

HdO

The Spread of Buddhism



Edited by
Ann Heirman
&
Stephan Peter Bumbacher

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The Spread of Buddhism

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Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher



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In memory of
Pol Vanden Broucke
(1957–2004)

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Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher

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Ann Heirman

INTRODUCTION: THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

Ann Heirman (Ghent) and Stephan Peter Bumbacher (Tübingen)

The aim of the present work is to examine the spread of Buddhism in order to gain a deeper understanding of the way in which Buddhism found its way into countries and regions different from its area of origin. Before we invite the kind reader to follow us on our journey, however, we first of all have to ask: What is Buddhism? An immediate answer offers itself: Buddhism is an abstraction, as is any religion. Why? No single religion represents a coherent and definite system of concepts and notions, for several reasons. First of all, religions evolve and develop. The transcendent Buddha of the later Mahāyāna was significantly different from Gotama Siddhattha of the early Hīnayāna as preserved in the Pāli canon. Just as the Jesus of the early wandering charismatic preachers of the first decades after his execution was different to the Jesus discussed at the council of Nicea in the early fourth century. Second, no single member of a religion can be aware of all possible interpretations. This holds true for the specialists like priests, monks, or university professors as well as, and even more so, for the lay believers. What the ordinary Chinese of, say, the Chang'an area of the late second century AD could know about Buddhism—based on the few texts that were translated by then into Chinese—differed substantially from what an elite monk at the Tang court would have known thanks to the comprehensive libraries available to him. Furthermore, lay believers may have had a different understanding of the various elements of their religion than the religious specialists as their view may still be informed by the earlier “folk-religious” tradition of their primary socialisation. We are, therefore, well advised to consider Buddhism in particular and religions in general as complexes consisting of a more or less “essential core” of concepts shared by most adherents (although they may understand them differently!) and layers of “secondary shells” of individually formed notions which may differ considerably from one believer to the next.

We may then ask: after various Buddhist traditions had left their areas of origin and spread into new territories, how did they enter these new environments? Did they adapt themselves or were they adapted? Which

difficulties did they encounter? Was the spread a single event or did it consist of several waves? The period to be examined in each region under discussion is primarily the period from the first appearance of Buddhism until the time when it disappeared, or, instead, when it had acquired a solid basis. As we did not want to produce a work in several volumes we had to limit ourselves geographically. Thus we follow the traces of Buddhism from its area of origin to the Far East, thereby crossing Central Asia, China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. As we will see, this is not a single route, or a straightforward voyage, but a long journey with many side routes, with back and forward movements, and numerous encounters.

This journey is conditioned by many factors. Geographical, social, political, economic, philosophical, religious, and even linguistic environments all played their role. The desert separating the Central Asian mountains from the heart of China hampered the transmission of Buddhist monasticism for several centuries, while the belief in the sacred mountains of Tibet and in the divinity of the king as a mountain-hero facilitated the king's transformation into a *bodhisattva* and a *buddha*. A lack of state sponsorship in the most western regions of Buddhist expansion made it impossible for the Buddhist communities to grow. Severe economic crises, the collapse of international trade, and the success of Islam made them disappear. State sponsorship in China, Tibet, Mongolia and Korea, however, brought the Buddhist community and state affairs into a close relationship and influenced the faith of the *samgha*. Esoteric Buddhism promoted itself as a prime protector of the state, and as an excellent curator of physical health. Still, in India, it could not stop the gradual shift of the traditional supporters of Buddhism to Hinduism, a shift that dried out the financial resources of the monasteries, and undermined their existence. In other regions, financial support continued to flow in, and monasteries developed into powerful economic centres. As Buddhism went its way, linguistic borders were frequently crossed and translation activities became of prime importance. Translation lead to a natural as well as an artificial selection of texts, or created an overwhelming and sometimes confusing richness of similar, but yet different or even contradictory words of the Buddha instead. Choices were made, and these choices further influenced the direction the Buddhist community would take.

The rise of Buddhism occurred just after the end of the later Vedic period of Indian history (ca. 1000 BC–550 BC). According to tradition, its founder, the Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama, was born in the Lumbinī park near Kapilavastu, in the sixth/fifth century BC. Whereas it seems to be widely accepted that he lived for eighty years, the date of his *parinirvāṇa*, i.e., passing away, is still under debate. After his enlightenment and his subsequent teaching of the way formalised in the “Four noble Truths”, he was busy wandering for forty-five years through the region of the Middle Ganges from Kapilavastu in the north to Bodhgayā, Bihar, in the south, and from Mathurā (Mutturā, Uttar Pradesh) in the west to Campā (Bhāgalpur, Bihar) in the east preaching his *dharma* or “Law”.

Among his disciples were the Group of Five (*pañcavargika*) with whom he had lived previously during the time of his austere penances and other people ordained by him. This *saṃgha* was immediately sent out on mission to teach the Buddhist Law. In the beginning, monks and nuns lived peripatetically, but very soon came to live in fixed residences which were donated and supported by female (*upāsikā*) and male (*upāsaka*) lay followers. Matters concerning the preservation and transmission of the word of the Buddha were discussed in a series of councils. During these councils (Skt. *saṃgīti* or *saṃgāyana* “singing” or “reciting in unison”) the Buddha’s *dharma* was recited, rehearsed, memorised and finally fixed in the Buddhist Canon. Shortly after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa* the *saṃgha* split into different schools (*nikāya*) holding separate *prātimokṣa* ceremonies (public confessions of individual transgressions). Many different Hīnayāna schools are thus recorded.

For the spread of Buddhism it is important to note that India’s material culture in the Buddhist scriptures is described as expanding and trade relations are far wider reaching during the time of the Buddha than in the previous Vedic period. In the great cities, as for instance in Vārāṇasī (Benares), we find very influential mercantile communities organised in guilds. The texts also reflect a widespread *saṃgha* supported by kings and merchants. Evidently, the institution and maintenance of the *saṃgha* to a high degree depended on the existence of donations offered by the laity and the security and protection provided by the rulers. According to extant votive inscriptions, merchants and craftsmen were among the main supporters of cave monasteries and donors of funds for the construction of the great *stūpas* in the centuries after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*.

Buddhist archaeological remains of the initial period of the Maurya dynasty (ca. 320–ca. 185 BC) are found in the Buddhist “Middle country” (*madhyadeśa*) at all places which the Buddha is said to have visited or where he had lived, in Avanti in Madhya Pradesh and in Mahārāṣṭra.

Whereas the first two kings of the Maurya dynasty (Candragupta and Bindusāra) seem to have supported the traditional Brahmans and the Jainas, the third king, Aśoka (r. 268–233 BC), is known as the most important person responsible for the spread of Buddhism. He is also on record as the first ruler over almost the whole Indian subcontinent. He left a series of edicts which he had engraved on rocks and pillars and in which he recorded his conquests and achievements as well as his opinions and wishes. He seems to have been specially inclined to Buddhism as can be seen in his edict no. VIII. This Bhābhra edict is addressed to the Buddhist community, and Aśoka recommends to monks and lay people the study of seven “sermons on the Law” (*dharmapaḷiyāya*). Also the inscription of Rummindei was written on the occasion of Aśoka’s pilgrimage to the birthplace of the Buddha in the twentieth year of his reign. Also during Aśoka’s reign, a Buddhist council was held at Pāṭaliputra (now Patna, Bihar). On that occasion decisions were made concerning Buddhist missionary activities which became crucial for the spread of Buddhism and its development into a world religion. Buddhism did not only spread throughout the whole of Aśoka’s empire, but according to the Sinhalese chronicles, the Thera Moggaliputta sent missionaries to nine adjacent countries in order to propagate the Buddhist doctrine. Tradition further emphasises that also a son of Aśoka, Mahinda, propagated Buddhism. He is said to have brought it to Sri Lanka.

Buddhism did not remain in India though. Xuanzang who travelled through India between 630 and 644 still reported the existence of about 2,000 Hīnayāna and 2,500 Mahāyāna monasteries, but in some regions the formerly rich monasteries already laid in ruins, abandoned for economical reasons, or destroyed by rapacious invaders or even by local rulers. The Sthaviravāda schools retreated to the south, especially to Sri Lanka. The early schools of Buddhism of mainland India, the main centres of which had remained in Magadha and Northwest India, were finally destroyed when the Muslims took power around 1200 AD, thus putting an end to the great monastic universities in Bihar (Nālandā and Vikramaśīla) and Bengal. Among the laity, the Mantrayāna or “Vehicle of Spells” which continued in Magadha, Bengal and Orissa

appears to have been assimilated into similar Hindu traditions. Only in a restricted and secluded region of Nepal the Indian Mahāyāna survived as a synthesis of the Madhyamaka Mantrayāna of the twelfth century and of Tibetan Buddhism.

* * *

The territorial expansion and geographical dispersion of the Buddhist community invoked different interpretations of the monastic discipline as well as of the doctrine. The wheel of the *dharma* was truly turned over and over again. But when did it start to turn and what does it tell? Does it concern the eightfold noble path, as the Sarvāstivādins claim, or are all words of the Buddha equally included in it, as sustained by the Mahāsāṃghikas, a school that came into being at the first schism of the Buddhist community? Or is it the four noble truths, or the path of vision, two early interpretations, as pointed out by Bart Dessein in his discussion on the wheel of the doctrine. Already in the first centuries of the spread of Buddhism, these questions were the central topic of many philosophical texts. Related to this, was the discussion on the first turning of the wheel. According to several *vinaya* (monastic) and *abhidharma* (doctrinal) texts, the wheel started to turn at the enlightenment of Kauṇḍinya, one of the five monks to whom the Buddha is said to have explained his doctrine in the Deer Park at Vārāṇasī. It was the first enlightenment caused by the turning of the wheel that was set in motion by the Buddha himself. This opinion, however, is again not shared by the Mahāsāṃghikas, who claim that the wheel started to turn under the *bodhi* tree at the moment that the Buddha gave a sermon to a few merchants who passed by. As shown by Bart Dessein, it is probably in the latter sense that we have to understand the claim of the Mahāsāṃghikas that all the words of the Buddha are included in the wheel of the doctrine: all that he said to the merchants was set in motion as the wheel of the doctrine started to turn.

* * *

In the north, Buddhism spread to the Central Asian regions, where it encountered many diverse populations such as the Greek descendants of Alexander the Great, the Bactrians, the Sogdians, the Parthians, the Sassanians, and the Śakas.

In her contribution on Buddhism in Gandhāra, Siglinde Dietz points out that the first Buddhist presence in Central Asia must have come from the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, probably during the

time of the Maurya king Aśoka. Still, it is only from the first century BC and thus after the Greek presence in the Gandhāran region that Buddhism really started to flourish, stimulated by the wealth, security and stability of the Kuṣāṇa empire. Along the trade routes of this extensive empire material and cultural goods were exchanged. It was the start of a period of great productivity of Buddhist texts, as shown by the many recent findings of Buddhist manuscripts in the region. When, however, in the seventh century the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited the Gandhāran region, Buddhism had already seriously declined. This was probably partially due to a general decline of economic prosperity, leaving laymen without the necessary funds to support large monasteries. A second and perhaps even more decisive factor in the decline of Buddhism was the revival of Hinduism, a feature that Gandhāra had in common with many other regions of the Indian subcontinent.

In Central Asia, an area of many political entities, Buddhism was further confronted with many new philosophical and cultural surroundings. In fact, Buddhism only partially found its way into the lay society. As shown by Xavier Tremblay in his contribution on the spread of Buddhism in Serindia, it was in the Bactrian region, unified under the reign of the Kuṣāṇas, that the Indian culture, and, along with it, Buddhism, could be widely propagated. The Kuṣāṇas, themselves mainly Mazdeans, thus created a political unity apt to the further spread of Buddhist ideas. Cultural regions that were outside or only briefly included in the Bactrian realms, such as Sogdia, only experienced very minor Buddhist influence. Those Sogdians who were followers of Buddhism were in fact not inhabitants of Sogdia proper, but lived in the Central Asian Tarim Basin, that was included in the Bactrian cultural realm. After 500 AD, Buddhism was perceived as a part of Chinese culture in the eastern regions of Central Asia. Depending on the willingness of Central Asian populations to get involved with their powerful Chinese neighbour, Buddhism was integrated, accepted, tolerated, or rejected.

From Central Asia, Buddhism mainly spread eastwards, but what about the West? In his study of Buddhism in the ancient West, Erik Seldeslachts points out that there are many indications of a westward movement of Buddhism, far into the Iranian region. This movement was probably triggered by the geographical overlap between the Buddhist and the Hellenistic regions. However, Buddhism never became very popular in the regions west of India, as the political and socio-economic factors, to a great extent responsible for its eastern expansion, played

only a minor role. While from the fifth to the early second century BC, there were frequent military and political contacts between the East and the West, trade was mainly carried out by intermediaries, and direct trade routes were only scarcely developed. In the first two centuries AD, commercial contacts intensified, and the maritime trade between India and the Roman Empire was a growing phenomenon. Political contacts, however, were limited to occasional Indian embassies to Rome, and Buddhism never gained state sponsorship in the West. Still, Buddhist communities might have existed in cosmopolitan cities such as Alexandria in Egypt. They are, however, likely to have suffered from the political and economic crises that hit the western world from the third century on. In addition, the collapse of the international trade and the growing popularity of Christianity probably added to their disappearance. From the seventh century onwards, an expanding Islam finally pushed Buddhism back, further to the east, and out of Central Asia.

* * *

The largest region in the east to come into contact with Buddhism, was certainly China. The first attestations of a Buddhist presence date from the first century AD. New ideas appeared and a new style of community life was introduced. For the first time, men and later also women, lived together in monasteries organised on the basis of monastic disciplinary texts (*vinaya* texts). As shown by Ann Heirman in her contribution on the spread of the *vinaya* from India to China, the establishment of Chinese monastic life regulated by disciplinary rules was not an easy thing to accomplish. While in the first centuries of our era, there was a serious lack of monastic rules, the extensive translation activities at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century suddenly caused an overwhelming richness of available material. It confronted the Chinese with as many as four similar, but still different, *vinayas*, all belonging to the northern Buddhist schools. Consequently, for about three centuries, the Chinese monasteries made use of several *vinayas*, often without making a clear distinction between them. In the seventh century, protest against this eclectic use of the *vinayas* arose in monastic as well as in political circles. Finally, at the beginning of the eighth century, one single *vinaya*, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, was imposed by imperial decree on the whole of China, which is a clear example of how the monastic community and the state worked hand in hand in their striving for unity.

Ann Heirman also raises the question of the influence of the Sinhalese Theravāda School in China. Except for some particular cases, such as the introduction of monastic life for nuns, this influence remained very meagre. Translations of Theravāda texts were of a relatively late date. Only at the end of the fifth century and in the beginning of the sixth century a few texts were translated in the south of China, at a politically very unstable time. Moreover, although Hīnayāna *vinayas* were kept in honour by the Chinese monasteries, thus providing the Buddhist community with a proper transmission of the ordination since the time of the Buddha, at the time of the translation of the Theravāda texts Mahāyāna ideas were already firmly established in the whole of China. There was no need for a new *vinaya*, nor was there a lot of interest in Hīnayāna philosophical ideas.

When Buddhism arrived in China, it came into contact with long established modes of thinking, cultural traditions and philosophies. Among the adherents of Chinese religious traditions mainly Daoist practitioners got interested in the new ideas introduced by Buddhism, being attracted by some apparently striking similarities, such as meditation techniques. In his paper on early Buddhism in China, Stephan Peter Bumbacher focuses on the reception of Buddhism in Daoist circles. While it is a well known fact that Buddhist supporters at first made use of Daoist concepts when translating their texts into Chinese to facilitate the spread of the new doctrine in China, Stephan Peter Bumbacher's contribution examines how Daoist disciples in the first centuries AD borrowed Buddhist practices and features. In this context, the Queen Mother of the West, Xi Wang Mu, played an intriguing role. By the time Buddhism began to gain popularity in China, she had become a deity who would save people from danger and, more importantly, could bestow upon them immortality. It seems that the population of the Han dynasty at first attributed a similar role to the Buddha. On the other hand, iconographical representations of the Queen Mother borrowed some striking features from the Buddha's iconography, such as shoulder-flames. Mythology, too, was a field in which adaptation of foreign elements took place. Laozi's birth story, for instance, clearly imitated crucial topoi of the birth story of the Buddha, and the very popular Daoist meditation technique in which deities are visualised goes back to the Indian practice of the visualisation of a Buddha. In the same way, the Daoist reverence for books, seen as holy objects or even as gods, may very well be borrowed from Buddhist Mahāyāna practices.

* * *

The introduction of Buddhism into China during the first centuries of our era and the subsequent development of a more Buddhist form of Daoism, and a more Chinese form of Buddhism, should not divert our attention from the fact that, after this initial phase, Indian and Central Asian texts and concepts continued to arrive in China. This was especially the case at the time of the Tang dynasty (618–906). As pointed out by Martin Lehnert in his contribution on esoteric Buddhism's way from India to China, also in this later phase of Chinese Buddhism, the Chinese context was not an isolated system on its own. Chinese scholars depended on translated texts and, particularly in esoteric Buddhism, often had to deal with different versions of the same text. In this context, Martin Lehnert examines the question of religious truth for a practitioner of "secret teaching". What is religious truth and why is it true?

The creation of tantric scriptures and ritual pragmatics proves to be largely dependent on local conditions of socio-political order. In the Indian context, tantric *praxis* helped to reconcile the Buddhist institutional life with the demand of the ruling and military clans for ritual protection and legitimation of the state and its rulers. It also paved the way to a Buddhist cult of the state. Through ritual magic a functional link between the mundane reality and the realisation of absolute truth was established.

At the Chinese Tang court, Buddhist monks assumed administrative and political responsibilities, and were often closely connected to imperial power. It is in this context that tantric Buddhism was introduced in China with its ritual magic, its sanctification of social and imperial order, and its practices that aimed at protecting the state. The translation process, however, was considered to be partially insufficient. Consequently, in order to fully understand the teaching and the scriptures, an instructed master was imperative. Only he could successfully apprehend the absolute, and thus serve as an advisor to the ruler. In fact, texts are not to be seen as explanations of the absolute truth. Rather, they are the absolute truth, only to be grasped by specialised and skilful masters.

At the end of the eighth century, Buddhism gradually lost support at the court, and Buddhist translation activities were suspended. It is not until the beginning of the Song dynasty (960–1279) that Buddhism, and also tantric Buddhism, regained some privileges. Still, the translations

and certainly the exegetic studies of tantric texts were limited compared to the Tang period. In addition, Chan Buddhism proved to be more successful in its claim to offer a better alternative for a symbiosis of Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian values. The Indic background of tantric Buddhism became a burden hard to get rid of, and the economic costs of translations and sumptuous rituals gradually became inappropriate. The state ritual that was essential in tantric practices was taken over by the Confucian cult, and civil service examinations were aimed at the recruitment of competent Confucian scholars able to preserve the social and imperial order. The truth claim of the secret teachings lost its value, at least for the state. In private life, however, tantric rituals, intermingled with Daoist *praxis*, survived.

* * *

As is well known, Buddhism did not remain limited to the Chinese empire. From China, it found its way to the Korean peninsula at a time when Korea was divided into three kingdoms (4th–7th centuries AD), Koguryō, Paekche and Silla. At the same time, many Korean monks travelled to China in order to study Buddhism, and some of them even played an active role in the history of Chinese Buddhism. A few monks travelled as far as India. As discussed by Pol Vanden Broucke in his contribution on the first steps of Korean Buddhism, a leading factor during the period of the Three Kingdoms was the successful form of esoteric Buddhism, expressed in the biographies of three eminent monks: Milbon, Hyet'ong and Myōngnang. Still today, these monks are honoured for their magic skills to protect the nation and cure diseases. They successfully subdued the native spirits and exceeded the power of the local shamans.

* * *

Buddhism became an integral part of the society, not only in China and Korea. It also found its way to Tibet and Mongolia, as discussed by Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, Sven Bretfeld and Klaus Sagaster respectively. In her contribution on the Buddhist way into Tibet, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz lays bare the complex puzzle of intermingling factors that led to the rise of Buddhism during the Yar-lung dynasty at the height of its power in the seventh to the ninth centuries. Although Tibetans might have come into contact with Buddhism as early as the fifth century AD, it was not until the reign of the famous king of the Yar-lung dynasty, Srong-btsan-sgan-po, who succeeded his father in

ca. 620 AD, that Buddhism aroused some interest. At the same time, a script suitable for the Tibetan language was brought back from India, a fact that benefited the spread of Buddhist ideas. Roughly a century later, under the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan (730–796), Buddhism was firmly established in Tibet. It was the time when Tibet reached its largest expansion. Buddhist masters, mainly Indian masters, were invited to the royal court at Lhasa and Indian Mahāyāna and tantric ideas were propagated. Chinese masters, too, played a significant role. In fact, when Indian monks brought Buddhism to Tibet, Buddhism was in all probability not a new religion, but was already well known through Chinese and Central Asian mediation. And even after the arrival of the Indian monks, Chinese influence remained substantial. Tibet was thus in no way a secluded country, and the influence of the surrounding regions is noticeable in textual and archaeological sources. Like many other countries, the state promotion of Buddhism led to a growing proximity between state affairs and the Buddhist *saṃgha*. Particularly in the early ninth century, the shift of power from the secular to the clerical clearly increased at the expense of the Tibetan nobility. The subsequent opposition of this nobility, anxious to preserve its privileges eventually lead to a temporary halt for Buddhism in the middle of the ninth century, a situation that was to change again a century and a half later, when a second spread of the *dharma* was inaugurated.

The second or “later spread” of Buddhism is discussed by Sven Bretfeld. The term “later spread” usually refers to missionary movements in Tibet from the late tenth century to around the thirteenth century, the formative period of Tibetan Buddhism as we know it today. In Tibetan sources this period is commemorated as a religious past that by its symbols explains the present, socially, culturally, as well as religiously. As pointed out by Sven Bretfeld, Tibetan Buddhism is not a homogeneous entity, but a conglomeration of very divergent opinions, also concerning both its history and what Buddhism actually is. One of the points under discussion is how far-reaching the extinction of Buddhism in the ninth century actually was. For the rNying-ma-pa masters (“the Old Ones”) there is even no such thing as extinction. Instead they claim that their texts and practices have survived without interruption since the time of the first introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that, starting from the late tenth century, there was a revival of Buddhism, stimulated by the activities and the financial support of the kings of Western Tibet. From the west, it spread to the rest of the country. Very successful in his

Buddhist teachings was the Indian master Atiśa (d. 1054) who visited many places in Tibet and promoted a mixture of traditional Mahāyāna doctrine and tantric practices, as well as a synthesis of monastic and tantric lifestyles. More and more schools came into being that sought their identity in a lineage of transmission going back to a founding teacher who had acquired his oral instructions directly from a tantric deity. At the end of the thirteenth century, Buddhism was firmly established in Tibet, mainly as a result of the many alliances with aristocratic families. Monastic leaders even began to play a role in Tibetan and foreign policy. This was certainly the case for the famous leader of the Sa-skyā School, Sa-skyā Paṇḍita, who in 1244 was summoned to the Mongolian court.

Tibetan Buddhism did in fact not remain limited to Tibet, but expanded to regions as far away as the Mongolian grasslands. It was in fact the astonishing Mongolian expansion that brought the Mongol empire in contact with the Buddhist Uighurs and Tanguts, and with the Buddhist environments of Tibet and China. The first contact with Buddhism was probably established when Činggis Khan conquered the Naiman region in the western part of Mongolia in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The spiritual advisor to the Naiman leader was Tatatungya, a Buddhist Uighur. He also introduced the Uighur-Mongolian script. Tibetan Buddhism reached Mongolia through the Xixia empire in Northwestern China, the empire of the Tanguts who were related to the Tibetans. However, many Tangut monasteries were not just replicas of Tibetan ones. The Tanguts had also created their own form of Buddhism based on Tibetan, Central Asian and Chinese elements. The Xixia Empire (ca. 982–1227) was the first eastern empire to fall under the attacks of the Mongol forces. In 1234, it was followed by the Jin dynasty, the dynasty of the Jurchen who occupied the northern part of China, and in 1279 by the Chinese Southern Song dynasty, that reigned over the southern regions of China. As a consequence, Chinese Buddhist schools, too, found their way to the Mongolian region. The most influential relationship, however, was to be the one with Tibet. In 1244, the head of the Tibetan Sa-skyā-pa School, Sa-skyā Paṇḍita, was invited to the Mongolian court and empowered with leadership over Tibet, under the control of the Mongols. After Sa-skyā Paṇḍita's death in 1251, his nephew 'Phags-pa took over the leadership. He was later appointed by Khubilai Khan as his personal spiritual advisor. Tantric Buddhism was thus given a political as well as religious role. It was to protect the state and its leaders. As discussed in Klaus

Sagaster's contribution, however, Buddhism was not only a matter for the Mongolian leadership, but also entered the minds and habits of the Mongolian people, as a religion conterminous with the traditional shamanistic beliefs. When the Mongolians lost power in China halfway through the fourteenth century, the strong link between Mongolia and Tibet also weakened. It was revived by Altan Khan (1507–1582) who conferred upon the head of the dGe-lugs-pa School the title of Dalai Lama. More than ever before, Buddhism now became the dominant religion in Mongolia.

* * *

All developments considered so far cannot but force us to think over again the main theme of the present work: “the spread of Buddhism”. As pointed out by Griffith Foulk in his contribution on the spread of Chan Buddhism, metaphors, although being unavoidable, can easily deter our attention from the implication these metaphors have. What do we have in mind when we speak of “the spread”, and how do we conceive of “Buddhism”? As it is clear from all contributions in the present work, “spread” seen as a metaphor for the distribution of an homogeneous creed is not a very apt image, for the various forms of Buddhism that existed in different parts around the world and in different periods, are not homogeneous at all, but differ both in character and content. However, if we see “the spread” as a spread of fire, the metaphor becomes much more fitting, for the process of combustion greatly depends on the fuel and environmental factors. Also the term “Buddhism” itself is not easily defined. What do we call “Buddhism”? What criteria do we use when we attach the label “Buddhism” to particular ideas, texts, images, institutions, or behaviours? It is clear that there is in fact no uniform set of criteria, and that depending on the region and on the period under discussion, we can only try to consciously determine for ourselves what is understood when we want to make use of the term “Buddhism”. “Buddhism” in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, where no tangible proofs of any Buddhist institution have actually been found, does not and cannot have the same implication as “Buddhism” in fifth century China with its growing discussions on the strict interpretation of monastic rules (although it seems that some of Alexandria's inhabitants may have been influenced—perhaps indirectly—by certain Buddhist traits, as is the case with the New Testament periscope presenting Jesus as walking over the water and rescuing his disciples in their boat which was informed by a similar yet

much older story dealing with the Buddha who walks over the water and rescues a boat).

Turning to the spread of Chan Buddhism, Griffith Foulk further raises the question how medieval Chinese Buddhists, all Mahāyāna followers, themselves conceived of the transmission of the *dharma*. For Mahāyāna Buddhists, the *buddha*-mind is in fact present in all living beings. Consequently it does not need to be transmitted, but only discovered. Still, the way to discover it needs to be passed on, and, as a consequence, lineages of transmission were created. This was especially so in the various Chan schools, where the founder of the tradition, Bodhidharma, is portrayed as the transmitter of a very special *dharma* that goes back to Śākyamuni himself. Discussions on the continuation of the Chan lineage arose, such as to whom was the *dharma* transmitted, and in which way did the subsequent transmissions take place? The importance of scriptures as a means for transmission decreased, and other devices were used instead. The *dharma* was passed on from mind to mind, from master to disciple. In this way, a Chan family with many branches, a mixture of historical and mythological relations, came into being. It influenced people's thinking at different times and places. In the Japanese Kamakura period (1185–1333), the Chan (Jap. Zen) mythology, ideology and teaching styles were transmitted to Japan. Zen monastic institutions, governed by a whole set of rules, were established, modelled on the great public monasteries of China. In recent years, finally, Zen Buddhism and the activities associated with it found their way to America and Europe, carefully transmitting the *dharma* along an unbroken master-disciple-lineage.

* * *

And so we have come to the end of our journey through Central and East Asia. Along the way, the wheel continued to turn. In some regions, it left virtually no traces, in other regions it became an integrated part of society and culture. It came along the merchant routes and introduced itself in the most diverse environments. It lived in symbiosis with many other philosophical and religious systems, it adapted itself and it was adapted. It was actively promoted, or just happened to be a useful instrument in the eyes of rulers. It attracted or lost the financial support of individuals and monarchs alike. Its texts were translated and explained, its notions rejected or embraced. It was turned over and over again.

THE FIRST TURNING OF THE WHEEL OF THE DOCTRINE: SARVĀSTIVĀDA AND MAHĀSĀMĠHIKA CONTROVERSY

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1. INTRODUCTION

After an initial period in which the Buddhist faith did not spread beyond the boundaries of the region where the Buddha spent his life, the territorial expansion of the Mauryan Empire under the famous king Aśoka (r. ca. 270–ca. 230 BC) enabled Buddhism to quickly spread throughout India. This geographical expansion of the community gradually invoked different interpretations of the word of the Buddha, and led to the formation of different sects and schools.¹

The dispute between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāmghikas on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and on the event that should be considered as the (first) turning of this wheel of the doctrine is an interesting example of scholarly debate between different Hīnayāna groups on the Indian subcontinent. This discussion, recorded in the Abhidharma literature, illustrates how the spread of Buddhism led to different interpretations of even such fundamental issues as: “What is the nature of what the Buddha said?” and “Where and to whom did He deliver his first sermon?”

The Mahāsāmghikas were involved in the first division of the Buddhist community early in the second century after the demise of the Buddha,² that is, the schism between the Mahāsāmghikas and the Sthaviravādins. This schism was most likely invoked by the expansion of the root Vinaya text by the future Sthaviravādins, an expansion that was not accepted by the later Mahāsāmghikas.³ In the second

¹ We here follow the distinction between “schools” and “sects” as defined by Heinz Bechert 1961.

² Nattier & Prebish 1976–1977, p. 239, suggest the date 116 Anno Buddhae.

³ On the primacy of monastic matters over doctrinal matters in the formation of the earliest Buddhist schools, see Frauwallner 1956 and Bechert 1961. On the relation of the so-called “five points of Mahādeva” to the first schism in the community, see

century after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, the Mahāsāṃghikas split into the Ekavyavahārikas, the Lokottaravādins, the Bahuśrutīyas, the Kukkuṭikas, and the Prajñaptivādins. Epigraphical evidence reveals that the Ekavyavahārikas and the Lokottaravādins moved into present-day Afghanistan, and that at least some of the Bahuśrutīyas resided in present-day Pakistan.⁴ The Prajñaptivādins moved to the Himālaya mountains. The place of residence of the Kukkuṭikas is unclear. After Mathurā had been the Mahāsāṃghika stronghold in the second half of the first century BC,⁵ the school also spread to the south of the Indian subcontinent, more precisely to the Kṛṣṇā valley region. Epigraphic evidence of the presence of the Mahāsāṃghikas and their different sub-schools in the Kṛṣṇā valley region, dates back to the second and third centuries AD.⁶ This means that, at the time of the compilation of the *Vaiḥṛīka* **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, our major Abhidharma source of information on the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika controversy under scrutiny here, the Mahāsāṃghikas had become an important Buddhist group also in the south.

2. TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT IN *SŪTRA* AND *VINAYA* LITERATURE

To answer the question on which premises the discussion on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and its first turning may have arisen, we need to investigate the different accounts of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine in the *Sūtra* and *Vinaya* literature. As the *Vinaya* literature contains the most complete accounts, we start with discussing the *Vinaya* literature.

The first sermon of the Buddha is narrated in the Pāli *Vinaya*, the *Mahāśāsakavinaya* «*Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü*» (T.1421), and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* «*Sifen lü*» (T.1428).⁷ All three accounts start with

Dessein, "Of Tempted Arhats and Supermundane Buddhas: Abhidharma in the Kṛṣṇā Region", in: Anthony Barber & Sri Padma Holt (eds.). *Buddhism in the Kṛṣṇā River Valley of Andhra*. State University of New York Press (forthcoming).

⁴ See Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 293–294.

⁵ Lamotte 1958, p. 580. See also Shizutani 1965.

⁶ See *Epigraphia Indica* XX, pp. 15–17, 17, 19–20, 21–22, 24; *Epigraphia Indica* XXI, pp. 61–62; *Epigraphia Indica* XXIV, pp. 256–260; *Epigraphia Indica* XXVII, pp. 1–4; Lüders 1973, nos. 1223, 1230, 1244, 1248, 1250, 1263, 1272, 1270; Sivaramamurti 1942, p. 278. See further also Lamotte 1958, p. 580.

⁷ Pāli *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* I.6.18–29 (Oldenberg 1964, pp. 10–11; Rhys Davids &

how the Buddha, having attained enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree, went to the Deer Park (*Mṛgadāva*) in Vārāṇasī, to meet the group of the five companions (*pañcavargika*)—(Ājñāta) Kaundinya, Vāṣpa, Bhadrīka, Mahānāman and Aśvajit—who had previously witnessed his austerities. The Buddha started his ministry by proclaiming the two extremes which one should avoid: a life given to pleasures, and a life given to mortification. This way of living is identified with the middle mode of progress (*madhyamā pratipad*). It is by practicing the middle mode of progress that insight, complete enlightenment (*saṃbodhi*), and *nirvāṇa* can be obtained. This middle mode of progress is then explained to be the eightfold noble path, consisting of right view (*samyagdr̥ṣṭi*), right conceptualising (*samyaksamkalpa*), right speech (*samyagvāc*), right action (*samyakkarmānta*), right livelihood (*samyagājīva*), right effort (*samyagyāyāma*), right mindfulness (*samyaksmṛti*), and right concentration (*samyaksamādhi*). It is only after the explanation of the nature of the middle mode of progress that the ministry on the four noble truths follows: the truth of suffering (*duḥkhasatya*), the truth of the origin (*samudayasatya*), the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*), and the truth of the path (*mārgasatya*), that is, the above noble eightfold path. In these *vinayas*, the four truths are subsequently explained as consisting of three cycles (*triparivarta*) and twelve constituent parts (*dvādaśākāra*). The three cycles—three turns of the wheel of the doctrine—are (1) a postulation and definition of the four noble truths (this is the noble truth of suffering, ...), (2) a hortative cycle (the noble truth of suffering, ..., has to be fully known), and (3) an evidential cycle (the noble truth of suffering, ..., is completely known). Since each cycle addresses the four noble truths, twelve aspects are formed. In the *vinaya* accounts, the first ministry is concluded with the Buddha's statement that since He "truly understands the wheel of the doctrine with its three cycles and twelve aspects, superior enlightenment (*anuttara samyaksambodhi*) is attained."⁸ Then follows the conversion of

Oldenberg 1881, pp. 94–97); T.1421.22.104b23–c18; T.1428.22.788a6–b23. See also Bareau 1963, pp. 172–182.

⁸ Pāli *Vinaya, Mahāvagga* I.6.28 (Oldenberg 1964, p. 11; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1881, p. 97); T.1421.22.104c16–17. T.1428.22.788b16–18 does not mention the simile of a wheel in this sentence, but continues with saying that when the World-honoured One cannot make someone else awaken for the four noble truths, he does not set the wheel of the doctrine in motion (T.1428.22.788b18–19). Schmithausen 1981, p. 214, suggests that the threefold comprehension of the four truths describes the Buddha's enlightenment, which is primarily regarded as the discovery of soteriologically relevant truth for all living beings. See also Oldenberg 1903, p. 147 n. 2. Also the Sanskrit

Kauṇḍinya—who is henceforth called Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya (who knew [the Buddhist doctrine])—, and the account concludes with a passage on how the gods instruct one another that the Buddha has set the wheel of the doctrine in motion.⁹ It is thus evident that, apart from defining the wheel of the doctrine as the four noble truths, these *vinayas* further identify the conversion of Kauṇḍinya with the first turning of this wheel. The sermon to the five monks is also recorded, be it in a somewhat different setting, in the Saṃghabhedavastu of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavastu* «*Genben shuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye poseng shi*» (T.1450).¹⁰ It has to be remarked that in this text, which contains all elements we find in the other *vinaya* texts, the sermon that leads to the conversion of Kauṇḍinya contains two clearly separated passages: a first part deals with the two extremes to be avoided and the middle mode of progress; a second part deals with the four truths with their three cycles and twelve constituent parts.¹¹

The picture that appears from the *vinaya* literature, is corroborated in the *sūtra* literature. A “*Dharmacakrapravartanasūtra*” (*Sūtra* on the Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine) is contained in the Pāli *Samyuttanikāya*.¹² Although we do not find an account of the first ministry of the Buddha in the *Sarvāstivāda*- and *Mahāsāṃghikavinayas*, the *sūtra* literature of these schools—the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda *Madhyamāgama* «*Zhong ahan jing*» (T.26) and *sūtra* no. 379 of the *Samyuktāgama* «*Za ahan jing*» (T.99), and the

Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra 17.17, 41.6, 8, 11, 13 mentions the turning of the wheel in three cycles with twelve aspects, leading to superior enlightenment. See Waldschmidt 1951a, pp. 216–218, 388–391.

⁹ Barea 1963, p. 177, sees the fact that the above accounts are parallel as a consequence of their common ancestorship. However, he remarks (op. cit., p. 9) that “il ne faut pourtant pas déduire qu’à notre avis la biographie du Buddha a dû commencer à se former chez les Theravādin, les Mahīśāsaka et les Dharmaguptaka, ou au sein de l’une de ces écoles seulement. Bien loin de penser ainsi, nous croyons au contraire qu’elle s’est lentement constituée dans un milieu diffus et surtout laïc n’appartenant à aucune secte particulière et s’est répandue notamment grâce aux pèlerinages bien avant que les premiers éléments en fussent incorporés dans les divers recueils canoniques à des époques variables.”

¹⁰ T.1450.24.127b24–128a10. The *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavastu* «*Genben shuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye poseng shi*» was translated by Yijing between 700 and 711. See also Yuyama 1979, p. 30.

¹¹ First part: the two extremes and the middle mode of progress, T.1450.24.127b24–c3; second part: the four truths with three cycles and twelve constituent parts, T.1450.24.127c8–128a8.

¹² SN, *Mahāvagga*, pp. 420–424. See also Woodward 1956, pp. 356–360.

Mahāsāṃghika *Ekottarāgama* «*Zengyi ahan jing*» (T.125)¹³—contains texts titled “*Dharmacakrapravartanasūtra*”. The Taishō collection contains two more *sūtras* titled “*Dharmacakrapravartanasūtra*” related to *sūtra* no. 379 of the *Samyuktāgama*. One is a translation attributed to An Shigao 安世高 (?–ca. 170), titled «*Fo shuo zhuan falun jing*» (T.109),¹⁴ and the other is the «*Fo shuo san zhuan falun jing*» (T.110), a translation by Yijing 義淨 (635–713). A comparison of the elements narrated in these *sūtra* accounts with those in the accounts in the above *vinayas* reveals the following:

<i>vinaya</i>	SN	T.26	T.99	T.109	T.110	T.125
Deer Park in Vārāṇasī	+	+	+	+	+	+
five companions	+	+	+	–	+	–
two extremes	+	+	–	+	–	+
middle mode of progress (eightfold noble path)	+	+	–	+	–	+
ministry on the four noble truths	+	–	–	+	–	–
three cycles and twelve constituent parts	+	–	+	+	+	–
conversion of Kaundinya	+	–	+	+	+	–
proclamation by the gods	+	–	+	+	+	–

That the account in the Pāli *Samyuttanikāya* is parallel to the account in the Pāli *Vinaya*, has already been shown by André Bareau (1963), p. 179.¹⁵ The above comparison shows that the one element all accounts of the first ministry of the Buddha agree on is the location of the first preaching: the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī. This may sustain the claim by André Bareau that the biography of the Buddha was gradually shaped, and spread along with the geographical expansion of the Buddhist faith a long time before it was taken up in the different canonical

¹³ On the (Mūla)Sārvāstivāda *Madhyamāgama* and *Samyuktāgama*, see T.1579.30.772c9–773a4; Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 136, 139, 148; Pāsādika 1985, p. 182; Schmithausen 1987, p. 306. On the Mahāsāṃghika *Ekottarāgama*, see T.1507.25.31c27–32b5; Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 136–137; Bronkhorst 1985, pp. 313–314; Schmithausen 1987, p. 321.

¹⁴ See Zürcher 1991, p. 300.

¹⁵ Schmithausen 1981, p. 202, suggests that the text from the *Samyuttanikāya* was taken over from the *vinaya*, and probably should be dated more than 100 years later than the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*.

works of the different schools.¹⁶ Therefore, it seems obvious that such a developmental process could have instigated later controversies among different Buddhist schools.

While all accounts included in *vinaya* literature agree that the Buddha delivered his first sermon to the group of the five *bhikṣus*, this is not the case for the *sūtra* literature. In the «*Fo shuo zhuan falun jing*» (T.109), one thousand monks and a multitude of gods are mentioned.¹⁷ Also in the version of the *Ekottarāgama* (T.125), the first sermon is delivered to a group of monks that is not further defined as to number, that is, it is addressed to “all” monks in general.¹⁸

The versions of the *Madhyamāgama* (T.26) and of the *Ekottarāgama* only have the first part of the account we find in the above *vinayas*.¹⁹ In these two works, the account of the first sermon of the Buddha stops with the proclamation of the middle mode of progress.

In *sūtra* no. 379 of the *Samyuktāgama* (T.99)²⁰ and in the «*Fo shuo san zhuan falun jing*» (T.110),²¹ it is said that the Buddha started his ministry with the five monks. However, these two works do not mention the two extremes to be avoided and the middle mode of progress, nor do they give a definition of the four noble truths. Yet, in these works, as is the case in the *vinaya* literature, the four noble truths are discussed with respect to the three cycles and twelve aspects. The two works also speak of the conversion of Kauṇḍinya and the proclamation by the gods. A further element that deserves our attention is that in these two works it is said that eighty thousand gods were converted simultaneously with Kauṇḍinya.²² Finally, the account in the «*Fo shuo zhuan falun jing*» (T.109) parallels the accounts we read in the *vinaya* literature, except for the fact that—as mentioned above—the Buddha addresses himself to one thousand *bhikṣus* and a multitude of gods.²³ Apart from this latter fact, also some other elements peculiar to the latter account point to its relative late date: the wheel of the doctrine appears in space and comes flying in before the Buddha’s eyes, who then grasps the wheel

¹⁶ See note 9.

¹⁷ T.109.2.503b6.

¹⁸ T.125.2.593b25.

¹⁹ T.26.1.777b26–778a2. See also note 11.

²⁰ T.99.2.103c14.

²¹ T.110.2.504a8.

²² T.99.2.104a9, T.110.2.504b7–8.

²³ T.109.2.503b5–6.

with his hands and stops its turning,²⁴ eight thousand gods are converted simultaneously with Kauṇḍinya,²⁵ and the one thousand monks he addressed, attain *arhat*-ship.²⁶

As mentioned above, apart from the location of the first preaching, the accounts in the *Madhyamāgama* and in the *Ekottarāgama*—the two works that only contain the first part of the account we find in the *vinayas*—also agree on the content of the Buddha’s preaching: the two extremes to be avoided, and the middle mode of progress. They do not mention the ministry on the four noble truths and their three cycles and twelve constituent parts.²⁷ As the eight constituent parts of the noble path can all be seen as characteristic for a “middle mode of progress”, while this is not the case for the three other truths, it is not unlikely that the fourth truth was the first to be proclaimed by the Buddha.²⁸ This would imply that the four noble truths as a set, are a later modification.²⁹ This assumption seems to be sustained by the fact

²⁴ T.109.2.503b7–11.

²⁵ T.109.2.503c13–14.

²⁶ T.109.2.503c14–15. Waldschmidt 1951b, p. 96, remarks that in the *Catuspariṣatsūtra*, a text known through a Sanskrit manuscript from Eastern Turkestan and that stems from the *Dirghāgama* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins, the definition of the four noble truths follows the section with the three turns and twelve aspects. In this text, Kauṇḍinya attains enlightenment after having heard the proclamation of the three cycles and twelve aspects, without having heard the actual ministry on the four noble truths (op. cit., p. 99). According to this text, Kauṇḍinya further attains *arhat*-ship after also having heard the definition of the four truths, while the other four monks do not (op. cit., p. 100). The other four monks only attain *arhat*-ship after the further sermon on the absence of a “self”. At this moment, the text says, there are six *arhats*: the five monks and the Tathāgata (op. cit., p. 100). See also Waldschmidt 1957, pp. 144–151. See further notes 83 and 94.

²⁷ As the initial part of the account, starting from the two extremes, appears in the Pāli, Sarvāstivāda, Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka literature, it probably is an ancient layer. See Bareau 1963, pp. 177–178. For the *vinaya* accounts, Bareau 1963, p. 178 suggests the following chronological order: Mahīśāsaka, Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka. He situates the Sarvāstivāda account (T.26) in between the Theravāda and the Dharmaguptaka account.

²⁸ See Bareau 1963, p. 180. Bronkhorst 2000, pp. 34–35: “Dem Thema der Befreiung vom Leiden wird nie widersprochen in den buddhistischen Texten. Wir werden also davon ausgehen, dass dies ein Hauptthema der Unterweisung des Buddha war. Wie gesagt wird dieses Thema sehr oft in der Form der sogenannten vier edlen Wahrheiten ausgedrückt. Man könnte in dieser aufzählenden Ausdrucksform vielleicht den Einfluss der späteren Scholastiker sehen, aber dies ändert nichts an ihrem Sinngehalt: der Buddha hat eine Methode gelehrt, dem Leiden ein Ende zu setzen.”

²⁹ See Frauwallner 1953, p. 184; Schmithausen 1981, p. 203; Vetter 1996, p. 54; Bronkhorst 2000, pp. 34–35. On the problem of precanonical Buddhism, see Schayer 1935, p. 121. Schayer 1935, p. 124: “The supposition that Buddha himself preached the *mārga* without taking any interest in its dogmatic foundation, though it cannot be

that the definition of the four noble truths is an integrated part of the section in which the four truths are elaborated as to three cycles and twelve aspects. As remarked by André Bareau, this section is reminiscent of abhidharmic developments.³⁰ The abhidharmic theory of the three turns and the twelve aspects would thus be a further elaboration of the four truths as a set. This would explain why only these versions of the first ministry of the Buddha that mention the three turns and twelve aspects, also mention the proclamation of the conversion of Kaṇḍinya by the gods. And, in turn, why the account in the *Madhyamāgama* and the *Ekottarāgama* see the first ministry of the Buddha as only consisting of the middle mode of progress.³¹ It has, in this respect, been claimed by André Bareau that the introduction of the five monks to the accounts on the first sermon was given in by the narrative argument that the same five monks witnessed the Buddha's life of self-mortification: introducing the five monks in the accounts on the first sermon linked this event in the Buddha's biography to the episode of his life in which he practiced austerities. This would also explain why not all the accounts in the *sūtra* literature mention the five monks.³² As, in the *vinaya* accounts, the first ministry is concluded with the statement of the Buddha that He has attained superior enlightenment because of His understanding of the wheel of the doctrine with its three cycles and twelve aspects, by implication, it should not be excluded that at least some elements in

actually proved, must [...] be seriously taken into account as a by no means excluded possibility." On the origin of the fourfold division, see Wezler 1984, pp. 312–324. See further also Schmithausen 1981, p. 207; Norman 1990, p. 27.

³⁰ Bareau 1963, p. 180: "Il semble que la première partie, celle qui définit les deux extrêmes à éviter et la voie du milieu, soit la plus ancienne et par le style et par l'esprit de la doctrine, alors que l'examen des Vérités selon les trois cycles et les douze aspects, par sa sécheresse et sa logique, sent déjà nettement l'*Abhidharma*." Schmithausen 1981, p. 210 n. 36, claims that, given the fact that it may seem doubtful that the discovery of the four noble truths is a genuine reflection of what the Buddha's enlightenment, as an experience, actually was, the theses that the four truths developed quite late, is not convincing, for why shouldn't the pattern of the four noble truths have already existed for some period before it came to be regarded as the content of enlightenment?

³¹ That *sūtra* no. 379 of the *Samyuktāgama* «*Za ahan jing*» (T.99) and the «*Fo shuo san zhuan fa lun jing*» (T.110) mention the three cycles and twelve aspects, without mentioning the ministry on the four noble truths and the middle mode of progress could be explained by the fact that we have two concepts which became linked to each other.

³² Bareau 1963, pp. 177–179, suggests that the first ministry of the Buddha is likely to have been addressed to all monks in general, and it is very likely that, as the two extremes to be avoided link the doctrine preached by the Buddha to the episode of his life in which the five companions witnessed his austerities and left him upon his giving up this life of self-mortification, when polishing the accounts, "all monks" came to be reduced to "the five monks". On the historicity of the five monks, see Oldenberg 1903, p. 142 n. 1; Bareau 1963, pp. 188–189.

the accounts of the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature belong to a later phase of philosophical development.

3. TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT IN SARVĀSTIVĀDA ABHIDHARMA LITERATURE

As outlined above, it is evident from the *vinaya* and the *sūtra* literature of the different Hīnayāna schools that it is likely that very early in the history of Buddhist philosophy, the concept of the middle mode of progress—the eightfold noble path—and the concept of the four truths as the content of the teaching of the Buddha were connected. It is also evident from this literature that these four truths became the subject of further abhidharmic interpretations, and that Kauṇḍinya was seen as the first person to be converted as a result of the sermon in the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī.

3.1. *Abhidharma Sources*

The Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvāstivāda discussion under investigation here, is recorded in the philosophical literature of the Sarvāstivādins, the school that issued from the Sthaviravādins at the council of Pāṭaliputra at the beginning of the third century after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*.³³ This school developed into a number of geographically and chronologically differentiated philosophical schools and sub-schools. One of these sub-schools was the Vaibhāṣikas, a Sarvāstivāda group based in Kaśmīra. They are named after the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (Great Commentary on the Abhidharma), one of three extant *vibhāṣās*—commentaries—on Kātyāyanīputra's **Aṣṭaskandha/Jñānaprasthāna* («*Apitan bajjandu lun*» (T.1543)/«*Apidamo fazhi lun*» (T.1544)). The *vibhāṣās* are characterised by a highly polemical nature and elements of scholarly debate.³⁴ According to tradition, it was in Kaśmīra that these Vaibhāṣikas compiled the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* during the reign of the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka. As Kaniṣka is referred to in the work as a “former king”,³⁵ at least some parts of the work must postdate Kaniṣka. Furthermore, given that the Sarvāstivāda works were, from the third century onwards, heavily influenced by the Vaibhāṣika viewpoints, it

³³ See Bareau 1955a, pp. 115–118; Prebish 1974, pp. 253–254.

³⁴ See Cox 1995, pp. 33–34.

³⁵ T.1545.27.593a15.

is not unlikely that the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* should be dated to around the second century AD.³⁶ The **Aṣṭaskandha/Jñānaprasthāna* is itself a summary of six earlier Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* texts.³⁷ As a group of seven, these texts, including the **Aṣṭaskandha/Jñānaprasthāna*, became known as the “*Śaṭpādābhidharma*”. The Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* literature shows how further sectarian philosophical development led to different interpretations of these issues.

The Chinese version of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* contains the most systematic and elaborate treatment of the subject under scrutiny here. This text is titled «*Apidamo dapiposha lun*» (T.1545). The text is attributed to 500 *arhats* and was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang 玄奘 and his translation team from 656 to 659.³⁸ The issue is also dealt with in the second of the three *vibhāṣās*: the **[Abhidharma]vibhāṣā[śāstra]* «*Apitan piposha lun*» (T.1546). This text is attributed to Kātyāyanīputra and 500 *arhats* and was translated by Buddhavarman and Daotai 道泰, between 437 and 439.³⁹

We also possess a third *vibhāṣā*. This text is the oldest of the three *vibhāṣā* compendia. It is titled **Vibhāṣā[śāstra]* and attributed to **Sītapāṇi* (or Śītapāṇi). It was translated by Saṃghabhadra, Dharmānandin, Buddharakṣa, and Min Zhi 敏智 in 383 as «*Piposha lun*» (T.1547).⁴⁰ While the first two *vibhāṣās* mentioned are based on a version of Kātyāyanīputra’s work as it was current in Kāśmīra, this third text is likely to be based on a version of Kātyāyanīputra’s work as it was accepted in Bactria and Gandhāra.⁴¹ This latter text does not contain a discussion on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and its turning.

Three other Sarvāstivāda texts in which the questions of the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and its first turning are discussed, are the above mentioned *Jñānaprasthāna* (Source of Knowledge) «*Apidamo fazhi*

³⁶ On the different traditions on the date of compilation of this work, see Nakamura 1980, p. 107; Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 119, 231–232.

³⁷ These are the *Samgītiparyāya* «*Apidamo jiyimen zulum*» (T.1536), translated by Xuanzang; the *Dharmaskandha* «*Apidamo fayun zulum*» (T.1537), translated by Xuanzang; the *Prajñaptiśāstra* «*Shishe lun*» (T.1538), translated by Dharmapāla and Weijing 惟淨; the *Vijñānakāya* «*Apidamo shishen zulum*» (T.1539), translated by Xuanzang; the *Dhātukāya* «*Apidamo jieshen zulum*» (T.1540), translated by Xuanzang; the *Prakaraṇapāda* «*Zhongshijfen apitan lun*» (T.1541), translated by Guṇabhadra and Bodhiyaśas, and «*Apidamo pinlei zulum*» (T.1542), translated by Xuanzang. See also Lamotte 1958, pp. 202–203.

³⁸ T.2154.55.557a18–19, 620c12–16.

³⁹ T.2145.55.11b29–c5; T.2154.55.421b14–17.

⁴⁰ T.2145.55.73c3–7.

⁴¹ See Nakamura 1980, p. 107; Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 234–237.

lun» (T.1544), the **Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* (Heart of Scholasticism with Miscellaneous Additions), and the *Abhidharmakośa* (Storehouse of Scholasticism). The **Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* is an adaptation and enlargement of the **Abhidharmahṛdaya* (Heart of Scholasticism) «*Apitan xin lun*» (T.1550), a summary digest of Sarvāstivāda philosophy written by Dharmasreṣṭhin, a Tocharian from Bactria. The latter work most likely predates the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*.⁴² The **Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* was written by Dharmatrāta at the beginning of the fourth century AD, and was influenced by the ideas of the Kāśmīri Vaibhāṣikas.⁴³ The present Chinese translation of this work, «*Ža apitan xin lun*» (T.1552), was done by Saṃghavarman in 434.⁴⁴ The *Abhidharmakośa* is a work by the famous Vasubandhu.⁴⁵ It is a further enlargement and adaptation of Dharmatrāta's work, but overall favours the Sautrāntika criticism on the Vaibhāṣika viewpoints.⁴⁶ The Sautrāntikas can be regarded as another sub-group of the Sarvāstivādins. There are two Chinese versions of the **Abhidharmakośa*, a translation by Xuanzang from 651 to 654 titled «*Apidamo jushe lun*» (T.1558), and the «*Apidamo jushe shi lun*» (T.1559) by Paramārtha, done between 564 and 567.⁴⁷ The **Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* and the *Abhidharmakośa* were both written in Gandhāra.⁴⁸

The discussion on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and its first turning is also referred to in the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (The Cycle of the Formation of Schisms), a work attributed to the Sarvāstivāda master Vasumitra. The composition date of this text is the subject of scholarly debate, considering the range of the assumed lifedates for Vasumitra between 400 years after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and the fourth century AD.⁴⁹ There are three translations of this text into Chinese: one

⁴² See T.1821.41.11c12–13, and further also Kawamura 1974, p. 40; Willemen 1975, pp. ii and xxix, note 16.

⁴³ See Dessein 1999, vol. 1, pp. xlvi–l.

⁴⁴ T.2145.55.74c3–7; T.2154.55.649c1–6. On the different Chinese translations of this text, see Dessein 1999, vol. 1, pp. lxxvii–lxxxii.

⁴⁵ On the dates of Vasubandhu, see Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, p. 270, notes 78 and 79.

⁴⁶ T.2049.50.190b15–16. See also Anacker 1984, p. 17.

⁴⁷ See Hirakawa et al. 1973, p. i.

⁴⁸ T.2087.51.881a17–19; T.2049.50.190b9–18.

⁴⁹ Lamotte 1958, pp. 301–302, dates Vasumitra 400 years after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Masuda 1925, p. 8, situates Vasumitra in the first century AD. On the problem of Vasumitra's authorship, see Cousins 1991, p. 28, where he proposes a date from the third to the fourth century AD. On the Sarvāstivāda positions, see T.2031.49.16c6–7; T.2032.49.19a25–26; T.2033.49.21c12–13. Thesis 39^(*) of Vasumitra (*Samayabhedoparacanacakra*). See further also ZZ 1–8–3.39a9–17; Masuda 1925, p. 52;

by Xuanzang, titled «*Xībuzong lun lun*» (T.2031); and two attributed to Paramārtha, titled «*Shibabu lun*» (T.2032) and «*Buzhiyi lun*» (T.2033).⁵⁰

3.2. *The Nature of the Wheel of the Doctrine*

The discussion on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine and its first turning in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* «*Apidamo dapiposha lun*» starts with the following quotation from the *sūtra* literature:

The World-honoured One makes the wheel of the doctrine (*dharmacakra*) turn. All *śramaṇas* of the world (*laukika*), *brāhmaṇas*, gods (*deva*), Māra, and Brahmā do not possess this ability regarding the wheel of the doctrine.⁵¹

That a *sūtra* passage is quoted is justified as follows: “the scriptural texts are the basis of this treatise, and what was not explained [in these *sūtras*], has to be explained now.”⁵² What is missing is more precisely said to be the “definition of the wheel of the doctrine,”⁵³ as well as

Bareau 1954, p. 255; Bareau 1955b, p. 145. On the Mahāsāṃghika positions, see T.2031.49.15b27–28; T.2032.49.18b12–13; T.2033.49.20b28. Thesis 3 of Vasumitra; thesis 3 of *Bhavya (*Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*); thesis 7 of Vinītadeva (*Samayabhedoparacanacakrenikāyabhedopadarśanaśaṅgraha*). See further also ZZ 1–8–3.23b1–16; Masuda 1925, p. 19; Bareau 1954, pp. 238–239; Bareau 1955b, p. 58; Bareau 1956, pp. 173, 193.

^(*) numbering according to Bareau 1954; 1956.

⁵⁰ On the problem of dating the three Chinese versions, see Masuda 1925, pp. 5–6; Lamotte 1958, p. 302; Wang 1994, pp. 171, 175–176. On the problem of the attribution of the «*Shibabu lun*» to Paramārtha or Kumārajīva, see Masuda 1920, p. 1; Masuda 1925, pp. 5–6; Demiéville 1925, p. 48 n. 1.

⁵¹ T.1545.27.911b13–15. Kimura, Nishi & Sakamoto 1979–1980, vol. 16, p. 143 n. 3, identify this *sūtra* as the *Dirghāgama*. The exact wording of the *Dirghāgama*, T.1.1.9b22–23, is: “Only the Buddha can turn this wheel of the doctrine (*dharmacakra*) without superior (*anuttara*). Of the gods (*deva*), Māra, Śakra and Brahmā, none can turn it.” This is also stated in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* «*Sifen lü*», T.1428.22.788b20–22: “The Tathāgata makes the wheel of the doctrine turn. It cannot be set in motion by the *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas*, Māra, gods such as Māra, gods (*deva*) and humans (*manuṣya*) of the world.” Also the *Catuspariśatsūtra* 13.9–12 contains a parallel to this section. See Waldschmidt 1957, pp. 154–157.

⁵² T.1545.27.911b16–17.

⁵³ T.1545.27.911b15–16. A definition of the “wheel” of the doctrine, or the simile of a “wheel” is also not alluded to in the following passages of the *Nikāyas*: *DN* I.110 (*Ambaṭṭhasutta*) I.148 (*Kūḍadantasutta*), II.41 (*Mahāpadānasutta*); *MN* I.380 (*Majjhimapaṇṇāsa* 56), II.145 (*Brahmāyusutta* 91); *AN* IV.186 (*Mahāvagga* XII.8), IV.213 (*Gahapattivagga* XXII.4); *SN* V.437–438 (*Simsapāvanavagga* 31). Also the Pāli *Vinaya* does not mention the “wheel” of the doctrine: *Mahāvagga* I.7.6; I.8.1–2; I.9.3–4; V.1.9–10; VI.26.8 (Oldenberg 1964, pp. 16, 18, 19, 181, 225; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1881, pp. 104–105, 109, 111; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1882, pp. 4–5, 95–96); *Cullavagga* VI.4.4–5 (Oldenberg 1964, p. 156; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1885, pp. 182–184). See also *Udāna* 49 (*Sonatherassavagga* V.3).

Scheme 1: Overview of Sarvāstivāda texts referred to

early Sarvāstivāda	Vaiḥaṣika	Vaiḥaṣika influenced	Sautrāntika
Kātyāyanīputra <i>Jñānaprasthāna</i> « <i>Apidamo fazhi lun</i> » (T.1544)			
	500 <i>arhats</i> * <i>Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāsāstra</i> « <i>Apidamo dapiposha lun</i> » (T.1545)		
	Kātyāyanīputra and 500 <i>arhats</i> * <i>[Abhidharma]vibhāṣā[sāstra]</i> « <i>Apitan piposha lun</i> » (T.1546)		
	* <i>Sitapāṇi</i> * <i>Vibhāṣā[sāstra]</i> « <i>Piposha lun</i> » (T.1547)		
		Dharmatrāta * <i>Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya</i> « <i>Ža apitan xin lun</i> » (T.1552)	
			Vasubandhu <i>Abhidharmakośa</i> « <i>Apidamo jushe lun</i> » (T.1558)

an explanation of “what should be considered as the turning of the wheel of the doctrine.”⁵⁴ This introductory passage is then followed by a definition of the wheel of the doctrine as “the eightfold noble path (*āryāṣṭāṅgikamārga*),”⁵⁵ that is, the “middle mode of progress” of which we, judging from the accounts in the *vinaya* and the *sūtra* literature, may assume that it belongs to the earliest of the Buddha’s teachings. The “turning of the wheel” is defined as “turning without stopping [...], leaving behind this and aiming at that [...] and] being able to subdue enemies”.⁵⁶ This definition indeed is not provided in the *sūtra* literature. To correctly understand this definition, it is useful to have a closer look at the development of the Sarvāstivāda path to salvation.

Erich Frauwallner has shown that, after the major elements of the Sarvāstivāda path to salvation had been set out in the works that later became known as the “*Śaṭpādābhīdharmā*”, these elements first came to be summarised in Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s **Abhidharmahṛdaya*.⁵⁷ The path to salvation that is presented in the **Abhidharmahṛdaya* is twofold: it consists of a path of vision (*darśanamārga*) in which eighty-eight contaminants (*anuśaya*) are broken off through vision (*darśana*), and a path of spiritual practice (*bhāvanāmārga*) in which ten more contaminants are broken off through spiritual practice (*bhāvanā*). The contaminants are those mental attitudes and wrong views that cause a human being to do volitional actions, which lead to a karmic result and rebirth. The path of vision consists of sixteen moments, the sixteenth of which simultaneously is the first moment of the path of spiritual practice. The first of these sixteen moments is called “patience regarding the law in relation to suffering” (*duḥkhe dharmakṣānti*). In this moment, contaminants to be abandoned through vision (*darśanaprahātavya*) of the realm of sensual passion (*kāmadhātu*) are destroyed. This moment is said to be an immediate path (*ānantaryamārga*) since the contaminant is immediately exterminated upon vision of the truth concerned (suffering). This moment is followed by the form of knowledge that has the same object. This moment is called “knowledge regarding the law in relation to suffering” (*duḥkhe dharmajñāna*). In this moment, one makes sure that the kind of contaminant that has been broken off in the previous moment does not come up again. Therefore, this moment is said to be a path of

⁵⁴ T.1545.27.911b16.

⁵⁵ T.1545.27.911b17–18.

⁵⁶ T.1545.27.911b28–29.

⁵⁷ Frauwallner 1971a, p. 124; 1971b, pp. 73–103. See also Yamada 1959, p. 114.

liberation (*vimuktimārga*). The third and fourth moments of the path of vision are the parallel forms of patience and knowledge, aimed simultaneously at the suffering of the realm of form (*rūpadhātu*) and of the realm of formlessness (*arūpyadhātu*). The fifth and sixth moments of the path of vision are the parallel forms of patience and knowledge, aimed at those defilements that relate to the origin of suffering and that are to be abandoned through vision of the origin in the realm of sensual passion. The same applies to defilements to be destroyed through vision of the extinction and of the path. In this way, sixteen moments are needed to break off all contaminants of the three realms, relating to the four noble truths. It is with the path of spiritual practice that the four fruits of *śramaṇa*-ship (*śrotaāpanna*, *sakṛdāgāmin*, *anāgāmin*, and *arhat*) are subsequently obtained.⁵⁸ The following scheme is a simplified outline of the Sarvāstivāda path to salvation:

Scheme 2: The Sarvāstivāda path to salvation

path of spiritual practice	
path of vision	
realm of sensual passion	realm of form realm of formlessness
(14) knowledge regarding the law in relation to the path	(16) subsequent knowledge regarding the law in relation to the path
(13) patience regarding the law in relation to the path	(15) subsequent patience regarding the law in relation to the path
(10) knowledge regarding the law in relation to extinction	(12) subsequent knowledge regarding the law in relation to extinction
(9) patience regarding the law in relation to extinction	(11) subsequent patience regarding the law in relation to extinction
(6) knowledge regarding the law in relation to the origin	(8) subsequent knowledge regarding the law in relation to the origin
(5) patience regarding the law in relation to the origin	(7) subsequent patience regarding the law in relation to the origin
(2) knowledge regarding the law in relation to suffering	(4) subsequent knowledge regarding the law in relation to suffering
(1) patience regarding the law in relation to suffering	(3) subsequent patience regarding the law in relation to suffering
preparatory exercises to the path to salvation	

⁵⁸ See Frauwallner 1971b, pp. 83–84.

It is evident from the above scheme that when practicing the noble path, one goes from one position to the next, hereby alternatively aiming at defilement of the realm of sensual passion on the one hand, and defilement of the realm of form and of the realm of formlessness on the other hand. In the course of this process, eighty-eight contaminants are subdued.

This Sarvāstivāda path to salvation shows how the theory of the four truths, which may have been connected to the idea of liberating insight at an early date,⁵⁹ was further developed into the framework of the path of vision as one of the two constituent parts of the way to liberation. As the Kāśmīra **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* most probably post-dates Dharmasreṣṭhin's **Abhidharmahṛdaya*,⁶⁰ the development of the theory of the four truths in its connection to the path of vision and to the annihilation of defilement leading to *nirvāṇa*, must have been known to its compilers. It must be to this process of attaining liberation through the annihilation of defilement that the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* refers when characterising the "turning" of the wheel of the doctrine as "turning without stopping [...], leaving behind this and aiming at that [...] and] being able to subdue enemies".⁶¹

This first section gives the opinion of the compilers of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*. The following section gives various opinions to justify how the wheel of the doctrine can be called "*brahmā*-wheel"⁶² and also be identified with the "path of vision" (*darśanamārga*) only.⁶³ "*Brahmā*-wheel" hereby refers to the quality of the Buddha as *brahmā*, in the sense of calm (*śānta*) and appeasement (*śātibhūta*). As it was the World-honoured One who set the wheel of the doctrine in motion, the wheel belongs to Him, and so it is justified to call this wheel "*brahmā*-wheel".⁶⁴ This passage reiterates the *sūtra* fragment quoted in

⁵⁹ With reference to the *Majjhimanikāya*, Schmithausen 1981, pp. 206–207, suggests that it is very likely that even before the composition of the stereotyped detailed description of the path to liberation, there was a fixed association between liberation (or at least enlightenment) and insight into the noble truths. He further claims that there may have been even a clear-cut view or theory according to which liberation was achieved by insight into the four noble truths. See also Schmithausen 1981, p. 240.

⁶⁰ See Lin 1949, p. 51; Willemen 1975, p. iii; Frauwallner 1971b, p. 86; Ryose 1986, p. 4; Dessein 1996, p. 647.

⁶¹ T.1545.27.911b28–29.

⁶² T.1545.27.811c1–28. See also T.1546.28.158a9–b1.

⁶³ T.1545.27.911c29–912b4.

⁶⁴ See T.1558.29.128b24–26. See also T.1559.29.279c27–280a1; T.1545.27.911c5–6 and La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, p. 245.

the beginning of the discussion.⁶⁵ The “path of vision” refers to one of the two paths that constitute the path to salvation as developed by the Sarvāstivādins, outlined above. Also these sections on the “*brahmā-wheel*” and the “path of vision” contain elements that are related to the developed Sarvāstivāda path to salvation.⁶⁶

The last part of the section of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* in which arguments are given to identify the wheel of the doctrine with the path of vision, contains a series of similes comparing the wheel of the doctrine to a conventional wheel.⁶⁷ One of these alternative similes—with which the compilers of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* do not agree, is an opinion attributed to the Sarvāstivāda master Ghoṣaka:

The venerable Ghoṣaka said that the eight members of the path of the seeker (*śaikṣamārga*) evolve in connection, and simultaneously obtain someone else when turning. [He] therefore said that this turning is [the turning of] the wheel of the doctrine. This path of eight members dominates the position of the path of vision, and, therefore, only the path of vision is said to be the wheel of the doctrine.⁶⁸

What is meant here is that the eight members of the noble path (the eight members of the path of the seeker) are inseparable in constituting the noble path. They therefore can be compared with a wheel of which the spokes, nave and felloe form a whole. When this wheel turns, someone else is reached, in the sense that someone else becomes convinced of the word of the Buddha, and starts to proceed on the path of liberation. This means that he starts to subdue all defilements with the path of vision. In this way, it can be claimed that the eightfold noble path is the wheel of the doctrine, set in motion with the aim of making humans subdue defilements, and that the eightfold noble path is identical with the path of vision.⁶⁹ This, in fact, is an accentuation of the primacy of the fourth of the four noble truths, alluded to before, as it is in the fourth truth that the way to liberation is given.

This master Ghoṣaka is also referred to in the **Saṃyuktābhidharmamahādaya* and in the *Abhidharmakośa*.⁷⁰ The **Saṃyuktābhidharmamahādaya* summarises

⁶⁵ See T.1545.27.911b13–15; T.1.1.9b22–23.

⁶⁶ T.1545.27.911c3–912b4. See also Kimura et al. 1979–1980, p. 144 n. 7; T.26.1.736c1–25; T.1546.28.158b2–24.

⁶⁷ T.1545.27.912a16–26.

⁶⁸ T.1545.27.912b1–4. See also T.1546.28.158b21–24.

⁶⁹ Waldschmidt 1951b, p. 96 n. 1, remarks that the *Mahāvīyutpatti* calls the first of the three *parivartas* the path of vision.

⁷⁰ T.1552.28.950b7–c23; T.1558.29.128b17–c24. See also Dessein 1999, vol. 1, p. 658; La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, pp. 244–249; T.1559.29.280a1–10.

the arguments we read in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* as to why the path of vision can be seen as the wheel of the doctrine. It includes the opinion attributed to Ghoṣaka with the claim that the eight members of the seeker that reach the thoughts of someone else when turning is called the “turning of the wheel of the doctrine”. In the *Abhidharmakośa*, after summarising the Vaibhāṣika arguments,⁷¹ Ghoṣaka’s simile of a wheel, alluded to in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* and the **Saṃyuktābhidharmahr̥daya*, is defined as follows: right view, right conceptualising, right effort, and right mindfulness resemble the spokes of a conventional wheel; right speech, right action, and right livelihood resemble the nave; and right concentration resembles the felloe.⁷² This simile for the wheel of the doctrine is also attributed to Ghoṣaka in the **[Abhidharma]vibhāṣā[śāstra]* «*Apītan pīposha lun*» (T.1546).⁷³

The tradition knows Ghoṣaka as a Tokharian who settled in Gandhāra and after the synod of Kaniṣka went to the west of Kāśmīra near Tukhara.⁷⁴ As Ghoṣaka is contradicted in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, he to all likelihood was a non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda master. As Vasubandhu criticises the Vaibhāṣika ideas, it is no surprise that he does not contradict the simile with a wheel attributed to Ghoṣaka in his *Abhidharmakośa*.⁷⁵

That the theory on the three cycles and twelve constituent parts became the subject of further philosophical interpretation is evident from an interesting passage in the *Abhidharmakośa* in which the Vaibhāṣika interpretation of the three cycles and twelve constituent parts is contradicted, and the opinion found in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature dealt with above is favoured. Judging from the *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, an eighth century commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* by Yaśomitra, this latter opinion also is the Sautrāntika opinion.⁷⁶ The interpretation we find in the *Abhidharmakośa* is also the interpretation of the **Vibhāṣā[śāstra]* «*Pīposha lun*» (T.1547), the *vibhāṣā* commentary on the

⁷¹ T.1558.29.128b28–c2: “As it moves swiftly, it resembles a wheel; because there is leaving behind and grasping; because of subduing what was not yet subdued; because of guarding what is already subdued; because of evolving from higher to lower.” See also La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, pp. 245–246; T.1559.29.280a1–4.

⁷² T.1558.29.128c2–6. See also La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, p. 246.

⁷³ T.1546.28.158b21–24.

⁷⁴ See Śānti Bhikṣu Śāstrī 1953, p. ii; Malalasekera 1961, p. 84; Tāranātha 1970, p. 49; La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 1, p. xlv; Dessein 1998, p. 1046.

⁷⁵ See also Dessein 1998, p. 1048.

⁷⁶ *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* 581.32–35. See also La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, pp. 248–249.

version of Kātyāyanīputra's **Aṣṭaṅgskandha* as it was accepted in Bactria and Gandhāra.⁷⁷ The compilers of the **Vibhāṣā[sāstra]* «*Piṭṭhaśā lun*» further claimed that this is the opinion in the *sūtra* literature.⁷⁸ This shows that the developments and interpretations contained in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā* (T.1545) and the **[Abhidharma]vibhāṣā[sāstra]* (T.1546) are peculiar for the Kāśmīra Vaibhāṣikas,⁷⁹ but were adopted in the Sarvāstivāda works that post-date these two *vibhāṣās*, and were later criticised by Vasubandhu. The passage concerned reads as follows:

What are the three cycles and the twelve aspects? This is the noble truth of suffering; this should be known; this is understood. These are the three cycles. With each turning, the eye (*caḥṣus*) arises, knowledge (*jñāna*) arises, wisdom (*vidyā*) arises, and awakening (*buddhi*) arises. Thus, there are twelve aspects (*ākāra*). In this way, all noble truths all have three cycles and twelve aspects. Because the number [of aspects for each of these truths] is the same, only three cycles and twelve aspects are spoken of [...]⁸⁰ This is the explanation of the Vaibhāṣikas. However, if it were like this, the path of vision would not contain three cycles and twelve aspects [but forty-eight]. How then could it be claimed that only the path of vision is the wheel of the doctrine? Therefore, the wheel of the doctrine is the sermon itself (*dharmaparyāya*), the sermon in Vārāṇasī that “set in motion” (*pravartana*) the wheel of the doctrine that consists of three cycles and twelve aspects. Three cycles, because the four truths are turned three times; twelve aspects, because each truth is viewed from three aspects: this is suffering, this is its origin, this is its cessation, this is the path; this should be known, this should be broken off, this should be realised, this should be developed; this is already known, this is already broken off, this is already realised, this is already developed.⁸¹

The general picture that emerges from the above analysis is that it is very likely that the first sermon of the Buddha only concerned the two extremes to be avoided and the middle mode of progress. Very early, the concept of the four truths became linked to this middle mode of progress, and these four noble truths were further developed into the theory of the three cycles and twelve aspects. These elements became

⁷⁷ T.1547.28.421c2–7, 480b27–c9.

⁷⁸ T.1547.28.421c5–6, 480c9.

⁷⁹ We can mention here that the discussion on Kauṇḍinya is not included in the «*Apitan bajiandu lun*» (T.1543) by Saṃghadeva and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, the Chinese version of the **Aṣṭaṅgantha*.

⁸⁰ See also *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* 580.22–581.6.

⁸¹ T.1558.29.128c7–21. See also La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, pp. 246–248; T.1559.29.280a10–21. Puguang 普光 (T.1821.41.370c9–371a20) and Fabao 法寶 (T.1822.41.754a25–b2) accept this Sautrāntika theory.

integrated in the accounts in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature. Later on, the theory of the four truths was interpreted in terms of the path of vision as part of the Sarvāstivāda path to salvation. Since the path of vision enables the seeker (*śaikṣa*) to subdue eighty-eight contaminants, after which he attains the four fruits of *śramaṇa*-ship culminating in *arhat*-ship, this path of vision became interpreted as “the wheel of the doctrine”. It is the concept of the path of vision that comes closest to the ‘middle path of progress’. Judging from the Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* literature, this further abhidharmic development was most advanced with the Kāśmīra Vaibhāṣikas and the works that were influenced by them. Their position was criticised by the Sautrāntikas, who preserved the identification of the wheel of the doctrine with the path of vision, but returned to the version of the three cycles and twelve aspects as we find it in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature.

3.3. *The First Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine*

In the above discussion on the nature of the wheel of the doctrine, it was mentioned that “turning” implies that someone else is reached, in the sense that someone else becomes convinced of the word of the Buddha, and so starts to proceed on the path of liberation. This brings us to the issue of the event that should be seen as the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine.

The **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (T.1545) contains the following statement on this matter:

Question: “When the Buddha proclaimed the doctrine, all five *bhikṣus* saw the doctrine. Why then is only Kauṇḍinya mentioned?” Answer: “Because Kauṇḍinya was the first to see the doctrine. It is so that Kauṇḍinya had already entered the path of vision, and that the four other [monks] were still in the stage of the aids to penetration (*nirvedhabhāgīya*)”.⁸²

Thus it is clear that, according to the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā*, the wheel of the doctrine can be considered to turn when someone else awakens to the path of vision, and that the conversion of Kauṇḍinya should be regarded as the first such event. As was the case for the interpretation of the definition of the wheel of the doctrine, the **Mahāvibhāṣā* argumentation as to why Kauṇḍinya was the first to see the path and

⁸² T.1545.27.911b9–12. The “aids to penetration” is one of the preparatory exercises to the path of salvation.

to obtain liberation, contains elements that refer to the developed Sarvāstivāda path to salvation.⁸³ The idea that Kauṇḍinya was the first monk to be converted on the occasion of the sermon in Vārāṇasī is in line with most of the accounts in the *vinaya* and the *sūtra* literature, and is also the opinion of the Gandhāran **Samyuktābhidharmamahādaya* and the *Abhidharmakośa* in the following passages:

The venerable Ghoṣaka said that the eight members of the seeker that reach the thoughts of someone else when turning, is called “the turning of the wheel of the doctrine”. That is why it is said that the *Tathāgata* made the wheel of the doctrine turn at the place of the wise recluse of Vārāṇasī.⁸⁴

How is it known that only the path of vision is the wheel of the doctrine? [Because of the fact that] when the path of vision arose in such [persons] as Kauṇḍinya, [the gods] proclaimed that the wheel of the right doctrine (*saddharma*) had been set in motion.⁸⁵

In the above passages, three elements are combined: the identification of the wheel of the doctrine with the path of vision or, alternatively, the eight members of the seeker, the person of Kauṇḍinya who “saw” the path,⁸⁶ and the proclamation by the gods that the Buddha had set the wheel of the doctrine in motion. This opinion appears to be shared by the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas.

As stated above, the proclamation by the gods is likely to be a later development inserted into the accounts of the first sermon of the Buddha, and the identification of the path of vision with the wheel of the doctrine should also be seen as a later development. Given the fact that the group of five monks does not appear in all versions of the account of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature, it appears that it too may have been a later

⁸³ Kauṇḍinya, e.g., is said to have made the noble path arise only at the moment of “subsequent knowledge in relation to the path” (*mārga ’nvayajñāna*), i.e., the last moment of the path of vision, and not in the preceding moments. The reason for this is, according to the compilers of the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, that “although the moment of ‘patience regarding the law in relation to suffering’ (*duḥkhe dharmakṣānti*)—moment 1 of the path of vision—can be called ‘turning,’ [the noble path] is not yet completed. It is only at the moment of ‘subsequent knowledge in relation to the path’—moment 16—that the turning is completed” (T.1545.27.913a17–19). Here, also, alternative opinions are given: T.1545.27.913a19–b4. See also T.1546.28.159a14–160b1.

⁸⁴ T.1552.28.950b22–24. See also Dessein 1999, vol. 1, p. 659.

⁸⁵ T.1558.29.128c6–7. Cf. *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* 580.22–24: “*tad evam āryasya Kauṇḍinyasya darśanamārga utpanne devatābhir uktam Bhagavatā pravartitam dharmacakram iti sūtravacanāt.*” See also La Vallée Poussin 1980, vol. 4, p. 246; T.1559.29.280a8–10.

⁸⁶ On the notion of vision in this content, see Schmithausen 1981, p. 203 n. 12.

development, introduced by the narrative argument that the same five monks witnessed the Buddha's life of self-mortification,⁸⁷ but the development of the theory of the four truths and the abhidharmic elaboration of the three cycles and twelve aspects, later encroached on Kaunḍinya as the first of these five monks to awaken for the truth. The interpretation of the "wheel of the doctrine" as the path of vision appears to have become connected to Kaunḍinya, as he was the first to "see" the path.

Related to this first turning of the wheel of the doctrine, the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* differentiates two kinds of turning of the wheel of the doctrine: the wheel that turns for oneself, i.e., the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*, and the wheel that turns for others, i.e., the wheel of the Buddha. Here it is said that the wheel that was set in motion under the *bodhi* tree is the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* because it was only profitable for oneself, that is, no one else was converted. However, the wheel of the doctrine that was set turning in Vārāṇasī is not the same as the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, because it was profitable for others.⁸⁸ It is clear that the idea here is that it is only when Kaunḍinya obtained enlightenment as a result of the sermon in the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī, that one can rightly claim that the wheel of the doctrine was set in motion. Also the **Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya* makes a distinction between, on the one hand, the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*, and, on the other hand, the vehicle of the World-honoured One. Kaunḍinya is hereby said to have made the wheel of the doctrine turn for himself and to have developed the path himself, but to have been unable to make the wheel of the doctrine turn for someone else. It is therefore only the World-honoured One who can make the wheel of the doctrine turn.⁸⁹ This is also stated in the two verses of the *Dīrghāgama* quoted above.⁹⁰ This alludes to a difference in "quality" of *arhat*-ship of the Buddha and of a disciple.

As, according to the Sarvāstivādins, it is only when someone else awakens to the Buddhist faith that one can claim that the wheel of the doctrine is turning, one cannot say that the wheel of the doctrine has been set in motion under the *bodhi* tree, when the Buddha delivered

⁸⁷ See note 32.

⁸⁸ T.1545.27.912b18–25.

⁸⁹ T.1552.28.950b23–27. See also Dessein 1999, vol. 1, p. 659.

⁹⁰ See note 51.

a first sermon there.⁹¹ It is this concept that the Mahāsāṃghikas are reproached for in the following passage of the **Mahāvibhāṣā*:

The Mahāsāṃghikas say that all words of the Buddha are the wheel of the doctrine. [They say that] when the noble path is the wheel of the doctrine, the wheel of the doctrine has been set in motion under the *bodhi* tree, and that there is no need for Vārāṇasī to claim that this is the [first] turning of the wheel of the doctrine. In order to refute this idea, and to establish that the wheel of the doctrine is nothing else than the noble path, and does not have the words (*vācā*) of the Buddha as specific nature (*bhāva*), [there is this discussion]. If [the wheel of the doctrine] had the words of the Buddha [as specific nature], then it would be so that the wheel of the doctrine was already set in motion when the doctrine was proclaimed to the merchants under the *bodhi* tree. [In that case,] there would be no more need [for the Buddha] to go to the land of Vārāṇasī, to say that the wheel of the doctrine has been set in motion. Therefore it is known that when, at that moment, the noble path was brought up in someone else's person, this is said to be the turning of the wheel of the doctrine.⁹²

We also find this argument in the **[Abhidharma]vibhāṣā[sāstra]* «*Apitan pipsha lun*» (T.1546).⁹³ Given the fact that, according to the Sarvāstivādins, one can only claim that the wheel of the doctrine is turning when someone else awakens to the truth, the argument in this passage is that the proclamation of the doctrine under the *bodhi* tree cannot be considered as the turning of the wheel of the doctrine. Although the Buddha did speak, there was no conversion. It is in this sense that setting the wheel in motion under the *bodhi* tree is equal to the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*, because no one was converted. It is also in this sense that one cannot claim, as the Mahāsāṃghikas do, that “speech” is the nature of the wheel of the doctrine. It is only in Vārāṇasī that the wheel of the doctrine was truly set in motion. Vārāṇasī, as we have seen, is mentioned in all accounts of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine included in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature. Taking into account that the five monks are likely to have been introduced in these accounts at a later date, it appears that Kauṇḍinya was selected among the five as the first to have awakened for the truth. This may

⁹¹ See on this: Pāli *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* I.4 (Oldenberg 1964, pp. 3–4; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1881, pp. 81–84); T.1421.22.103a10–b7; T.1428.22.781c11–785c27. See also Bareau 1963, pp. 106–123.

⁹² T.1545.27.912b7–13.

⁹³ T.1546.28.158b25–c3.

explain why, in the argument in the Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* texts, that Kaundinya should be regarded as the first to have awakened for the truth, and not the other four monks, contains elements that are related to the developed Sarvāstivāda path to salvation.

As mentioned above, the account of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine in the Mahāsāṃghika *Ekottarāgama* (T.125) does not mention the five monks, nor the concept of the four truths with their three cycles and twelve constituent parts. It is thus possible that the Mahāsāṃghika interpretation of the wheel of the doctrine as “speech” predates the linking of these abhidharmic concepts with Kaundinya as the first of the five monks to have awakened for the doctrine. It may be added here that also the Pāli *Vinaya* contains the record of the fruitless attempt of the Buddha to convert Upaka of the Ājīvaka sect.⁹⁴ Based on the linguistic peculiarities of this passage, Heinz Bechert (1973, p. 8) concluded that it should be dated back to the time of the Buddha.

3. THE RELATION OF “SPEECH” AS THE NATURE OF THE WHEEL OF THE DOCTRINE TO OTHER MAHĀSĀMĠHIKA DOCTRINAL STANDPOINTS

As the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* is characterised by sectarian argumentation,⁹⁵ it is not unlikely that the Vaibhāṣika arguments were influenced by a later perception of a given problem under scrutiny. Thus, when the Kāśmīri Vaibhāṣikas claim that, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas, “all words of the Buddha are the wheel of the doctrine,” it is not impossible that this is a Vaibhāṣika perception of a Mahāsāṃghika standpoint.⁹⁶ This claim is supported by the fact that the *Ekottarāgama* does mention the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī as location of the first sermon, while not mentioning the five *bhikṣus*. The Vaibhāṣaka

⁹⁴ Pāli *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* I.6.9 (Oldenberg 1964, p. 8; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1881, p. 91). This event is also recorded in the *Mahīsāsakavinaya* (T.1421.22.104a21–b8) and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428.22.787b25–c13). For further parallels, see Waldschmidt 1951b, pp. 94–95.

⁹⁵ See Cox 1995, p. 35.

⁹⁶ T.1545.27.912b8–9. In the Pāli *Vinaya*, *Cullavagga* IX.1–4 (Oldenberg 1964, p. 239) we read: “*Seyyathāpi bhikkhave mahāsamuddo ekaraso loṇaraso, evam eva kho bhikkhave ayaṃ dhammavinayo ekaraso vimuttiraso*,” i.e., the claim that the doctrine (*dhamma*) and the discipline (*vinaya*) have a single flavour, the flavour of deliverance. See also Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1885, p. 304. Parallel claims can be read also in *AN* IV:203 (*Mahāvagga*), *Udāna* 56 (*Sonatherassavagga* V.5), T.26.1.476c10–15 and T.125.2.753a29–b1. See also Bareau 1955b, pp. 58, 145; Lamotte 1958, p. 156.

criticism that “the Mahāsāṃghikas say that all words of the Buddha are the wheel of the doctrine,”⁹⁷ and that “when the noble path is the wheel of the doctrine, the wheel of the doctrine has been set in motion under the *bodhi* tree,”⁹⁸ is not sustained by the evidence in the *Ekottarāgama* and is likely to be caused by the introduction of the five monks and the pre-eminence of Kauṇḍinya to the accounts of the first sermon.

As mentioned above, the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* and the **Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya* make a distinction between, on the one hand, the vehicle of the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, and, on the other hand, the vehicle of the World-honoured One. The **Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya* further says that Kauṇḍinya made the wheel of the doctrine turn for himself and developed the path himself, but was unable to make the wheel of the doctrine turn for someone else. As stated, this alludes to a difference in “quality” of *arhat*-ship of the Buddha and of a disciple. In this respect, it is remarkable that in the accounts in the *vinaya* literature and in the above mentioned *sūtras*, there is no difference in the description of the enlightenment of the Buddha and of the first disciples, that is, in the description of their *arhat*-ship.⁹⁹ It has been suggested by André Bareau (1963, pp. 178, 187) that this implies that the narration of the first sermon of the Buddha belongs to a period in which, in the mind of the narrators, the Buddha was considered to be a human being, so much so that no distinction was made between his career and the career of his disciples.¹⁰⁰

Judging from the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, the Mahāsāṃghikas “upgraded” the position of the Buddha, and supramundane characteristics became ascribed to him.¹⁰¹ The accentuation of the otherworldly characteristics of the Buddha became one of the peculiar concepts of the Mahāsāṃghikas. In the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, the Mahāsāṃghika opinion that all words of the Buddha are equally the turning of the

⁹⁷ See note 92.

⁹⁸ See note 92.

⁹⁹ Pāli *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* I.6.18 and I.6.29 (Oldenberg 1964, pp. 10 and 11; Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1881, pp. 94–95 and 97); T.1421.22.104b25–26 and c18–19; T.1428.22.788a9–10 and b24–25.

¹⁰⁰ On the authenticity of *arhat*-ship as one of the four fruits of *śramaṇa*-ship, see Manné 1995, pp. 91, 117, 122. See also Oldenberg 1903, p. 149; Waldschmidt 1951b, p. 96.

¹⁰¹ T.2031.49.15b27 ff.; T.2032.49.18b11–12 ff.; T.2033.49.20b27 ff.

wheel of the doctrine is given as only one of a series of specifications of the word of the Buddha. These are, among others, the statement that “everything that has been preached by the World-honoured One is in conformity with the truth (*ayathārtha*);”¹⁰² and the claim that “the *sūtras* proclaimed by the Buddha are all perfect in themselves.”¹⁰³ Such standpoints, along with the fact that, according to the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, the Ekavyavahārikas, the Lokottaravādins, and the Kukkuṭikas share the opinion on the nature of the words of the Buddha with the Mahāsāṃghikas, the school from which they later issued,¹⁰⁴ allow us to give another interpretation of the claim that, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas, “all words of the Buddha equally are the turning of the wheel of the doctrine.” “All words” probably has to be taken literally as “everything he said”. This idea of otherworldliness of the Buddha stands in contrast to the Sarvāstivāda opinion. The fact that the Sarvāstivāda treatises differentiate three vehicles may allude to it that also the Sarvāstivādins understood *arhat*-ship of the Buddha to be of a different quality than *arhat*-ship of a disciple.

As the Mahāsāṃghika schools who resided in the Kṛṣṇā region (Bahuśrutīya, Caitika, Pūrvaśaila, Aparāśaila) agreed on the so-called “five points of Mahādeva” with the Mahāsāṃghika groups that resided in the north¹⁰⁵—points that degrade the status of an *arhat* vis-à-vis the status of the Buddha—we may safely claim that they most likely also have agreed with their northern fellow monks on the interpretation of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine, i.e., an interpretation that relates to the supramundane characteristics of the Buddha.

¹⁰² T.2031.49.15b28–29; T.2032.49.18b13; T.2033.49.20b29. Thesis 5 of Vasumitra; thesis 4 of *Bhavya. See further also ZZ 1–8–3.24a4–11. See also Masuda 1925, p. 19; Bareau 1954, p. 239; 1955b, p. 58; 1956, p. 173.

¹⁰³ T.2031.49.15c24; T.2032.49.18c2–3; T.2033.49.20c26–27. Thesis 39 of Vasumitra. See further also ZZ 1–8–3.31a2–7. See also Masuda 1925, p. 28 n. 2; Bareau 1954, p. 244; 1955b, p. 67.

¹⁰⁴ T.2031.49.15b27–28; T.2032.49.18b12–13; T.2033.49.20b28. Thesis 3 of Vasumitra (*Sbc*); thesis 3 of *Bhavya (*Nbv*); thesis 7 of Vinītadeva (*Sbcs*). See further also ZZ 1–8–3.23b1–16; Masuda 1925, p. 19; Bareau 1954, pp. 238–239; Bareau 1955b, p. 58; Bareau 1956, pp. 173, 193.

¹⁰⁵ See note 4.

5. CONCLUSION

A comparison of the different accounts of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature, and an analysis of the discussion on this event in the Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* texts, shows that, at an early date, the concept of the “middle mode of progress” and the concept of the “four noble truths” as the content of the first sermon of the Buddha, were connected. It is hereby very well possible that the so-called “five monks” were introduced into the accounts as a result of the narrative argument that this could link the first sermon to the episode in the Buddha’s life in which he lived a life of austerities. The same five monks to whom the Buddha is said to have delivered his first sermon had also witnessed the Buddha’s life of austerities and his renunciation of such life, that is, his realisation of the “middle mode of progress”. Further philosophical development led to the interpretation of these four noble truths in terms of “three cycles” and “twelve constituent parts”. Also these concepts were recorded in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature.

Scholarly fragmentation within the Sarvāstivādins led to different opinions on the precise interpretation of these “three cycles” and “twelve constituent parts”. With regard to this issue, the Sautrāntikas appear to have been the more conservative group, as they agree with the opinion recorded in the *vinaya* and *sūtra* literature. In their interpretation, they contradict the Kāśmīri Vaibhāṣikas.

Since both the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas accept the concepts of the middle mode of progress and the four noble truths (inclusive of a differentiation of these four into three cycles and twelve constituent parts), it is logical that both sub-schools claim that the Buddha delivered his first sermon to the five monks in the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī. Both sub-schools further agree that Kauṇḍīnya was the first of the five monks to be converted, as he was the first to enter the “path of vision”—a further elaboration of the concept of the four noble truths—with the aim to eliminate all contaminants. The sermon in Vārāṇasī is thus seen as the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine, in this sense that it is as the result of this event that someone first awakened for the Buddhist path. With this view, the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas oppose the Mahāsāṃghikas, of whom they claim that they adhere to the opinion that the wheel of the doctrine was already set in motion when the Buddha attained enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree and delivered a sermon there. One possible interpretation of this Mahāsāṃghika claim

would be that their interpretation of the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine belongs to a stage of doctrinal development that predates the moment the “five monks” were introduced into the accounts.

This interpretation, however, is contradicted by the fact that the Mahāsāṃghika *Ekottarāgama* does not locate the first sermon under the *bodhi* tree, but in Vārāṇasī. This fact demands another interpretation of the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika controversy. According to the Sarvāstivādins, the Mahāsāṃghikas also claim that “all words of the Buddha are the wheel of the doctrine”. If we take into account that it is only gradually that a difference came to be seen between *arhat*-ship of a disciple and of the Buddha, it is very well possible that it is this evolution that explains the difference in opinion between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas. The Sarvāstivādins came to accentuate the difference in quality of *arhat*-ship between a disciple and the Buddha, hereby claiming that it is only the Buddha who can make someone else awaken to the Buddhist path. This explains why the event that made Kaunḍinya awaken to the path was seen as the first turning of the wheel of the doctrine. The Mahāsāṃghikas are known to have demoted the position of an *arhat* and to have ascribed supramundane characteristics to the Buddha. This tendency became very dominant around the period the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* was compiled, that is, the period of Vaibhāṣika dominance. It is thus very well possible that we have to interpret the Vaibhāṣika claim that, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas, “all words of the Buddha are the wheel of the doctrine”, in connection to the other supramundane characteristics that became ascribed to the Buddha and to the nature of his words. It may have been an awareness of this Mahāsāṃghika tendency which diverges from their own interpretation, that made the Sarvāstivādins replace the Mahāsāṃghika claim that the first sermon was held in the Deer Park in Vārāṇasī with the claim that, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas, the first sermon was held under the *bodhi* tree. With the view that the wheel of the doctrine can only be said to have been set turning when someone is converted, they could thus reproach the Mahāsāṃghikas, since no one was converted under the *bodhi* tree. This Sarvāstivāda claim is further justified by the fact that the account in the *Ekottarāgama* does not mention the five monks.

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- T.110 «*Fo shuo san zhuan falun jing*» 佛說三轉法輪經. Translated by Yijing 義淨.
- T.125 *Ekottarāgama* «*Zengyi ahan jing*» 增壹阿含經. Translated by Saṃghadeva.
- T.1421 «*Mishasai bu hexi wufen liu*» 彌沙塞部和醯五分律. Translated by Buddhajīva, Zhisheng 智勝, Daosheng 道生 and Huiyan 慧嚴 (*Mahāsāsakavinaya*).
- T.1425 «*Mohesengqi liu*» 摩訶僧祇律. Translated by Buddhabhadra and 法顯 Faxian (*Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*).
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- T.1450 *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* *vasi* «*Genben shuoyigeyou bu pinaiye poseng shi*» 根本說一切有部毗奈耶破僧事. Translated by Yijing 義淨.
- T.1507 «*Fenbie gongde lun*» 分別功德論. Anonymous translation.
- T.1543 Kātyāyanīputra, **Abhidharmāśātaskandha[sāstra]* «*Apitan bajianlu lun*» 阿毘曇八犍度論. Translated by Saṃghadeva and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念.
- T.1544 Kātyāyanīputra, [*Abhidharma*] *jñānaprasthāna[sāstra]* «*Apidamo fazhi lun*» 阿毗達磨發智論. Translated by Xuanzang 玄奘.
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- T.1546 Kātyāyanīputra and 500 *arhats*, * [*Abhidharma*] *vibhāṣā[sāstra]* «*Apitan piposha lun*» 阿毗曇毗婆沙論. Translated by Buddhavarman, Daotai 道泰.
- T.1547 **Sitapāṇi*, **Vibhāṣā[sāstra]* «*Piposha lun*» 毗婆沙論. Translated by Saṃghabhadra.
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BUDDHISM IN GANDHĀRA

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1. INTRODUCTION: GANDHĀRA AND ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Gandhāra is the ancient Sanskrit name of the region surrounding Peshawar (Skt. *Puruṣapura*) which is now the northwestern frontier province of Pakistan. *Gāndhāri*¹ as the name of a people in Northwest India living near the river Kabul is first mentioned in the *R̥gveda* (Hymn Veda), the most ancient work of Indian literature.² Whereas according to Greek and Chinese sources the river Indus constituted the eastern frontier of Gandhāra, it stretched up to Rawalpindi according to Indian sources. In the old Indian epic *Rāmāyana*, which relates the adventures of Rāma and Sīta, the eastern border of Gandhāra was located near Rawalpindi. According to this epic, Gandhāra was conquered by Bharata, a brother of Rāma, who founded two major towns for his sons: Puṣkalāvātī (or Puṣkarāvātī, Greek *Peukelaotis*, now *Charsadda*) for Puṣkala and Takṣaśīlā (now *Taxila*) for Takṣa. Buddhist sources have *Taxila* as the capital of Gandhāra.³ During the Persian dynasty of the Achaemenids, in the time of Dareios I. (6th/5th century BC) and his successors (559–336 BC), Gandhāra had to pay taxes to these Persian kings. The Greek historians Herodot (5th century BC) and Strabon (1st century BC) as well as the geographer Ptolemaios (2nd century AD) knew its inhabitants as *Gandarites* and *Gandarai*. This province was surrendered to the Indian king Candragupta Maurya (ca. 320–300 BC) in 305 BC in a treaty with Seleukos I.⁴ At that time, it comprised not only the region around Peshawar (*Puruṣapura*), but also the Western Punjab (*Panjab*). Its capital was *Takṣaśīlā*.

From earliest times on, the Khyber Pass situated between Kabul and Peshawar was the main communication with India and the passageway

¹ See Mayrhofer 1992, s.v. *gāndhāri*- m.; Malalasekera 1937–1938, s.vv. *Gandhāra*, *Takkasīlā*.

² The earliest hymns date back to ca. 1500 BC.

³ Brandtner 2001, pp. 35f.

⁴ Lamotte 1958, pp. 327, 364.

for all major migrations and invasions into India.⁵ Already in the middle of the second millennium BC Indo-Aryan tribes migrated into India on this route. These Indo-Aryan tribes influenced the Indian culture for many centuries through their Vedic Sanskrit.⁶ The Khyber Pass also served as the starting point for the Buddhist missions to the east along the so-called Silk Road. Whereas the Sogdian and Parthian missionaries took the northern branch along the Tarim Basin, the Indians and Indo-Scythians travelled on the southern route from Yarkand over Khotan and Miran to Dunhuang 敦煌.⁷

Between the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD, the time we are here concerned with, Gandhāra's sphere of influence covered the territories along and around the Indus, Swat and Kabul river valleys. Therefore, Richard Salomon differentiates between Gandhāra proper and Greater Gandhāra.⁸ The latter comprises, apart from Peshawar valley and the just mentioned neighbouring regions, also the "triangular" area stretching from Bamiyan in Afghanistan's west over Kabul and Haḍḍa to Taxila in Pakistan's southeastern corner and Gilgit in its northeastern corner.

According to Pāli sources,⁹ Gandhāra was one of India's sixteen "great regions" (*mahājanapada*).¹⁰ In the Buddha's own time it was part of the "Northern Region" (*Uttarāpatha*),¹¹ and was thus considered as belonging to India. The Aśoka (ca. 268–233 BC) inscriptions testify to this as well as the fact that when in the second century BC the Bactrian Greeks integrated this region into their empire, they minted coins with

⁵ Salomon 1999, p. 4; Brinkhaus 2001, p. 64, n. 4.

⁶ The Bactrian Greeks, Scythians and Kuṣāṇas who invaded India in the centuries around the beginning of the Christian era were apparently quickly Indianised and left only faint marks of their language, religion and culture in the course of their progress into India. See also Fussman 1994, p. 18.

⁷ Zürcher 1990, pp. 172ff.

⁸ Salomon 1999, p. 3 and map 1 on p. 2; see also Fussman 1987, p. 67; Fussman 2004, pp. 237f.

⁹ *AN* I 262.35–213.5; *AN* IV 251.3–8; 256.15–20; 260.25–261.1.

¹⁰ Cf. Lamotte 1958, pp. 8–10. Fourteen regions were situated in the "Middle country" (*madhyadeśa*) and two of them in the "Border region" (*pratyantajanapada*) where the Buddhist monastic rules were less rigorously applied.

¹¹ Lamotte 1958, p. 109; the original meaning of *uttarāpatha* is "the northern road" or "the northern direction". *Uttarāpatha* became the name of the whole of Northern India which according to Pāli sources included Kashmir (Skt. Kaśmīra), Gandhāra and Kamboja (i.e., Northern Kashmir) as main divisions. Cf. Malalasekera 1937–1938, s.v. *Uttarāpatha*.

bilingual legends in Greek and Gāndhārī.¹² Taxila (Skt. Takṣaśilā, Pāli Takkaśilā), the capital of this region, was one of the great cultural centres of India. Alexander's historians mention the great number of brahmans, ascetics and gymnosophists living around Taxila.¹³

The Gandhāran formative influence on Greater Gandhāra is attested by the adoption of the Gandhāran style of art and the use of the Gāndhārī¹⁴ language which preceded Sanskrit and remained the missionary language of the Buddhists in Central Asia for a considerable time.¹⁵

In the subsequent paragraphs an overview of the transmission and development of Buddhism in Gandhāra will be presented. In addition, we will offer a sketch of the general history of Buddhism in Central Asia, its culmination as well as its decline, imbedded in the description of the Indo-Greek activities in the area. Then follows a more detailed survey of the situation of Buddhism in Gandhāra, as it can be reconstructed due to the Buddhist schools whose presence in the area of Greater Gandhāra is attested for the time period in question. This account will be supplemented by a comprehensive presentation of recent research, including a discussion of newly discovered Gāndhārī manuscripts.

2. GĀNDHĀRĪ AND THE KHAROṢṬHĪ SCRIPT

Apparently all¹⁶ Gāndhārī documents were written in the Kharoṣṭhī script¹⁷ which first appeared in the Aśoka inscriptions of Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā in the middle of the third century BC. At that time the script was already fully developed. It seems to have been derived from the Aramaic. During the Achaemenid era Aramaic served as the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire. Therefore it is assumed, that

¹² These legends contain the name of the ruler and his titles in the genitive case in Greek and Gāndhārī in Kharoṣṭhī script. Cf. Renou & Filliozat 1947–1949, p. 329.

¹³ Lauffer 1993, pp. 145f.; Fussman 1994, pp. 17f.

¹⁴ The name Gāndhārī for this Middle Indian dialect of Northwest India was suggested by Sir Harold Bailey and immediately accepted. Cf. Bailey 1946, pp. 764–765. For a description of this language, see Konow 1929, pp. xcv–cxviii; Brough 1962, pp. 48–118; Fussman 1989, pp. 432–501; von Hinüber 2001, pp. 93–97. For Gāndhārī as a spoken language, see Fussman 1989, pp. 440ff.

¹⁵ Bernhard 1970, p. 57; von Hinüber 1983, p. 27; von Hinüber 2001, p. 29.

¹⁶ Fussman 1989, p. 439, remarks that the Kharoṣṭhī script is not necessarily connected with Gāndhārī. Cf. Boucher 2000, p. 6.

¹⁷ Salomon 1998a, pp. 42–64.

Kharoṣṭhī originated sometime in the fourth or fifth centuries BC.¹⁸ Taxila, the capital of Gandhāra, seems to have been the place of origin of Kharoṣṭhī.¹⁹ After the reign of Aśoka, Kharoṣṭhī continued to be the principal script in use in the northwest during the period of the reigns of the Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian, and Kuṣāṇa kings from the first century BC to the second century AD. It appears that the Kharoṣṭhī script fell into disuse in this region during the third century AD, but it may have continued to be used in the Tarim Basin, where documents in this script were found together with others in the Kuchean language dating to the seventh century.²⁰

Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions²¹ have been discovered as far west as Wardak or Khawat on the Kabul River in Afghanistan and north of the Hindukush, in ancient Bactria and nowadays Afghanistan (Qundus) and in Uzbekistan (Termez) and Tajikistan (Anzhina-Tepe). Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions are sporadically found in the south and southwest as far as Mohenjo-Daro and in Baluchistan as well as in the southeast, in the region around Delhi and Mathurā. In Northern India and adjoining regions Kharoṣṭhī script was in use for the coin legends of the Indo-Greek and Scythian kings.²² Third century AD Central Asian Kharoṣṭhī script served not only for epigraphic purposes, but also for the official documents of the Shan-shan (Kroraina) kingdom in the Tarim Basin. These documents were composed in a local variety of the Gāndhārī

¹⁸ The Kharoṣṭhī script has some unique features which stand in contrast to all other Indian scripts: Unlike the Indian Brāhmī it is written from right to left and has a cursive ductus which according to R. Salomon seems to reflect an origin in a “clerk’s” script. Furthermore it is top-oriented. Thus, the distinctive features of a character are to be seen at its top. The script did not undergo any significant palaeographic changes in the course of its development nor does it have local variants, except its Central Asian variety. Dating inscriptions or manuscripts on the basis of the palaeographic criteria is, therefore, quite difficult. Cf. Salomon 1998a, p. 55; von Hinüber 2001, p. 27. A reason for this might be the short-lived use of the Kharoṣṭhī script within a relatively limited area, lasting for only some five centuries. There are also differences in graphics between Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī. The latter basically does not differentiate between long and short vowels. Consonantal conjuncts or ligatures and consonantal combinations, particularly those involving stops and sibilants, are prone to take special and obscure or even wrong forms in Kharoṣṭhī. Cf. Salomon 1998a, pp. 48f.; von Hinüber 2003, pp. 8f.

¹⁹ Konow 1929, p. xiv.

²⁰ Salomon 1998a, pp. 46–47.

²¹ Fussman 1989, pp. 444–451; Salomon 1998a, pp. 44–46.

²² It is noteworthy, that the coins of the Western Kṣatrapas Nahāpāna and Caṣṭana had legends in three different scripts, i.e., Greek, Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī.

dialect, the so-called Niya or Kroraina Prākṛit.²³ A dedicatory stone inscription was found even in Luoyang 洛陽²⁴ and recently a stone Buddha with a pedestal inscription in Kharoṣṭhī came to light at Shifosi in Chang'an 長安 county.²⁵ The content of the majority of the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions is Buddhist,²⁶ including inscriptions commemorating donations to the *saṃgha* that were made in the form of relics of the Buddha, buildings, sculptures or jars. Most of them, however, contain very short epigraphic texts only. One such inscription is that of Senavarma, the king of Oḍi, which represents the longest complete text in Gāndhārī²⁷ discovered so far. Written on a small gold leaf it describes the consecration of the Ekakūṭa *stūpa* after it had been restored with the financial help of Senavarma.²⁸

3. SOURCES ON THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN GANDHĀRA—TRANSMISSION AND DEVELOPMENT

For the study of the history of Buddhism in Gandhāra we can rely on several kinds of sources: a) the inscriptions of Aśoka, b) many inscriptions and graffiti made by Buddhist pilgrims that came to light just in the recent years, c) antiquities recovered by archeologists in this area,²⁹ d) Buddhist manuscripts found in that region, e) Sinhalese chronicles and the reports of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Faxian 法顯 (5th century), Xuanzang 玄奘 (629–645) and Huizhao 慧沼 (650–715).

According to a late legend,³⁰ Pukkusāti, the king of Takṣaśilā (Taxila),

²³ Salomon 1998a, p. 159.

²⁴ Brough 1961, pp. 517–530.

²⁵ Salomon 1998a, p. 160.

²⁶ Fussman 1989, p. 451.

²⁷ von Hinüber 2003, p. 7: “Zugleich ist die Senavarma-Inschrift trotz der Neufunde von zahlreichen literarischen buddhistischen Texten auf Birkenrinde... der längste zusammenhängende, d.h. ohne Lücken überlieferte Text in Gāndhārī und in Kharoṣṭhī-Schrift.” This inscription dates from ca. the middle of the first century AD. All Gāndhārī manuscripts as e.g., the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* are more or less fragmentary.

²⁸ von Hinüber 2003, p. 7.

²⁹ The research on Buddhist sites in Afghanistan began with the foundation of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan in 1922. Cf. von Hinüber 1984, p. 99. Taxila was excavated by Sir John Marshall and his successor in the Archaeological Survey of India, Sir Mortimer Wheeler. Cf. Brandtner 2001, pp. 36ff. After the Second World War Italian archaeologists began to work in Swat.

³⁰ Lamotte 1958, pp. 110f.; Malalasekera 1937–1938, s.v. *Pukkusāti*. This legend is mentioned in Buddhaghosa's (4th/5th century AD) “Commentary on the Middle Collection (of the Discourses)”, *Pi* V, pp. 33f.

was a friend of Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha during the Buddha's lifetime. In return for a gift of precious garments, Bimbisāra sent to Pukkusāti a golden plaque on which he had inscribed the Buddhist teachings. Pukkusāti subsequently became a monk and went to Śrāvastī to meet the Buddha, who taught him the *Discourse on the Analysis of the Elements* (*Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*).³¹ Another tradition has it that either a pupil of Ānanda brought the teachings of the Buddha to Gandhāra only fifty years after Śākyamuni's death or that the Buddha himself brought Buddhism to Uttarāpatha. There is, however, no evidence at all available attesting the presence of Buddhism in Gandhāra at this early date.

The first Buddhist missions to Central Asia must have started from the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. As the Sinhalese chronicles *The Chronicle of the Island* (*Dīpavaṃsa* VIII.1–4) and *The Great Chronicle* (*Mahāvaṃsa* XII.1–28) report, the *thera* Moggaliputta sent missionaries to adjacent countries, to propagate there the Buddhist doctrine after the third council that had taken place under Aśoka.³² Majjhantika (Skt. Madhyāntika) was sent to Kashmir and Gandhāra and converted there not only the *nāga* king³³ Aravāḷa but also expounded the doctrine to eighty thousand persons in the discourse *Āśvīsūpamā*³⁴ (The Simile of the Serpent). Even though the major part of this story might be legendary, the presence of Buddhism in Gandhāra at this time is confirmed by Aśoka's Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions at Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā and those written in Greek and Aramaic at Kandahar (Kandahār).³⁵

We do not have any evidence, however, that the northwest region was converted to Buddhism before the Maurya dynasty (ca. 300–185 BC), because archaeological remains from the time before 300 would have to belong to the pre-script and pre-picture period of archaeology. Buddhist archaeological remains of the period after 300 are found in the Buddhist "Middle country" (*madhyapradeśa*) at all places where the Buddha lived and is said to have visited.³⁶ We do not have

³¹ *MN* III, pp. 237–247.

³² Cf. editors' introduction.

³³ The *nāgas*, "serpent-(demons)" are either supposed to have a human face with serpent-like lower extremities or are represented as ordinary men. The worship of *nāgas* is the most common popular belief which Buddhist missionaries had to struggle with. Cf. Lamotte 1958, pp. 368f.

³⁴ Cf. *SN* IV, pp. 172–175 or *AN* II, pp. 110–111.

³⁵ Salomon 1998a, pp. 152f.

³⁶ See Kieffer-Pülz 2000, p. 309.

archaeological remains from the previous period. Xuanzang reports on the existence of six great *stūpas* founded by Aśoka (268–233 BC) and situated near bigger towns, the greatest of which is the Dharmarājika *stūpa* at Taxila. Remains of many *stūpas* and monasteries were actually detected in and around Taxila,³⁷ but their dating to the Maurya time is by no means certain.³⁸

The earliest Buddhist Kharoṣṭhī epigraphic texts after those made by Aśoka is the reliquary inscription from Bajaur which was consecrated under the reign of Menander (about 150 BC). Next comes that of Patika at Taxila (about 5 AD).³⁹ Other reliquaries mentioning the kings of Apraca and Oḍi who controlled the higher valleys near Gandhāra are datable around the beginning of the Christian era.

From the archaeological and epigraphic evidence we can assume that the first monasteries and *stūpas* were built at the end of the third century BC. During the second century BC, Buddhism progressed to the higher regions and flourished in the first century BC. It entered the Kuṣāṇa empire, which had been founded by Indo-Scythian (Yuezhi) conquerors during the first to the third centuries AD.⁴⁰

4. THE INDO-GREEK KINGDOMS AND THEIR RELATION TO BUDDHISM

The Indo-Greek king Menander (ca. 155–130)⁴¹ is best remembered from literary sources: He attained fame in the Buddhist text *Milindapañha* (Milinda's Questions).⁴² This text is a dialogue between the Greek king Menander and the Buddhist philosopher Nāgasena, resulting in Menander's conversion to Buddhism. Although Menander is in fact a historical person, the dialogue itself is ahistorical, as Milinda speaks to the six heretics,⁴³ who lived at the time of the Buddha. According to

³⁷ Brandtner 2001, pp. 37f.

³⁸ Fussman 1994, p. 19.

³⁹ Falk 2002, p. 99 n. 2. This inscription is written in the year 78 of the Mogasa era during the reign of king Liaka Kusulaka.

⁴⁰ Kulke & Rothermund 1998, pp. 101–106.

⁴¹ Kulke & Rothermund 1998, pp. 95f.

⁴² von Hinüber 2000, pp. 82–86; Fussman, 1993.

⁴³ The six heretics are best known from the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (Discourse on the Fruit of the Life of a Recluse) of the *Dīghanikāya* (Long Group (of Discourses), *DN I*, pp. 46–86). In this *sūtra* the tenets of six famous teachers of the time of the Buddha are disputed and refuted in a discussion in the presence of the King Ajātaśatru of Magadha.

von Hinüber,⁴⁴ “there is no traceable Greek influence on form or content of the purely Indic dialogue.” In our context it is worth mentioning that, according to Fussman’s⁴⁵ research the Pāli *Milindapañha* and the Chinese translation **Nāgasenabhikṣusūtra* (The Discourse of the Monk Nāgasena)⁴⁶ are both translations of the same text, which was written in a northwestern Middle Indic, perhaps Gāndhārī.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Menander’s interest in Buddhism might have been a genuine one, because there exist coins issued by this king which show a wheel similar to the Buddhist *cakra*.⁴⁸ Also Plutarch relates that after Menander’s death his relics were distributed among all his capitals where monuments were erected to enshrine them.⁴⁹ King Menander shares with Aśoka and Kaniṣka, who both were celebrated as protectors and supporters of Buddhism, the fate that none of them is mentioned as a Buddhist in any other sources. Only one Greek name is found in the Buddhist Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions of the Indo-Greek period. It is that of the *upāsaka* Theodoros. This lack of information on the Greeks in the inscriptions of Gandhāra and Panjab seems to indicate that there was no noticeable Greek influence on Buddhism and that the success of Buddhism in Gandhāra is contemporary with or posterior to the collapse of the Indo-Greeks in Gandhāra.⁵⁰

In the first century BC the Indo-Greek kingdoms were conquered by the Śakas (Scythians) who, in turn, were vanquished by the Pahlavas (Parthians) a century later. The Śakas as well as the Pahlavas were initially destroying Buddhist monuments but later changed their attitudes and rebuilt Taxila according to Greek town-planning rules. They enlarged the Dharmarājika *stūpa* and presented the *saṃgha* with rich gifts according to epigraphical sources. At the beginning of the first century AD, the Kuṣāṇas of the Yuezhi (Indo-Scythians) united the northwest and founded an empire that extended southwards across the whole of North India as far as Sāñchī, to the west into Afghanistan and to the east into Chinese Turkestan. Their capital was Puruṣapura

⁴⁴ von Hinüber 2000, p. 83.

⁴⁵ Fussman 1993, p. 66. See also Lamotte 1958, pp. 465–468.

⁴⁶ T.1670A.32.0694a02–0703c04 (2 vols.); T.1670B.32.0703c06–0719a20 (3 vols.). Cf. Demiéville 1925, pp. 1–258.

⁴⁷ Boucher 1998, p. 472.

⁴⁸ The *cakra* is the symbol for the Buddha’s teaching (*dharma*).

⁴⁹ This custom is very popular among Buddhists. Cf. Kulke & Rothermund 1998, p. 95.

⁵⁰ Fussman 1994, p. 26.

(modern Peshawar) in Gandhāra. This strong political power, reigning over such a vast territory and ensuring wealth, security and stability, was favourable to the exchange of material and cultural goods along the trade routes throughout this empire which in turn facilitated the spread of Buddhism. The most important trade route was the so-called Silk Road, actually a wide-spread network of trade routes that in its East-West axis connected the Roman Empire with the Chinese Empire while linking both empires via Balkh, Bamiyan (Bāmiyān), Peshawar and Taxila with the Indian subcontinent. It was along these routes that Buddhist tradesmen and monks spread their religion.

The greatest emperor of the Kuṣāṇas was Kaniška.⁵¹ According to the Buddhist tradition he is recognised as a second Aśoka. The Buddhists claimed him as a royal patron. But, as G. Fussman has shown,⁵² Kaniška, like Aśoka, dedicated temples to quite a number of other gods as well. However, he built large *stūpas* near Puruṣapura, which were much admired by the Chinese pilgrims,⁵³ and a monastery at Kapīṣṭh (Begram).⁵⁴ The tradition which maintains that he patronised the fourth Buddhist council as a result of which missionary activity was accelerated and Buddhist missions were sent to Central Asia and China is historically doubtful as is the tradition concerning the triumphant spread of Buddhism into Bactria during his reign. Only few of the monasteries excavated in Afghanistan go indeed back to the early Kuṣāṇa period. Thus it appears that, at the time of Kaniška, institutionalised Buddhism was not as widely spread as was once believed.

⁵¹ The date of Kaniška has been debated by scholars for more than 100 years. For much of the 20th century, an early dating to 78 AD was favored. Cf. Fussman 1998, pp. 571f., 627ff.; Fussman 1987, p. 68. Recent discoveries have led to significant improvements in the chronology of this period and scholarly debate has largely shifted to considering a date in the late 120s AD most likely. Cf. Sims-Williams 1995/1996, p. 106: “Kanishka I: 100–126 or 120–146”. Some scholars go further and specifically assign the date to 127/ 128 AD. Cf. Falk 2001; 2004. A date in the late 120’s is supported by a radiocarbon test of the Senior Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, see note 100 below.

⁵² Fussman 1998, pp. 590ff.

⁵³ Cf. Xuanzang in Beal 1884, vol. 1, pp. 99ff.

⁵⁴ Watters 1904, p. 124.

5. GREEK INFLUENCE ON GANDHĀRA'S BUDDHIST ART AND PRACTICE

Whereas Greek influence on Buddhism⁵⁵ in Gandhāra seems to have been minimal, the Gandhāran art in fact represents a Graeco-Buddhist synthesis. It has to be stressed, however, that Gandhāra was as much open to influences from India as from Persia and Greece. Fussman⁵⁶ remarks that as different as the images at Amarāvātī and Mathurā may be from Gandhāran art, the ideological content is the same: they illustrate the same *Jātakas*⁵⁷ and episodes of the life of the Buddha. It is, however, a fact that the aniconic Buddha on Mathurā and Gandhāra images was replaced by the anthropomorphic presentations of the Buddha at nearly the same time, probably around the beginning of the Christian era. The first representation of an anthropomorphic Buddha is found in Gandhāra at about 50 BC.⁵⁸ This Buddha has the appearance of Zeus or Heracles as they are depicted in contemporary Greek sculptures. This kind of representation of the Buddha, which is the earliest known evidence for a Hellenised Buddha image, is different from the later Gandhāran art.⁵⁹ The classical Gandhāran Buddha, dressed in a monk's robe with Greek drapery and wearing his hair in Greek style,⁶⁰ must have appeared around 20 AD at the latest, because it is represented in this way on the reliquary of Bimārān.⁶¹ The first sitting Buddhas are found in Mathurā at about the same time. It is

⁵⁵ Cf. below the adoption of the Greek calendar in Buddhist practice.

⁵⁶ Fussman 1994, p. 27.

⁵⁷ These "Birth Stories" refer to previous lives of the Buddha as a *bodhisattva*.

⁵⁸ Fussman 1987, pp. 71f. and Fig. 2: "The obverse of the Tilia Tepe token shows a bearded man, depicted as a likeness of Zeus (? [or Heracles?]) standing and pushing a wheel to his left; on the right, in Kharoṣṭhī script: *dharmacakrapravartako*, "he who sets in motion the Wheel of the Law", ... The reverse depicts a lion standing to the left ...; to the right, in Kharoṣṭhī script, *Sīho vigatabhaya*, "the lion who chased away fear", i.e., the Buddha, the lion of the Śākyas."

⁵⁹ Fussman 1994, p. 29.

⁶⁰ In this style the Buddha's hair is arranged in waves gathered together at the top of his head.

⁶¹ This reliquary was a container for fragments of Buddhist relics. It is a round box of pure gold *repoussé*, inlaid with rubies, which now is kept in the British Museum at London. It was enclosed in a stone box when discovered by Charles Masson in the ruins of a *stūpa* at Bimārān near Jalalabad in Afghanistan. This reliquary is decorated with a band of eight arched niches enclosing figures of the Buddha, flanked by the gods Indra and Brahma. Cf. the description in Fussman 1987, p. 70. Fussman, loc.cit., assumes an enshrinement date at ca. 20 AD or a little later, ca. 20–50 AD. However, an assignment of the date to "the second or even the third century" is given in Snellgrove 1978, p. 63.

not quite clear why the aniconic representation⁶² was changed to an anthropomorphic one. It seems that the Buddhists at that time felt the need for an anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha whom they might adore and worship. One incentive for the change might have been the new movement of the Mahāyāna with its emphasis on devotion.⁶³ Fussman⁶⁴ concludes from the text of a recently published inscription that there was a theological as well as a technical reason for this. According to inscriptions at Mathurā, the artists of early Buddha images pretended to represent the *bodhisattva* just at the very moment before his enlightenment while sitting under the tree of enlightenment.⁶⁵ The artists, therefore, did not have to face the difficulty of showing the extraordinary transformation of the Buddha, which was a consequence of his enlightenment, and the resulting physical differences between the former *bodhisattva* and the now *samyaksaṃbuddha*, “the fully enlightened One”.

Greek influence on Buddhist practice may be seen in the adoption of the Greek calendar.⁶⁶ In Buddhist dedicational inscriptions the Indian names of months are usually found, but there are many incidences where Greek or Macedonian names of months do appear. It seems, therefore, that some Buddhist communities or donators used the Greek calendar while others did not.

6. CHINESE SOURCES ON BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Although the first Chinese Buddhist translations were made not before the second century AD, Buddhist activities are mentioned in Chinese sources⁶⁷ already in the first century AD. By this time at the latest, Buddhists must have come to China and it is assumed that they came overland along the Silk Road. According to Xuanzang, Buddhism was brought to Bactria by Trapuṣa and Bhallika, two merchants who were

⁶² In the aniconic representation of the Buddha, the three main events of the Buddha's career are represented by the following symbols: the enlightenment by the tree under which he attained it, the first sermon by “the wheel of the Law” (*dharmacakra*), and the entry into Nirvāṇa by the *stūpa*. Cf. the plates in Snellgrove 1978, p. 38.

⁶³ Similar cults developed in Brahmanism and Jainism at the same time.

⁶⁴ Fussman 1994, p. 30.

⁶⁵ This type is called the Buddha *kapardin*, “wearing braided and knotted hair”. Cf. Fussman 1994, p. 30.

⁶⁶ Fussman 1994, p. 28.

⁶⁷ Zürcher 1959, vol. 1, pp. 18ff.

the first to offer food to the Buddha after his enlightenment.⁶⁸ Whereas this must be mere legend because Buddhist inscriptions are found there only from the Kuṣāṇa period onwards,⁶⁹ the legend does show that not only monks but also travelling merchants were presumed to be capable of spreading Buddhism. Among the first translators who took the overland way from West Central Asia we find the Parthian An Shigao 安世高 and the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema (Chin. Zhi Loujiachan 支婁迦讖). They both⁷⁰ worked in the second century in the Chinese capital that period, Luoyang. At about the same time (or slightly earlier) when other Buddhist missionaries reached Chinese Turkestan, Buddhism was officially adopted at Kashgar. This may also have been the time at which Buddhism was adopted in Khotan.

7. ZENITH AND DECLINE OF BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

During the third century the emerging power of the Sassanians in Iran became a growing threat to the Kuṣāṇas. Gradually they were driven back from the west to the east, though the reason why and the time when the empire fully collapsed are not known. Adherents as they were of Zoroastrianism, the Sassanians seem to have practiced policy of relative tolerance towards Buddhism.

After the fall of the Kuṣāṇa empire we find a collection of little kingdoms, all apparently fairly prosperous and friendly towards Buddhism. Kings embellished their capitals with temples, monasteries and *stūpas*. Between the third and fifth centuries the beautiful *stūpa* at Jauliān in Taxila was erected and enlarged, the heavily decorated *stūpas* of Haḍḍa were built, and the cave monasteries were dug into the mountain at Bamiyan. This was the zenith of Buddhism in Western Central Asia. It encountered a severe check with the invasion of the White Huns (the Hephthalites), who conquered Gandhāra and Taxila on their way into India during the second half of the fifth century. The White Huns, however, do not seem to have been quite such ferocious persecutors of Buddhism as they are depicted by Xuanzang. According to archaeo-

⁶⁸ Cf. Waldschmidt 1952–1962, 2.4.

⁶⁹ Salomon 1998, pp. 153–154.

⁷⁰ An Shigao stayed and worked at Luoyang from 148 until 170, Lokakṣema between 167 and 186. See Demiéville 1978, s.vv. *An Seikō* and *Shi Rukasen*; Zürcher 1959, pp. 32–36. For details on An Shigao see below pp. 80; 92–93.

logical findings, the White Huns' attitudes towards Buddhism seem to have differed from region to region. While Taxila and Gandhāra were damaged considerably, in the more western areas monasteries hardly suffered at all according to archaeological findings.⁷¹ In the early seventh century, however, when Xuanzang visited this region, a marked decline of Buddhism had taken place. Most of the monasteries were now deserted and lied in ruins.⁷² The temple of the Buddha's "alms-bowl" (*pātra*) was destroyed and the alms-bowl itself brought to Persia.⁷³ The great *stūpa* near Puruṣapura (Peshawar), once constructed by Kaniṣka was still in existence, but the old monastery nearby, also built by him, was delapidated. A few monks studying Hīnayāna teachings still lived there.⁷⁴ The same holds true for the old monastery north of Puṣkalāvati (Charsadda). In the monastery near Varṣapura (Shāhbāzgarhī) Xuanzang found more than fifty monks, all followers of the Mahāyāna. But the pious Buddhist lay community he met with in Haḍḍa consisted of such a small number of monks that they were hardly able to look properly after the large monasteries. This could have been the result of a general decline in economic prosperity leaving laymen with few funds to feed a large community of monks.

A second, and perhaps even more decisive, factor in the decline was the revival of Hinduism. The numerous Śāhi dynasties that ultimately inherited the Kuṣāṇa empire in Afghanistan and further west mostly professed Hinduism. The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit (7th century AD), however, evidently favoured Buddhism. Four of them are named as donors in the colophons of manuscripts,⁷⁵ unearthed from two small *stūpas* at Naupur near Gilgit. Peculiarities of orthography and the names mentioned in the colophons at the end of the manuscripts, show that

⁷¹ von Hinüber 1984, pp. 101f.

⁷² Beal 1884, vol. 1, p. 98.

⁷³ Xuanzang tells us that the Buddha's "alms-bowl" (*pātra*) is said to have come to Gandhāra after his *nirvāṇa*. At Xuanzang's time it had already been taken to Persia. Cf. Beal 1884, vol. I, pp. 98f.

⁷⁴ Beal 1884, vol. 1, pp. 103f.

⁷⁵ von Hinüber 1979, pp. 336f.; von Hinüber 1980, pp. 49–82. Besides this mention of four rulers of the Paṭola-Śāhi dynasty, only one ruler of this dynasty, Navasurendrādityanandin, is known from an inscription at Hatūn. This inscription is dated to the year 47 of an unknown era. Only one date is mentioned in the colophons, the year 3 of an unknown era. Von Hinüber 1980, pp. 55f. and 70, assumes that the unknown era might refer to the Laukika era and the mentioned dates to the year 627/628 AD and 671/672 AD respectively.

there were manifold connections between the Buddhists of Gilgit and those of Khotan, one of the centres of Buddhism in Chinese Turkestan during the seventh century.

8. BUDDHIST SCHOOLS IN THE AREA OF GREATER GANDHĀRA

As mentioned above, almost all the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions are Buddhist.⁷⁶ Only a few of them, however, mention the names of the Buddhist schools to which they are dedicated. In the inscriptions of Greater Gandhāra the following Buddhist schools are attested:⁷⁷

- the Kāśyapīyas (at Apraca and Pālāṭū Dherī) in 20 BC and during the Kuṣāṇa era
- the Dharmaguptakas (at Jamālgaṛhī) in 112 BC
- the Sarvāstivādins (at Peshawar, Zeda and Kurram) in the Kuṣāṇa era during the reign of Kaniška, at Taxila and at Haḍḍa in the second to third centuries AD,⁷⁸ and at Shâh-jî-kî-Dherî during the Kuṣāṇa era.⁷⁹
- a Mahāsāṃghika monastery at Wardak is known in the year 51 of the Kaniška era.

These are the four Buddhist schools which were still present at the time when Xuanzang came to India in the seventh century.⁸⁰ Two of these schools played a major role in spreading Buddhism outside of India, i.e., the Dharmaguptakas and the Sarvāstivādins.

9. BUDDHIST SCHOOLS AND THEIR RELATION TO SPECIFIC LANGUAGES USED IN THE PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Language is considered a major problem in the propagation of Buddhism in Central Asia where there exists a great variety of languages, including Iranian Indo-European (Khotanese, Sogdian), non-Iranian Indo-European (Tokharian), and Altaic languages (Uighur,

⁷⁶ Fussman 1989, p. 451.

⁷⁷ Fussman 1994, p. 20f.

⁷⁸ Fussman 1989, pp. 449, 447.

⁷⁹ Errington & Falk 2002, pp. 110–113; Fussman 1987, pp. 77–81.

⁸⁰ Fussman 1994, p. 21.

Mongolian), in addition to Tibetan and Chinese. During the first centuries after the Buddha's passing his teachings were handed down merely in oral form. It is only in the first century BC that the Buddhist Canon of the Theravādins is said to have been set down in writing. In the Bhābhārā edict of Aśoka seven titles of Buddhist texts are recorded.⁸¹ In these titles the local language, a Māgadhī form of Prākṛit, can be discerned. In Northwest India the Gāndhārī Prākṛit was the vernacular language in use up to the third century⁸² as the newly discovered Gāndhārī manuscripts and documents show.⁸³ Several Chinese translations were made from Gāndhārī texts, like for example the fifth century Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrghāgama* (Collection of Long Discourses [of the Buddha]), as was demonstrated by P. Pelliot, F. Weller and E. Waldschmidt.⁸⁴ However, Gāndhārī gradually gave way to Sanskrit. Whereas the Sarvāstivādins are specifically connected with the Sanskritisation of the canonical literature,⁸⁵ the Dharmaguptakas are linked with the use of Gāndhārī. As recent research has shown,⁸⁶ also other Buddhist schools used the Gāndhārī at an early time.

The school of the Dharmaguptakas seems to have nearly disappeared by the seventh century. Xuanzang found none of its adherents in India proper. Only small communities seem to have survived along the Northern Silk Road in Central Asia at his time. Along with the decline of this school Gāndhārī seems to have died out. It was replaced by Sanskrit when the Sarvāstivāda school gained its dominant position. Towards the end of this period, the Dharmaguptakas themselves, under pressure of the more powerful school, probably adopted Sanskrit. A few fragments of a Dharmaguptaka Canon in Sanskrit and written in Brāhmī script were found at Qizil and Duldur-āqur near Kucha (Kučā). One fragment was identified by E. Waldschmidt as belonging to a *Bhikṣuṣūprātimokṣa*⁸⁷ of the sixth century. The fragments of the *Bhikṣuvinayavibhaṅga* (The Commentary on the *Vinaya* of

⁸¹ The Bhābhārā edict is addressed to the Buddhist community, and Aśoka recommends to monks and lay people the study of seven "sermons on the Law" (*dhammapaliyāya*). Cf. editors' introduction. This mention shows at least the presence of Buddhist texts in a pre-canonical form, even if they were not yet written down.

⁸² Fussman 1994, p. 39.

⁸³ Salomon 1999, p. 154; von Hinüber 2001, pp. 58ff.

⁸⁴ Boucher 1998, p. 472.

⁸⁵ Boucher 1998, p. 473; Fussman 1989, pp. 486ff.

⁸⁶ von Hinüber 1983, p. 33; von Hinüber 1985, pp. 74f.; Boucher 1998, p. 473f.

⁸⁷ In the *Prātimokṣasūtra* the rules for Buddhist monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*) are collected.

the Monks) were identified and published by J. Chung and K. Wille.⁸⁸ E. Waldschmidt identified another fragment from Murtauq as containing the Dharmaguptaka version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (The Discourse on the Complete Nirvāṇa).⁸⁹ Dharmaguptaka communities were not only present on the Southern Silk Road but also in the oasis of Kucha, perhaps even before the Sarvāstivādins began their missions during the time of Kaniška. Though there exists no Indian textual evidence connecting the Gāndhārī language with the early Mahāyāna, D. Boucher⁹⁰ has shown that Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (The Discourse on the Lotus of the True Law, T.263), one of the most important Māhāyāna texts, might have been prepared on the basis of a Gāndhārī Prākṛit text. J. Nattier⁹¹ observed that within Central Asia not a single Buddhist text written in any Central Asian language can be assigned to a date earlier than the beginning of the sixth century. She draws the conclusion that the subsequent flourishing of Buddhist vernacular literature in the eastern parts of Central Asia may have been influenced by early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts.

10. DOCUMENTATION OF GĀNDHĀRĪ RESEARCH MATERIAL AND RECENTLY DISCOVERED BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

From various manuscript collections that were revealed to the public in recent years we can now infer which Buddhist schools must have been present in Gandhāra until the seventh century AD.

For a long time the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* (Words of the Dharma), written in Kharoṣṭhī script, was the most prominent early Buddhist manuscript. One third of it was acquired by the French cartographer and naval officer Dutreuil de Rhins shortly before he was murdered in 1893.⁹² A second part was purchased by N. F. Petrovskii, the Russian Consul-General in Kashgar, and sent to S. F. Oldenburg in St. Petersburg. The remaining third has never been found. J. Brough⁹³

⁸⁸ Chung & Wille 1997, p. 47. The school affiliation of the *Bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣasūtra*, which is published in Wille 1997, pp. 307–314, is in all probability Sarvāstivāda (Heirman 2000).

⁸⁹ Sander 1993, pp. 74f.

⁹⁰ Boucher 1998.

⁹¹ Nattier 1990, pp. 203, 212.

⁹² von Hinüber 1984, p. 99.

⁹³ Brough 1962.

published the extant portions of this manuscript along with a detailed study of the Gāndhārī language and the differences between the various extant *Dharmapada* versions, i.e., the Pāli *Dhammapada* of the Theravādins and the Sanskrit *Udānavarga* (The Group of Inspired Utterances) of the Sarvāstivādins. The peculiarities of its language let G. Fussman to date the manuscript to the late first century BC.⁹⁴ It is supposed to originate from Khotan⁹⁵ and not coming from Gandhāra. It is generally attributed to the Dharmaguptaka school.⁹⁶

It is only very recently that six additional collections of Gāndhārī manuscripts have been discovered.⁹⁷ These have been described by R. Salomon⁹⁸ as follows:

1.) The British Library Kharoṣṭhī scrolls kept in the British Library at London. These manuscripts consist of 29 fragmentary rolls of birch bark. A detailed description of the contents of this collection is found in Salomon (1999). The texts belong to different literary genres and are written by different scribes. There are fragments of *sūtra*, *avadāna* (“previous birth stories”), *abhidharma*, commentaries and verse texts. The fragments of the Gāndhārī Rhinoceros *Sūtra* were published by R. Salomon 2000, those of the *Ekottarikāgamasūtras* by M. Allon 2001, those of a new version of the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* and a collection of “Previous Birth Stories” by T. Lenz (2003). The *abhidharma* fragment concerning the topic of the three time periods was discussed by C. Cox⁹⁹ at the XIIIth IABS (International Association of Buddhist Studies) Conference. The fragments originate from Haḍḍa, Afghanistan and may be attributed to the Dharmaguptaka school. Their likely date of composition is the early first century AD.

2.) The Senior collection is a private collection in the United Kingdom. It consists of 24 fragments written by the same hand. Most of them are *sūtra* texts belonging to the *Samyuktāgama* (Collection of Kindred [Discourses]), the *Dirghāgama*, the *Madhyamāgama* (Collection of Middle Length [Discourses]) and one fragment from the *Anavataptagāthā*.

⁹⁴ Fussman 1989, pp. 464f., 498; Brough 1962, p. 56, dated it tentatively to the early second century AD.

⁹⁵ Sander 1993, p. 69; Chung & Wille 1997, p. 47.

⁹⁶ von Hinüber 1985, p. 74.

⁹⁷ In addition, a few more Kharoṣṭhī fragments have been added since. A current list is available on the Early Buddhist Manuscript website: http://depts.washington.edu/ebmp/manuscripts_frag.php.

⁹⁸ Salomon 1997; 1998b; 1999; 2002b.

⁹⁹ Cox 2002.

Its provenance is unknown. The jar in which the fragments were contained is dated to the year twelve of an unspecified era. This era must be the Kaniṣka era, i.e., early second century AD.¹⁰⁰ The inscription refers to a gift of the Dharmaguptaka school. A study and catalogue of this collection is currently being prepared by M. Allon.¹⁰¹

3.) The University of Washington scroll kept at the University of Washington Library in Seattle consists of eight fragments of a single birch bark scroll which apparently belonged to an *abhidharma* text or another scholastic commentary. While its provenance is unknown, it can be dated to the first or second century AD.

4.) The Pelliot fragments in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France at Paris¹⁰² are eight miscellaneous fragments of palm leaf folios. The text of one of these fragments utilises Sanskrit in Kharoṣṭhī script. The fragments contain narrative and doctrinal texts which are not yet identified. They originate from Subashi and Khitai Bazaar, near Kucha, Xinjiang, and can be tentatively dated to the second to third century AD. These fragments were published by R. Salomon 1998. The language of fragment 1 is more or less standard Sanskrit, that of fragments 2 and 3 is Sanskritised Gāndhārī. Script and language of the eighth fragment seem to be somewhat more archaic than those of the others and it could, therefore, be a little older than the just mentioned fragments.¹⁰³ Salomon¹⁰⁴ draws the conclusion that the variation in the Sanskrit-Kharoṣṭhī language of these fragments shows the important role which these kinds of manuscripts played in the early translations of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. This nicely confirms the above mentioned Gāndhārī hypothesis of D. Boucher to the effect that the Chinese translators worked on the basis of oral recitation of Indic texts that were heavily Prakritised.¹⁰⁵

5.) The Schøyen Kharoṣṭhī fragments are kept in a private collection in Norway. These 135 small fragments of palm leaf folios are the remnants of several dozen different manuscripts of diverse contents. They

¹⁰⁰ At the XIVth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (London, 2005), Mark Allon presented the results from a radiocarbon test of the Senior manuscripts which, when combined with the data from the inscription favours a date for Kaniṣka in the late 120s AD, and rules out the traditional date of 78 AD.

¹⁰¹ Salomon 2003, p. 74.

¹⁰² Salomon 1998.

¹⁰³ Salomon 1998, p. 149.

¹⁰⁴ Salomon 1998, p. 151.

¹⁰⁵ Boucher 1998, p. 471.

are mostly unidentified and originate from Bamiyan in Afghanistan, or nearby. They date probably to the second to third centuries AD.¹⁰⁶ The fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* were published by M. Allon and R. Salomon in 2000. These fragments belong to a distinct version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* which differs from all other extant versions; on the other hand, this Gāndhārī version has some notable similarities to the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* version which is attributed to the Dharmaguptaka school. The authors draw the conclusion that the Gāndhārī *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* version also belonged to that school.¹⁰⁷

6.) The Hirayama Kharoṣṭhī fragments are stored at the Institute of Silk Road Studies in Kamakura (Japan). This collection comprises 27 fragments of palm leaf folios which belong to the same group of manuscripts as the Schøyen Kharoṣṭhī fragments. One of these fragments belongs to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. It was published by M. Allon and R. Salomon (2000, p. 246).

Until a few years ago all of the identified Gāndhārī fragments in Kharoṣṭhī script were parts of texts connected with the Hīnayāna. Recently, however, fragments of one text, now split between both the Schøyen and Hirayama Collections, have been identified as forming part of the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra*. This *sūtra* came to be classified as a Mahāyāna *sūtra*, but it is not certain if such an identification is appropriate for the text in view of the time when the original manuscripts were written.¹⁰⁸ It is remarkable that no fragments of *vinaya* texts were found in these collections. Another noteworthy feature is that the *abhidharma* texts in the Kharoṣṭhī collections as well as those in the Schøyen collection can not be attributed to *abhidharma* works of the Sarvāstivādins known to us in original Sanskrit or in Chinese translations. This agrees with the observation made by L. Sander¹⁰⁹ with regard to the *abhidharma* fragments from the Kuṣāṇa and early Gupta periods that were found in Qizil. She sees as one of the difficulties the age of the fragments which are older than the Sanskrit fragments known to us.

Another sizeable collection of Buddhist manuscripts appeared a few years ago. They were acquired by the Norwegian M. Schøyen

¹⁰⁶ Three Kharoṣṭhī fragments from the Schøyen Collection recently underwent radiocarbon testing by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. The results support paleographic dating of these documents to the second and third centuries AD.

¹⁰⁷ Allon & Salomon 2000, p. 273.

¹⁰⁸ Glass 2004, p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Sander 1991, pp. 133–134.

and will be published successively by J. Braarvig. According to the information “from the local dealers, most of the manuscripts were found quite recently in Afghanistan by local people taking refuge from the Taliban forces in caves near the Bamiyan valley, where an old library may have been situated, or possibly hidden.”¹¹⁰ This collection¹¹¹ contains Sanskrit manuscripts from the Kuṣāṇa period up to the seventh century. The collection comprises *vinaya* fragments of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins, but none of the Sarvāstivādins. In addition, there are *sūtra* fragments with parallels in the *Dirghāgama* and *Ekottarikāgama* (Collection of Gradual [Discourses]), which cannot be clearly attributed to any defined school, because we do not have close correspondences in Chinese translations.¹¹² Among the *abhidharma* fragments only those of the *Śāriputrābhidharma* (The *Abhidharma* of Śāriputra) were identified by K. Matsuda. Among the fragments which cannot be attributed to any known work are *abhidharma* fragments, early commentary fragments, a Mīmāṃsaka fragment and poetical texts. Among the Mahāyāna *sūtra* fragments we find an *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses) from the Kuṣāṇa period, fragments of a *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, *Vajracchedikā* (Diamond [Sūtra]), *Samādhirājasūtra* (“King of Concentration” *Sūtra*), and of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* (*Sūtra* on the Supernatural Manifestation of Sukhāvatī).¹¹³ Research on both language and content of these fragments has just begun. Its results will be published successively in the volumes of the series *Buddhist Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection*.¹¹⁴ The presence of the school of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins in Bamiyan is confirmed by Xuanzang.

One of the most spectacular finds of Buddhist manuscripts was unearthed from two *stūpas* at Naupur near Gilgit in the years 1931 and 1938. This collection contains Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna manuscripts. A description of the manuscripts contained in this collection is found in von Hinüber (1979). Among these manuscripts an almost complete *Vinayavastu* (Vinaya Matter) of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is found as well as fragments of an *Ekottarāgama*¹¹⁵ and of the *abhidharma* works

¹¹⁰ Braarvig 2000, p. XIII. It is not sure, however, whether this information provided by manuscript dealers can be trusted at all.

¹¹¹ Cf. the description in Hartmann 2004, pp. 125ff.

¹¹² Hartmann 2004, p. 127.

¹¹³ Sukhāvatī is the paradise of the Buddha Amitābha.

¹¹⁴ Braarvig 2000; 2002.

¹¹⁵ Tripathi 1995.

*Dharmaskandha*¹¹⁶ (Items of the Doctrine) and *Lokaprajñāpti* (Arrangement of the World) of the *Prajñāptiśāstra*.¹¹⁷ All Hīnayāna fragments in this collection seem to belong to the Mūlasarvāstivādins¹¹⁸ and the newly discovered manuscript of the *Dirghāgama* to the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda school.¹¹⁹

11. CONCLUSION

As we can conclude from these different manuscript remains it seems so that we might not have any Sarvāstivāda manuscripts from Gandhāra, although their presence at Peshawar, Zeda and Kurram is attested by inscriptions from the Kuṣāṇa period. There are only very few *abhidharma* fragments extant, although Gandhāra together with Kashmir (or rather Kaśmīra) was a stronghold of the Sarvāstivādins.¹²⁰ According to Xuanzang, Vasumitra composed the *Prakaraṇapāda* in Puṣkarāvati.¹²¹ Also the *Dhātukāya*, another canonical *abhidharma* work, has been connected with Gandhāra.¹²² The presence of Mahāyāna since the Kuṣāṇa period is attested not only by epigraphical and numismatic evidence¹²³ but also by the manuscripts of the Schøyen and Gilgit collections.

In the preceding pages it was, unfortunately, possible to offer but a sketch of Buddhism in Gandhāra, as it is reflected in the light of the newly discovered sources. However, thanks to the evidence preserved in inscriptions and to the recently published manuscript collections, Buddhism is now documented for the whole period during which it was present in Gandhāra. We hope that this survey at least can indicate the direction which further research should take.

¹¹⁶ Dietz 1984.

¹¹⁷ Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 154ff.

¹¹⁸ Hartmann 2000, p. 428.

¹¹⁹ For a description of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript and its school affiliation, see Hartmann 2004b, p. 120.

¹²⁰ Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, p. 149.

¹²¹ Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 154ff.

¹²² For further *abhidharma* works from Gandhāra see Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 255ff.

¹²³ Fussman 1987, pp. 73ff.

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T.1670A

**Nāgasenabhikṣusūtra* «*Naxian bhikṣu jing*» 那先比丘經.

T.1670B

**Nāgasenabhikṣusūtra* «*Naxian bhikṣu jing*» 那先比丘經.

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THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN SERINDIA: BUDDHISM AMONG IRANIANS, TOCHARIANS AND TURKS BEFORE THE 13TH CENTURY

Xavier Tremblay (Köln)

1. DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT

The term “Serindia”, coined by Aurel Stein, combines Northwestern Afghanistan, and the former Soviet and Chinese Turkestans. This area, though it was united by the coexistence of Iranian and Indian influence between the beginning of the Christian era and the period of Islamicisation, in fact encompassed four geographically and ecologically distinct areas:

1. The partly desertlike eastern fringe of Western Iran, with the provinces of Margiana around Merv (now in Turkmenistan, near Mary) and Aria around Herat. It is probable that Parthian, a Western Iranian language, was spoken in Margiana up to the sixth century AD when the province was persianised.

2. The mountainous Hindukush and Turkestan ranges, in which almost every valley had its own language (as it is still often the case now). Two regions were prominent:

Bactria between the Hindukush and the Iron Gate, along the middle course of the Oxus (approximately from the confluence of the Panj and the Kokcha to the western boundary of Afghanistan) and along the Bactres, Xulm and Qunduz rivers in the south, and the Waxš, Kafir-nigan and Surxan rivers in the north. The Bactrian dynasties, that is the Kušānas (from Kušan; 120 BC–233 AD), and after a period of Sassanian occupation (233–ca. 375 AD), the Chionites and Kidarites (360–480 AD) and finally the Hephthalites (480–560), whom the Türks defeated and eventually vassalised, constituted mighty empires dominating Northern India and, at least during the Hephthalite Empire, Central Asia.¹

¹ Brough 1965 (whose theory of a Kušāna dominion upon the Tarim form rests on insufficient evidence, but who pointed aptly to wide-ranging influence); Kuwayama 1989; Grenet 1996. The whole Bactrian chronology is matter of dispute with datings diverging sometimes more than one hundred years. I follow Enoki 1969, 1970; Grenet 1996, p. 371 n. 17; 2002, pp. 205–209; 220f. A Sassanian occupation of Bactria already in



Serindia in the 2nd century AD

Sogdiana (the main cities were Samarkand, Tashkent/Taškent and Kesh/Keš), Bukhara and Ferghana were divided into numerous principalities. Sogdiana remained outside the Kuṣāṇa Empire, but stood under Bactria's dominion from 402 to 560. Its dynasties survived, however, until the Muslim conquest in the 740's.

Bactrian and Sogdian (closely related to Bukharan and Ferghanian) were Eastern Iranian languages. The former was written from the first century AD onwards in the Greek alphabet, while the latter was written in a national alphabet derived from Aramaean. In all of the aforementioned Iranian countries, the national religion was Mazdeism. However, in the Eastern Iranian region, it assumed a form deeply divergent from that of the Sassanian Empire.²

3. The Tarim Basin is a desert where permanent dwellings were only possible at the fringes: Kashgar (Kāšġar) and Khotan, where Saka dialects of Iranian were spoken; Aqsu and Kucha (Kuċā) in the West, Agni and Turfan in the East, with two closely cognate Indo-European (but not Iranian) languages, Tocharian A and Tocharian B; and Loulan, the vernacular of which remains unknown. Each oasis constituted a separate kingdom.

4. The northern steppe (Mongolia, Kazakhstan), periodically subjugated under various tribal confederations, the best known of which are the Xiongnu (from the third century BC onwards), the Ruanruan (ca. 390–563), the Türks (552–766 and the Uighurs (763–844 in Mongolia, 857–1450 in the Tarim Basin), the Qitans (ca. 907–1125 in Mongolia, 1137–1218 in Khorasan) and the Tungusic-, and more precisely Manchu-speaking Jurchen (1115–1234).

Before the second half of the twentieth century it was physically impossible to travel quickly carrying large quantities of merchandise along these enormous distances which had the most inhospitable

the third century AD is unambiguously proven by Sassanian inscriptions (ŠKZ, Paikuli, see Huyse 1999). I do not believe that the Chionites and the Kidarites were distinct clans (Tremblay 2001, p. 188).

² On Eastern Mazdeism, see Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3, pp. 152ff.; Tremblay, forthcoming. All forms of Mazdeism have in common the usage of a sacred prayer-book called the *Avesta*, the devotion to a pantheon including the gods Ahura Mazdā (who at least in the *Avesta* was supreme), the Aməša Spəntas, Mithra and Vərəθraϋna, the reverence of a (probably fictitious) founder Zarathuštra, an eschatology and the “intercommunion”, i.e., the mutual acceptance among all Mazdeans of the sacrifices. Due to thorough changes in the interpretation of Mazdean texts, handbooks older than Stausberg 2002 should be consulted with caution.

climates. At the time of the Sogdian *Ancient Letters*³ (ca. 313/4 AD), one year could pass before a letter from Central China reached Dunhuang 敦煌.⁴ In 399, the Chinese pilgrim Faxian 法顯 took more than eight months to travel from Dunhuang to Kashgar. *Ancient Letter II* says that no merchant had come from Sogdiana to Luoyang 洛陽 for three years. However lucrative and historically important the trade along the Silk Road may have been, we must keep in mind that it was small expeditions of the speculative and adventurous that made the journey. So few people were involved that almost no services for the traveller (wells, hostels, caravanserais or the like) were established before the Muslim period⁵. The life of the Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) too recalls how arduous and risky a journey from China to India was. This clearly indicates also how the history of Buddhism is in each country must have been separate.

In all Serindian countries Buddhism coexisted with other religions: Iranian Mazdeism, Turkic “tāḡrism”, and also Nestorian Christianity⁶ and Manichaeism.⁷ Whereas we have at least indications that in some areas the Buddhist preaching targeted Mazdeans (see further), no Buddhist text shows any influence of Christianity or Manichaeism. Fussman (1994, pp. 39f.) explains both the statement by Xuanzang that Buddhism was shrinking in India and the final waning of Buddhism in India through the assumption that Buddhists were at all epochs a minority. This fact is concealed by the Hindu or Mazdean disregard for manuscripts and the familial and (for the Hindus) aniconic nature of their cult, so that they were bound to leave fewer archaeological vestiges.

Serindia does not occupy in Buddhist studies a place comparable to Ceylon, Tibet or Japan. This subordinate rank is due to two relatively

³ The so-called Sogdian *Ancient Letters* encompass eight *Letters* in Sogdian ca. 313/4, found in a hole in a tower of the Great Wall (edited in Reichelt 1928–1931). They provide very important information on the Sogdian presence along the eastern end of the Silk Road.

⁴ For instance, *Ancient Letter II*, written in June 313 in Guzang 姑臧, and *Ancient Letter III*, written in April 314 (Grenet, Sims-Williams & La Vaissière 1998, pp. 101f.) were transported by the same caravan.

⁵ La Vaissière 2002, p. 190.

⁶ About Nestorianism in Asia, see in the first instance Gillmann & Klimkeit 1999.

⁷ Manichaeism is an abated religion, founded by Mani (216–277), who insisted on the purification of the devotees by clearing their luminous nature from evil impurity at all levels (cosmological, physical through diets, moral, and so on). Interesting handbooks are Puech 1949, Tardieu 1981, BeDuhn 2000; a well-done chrestomathy is Gnoli 2003.

late historical hazards, not to its pristine reality. Firstly, all the languages of Serindian Buddhism are dead languages which were totally unknown before the eve of the twentieth century and which require a great deal of linguistic work before they can be, even approximately, understood. Secondly, almost all the countries which are covered by this survey have become Muslim: Eastern Iran between the eighth and the ninth century, Khotan in 1008, Turfan around 1430. Buddhism withdrew progressively to Hami 哈密 (which fell in 1451) and Dunhuang (Islamicised around 1500). The last Buddhist Uighur manuscript was copied in Suzhou 肅州, in the present Chinese province of Gansu 甘肅, in 1702.⁸ However, Buddhism has survived down to the present among the Yellow Uighurs (Sarı Yıyur) who live in Gansu near Suzhou.⁹

As a consequence, manuscripts are often fragmentary, and always difficult to understand. It remains nonetheless a historical mistake to leap from “no (more) visible” or “arcane indeed” to “unexistent” or “unimportant”. As a matter of fact, Iranian and Tocharian Buddhists are at least responsible for one major contribution to the spread of Buddhism and its intellectual evolution: the first translations of Buddhist texts and concepts into Chinese.

This article will be historically oriented. Those readers interested in philological questions may find answers in the survey of all sources given in Tremblay (2001, pp. 137–182). More specific and complete surveys are Fussman (1989a, pp. 444–451) for the Gāndhārī inscriptions; von Hinüber (1979) for the Gilgit manuscripts; *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (VOHD) vol. 10 and Sander in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* IV:1 (1981, pp. 52–75 and 1991) for the Sanskrit texts of the Turfan Basin; Salomon (1999a and 2002) for the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments, a collection of recently found Gāndhārī manuscripts; MSC for the Schøyen collection, a private collection that contains about 1500 Buddhist manuscripts of most Asian countries spanning nearly 2000 years; Emmerick (1992) for Khotanese; Schmidt (1988, pp. 306–314) and Emmerick (1992, pp. 59ff.) and Skjærvø (2002) for Tūmshuqese; and Elverskog (1997) for Turkic Buddhism.

⁸ Hamada 1990. For the edition of the text, see Radloff & Malov 1913; Radloff 1930.

⁹ Malov 1912; Thomsen in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 1, pp. 564f., with further literature.

2. OUTLINE OF A HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE EARLY PERIOD (100 BC–850 AD)

2.1. *Buddhism among the Parthians*

No Buddhist texts in Parthian are extant, but their existence can be inferred from the presence of Buddhist and Indian terms in the Manichaean Parthian theological vocabulary from the earliest texts onwards (3rd–4th century BC).¹⁰ These terms show that the Manichaeans developed their apologetics in a Buddhist milieu. The connection of these linguistic tokens with archaeological remains is debated. To be true, a *stūpa* with a great statue of Buddha has been found in Gyaur-kala near Merv, which has been repeatedly dated by Masson, Košelenko, Filanovič and Usmanova to the second century AD,¹¹ but none of the artefacts found there (Brāhmī manuscripts, clay plaques, vases) predate the Hephthalite period,¹² and this early dating was contested by Litvinskij and Staviskij.¹³ The mention of Parthia in the Singhalese *Mahāvamsa*¹⁴ is also of little historical reliability. Notwithstanding these uncertainties, the archaeological site of Merv is far from being exhausted and Herat has not yet been investigated, so that the presence of Buddhism in Margiana and Aria already in the second or third century is still probable.

No historical account upon Buddhism among the Parthians has survived; and the famous introducer of Buddhism to China, An Shigao, was probably not a Parthian, but perhaps a Sogdian (see *infra* 2.3.2.).

2.2. *Buddhism in Bactria*

There is as yet no primary evidence whatsoever that Buddhism was cultivated in Bactria proper before the middle of the first century AD. But from the first Kuṣāṇa king, Kujula Kadphises, onwards, the Kuṣāṇas

¹⁰ For instance *byxš-* “to beg” < *bhikṣu-*; *nbr’n* “paradise” < *nirvāṇa-*; *zmbwdyg* “earth” < *jambudvīpa-* (Asmussen 1965, p. 136; Sundermann 1982). See further Sims-Williams 1979.

¹¹ Since Masson 1963; see recently Filanovič & Usmanova 1996.

¹² Callieri 1996, esp. pp. 397f. See also Vorob’eva-Desjatovskaja 1999.

¹³ Litvinskij 1968, p. 31; Staviskij 1990; Pugačenkova & Usmanova 1995, esp. p. 56. All the latter authors insist that in the earliest layer of the *stūpa*, coins of Šāpuhr II (309–379) have been found, so that the *stūpa* cannot be of the Kuṣāṇa period.

¹⁴ Litvinskij 1967. The *Mahāvamsa* (Great Chronicle) is a Pāli chronicle reporting the history of Sri Lanka from the time of the Buddha to the reign of king Mahāsena (4th century).

reigned upon a culturally dual monarchy across the Hindukush, uniting Bactria and Northern India (Kapiśa, Gandhāra and the Gangetic plain) where Buddhism had flourished since at least the reign of the Mauryan king Aśoka (r. 268–231 BC).¹⁵

2.2.1. *Buddhism among Iranians in India*

Several Iranian dynasties in India (the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians) seized parts of Gandhāra and Northern India (as far as Mathurā) after 90 BC. Under the Śakas and their vassals, particularly from Azes onwards (58 BC) the Buddhist donations grew considerably and Buddha was depicted for the first time.¹⁶ Whereas several inscriptions acknowledge the generosity of Iranian rulers, princes, officials or subordinates,¹⁷ none does so for the Kuṣāṇa kings and princes themselves.¹⁸ The Kuṣāṇas thus inherited in their newly seized Indian territories a tradition of at least sponsorship towards Buddhism (as well as towards Hinduism) and under their reign Buddhism went on thriving in India. The political unification of Bactria and Northern India and the peace it provided must have facilitated the journey of preachers or monks from India to Bactria.

¹⁵ Lamotte 1958, pp. 365ff. Missions to Northwestern India and Bactria were attributed to the fictitious figure of Madhyāntika.

¹⁶ Coins found in the necropolis of Tilia Tepe in northern Afghanistan, which may date as early as 50 BC, show a bearded man (iconographically a Zeus? or a Heracles?) holding a wheel with the inscription “he who sets in motion the Wheel of the Law”. This bearded man must be the Buddha: it is clearly an early, not yet standardised and isolated attempt to represent him. At least from 20 AD onwards, representations of the Buddha are found in abundance, see Fussman 1987, pp. 71 and 77. At about the same time seated Buddhas appeared in Mathurā, in the Kuṣāṇa Empire, but outside Bactria (van Lohuizen – de Leeuw 1981). See also van Lohuizen – De Leeuw 1949, p. 87.

¹⁷ Before the Kuṣāṇas, numerous kings had made donations (for instance the Copper Plate of Taxila, donated by king Liaka Kusulaka). Under the Kuṣāṇas, some officials, even Bactrian ones, did the same. For instance, Vaḡamarega (*Βαγομαρηγο) built a *vihāra* which was dubbed after him, the *Vaḡamariḡavihāra* (CIInd II:2, lxxxvi).

¹⁸ The Shāh-jī-kī Dherī reliquary, found in a monastery near the present Peshawar and sometimes seen as a proof of Buddhist support by the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniška, is in fact a perfume-box which was commissioned under the reign of Kaniška by two junior monks, in no way by Kaniška himself—a fact which accounts for the crude work, see Fussman 1987, p. 79. All historical inferences drawn from this casket are void. See Falk 2002.

2.2.2. *The Kuṣāṇa Reign*

Buddhism in Bactria

Not a lot is known about the first Buddhist missions to Bactria. At first, the missions were purely oral: the early libraries (especially the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments) did not contain many *sūtras*, but rather canvases for predication.¹⁹ Also, we cannot know from where the monks came in Bactria: from Gandhāra to be sure,²⁰ but probably also from the Central Gangetic parts of India. The absence of preserved Bactrian Buddhist texts prior to the fifth century²¹ and of manuscripts from Termez written in the Kharoṣṭhī script obscures any conclusion. However, in Bamiyan, the manuscripts of the Schøyen collection include, besides more than 130 Kharoṣṭhī fragments (at least thirty of which may be Mahāyānic), thousands of Brāhmī fragments of the third century (MSC I, pp. 1ff.) and more frequently the fourth or fifth, on palm-leaves. This clearly shows that the Schøyen manuscripts belong to a tradition that was at least originally independent from Gandhāra. In the third century, Kharoṣṭhī was still in use in Gandhāra, and palm-leaves, possibly blank,²² had to be imported from Central India.

It is unclear whether the “Western” translators of Buddhist treatises into Chinese who were given the family name Zhi 支 (for “Yuezhi 月支”, i.e. Kuṣāṇa) were in fact Bactrian, and even if they were really of Bactrian ascendancy, whether they considered themselves to be Bactrian.²³

¹⁹ Salomon 1999a, p. 24 and Sander 1991, pp. 141f. *Sūtras* were mostly learnt by heart: Faxian, T.2085.51.864b17–19, 21 (Giles 1965, p. 64): “Fa-hsien’s object was to get copies of the Disciplines; but in the various countries of Northern India these were handed down orally from one Patriarch to another, there being no written volume which he could copy. Therefore he extended his journey as far as Central India [...]; as to the other texts, the Eighteen Schools have each one the commentary of its own Patriarch.” Xuanzang praised the monks of Kashgar thus: “Without understanding the principles, they recite many religious chants; therefore there are many who can say throughout the three *Piṭakas* and the *Vibhāṣā*” (T.2087.51.942c20–21; Beal, 1884, book 12, p. 307). Buddhayaśas impressed the Chinese by reciting and translating the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* by heart. See *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), T.2059.50.334b15–19; Shih 1968, p. 89. Cf. Lévi 1915; Lamotte 1958, p. 164.

²⁰ The Indian loanwords in Bactrian and Sogdian point to a Gāndhārī origin.

²¹ The Ayrtaṃ inscription from the fourth year of Huviška (ca. 110 or 140), engraved on behalf of a dignitary named Šodia (< *Fšū-dajah-?), is too fragmentary to be understood; whereas it was engraved around a *stūpa*, it mentions a *βαρολαγγο* (“temple to the <Mazdean> gods”).

²² Cf. Sander 1991, p. 138. At least one case of palm-leaves brought in from and written in Gandhāra or the Tarim Basin can be made out: the Kharoṣṭhī fragment of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* on palm-leaf in the Oldenburg collections. See Litvinsky et al. 1996, p. 435.

²³ This uncertainty concerns also figures like the Buddhist monk from Termez of the

It is all the more difficult to speak of Bactrian or Iranian peculiarities of Buddhism. Most schools attested in Gāndhāra have also left manuscripts in Bactria.²⁴ It was once surmised²⁵ that Mahāyāna emerged first in Gandhāra, and especially among, or in contact with Iranians, albeit the Mahāyānists themselves rather claimed to issue from the Gangetic Mahāsāṃghika. It is true that all “Yuezhi” early translators of Buddhist works in Chinese, such as Zhi Loujiachan 支婁迦讖 (Lokakṣema),²⁶ Zhi Qian 支謙, Zhi Liang 支亮, Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa), translated as early as 170 AD Mahāyāna works. But 170 AD is already ca. two centuries after the emergence of Mahāyāna: provided these translators brought these works from Bactria, they prove at best that Mahāyāna had by then reached Bactria. The general move towards personal devotion (*bhakti*), often seen as a defining characteristic of Mahāyāna, constituted at the eve of the Christian era a general trend in the whole of India, and was by no means restricted to Buddhism since it can also be found in Kṛṣṇaism and Śivaism. If Mahāyāna is but the crystallisation of tendencies incipient from the very beginning of Buddhism,²⁷ such ideas were in the air everywhere without the help of Iranians.²⁸ To ascribe it to foreign influences one needs not only vague similarities, but real “smoking guns”, that is precise parallelisms or borrowings. In an indubitable case of a Mazdean influenced text such as the (much later) Sogdian *Vessantara Jātaka*, Mazdean gods with their local names are quoted (see further). Such proofs are wanting in the case of the Mahāyāna.²⁹

Kuṣāṇa epoch, named Dharmamitra, who is said to be the author of a lost Sanskrit treatise translated in Tibetan. Cf. Rerix 1963, p. 122 [non uidi].

²⁴ To the Mahāsāṃghika school belong all Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions which mention a Buddhist school so far found in Bactria—all from the vicinity of Termez. See Vorob’eva-Desjatovskaja 1983, p. 35 n. 14, p. 42 n. 11 (from Fajaz-tepe); cf. also p. 31 n. 2, p. 39 nn. 23, 25, p. 40 n. 30 (from Kara-Tepe), as well as Brāhmī inscriptions from Fajaz Tepe (Vorob’eva-Desjatovskaja 1974, p. 117) and Bactrian graffiti from one temple in Kara-Tepe (5th century?). The later Brāhmī manuscripts (5th–7th century) on birch-bark from Zang-Tepe and Bairam-Ali seem to be *Prātimokṣasūtras* of the Sarvāstivādins. The Qunduz vase (3rd century?, cf. Fussman 1974, pp. 58–61) is Dharmaguptaka. The Bactrian manuscript Schøyen 2419/1–2 (5th century?), found probably in Bamiyan, belongs to the Mahāyāna, whereas the fragments 5 and 7 of Bamiyan found by Hackin in 1928 were Mahāsāṃghika. See Roth 1980, p. 83; von Hinüber 1989a, p. 343.

²⁵ Pelliot 1912, p. 107; Lamotte 1954; 1958, pp. 550f. (with bibliography).

²⁶ He is credited with the introduction of Mahāyāna in China. Cf. Zürcher 1959, vol. 1, p. 35.

²⁷ Fussman 1994, p. 18.

²⁸ See also Scott 1990.

²⁹ Fussman 1994, pp. 36–38 for the detailed demonstration.

Were the Kuṣāṇas Buddhists?

The Kuṣāṇa epoch is characterised by an Indian cultural and particularly iconographic influx in Bactria. This influx is in fact more Hindu than Buddhist. Tokens of such an influence are legal terms such as *ραζογολο* “royal tribunal” < Skt. *rājakula*- “royal court”, or *παρμυανο* “authoritative” < *pramāṇa*-. In Dilberjin, a fresco portraying Śiva with Parvatī was painted in a temple dedicated to the Dioscures. As a matter of fact, some of the divinities with a non-Greek name pictured on the Kuṣāṇa coins³⁰ follow Greek iconographical conventions while others follow Hindu ones. Gods with four arms appear on seals.³¹ All coins of king Vima Kadphises portray Śiva accosted by a bull with a Kharoṣṭhi dedication borrowing its vocabulary to the Śivaite cult.³² Fussman³³ concluded, understandably, that Vima Kadphises was a Śivaite. However, Foucher³⁴ had already called for prudence. In fact, Vima was depicted in the Mazdean temple in Rabatak (Rabatak 13). And the iconographical Śiva on Vima’s coins was a Bactrian god named *On̄po*. Now the Sogdian correspondent of *On̄po*, *Wēšparkar*, was identified as Śiva.³⁵ Still, the etymology of *Wēšparkar* (Avestan *Vaiiūš uparō-kai-riiō*) and *Wēšparkar*’s function as patron of the air, identified with the *spiritus vivens* in the Manichaean fragment M 178, 106, ensure that *Wēšparkar* was in fact the Avestan *Vaiiu*. Since it is highly unlikely that *On̄po* and its homonym *Wēšparkar* are not one and the same god,³⁶ the religious affiliation of Vima Kadphises must be understood in another way than Fussman did.³⁷ As the supreme king of India, Vima Kadphises sought the protection of the mightiest god, Śiva; but for his Iranian

³⁰ A good overview of the types of Kuṣāṇa coins is Göbl 1984.

³¹ Humbach 1974.

³² *Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaiṣvararasa mahiṣvarasa Hima-kapṭiśasa* “Of the great king, king of kings, lord of the whole word, great lord (or “devout of the Great Lord” = Śiva), Vima Kadphises”.

³³ Schlumberger, Le Berre & Fussman 1983, pp. 149f.; Fussman 1989b, p. 199.

³⁴ Foucher 1905–1951, vol. 2, p. 519.

³⁵ The Sogdian version of the *Vessantara Jātaka* (910–935) four times calls “*Wēšparkar*” a major deity with three faces, which corresponds to Mahādeva (Sogd. *Mγtyβ*) in the Sogdian parallel god-list P 8. This can hardly be anyone else than Śiva, see Humbach 1975, p. 403. Moreover, *wyšprkr* is written on a Penjikent fresco (8th century) depicting a three-headed Śiva, see Maršak apud Azarpay 1981, pp. 29f.; Maršak 1990.

³⁶ According to Tanabe 1991/1992, *On̄po* was a Wind-god for the Kuṣāṇas as well. Unfortunately, his iconographical arguments are disputable, (Lo Muzio 1995–1996, p. 170 n. 8). See further Grenet 1994, p. 43. *Vaiiu*’s main function is not naturalistic.

³⁷ It is no parsimonious hypothesis to imagine that the Kuṣāṇas, an Iranian dynasty, converted to Śivaism under Vima Kadphises and returned to Mazdeism under his son Kaniška.

subjects the image of Śiva was nothing but an iconographic garb for a Mazdean deity.³⁸ Such an amphibology is explicit in the Rabatak inscription, where over the list of predominantly Mazdean gods (but with some Hindu intruders), a line was added: *ο οδο μαασηνο ριζδι οδο βιζαγο ριζδι* “and he (Ooηbo?) is called Mahāsena (= Śiva) and he is called Viśākha”.³⁹ The system of *interpretationes hinduicae* was probably created in Bactria before Vima Kadphises. If not, the Śiva-coins bearing the legend Oηbo, which are most numerous in the Kuṣāṇa coinage and were seen by the eyes of every Bactrian, would have been incomprehensible.

Vima's Śivaist iconography was not necessarily dictated by hypocrisy or political adaptation to local situations in the Achaemenids' manner, who let themselves be depicted as Pharaohs and performed rites to Marduk or Apis. He may have perceived no difference between Śiva and Vaiiu. In India, a Mazdean temple curator (*bakanapati*)⁴⁰ could bestow a Hindu temple (*devakula*); its restorer, a Kuṣāṇa general, could adorn it with statues of a Kuṣāṇa king (Huviška?; from Huviška) and proclaim he owed his sovereignty to Śiva.⁴¹ Kaniška's (from Kaniška) second successor Vasudeva bore a Viṣṇuist name.⁴² Such equivalences between Mazdeism and Hinduism, in Kuṣāṇa Bactria as well as later in seventh century Sogdiana,⁴³ presuppose intense dealings and probably immigrations that go back to the Indo-Greek realms. Buddhism could thus have come into Bactria in the swarm of the Indian flow.

In view of the above data the question arises whether the spread of Buddhism in Bactria followed a spontaneous, osmotic course, or whether the Kuṣāṇas favoured it actively? Long after the wane of the Kuṣāṇa reign, the Sarvāstivādin tradition⁴⁴ depicted the Kuṣāṇas as active promoters of Buddhism. They especially favoured king Kaniška, who according to Xuanzang summoned the Kashmir council, the misnamed Kaniška council, which Frauwallner (1952, pp. 250–256)⁴⁵

³⁸ The *interpretatio* theory was already put forward by Rosenfield 1967, pp. 247 and 249, although he did not consider Oηbo to be an Iranian god.

³⁹ Sims-Williams 1998, p. 82.

⁴⁰ According to Henning 1965b, pp. 250–252, *bakanapati* does not designate a lay servant but a priestly class, perhaps higher than the *magus*.

⁴¹ Māt inscription. See Fussman 1998, pp. 605–614.

⁴² Rosenfield 1967, p. 104. See further Rapin 1995, pp. 278–281.

⁴³ Nana's temple in Penjikent sheltered a Śivaist chapel. Cf. Grenet 1994, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Upon the whole legend, see Lévi 1896, vol. 1, pp. 444ff. and Lüders 1926. La Vallée Poussin 1930, pp. 324–328, already raised doubt and enlisted some discrepancies.

⁴⁵ See already La Vallée-Poussin 1930, pp. 326ff.

showed to be nothing else than a Sarvāstivādin synod. Elaborating this tradition, Salomon (1999a, pp. 10 and 180f.)⁴⁶ stated that the Indo-Scythians were favourable to the Dharmaguptakas, whereas the Kuṣāṇas inclined to the Sarvāstivāda sect. Salomon thus called for a reappraisal of the role of the Indo-Scythians to account for the prevalence of the Dharmaguptaka sect among the Gāndhārī manuscript remains recently found in Haḍḍa, near the present-day Jalalabad (the so-called British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments).⁴⁷

Let alone that not only the Sarvāstivādins but even Mahāyānists paid tribute to the Kuṣāṇas and were fostered by them,⁴⁸ and let alone still that Kaniṣka is not mentioned by Paramārtha (T.2049) in the history of the Kashmir council and that the colophon of the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāsāstra* (T.1545)⁴⁹ only indicates that the council occurred under his reign, Salomon was apparently not aware of the fact made clear since the discovery of the dynastic temple in Surkh Kotal that the Kuṣāṇas were not Buddhists, but Mazdeans. In the coins they issued, Buddha was struck on but two rare types of gold coins, only under Kaniṣka, whereas Nana, the Eastern Iranian great goddess, Vaiiū or Mithra are found in hoards in very numerous quantities. Buddha thus fares hardly better than foreign deities like Horus, Serapis or Skanda-Kumara.

The U-shaped Buddhist sanctuary in Dalverdzin has aisles containing stucco statues with the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* on one side and lay donors with a prince in Kuṣāṇa dress, court ladies and a magnate on the other. This site dates from Kaniṣka or his predecessor (Vima Kadphises) and provides contemporary testimony of the good relations between the nobility and the Buddhists, but there is no indication as to the person who erected it. A local aristocrat is as good a candidate as the central power. To be true, a big monastery in Peshawar (in Gandhāra!) was ascribed to Kaniṣka by a tradition reported by Xuanzang.⁵⁰ More than fifteen temples, *vihāras* and *stūpas*, some of them of great dimensions, were ascribed to the Kuṣāṇa era in Bactria by Soviet archaeologists⁵¹

⁴⁶ See a similar reasoning in Konow 1929, p. lxxix.

⁴⁷ These ca. 100 fragments from more than 33 manuscripts (upon which Salomon 1999a) date from the first century AD. They were perhaps relegated to a pot dedicated to Dharmaguptakas, since they are worn out and may have been deemed unusable.

⁴⁸ Cf. note 58.

⁴⁹ “Great Commentarial Treatise on *Abhidharma*”, a commentary written in Kashmir around the second century AD.

⁵⁰ T.2087.51.880b15–881a10. Cf. Beal 1884, book 2, pp. 103–109.

⁵¹ See Staviskij 1989, pp. 203–215 and 263–279 et passim.

and even in midtown Termez a small temple has been reported.⁵² The datings, however, are under discussion. Moreover, the only witnesses⁵³ that the Kuṣāṇas personally sponsored these buildings are the traditions reported by Xuanzang and three Kharoṣṭhī *ostraca* from Kara-tepe (near Termez) provided one can prove that they really bear the Indo-Bactrian hybrid term *Khadevakavihara* “royal *vihāra*”.⁵⁴ And even if the Kuṣāṇas actually did support Buddhism, it proves nothing concerning their religious affiliation: the *mahakṣatrapā* Kharapallana is mentioned in the Sarnath inscription as the patron of the *stūpa*, but fortunately his seal is conserved, which bears the Iranian deities Xvarənah and Aši Varəuhī.⁵⁵ The Kuṣāṇas and their officials thus may have supported as sponsors the construction of religious buildings of all prominent religions. There is no reason to surmise that the Kuṣāṇas’ Buddhist “convictions” went further and that they pushed forward one school rather than another. No Sarvāstivāda or Dharmaguptaka hegemony is found in Bactrian Buddhism.

Must then the whole Buddhist lore around Kaniška (none of which is earlier than the fifth century) be a pious fake? Most Bactrian Mazdeans, including the Kuṣāṇas, probably did not consider Buddhism as a rival or contradictory to Mazdeism. Later evidence documents that Buddha could also have a place in a Mazdean pantheon. For instance, over the head of a painted Buddha in Termez, the overtly syncretistic name *Βοδδομαζδο* was written (perhaps later).⁵⁶ The Eastern Mazdean pantheon was not a closed one and could integrate Buddha, as an *ignotum deum*.

On the other hand, to the eyes of Buddhist (probably Hīmayāna) monks for which the sole definite conversion token was to become a monk oneself, there was but a faint difference between a devout lay Buddhist, a sympathiser and a mere tolerant ruler who eventually sponsored religious buildings of all the faiths of his multiethnic empire: all were equally *upāsakas* (lay followers) from whom no special ethical behaviour or formal declaration was required.⁵⁷ Since Kaniška

⁵² Leriche, Pidaev & Généquand 2002, pp. 408f. This interpretation is contested (Fussman, personal communication), but further finds have been released.

⁵³ The so-called “Kaniška reliquary” bears in fact no relation to Kaniška. Cf. note 18.

⁵⁴ According to Vertogradova 1982.

⁵⁵ Staviskij 1986, pp. 141f.

⁵⁶ Stavisky 1988, p. 1400.

⁵⁷ Fussman 1994, p. 25.

had been the most powerful sovereign of India since Aśoka and could emerge in the Buddhist legends, the *avadānas*, as a *de facto* major protector of Buddhism, he was later ascribed *bona fide* all possible patronages. Such dignity was not denied to his offspring, since Kaniṣka's son, king Huviṣka, was dubbed a promoter of Mahāyāna.⁵⁸

Buddhism after the Kuṣāṇas

Buddhism thrived in Bactria also after the Kuṣāṇa empire. The manuscripts found around Termez date from the Hephthalite period and the Great Buddhas of Bamiyan were erected under the Hephthalites.⁵⁹ The monastery of Ajīna was built during the seventh and eighth centuries. Xuanzang noted ten monasteries in Termez (with 1,000 monks), five in Čayānyān, two in Sumān (both with “a few monks”), three in Kubāḍyān (with 100 monks), none in Waxš, Xottal, Kumiḍ, Baylān, ten in Xulm (with 500 monks), 100 in Bactres (with 3,000 monks, all Hīnayāna), ten in Gaz (with 300 Sarvāstivāda monks), 10 in Bamiyan (with 1,000 monks).⁶⁰ For comparison, in the kingdom of Kapiśa, Xuanzang counted 6000 monks.⁶¹ Xuanzang's approximate numbers give the impression that Buddhism was cultivated in Bactria, but not everywhere, and not as the sole religion. An interesting example is a Bactrian contract (BD VI. 24), written in 741 AD by a Mazdean “in the presence of the God Oxus”. It stipulates that the purchaser of a piece of land may convert it to the purpose of his choice, “a bride-price, dowry, *viḥāra* or Mazdean temple, *daxma* or crematorium”. The contract bespeaks that Buddhism was popular enough to have its practices taken in consideration as possibilities in the clauses of a profane estate sale contract. Still, the Mazdean scribe seems to have remained apathetic as to the choice between Mazdeism and Buddhism. Likewise, although the Hephthalites do not seem to have been Buddhists, Buddhism was introduced or reintroduced under their dominion in Margiana⁶² and Sogdiana.⁶³

⁵⁸ Cf. an *avadāna* on a palm-leaf of the fourth century from the Schøyen collection, MSC III, p. 256 = MSC 2378/9 v 2.

⁵⁹ Rhie 1999–2002, vol. 1, pp. 232f., holds that they were already erected under the Chionites.

⁶⁰ T.2087.51.872a21–873a9.

⁶¹ T.2087.51.873c19.

⁶² Callieri 1996.

⁶³ La Vaissière 2002, p. 84.

2.3. *Buddhism in Sogdiana and among Sogdians (100 AD–1000 AD)*

The first datable reference to Buddhism in Sogdiana *might* be the name Ƣōtamsāc (*Ƣwt'ms'c*) “Venerator of Gotam” in the third *Ancient Letter* (313 AD). The puzzling history of Buddhism in Sogdiana is the result of the blatant discrepancy between the philological and the archaeological evidence about Sogdian Buddhism.

2.3.1. *Buddhism in Sogdiana*

As a matter of fact, whereas in Kucha, Turfan and elsewhere in China numerous Sogdian Buddhist inscriptions and manuscripts, dating from the seventh to the eleventh century, have been found, archaeology has brought to light no Buddhist building and only very few inscriptions⁶⁴ from Sogdiana. Out of hundreds of paintings (mostly dating from 720–740), only a handful represent Buddha: one in Semirečie, three in Penjikent⁶⁵, and one in Kar-Namak. Furthermore, there is one medallion in clay found in Tibet. One of the Penjikent frescoes, of small scale, adorned an impost over a door (no prestigious place) in a private house. In the same house, a wall limned a pair of Mazdean deities (X'arənah and Aši). The fresco also has iconographical mistakes, so that it is clear that the patron or the painter had but an indirect knowledge of Buddhism and held Buddha to be a subordinate genius. Also, in Semirečie, where the Sogdians (and later the Turks) were mostly Christians, the only trace of Buddhism is two gilt bronze plates with Chinese iconography. One of the plates found in Tokmak shows on the *recto* Buddha, on the *verso* probably a fox-headed X'arənah and Aši (both Mazdean deities).⁶⁶ And finally, the older Buddhist loan-words from Gāndhārī in Sogdian are few and pertain only to external phenomena. They point to a very superficial acquaintance with Buddhism.⁶⁷

The history of Buddhism in Sogdiana is thus at first glance simple: a complete failure. During the Chionite and Hephthalite dominion over Sogdiana (402–560), Buddhists (from Bactria?) seem to have attempted

⁶⁴ Two inscriptions from Penjikent, one doubtful from Afrasyab, see Vorob'eva-Desjatovskaja 1984, pp. 47f. nn. 51–53.

⁶⁵ An impost (Maršak 1990, pp. 304f.), a head (Maršak & Raspopova 1997–1998) and one still unpublished (friendly communication of F. Grenet).

⁶⁶ Belenizki 1968, p. 140 fig. 66f.

⁶⁷ E.g., *Ƣwt* “Buddha”, *βrx'r* “vihāra”, *βws'ntk* “fast”. See also Tremblay 2001, pp. 69f. n. 115.

to set foot in Sogdiana. This attempt has left two traces: (1) the name of the city of Bukhara was slightly modified to resemble *θrx'r* [*θṛxār*] “vihāra”.⁶⁸ (2) The sole mention of Buddhists in Sogdiana is to be found in the biography of Xuanzang: two novices were attacked by fire when they attempted to worship Buddha in an empty monastery!⁶⁹

It is therefore all the more amazing that art iconographers claim that Buddhism prospered in Sogdiana at least up to the seventh century. The most positive statement is Marshak's (apud Azarpay 1981, p. 28): “Buddhism, which obtained wide recognition, penetrated Sogdiana in the first centuries AD. Buddhism took such firm root in Sogdiana that a number of Buddhist terms entered the Sogdian language and were later used by the Manichaeans in their own religious texts”. Five arguments have been adduced in favour of such a statement:

1. Some iconographic motives in Sogdian painting have been connected to Buddhist representations: for instance, the riding kings on temple II at Penjikent, or the domed structures depicted in some paintings.⁷⁰ But even if the connexion stands scrutiny, we should not forget that the Sogdian iconography was deeply renewed during the Hephthalite period and was bound to borrow from Bactria. Roman, Byzantine or Mesopotamian influences can be traced as well.⁷¹ An iconographic motif proves nothing of religious affiliation.

2. Mazdean customs bear traces of Indian influence: umbrella-shaped altars with hanging bells,⁷² four-armed deities, systematic *interpretatio indica* of the gods through Indian counterparts. But the attribution of these unquestionably Indian influences to Sogdian Buddhism comes short by two facts. Firstly, the *interpretationes* are already present on Kuṣaṇa coins and betray contacts between Mazdeism and Buddhism in Bactria rather than in Sogdiana. Secondly, an Indian influence does by no means imply a Buddhist influence: a Hindu one is more appropriate to Mazdeism. The fact that the Sogdian interpreter of the Buddhist text *Vessantara Jātaka* could mechanically replace Indra, Śiva and Brahma of his *Vorlage* with the Mazdean gods Ahura Mazdā, Vaiiū and Zurvan

⁶⁸ Tremblay 2003, pp. 122f.

⁶⁹ T.2053.50.227c10–22, tr. Li 1995, pp. 44–45.

⁷⁰ Naymark 2001, pp. 313–322, esp. 320. Temple II was even misinterpreted as a Buddhist temple (Verardi 1982, pp. 275–280).

⁷¹ Naymark 2001, esp. pp. 79–80 (*Lupa romana*); pp. 345–388 (Joseph re-used as a Mazdean god).

⁷² Grenet 1994, p. 48 and fig. 15.

only means that these equivalences were common to all Sogdians, not that he or his milieu invented them.

3. Of the four faiths which yielded texts in Sogdian, Buddhism is the best represented in the extant manuscripts. Moreover, some of these manuscripts are written in a more archaic stage of Sogdian than the Manichaean or Christian texts (but later than the *Ancient Letters*). This argument seems decisive. However, the colophons do not mention Sogdiana, but rather the Turfan basin and above all China as the place where the manuscripts were copied.⁷³ All manuscripts were found either in Turfan or in Dunhuang, that is at least 2,000 km east of Sogdiana. Moreover, all identified Sogdian texts (except the *Vessantara Jātaka* and P.2) were slavishly translated from Chinese and contain numerous Chinese calques.⁷⁴

4. The Manichaean propaganda in Sogdian addressed Buddhists, since it mimicked the Buddhist terminology.⁷⁵ But most Manichaean texts were likewise written in Turfan, far from Sogdiana, in a place where one can expect many Sogdians to have been Buddhists.

5. Under the earliest masters and translators of Chinese Buddhism (2nd–4th century) not a few bore a family name referring to Samarkand or Kanka, a fact which seems puzzling if the Sogdians were so reluctant to adopt Buddhism. See, for instance, Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 (end of the 2nd century), whose family had settled in China for at least one generation; Kang Senghui 康僧會, who was born in Jiaozhi 交趾 (a region in the northern part of Vietnam, near present-day Hanoi), where his father, born in a family living in India for generations, had moved to, and who arrived at the capital of the Chinese kingdom of Wu 吳 (222–280 AD), Jianye 建業 (near Nanjing), in 247; Kang Sengyuan 康僧淵 who fled from the north of China, where he was born, to the Southern Chinese town of Jiankang 健康 (present-day Nanjing) shortly after 326; or Kang Falang 康法朗 (second half 3rd century) who came from Zhongshan 中山, travelled to the Western Regions, and finally returned to China where he settled again at Zhongshan with several hundred disciples.⁷⁶ These summarised biographical data clearly show

⁷³ P.2 was copied in Chang'an, the "Sūtra upon the Intoxicating Drinks" in Luoyang, P.8 at Dunhuang; the Berlin *Vajracchedikā* in Turfan (Tremblay 2001, p. 71).

⁷⁴ Weller 1935ab; 1936; 1937a; 1937–1938; *BST*, pp. 158ff.

⁷⁵ Asmussen 1965, pp. 136–147.

⁷⁶ For more details, see Zürcher 1959.

that these “Sogdians” did not come from Sogdiana at all, long since left by their families, but from China proper.⁷⁷ From the Han epoch onward, numerous Sogdians settled in China where they often became part of the gentry.⁷⁸ These “Sogdians” from China were probably polyglots, and at least some of them were Buddhists, but one cannot extrapolate from them to Sogdiana’s culture.

In this context, attention should be drawn to the earliest translator of Buddhist texts, the famous translator An Shigao 安世高, who settled at Luoyang in 148 AD, and who is often said to have been a Parthian since his name, *An*, is an abridgment of *Anxi* < *Aršak*, the dynastic name of the Arsacids. Forte (1995) has shown that the Chinese texts mention An Shigao in two totally different contexts: (1) rather precisely, as the son of a king, sent as a hostage to the court of China, where he founded a family of foreign merchants and high officials which still furnished ministers in the seventh century and (2) rather vaguely in Buddhist accounts, as the son of the king of An, who flew to China and became something of a astrologue who initiated the translation of Indian literacy. No sources make him definitely a monk (Forte 1995, pp. 74ff.) and the fact that he had offspring, although it constitutes no firm proof, does not point towards this direction. An Shigao cannot have originated from the imperial family of Parthia, who had no regular relations with China⁷⁹ and was separated from it by Sogdiana or the Kuṣāṇa empire. The assumption that An Shigao would issue from Parthian petty kingdoms (e.g., the Surens in Sīstan?) is hardly more satisfying, since the geographical distance remains enormous and no diplomatic relations are attested. An Shigao’s connexion with putative Indo-Parthians⁸⁰ is completely speculative.

An Shigao’s name actually may point to Central Asia or Bactria. In fact, the sources say that Shigao was no name, but his title or style (*zi*), while his personal name was Qing 清. Shigao 世高 represents Old Chinese (OC) **lāps*/*lāb*⁸¹-*kauh* (> Early Middle Chinese (EMC) **ciəŋ*^h

⁷⁷ See also Grenet 1996a, pp. 67ff.

⁷⁸ Pulleyblank 1952, pp. 41ff.; p. 134 n. 7. An Shigao’s family is a further example (cf. *infra*).

⁷⁹ The evidence has hardly grown since Hirth 1899; cf. Leslie & Gardiner 1996, pp. 251f.; Posch 1998.

⁸⁰ Such a hypothesis was expressly formulated by Aramaki & Kominami 1993, pp. 229–230 n. 30.

⁸¹ Pulleyblank 1962, p. 234, corrected along the lines of Pulleyblank 1973, p. 120.

[*śāyḥ?*]-*kaw*) which may render⁸² the well-known Yuezhi title **ṣabxu*⁸³ (Bactrian *ζαροο*,⁸⁴ *ζαβοχο*, Greek *ζαονς*, *ζαοον* under Kujula Kadphises, Gāndhārī *jāvukha*, *jaiiva*, *yavuga*, Nīya Prakrit (Krorainic) *yapgu*-).

It should also be taken into account that there is another region called An by the Chinese, at least in later texts, and that is Bukhara. Bukhara stood on the road of Parthia and was assimilated to it in the same way the Latins called the Hellenes *Graeci*. An Shigao may have been a nobleman, and perhaps a prince from Bukhara.⁸⁵ After all, China had regular relations with Bukhara as early as 126 AD, and some members of the royal house of Bukhara were later considered by Chinese sources as An Shigao's relatives (Forte 1995, pp. 34f.). It may be the result of a simple confusion or it may indicate that An Shigao's family was still felt to be related to Bukhara in the sixth century.

2.3.2. *Sogdian Buddhism in China*

Despite the presence of so many Sogdians in China, one should be careful not to jump to the conclusion that Sogdians introduced Buddhism in China. As a matter of fact, whereas the Sogdians predominate among the earliest translators, the introduction of Buddhism was ascribed to the Yuezhi.⁸⁶ The earliest somewhat reliable mention of Buddhists in China depicts foreign monks in a feudal court at Pengcheng 彭城 (present-day Xuzhou 徐州 in northwestern Jiangsu), a city along a commercial route.⁸⁷ This local centre contrasts with the milieu where the Sogdian translators flourished: the Chinese capitals, such as Luoyang. During the second and third centuries, the Sogdians thus seem not to have been conspicuous as religious propagandists, but as official

⁸² Following remarks are necessary: (1) OC **ǵ* (rectius **λ* with Pulleyblank 1973, p. 117) approaches *ś* in Han-dynasty renderings of foreign words in Chinese (Pulleyblank 1962, p. 116; 1983, p. 84), but *ś* cannot be excluded; (2) OC **h* renders open syllables (Pulleyblank 1962, p. 213); (3) in case < **λaps* really ended in *-s in the Han period, it does not hamper the match, since the suffix -s was not always considered in renderings (Pulleyblank 1962, p. 219); (4) initial OC **k*^o may render either *x* or *kh*, since *x* or *h* did not exist as initials in Old Chinese.

⁸³ **ṣabxu* is itself a loan-word from Xiongnu, ultimately borrowed from Chinese *xihou* 翕侯 “marquess allied <with China>” (Humbach 1966, pp. 24–28).

⁸⁴ Henning 1965a, p. 85.

⁸⁵ Already Kuwabara 1926.

⁸⁶ No matter how the details are to be understood, the first Buddhist teaching in China was ascribed to a “Yuezhi” (i.e., Kuṣāṇa) official or prince in 2 BC (discussion Zürcher, vol. 1, pp. 24f.). Even if this third century story is apocryphal, it betokens that to its author's and audience's eyes, Buddhism came from the Kuṣāṇa Empire.

⁸⁷ Zürcher 1959, vol. 1, p. 26.

interpreters, perhaps because they were the most numerous or the best organised western foreigners who permanently dwelled in China and who acted as *proxeni* for all western affairs, including Buddhism.⁸⁸ Some early colophons describe the translation procedure: a foreign monk, knowing no or very little Chinese, recited the text, which was translated by an interpreter, noted by Chinese monks and devoted laymen, and then commented upon.⁸⁹ The Chinese memorialists of Buddhism were probably more concerned with these interpreters who acclimatised Buddhism to the Chinese aristocratic circles, than with those that we would deem in the first instance to be the introducers of Buddhism on Chinese soil, namely Indian monks preaching among foreigners or bringing manuscripts. This can explain the relative rarity of natives of Kucha, Agni, Turfan or Loulan—all cities with far older Buddhist traditions than Sogdiana—among the early translators mentioned in Chinese records. The natives of these cities were probably more numerous among the common monks, and were mostly not official interpreters. Most “introducers” of Buddhism in this peculiar “translator” sense may have been Sogdians. It does not mean in any way that before the Sogdians translated texts, there were no Buddhists in China. It is even not improbable that the earliest Sogdian interpreters have only been converted to Buddhism in China, by Bactrians and Indians. Anyway, in Sogdiana, the Kuṣāṇa or Indian input is almost nil before the fifth century.⁹⁰

To sum up, Buddhist Sogdians lived mostly, and at the beginning probably solely, in China and in the Tarim Basin. Sogdian Buddhism is but a part of Chinese Buddhism and participates in all its tendencies, including Chan Buddhism.⁹¹ It also seems to have had strong magical-syncretistic tendencies: the Paris manuscript P.3, compiled to produce rain (an obsession in these dry lands), on the one hand advises using a *mntr* (the description of which makes clear that it was a *maṇḍala* probably borrowed from tantrism), but on the other hand also contains Mazdean terms (Sogd. *wṣ'pymtrw* 131 = Avestan *gandarəβō upāpō*) and a Mazdean

⁸⁸ About the connexion between early Buddhism and the *Da honglu* 大鴻臚, the minister controlling the foreign envoys under the Han, cf. Zürcher 1959, vol. 1, pp. 38f. The Chinese official in charge of Iranian cults did not bear a religious title, but was called *sabao* 薩寶 < EMC **sat-paw* < Sogd. *s'rtṣ'w* < **sārtha-pāyan-*, on Irano-Indian hybrid name for the “caravaneer” (Yoshida 1988, pp. 168–171).

⁸⁹ Zürcher 1959, vol. 1, p. 31.

⁹⁰ Grenet 1996, pp. 367–370; La Vaissière 2002, p. 167.

⁹¹ Yoshida 1996, p. 167.

hymn (*Yāsna*) to Wāt (*Wṛt*) the Wind-god. Moreover, it prescribes wearing a wolf-skin and to imitate a wolf, or to sacrifice animals such as frogs or calves. Practices comparable to those described in P.3 are mentioned in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 for Mazdean Sogdiana.⁹² Such a debased Buddhism, nurtured with Mazdeism or Daoism, fed a kind of religious pidgin strongly magical in character. A Mazdean-Daoist-Buddhist mixture spread outside Central Asia: Empress Dowager Ling (died 528) of the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–535), a Mongolian dynasty who had made Buddhism almost a state religion,⁹³ invited a “monk Mithra” (or a “monk of Mithra”), composed hymns in praise of the Sacred Fire, but at the same time built Buddha statues.⁹⁴

2.3.3. *Sogdian Buddhism as a “Colonial” Phenomenon*

The only counterargument for the origin of Sogdian Buddhism in emigrated colonies in China and in the Tarim Basin is that archaeological traces for Sogdian trade are wanting for the Kuṣāṇa period, so that Naymark (2001, pp. 68f.) even surmised that Sogdian emigration did not begin until the end of the third century, as a consequence of the Sassanian invasion. This view somewhat abuses of the *a silentio* argument and is contradicted by the evidence. Negative and positive refutations need to be taken into account:

Negative refutations

(i) Trade involved only a very low volume of goods, thus leaving but scant traces, if any. If it were not for the *Ancient Letters*, we would have no trace of Sogdian trade for the fourth century. In some respects, Sogdiana even stood outside the international Sogdian trade.⁹⁵ Sogdian merchants, for instance, made use of Persian gold coins, but these coins were rarely found in Sogdiana proper (where local bronze coins circulated).

(ii) From the first to the seventh century, the dominant cultures (not only in Central Asia, but in China as well) were Indian and Iranian, the borrowing one was China: there are many more Iranian loanwords

⁹² *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang, 618–906), vol. 20, scroll 221, p. 6244 (tr. Chavannes 1903, p. 135: “Le onzième mois, ils battent du tambour et dansent pour demander le froid”).

⁹³ Eberhard 1949, pp. 228–234, 236–237, 333–335; Satō 1978, pp. 39f.

⁹⁴ *Weishu* 魏書 (History of the Wei), vol. 2, scroll 13, pp. 337–340 (Liu Ts’un Yan 1976, pp. 13f.). About Daoism at the Wei court, see Mather 1979.

⁹⁵ La Vaissière 2002, p. 169.

in Chinese than vice versa.⁹⁶ Human contacts between Sogdiana and China did thus not necessarily result in a Chinese influence on the Sogdian culture.

(iii) Sassanians never invaded Sogdiana: there is no archaeological evidence of such an invasion and the so-called *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* I⁹⁷ (242–279) even explicitly exclude Sogdiana from his conquests.⁹⁸ Thus Naymark's hypothesis that the Northern road was opened by Sassanians loses any basis.

(iv) Sogdian immigrants did not only settle for trade, but—various Chinese sources insist—they were also farmers.⁹⁹ Naturally, a Sogdian agricultural colony could subsequently offer and mute to a resting place, or an embryo of market for western merchants.

Positive refutations

(v) Chinese biographies of Sogdians mention numerous immigration cases already in the second century, as for instance Kang Mengxiang (see above).

(vi) Archaeological and historical traces of early Sogdian trade are actually present, even though they cannot be called spectacular.¹⁰⁰ The oldest Sogdian graffiti (engraved by traders) in Shatial, on the Upper Indus, seem to be older than the *Ancient Letters*,¹⁰¹ thus dating from the third century. Sogdian merchants seem to have actually wandered across India at that time.¹⁰²

To sum up, one must never leave out of consideration the dichotomy between Sogdians in Sogdiana and Sogdians abroad, who partly adopted the customs of the local population but clung to their vernacular tongue. We can thus distinguish four kinds of Sogdian Buddhisms, all dependent on the countries where the colonies had settled:

⁹⁶ Laufer 1919; Schafer 1963.

⁹⁷ An inscription of the Sassanian ruler Sapor I on an ancient tower traditionally considered as a shrine of Zoroaster.

⁹⁸ Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Pulleyblank 1952; Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, pp. 164, 218f. and 255; Sims-Williams 1996, p. 60; Tremblay 2001, pp. 19, 20 n. 30, p. 99; Trombert 2002, pp. 550–554 (pointing to the role played by Sogdians in the speculative culture of wine—something intermediate between trade and peasantry).

¹⁰⁰ La Vaissière 2002, pp. 43–47. See also Menander, fragment no. 18 in Müller.

¹⁰¹ Sims-Williams 1997, p. 67.

¹⁰² On Sogdian trade with India, see now Fussman 1997, pp. 76ff., refuting Jettmar's hypothesis that Sogdians were forbidden to enter India (1991; 1997, pp. 94ff.).

(1) an Indian one in India, upon which we are informed merely through monks' biographies.

(2) a Chinese one in China and later in the Tarim Basin, beginning in the second century AD, to which we owe the great majority of the texts (translated from Chinese from approximately the fifth century onwards). Thus, even if Buddhism generally spread westwards (from India to China), it reached most Sogdians the other way around, from China.

(3) a Tocharian one in Sogdian trading centres in the Tarim oases, to which two texts are due and which seems to have remained rather limited. As a matter of fact, Sogdians had a greater influence upon Tocharians than the other way around.¹⁰³

(4) an Indo-Bactrian one in Sogdiana proper, which did not develop before the Hephthalites and proved abortive. The earliest Indian (scil. Gāndhārī) loan-words entered Sogdian through Parthian, not through Bactrian. This tradition *might* be reflected in the Sogdian *Vessantara Jātaka* (found in the Chinese town of Dunhuang).

3. BUDDHISM IN THE TARIM BASIN: KHOTAN, LOULAN, KUCHA, TURFAN, AGNI, KASHGAR (100 BC–850 AD)

The now dominant hypothesis on the propagation of Buddhism in Central Asia goes back to 1932 when E. Waldschmidt remarked that the names quoted in the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* (T.1),¹⁰⁴ which had been translated by the avowedly Dharmaguptaka monk Buddhayaśas (who also translated the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*), were not rendered from Sanskrit, but from a then still undetermined Prākṛit also found in the Khotan *Dharmapada*.¹⁰⁵ In 1946, Bailey identified this Prākṛit, which he named Gāndhārī, as corresponding to the language of most Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Northwestern India. Since then, a consensus has grown, which at least practically identifies the earliest Buddhist wave with Kharoṣṭhī, Kharoṣṭhī with Gāndhārī, and, which concerns us more directly, with the Dharmaguptaka school.¹⁰⁶ Even the scholars

¹⁰³ Tremblay 2001, pp. 69–71, with more details.

¹⁰⁴ I.e., the “Long Discourses”, one of the major sections of the *sūtrapīṭaka*.

¹⁰⁵ The *Dharmapada* is a sort of anthology of verses from various, mostly Buddhist, books. Salomon 1999a, p. 170, adduces a solid proof in favour of the use of the *Dharmapada* amongst Dharmaguptakas, but this does not exclude the possibility that other schools (such as the Kāśyapīyas, cf. Brough 1962, p. 45) followed the same tradition.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Brough 1962, pp. 44f.; Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 162–169.

who express some principal reservations continue to use the language as criterion for the determination of Buddhist schools.¹⁰⁷ According to this reasoning, the introduction of Buddhism in the Tarim Basin would be the work of the Dharmaguptaka school. At some time, this school and the Gāndhārī it resorted to would then have been ousted by Sanskrit and the Sarvāstivāda school (Kucha, Agni), or by the Mahāyāna movement (Khotan).

Waldschmidt's and Bernhard's hypothesis had the great merit of discerning strata among the evidence. The monastic archives which have been unearthed were closed or destroyed in 648 (Qizil caves near Kucha) or at the beginning of the eleventh century (Khotan), those in Turfan during the fifteenth century. This is not only remote from the period of the first missions, but there are definite traces of discontinuity in the tradition. For instance, the Khotan *Dharmapada*, some orthographical devices of Khotanese¹⁰⁸ and the not yet systematically plotted Gāndhārī loan words in Khotanese¹⁰⁹ betray indisputably that the first missions in Khotan included Dharmaguptakas and used a Kharoṣṭhī-written Gāndhārī. Now all other manuscripts from Khotan, and especially all manuscripts written in Khotanese, belong to the Mahāyāna, are written in the Brāhmī script, and were translated from Sanskrit. Only a few scraps (from Farhad Beg) go back as early as the fourth to sixth century. Nevertheless, the Dharmaguptaka hypothesis oversimplifies the facts:

1. The sectarian homogeneity is in fact illusory. The Chinese visitors noted that the city-states lodged monks of different schools. So, for instance, according to Faxian in 399/400,¹¹⁰ most of the Khotanese monks (and thus not all of them) were Mahāyāna monks, while Xuanzang was lodged in a Sarvāstivāda monastery when he visited Khotan.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Bernhard 1970, pp. 59–61: “It is, of course, true that a living language does not necessarily belong exclusively to one single sect or school, and it would hardly be necessary to make such a statement of the obvious, if it were not for the fact that scholars over and over again speak of the Sanskrit canon and of one canon in Northwestern Prākṛit as though there could be only one canon in the same language” (p. 61). Similarly Sander 1991, p. 140; Salomon 1999a, pp. 10f.; pp. 169–171.

¹⁰⁸ See Hitch 1984.

¹⁰⁹ Upon which see provisionally Bailey 1946; 1947, pp. 139–145; 1949, pp. 121–128; 1950. The older Indian loan words in Sogdian and Bactrian are Gāndhārī too.

¹¹⁰ T.2085.51.857b5 (tr. Giles 1965, p. 64)

¹¹¹ T.2053.50.251b12 (tr. Li 1995, p. 165).

2. It is true that most manuscripts in Gāndhārī belong to the Dharmaguptakas, but virtually all schools—inclusive Mahāyāna—used some Gāndhārī. Von Hinüber (1982b and 1983) has pointed out incompletely Sanskritised Gāndhārī words in works heretofore ascribed to the Sarvāstivādins and drew the conclusion that either the sectarian attribution had to be revised, or the tacit dogma Gāndhārī = Dharmaguptaka is wrong.¹¹² Conversely, Dharmaguptakas also resorted to Sanskrit.¹¹³

3. As a matter of fact, the inscriptions of the first century AD, irrespective of all sectarian affiliation, document a massive trend towards Sanskritisation of Gāndhārī, before Buddhism reached Central Asia.¹¹⁴ This is true also for the Dharmaguptaka inscriptions. It would consequently be very surprising that the Dharmaguptakas would have clung to “pure” Gāndhārī in (all) their manuscripts, while they Sanskritised the inscriptions.¹¹⁵

4. There is in fact a memory barrier around 550 AD: the period prior to literacy in vernaculars is very poorly known. This period corresponds both in Kucha and in Khotan to Kharoṣṭhī’s falling into disuse, whereby most of the early records and manuscripts became obsolete. A duality or multiplicity of scribal traditions, the ones in Gāndhārī and Kharoṣṭhī, the others in Sanskrit and Brāhmī, with interminglings, including non-Buddhist works,¹¹⁶ was replaced by a predominance of one tradition in each city.

3.1. *Khotan*

Given the above data, it is no surprise that for the beginnings of Buddhism in Khotan most authors quote legends.¹¹⁷ These can in no way be used in historical reconstructions: it is at best impossible to assess what degree of truth lies in them as long as no primary evidence either

¹¹² See also Nakatani 1984, pp. 141f., and von Hinüber 1989a, p. 358.

¹¹³ Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 164–168; von Hinüber 1989a, p. 354 and Chung & Wille 1997. Cf. also KI 510, mentioned in note 129.

¹¹⁴ Fussman 1989a, pp. 485–487. See also also von Hinüber 1989a, pp. 350–354.

¹¹⁵ Even if some manuscripts in Gāndhārī continued to be copied after the extinction of the language: the text of the Khotan *Dharmapada* can be dated ca. 50 BC, the manuscript between 100 and 250 AD (Fussman 1989a, pp. 436–438, 464).

¹¹⁶ The majority of the earliest Kucha manuscripts is profane: medical texts, *kāvya* poetry, *Mahābhārata*, *Kāmasūtra*, and so on. “Mixed” manuscripts (with partly Buddhist contents) nevertheless suggest that they were copied by Buddhists (see Franco 2004).

¹¹⁷ Stein 1907, vol. 1, pp. 223–235; Lamotte 1958, pp. 281–283; Emmerick 1967, pp. 23–25; 1992, p. 2; Skjærvø 1999, pp. 276–283.

contradicts or confirms the stories. They are, moreover, implausible in most details.¹¹⁸

Contemporary witness reports (by Chinese) are sparse:¹¹⁹ in 73 AD, when the Chinese general Ban Chao 班超 visited Khotan it seems to have still professed Mazdeism.¹²⁰ On the other hand, Indian culture seems to have impinged on Khotan very early. Already in the second century it was strong in Kucha. Indian presence in Khotan must therefore be even earlier. When in 260 AD, the Chinese monk Zhu Shixing 朱士行 choose to go to Khotan in an attempt to find original Sanskrit *sūtras*, he succeeded in locating the Sanskrit *Prajñāpāramitā* in 25,000 verses, and tried to send it to China. In Khotan, however, there were numerous Hīnayānists who attempted to prevent it because they regarded the text as heterodox. Eventually, Zhu Shixing stayed in Khotan, but sent the manuscript to Luoyang where it was translated by a Khotanese monk named Mokṣala.¹²¹ In 296, the Khotanese monk Gītamitra came to Chang'an with another copy of the same text. While at the time of Zhu Shixing, most Khotanese monks seem to have been Hīnayānists, in 401, the Chinese pilgrim Faxian mentions that the whole population of Khotan was Buddhist, most of them Mahāyānists.¹²²

The earliest long manuscripts in Khotanese are not earlier than the seventh century, but the composition of the oldest Old Khotanese

¹¹⁸ See the Tibetan “Prophecy of the Li Country” (Emmerick 1967, pp. 15–21) or Xuanzang’s report (T.2087.51.943a25–b24; Beal 1884, book 12, pp. 309–311), which connects the rise of Khotan with exiles from the city of Taxila, banished to the desert under king Aśoka. In the same region, there were also some Chinese exiles, driven out of their country, with whom the Taxilan exiles had some hostile contacts. This fiction tries to give an explanation for the fact that in the seventh century in Khotan, Indian and Chinese influences met and entangled. As an historical report, however, the story is of no use: it ignores the Iranian population of Khotan. Even if, as it has never been cogently demonstrated, Khotanese replaced in Khotan an earlier, Tibeto-Burmese vernacular (cf. Shafer 1961, pp. 47f.), Xuanzang’s legend is hardly more satisfactory.

¹¹⁹ Cf. in general Stein 1907, pp. 151ff.; Bailey 1982, pp. 71–72; Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art*, vol. 1, pp. 260–265, with identification of the various shrines described by Xuanzang.

¹²⁰ Yamazaki 1990, pp. 68ff. The Khotanese vocabulary preserves some Mazdean terms (e.g., *dyūva*- “demon”, *Śsandrāmātā*- “Śrī”, *urmayśde* “sun”, *gyasta*- “worshipful being”). Some customs, such as the deploration of the deceased, as described by the monk Song Yun in 519, could be Mazdean (T.2092.51.1019a3–22; tr. Wang, 1984, pp. 220–222). It cannot be excluded that Mazdeism still survived in Khotan in the eighth or ninth century.

¹²¹ Skjærvø 1999, p. 277.

¹²² T.2085.51.857b3–5 (tr. Giles 1965, p. 4).

texts may be tentatively dated back to the fifth century. These texts are Mahāyānist.

For the later period (600–1000 AD), we are in no better position concerning external reports and absolute dates, but we have the full amount of Khotanese, Khotan Sanskrit and (from 750 onwards) Tibetan manuscripts. The relative chronology of manuscripts is disparagingly rudimentary,¹²³ but Skjærvø (1999, pp. 330–338), in his pioneering study, has linked different Khotanese versions of Buddhist texts to dated Chinese or Nepali counterparts. He thereby found evidence for a continuous intercourse between Khotan, on the one hand, and India,¹²⁴ Tibet and China on the other. The Indian *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra*, an important Mahāyāna text that emphasises the presence of the Buddha in all phenomena, for instance, came to Khotan in four different recensions from the fifth/sixth to the eighth century. After the Tibetan conquest of Khotan in 750, many Tibetan texts—secular as well as Buddhist—were translated in Khotanese. Names in Upper Indus inscriptions and even the existence of a specific genre, the *deśanā* “Confession (of the *karma*)”¹²⁵ bespeak regular relations between Gilgit and Khotan.¹²⁶

Buddhism seems at first glance to have thriven up to its brutal end with the Muslim conquest ca. 1007, but Hamilton (1977) pointed to a silent Turkicisation of Khotan during the tenth century. In fact in 975, the king of Khotan had married a Qarakhanid princess. Later, one of his sons allied with the Muslims to conquer the city.¹²⁷

3.2. Loulan

Since the city of Loulan apparently declined after its capture by the Tuyuhun 吐谷浑 in 441 AD,¹²⁸ it would be a crucial case study for early Tarim Buddhism. Unfortunately, Loulan texts with religious

¹²³ Sander 1984.

¹²⁴ A similar conclusion can be reached concerning the figurative arts (Rhie 1999–2002, vol. 1, pp. 315, 321): Khotan and Kashgar were the gate for all Indian influences in Central Asia.

¹²⁵ Recitation of names of the Buddha in order to improve one’s *karma* (Emmerick 1979).

¹²⁶ von Hinüber 1982a; 1989b, pp. 93f., 96, 99.

¹²⁷ Kumamoto 1986, pp. 227f.

¹²⁸ F. W. Thomas, 1934, pp. 48ff.; Enoki 1964, p. 167 with n. 124; Tremblay 2001, p. 18 n. 22. The last king known is Sumitra in 383 AD (Lin Meicun 1990, p. 290).

content are sparse. Yet, they display a variety of sectarian affiliations and languages.¹²⁹ The art of Loulan (as found in the nearby ancient city of Miran) is closely tied with Kuṣāṇa art. Also the fact that Loulan's Kharoṣṭhī syllabary is borrowed from Gāndhāra, and that its chancellery language contains numerous Iranian (especially Bactrian and Sakan, i.e. cognate with Khotanese) loan words, clearly shows Iranian influence.

Most of the Chinese *laissez-passer* (ca. 270 AD) found in Loulan concern “Yuezhi”.¹³⁰ Unfortunately, the meaning of this term is unclear. Most of the concerned people were mercenaries, and Brough (1965, pp. 605f.) surmised that the ethnonym Yuezhi designated the local people. In any case, it betokens a Kuṣāṇa influence.

3.3. *Kucha*

The introduction of Buddhism in Kucha (Kučā), the mightiest city-state on the Northern Silk Road, is still more obscure than in Khotan. A water-jug sent in 109 AD by the city of Kucha to China is known to have been conserved by a well-known antiquity-collector named Liu Zhilin 劉之遴 in the sixth century.¹³¹ Since it was designated by the same Chinese characters as water-jugs used for the ritual hand-lustration, Liu Mau-Tsai surmised that this water-jug was Buddhist. Even if the object is no counterfeit, the weakness of the argument is obvious: the reported inscription on the water-jug does not say anything on its purpose. Moreover, it is rather curious that in 109 AD a Kuchean king would have sent a Buddhist water-jug to Buddhist communities in China, and even if the characters are really used in a precise, technical sense, they may simply reflect the interpretation of the sixth century owner or reporter who thought that it resembled Buddhist water-jugs.

Indian king names appear in Chinese sources from the first century onwards. The earliest manuscripts with Buddhist contents, on palm-leaf,

¹²⁹ The Kharoṣṭhī inscription KI 510, quoting the *Dharmapada*, is written in Buddhist Sanskrit and probably belongs to the Dharmaguptaka tradition, while KI 390 tributes the chief (*cojho*) Śamasena with the epithet *mahāyānasamprastitasa* “who has set forth the Great Vehicle”, just as the newly discovered Endere inscription in Gāndhārī (Salomon, MSC III, p. 261; 1999b) does with the Loulan king Aṃjaka. An *abhidharma* commentary in Sanskrit is of the Sarvāstivāda tradition (Salomon & Cox 1988, pp. 141ff.). *Bodhisattvas* are represented as early as the third century AD (Rhie 1999–2002, vol. 1, pp. 412f., 424), and in Miran (abandoned by ca. 450 AD) the paintings in monasteries are Hīnayānic, as well as probably Mahāyānic (Rhie 1999–2002, vol. 1, p. 391).

¹³⁰ Chavannes apud Stein 1907, vol. 1, pp. 521–547.

¹³¹ Liu Mau-Tsai 1969, pp. 21, 168 with n. 496.

dating from the second century,¹³² are extraordinary historical tokens, since they give evidence that despite the great distance and the hardships of the journey, the relations between the Tarim Basin and Gangetic India were close and regular enough to enable monks who dwelt in Kucha to understand Sanskrit philosophical treatises and dramas. They prove moreover that Sanskrit was used from the very beginning of the Buddhist mission. For at least three centuries (5th–8th), the chancelleries and/or Buddhist monasteries resorted to four codes side by side: Gāndhārī in Kharoṣṭhī,¹³³ Tocharian in Kharoṣṭhī,¹³⁴ Sanskrit in Brāhmī, and Tocharian in Brāhmī.

The discrepancy between the Chinese reports prior to 550¹³⁵ and the picture conveyed by the Kuchean manuscripts (mostly 6th–9th century) is striking. The Chinese records on early eminent monks are full of salient, often queer Kuchean figures, from the famous translator Kumārajīva (344–413) to wizards such as Po Śrīmitra (early fourth century) who brought magic practices to South China, or Dharmakṣema (385–433) who taught Gansu women sexual practices. Most Chinese sources purport that a strong Mahāyānic tradition flourished early: to be true, Dharmakṣema reported that in the fifth century Hīnayāna prevailed, and Kumārajīva in 356 or Dharmabhadra at approximately the same period¹³⁶ turned to Mahāyāna only under the influence of Kashgar monks, but in 258 the monk Bo Yan 帛延 translated the Mahāyāna *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra*, and in 286, Dharmarakṣa, known as a translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, received a Mahāyāna *sūtra* from Kucha and had as collaborators the Kuchean monks Bo Yuanxin 帛元信 and Bo Faju 白法巨. Interesting also is that a Mahāsāṃghika manuscript¹³⁷ and Mahāyāna *sūtras* imported from Khotan¹³⁸ have been found in Qizil near Kucha. The thaumaturges, whose paradoxical or shocking behaviour was for the Chinese typical for Kucha, may belong to tantrism.¹³⁹ Even Dhyāna was rooted in Kucha, and was cultivated

¹³² Dramas by the famous poet Aśvaghoṣa's (Lüders 1911, pp. 390ff.).

¹³³ The last Gāndhārī documents, written down in Kucha, date probably from the seventh century (Bailey 1950b, p. 121; Bernhard 1970; Hitch 1984, p. 198; Tremblay 2001, p. 149 n. 244).

¹³⁴ Schmidt 2001.

¹³⁵ For an overview, see Liu Mau-Tsai, 1969, pp. 20–34.

¹³⁶ Liu Mau-Tsai 1969, p. 184 and n. 619.

¹³⁷ Bechert in STF VI, pp. 49f.; Salomon 1999a, p. 158.

¹³⁸ Sander 1991, p. 136 n. 11.

¹³⁹ Cf. Liu Mau-Tsai 1969, p. 28; Schafer 1963, pp. 182f.

for instance by a king's daughter, who was probably Kumārajīva's niece. Kumārajīva himself translated some texts of this tradition. With the sixth century,¹⁴⁰ all paintings or Chinese reports pointing to Mahāyānist beliefs wane progressively. By the time of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (602–664), Kucha seems to have become a stronghold of the (Mūla)Sarvāstivādins.¹⁴¹ The Kuchean manuscripts (5th–9th century?) all belong to this school—they contain no clear trace of a former religion.¹⁴² The reasons for this reorientation remain obscure.

3.4. *Turfan before 791*

Of all the Tarim Basin cities Turfan was the most cosmopolitan: the Chinese Former Han dynasty had already disputed the Jushi 車師 kingdom with the Xiongnu since 73 BC, when they divided the kingdom into an “Anterior Jushi” with capital Yar-khoto near Turfan, under Chinese influence, and a “Posterior” kingdom in Gučen under Xiongnu overlordship;¹⁴³ already in 313 Turfan was for the Sogdians the “Chinese town”. However, a permanent Chinese dominance upon Turfan was not achieved before 327, when the Former Liang 前涼 established a command post,¹⁴⁴ and they seem not to have ousted the local dynasty before 448.¹⁴⁵ In 498, The Ruanruan enfeoffed the house

¹⁴⁰ Earlier paintings, such as the paintings in the Qizil Cave 83 (maybe ca. 450 AD) portray Maitreya with other *bodhisattvas* and miracles performed by Buddha after his death (cf., e.g., Yaldiz 1987, pp. 90–93 and Plate 56).

¹⁴¹ T.2087.51.870a25 (tr. Beal, 1884, book 1, p. 19); Waldschmidt 1926, p. 76; Schmidt 1985, with further reading. The distinction between Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda is largely illusory (Iwamoto 1964; Enomoto 1984). See also Schmithausen 1970, p. 112 n. 257 [manuscript from Gilgit]; von Hinüber 1985, p. 71; Pinault 1989, p. 13; Schmidt 1998, p. 76; 1999, p. 100.

¹⁴² The designation for “god” (A *ñkāṭ*, B *ñakte* < **ni-ghuH-tó-*, cf. ved. *hū-* “to invoke a god during sacrifice”, engl. *God*, German *Gott*, and so on, cf. Normier 1980, pp. 267ff.) betrays nothing more than that the Tocharian Pre-Buddhist religion had probably Indo-European roots—not a highly informative finding. See further Pinault 1998a, pp. 358f. Traces of Mazdeism (maybe imported from Sogdiana or Bactriana) have been advocated (Liu Mau-Tsai 1969, p. 33; Tremblay 2001, p. 160 n. 261, with reservations; contra Pinault 1998b, p. 16).

¹⁴³ Shimazaki 1969, pp. 36, 50–54.

¹⁴⁴ Pelliot 2003, p. 29 n. 100.

¹⁴⁵ Zhang Guang-da 1996, pp. 303f. The beginning of Tocharian literacy in Kharoṣṭhī and later in Brāhmī in Turfan might predate the Former Liang dynasty. Some Kharoṣṭhī wood-tablets probably in Tocharian have been found in Tumšūq near Turfan. Tocharian A seems to have been a dead language in Turfan at the time of copying the preserved manuscripts (Winter 1955; 1961, p. 280; 1963, p. 245; 1984, pp. 16–17; Tremblay 2001, p. 36 n. 55, pp. 37–44).

of Qu 麴, perhaps Chinese or partly Chinese in origin, and in any case highly sinicised by the early seventh century,¹⁴⁶ with Gaochang 高昌—at that time a Turkic town (Qočo) had developed near Turfan. After 640, Turfan was, unlike the other towns, a Chinese prefecture, under direct administration which lasted until the Uighur conquest in 791/792.

Turfan is evoked only twice by Chinese sources in relation to Buddhist missions: a copy of the Mahāyāna text *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* came from Turfan to China in 382 AD; in the same year the monk Kumārabodhi, the *purohita* (in principle, a brāhmanic chaplain) of the king of Turfan, arrived in Chang'an. However, Turfan was renowned as a major centre for the translation of Sanskrit sources into Chinese, as it was later (8th–9th century) for the translation from Tocharian (A) into Turkic. But in Turfan the Chinese population probably grew significantly at an early stage, so that to the eyes of the Chinese the monks from Turfan were probably not “western” and attracted less attention from historiographers.

For the years before the Former Liang very little material is available. As for the period between 448 and 640, the Tujue 突厥 (i.e. Türk) Buddhist inscription dated 469 on the Idiqutšahri temple—it is impossible to say whether the king who ordered the temple was a mere sponsor or a dedicated Buddhist—and the ca. 400 Chinese documents and contracts unearthed between 1959 and 1979 in the Astana tombs betoken the existence of numerous monasteries. The first Qu kings were rather prone to Confucianism, but Qu Wentai 麴文泰, the last king, was noted for his devotion to Buddhism.

Buddhism did not stand alone: Mazdean temples are attested,¹⁴⁷ Nestorianism found its way there, probably already in the sixth century, and Daoist manuscripts and amulets have been unearthed.

3.5. Other Kingdoms: Agni (*Qarašahr*) and Kashgar (*Kāšghar*)

If information on Buddhism in Khotan, Kucha or Turfan is insufficient, it exceeds the information on the other kingdoms. Agni seems at various epochs to have been subjected to or pressed by Kucha.¹⁴⁸ It is never

¹⁴⁶ Twitchett 1979, p. 225.

¹⁴⁷ Trombert 2002, pp. 525f.

¹⁴⁸ Tremblay 2001, p. 40 n. 62. So, for instance, the crown of the Agni kings as depicted on wall paintings seems to have been debased during the sixth century (J. Ebert, orally), and after Kucha's fall in 640, the Turkish general in Chinese service

mentioned as a source for manuscripts or as a provenance of masters of the law in the Chinese records. According to the *Beishi* 北史,¹⁴⁹ a standard history of the northern dynasties in China covering a period between 368 and 618, and compiled in the seventh century, Mazdeism was cultivated in Agni. No manuscripts, however, have corroborated this report. Agni still awaits its historiographer.

Most of the Agni manuscripts were found in the Šorčuk monastery and belong to the Sarvāstivāda tradition. In Agni, Faxian mentioned only Hīnayāna monks, more than four thousand of them.¹⁵⁰ Xuanzang mentions ten or more monasteries with about two thousand monks, all of the Sarvāstivāda school.¹⁵¹ Still, not all monks can have been Hīnayāna monks, as shown by Lore Sander (1991, pp. 135f. n. 11) who has listed the Mahāyāna manuscripts preserved in Agni. Consequently, we can conclude that in one and the same monastery (Šorčuk) monks copied both Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist manuscripts.

Contrary to Agni, Kashgar seems to have been an active Mahāyāna centre. It is here that Kumārajīva converted to Mahāyāna. But Faxian¹⁵² ascribes Kashgar to Hīnayāna, and according to Xuanzang¹⁵³ the monks all belong to the Sarvāstivāda school. Zhu Houzheng 竺侯征, an *upāsaka* (lay follower) from Kashmir brought the *Yogācārabhūmi* (T.606), a (Mūla)Sarvāstivādin text,¹⁵⁴ from Kashgar to Dunhuang, and translated it together with Dharmarakṣa. Unfortunately, Kashgar has not been surveyed archaeologically and no early manuscripts have been unearthed.

4. BUDDHISM AMONG THE TURKS (TÜRKS AND UIGHURS) (560–1700 AD)

Two different Turkish confederations, with two slightly different dialects, attained overlordship upon Central Asia at different moments:

gave back to Agni some bulwarks and forts that Kucha had seized (Chavannes 1903, pp. 111f.).

¹⁴⁹ *Beishi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties), vol. 10, scroll 97, p. 3216 (tr. Liu Mau-Tsai 1969, vol. 1, p. 162). The text says that the people believed in the God of Heaven (天神) as well as in the teaching of the Buddha. The God of Heaven refers to the Mazdean supreme god, Ahura Mazdā.

¹⁵⁰ T.2053.51.857a24–29 (tr. Giles 1956 [1923], p. 3).

¹⁵¹ T.2087.51.870a11–12 (tr. Beal 1884, book 1, p. 18).

¹⁵² T.2085.51.857c20–21 (tr. Giles 1956 [1923], p. 8).

¹⁵³ T.2087.51.942c20 (tr. Beal 1884, book 12, p. 307).

¹⁵⁴ Schmithausen 1987, p. 305.

1. The Türks (Chinese Tujue 突厥) founded two empires: the First Empire with its Eastern or Mongolian (552–628) and Western (566–766) branches, and the Second Empire, reigning over Mongolia (680–744).

2. The Uighurs founded an Empire in Mongolia (763–844). After its collapse, three fleeing clans founded three kingdoms: in Aqsu–Kucha (844–933 or 1020?) under the Yaylaqar house, in Turfan (857–1450) under the Ādiz family, and in Gansu (863–ca. 1050) under the Boqut clan.

4.1. *Buddhism among the Türks*

The Chinese accounts report unambiguously an interest for Buddhism among the first Eastern Türk Khans (*qayans*).¹⁵⁵ Already the Ruanruan, who preceded the Türks as the ruling confederation in Mongolia, and who had strong ties with the Türks, seem to have been reached by Buddhist missions.¹⁵⁶

As a sign of friendship with the first Eastern Türk Khan, Muhan (木杆) Khan, the Northern Zhou 北周 dynasty (557–581), a short-lived dynasty—with many non-Chinese elements—that reigned over the north of China, built between 557 and 560 in Chang'an a northern Chinese-style Buddhist temple for the thousands of Türks living in Chang'an.¹⁵⁷ Muhan's brother, Tatpar Khan, invited the Gandhāran monk Jīnagupta from Chang'an in 574. The Khan also built a monastery and asked for *sūtras*, among which were Mahāyāna *sūtras*, a *Nirvāṇasūtra* and the *Sarvāstivādaśāstra*.¹⁵⁸ For Tatpar Khan, the king of the Northern Qi 北齊, another short-lived dynasty (550–577) in the north of China, let a *Nirvāṇasūtra* be translated into the language of the Tujue in 574 AD.¹⁵⁹ Later, the Eastern Türk Khan warmly welcomed the Buddhist pilgrims Prabhākhamitra in 626¹⁶⁰ and Xuanzang in 630.¹⁶¹

The Second Türk Empire is reputed to have been hostile to any foreign religion, mostly because of the rejection of all foreign influences

¹⁵⁵ von Gabain 1954, pp. 136–165; Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, pp. 36–38, 43, 461.

¹⁵⁶ The elder uncle of the last Ruanruan Khan and himself for a short time anti-Khan (522–523), for instance, was named *Poluomen* or **Brāhman*. For further examples, see Kollautz & Miyakawa 1970, vol. 1, pp. 77–81, 131.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Liu Mau-tsai 1958, vol. 1, pp. 39ff.

¹⁵⁸ *Suishu* 隋書, vol. 6, scroll 84, p. 1864 (tr. Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, vol. 1, p. 43).

¹⁵⁹ *Bei Qishu* 北齊書 (History of the Northern Qi), vol. 1, scroll 20, p. 267.

¹⁶⁰ Chavannes 1903, p. 301.

¹⁶¹ T.2053.50.227a27–c2 (tr. Li 1995, pp. 42–44).

as expressed by Toñuquq, counsellor of Bilgä Khan, in the Chinese sources and in his famous funeral inscription. But Bilgä began projects to build walled cities and Buddhist temples at the beginning of his reign in 716,¹⁶² and a very common name in the runic inscriptions is *γšbr*’ (with variants) derived from the Sanskrit *īśvara*, “Master”, through the intermediary of Sogdian *γšβr*.¹⁶³

All these accounts had been known for a long time, but were only paid attention to after the discovery in 1956 of the Bugut inscription of ca. 590 AD, in which the first editors Kljaštornyj & Livšic (1972) and Bazin (1975, pp. 41–43) found Buddhist features. Most of them have been questioned in the revision by Yoshida & Moriyasu (1999).¹⁶⁴ Anyway, since the Bugut inscription is written in Sogdian, it points to the fact that the Türk language was unwritten at that time,¹⁶⁵ so that “the language of the Tujue” into which, as mentioned above, a *Nīrvāṇasūtra* was translated probably refers to Sogdian. In any case, the extant fragments of the Turkic *Nīrvāṇasūtra*¹⁶⁶ cannot be the *Nīrvāṇasūtra* translated in 574.

4.2. *Buddhism among the Uighurs*

Apart from the Sogdian inscription in Bugut, the earliest dated Turkic Buddhist monument is a Uighur dedicatory inscription from the years 760/780.¹⁶⁷ However, the Uighurs’ royal clan was not Buddhist, but Manichaean after the first Khan, Būgü Khan, converted in 763. And even if his successors of the Yaylaqar clan between 763 and 808 do not seem to have been Manichaeans, they were not Buddhist either.¹⁶⁸ In

¹⁶² Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, p. 172.

¹⁶³ Tremblay 2001, p. 21 n. 32.

¹⁶⁴ Yoshida’s and Moriyasu’s doubt seems overemphasised. For instance, an expression like *mēm snk*’, whether it means “*saṃgha* of the religion” (with Kljaštornyj & Livšic 1975) or “stone of the law” (with Yoshida & Moriyasu 1999), sounds Buddhist.

¹⁶⁵ Bazin 1975, p. 44; 1991, pp. 98, 203 assumes that the very first Turkic texts were the runic inscriptions of Bilgä Khan of 716–734. However, the still undeciphered “western Turkic runes” (Tremblay 2001, p. 21 n. 33) may be older.

¹⁶⁶ Elverskog no. 32.

¹⁶⁷ Tekin 1976.

¹⁶⁸ Ton Baya Khan, for instance, summoned Turkic wizards, not Indian monks or Manichaean astrologers, before his Tibetan campaign in 765. As for the later Aqsu-Kucha Kingdom under the Uighur Yaylaqar clan, a Manichaean Pothi-Book from ca. 925 found in Murtuq (near Kucha) testifies to the Manichaean presence in Kucha, while a Tocharian B official prayer devised for a *Hwähkhwā* (= *qayan*?) as late as 1020 may point to the fact that the Yaylaqars had become Buddhist. Cf. Tremblay 2001, p. 41 with n. 41 (and Schmidt apud eum).

any case, in 808 a coup d'état gave the throne to a new, Manichaean, dynasty, the Ādiz. The Manichaean Uighur texts are mostly written in the same dialect as the Türk runic inscriptions discovered along the Orkhon river in Mongolia: it is called the Türk or *n*-dialect.¹⁶⁹ The Uighur court abode, for prestige reasons, to the Türk dialect of its imperial predecessors and erected runic inscriptions in Türk dialect in Tariat, Šine-Usu, Tes or Qarabalyasun. Buddhist texts in Türk dialect, or at least with Türk dialectal colouring, are scarce, but some of them have been identified.¹⁷⁰ Even the most archaic texts¹⁷¹ have been translated from Chinese originals long after the First Türk Empire. They must go back to the Uighur Empire, and have to be dated between 750 and 1000. No early Türk Buddhist text has thus been preserved—nor probably did one ever exist, since Turkic languages were unwritten until ca. 720.

Under the Manichaean Uighur Khans, Buddhist texts were translated into Turkic approximately as much from Tocharian as from Chinese or Sogdian. However, in the most archaic texts the Sogdian influence is at its highest. The orthography often follows Sogdian rules rather than the later Uighur ones, and in any case the Uighur alphabet is but an adaptation of the Sogdian one. Buddhist Uighur manuscripts in Brāhmī are not earlier than the eleventh century and preserve no early linguistic features: they do not set forth the Tocharian literary. Also, the Buddhist basic vocabulary (i.e., the non-technical terms) is borrowed mostly from Sogdian.¹⁷² This vocabulary is stable at all epochs. For the Buddhist technical vocabulary, the situation is different. The early texts indeed contain more Sogdian loanwords or Indic loanwords than the later manuscripts, but they still contain many more Tocharian loanwords.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ The *n*-dialect writes with Runic ñ, Manichaean *n*, a sound which evolved later in Uighur *y*. Cf. von Gabain 1950, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. von Gabain 1976; Maue & Röhrborn 1984–1985, vol. 2, p. 77; Laut 1986, p. 11; Moriyasu 1990, pp. 150f.

¹⁷¹ See, for instance, the *Säkiz Yükmäk* (TTT VI; Elverskog no. 55), translated from a Chinese apocryphal *sūtra* composed under Empress Wu (690–705), or the Buddha Biography T II Y 21 + 32 (Elverskog, no. 14), probably translated (maybe via Sogdian) from the Chinese version T.187 of the *Lalitavistara*, itself translated in 683 (Müller, *Uigurica* II no. 1, 4–7).

¹⁷² For a list, see Asmussen 1965, pp. 145f.; Laut 1986, pp. 143–148. Examples are *pwɔdysβt(w)* “Bodhisattva”, or *ʼzrw* “Brahma” < Sogd. (ʼ)*zrw* “Zurvan” following the old Mazdean *interpretatio indica*. But note *a contrario* Uigh. *kšnty* “forgiveness” < Tocharian *kšānti*, or Uigh. *tnk* < Khot. *thāṃga* “tax”.

¹⁷³ Laut 1986, pp. 93–142 (who rather overemphasises the Sogdian influence) finds no more than 31 Indic loanwords that entered through Sogdian against ca. 350 which

A controversy has arisen on the respective importance of Sogdian and Tocharian in early Uighur Buddhism. The discussion concerns the milieu where the first contact between the Uighurs and Buddhism took place. J. P. Laut (1983, pp. 92f.; 1986, pp. 9–11) has proposed what he himself called the “Sogdian hypothesis”. According to him, the early Turkic Buddhism proceeds from Sogdian Buddhism. This influence could even go back to the First Türk Empire. T. Moriyasu (1990), on the other hand, has criticised the “Sogdian hypothesis” and put forward what could be dubbed a “Tocharian hypothesis”. According to him, the Sogdians with whom the Turks were in contact rather professed Manichaeism and, apart from a superficial and perhaps short-lived Buddhist influence during the First Türk Empire, the Turks were influenced by Sogdian Manichaeism before they had any broader knowledge of Buddhism. When later the Uighurs conquered the Tarim Basin (791), the Tocharian population felt it necessary to translate their writings in Turkic. They used the sole Turkic religious vocabulary available, which is Manichaean. The numerous Sogdian loan words in the early phase of Turkic Buddhism would thus be borrowed from the Manichaeans.

T. Moriyasu (1990, pp. 153f.) has pointed out some Sogdian loan words in Buddhist Turkic which cannot have come from written Buddhist Sogdian and are thus inconsistent with the “Sogdian hypothesis”. But in fact, these examples do not prove what Moriyasu hoped for:

1. T. Moriyasu draws attention to the fact that the Skt. *śikṣāpada* “precept” did not enter in Uighur as *čqš’p(w)t* (Brāhmī *cāhśāpath*) through the more educated form *škš’pt* attested in Buddhist Sogdian, but that it entered through a popular pronunciation borrowed from Parthian **čxš’pt/δ* [**čəxšāpāδ*] which is more or less directly reflected in the Sogdian Manichaean *čxš’pδ*. This is true, but both the Turkic and the Manichaean Sogdian terms (whose finals differ) were independently borrowed from spoken Buddhist Sogdian.

2. According to T. Moriyasu, the Turkic translation of Skt. *dharma* through the Sogdian loanword *nwm* “law” (< *νόμος*) agrees with Manichaean Sogdian rather than with Buddhist Sogdian, in whose manuscripts one finds instead, at all epochs, the transcription *δrm*. However, *nwm* is a non-denominational word, also attested in Christian

entered through Tocharian in the Turkic *Maitreyasamiti* from Sängim (ed. BTT 9; Elverskog, no. 81; 9th century according to Laut 1986, p. 163).

Sogdian, whereas the technical Manichaean word for “law” is *šyn*. Most probably, Buddhist preachers and commoners shunned the literate exotic term *šm*, which was understandable only to those who were Buddhists already and which therefore had to be glossed through *nwm* for all others.

3. In the Sogdian texts, the notion of *kleśa* is expressed by *wytwey sr'yβt'm* “pain and suffering”, whereas in Uighur it is rendered by the Sogdian loan word *nyzb'ny* “desire”. According to T. Moriyasu, this again contradicts the “Sogdian hypothesis”. But actually, the Sogdian dual term translates the Chinese equivalent for *kleśa*: *fan nao* 煩惱, “trouble and disturbance”. The scholarly Sogdian translation abides so slavishly to the Chinese original that at face value it makes no sense at all.¹⁷⁴ Missionaries could not use it, but must have recourse to a simpler explanation for the impurity that causes all rebirths. The term “desire” is by no means an absurd equivalence.

The three preceding examples, adduced by T. Moriyasu, point neither to a non-Buddhist tradition as Moriyasu claimed, nor to a direct written Sogdian *Vorlage* as per *Laut*, but to an oral teaching in Sogdian, whence the Turks took out their own Buddhist vocabulary without intrusion of the Sogdo-Chinese Buddhist jargon. The two following loan words are still more compelling:

4. To translate Indra, the king of the gods, the Sogdian Buddhists, according to the old *interpretatio indica*, used its Sogdian gloss *”δβγ*, “Supergod”,¹⁷⁵ the most frequent designation of the supreme god Ahura Mazda. The Uighurs translated Indra through Ahura Mazdā as well, but through the proper name of the god in Sogdian: *Qermwzt'*. They must have been instructed by Sogdians who explained them: “*”δβγ* is but an epiclesis for the god Xormuzd”. If the Uighurs had been taught Buddhism from Tocharians, they would never have translated *Indra* in that way. But if they had first met *Qermwzt'* among Manichaeans, they would not have identified him with the supreme God, since *Qermwzt'* designates “the Primeval Man” among Manichaeans.

5. Buddhist Uighur possesses some pairs of loan words for the same notion. For instance, it translates “fast” by *bčq*, borrowed from a lost Sogdian term **p'čkk* < Old Iranian **pāti-* “guard”¹⁷⁶ and by *bwst* also

¹⁷⁴ Weller 1935, p. 324.

¹⁷⁵ This is the case in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, or in P.3, p. 207, P.5, p. 100, and other manuscripts.

¹⁷⁶ Henning 1936, pp. 587f.

borrowed from Sogdian, viz. from **βwsnt*, a loan word from Gāndhārī *posadhu* [**βosqδ* (< Skt. *upoṣadha*). The latter term is lost as well, but an enlarged form, *βws'ntk* is the unique vocable for “fast” attested in Manichaean and Buddhist Sogdian texts. Uigh. *bwst* cannot have been borrowed from Manichaean Sogdian, since *βws'ntk* is reflected in Manichaean Uighur by another form, viz. *βwsnty*. Uigh. *bčq* and *bwst* are in fact borrowings from spoken Sogdian, without assignable religious affiliation.

We can conclude that the Uighurs learnt their Buddhist vocabulary not from Sogdian books, but from Sogdian preachers who spoke a simple, non-technical language free from Chinese calques unlike the one they wrote. As Jes P. Asmussen (1965, p. 147) put it: “The Buddhism found among the Uighurs is popular.” Nothing militates against the assumption that the Sogdian preachers were Buddhists, and the above examples 2, 4 and 5 rule out Manichaeans.

4.3. *Multiplicity of Traditions within the Turkic Buddhism*

The above leads us to a rather different reconstitution of the beginnings of Buddhism among the Turks. In the Eastern Türk Empire and in the Mongolian Uighur Empire before it seized the Tarim Basin (i.e. before 790), Buddhism was but a part of the Chinese way of life: the Khans begged for Buddhist manuscripts as they begged for a calendar, for silk, and so on. Because of their anti-Chinese policy,¹⁷⁷ the Uighur Khans (with the exception of the years 779–808) chose a non-Chinese religion, viz. Manicheism.¹⁷⁸ Earlier Buddhist missions existed during the Türk Empire, and they may have left some Buddhist communities or a general acquaintance with some Buddhist concepts, perhaps some loanwords, but no written translations in Türk Turkic because it was still an unwritten language. If there were monasteries, their manuscripts must have been in Chinese or Sogdian.

Despite the court Manichaeism, Buddhist influence was by no means insignificant among the Uighurs, since some details in Manichaean Turkic texts betray that they were intended for a Buddhist audience.¹⁷⁹ The earlier Buddhist Uighur tradition was laid by Sogdians who came, as did all Sogdian Buddhists, from China. They addressed laymen, not

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Mackerras 1969, pp. viii–ix; Beckwith 1987, p. 146; Tremblay 2001, p. 116.

¹⁷⁸ Tremblay 2001, pp. 110–114.

¹⁷⁹ Tremblay 2001, p. 107.

masters of the law. To be intelligible, they used non-technical words from Sogdian and Turkic, even if their own written higher standard preferred Indian loan words or calques from Chinese. In this way, their practice betokens a widespread Sogdian-Turkic bilingualism among Uighurs. The Buddhist Uighurs mimicked the upper-class *n*-dialect, but never so consequently as the Manichaeans. This second Buddhist wave probably produced a few manuscripts.¹⁸⁰

When the Uighurs seized the Tarim Basin, they began to settle in the eastern part—Turfan and Agni. The Tocharian A language, used in that area, slowly died out. But the inhabitants did not cease to be Buddhists, so they began ca. 820/850 to translate their Tocharian A and Chinese texts in Turkic, using the Buddhist Uighur idiom already created. Their own Turkic productions quickly outnumbered those of the second Buddhist wave, because in Turfan and Agni a well-established monastic tradition in Tocharian and Chinese provided numerous manuscripts as well as cultured translators. At this time, the loan words from Sanskrit, Tocharian and Chinese were abundant. The city of Turfan, with its double Tocharian and Chinese tradition, was probably the major translation centre, so that Tocharian A played a greater role in Uighur Buddhism than Tocharian B, the language of Kucha.¹⁸¹

The second and the third Buddhist waves overlapped for some time, since they did not address the same people: the Sogdian second wave was active among originally non-Buddhist Turks in Mongolia, the Turfan third wave flourished among turkicised Tocharians and Chinese who had been Buddhists for a long time. The basic Buddhist Turkic vocabulary owes much to the first and second waves, but almost all extant manuscripts come from the Tarim Basin and belong to the third tradition.

The turkicised Turfan and Agni people did not learn the court *n*-dialect, but the normal Uighur *y*-dialect, which increasingly became the standard Buddhist idiom. When eventually the Manichaean Khan Kōl Bilgä täjri converted to Buddhism in 1008,¹⁸² the *n*-dialect disappeared.

¹⁸⁰ The Turkic *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* (Fedâkâr 1994; Elverskog no. 38) was probably translated from Sogdian. The Sogdian version, itself slavishly adhering to Chinese, is preserved. It was translated long after 500 and probably even after 700 (cf. Weller 1937).

¹⁸¹ von Gabain 1957, p. 15.

¹⁸² Tremblay 2001, p. 89. The Gansu Uighur kingdom had converted in 998 (Pinks 1968, pp. 112–114).

With the gradual vanishing of Tocharian, Uighur Buddhism got more and more intertwined with Chinese Buddhism, although direct Indian contacts never died out, as the revival of Brāhmī to write Uighur from the eleventh century onwards testifies.¹⁸³ The Tibetan influx remained marginal before the Mongol conquest.

The Uighur region remained a stronghold of Buddhism up to ca. 1430, when the Khan was forced to convert through the Chaghataid prince Xizr Hoja.

5. CONCLUSION

Not too many years ago, the role of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty and more generally of the Iranians in the history of Buddhism was valued very highly: “Der Yabgu Kaniška [...] führte sein Reich zum Höhepunkt der Kultur; sie trug buddhistisches Gepräge. An seinem Hof dichtete Māṛceta seine Buddhahymnen, verfaßte Aśvaghōṣa sein Buddhaepos und gestaltete Kumāralāta seine buddhistischen Erzählungen und eine Sanskrit-Grammatik. Es war auch vermutlich hier, in Baktrien [...], daß man zum ersten mal gewagt hat, ein Bildnis des Buddha zu schaffen”.¹⁸⁴ The discovery that the Kuṣāṇas were in all probability not Buddhists has soberingly shown that the Buddhist accounts, written long after the Kuṣāṇa dynasty, are to be used with caution, and that many religious phenomena (such as Mahāyāna) could develop and be propagated simply along trade routes without a foreign king’s hand. The more detailed the evidence grows, the more insufficient and piecemeal it appears to us. Some momentous phenomena may have left no positive traces: such as Gandhāran Hinduism, Parthian Buddhism, the Sogdians in China, or Mazdeism. Reality is always more intricate than the image chance findings convey.

The earliest evidenced translations into the vernacular languages of Serindia postdate by five centuries the arrival of Buddhism and, in the Tarim Basin, the beginning of literacy in Indian languages: fourth-fifth century for Bactrian, sixth century for Sogdian (both languages had already been written for centuries), fifth century for Khotanese, some-

¹⁸³ See the TTT VIII manuscript.

¹⁸⁴ von Gabain 1961b, p. 498. Similarly Litvinsky 1999, p. 2.

what earlier for Tocharian. The idiom of Loulan (deserted ca. 450) was never written. Apparently, the necessity to have Buddhist texts translated did not appear at once, and missions resorted only to predication.

It has often been surmised that Gāndhārī preceded Sanskrit as sacred language. This assumption is not supported by the evidence. To be true, Gāndhārī and the Kharoṣṭhī script documents represent as a whole the older layer, and fell into disuse centuries before Sanskrit. But the oldest Kucha manuscripts, of Kuṣāṇa date, are in Sanskrit, and a great part of Indian literacy introduced to Central Asia (such as medical texts or grammars) probably never existed in Gāndhārī. Between ca. 150 to ca. 650 AD, Serindian Buddhism in Bactria and in the Tarim Basin used a duality or plurality of Indian languages: Gāndhārī (in some texts with other underlying Prākṛits), Sanskrit, and probably intermediate stages between Gāndhārī and Sanskrit. In the Tarim Basin, Gāndhārī outlived by three centuries its demise in Gandhāra (4th century).¹⁸⁵ That is the result of the fact that it was the chancellery language, and chancelleries are notoriously conservative.

In any case, the languages of Serindian Buddhism were at first Indian ones, and manuscripts came from India. The missionaries, whether they went to Bactria or to the Tarim Basin and further to China, departed from India. Nevertheless, one cannot explain how Buddhism could develop a local literacy and eventually become a gentry and court religion by ascribing its propagation to the sole persuasive power of heroic Indian or Indianised monks, a view that J. Brough (1965, p. 587) denounced as “romantic”. Christianity could not root in China, although missionaries did not fail to try.

Buddhism, and more generally the Indian culture, was in the Tarim Basin and in Sogdiana but one of the features of the adoption of a Bactrian *political* influence. As a matter of fact, the map of Buddhism was coextensive with Bactrian influence up to Bactria’s political collapse (560 AD). The Tarim Basin kingdoms adopted Buddhism, Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī during the Kuṣāṇa epoch (1st–3rd centuries AD). At the same time they borrowed Bactrian and Śaka loan words.¹⁸⁶ Buddhism and Hinduism entered Sogdiana only in the fifth century, when

¹⁸⁵ See Fussman 1989a.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Burrow 1935; Bailey 1946; Tremblay 2001, pp. 24f. n. 37. More loan words (at times uncertain) in Weber 1997.

Sogdiana fell for the first time under Bactrian dominion.¹⁸⁷ It seems that as the Bactrian political sphere became Indianised, Buddhism was but one part of the picture. This may seem strange at first, since Bactria never spoke an Indian language and since Mazdeism and Buddhism or Hinduism share few anthropological or cosmological orientations.¹⁸⁸ But the evidence betokens that the Bactrians and Sogdians themselves probably considered Mazdeism and Hinduism as two forms of the same religion, establishing correspondences between both. A fortiori the inhabitants of the Tarim kingdoms, who had contacts primarily with the Kuṣāṇa and later with the Hephthalite kingdoms through the Indian parts of their kingdom, did not necessarily oppose Iranian and Indian cultures and were prone to perceive Bactrian culture as Indian. Mazdeism in its Bactrian and Sogdian form may have looked like an Indian religion. It is in the intermingling of Indian and Iranian influences that the unity of Serindia may reside.¹⁸⁹

In the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia, we can distinguish two periods: a Bactrian one (1st–6th century) and a Chinese one (6th–14th century). Many fluctuations in the history of Buddhism coincide with the adoption or the rejection of these models: the choice of Manichaeism, not Buddhism, as the ruler's religion by the Uighurs (763–1008) corresponds with an anti-Chinese policy. On the other hand, Buddhism also served as a legitimisation for independence and imperialism, at least among the Tabgač of the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–535).¹⁹⁰

The most conspicuous Buddhist manifestations, such as monasteries or donations are tributary to politics, but the harbingers of Buddhism

¹⁸⁷ Grenet 2002, pp. 204f. About Sogdiana's political and urbanistic remodelling under the Kidarites and Hephthalites, see Grenet 1996, pp. 383–388.

¹⁸⁸ Mazdeism, for instance, rejects the doctrine of an uncreated earth and of reincarnation, and ignores the notion of *karma*. But see Freret 1994.

¹⁸⁹ To take but one example, Sogdian Buddhists retained Mazdean names in the eighth century (colophon of P.8).

¹⁹⁰ Buddhism also enjoyed great favour among the Qitans of the Liao dynasty (ca. 907–1125) in the north of modern China (see Wittfogel & Fêng, 1949, pp. 291ff.), and in the Xixia state of the Tangut people (ca. 982–1227) in northwestern China. The Qitans made enormous gifts to monasteries, and edited the best ever Chinese Buddhist canon (1031–1055) (Demiéville 1924, pp. 211–212; Wittfogel & Fêng, 1949, p. 294). Qitan Buddhism had strong ties with the Uighur region and with India. In 1001, the (still Manichaean) Uighurs even presented at the Liao court “Brahman” monks, that is probably monks from India. The Xixia dynasty, on the other hand, partly substantiated its claim to be an empire equal to China with regard to Buddhism (cf. Dunnell 1996, pp. 118ff., especially pp. 137–139).

were individuals. They left very few traces, but the mixture of Buddhism, Daoism and wizardry in the Han reports on Buddhism, of Buddhism and Mazdeism in some Sogdian texts, and the weight of iconography let us gauge that the first missionaries were preachers and thaumaturges, who showed images and who told stories. The earliest Buddhist texts translated in Chinese were in fact doctrinally crude.

It may seem that Serindian Buddhism, the manifestations of which are multifaceted and often as debased as acculturated, displays neither unity nor individuality. In fact we should turn over this image: Indian Buddhism has been for some time one of the factors of unity in Serindia, and since it has survived up to now, albeit in a very modest measure, it cannot have been a foreign transplant. Manichaeism and Eastern Mazdeism have not been so resilient.¹⁹¹

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¹⁹¹ But Nestorianism has survived among the Mongolian Erkuts.

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GREECE, THE FINAL FRONTIER? THE WESTWARD SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

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1. INTRODUCTION

The apparent absence of Buddhism in the ancient and early medieval West presents a striking contrast with the success of the religion all over South, Central, East, and Southeast Asia. This makes one wonder whether the West was really untouched by Buddhism. There are irrefutable proofs that Buddhism did spread westwards, at least far into Iranian territory. Although there is little hard evidence, there are indications that it also reached the Graeco-Roman world. Not only did Buddhism have an impact on Westerners in the East, but Buddhists were probably present in the West. Moreover, for several centuries it may have taken part in the interaction among different Western and Eastern philosophies and religions.

Before taking a look at the evidence, it may be useful to assess which circumstances contributed to or hampered the westward diffusion of Buddhism. In India and beyond, the spread of Buddhist monasteries supported by communities of lay-followers was to a great extent determined by political and socio-economic factors. Firstly, the protection and promotion by powerful rulers and secondly, the patronage of rich merchants active in urban centres along trade-routes.¹ These conditions were only partly fulfilled in the relations of South Asia with the West. In the early period of the development of Buddhism, from the fifth to the early second century BC, there were many military and political links between East and West. Trade was also important, but it was mostly carried out through intermediaries, and direct trade-routes were only marginally developed. By the second and first centuries BC, military and political contacts between Indians and Greeks were largely confined to Bactria, Eastern Iran and Northwest India, where the Greek colonists (the Graeco-Bactrians and Indo-Greeks) became

¹ Heitzman 1984, pp. 121, 132–133.

culturally increasingly iranianised and indianised, while they lost political contact with the West. At the same time, new direct trade links were established, in which South India became more important thanks to the developing monsoon trade. In the first two centuries of our era, the sea-trade between the Roman Empire and India was at its height, but political connections became restricted to occasional Indian embassies to Rome. Buddhism never enjoyed state sponsorship in the West, but small Buddhist communities there could have thrived on merchants from Buddhist countries or local converts in cosmopolitan cities like Alexandria in Egypt or Antioch in Syria. Conversely, the successive economic and political crises that shook the Roman World between the late third and the fifth century must have adversely affected such communities. By the way, the partial collapse of international trade in this and later periods may have heralded the onset of the disappearance of Buddhism in India itself. Finally, before it could become a mass movement, western Buddhism was drowned in the anti-pagan drives that were organised when Christianity made it to the top. Let us now take a look at each of the periods and factors in more detail.

2. FROM THE ACHAEMENIDS TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT

For the period of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persia (559–330 BC), there is no evidence that Buddhism was already spreading westwards. There is, to be true, the story told in several versions in Buddhist literature, that two merchants, Trapuṣa or Tapassu and Bhallika or Bhalluka, hailing from the neighbourhood of Balkh in Afghanistan, became the first lay followers of the Buddha and then monks, and built *stūpas* and monasteries in their region of origin.² According to the *Mahāvastu* version, *stūpas* were erected in the cities of Keśasthālī (Kesh, now Shahrisabzi in Uzbekistan?), Vālukṣa (Balkh?) and Śīlukṣa or Śīlā (?).³ However, since not the least archaeological or other trace exists of Buddhist presence in Bactria during Buddha's own time or even during the entire Achaemenid period, one may suppose that this story does not date from that period, but was fabricated much later,

² Apart from the texts mentioned by Malalasekera 1937–1938, vol. 1, p. 991, s.v. Tapassu, Tapussa; vol. 2, p. 367, s.v. Bhallika, Bhalliya, Bhaluka Thera. The story occurs in *Mahāvastu* 3.303–311 and *Lalitavistara* 24.381.4ff., and a version is also told by Xuanzang (Book 1), see Beal 1881, vol. 1, p. 111 (cf. Chandra 1982, pp. 280–286).

³ *Mahāvastu* 3.310 (Jones 1956, p. 297).

possibly in Kuṣāṇa times, when the region referred to was included in an empire also covering North India and when Buddhism was certainly present there.

Silence about Buddhism also reigns at the time of the invasion of the East by Alexander the Great (327–325 BC in India), with one possible exception. Pyrrho of Elis († ca. 275 BC), disputedly the founder of sceptic philosophy in Greece,⁴ went to India in the retinue of Alexander. Scepticism was widespread in India and Evrard Flintoff has tried to show that regarding all ideas with which Pyrrho was an innovator in Greece, he is in agreement with the sceptical schools of thought in India.⁵ In general, though, scholars have maintained the Greek basis of scepticism. One could say that scepticism by its systematic negation of all standpoints must be similar wherever it originates. But there is also the assertion of the third century biographer Diogenes Laertius on the authority of older sources, that Pyrrho developed his philosophy under the influence of his contacts with Indian “gymnosophists”.⁶ In particular, attention has been drawn to Pyrrho’s antinomies, which correspond to the *catuṣkoṭi* or quadrilemma as used in India by, among others, Mādhyamika Buddhism.⁷ In the words of Pyrrho, as preserved by the Church Father Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–339 AD): “We must not say about any one thing that it is, or that it is not, or that it is and is not, or that it neither is or is not.”⁸ The *catuṣkoṭi* is, to be true, only evidenced in Indian texts from much later times than that of Pyrrho. In essence, the *catuṣkoṭi* is a sceptical device, not in the first place a Buddhistic one. Probably, both Pyrrho and Buddhism were influenced by Indian scepticism. Both for Pyrrhonism and Buddhism the goal of the quadrilemma was to make the antinomies disappear, and to bring about a mental transformation in which the world is suddenly realised to be unreal in all the ways we conceive it, and in which all concepts, speech and being troubled are suspended. In contrast to Greek thought, Pyrrho sees this mental state as the ultimate goal in itself, not as a part of it. It is not known, however, whether to him this was merely a technique for making the present life more endurable, or for other-worldly salvation, an aim which in India was shared by

⁴ Cf. Sedlar 1980, pp. 77–78.

⁵ Flintoff 1980.

⁶ Diogenes Laertius, *Vita philosophorum*, 9.61, 63; cf. Jairazbhoy 1963, p. 84.

⁷ On the origin and spread of the *catuṣkoṭi* in India, see Bhattacharya 1937.

⁸ Flintoff 1980, p. 92.

Buddhism with several other systems.⁹ One may conclude that there is an Indian, but probably no Buddhist reality behind this case.

3. SELEUCIDS AND MAURYAS

In the time of Alexander the Great the foundations were laid for many later developments. Politically, the Macedonian conquest was indirectly and even directly responsible for the rise of the mighty Mauryan Empire in India, which would in general be as beneficial to Buddhism as it was favourably disposed to the Greeks. To explain this, we need a short historical digression. In 311 BC, the eastern part of Alexander's empire passed into the hands of Seleucus I Nicator, but the Indian areas of that empire came into the hold of Candragupta, who as the first ruler of the Maurya dynasty would unify much of India. There may have been a military stand-off between Seleucus and Candragupta, but sooner rather than later they came to an understanding. This understanding may have had its ground in their common past as officers serving under Alexander. For Candragupta such a past is not commonly acknowledged as a fact, but I consider as correct the bold old hypothesis of H. C. Seth according to which Candragupta is identical with Sisikottos, a young political refugee from India who joined Alexander.¹⁰ This identification fits with what is known from Indian sources about the young Candragupta. It also gives sense to the information of the Greek historian Plutarch (ca. AD 46–120) that Sandrókottos (Candragupta) as a young man had met with Alexander, and that later, as a king, he still cherished a great worship for him.¹¹ Finally, it is in my opinion supported by the fact that in a Jaina Prākṛit source Candragupta is referred to as *Sasigutta*, a form which like Sanskrit *Candragupta*, Prākṛit *Caṃdagutta* means “protected by the moon”.¹² Now, *Sasigutta*, or a closely related form, must lie at the basis of Greek *Sisikottos*.

However it be, Seleucus and Candragupta concluded a treaty, which included a marriage deal and gave Candragupta, in exchange for 500 elephants, the control over immense areas in Arachosia and Gedrosia, in what is now Afghanistan and Baluchistan.¹³ Usually, this

⁹ Flintoff 1980, pp. 93–99; Sedlar 1980, pp. 77–78.

¹⁰ Seth 1937a; 1937b, p. 653.

¹¹ Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 62.9; *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* 542 D.

¹² *Vyavahārasūtra Bhāṣya* 3.342; cf. Malvania 1970–72, vol. 2, p. 796, s.v. *Sasigutta*.

¹³ Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 62.4; Appianus, *Historia Romana* 11.55; Justinus, *Epitome*

is explained as the consequence of a military victory of Candragupta over Seleucus.¹⁴ With Hartmut Scharfe, one can, however, also view it from a different angle: the supply of elephants is reminiscent of and perhaps included the supply of auxiliaries, the typical duty of a vassal.¹⁵ The title *devānāmpriya* “friend of the gods” borne by Candragupta and his successors points in the same direction, for it is a translation of the Greek title φιλὸς τῶν θεῶν borne by the Hellenistic vassals.¹⁶ It may therefore be that Candragupta and his successors were at the same time sovereign in their Indian possessions and Seleucid vassals in Arachosia and Gedrosia.

In view of this, it is not surprising that the Mauryas in general entertained good relations with their western neighbours, the Seleucids. The relationship seems to have been even more intricate than commonly supposed. In this connection, I propose to rethink the position of Megasthenes, the so-called ambassador of Seleucus to the Mauryan court at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century BC. In reality Megasthenes belonged to the court of Sibyrtius, satrap of Arachosia. Even if in Arachosia and Gedrosia the Mauryas were vassals of the Seleucids, as we saw, these areas must have been under the direct administration of the Mauryas. Thus, Megasthenes was not delegated from one empire to another, but from a remote province to the centre of the Mauryan empire. Hence, his function may have been that of a functionary working for the integration of a minority community. His task, then, was to inform the Greeks living under Indian rule on local administration, society and culture, in order to facilitate their integration into the empire. This explains the slightly propagandistic tone of Megasthenes’ book on India, the *Indica* (Τὰ Ἰνδικά). Now, in the fragments that have survived of this work, there is no special reference to a separate religion called “Buddhism”, nor to anything specifically Buddhist. It may be that this information was not rightly understood by the compilers who used it, or that it is simply lost. What then about the claims that Megasthenes mentions the Buddhists as *Sarmánai*, whom he opposes to the *Brakhmánai*, the Brahmins? It should be clear that the class of *Sarmánai* or *śramaṇas* includes all types of

historiarum Philippicarum 15.4.21; Orosius, *Historia adversum paganos* 3.23, 46; Strabo, *Geographica* 15.2.9.

¹⁴ E.g., by Tola & Dragonetti 1991, p. 126.

¹⁵ Scharfe 1971, p. 217.

¹⁶ Scharfe 1971, pp. 215–216.

ascetics.¹⁷ Megasthenes explains the difference between the ascetics and the Brahmins, a distinction more fundamental in ancient Indian culture than the one we perceive between the two religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. A distinction also much more natural for a heathen Greek to make than going into the intricacies of Indian sectarianism. By the way, neither in Greece nor in India were there Church-like religions as we know them, only a plurality of traditions, rituals, cults, doctrines of salvation, and philosophies. Maybe, with the promotion of the concept of *dhamma*, some decades after Megasthenes, emperor Aśoka (ca. 273–237 BC) went a long way in the direction of a religion. Yet, Aśoka's way of presenting things is remarkably similar to that of Megasthenes. Aśoka seems to have been personally an adept of Buddhism, but there is nothing specifically Buddhist about his edicts, except those in which he speaks in his personal name. In the edicts which he issued as the head of state there is no trace of Buddhism.¹⁸ Aśoka does not show any preference for Buddhism over other sects or Brahmanical institutions. On the contrary, he exhorts his subjects to treat all religious groups and individuals alike. His edicts are all about spreading a broadly conceived *dhamma* detached of all sectarian or group-related content. In this, behind the naivety of his message, Aśoka shows a clear and ambitious vision: the spreading of the *dhamma* as a unifying force in his empire, as a means to consolidate his political power and to spread his influence further. Characteristic for this attitude is, for instance, that, with all the remorse he expresses in his thirteenth rock edict for the suffering caused to the people of Kalinga by his conquest, Aśoka shows no intention to give that people back its freedom. How ambitious Aśoka conceived his politics appears from the same edict, where he speaks about the propagation of the *dhamma* not only to his own subjects, Greeks and Kambojas of Northwest India included, but also to Syria, Egypt, Libya, Macedonia, and Greece.¹⁹ In his second rock-edict, Aśoka notifies that he has established in the land of Antiochus

¹⁷ Cf. Christol 1984, p. 39.

¹⁸ Thapar 1961, pp. 147–181, especially p. 179; Filliozat 1963, p. 7; cf. Karttunen 1997, p. 265.

¹⁹ The kings of these countries mentioned are Antiyoka or either Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BC) or Antiochus I (281/80–262/61) of Syria, Turamaya or Ptolemaeus II Philadelphus of Egypt (283–246), Antikini or Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia (278–239), Maka or Magas of Cyrene (300–258), and Alikasu(n)dara or Alexander of Corinth (ca. 295–244) (rather than Alexander of Epirus (272–258), cf. Derrett 1959, p. 130).

(I or II) of Syria and his neighbours medical facilities for both animals and men. Again, in his fifth edict he mentions the functionaries called *dhammamahāmātas*, who supervised and promoted religious communities, especially among western peoples like the Greeks.

All such religious and charitable activities may have been part of a deliberate policy intended to gain influence or to establish a foothold in western countries. If the edicts are to be taken at face value, Aśoka seems thus responsible for large-scale activities in the West—and elsewhere—that combine religion and politics, what we could call missions. Without independent archaeological or textual confirmation, it is of course impossible to prove Aśoka's claims. Nevertheless, I think there is no point in considering them as boasting or in otherwise rejecting them as untrue. The question is how important these missions were. While the end-result is clear—nothing of them has survived—, there may have been some temporary results or some indirect influence. In the first place, we want to know how important they were for Buddhism. It seems natural that the Buddhists have benefited most from Aśoka's policy because they themselves were likely to take the most advantage of it. On the one hand they had a tradition of wandering, proselytising preachers and on the other hand they apparently dropped ritualistic or ethnocentric qualms about leaving India more easily than other sects. One may wonder, though, to what extent these characteristics may have precisely been the result of Aśoka's encouragement. It is no coincidence that Pāli sources place the first international missionary activities in Aśoka's time.²⁰ Although these texts are not necessarily to be taken literally as historical sources, they are indicative of some new kind of intense proselytising activity. They state that after the council of Pāṭaliputra in ca. 250 BC, the *thera* Moggaliputta sent missionaries in nine directions. Among them, Majjhantika went to Kashmir and Gandhāra, and Mahārakkhita to Yonakaloka.²¹ Whether Yonakaloka²² corresponds to specific territories bordering on India like Gedrosia, Arachosia, the Hindukush, or the Oxus region, where colonists of Greek descent had settled down, or refers to the wider Hellenistic world, is not clear. In any case, it is conspicuous that the number of ordinations in relation to the number of conversions reported in the texts for

²⁰ *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Samantapāsādikā*, and *Mahābodhiwaṃsa* (cf. Lévi 1891, p. 207; Lamotte 1958, p. 320).

²¹ Lamotte 1958, pp. 320–321.

²² Lamotte 1958, pp. 328, 338.

Yonakaloka (one ordination on 17 or 73 conversions) is seven to ten times lower than the overall figure for the rest of the world (one on 2, 5 or 7). Lamotte explained this by the absence in general of regular priests and clergymen in the Hellenistic world (a fact also remarked on by Aśoka himself in his thirteenth rock edict).²³ The resulting shortage of spiritual leaders may have been an impediment to the further success of the missions.

Still according to the aforementioned Pāli tradition, a certain Yonaka “Greek” named Dhammarakkhita was sent to Aparāntaka, which is a region located in the west of present-day Maharashtra, but in the larger sense indicates all coastal areas between that area and the mouths of the Indus.²⁴ Without independent confirmation, it is, however, not a proven fact that in so early a period a Greek from the western borderlands of India was active as a missionary in India proper. It may be that events from different periods are presented as one historical sequence, and that in reality Dhammarakkhita was a later Graeco-Bactrian or Indo-Greek.

Alexander the Great had striven to not only politically unify East and West, but also culturally. If there was any long-lasting fall-out of this project, that was shattered by Alexander’s early death, is difficult to assess. What can be observed is the Hellenisation of the East in the wake of the Macedonian conquests, followed by the Orientalisation of the West. How deep Hellenisation affected the people in the East is a matter of debate. In the first place it entailed the spread of standard Greek (the *Koinè*). Although Aramaic was not totally superseded, Greek became the official language of trade, administration, and the army in all conquered areas, up to the border-regions of India. The other side of the picture is that Orientals began to use Greek as a medium for spreading their own ideas.²⁵ Among the early examples of this tendency are two Greek translations of Aśokan edicts found in Kandahar,²⁶ at that time the capital of the Arachosian and Gedrosian areas ceded to the Indians by the treaty between Seleucus and Candragupta mentioned above. These translations from Middle Indic are somewhat free, but render the content of the originals correctly in a stylish Greek. They are

²³ Lamotte 1958, pp. 337–338.

²⁴ Lamotte 1958, pp. 320, 328.

²⁵ Halbfass 1988, p. 8.

²⁶ Schlumberger et al. 1958; Gallavoti 1959; Filliozat 1963; Schlumberger & Benveniste 1969.

of special interest to the problem at hand, for they give us an idea of the manner in which typically Indian concepts were rendered in Greek from an early date.²⁷ For instance, *dharmma* (same as Sanskrit *dharma*) is rendered as *eusebeia*, which has the connotation of “piety”.

4. THE INDO-GREEKS

That already in the time of Aśoka, Buddhism started to take root among the Greeks in the East and West remains thus an unproven probability, but there are indications that it did so under Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek rule. In that period, a name similar to that of the afore-mentioned Dhammarakkhita is met with, when in the reign of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, in the middle of the second century or the early first century BC,²⁸ monks from all over the world were present at the inauguration of the great *stūpa* at Anurādhapura. From Alasanda, city of the Yonas or Greeks, came Mahādhammarakkhita with 30,000 monks, we are told by the *Mahāvamsa* chronicle.²⁹ This number is certainly greatly exaggerated, but even if in reality only three Greek monks came, the case is interesting. The question is, where was Alasanda? Some researchers have maintained that it was Alexandria in Egypt.³⁰ In apparent support of the presence in Egypt of Buddhism in these early times, the archaeologist W. M. Flinders Petrie interpreted certain signs on a Ptolemaic gravestone from Denderah as Buddhistic symbols.³¹ He was, however, not followed in this by his fellow-workers and his interpretation is seldom taken seriously nowadays.³² In view of the early date, Alasanda is more likely one of the other Alexandrias closer to India, possibly Alexandria-among-the-Arachosians (i.e., present-day Kandahar), or Alexandria-under-the-Caucasus near present-day Bagrām, both in Afghanistan.³³ Anticipating the discussion below on the spread of Buddhism to Parthia, it is also interesting to notice that

²⁷ Filliozat 1963, pp. 4–6; Schlumberger & Benveniste 1969, pp. 195, 197–200; Norman 1972.

²⁸ Lamotte 1958, p. 397 gives 104–80 BC as the regnal years of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, but divergent datings are met with, ranging from 161–137 to 101–77 BC.

²⁹ *Mahāvamsa* 29.39 (Geiger & Bode 1912, p. 194); cf. Lévi 1891, pp. 210–211.

³⁰ Lévi 1934–1937, pp. 159–164.

³¹ Flinders Petrie 1900, p. 54.

³² Cf. F. Ll. Griffith in Flinders Petrie 1900, p. 54; cf. also the criticism by Salomon 1991, p. 736, n. 33.

³³ Lévi 1891, p. 211.

at the ceremony in Anurādhapura a certain Mahādeva is said to have been present with a retinue of no less than 460,000 monks (!) from the Pallava (Parthian) country.³⁴

Only a very few clear cases of official sponsorship of Buddhism by Indo-Greeks are recorded in inscriptions. There is one on a relic vase from the Swat valley, dating to about 50 BC or somewhat earlier, in which the local officer (*meridarkh*) Theüdora (Theodorus) records his pious act as follows:

By Theüdora, the meridarkh, were established these relics of the Lord Śakamuni for the purpose of security of many people.³⁵

A copper plate inscription from Shahpur near Taxila remembers the establishment of a *stūpa* by another *meridarkh*, whose name is illegible.³⁶

A contested instance of patronage of Buddhism is that by the Indo-Greek king Menander (ca. 155–130 BC), who through the Pāli text *Milindapañha* received a prominent place in Theravāda tradition as king Milinda. Although the view has been repeatedly challenged,³⁷ there are a number of indications that tend to confirm the hypothesis that Menander was a Buddhist. Ptolemy mentions Euthumēdia as another name of the supposed capital of Menander, Sagāla, or Sāgala in Middle Indic.³⁸ A. Foucher argued that *Euthumēdia* translates the Buddhist concept of *saṃyaksamkalpa* “the right conviction or intention”, and he took this to mean that Menander converted to Buddhism in Sāgala.³⁹ In the *Avadānakalpalatā* of the Medieval Buddhist poet Kṣemendra (990–1065) the “prophecy” is enunciated that Milinda will build a *stūpa* at Pāṭaliputra.⁴⁰ Much earlier, Plutarch relates that after Menander’s death different cities quarrelled for his bodily remains in a way totally reminiscent of what the Buddhist tradition states to have happened after the death of the Buddha.⁴¹ Certain kings figuring in Buddhist stories are portrayed as protectors of Buddhism against Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, a staunch supporter of Brahmanism, who came

³⁴ *Mahāvamsa* 29.38 (Geiger & Bode 1912, p. 194).

³⁵ *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* II, pp. 1–4.

³⁶ *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* II, pp. 4–5.

³⁷ E.g., by Tarn 1951, pp. 267–269.

³⁸ Ptolemaeus, *Geographia* 7.1.46. Some emend to **Euthydēmía* on the assumption that the city was consecrated to the Graeco-Bactrian ruler Euthydemus.

³⁹ Foucher 1943, pp. 34–35.

⁴⁰ In the chapter titled *Stūpāvadāna*.

⁴¹ Plutarchus, *Moralia* 52.28 (821 D).

to power after overthrowing the Mauryas in about 186 BC. Some of these kings may be recognised as historical Indo-Greeks, especially the one called Daṃṣṭranivāsin in the *Aśokāvadāna*⁴² and Buddhapakṣa in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, who was attacked by Puṣyamitra during a campaign for the destruction of all the *stūpas* built by Aśoka, and who is identified by P. C. Bagchi with Menander.⁴³ The name Buddhapakṣa “follower of the Buddha” speaks for itself, while Daṃṣṭranivāsin, according to Bagchi, indicates that he had his residence (*nivāsa*) at a place where a tooth-relic (*daṃṣṭra*) of the Buddha was kept. It is not clear to me whether a tooth-relic is indeed attested at mount Dantaloka on the road from Puṣkalāvatī to the Swat valley, as alleged by Bagchi⁴⁴ and indicated by the name of the place itself (*danta* “tooth” and *loka* “tract, district”), but it is, interestingly, recorded by Xuanzang at Balkh.⁴⁵ Although there is no proof whatsoever that Puṣyamitra actually persecuted the Buddhists, he may have incurred their wrath because he did no longer actively support them as the Mauryas had done.⁴⁶ The Greek struggle with Puṣyamitra gave the Buddhists the prospect of renewed influence. Part of the Indo-Greek aristocracy, though, in particular king Agathocles, who ruled between about 180 and 170 BC, had shown sympathy for the followers of the Viṣṇu-Baladeva-Kriṣṇa cult.⁴⁷ King Antialcidas, around 100 BC, seems also to have played the Vaiṣṇava card through his envoy Heliodorus, as can be read in the latter’s Besnagar inscription. It should be stressed that several Indo-Greek coins show Hindu elements but none show Buddhist ones. Still, there is no doubt that whenever needed, the tiny Greek minority accepted any local support they could muster, certainly also that of Buddhism, which by this time must have become firmly implanted in Northwest India. What may be sensed is that strategic reasons made some Greeks the promoters of Buddhism and some Buddhists supporters of the Greeks. To what extent the adoption of Buddhism—or any other system—by Greeks was only a tactical or political ploy⁴⁸ or implied genuine conversion, remains elusive. These two motivations were not necessarily incompatible and

⁴² *Divyāvadāna* 19.

⁴³ Bagchi 1946, pp. 83–91.

⁴⁴ Bagchi 1946, pp. 85–86.

⁴⁵ Xuanzang in Beal 1881, vol. 1, p. 110.

⁴⁶ Lévi 1891, p. 194 is perhaps too cynical in his evaluation of the motives of the Greeks.

⁴⁷ Guillaume 1991, pp. 81–87, 100–101.

⁴⁸ Lévi 1891, p. 194; Tarn 1951, p. 392, chapter 4.

adoption of Buddhism or Hinduism should also be understood within the tradition of pagan pluralism and Hellenistic syncretism. One should also not exaggerate the opposition between Buddhists and Hindus. As to Menander, we may adopt the middle position of Bopearachchi that Menander was favourably disposed towards Buddhism, but not exclusively connected to that sect.⁴⁹

5. WESTERN CENTRAL ASIA, IRAN AND FURTHER WEST

By the beginning of our era, the international political scene had changed dramatically. In Northwest India, Śakas, Indo-Parthians and Kuṣāṇas held sway until the Guptas unified North India in the fourth-fifth century. In the West, the Roman Empire had become a formidable power. In between these two, Parthians and later Sassanians formed a powerful block. The Śakas seem to have followed the relatively favourable Greek policy with regard to Buddhism. A stronger impetus to its spread came from the Kuṣāṇa kings, especially Kaniška (ca. AD 78–102).⁵⁰ The fact that the Kuṣāṇa Empire stretched across large parts of Northern India, Eastern Iran and Central Asia and that it dominated the trade between India, China, Parthia and the Roman Empire, greatly favoured the diffusion. Under Kuṣāṇa rule, the art of Gandhāra originated, largely Hellenistic Greek or rather Roman-Syrian as to its form, but Indian and Buddhist in content.⁵¹ Thus, Gandhāran artists took the image of Apollo as a model when they started to depict the Buddha, but the end-result was original to a great extent. Buddhism also became firmly entrenched in many places to the west of Gandhāra around this time, for example, in the western Kuṣāṇa capital Kāpiśī, northeast of Kabul, and in Balkh, where Buddhism peacefully coexisted with Zoroastrianism under Kaniška's policy of religious tolerance, resulting in some mutual influence.

As early as the first century AD, Buddhism started expanding even further westwards to Bukhara and areas under Parthian rule in Margiana and Northern Khorāsān, as is clear from the findings of Soviet and Russian archaeologists, whose work is unfortunately still

⁴⁹ Bopearachchi 1990, pp. 48–49.

⁵⁰ Litvinskij 1998, p. 177.

⁵¹ Bussagli 1996, pp. 360–361. Earlier scholars, like Tarn 1951, pp. 394–398, 404–407, unconvincingly argued that the Indo-Greeks started the school.

largely unknown in the West.⁵² G. A. Koshelenko supposed that the appearance of Buddhism in Margiana was due more to the contact the Parthians had with that religion in their Indian possessions than to any influence from Bactria.⁵³ Of course, here, like elsewhere, there may have been several ways by which Buddhism expanded.

Between 224 and 226 AD the Sassanians overthrew both the Kuṣāṇas and the Parthians, and in the Kuṣāṇa areas this seems to have been accompanied or followed by massive destruction and desertion of Buddhist sites.⁵⁴ Violent suppression of Buddhists, as well as Christians, Manichaeans, Brahmans, and other minorities by the Zoroastrians is also evident from an inscription of the high-priest Kartūr (Kerder) on the Kabah of Zartusht dating from ca. 290 AD. However dominant Zoroastrianism was under the Sassanians and whatever exclusivistic and even fanatical tendencies it showed, Buddhism seems to also have been tolerated at times. Even more than tolerance was present if one considers some coins of governor Peroz (242–252 AD) and of king Hormizd (256–264 AD), which depict them as paying homage to the Buddha.

Mostly it is argued that the real break-through of Buddhism in parts of Central Asia, like Margiana and especially Sogdiana, only came around the turn of the fifth century, when the Sassanians had to retreat before the Hephtalites or White Huns.⁵⁵ But this break-through was rather short-lived. After a coalition of Sassanians and Western Turks reconquered most of the Hephtalite domains in 560, Indian elements were again absorbed by the former's culture, but Buddhism, still mostly out of favour with the rulers, did not do much more than survive.⁵⁶ Aside from the Turki Shahis, who brought it to blossom in Central Afghanistan, Buddhism only once again found patrons west of India in the rulers of the Western Turk Empire, who between the early seventh and the early eighth century promoted it in Uzbekistan, Kirghizistan, and Kazakhstan. As far as I know, the reasons why Buddhism finally disappeared from western countries have not been clarified in detail, but the most obvious reason is that it was swept away by the Muslim

⁵² Koshelenko 1966; Stavisky 1994, p. 128; Litvinskij 1998, p. 177; Walter 1998, pp. 42–43.

⁵³ Koshelenko 1966, pp. 180–183.

⁵⁴ Pugachenkova 1992, p. 35; Stavisky 1985, p. 1396; Zeymal 1999, pp. 415–416.

⁵⁵ E.g., Grenet 2002, pp. 212–213.

⁵⁶ Grenet 2002, pp. 213–214.

Arab conquests.⁵⁷ But even in Islam elements are present to which Buddhism may have contributed more than is generally accepted, like the *madrassa* system of education.⁵⁸ If Buddhist monuments have not provided direct prototypes for early Islamic architecture in Central Asia, then their impact was at least indirect through their influence on Zoroastrian architecture in sixth-century Sogdia which itself influenced Islamic building practice.⁵⁹ Only once in later times Buddhism was reintroduced in Persia and as far west as the Caucasus, namely under the Mongol Khans in the thirteenth century, leaving archaeological traces of temples, monasteries, cave complexes and *stūpas*, but by the mid-fourteenth century it again disappeared.⁶⁰

As far as the pre-Muslim period is concerned, no certain archaeological traces of Buddhism have as yet been discovered beyond Iran, in Iraq, Syria, the Caucasus, and further west.⁶¹ Nonetheless, we are confronted with the intriguing statement by al-Bīrūnī that not only Khorāsān and Persia, but also Irak, Mosul, and the country up to the frontier of Syria were all *Samaniyya* before the imposition of Magism (Zoroastrianism) as the religion of state of the Persian Empire, but that this religion has now retreated to Afghanistan.⁶² It is difficult to take this literally if “Buddhist” is meant by Samaniyya. A similar statement elsewhere by the same author, that all people in the eastern part of the world were *Samans* before the appearance of Būdhāsaf (the *bodhisattva*),⁶³ might lead us to suppose that al-Bīrūnī uses the term Samaniyya to refer to any Eastern heathen religion other than Zoroastrianism, but not to Buddhism. However, again giving the impression of talking about Buddhists, al-Bīrūnī goes on to say in the second passage mentioned that in the border region between Khorasan and India one can still see the monuments (*bahārs* and *farkhārs*) of the people called *Shamanān* by the

⁵⁷ Grenet 2002, pp. 213–214; Zeymal 1999, pp. 415–416.

⁵⁸ Duka 1904; Bulliet 1976, pp. 144–145.

⁵⁹ See the discussion in Litvinskij 1981, pp. 63–64 and Mode 1994 versus Pugačenkova 1991, p. 219.

⁶⁰ Mélikian-Chirvani 1989, p. 498.

⁶¹ We will not concern ourselves here with finds of ancient Buddha statues or statuettes from Fars, Russia, Sweden, France, and elsewhere, that are occasionally reported in (often popular) literature or in the media, since these are either isolated or unconfirmed and tell us nothing about an eventual accompanying spread of Buddhist ideas and cults (cf. Jacobson 1927, p. 205, n. 1).

⁶² Or *Sumaniyya*. al-Bīrūnī, *India*, Book 1; Sachau 1910, vol. 1, p. 21.

⁶³ Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, chapter 8; Sachau 1879, p. 188.

inhabitants of Khorāsān. *Bahārs* are Buddhist *vihāras* or monasteries, but what is meant by *farkhār* is unclear to me. Possibly it is derived from Sanskrit *parīṣkāra* “ornament, decoration”, Pāli *parikkhāra* “apparatus”, indicating an Indian, but not necessarily Buddhist origin.

Probably as early as the Kuṣāṇa period the *navavihāra* or “new monastery” was founded in Balkh at the location still known as *Naw Bahār*, and it became a centre of Buddhist study and pilgrimage.⁶⁴ When it was visited by Xuanzang, around 630 AD, the impressive monastery had about one hundred monks who, he says, were very unstable in their religion. Apart from the *navavihāra*, the city of Balkh had at that moment about one hundred other monasteries with about 3,000 monks.⁶⁵ After the fall of Balkh to the Arabs and the partial destruction of the *navavihāra* around 663–664 AD, the Barmacids, Islamised descendants of the lay keeper of the monastery, held important positions under the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids during the eighth century, till they fell into disfavour.⁶⁶ Their name is derivable through Bactrian from Sanskrit *pramukha* “chief”.⁶⁷

As to Buddhism in other areas of Iranian speech, Xuanzang notices that Persia has two or three monasteries with several hundreds of monks, mainly of the Sarvāstivādin school of the Little Vehicle, while in Makrān there were some 100 monasteries and some 6,000 priests of both the Little and Great Vehicles.⁶⁸ A systematic study of Iranian place-names containing elements like *but* (< *Buddha*) and *bahār* (< *vihāra* “monastery”) is a desideratum that may provide important clues on the westernmost expansion of Buddhism.⁶⁹ The initiative was already taken by R. W. Bulliet, who has shown that the toponym *Naw Bahār* has spread from Afghanistan and Eastern Iran north-westward along the great land routes leading to Samarkand and Bukhara (the name of which, is itself

⁶⁴ Cf. Bailey 1943, p. 2; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New edition), vol. 1 (1960), p. 1033a–b s.v. *al-Barāmika* [W. Barthold – D. Sourdel]; vol. 7 (1993), p. 1039b s.v. *Naw Bahār*; vol. 9 (1997), p. 869b s.v. *sumaniyya* [G. Monot].

⁶⁵ Beal 1881, vol. 1, pp. 108–112 (Book 1).

⁶⁶ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1 (1960), pp. 1033a–1036a s.v. *al-Barāmika* [W. Barthold – D. Sourdel].

⁶⁷ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1 (1960), p. 1033a–b s.v. *al-Barāmika* [W. Barthold – D. Sourdel]; vol. 9 (1997), p. 869b, s.v. *sumaniyya* [G. Monot]; Bailey 1943, p. 2. Grenet 2002, p. 213.

⁶⁸ Beal 1881, vol. 4, pp. 464–465 (Book 11).

⁶⁹ Cf., e.g., the *Bihārīstān* in the Valley of Jam, mentioned by Warwick & Ball 1976, p. 150, or also *Bahār* near Hamadan.

also said to be from *vihāra*), and westward till well beyond Hamadān, in what is now Kurdish territory. According to Bulliet, this indicates a series of foundations directed from the *navavihāra* of Balkh.⁷⁰

On the basis of information provided by Xuanzang and the Arab author Ibn al-Faḳīh, and of the designation *nava* “new”, Bulliet further suggested that the *navavihāra* monasteries represented a specific type or sect of Buddhism connected with Central Asia and China and were distinct from the older monasteries in the region.⁷¹ Should one think here of the Western Vaibhāṣika or Bālhika (Bactrian) Abhidharma School founded by the Tokharian monk Ghoṣaka after the fourth (fifth) Buddhist council organised by Kaniṣka?⁷² Or was it Mahāyāna? On the basis of the translations made by Parthian Buddhist preachers who reached China as early as the middle of the second century, Mariko Walter infers the presence in Parthia of a Mahāyāna tradition.⁷³ Already it is starting to become clear that in the entire Oxus region a variety of Hīnayāna schools was active, Dharmaguptakas, Sarvāstivādins and Mahāsāṃghikas.⁷⁴ Among other sources, this appears from Gāndhārī and Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī script that have come to light at Merv, Zang-Tepe near Termez and other places.⁷⁵ However, a lot of work remains to be done in the study and translation of these texts, as well as of the numerous Buddhistic inscriptions from the region.

To complete this overview, mention should be made of some possible evidence of Buddhism along the Persian Gulf, scarce and indecisive though it is. Cave complexes at Chehelkhāneh and Haidarī on the northwestern shore of the Gulf to a certain extent resemble Buddhist monasteries serving local trading communities in India and Central

⁷⁰ Bulliet 1976, pp. 140–143; cf. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 9 (1997), pp. 869a–870a, s.v. *sumaniyya* [G. Monot]; vol. 7 (1993), p. 1039b s.v. *Naw Bahār*. Some caution is expressed by Emmerick 1989, p. 493a.

⁷¹ Bulliet 1976, pp. 142–143.

⁷² Cf. Stavisky 1994, pp. 132–133.

⁷³ Walter 1998, pp. 52–54, 56–58; cf. Litvinskij 1998, p. 177. On the Parthian missionaries, see also Koshelenko 1966, pp. 180–181; Litvinskij 1998, pp. 177–178. One scholar advanced the possibility that these Parthians were in reality Indo-Parthians, Parthian inhabitants of India that is, which would of course drastically change the situation. Unfortunately, I cannot trace the reference now.

⁷⁴ Litvinskij 1998, p. 177; Walter 1998, pp. 52–53.

⁷⁵ Koshelenko 1966, pp. 181–182; Litvinskij 1981, pp. 53–54; 1998, pp. 177–179; Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya in Litvinsky, Zhang & Samghabadi 1996, pp. 437–442.

Asia, but they might as well be Christian monasteries.⁷⁶ If they are Buddhist complexes, there could be a direct link with India, for the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* in the first century indicates the Gulf as the destination of Indian merchant ships from Barygaza⁷⁷ (i.e., Bharukaccha, now Bharuch in Gujarat). This observation again directs our attention to long-distance trade as a factor in the spread of Buddhism.

6. THE EAST-WEST TRADE AND BUDDHISM

Several overland trade routes and combined land-sea routes existed between the Roman World and India, passing through Persia, the Persian Gulf and Near-Eastern cities like Palmyra, Petra, Antioch and Ephese. Northern India was mainly the transit area of the South-Indian, and Central-Asian trade.⁷⁸ Gradually the sea routes became more important, as Persia was avoided by the Romans during periods of war with the Parthians and the Sassanians, who controlled these routes.⁷⁹ In particular the monsoon routes across the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea became immensely popular. Alexandria in Egypt became the most important centre connecting these routes to the Mediterranean World.

Textual, numismatic, and archaeological evidence testifies to the presence of numerous traders from the Graeco-Roman world in India, especially in the southern port-towns, where they established business houses. There is hardly any evidence that these traders came under the influence of Indian religions, Buddhism or any other. A number of Prākṛit inscriptions from the first and second centuries AD found at different places in Maharashtra in South-western India⁸⁰ are often regarded as bearing witness to the donations by Yavana ("Greek") traders to Buddhist monasteries and *stūpas*.⁸¹ The Indian names of several of these Yavanas have often been a cause for wonder, but have been interpreted as showing the degree of Indianisation of these people. One may, however, wonder whether these men really were Greeks and traders. Samuel Clark Laeuchli pointed out that in Prākṛit *yona(ka)*

⁷⁶ On Ḥaidarī, see Ball & Whitehouse 1976.

⁷⁷ *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 36.

⁷⁸ *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 38, 41, 47, 51, etc.

⁷⁹ Cf. Wheeler 1951, pp. 346, 349.

⁸⁰ E.g., Nāsik, in Senart 1906, pp. 90–91, no. 18.

⁸¹ Cf. Karttunen 1997, pp. 297–298.

“Greek” is to be distinguished from *yavana*, which no longer meant “Greek” as in Sanskrit, from which the word is a loan, but “Greek of high civil or military rank”, then “foreigner of high rank” in general, and ultimately “foreign military man, mercenary”.⁸² Thus, the men of the inscriptions may have been Graeco-Roman or other Western mercenaries. Amazingly, two of them, Ciṭa and Irila of the Gata-people, who clearly carry non-Indian names, are recognisable as Goths, a Germanic people at that time probably living in what is now Poland.⁸³ One man mentioned in one of the inscriptions, is called a *Yonaka*, and he thus probably is a real Greek in spite of his Indian name Indrāgnidatta. He hailed from Datāmitra, which probably is present-day Termez on the Oxus, at the same time a Greek foundation and an important early Buddhist centre in Central Asia, as we have seen.

There is also a lot of literary and epigraphical evidence for the presence of Indian traders and other visitors, even whole communities, in Armenia, the northern Black Sea area, Socotra, Arabia, the Red Sea area, and across the Mediterranean. Indians are met with from Alexandria to Athens, and from Antioch in Syria to Tarragona in Spain. One, however, looks in vain for something specifically Buddhist about these people, whereas it is often possible to clearly identify Hindu elements. Attempts at identifying some Indian visitors as Buddhists are unconvincing, as is the case with the old ascetic Zarmanokhēgas, who in 20 BC threw himself on a funeral pyre on the market in Athens, burning himself alive.⁸⁴

During the reign of emperor Claudius (41–54 AD), the king of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) sent a delegation to Rome consisting of four men under the leadership of a certain Racchias.⁸⁵ An echo of this event is presumably preserved in a commentary on the Pāli text *Mahāvamsa* informing us that king Bhātikābhaya (38–66? AD) sent out ships to Romanukkharaṭṭha or the Roman Empire.⁸⁶ From Racchias the Romans learned a lot about the island, but whereas this island belonged to the

⁸² Laeuchli 1986, pp. 207–213, 217. The semantic influence of another Sanskrit *yavana*- “keeping away; averting” may have played a role in this process.

⁸³ Konow 1912; Mayrhofer 1959.

⁸⁴ Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 54.9.8; Plutarchus, *Vita Alexandri* 69.7; Strabo, *Geographica* 15.1.73. As an explanation for the name *Zarmanokhēgas*, Lévi 1891, pp. 211–212 unconvincingly suggested **śramaṇaśākya*-, which he strangely understood as “moine de Çākya”.

⁸⁵ Plinius, *Naturalis historia* 6.84–91; cf. Schwarz 1975, pp. 189–190.

⁸⁶ *Mahāvamsa Tīkā* 630 on *Mahāvamsa* 34.46–47; cf. Schwarz 1974; 1975, p. 190.

Buddhist sphere of influence from an early period, again nothing which is recognisable as Buddhistic. Even the man's name, which stands for *Rakkhiya*, or another *Rakkhita* beside the *Mahārakkhita*, *Mahādhammarakkhita* and *Dhammarakkhita* already mentioned,⁸⁷ is not exclusively a Buddhist one.⁸⁸

What to think also of the accountant *Asokas* mentioned in a late Greek papyrus from Oxyrrhynchus in Egypt?⁸⁹ The absence of a Greek or Coptic etymology for his name paves the way for an identification with Middle Indic *Asoka*, Sanskrit *Śoka*. Although one should not assume a direct link with emperor Śoka, who lived nearly a millennium earlier, it may indicate that this person was a Buddhist, for in Pāli sources the name *Asoka* is regularly carried by laymen.⁹⁰

On the whole, the available evidence of the popularity of Buddhism among "Western" business communities is thus meagre. Yet, in the absence of state sponsorship, individual or group-related patronage by traders may have been a way by which Buddhism could travel further west from Iranian lands. Anyhow, trade relations provided channels for the diffusion of religious and philosophical ideas across the Old World, as will be illustrated below by the case of Scythianós.

7. RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPLAY

It is not known how Buddhism was received by the Graeco-Roman pagan scene. Maybe not so differently from eastern cults like that of Isis or Mithras, which were accepted next to or integrated into the traditional cults. It could also have been treated as a philosophical school, in which case it could have aroused the suspicion of "atheism" (i.e., of not respecting traditional cults), as was the case with Epicureanism.

Buddhist propaganda in the West would have reached in the first place the people of the lower classes, just like the initially equally unknown Christianity. Sylvain Lévi's assumption that the esoteric concepts of philosophical Buddhism were beyond the grasp of the

⁸⁷ To the same identification came Karttunen 1997, p. 341, n. 114.

⁸⁸ It was, e.g., also carried by Jains (Malvania 1970–72, vol. 2, s.v. *Rakkhiya* 1. and 2.).

⁸⁹ P. Oxy 3867, *Elias to Andronicus* 8, 16 (ed. Sirivianou 1989, pp. 150–153).

⁹⁰ Malalasekera 1937–1938, vol. 1, pp. 219–220. Sirivianou 1989, p. 152, n. 8, considers the resemblance to the name of king *Śoka* as irrelevant.

common people in the West⁹¹ may well be largely true, but that among the converts nobody was capable of translating the core Buddhist precepts into Greek, is a great underestimation of the capacities of the people of those days.

As already indicated, when Western texts speak about Indians, nothing specifically Buddhistic is to be gleaned from them. On the other hand, where Western traditions seem to betray Buddhistic elements or influence, there is mostly no direct Indian connection whatsoever demonstrable. This may simply indicate that Buddhism did not come directly from India, for “[t]he power-house of Buddhist mission was no longer our India alone but lands well to her West and North”.⁹² But in most such cases it is even well-nigh impossible to prove that it really concerns Buddhism. Many such apparently Buddhist elements are found on the crossroads between Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity, Neo-Platonism, and similar agents of the orientalising of the West.

The only gnostic sect in which Buddhist influence is undeniable is Manichaeism.⁹³ Its third-century Persian founder Mani preached for one year in India. His doctrine, which had a great impact in the West, contains elements with Indian, especially Buddhistic, reminiscences, like the division between the “possessors of knowledge” living the life of an ascetic and the mass of “auditors”. Mani declares himself an heir not only of Zoroaster and Christ, but also of Buddha. In the Coptic *Kephalaia of the Teacher* (ca. 400 AD), containing the teachings of Mani and tenets of Manichaeism, beside Buddha a certain *aurantês* appears, a name derivable through Middle Iranian (Bactrian?) **ahrent* from Indic *arha(n)t* “an Arhat, the highest rank in Buddhist monastic hierarchy”.⁹⁴ From the introduction of Buddhist terms in some Parthian Manichaean texts, R. E. Emmerick infers that they probably originated in one of the centres where Manichaeism and Buddhism flourished side by side, perhaps in Balkh of the third to the eighth century. But the Buddhist connection goes further back in time. Already Mani’s predecessor Terébinthos had taken on the name Bouddâs and pretended to be born from a virgin.⁹⁵ Terébinthos’s own teacher was Scythianós, an eponym

⁹¹ Lévi 1891, p. 213.

⁹² Derrett 2000, p. 25.

⁹³ Cf. Halbfass 1988, p. 18.

⁹⁴ Gnoli 1991.

⁹⁵ Epiphanius, *Adversus octoginta haereses* 66.1.7; 66.3.11; 66.4.4; *Souda*, s.v. Μάνης; Hegemonius, *Acta archelai* 63.2; Gaius Marius Victorinus, *Ad Iustinum Manichaeum* 7. Cf. Lévi 1891, p. 212.

that, as Sylvain Lévy remarked, looks like a translation of Śākya, the clan-name of the Buddha, (perhaps rightly) understood as “Scythian”.⁹⁶ Scythianós was a merchant by profession, trading between Egypt and India. In this way he got hold of Egyptian and Indian texts on what St. Epiphanius of Judea (ca. 315–403 AD) calls “magic practices”.⁹⁷ When Scythianós started preaching, nobody paid attention to him, so that one day he got so frustrated that he jumped to his death from the upper storey of a house while trying to impress the onlookers by flying, a fatal feat later repeated by Terébinthos.⁹⁸ Levitation is precisely one of the *siddhis* or supernatural faculties of Indian yogic tradition which Buddhism shares with Hinduism. The tenth-century Byzantine lexicon *Souda* avers that Scythianós, who is here confused with Mani (Μάνης), was of Brahman descent.⁹⁹

Mani apparently also borrowed many things from the Syrian gnostic philosopher Bardesanes. In 218 AD, Bardesanes had conversations with Indians somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, and he later wrote a book on India that is unfortunately lost. Citations preserved with other authors show that Bardesanes was well informed about the *Brakhmânes* and the *Samanaîoi*.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the Brakhmânes, he rightly points out that the Samanaîoi do not claim common ethnic affiliation, but are composed of all Indian communities. Again, there is every reason to claim that the latter category includes all kinds of ascetics and not specifically the Buddhists.¹⁰¹

Basilides, a Hellenised Egyptian from the first half of the second century, was a gnostic and a Christian, though he was later considered heretical. Other scholars have stressed his Greek antecedents, like Neo-Pythagoreanism, Plato and Philo.¹⁰² J. Kennedy nevertheless regarded his philosophy as Buddhistic to the core, with some Sāṃkhya elements.¹⁰³ I give here some of the elements that have been singled out by Kennedy, and occasionally other writers, to underpin the hypothesis that Basilides

⁹⁶ Lévi 1891, p. 212.

⁹⁷ Epiphanius, *Adversus octoginta haereses* 66.1.8–66.2.7.

⁹⁸ Epiphanius, *Adversus octoginta haereses*, 66.2.8; 66.3.13–14.

⁹⁹ *Souda*, s.v. Μάνης.

¹⁰⁰ Porphyrius Malchus, *De Abstinencia* 4.17.1, 3; Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2.14.

¹⁰¹ Sedlar 1980, pp. 170–175.

¹⁰² Mansel 1875, pp. 144–165, in particular 158, 162.

¹⁰³ Kennedy 1902.

incorporated much of Buddhism into his Christian Gnosticism.¹⁰⁴ Even if this interpretation may be somewhat preconceived or overdrawn, it is based on what is handed down of Basilides' teachings. Again, however, one should take into account that Basilides' teachings are not known in the original, but only through later Christian authors, principally Clemens of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 AD), and Hippolytus of Rome († ca. 236 AD).¹⁰⁵

Suffering is a universal and fundamental fact in the world, says Basilides. It is not caused by God, but the automatic outcome of sin. Every living being bears the consequences of its present acts in the following life. As a result, man is caught in an endless cycle of rebirth, during which he may be reborn in non-human forms, even as a plant. Notwithstanding the fatality of this causal mechanism of transmigration, destiny is self-made. The human will is free to do good things, opening for the elect few the prospect of salvation, but the great mass of mankind will everlastingly remain bound in the cycle of rebirth.

The way to salvation is not shown by philosophy for Basilides, but by Christian theology. Here he clearly deviates from the Buddha, who preached a practical mode of liberation free from theology. Still, Basilides' God is the most abstract God thinkable, exclusively described through negations, in a way otherwise unknown in the West. This unnameable God Basilides places in *buthós*, literally "the Depth" in Greek. Semantically, however, one may compare the notion of *śūnyatā* "Emptiness", which in esoteric Mādhyamika Buddhism denotes the absolute reality or truth, in which all distinctions disappear. It is at present not possible to more than speculate, but one may even wonder whether *buthós* is not at the same time an attempt at formally rendering the term *buddhathā* or of *bhūtatathatā*, which are both used to refer to the same absolute reality. Even more remarkable in this context is the related use of *buthós* by another second-century gnostic, Valentinus, for the supreme, unbegotten, invisible, self-existent Aeon (Eternal). From the Unnameable God in Basilides' system five Aeons emanate: Mind (*nous*), Word (*logos*), Prudence (*phronesis*), Wisdom (*sophia*) and Power

¹⁰⁴ Kennedy 1902; also, but in a more fuzzy way, Lillie 1893, pp. 170–173, and less explicit, Garbe 1914, p. 72.

¹⁰⁵ Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 7.2–15 (ed. Marcovitch 1986); Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* 3.1; 4.12, 24–26; 7.17 (ed. Stählin 1970; 1985); further Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.24, and some minor references with the same and other Fathers of the Church.

(*dunamis*). It seems rather far-fetched to compare these, as Arthur Lillie does,¹⁰⁶ with the five Dhyānī Buddhas, each characterised by one of the *skandhas* or constituent elements of being, namely consciousness, mental confirmation, perception, sensation, and bodily form. In fact, the latter are more akin to the five spheres of Basilides, the highest being the region of the “not-being God” or the supramundane realm (cf. *nirvāṇa*), followed by the Firmament, the Ogdoad or Aether, the Hebdomad or Air, and finally, the lowest sphere of Earth, the place of Formlessness and Matter, a place of suffering. Each region is filled with innumerable beings with natures corresponding to their respective spheres. Some are destined to a further process of refinement and these ascend to a higher sphere, others are not able to ascend any further, but none descends.

The actual world was preceded by an ideal world beyond knowledge, a chaotic, conglomerated seed-mass deposited by an ideal God, in which all entities were stored up in a confused state. These entities evolve spontaneously according to their own nature, through a process of differentiation and combination. This process involves three fundamental qualities, the light or subtle, the passions, and the gross or dense, corresponding to the *guṇas* of the Sāṃkhya system, namely *sattva* “purity”, *rajas* “passion”, and *tamas* “(mental) darkness”. In this connection, Basilides does not even consider the soul as a permanent unit, but as composed of various entities with different characters, the highest being the subtle, rational part, the lowest the gross material body. The passions are appendages, parasitical spirits with a substantial existence appended to the rational faculty in a constant struggle, creating illusions and irrational desires in men. This is reminiscent of Manichaeic ideas, but also recalls the five *skandhas*, of which reason is the highest and material form the lowest.

In Basilides’ system, all existences are classified into either mundane or supramundane, the latter recalling the *lokottara* “world-transcending”, spiritual nature of the Buddhas, a concept furthest developed within the Mahāsāṃghika school. The Sons of God, of whom Jesus is the first, are consubstantial with God, just like in the *dharmakāya* theory of Mahāyāna the Buddha-figure incarnates the *dharmma* or absolute being and truth.¹⁰⁷ These Sons are by their nature ensured of the ultimate

¹⁰⁶ Lillie 1893, p. 173.

¹⁰⁷ On the *dharmakāya* concept, see La Vallée Poussin 1906; 1913.

salvation, although like Bodhisattvas they may postpone it by voluntary committing sin. By faith, the intuitive grasping of the teaching of the gospel, the elect among the believers, may, like Buddhist Arhats or highest ranking monks, arrive at a state of serene blessedness and charity for all beings, without passions and desires. They all ascend to the region of the “not-being God”, a sort of *nirvāṇa*.

Other central concepts of Basilides are, finally, Ignorance, which is reminiscent of *avijjā* in Buddhism, and Formlessness or the blind material world, which is comparable to the Sāṃkhya concept of *prakṛti* or nature unperceived by consciousness.

It may be that the correspondences of Basilides’ notions with Indian ones are accidental, or even that they are natural. The origin of sin was a central question in every form of gnosis and the belief in transmigration was fairly widespread in Antiquity. But the evil consequences of all actions were normally not the basis of Greek philosophies. And it is strange that a Christian professes a fully developed doctrine of reincarnation combined with the law of causality as it is otherwise only found in Indian religions.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Basilides was not the only one spreading such ideas, but he seems to have been part of a real current within the Church. This current was vehemently attacked by Origen (ca. 185–254 AD), the founder of systematic Christian theology, who was later considered heretical, among other things because of his extreme asceticism.¹⁰⁹

Origen was a student of Clemens of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 AD),¹¹⁰ who was himself fairly well acquainted with Indian thought and is the first Western author to mention the Buddha—as *Bouttas*.¹¹¹ The voiceless geminate of this form may betray an Iranian (cf. Persian *but* “idol”)¹¹² intermediary. Bouttas is worshipped by his followers, as if he were a god. Elsewhere, Clemens informs us that certain Indians—called *Semnoí*—worship a pyramid under which the bones of a God are kept,¹¹³ apparently a reference to *stūpas*. Jains also built *stūpas*, however, and the fact that the *Semnoí* wander about naked, seems indeed to refer to Jains, unless it was just the standard way in which the Ancients

¹⁰⁸ Kennedy 1902, pp. 392–394.

¹⁰⁹ Benz 1951; Sedlar 1980, p. 200.

¹¹⁰ Benz 1951, pp. 185–192.

¹¹¹ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, 1.15.71.6; cf. Benz 1951, pp. 183–184.

¹¹² Cf. Bailey 1931.

¹¹³ *Stromata* 3.6.60.3–4; cf. Benz 1951, p. 182.

imagined Indian wise men.¹¹⁴ The holy women—*Semnai*—who remain virgins, may either be Buddhist or Jain nuns.¹¹⁵ *Semnoi* is at the same time a formal rendering of Middle Indic *samaṇa* “an ascetic” and a folk-etymological interpretation of the latter (Greek *semnós* carries the same meaning “venerable” as the Sanskrit term *arhat* indicating the highest rank in Buddhist monastic hierarchy). Then, in the third instance, Clemens mentions a group called *Samanaioi* living among the Bactrians.¹¹⁶ Again *samaṇas*, and here it is more likely the Buddhists specifically who are intended, although Hindu sects had also spread to Central Asia.¹¹⁷ Clemens’ inability to connect these different pieces of information with each other and to distinguish between Jains and Buddhists, makes it doubtful that Clemens knew a lot about a separate religious entity called “Buddhism” in India, let alone in the West. In general, however, a typical religious disposition would make a Christian much more receptive to doctrinal differences in foreign groups than a pagan Greek would be. He would also be less slavishly bound to the classical literary Graeco-Roman tradition, which had established as the great authorities on India the Alexander-historians and Megasthenes, neither of whom clearly refers to Buddhism as a separate sect or religion. Sylvain Lévi considered this traditionalism as one of the main reasons for the silence on Buddhism in classical literature.¹¹⁸ In this connection, one possible pre-Christian reference to Buddhists, that has gone unnoticed till now, should be mentioned. The *Pedanoi* are an Indian community about whom Nicolaus Damascenus, a Greek historian and philosopher of the first century BC, says that they have no hereditary officiants, but choose the wisest man among themselves to preside over their religious activities.¹¹⁹ With the name of this community one may compare Middle Indic *padhāna*, *pahāna*, Sanskrit *pradhāna* “principal, chief, head, leader” and conclude it does not so much refer to a people, as to their pastor. Indeed, each Buddhist community of monks elected its own abbots in rotation.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Christol 1984, p. 39; Karttunen 1997, p. 58.

¹¹⁵ Benz 1951, pp. 181–182.

¹¹⁶ *Stromata* 1.75.71.4.

¹¹⁷ Litvinskij 1998, p. 178.

¹¹⁸ Lévi 1891, pp. 212–213; cf. Halbfass 1988, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ Handed down by Paradoxographus Vaticanus, *Admiranda* 5.42 (43) and Johannes Stobaeus, *Anthologia* 3.9.49.

Another Alexandrian teacher of Origen was called Sakkas Ammonius (ca. 175–245 AD), whose teachings are very much akin to Gnosticism.¹²⁰ Some researchers suspect that the name Sakkas Ammonius refers to an epithet of the Buddha: Pāli *Sakkamuni*, Sanskrit *Śākyamuni* “sage of the *Sakka* or *Śākya* clan”.¹²¹ There is, however, no indication that Ammonius really was a Buddhist. According to the Church Father Eusebius of Caesarea, he was a Christian turned pagan.¹²² Ammonius was also a teacher of the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (205–270 AD). As to Plotinus, who had to cut short a voyage to India halfway,¹²³ several researchers have pointed out a number of parallels between his doctrine and Indian, especially Upaniṣadic notions. One such idea is that the world with its soul(s) and matter came into being through successive emanations of the “one”, and that the human soul can be reunited with that essential nature of the universe during this or a later life.¹²⁴ But direct Indian influence is nowhere demonstrable, and Plotinus’ ideas do have Greek antecedents, although it is interesting to note that the Neo-Platonist philosopher Porphyry (ca. 233–309 AD) suggests that they are derived from Sakkas Ammonius.¹²⁵

Around 400, another father of the Church, Hieronymus, mentions the virginal birth of Buddas (Buddha) from the thigh of his mother.¹²⁶ The virginity of Māyā and Mary is only one of the many parallels in Buddhist and Christian themes, teachings, parables and stories.¹²⁷ There are the childhood stories of the apocryphal gospels, like that in which the statues fall down at the moment Christ and Buddha are carried inside a temple,¹²⁸ or that in which both explain to their teachers the meaning of the characters of the alphabet.¹²⁹ But also in the canonical gospels the similarities are amazing, with, among other themes, the glorification of the newborn saviour by an old man, the parable of the

¹²⁰ Benz 1951, p. 197; Sedlar 1980, pp. 200–207, 292.

¹²¹ Benz 1951, pp. 197–202, relying on Seeberg 1941; Sedlar 1980, pp. 199–200, 292; and the prudent criticism of Halbfass 1988, p. 17.

¹²² Sedlar 1980, p. 199.

¹²³ Sedlar 1980, pp. 200, 292.

¹²⁴ Benz 1951, pp. 200–201; cf. Halbfass 1988, p. 17.

¹²⁵ Benz 1951, p. 200.

¹²⁶ Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum* 1.42; cf. Ratramnus Corbeiensis, *De nativitate Christi* 3.

¹²⁷ Cf., a.o., Derrett 1967; 1970; 1978; 1990; 1992; 1999; 2002; Philonenko 1972; Sedlar 1980, pp. 107–123; Lindtner 2000.

¹²⁸ Sedlar 1980, p. 114.

¹²⁹ Garbe 1914, p. 74; Jairazbhoy 1963, pp. 145–146.

sower and that of the prodigal son, the walking on water, the consolation of the widow, the fasting in the wilderness, and the temptation by the devil.¹³⁰ The multiplication of the bread and the fishes by Jesus to feed a mass of 5,000 people has its counterpart in the feeding of 500 monks with one cake and a little milk with ghee by the Buddhist Elder Mogallāna at the behest of the Buddha, as related in the introduction to the *Illāsajātaka*.¹³¹

Since such parallels were first noticed in the nineteenth century, the simple fact that Buddhism is the older of the two religions, often led scholars—including Schopenhauer—to the conviction that common elements in both must have been borrowed by Christianity from Buddhism.¹³² Though it is difficult to exactly date it, the extant Buddhist literature is much younger than the origin of Buddhism and its final redaction has often taken place centuries after the beginning of our era. In quite a number of cases, the direction of borrowing seems to be rather the reverse: from Christianity into Buddhism.¹³³ In general, one may speak of a two-way influence,¹³⁴ but next to nothing is known about the media and ways of transfer, or when it took place. In a single case, the sixth century legend of *Ioasaph and Barlaam*, the transmission can be traced to a certain extent.¹³⁵ *Ioasaph and Barlaam* is a Greek version of a popular novel based on an Indian original that came to us through a series of translations in Pahlavi, Arabic, Syriac, and Georgian. The extant Greek text is ascribed to Iohannes of Damascus (ca. 650–750 AD), a Christian theologian of Arabic descent, but the actual translator was probably his contemporary St. Euthymius the Georgian. This shows that one should not always think of direct influence from India. The figure of Ioasaph, who is no other than the *bodhisattva* of the Buddha-legends, was eventually canonised by the Church as the saint Iosaphath. In general, Buddhist-Christian confabulations must have taken place at various places and spread over a period of almost a 1,000 years starting with Aśoka.¹³⁶ It seems to me that persecution under the Sassanians may have been one of many crucial factors the

¹³⁰ Cf. Derrett 2000.

¹³¹ Matthew, 14.15–16; Marcus, 6.35–36; Lukas, 9.13–14; *Jātaka* 78 (Cowell 1895, pp. 195–201); cf. Garbe 1914, pp. 59–61.

¹³² E.g., Lillie 1893; 1909.

¹³³ Cf. the examples listed in Derrett 2000, pp. 57–76.

¹³⁴ Cf. Derrett 1967, pp. 59–64; 2000, pp. 45–82.

¹³⁵ Cf. Lang 1955; 1957; Lamotte 1957.

¹³⁶ Derrett 2000, pp. 83–86.

influence Buddhism and Christianity had on each other, as exchanges may have taken place when their respective followers took refuge with one another. Most exchanges, which by the way also involved other philosophies and religions, did not, however, really affect the core of the respective doctrines and did not lead to more than superficial convergence. They were triggered by the shock of recognition experienced by enthusiastic followers of, for example, Mahāyāna and Christianity when confronted with each other's teachings and stories, which were then cleverly used as pieces of propaganda for one's own sake.¹³⁷

More than on the literary or doctrinal level, indecisiveness still reigns regarding the oft-alleged influence of a series of Buddhist institutions and practices, like monasticism, confession, the use of bells and incense etc. on the origin of their Christian counterparts. However, ascribing all commonalities to coincidence does not seem to be the most rational conclusion here either.

8. THE THERAPEUTAI: BUDDHIST MONKS?

Although it has given rise to much speculation, the comparison between the sect of the *Therapeutai*, and Buddhism is most interesting. The Therapeutai are only known through Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC–AD 50), who claims that they were widespread over many countries, but had their principle centre in the vicinity of Alexandria in Egypt.¹³⁸ Church-historians from the fourth century onwards considered them as Christians, but in view of their existence at the very beginning of our era, this is improbable. Seeking the roots of the Therapeutai in Alexandrian Judaism, late nineteenth century authors nevertheless remarked that they had rules and traditions similar to those of Buddhist monks.¹³⁹ Broadly, Philo gives the following information:

- there are not only male Therapeutai, but also female (*Therapeutrides*);
- they give up all possessions as well as relations with family and friends;

¹³⁷ Derrett 2000, pp. 86–101.

¹³⁸ Philo Alexandrinus, *De vita contemplativa* (ed. Cohn & Reiter 1915).

¹³⁹ E.g., Mansel 1875, pp. 31–32.

- they live at the same time a life in solitude and as a community, in modest huts outside the city, where each has a small cell or shrine called monastery and sanctuary (*semneíon*);
- they pray two times a day, in order to become enlightened and to be relieved of the burden of the senses, finding inner calm;
- they attach much importance to modesty, moderation in food, drink and clothing, and to other practices conducive to a state of holiness;
- during their congregations on the seventh day of the week they eat only bread and water, the elder holding a speech, while male and female listeners are separated by a high wall;
- they have no serfs, since all are born equal, but the novices serve those with a longer state of duty;
- they possess ancient allegorical scriptures and sacred philosophical doctrines which they study and expound to each other and on which they meditate in solitude in order to grow in piety;
- they consider their doctrine as a living being, as it were, with the literal text as the body and the allegorical interpretation as the soul.

There are elements in this list which seem not entirely to fit Buddhism like, for example, the weekly congregation, for the Buddhist *uposatha* or sacred day of takes place five or six times a month. Originally, however, among pre-Buddhistic ascetic communities the sacred day was weekly.¹⁴⁰ The mentioning of a festival at which the Flight from Egypt is commemorated seems to suggest that the Therapeutai were Jews, which otherwise is not obvious. Other striking points seem not to have received any attention before. The word *semneíon* “sanctuary” is of course Greek, but as in the case of the *Semnoí*, above, it may ultimately be based on Indic *samāṇa* “an ascetic, a monk”. The repeated stress on piety (*eusébeia*) as the ultimate goal of the Therapeutai is strongly reminiscent of the translation of *dhamma* by *eusébeia* in Aśoka’s Greek edicts. The distinction between literal reading and allegorical interpretation of the texts vaguely recalls the Mādhyamika distinction between the conventional and the absolute truth. The presentation of the doctrine as a living being recalls the *dharmakāya* notion of a depersonalised Buddha embodying the absolute truth as his own true nature (*dharma*,

¹⁴⁰ Przyłuski 1936.

dhamma).¹⁴¹ Any comparison with Mādhyamika ideas is anachronistic, however, for this school probably originated somewhat later than the time of the Therapeutai (second century AD?). Or, should one consider here the possibility of influence in the other direction?

In popular literature attention is sometimes drawn to the name *therapeutai*, which would on the one hand correspond in Greek to the view of Buddhists of their own activities as a kind of healing (Greek *therapeúein*), and on the other hand render the designation *theravāda* “doctrine of the Elders” for the Hīnayāna branch of Buddhism (or *theravādi* for a follower of this branch). Apart from the fact that the first meaning of *therapeúein* is “to do service”, the latter part of the argument is of course linguistically not very convincing. If there is any truth in it, it may be that paronymic attraction of *therapeúein* “to heal; to serve; to worship” in itself may have been strong enough to replace the sole element *thera* “(Buddhist) Elder”.

Mention should be made here of attempts to draw also the sect of the Essenians into the Buddhist zone of influence and to consider them as the transmitters of Buddhist thought to Jesus and emerging Christianity,¹⁴² but these do not seem to lead to more than the constata-tion of similarities and probabilities.

Finally, Buddhism also has affinity with several Hellenistic schools of thought, without there being any clear indication of mutual influence. With Epicureanism, for example, Buddhism has in common its stress on spreading to all mankind a salutary message based on rational insight, which must lead to “absence of fear”, in particular of the supernatural.¹⁴³ Both share as well the high value attached to actively helping people in general as well as to “friendship” in particular, though Buddhism sees this more as a means of putting an end to suffering rather than as the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure.¹⁴⁴

9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

When we have a final look at the circumstances which explain the limited success of or response to Buddhism in the West, we may keep in mind the following observations.

¹⁴¹ Williams 1989, p. 175.

¹⁴² E.g., by Dupont-Sommer 1981.

¹⁴³ Warder 1956, pp. 57–58.

¹⁴⁴ Warder 1956, p. 57.

First of all, we should not forget how limited our information is. Although many aspects on which I have touched, can be further elaborated, at present one should beware of jumping to conclusions. On the other hand, it is also true that what we have is only the tip of the iceberg and we can only hope that in the future more material will come to light.

Except maybe under Aśoka, there was no centrally orchestrated plan to bring Buddhism to the West. The practice of proselytising, what we call "Buddhist missions" was mostly the result of accidental circumstances and temporary decisions rather than a real sustained mission in the Christian sense.

The large proportions assumed by international trade around the beginning of our era was an important facilitator for the movement of Buddhist laymen and monks. However, the more Buddhism spread westwards the less likely became state sponsorship. Therefore, patches of practicing Buddhists in Egypt and elsewhere were left to themselves, except for the support of traders and converted locals. When international trade declined as a result of the crises the Roman Empire passed through between the late third and the fifth century, Buddhism automatically suffered.

Even if one wants to deny the historical reality behind the indications of Buddhist presence in the Mediterranean, then one still has to concede that there was during many centuries a wide geographical overlap between Buddhism and Hellenistic culture in the Iranian areas, from the eastern border regions of the Roman Empire up to the western borders of India, and deep into Central Asia. The geographical overlap between Buddhism and Christianity was possibly even greater, involving communities in Sri Lanka, South and North-west India, Persia and Central Asia. In that light, philosophical and religious similarities are the natural outcome of mutual influence rather than accident. It is wrong to see the Parthian and Sassanian Empires in this as insurmountable geopolitical blocks. Instead, it may be that the common experience of repression in the Iranian lands brought religions closer together.

A first wave of Buddhism initiated by the political ambitions of Aśoka in the third century BC was apparently not strong enough to leave any visible or lasting impact. A second wave from the beginning of our era onwards, simultaneous with and part of the great expansion of Buddhism in Asia, spanned most of the Iranian lands, but reached the West too late to grow in the fertile earth of late Roman paganism.

Becoming the state religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, Christianity would wipe out Buddhism together with most other

pagan and oriental religions and philosophies, all the while imbibing many elements from them. But Buddhism would continue to be present for a long time in the West Asian empires. However, from the seventh century onwards, just when Buddhism shows signs of a revival, an expanding Islam would leave no room for it, driving it out of Persia and Central Asia.

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VINAYA: FROM INDIA TO CHINA

Ann Heirman (Ghent)

1. INTRODUCTION

On his death-bed, the Buddha advised his disciples to rely on the monastic discipline he had expounded.¹ Consequently, the title *dashi* 大師, Great Master, originally reserved for the Buddha himself, was transferred to the list of precepts (*prātimokṣa*) for monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). The *prātimokṣa* became their *dashi*.² Monastic discipline is thus clearly one of the essential strongholds of Buddhism, the protectors of which are in the first place the monks and nuns.³ This central position of monastic discipline does not imply that all monasteries applied exactly the same rules. From the beginning of the spread of monastic Buddhism, different rules or different interpretations of the rules started to emerge, and various schools (*nikāya*) arose. These schools were defined on the basis of their disciplinary texts (*vinaya*).⁴

When Buddhism entered China in the first century AD, it was the monks of the northern Buddhist schools who formed the first Buddhist

¹ Dīgha II, p. 154; *Chang ahan jing*, T.1.1.26a27–28. See also Waldschmidt 1950–51, Part 3, pp. 386–387, for Sanskrit, Tibetan, Pāli, and Chinese (*Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*) sources.

² Later, the term was also used for *bodhisattvas* and eminent monks (Forte 1994, pp. 1022–1023).

³ See, for instance, a recent study on the tasks and functions of the *saṃgha* according to the early Buddhist texts: Freiburger 2000 (particularly pp. 33–48).

⁴ The core of monastic discipline is a list of precepts (*prātimokṣa*) and a set of formal procedures (*karmavācānā*). These precepts are introduced and commented upon in the chapters for monks and nuns (*bhikṣu-* and *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅgas*). The procedures are explained in detail in the so-called *skandhakas* or *vastus* (chapters). The *bhikṣu-* and *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅgas* and the *skandhakas* or *vastus* together constitute the full *vinayas*. Besides this, the term *vinaya* is also used for all texts related to monastic discipline. The *vinayas* of the different schools coincide to a large extent, both regarding the number and the topic of the precepts. This similarity undoubtedly points to a common basis. In essence the various schools thus coincide. Many differences, however, appear in the interpretation of the rules, the mitigating circumstances and the exceptions that were allowed. When the *vinayas*, for instance, all equally say that ‘a wrong woman’ cannot be ordained, the interpretation of ‘a wrong woman’ differs: depending on the *vinaya*, it is either a woman thief, an adulteress, or a bad wife (see Heirman 2002a, part 1, pp. 152–157). See also note 177.

communities referring to their respective *vinaya* traditions. Later, when the sea route between India and China became more popular, the monks of the southern part of the Indian subcontinent also started to exert some influence. The first *vinaya* texts were most probably introduced orally and in a foreign language, for the use of the foreign monks. When, in the third and the fourth centuries, later generations of immigrants lost contact with their original languages and more and more Chinese entered the monasteries, the need for translations of disciplinary texts became urgent. By the end of the fifth century, the most important *vinaya* translations were finished, and were available in Buddhist monasteries all over the country. More than two centuries later, one more *vinaya* was introduced to China, the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*, translated at the beginning of the eighth century. Curiously enough this was exactly the same time as another *vinaya*, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, was imposed on the whole of China. From that time on until today, the latter *vinaya* has been followed in all Chinese monasteries.

The following paper aims to trace the history of the Chinese *vinaya* texts from their introduction to the firm establishment of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*. It covers a period that goes from the fall of the Han 漢 dynasty to the days following Empress Wu Zetian's 武則天 reign (690–705). When in 220 AD the Han dynasty came to an end, the country broke up in three kingdoms, the Wei 魏, the Shuhan 蜀漢 and the Wu 吳. They were temporarily brought together again by the Western Jin 西晉 dynasty (280–316). This was a rather weak dynasty, unable to defend itself against the many attacks of foreign northern troops. Consequently, the Chinese had to withdraw to the south of China. This was the start of the so-called north-south division of China that would last until 589. In the north, many foreign kingdoms arose, the most important of which was the Northern Wei 北魏 dynasty (386–535) that occupied a large part of Northern China. The Northern Wei controlled major cities such as Chang'an 長安 (modern Xi'an 西安) and Luoyang 洛陽. In the south, several Chinese dynasties succeeded one another: the Eastern Jin 東晉 (316–420), the Liu Song 劉宋 (420–479), the Qi 齊 (479–502), the Liang 梁 (502–557), and the Chen 陳 (557–589). The capital was Jiankang (modern Nanjing). The country was re-united by the Sui dynasty in 589. The dynasty did not last long, however, and in 618 a general called Li Yuan started the Tang dynasty. This dynasty lasted until 906, but was temporarily interrupted by the Zhou 周 dynasty (690–705), founded by Wu Zetian, a former concubine of two Tang emperors. It is in between the fall of the Han

and the re-establishment of the Tang, that the history of the Chinese *vinaya* texts was decided.

2. THE EARLIEST VINAYA TEXTS

Around the first century AD,⁵ Buddhist monks and lay followers started to enter China along the merchant land routes from India to China, and small Buddhist communities arose. The first monks all were foreigners.⁶ They most probably transmitted the disciplinary text orally.⁷ This was still the case in the Central Asian countries when the monk Faxian 法顯 travelled through the region in the beginning of the fifth century.⁸

2.1. *Disciplinary Rules for Monks*

According to the Official History of the Sui 隋 dynasty,⁹ the first Chinese monk was ordained in the Huangchu period (220–226) of the Wei kingdom. Many buddhologists,¹⁰ however, consider Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調 (*var.* Futiao; 浮 or 弗 – 調), a collaborator of An Shigao 安世高 at the end of the second century, to be the first known Chinese monk. Once the Buddhist community began to attract more and more Chinese speaking followers, it seems logical that the need for Chinese translations of the disciplinary texts grew. An additional reason for these translations might have been that later generations of foreign Buddhist families lost contact with their original languages and more and more needed to rely

⁵ See Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, pp. 18–23.

⁶ Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, pp. 23–24; Ch'en 1973, pp. 43–44; Zürcher 1990, p. 163. In all probability, also the monks in the first known Buddhist community in China were foreigners. It is the community of Pengcheng, a flourishing commercial centre situated on the main route from Luoyang to the south, in the northern Jiangsu province. It was mentioned for the first time in 65 AD (*Hou Hanshu* 42, vol. 5, pp. 1428–1429). The community seems to have been quite prosperous, and succeeded in attracting a number of Chinese lay followers. See Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, pp. 26–27; Rhie 1999, pp. 15–18.

⁷ Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, p. 55; Salomon 1999, pp. 165–166; Boucher 2000a, p. 60.

⁸ See note 43.

⁹ *Suishu* 35, vol. 4, p. 1097.

¹⁰ See Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 34; vol. 2, p. 331, note 86; Ch'en 1973, pp. 45–46; Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 64–65, 79, 93–97. A. Forte (1995, p. 66), however, sees him as a layman.

on Chinese texts. According to the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳¹¹ (Biographies of Eminent Monks), compiled by Huijiao 慧皎 ca. 530 AD,¹² the first *vinaya* text translated into Chinese is a text called *Sengqijixin* 僧祇戒心 (The Heart of Precepts of the Mahāsāṃghikas). The *Gaoseng zhuan* tells us that the translation was done by Dharmakāla, a native of Central India, who arrived in Luoyang around 250 AD.¹³ Still, since no text by this title is mentioned in the earliest extant catalogue, the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (Collection of Records concerning the Tripiṭaka) compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 between 510 and 518,¹⁴ it is not certain that Dharmakāla indeed translated such a text. Only in relatively late catalogues,¹⁵ do we find references to it. The title of the translation, *Sengqijixin*, probably refers to a *prātimokṣa* of the Mahāsāṃghika school.¹⁶ The text is not extant. Huijiao also claims that Dharmakāla, who was able to recite all the *vinayas*, introduced the first ordination tradition to China with the help of Indian monks.¹⁷ In all probability, the Indian monks were needed in order to obtain a sufficient number of ordained participants necessary to hold a legally valid ordination ceremony.¹⁸ For various reasons, it is not possible to determine which ordination ceremony or which school Dharmakāla might have introduced. First of all, we do not know to which school Dharmakāla himself belonged. Instead, he is said to have been acquainted with all the *vinayas*. In addition, the school affiliation of the Indian monks is not mentioned, and, finally, we have no reference to the basic legal text used at the ordination ritual.

¹¹ Huijiao, T.2059.50.325a3–4.

¹² Wright 1954, p. 400.

¹³ Also in the chapter on Buddhism and Daoism of the *Weishu*, a history of the Northern Wei dynasty, compiled by Wei Shou in 551–554, Dharmakāla is said to have translated a *prātimokṣa* (*Weishu* 114, vol. 8, p. 3029).

¹⁴ Dates of compilation of the catalogues: Mizuno 1995, pp. 187–206.

¹⁵ Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140b8 (AD 594); Daoxuan, T.2149.55.226c12–26 (AD 664); Jingmai, T.2151.55.351a21–b1 (AD 627–649); Zhisheng, T.2154.55.486c3–24, 648b22–23 (AD 730); the text is reported as lost; Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.783c20–784a13 (AD 800); the text is lost.

¹⁶ Shih 1968, p. 19 n. 68; Hirakawa 1970, p. 202.

¹⁷ Huijiao, T.2059.50.325a4–5. These Indian monks might already have been present in China, as the biographies of Dharmakāla in Jingmai, T.2151.55.351a28–29, in Zhisheng, T.2154.55.486c23, and in Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.784a12, seem to suggest by using the expression 集梵僧, ‘he assembled Indian monks’.

¹⁸ A minimum quorum of ten monks is needed (for references to the relevant *vinaya* passages, see Heirman, 2001, p. 294 n. 87).

The first texts on legal procedures (*karmavācanā* texts) translated into Chinese are, according to some catalogues,¹⁹ two Dharmaguptaka texts: the *Tanwude Lübu* 曇無德律部雜羯磨 (T.1432, *Karmavācanā* of the Dharmaguptaka School), translated in 252 AD by the Sogdian Kang Sengkai 康僧鎧 (Saṃghavarman)²⁰ and the *Jiemo* 羯磨 (T.1433, *Karmavācanā*), translated in 254 AD by the Parthian Tandi 曇帝 (?Dharmasatya).²¹ Also Huijiao, in his *Gaoseng zhuan*,²² refers to an early Dharmaguptaka *karmavācanā* text, translated by Tandi. Of Kang Sengkai, Huijiao²³ says that he has translated four texts. Since he only gives the name of one, non-*vinaya*, work, it is not certain that he thought a *karmavācanā* to be among the texts translated by Kang Sengkai. It is further remarkable that the earliest extant catalogue, the *Chu sanzang jiji*, does not mention either of these early *karmavācanā* translations. They are only recorded in later catalogues. Moreover, A. Hirakawa²⁴ provides extensive evidence that the two texts should be considered as a later redaction based on the Chinese *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428. The similarity of the Chinese terminology indeed indicates that these *karmavācanā* texts were probably compiled after the translation of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* in the early fifth century. Still, some differences in the chapters on the *sīmā*²⁵ and the ordination reveal that the *karmavācanā* texts are not collections of procedures merely borrowed from T.1428, but further developments of the same Dharmaguptaka tradition.²⁶

The above does not necessarily imply that there never were such early *vinaya* translations. Many early Buddhist masters were convinced of their existence, and claimed that the first legal ordinations in China

¹⁹ T.1432: Zhisheng, T.2154.55.486c29–487a7, 619b7–8, 668a23–24, 719b21–22 (AD 730); Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.784a17–24, 952b15–16, 1007c19–20, 1042c15 (AD 800).

T.1433: Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140b13 (AD 594); Yancong et al., T.2147.55.155b18 (AD 602); Jingtai et al., T.2148.55.188a17–18 (AD 664); Daoxuan, T.2149.55.227a5–11, 300b15–16, 324b9–10 (AD 664); Jingmai, T.2151.55.351b5–7 (AD 627–649); Mingquan et al., T.2153.55.432b20–22 (AD 695); Zhisheng, T.2154.55.487a8–13, 619b9–10, 719b23–24 (AD 730); Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.784a25–b1, 952b17–18, 1042c16–17 (AD 800).

²⁰ Lamotte 1958, p. 595; Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 122.

²¹ Lamotte 1958, p. 595; Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 123.

²² Huijiao, T.2059.50.325a8–9.

²³ Huijiao, T.2059.50.325a6–8.

²⁴ Hirakawa, 1970, pp. 202–218, 252–253.

²⁵ In order to have a legally valid procedure, any formal act has to be carried out within a well delimited district (*sīmā*) by a harmonious order (a *samagrasaṃgha*, i.e., an entire and unanimous order). See Kieffer-Pülz 1992, pp. 27–28. See also the notes 175–177.

²⁶ See Heirman 2002b, pp. 402–407.

were based on the legal procedures of the Dharmaguptaka school as described in the *karmavācānā* texts.²⁷ As we will see further, this is probably one of the reasons why the Dharmaguptaka ordination eventually was accepted as the only true one in China. But even if Chinese *vinaya* texts were available around the middle of the third century, they cannot have been widespread²⁸ since about one hundred years later, monks such as Dao'an 道安 (312–385), pointed to the many difficulties in governing the Buddhist monasteries due to the lack of such texts. In order to temporarily rectify this situation, Dao'an even made some rules of his own.²⁹ Besides this, he tried to encourage the translation of *vinaya* texts. Dao'an himself is sometimes said to have translated a *Binaiye* 鼻奈耶 (*Vinaya*) that was based on the *Sarvāstivādivinaya*.³⁰ He further suggested inviting the famous translator Kumārajīva³¹ (343–413) to China. The latter finally arrived in Chang'an sixteen years after Dao'an's death.

2.2. *Disciplinary Rules for Nuns*

Also for women, the lack of *vinaya* texts in the first period of Buddhism in China constituted a serious problem. Just like their male counterparts, women could not rely on any rules to start a monastic community. In addition, since, as far as we know, nuns never crossed the mountains from India to China, no foreign community of nuns existed in China in

²⁷ See Heirman 2002b, pp. 410–416.

²⁸ According to E. Zürcher (1990, pp. 169–182), it is mainly the way how early Buddhism spread in China that caused this defective transmission of *vinaya* texts. The spread of Buddhism was not a case of “contact expansion”, but the result of “a long-distance transmission”. The northwest of China was initially only a transit zone, with no firm establishments. Therefore, monks in more eastern and southern centres easily lost their feed-back, and transmission of texts often failed, certainly after the Chinese in the beginning of the fourth century lost control of the northern part of China.

²⁹ See Huijiao, T.2059.50.353b23–27, translated by Link 1958, pp. 35–36. For a discussion, see T'ang 1996, vol. 1, pp. 212–217; Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, pp. 187–189; Ch'en 1973, pp. 99–100; Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 2, pp. 699–702 (who also points to some rules established by the monks Zhi Dun 支遁, a contemporary of Dao'an, and Huiyuan 慧遠, Dao'an's most famous disciple); Kuo, 1994, pp. 26–28; Yifa, 2002, pp. 8–19 (including the rules of Dao'an's contemporaries and of Huiyuan).

³⁰ See Daoxuan, T.2149.55.300b3–4 and 324a17–18: Dao'an translated a *Binaiye* together with Zhu Fonian. In all probability, this refers to a text translated in 383 by Zhu Fonian, with a preface of Dao'an (= T.1464) (cf. Yuyama 1979, pp. 7–8). On some other *vinaya* translations (no longer extant) made at the end of the fourth century, see Wang 1994, p. 167.

³¹ Kumārajīva was born in Kucha (Kučā), in Central Asia. At an early age, he entered the monastic order. In 401, he arrived in Chang'an where he distinguished himself as an outstanding translator of both Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna texts.

the first centuries AD. According to the *Chu sanzang jiji*,³² the first *vinaya* text for nuns translated into Chinese was the *Biqiuni Jie* 比丘尼戒 (*Bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*), a *prātimokṣa* text translated by Dharmarakṣa in the second half of the third century AD. Sengyou adds, however, that the text is lost. Still, since Sengyou mentions this work, A. Hirakawa is of the opinion that it must have existed.³³

According to the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳³⁴ (Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs), the first Chinese nun was Zhu Jingjian 竺淨檢 (ca. 292–361)³⁵ When in the beginning of the fourth century, she wanted to become a nun, she was told that in China the rules for nuns were not complete, but that in foreign countries these rules existed. Yet, according to the *Biqiuni zhuan*, in the middle of the fourth century Zhu Jingjian and four other women were ordained before the *bhikṣusamṅha* (“community of monks”) on the basis of a *karmavācānā* and of a *prātimokṣa* of the Mahāsāṃghika school. There is, however, no evidence of the spread of these Mahāsāṃghika works, as pointed out by Z. Tsukamoto.³⁶ Also after Zhu Jingjian’s ordination the search for *vinaya* rules clearly continued. This search is described in three short comments in the *Chu sanzang jiji*.³⁷ These narrate in detail the translation into Chinese of a *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa* at the end of 379 AD or in the beginning of 380 AD. The text had been obtained in Kucha (Kučā) by the monk Sengchun 僧純, and has been translated by Tanmochi 曇摩持 (?Dharmaji)³⁸ and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念. According to A. Hirakawa,³⁹ it is beyond doubt that this no longer extant work once existed.⁴⁰ The above comments also mention

³² Sengyou, T.2145.55.14c28.

³³ Hirakawa 1970, p. 234. On the earliest *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣas*, see also Nishimoto 1928; Heirman 2000b, pp. 9–16.

³⁴ T.2063, a collection of biographies of Buddhist nuns compiled by Baochang 寶唱 between 516 and 519. It has been translated by Tsai 1994. See also De Rauw 2005.

³⁵ Baochang, T.2063.50.934c2–935a5.

³⁶ Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 1, p. 424.

³⁷ Sengyou, T.2145.55.81b21–24, 81b25–c17 and 81c18–82a17. These passages have been translated and annotated in Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 636–641, note 17.

³⁸ Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 1, p. 426.

³⁹ Hirakawa 1970, pp. 234–235.

⁴⁰ See also Sengyou, T.2145.55.10a26–29: an “Indic” (胡, cf. Boucher 2000b) text obtained by Sengchun in Kučā at the time of Emperor Jianwen (fl. 371–372 AD) of the (Eastern) Jin and brought by him to Guanzhong 關中 (i.e., the present-day Shenxi), where he had it translated by Zhu Fonian, Tanmochi and Huichang. This text is further mentioned in the following catalogues: Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140b11; Daoxuan, T.2149.55.250a15–18; Jingmai, T.2151.55.358a24–26; Zhisheng, T.2154.55.510c3 and 648c6–7; Yuanzhao et al., T.2157.55.807b9 and 984c7–8.

that, an apocryphal tradition of five hundred precepts for *bhikṣuṇīs* compiled by the monk Mili 覓歷, had existed, but was lost.

Finally, a complete set of rules for nuns became available when in the beginning of the fifth century, four *vinayas* were translated into Chinese.

2.3. Faxian Goes to India

As seen above, in the fourth century, there was not yet a Chinese translation of an entire *vinaya* text. This deficiency prompted the monk Faxian 法顯 to undertake a trip from Chang'an to India in 399. His travel account tells us that his main purpose was to obtain an original version of the *vinaya*.⁴¹ This was not an easy task, since, according to Faxian, in the countries of "Northern Indian",⁴² *vinaya* texts were transmitted only orally.⁴³ Consequently, Faxian had to go further south to what he calls "Central India",⁴⁴ where, in Pāṭaliputra⁴⁵ (modern Patna), he succeeded in copying the *vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghika school. He was also able to obtain extracts⁴⁶ of the *Sarvāstivāda vinaya*. Faxian remarks that the latter *vinaya* was the *vinaya* used by the Chinese at that time, but that it was, in China, transmitted only orally.⁴⁷ On his journey further to the south, he received a copy of the *Mahīśāsaka vinaya* in Sri Lanka.⁴⁸ After a long and perilous journey at sea, he finally sailed back to China in 414. Although his ship totally lost its directions, it eventually managed to reach the present-day province of Shandong. From there, Faxian travelled south to Jiankang, where the Buddhist master Buddhahadra translated several of the texts that he had obtained, including the *Mahāsāṃghika vinaya*.⁴⁹

⁴¹ *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan*, T.2085.51.857a6–8, 864b17, 864c1–3.

⁴² *Bei Tianzhu zhu guo* 北天竺諸國 (Faxian, T.2085.51.864b17).

⁴³ Faxian, T.2085.51.864b17–18.

⁴⁴ *Zhong Tianzhu* 中天竺 (Huijiao, T.2059.50.338a17; Faxian, T.2085.51.864b18–19).

⁴⁵ In a Mahāyāna monastery, called the Devarāja monastery (Roth 1970, pp. ii–iii).

⁴⁶ Extracts (*chao lü* 抄律, cf. Nakamura 1985, p. 711), consisting of ca. seven thousand stanzas (Faxian, T.2085.51.864b23–24). According to Sengyou, T.2145.55.12a7 and 13–14, these extracts have not been translated.

⁴⁷ Faxian, T.2085.51.864b23–25.

⁴⁸ Huijiao, T.2059.50.338a24; Faxian, T.2085.51.865c24. For details on this copy, see de Jong 1981, pp. 109–113.

⁴⁹ Huijiao, T.2059.50.338b15–18.

3. THE TRANSLATION OF VINAYA TEXTS: THE NORTHERN SCHOOLS

3.1. *The Fifth Century*

The first *vinaya* texts entered China via the northern land routes. These texts all belong to the so-called northern tradition, in opposition to the southern, that is, the Pāli Theravāda tradition. At the end of the fourth century, no complete *vinaya* had yet been translated. This situation changed rapidly when in the beginning of the fifth century⁵⁰ four complete *vinayas* were translated into Chinese.⁵¹ The first one was the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (T.1435, *Vinaya* in Ten Recitations), *Sarvāstivāda vinaya*, translated between 404 and 409 by Punyatrāta/Puṇyatara,⁵² Kumārajīva and Dharmaruci, and revised a few years later by Vimalākṣa.⁵³ The translation team worked in Chang'an, at that time the capital of the Yao Qin 姚秦 or Later Qin 後秦 (384–417),⁵⁴ one of the northern

⁵⁰ Since that time, and apart from the four complete *vinayas*, many other *vinaya* texts, such as lists of precepts (*prātimokṣas*) and lists of procedures (*karmavācānās*) have been translated. Among the latter texts also figure some texts of two other schools of which complete *vinayas* do not survive in Chinese. These are the Kāśyapīya school of which a *bhikṣuprātimokṣa* has been translated by Prajñāruci in 543 (*Jiētuō jiějīng* 解脫戒經, *Prātimokṣasūtra*, T.1460), and the Saṃmatīya school, known through the translation of a commentary on a lost *bhikṣuprātimokṣa* by Paramārtha in 568 (*Lǐ ershi'ér míngliào lùn* 律二十二明了論, Explanatory Commentary on Twenty-two Stanzas of the *Vinaya*, T.1461). For details, see Yuyama 1979.

⁵¹ The fifth century also saw a growing popularity of the so-called *bodhisattva* rules, intended to provide the Chinese Buddhist community with a guide of Mahāyāna moral precepts. The most influential text is the *Fanwang jīng* 梵網經 (T.1484), the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, that contains a set of fifty-eight precepts. This text has been translated into French by J. J. M. De Groot, *Le code du Mahāyāna en Chine, Son influence sur la vie monacale et sur le monde laïque*, Amsterdam, Johannes Müller 1893. Although the *Fanwang jīng* is traditionally said to have been translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 406, it is in fact a text composed in China probably around the middle of the fifth century. The *Fanwang jīng* was considered to be a Mahāyāna supplement, and in China until today, the ordination based on the traditional Hīnayāna *vinaya* texts always comes first. This is in accordance with the opinion expressed in texts such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *Stages of the Bodhisattva*, of which two translations (possibly based on two different Indian versions, cf. Groner, 1990b, p. 226) were made in the fifth century. One is the *Pusadichi jīng* 菩薩地持經 (T.1581), translated by Tanwuchen 曇無讖 between 414 and 421 (see, in particular, T.1581.30.910b5ff.). The other one is the *Pusashanjie jīng* 菩薩善戒經 (T.1582 and T.1583 (the latter text might in the fact be the tenth scroll of T.1582, cf. Kuo 1994, p. 40)), translated by Guṇavarman in 431 (see, in particular, T.1583.30.1013c24–1014a2). For more details see, among others, Demiéville, 1930; Groner 1990a, pp. 251–257; Groner 1990b; Kuo 1994, pp. 37–58.

⁵² Furuoduoluo 弗若多羅.

⁵³ See Yuyama 1979, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Gernet 1990, p. 165.

dynasties. According to the *Gaoseng zhuan*,⁵⁵ the Kashmirian monk Punyatrāta recited the Indian text, while Kumārajīva translated it into Chinese. Kumārajīva was born in Kucha, the son of an Indian father. His mother was related to the Kucha royal family. When the text was not yet finished, Punyatrāta died. His task was continued by another western monk, Dharmaruci, who is said to have brought with him a copy of the text.⁵⁶ In 406, the Kashmirian monk Vimalākṣa came to Chang'an to meet Kumārajīva. Vimalākṣa had been Kumārajīva's teacher in Kucha. From him, Kumārajīva had learned the *Sarvāstivāda vinaya*. After the death of Kumārajīva, Vimalākṣa left Chang'an and went to the present day province of Anhui 安徽. There, he revised Kumārajīva's translation. Vimalākṣa continued to propagate the *Sarvāstivāda vinaya* and his teaching even reached the southern capital Jiankang 健康.

A second *vinaya* translated into Chinese, was the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (T.1428, *Vinaya* in Four Parts), *Dharmaguptakavinaya*,⁵⁷ translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian⁵⁸ 竺佛念 between 410 and 412. Buddhayaśas was born in Kashmir (Kāśmīra). After his ordination, he went to Kashgar, where he met his former disciple Kumārajīva. He later moved to Kucha, and then finally travelled to Chang'an where he again encountered Kumārajīva. It was in Chang'an that a translation team led by Buddhayaśas began to translate the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*. Buddhayaśas recited the text by memory, Zhu Fonian,⁵⁹ born in Liangzhou 涼州 in the present-day Gansu 甘肅 province, translated it into Chinese, and the Chinese Daohan 道含 wrote down the translation.⁶⁰

The next *vinaya* that was translated, was the *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425), *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*,⁶¹ translated by Buddhahadra and Faxian⁶² 法顯 between 416 and 418 in Jiankang, the capital of the

⁵⁵ See the biographies of Kumārajīva, Punyatrāta, Dharmaruci and Vimalākṣa (Huijiao, T.2059.50.330a10–333c14, translated by Shih 1968, pp. 60–85). See also the earliest extant catalogue, Sengyou, T.2145.55.20a28–b21.

⁵⁶ Huijiao, T.2059.50.333b6–7.

⁵⁷ For a translation into English of the rules for nuns (T.1428.22.714a2–778b13), see Heirman 2002a.

⁵⁸ See the biographies of Zhu Fonian and of Buddhayaśas (Huijiao, T.2059.50.329a28–b15, 333c15–334b25, translated by Shih 1968, pp. 55–56, 85–90).

⁵⁹ According to Z. Tsukamoto (1985, vol. 2, p. 738), Zhu Fonian was possibly an Indian whose family had lived in China for generations.

⁶⁰ For more details, see Heirman 2002a, part 1, pp. 24–25.

⁶¹ The rules for nuns (T.1425.22.471a25–476b11 and 514a25–547a28) have been translated into English by Hirakawa, 1982.

⁶² See the biographies of Buddhahadra and Faxian (Huijiao, T.2059.50.334b26–335c14 and 337b19–338b25, translated by Shih 1968, pp. 90–98 and 108–115).

Southern Song 南宋 dynasty.⁶³ The text had been brought back by Faxian from Pāṭaliputra.⁶⁴ Buddhābhaddra was born in Kapilavastu. After his ordination, he went to Kashmir and then to China, where he visited several cities. In Jiankang, he translated the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* together with Faxian.

Finally, according to the *Gaoseng zhuan*,⁶⁵ the *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T.1421, *Vinaya* in Five Parts of the Mahīśāsakas), *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, has been translated by Buddhajīva,⁶⁶ Zhisheng 智勝, Daosheng 道生 and Huiyan 慧嚴 between 423 and 424.⁶⁷ The translation team worked in Jiankang. Buddhajīva held the text, the Khotanese monk Zhisheng translated it into Chinese, while Daosheng and Huiyan wrote down the translation and revised it. The task of Buddhajīva thus seems to have been to read the basic text aloud. This is in all probability the text that Faxian had obtained in Sri Lanka.⁶⁸

3.2. The Eighth Century

Much later, in the beginning of the eighth century,⁶⁹ the monk Yījīng 義淨 translated large parts of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* (*Genben*

⁶³ For more details, see Roth 1970, pp. i–iii; Hirakawa 1982, pp. 4, 9–10.

⁶⁴ Huijiao, T.2059.50.335c9–10, 403b16–18.

⁶⁵ Huijiao, T.2059.50.339a9–10. See also the following catalogues: Sengyou, T.2145.55.21a25–b1 (Buddhajīva, Zhisheng, Daosheng and Huiyan), 111a28–b2 (Buddhajīva and Zhisheng); Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140a14 (Buddhajīva and Zhisheng); Yancong et al., T.2147.55.155b12–13 (Buddhajīva and Zhisheng); Jingtai et al., T.2148.55.188a2–3 (Buddhajīva and Zhisheng).

⁶⁶ See the biography of Buddhajīva (Huijiao, T.2059.50.339a3–13, translated by Shih 1968, pp. 118–119).

⁶⁷ Yuyama 1979, pp. 37–38, places the translation between 422 and 423 and does not mention the monk Zhisheng.

⁶⁸ Cf. Huijiao, T.2059.50.339a5–6, 403b16–18; Sengyou, T.2145.55.21a14–15. See also de Jong 1981, p. 109.

⁶⁹ Around the same time, the Chinese Chan clerics began to develop their own monastic codes mainly aimed at the practical organisation of the monasteries. While continuing to rely on the Indian *vinaya* for ordination and moral guidelines, the Chan monks, in the course of time, developed several sets of rules to govern the monastic community. These codes are commonly called *qinggui* 清規, “pure rules”. Although tradition claims that the “pure rules” all merely develop guidelines made by the monk Baizhang (749–814), they contain many elements that can be traced back to earlier Buddhist rules, even non-Chan rules. The earliest extant code is the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪元清規 (The Pure Rules for the Chan Monastery), compiled in 1103. The most influential set is the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 敕修百丈清規 (The Pure Rules of Baizhang Corrected by Imperial Order), compiled ca. 1335. The Chan codes gradually became the standard guidelines for the organisation of all Chinese public monasteries. See Foulk 1987, pp. 62–99; Fritz 1994, pp. 1–111, followed by a partial translation of the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*; Yifa 2002, pp. 1–98, followed by a translation of the *Chanyuan qinggui*.

shuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, T.1442–T.1451) into Chinese, as well as other *vinaya* texts belonging to the same school.⁷⁰ The origin of the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya* is still under debate. On the one hand, it contains very old material, while on the other hand, it also includes elements added at a time when all the other *vinayas* already had been finalised and additions to them were no longer allowed. This seems to be the result of the fact that it was the *vinaya* of the Sautrāntikas, a Sarvāstivāda branch that became the dominant one between the fifth and the seventh centuries.⁷¹ Once the domination of the Sautrāntikas was established, they renamed themselves as Mūlasarvāstivādins, that is, the original Sarvāstivādins.⁷² Their *vinaya*, now also finalised, became the prevailing *vinaya* in Northern and Central India, especially in Nālandā, a famous centre of Buddhist studies.⁷³ In this sense, it is not surprising that during his stay in India (671–695), and during the more than ten years that he spent in Nālandā, Yijing was confronted mainly with the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*.

As it is clear from his travel account (T.2125), for Yijing, disciplinary rules were very important, and he was concerned with the Chinese *vinaya* situation. According to him, many misinterpretations had been handed down,⁷⁴ and it was even getting difficult to understand the *vinaya* because so many men had already handled it. The only way out was to return to the original texts themselves.⁷⁵ Therefore, Yijing was of the opinion that

⁷⁰ Of the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*, a Tibetan translation as well as many Sanskrit fragments are extant. For details, see Yuyama 1979, pp. 12–33.

⁷¹ Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 125; Heirman 1999, pp. 855–856.

⁷² The fact that the Mūlasarvāstivādins call themselves “*mūla*”, whether to be interpreted as “the original” (Sarvāstivādins) or as “the root” (of other sects) (cf. Enomoto 2000, pp. 240–249), and the fact that in some texts, the Mūlasarvāstivādins and the Sarvāstivādins are considered as belonging to one and the same tradition, does not imply that there is no difference between the two schools. Although the *Sarvāstivādivinaya* and the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya* are similar, they also differ in many instances, and therefore the shorter *Sarvāstivādivinaya* cannot just be a summary of the longer *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*, as it was claimed in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (T.1509.25.756c3–5; see also Willemen, Dessein & Cox 1998, pp. 88–89; Enomoto 2000, pp. 244–245). On the other hand, the similarities between the two *vinayas* reveal that, to a certain extent, they developed in a parallel way. For more details, see Heirman 1999, pp. 852–866.

⁷³ Wang 1994, pp. 180–183; Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 299–302.

⁷⁴ Yijing, T.2125.54.206a21–22.

⁷⁵ Yijing, T.2125.54.205c20–206a4. Yijing compares the *vinaya* situation with a deep well, the water of which has been spoiled after a river has overflowed. If a thirsty man wishes to drink of the pure water of the well, he can only do so by endangering his life. Yijing adds that this kind of situation would not occur if one only abided by the *vinaya* texts themselves (and not by the later commentaries).

the original disciplinary rules—as one could still find them in India—had to be emphasised. He took the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* as a basis. By doing so, Yijing never said that the other *vinayas* were less valuable. To Yijing, the only important fact was that one followed one, unspoiled *vinaya*.⁷⁶ His own preference for the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* seems to rely mainly on two facts. First of all, because of his long stay in Nālandā, he had become an expert of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*, and secondly, this Indian *vinaya* had not yet been spoiled by any Chinese commentaries and interpretations. Despite the translation of Yijing, however, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* did not become popular in the Chinese monasteries. Instead, as we will see further, it was the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* that with the help of an imperial edict issued by the Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 705–710), conquered the whole of China.⁷⁷

3.3. *The Origin of the Northern Vinayas*

The above has shown that in China, there were mainly two centres of *vinaya* translation: Chang'an (Xi'an) in the north, and Jiankang (Nanjing) in the south. As for the origin and the original languages of the Indian *vinayas* translated into Chinese, the information is generally rather scarce. Some scholars have tried to gain some more knowledge by analysing the phonetic renderings used in the translations of these texts. A serious difficulty for this kind of study is the cumulative tradition of standard terms that were passed down from translator to translator and that therefore do not testify the linguistic situation of the text in which they

⁷⁶ Yijing underlines that each tradition equally leads to *nirvāṇa*, but that the precepts of the different schools should not be intermingled (T.2125.54.205b28–c6).

⁷⁷ It is not impossible that the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705) had in mind using the newly arrived *vinaya* to her advantage (personal communication of the late Professor Forte, Napoli). Yijing was indeed closely linked to the imperial court of Wu Zetian, and after his return from India in 695, he resided in the most important dynastic monastery, the Da Fuxian Si 大福先寺 in the capital Luoyang. This monastery had been founded by Wu Zetian, and was a centre of translation and propaganda for the empress. It also had an ordination platform (Forte 1983, p. 695). It is thus not impossible that the empress might have thought to use the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* for her own purposes, converting China into a Buddhist state (see Forte 1976; 1992, pp. 219–231). But time was not on her side. Although a *Mūlasarvāstivāda karmavācānā* (set of procedures) and a *vinayavibhaṅga* (list of rules and their commentary) for monks had been translated by 703, the translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* as a whole was finished only after Wu Zetian's death in 705 (see Yuyama 1979, pp. 12–33; Matsumura 1996, pp. 171–173). Nonetheless, the relation between her imperial court and the use of certain *vinaya* texts, remains an intriguing subject for further research.

appear.⁷⁸ Still, an analysis of the Chinese renderings combined to the study of the extant Indian manuscripts can provide strong clues.⁷⁹

The first *vinaya* translated into Chinese was the one of the Sarvāstivādins, the prominent school in Northwest India and in Central Asia.⁸⁰ Although they once used Northwest Prākṛit (i.e., Gāndhārī),⁸¹ by the time that Kumārajīva made his translations, the language used by the Sarvāstivādins was Buddhist Sanskrit.⁸²

Of the Dharmaguptakas, it has been argued that they originally used Gāndhārī, gradually turned to Buddhist Sanskrit, and eventually used Sanskrit.⁸³ Also, the Dharmaguptakas seem to have been prominent in the Gandhāra region.⁸⁴ Therefore, since in the fifth century, Gāndhārī was still in use, it is not impossible that the Indian *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, recited by Buddhayaśas, is related to the Gāndhārī tradition.⁸⁵

The Mahāsāṃghikas are attested mainly in the northern and the central part of the Indian subcontinent.⁸⁶ Since they were active in the Gandhāra region, they presumably once used Gāndhārī.⁸⁷ However, the most prominent language used by the Mahāsāṃghikas, or at least by the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins, a sub-branch of the Mahāsāṃghikas, seems to be a ‘language in the transitional state from Prākṛit to Sanskrit’.⁸⁸

As for the Mahīśāsakas, attested in Āndhra Pradesh, in Panjāb and in Pakistan (Uḍḍiyāna),⁸⁹ not a lot is known on the original language of

⁷⁸ Pulleyblank 1983, p. 87.

⁷⁹ For more details, see Boucher 1998.

⁸⁰ Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 297–298.

⁸¹ Fussman 1989, pp. 441–442; Salomon 1999, p. 171.

⁸² von Hinüber 1989, pp. 353–354; von Simson 2000, pp. 2–4.

⁸³ Waldschmidt 1980, pp. 168–169; Chung & Wille 1997, pp. 52–53. M. Nishimura (1997, pp. 260–265), on the other hand, is of the opinion that only two linguistic phases can be discerned in the Dharmaguptaka tradition: 1) Gāndhārī; 2) Buddhist Sanskrit. For further details, see Heirman 2002b, pp. 400–402.

⁸⁴ Salomon 1999, pp. 166–178. Further study, however, is needed to determine how important the position of the Dharmaguptakas exactly was (Allon and Salomon 2000, pp. 271–273; Boucher 2000a, pp. 63–69; Lenz 2003, pp. 17–19).

⁸⁵ A further indication of its Gāndhārī origin, is a reference to the Arapacana syllabary found in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428.22.639a14. In all probability, this “syllabary was originally formulated in a Gāndhārī-speaking environment and written in the Kharoṣṭhī script” (Salomon 1990, p. 271).

⁸⁶ Kieffer-Pülz 2000, p. 293.

⁸⁷ Salomon 1999, p. 171.

⁸⁸ Roth 1970, pp. lv–lvi. See also von Hinüber 1989, pp. 353–354. On the features of this language see Roth, 1970, pp. lv–lxi; 1980, pp. 81–93.

⁸⁹ Kieffer-Pülz 2000, p. 298.

their *vinaya*. Still, at least for the *vinaya* text translated into Chinese, a few scholars have advanced the hypothesis that it was written in Sanskrit. This is based on some preliminary studies of the phonetic renderings, as well as on the fact that the biography of the Kashmirian translator Buddhajīva says that in his youth in Kashmir, he had a Buddhist master belonging to the Mahīśāsaka school.⁹⁰ Since in Kashmir, the prominent Buddhist language was Sanskrit, the latter language is put forward as a not improbable guess.⁹¹ In an article on the texts found by Faxian in Sri Lanka,⁹² however, J. W. de Jong is doubtful about this hypothesis. He points out that the studies on the phonetic renderings certainly do not give a clear picture, and that the origin of one of the translators cannot be proof enough of the language that he used. In that context, he underlines that Buddhayaśas too was from Kashmir. He was one of the translators of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, a *vinaya* that most probably was not translated from Sanskrit.

Finally, for the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra*, the situation is comparatively clear. The original text was written in Sanskrit, and, as indicated above, at the time of Yijing, it was the prominent *vinaya* in the region of Nālandā.⁹³

4. THE TRANSLATION OF THE THERAVĀDA TRADITION

It is clear that the above mentioned translations all are related to the languages of northern Buddhism, that is, Gāndhārī, Buddhist Sanskrit and Sanskrit. Not one extant *vinaya* is related to the Sinhalese Pāli tradition, despite the fact of quite frequent contact between China and Sri Lanka at a time when the Chinese Buddhist community was eagerly looking for as many Indian texts as possible.

4.1. *Contact Sri Lanka—China*

As is still the case today, the southern or Theravāda tradition was predominant on the island of Sri Lanka at the time of the Chinese *vinaya* translations. Contrary to the northern tradition, its texts never reached China via the northern land routes. The language of the original texts

⁹⁰ Huijiao, T.2059.50.339a3–4.

⁹¹ Demiéville 1975, p. 293; von Hinüber 1989, p. 354.

⁹² de Jong 1981, pp. 109–112.

⁹³ For more details, see Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 299–300.

is Pāli, and its followers are predominantly Hīnayānists. Although, in the first centuries of the spread of Buddhism in China, Sri Lanka was much less known than many other parts of the Indian subcontinent, the Chinese were certainly aware of the existence of a Sinhalese Buddhist community. Apart from the visit of the monk Faxian to the island (see above), several other contacts between Sri Lanka and China have been recorded, both in Buddhist texts and in secular historical sources. Maybe the most striking example of obvious contact between the Theravāda Sinhalese Buddhist communities and the communities in China is the (second) ordination ceremony of Chinese nuns ca. 433. As seen above, the first Chinese nun Zhu Jingjian was ordained in the presence of the *bhikṣusamṅha* only. This goes against one of the fundamental rules (*gurudharma*)⁹⁴ accepted by the first Indian nun Mahāprajāpatī as a condition for the creation of a *bhikṣuṇīsamṅha*. One of these rules states that a woman should be ordained first in the presence of a *bhikṣuṇīsamṅha* and then in the presence of a *bhikṣusamṅha*. Most fifth century Chinese *vinayas* specify that ten nuns are required for the first ceremony in the *bhikṣuṇīsamṅha*.⁹⁵ This procedure has assured the proper and uninterrupted transmission of the rules for women from the time of the Buddha onward. In China, however, it is clear that, originally, the rule had not been followed, since at the time of Zhu Jingjian's ordination, there was no Chinese *bhikṣuṇīsamṅha*. This situation led to discussion as mentioned in several biographies of the *Biqiuni zhuan*.⁹⁶ It reached its peak in the first half of the fifth century. At that time, in 429, a foreign boat captain named Nanti 難提, brought several Sinhalese nuns to Jiankang, the capital of the Southern Song dynasty.⁹⁷ For the first time, a group of fully ordained foreign nuns was present in China. Yet, their number was not sufficient, a problem that was solved a few years later when a second group of eleven Sinhalese nuns arrived.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the rules see, among others, Horner 1930, pp. 118–161; Nolot 1991, pp. 397–405; Hüsken 1993, pp. 154–164; Heirman 1997, pp. 34–43; Hüsken 1997b, pp. 345–360; Heirman 1998; Heirman 2002a, part 1, pp. 63–65.

⁹⁵ *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421.22.187c7–8; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425.22.473c24–26; *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428.22.763b24, 763c28–29. In the *Sarvāstivādivinaya*, T.1435, the number of nuns is not explicitly mentioned. For more details, see Heirman 2001, pp. 294–295, note 88.

⁹⁶ Baochang, T.2063.50.934c24–25, 937b25–c4, 939c14–21, 941a16–22. See also Huijiao, *Gaoseng zhuan*, T.2059.50.341a28–b7.

⁹⁷ Baochang, T.2063.50.939c12–14. According to Huijiao, T.2059.50.341a29, the group consisted of eight nuns.

⁹⁸ Baochang, T.2063.50.939c21–22, 944c3–5.

Consequently, it became possible to offer the Chinese nuns a second ordination, this time in the presence of an adequate quorum of fully ordained nuns. Afterwards, the discussion on the validity of the Chinese nuns' ordination died out.⁹⁹

Apart from the Sinhalese delegations that made the second ordination of Chinese nuns possible, around the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century also other missions from Sri Lanka to Southern China took place.¹⁰⁰ According to the *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論¹⁰¹ (Essay on the Discernment of Right), the *śramaṇa* Tanmocuo 曇摩撮¹⁰² was sent to the court of the Chinese Emperor Xiaowu 孝武 (r. 373–396) by the king of Sri Lanka who was impressed by the emperor's devotion to Buddhism.¹⁰³ He was to present to the Chinese emperor a statue of jade. The Official Histories of the Liang¹⁰⁴ and of the Southern Dynasties,¹⁰⁵ as well as the *Gaoseng zhuan*,¹⁰⁶ further mention that the Sinhalese mission arrived at the Chinese court during the *yixi* period (405–418) of Emperor An's 安 reign.¹⁰⁷ This implies that the journey must have lasted at least ten years. According to E. Zürcher,¹⁰⁸ this is very improbable. He points out that the long period might be the result of a chronological computation by Chinese historians who wanted to account for the fact that the present was destined for the Emperor Xiaowu (who died in 396), but only arrived during the *yixi* period. E. Zürcher argues that this artificial calculation is not necessary since

⁹⁹ The basic text used at the ordination ceremony is not mentioned in any source. It presumably was a Chinese *vinaya*. For a discussion, see Heirman 2001, pp. 289–298.

¹⁰⁰ The northern part of China had less contact with Sri Lanka. Still, according to the *Weishu* 114, vol. 8, p. 3036, in the beginning of the Tai'an period (455–460), five Sinhalese monks reached the Northern Wei capital. The monks said that they had traversed the countries of the Western Regions, which means that, contrary to the Sinhalese missions that most probably went to the south of China using the sea route, they had come overland.

¹⁰¹ Compiled by the monk Falin (572–640): T.2110.52.502c27–29.

¹⁰² Variant in Huijiao, T.2059.50.410b4: Tanmoyi 曇摩抑. According to E. Zürcher (1972, vol. 1, p. 152), the name might be a rendering of Dharmayukta.

¹⁰³ On this mission, see also Lévi 1900, pp. 414–415; Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, p. 152.

¹⁰⁴ *Liangshu* 54, vol. 3, p. 800.

¹⁰⁵ *Nanshi* 78, vol. 6, p. 1964.

¹⁰⁶ Huijiao, T.2059.50.410b2–5. See also Zhipan, T.2035.49.456c25–26.

¹⁰⁷ According to E. Zürcher (1972, vol. 2, p. 371 n. 375), the oldest but no longer extant source may have been the anonymous *Jin Xiaowu shi Shiziguo xian bai yu xiang ji* 晉孝武世師子國獻白玉像記 (Account of the White Jade Statue Presented [by the King of] Sri Lanka at the Time of the Jin Emperor Xiaowu), a work mentioned in Sengyou's catalogue (T.2145.55.92c2).

¹⁰⁸ Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, p. 152.

even when the present was destined for Xiaowu, the mission can have started many years after 396, the Sinhalese court having no up-to-date information on the death of the Chinese emperor. Further referring to a note in the Official History of the Jin dynasty¹⁰⁹ that says that in 413, Dashi 大師¹¹⁰ sent a tribute of regional products to the Chinese court, E. Zürcher concludes that the year 413 might be the year that the envoy arrived. The statue of jade, four feet and two inches high, was placed in the Waguan monastery (*Waguan si* 瓦官寺), an important monastery in the capital Jiankang where many prominent monks such as Zhu Sengfu 竺僧敷 (ca. 300–370) and Zhu Fatai 竺法太 (320–387) had resided.¹¹¹ The *Liangshu*¹¹² and the *Nanshi*¹¹³ further mention that besides the jade statue, the envoy also brought ten packages (*zai* 載) of texts. It is not clear which texts these might have been.

The period that saw the most extensive contact between the Chinese and the Sinhalese courts was the period between 428 and 435. Not only did the boat captain Nanti bring several Sinhalese nuns to the Chinese capital Jiankang, the Sinhalese king Mahānāma (reigned 409–431)¹¹⁴ repeatedly sent products and messages to the Chinese Emperor Wen 文 (reigned 424–453) of the Song dynasty.¹¹⁵ According to the entry on Sri Lanka in the Official History of the Song dynasty,¹¹⁶ in the fifth year of the *yuanjia* period of Emperor Wen (428), the Sinhalese king sent a delegation to the Chinese court to pay tribute. Four monks¹¹⁷ offered the emperor two white robes and a statue with an ivory pedestal.¹¹⁸ There was also a letter in which the king asked for an answer to be sent back to him. In the section on Emperor Wen, however, the *Songshu* does not mention any tribute paid by Sri Lanka in the fifth year of *yuanjia*, but it mentions such a tribute in the seventh year (430).¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁹ *Jinshu* 10, vol. 1, p. 264.

¹¹⁰ Probably *Da Shiziguo* 大師 / 獅子國, Sri Lanka.

¹¹¹ See Zürcher, 1972, vol. 1, 147–150; Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 395–396.

¹¹² *Liangshu* 54, vol. 3, p. 800.

¹¹³ *Nanshi* 78, vol. 6, p. 1964.

¹¹⁴ Based on Geiger 1960, p. 224.

¹¹⁵ For details on the maritime relations between Southeast Asia and China, see Zürcher 2002, pp. 30–42.

¹¹⁶ *Songshu* 97, vol. 8, p. 2384.

¹¹⁷ 道人, men who practice the way.

¹¹⁸ This delegation is also mentioned in the *Nanshi* 78, vol. 6, p. 1965. The *Liangshu* 54, vol. 3, p. 800, refers to a delegation in the sixth year of *yuanjia* (429). On this mission, see also Lévi 1900, pp. 412–413.

¹¹⁹ *Songshu* 5, vol. 1, p. 79. Also mentioned in the *Nanshi* 2, vol. 1, p. 41.

Also the Buddhist historian Zhipan 志磐 (fl. 1258–1269) refers in his *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記¹²⁰ (Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and Patriarchs) to a Sinhalese tribute mission. He places it in the fifth year of *yuanjia* (428). According to Zhipan, the Emperor Wen replied to Mahānāma's letter. He told the Sinhalese king that there were scarcely any Hīnayāna texts in China and asked the king to send him copies. It is not clear whether or not the king ever received such a request and whether or not he answered it, but the fact that Zhipan's text is very late diminishes its credibility on this matter.

The Official Histories of the Song, of the Liang and of the Southern Dynasties,¹²¹ further mention that in the twelfth year of *yuanjia* (435), the Sinhalese again sent an envoy to pay tribute.¹²² The *Liangshu* and the *Nanshi* add that also in 527, a Sinhalese king called *Jiaye* (*Jiashe*) *jialuo heliye* 伽葉伽羅訶梨邪¹²³ sent tribute to China. The letter addressed to the emperor is an almost exact copy of the former king Mahānāma's letter.¹²⁴

4.2. The Pāli Theravāda Tradition

At the time of the first contact between the Sinhalese and the Chinese communities, there were two leading monasteries in Sri Lanka: the Abhayagirivihāra and the Mahāvihāra. The Abhayagirivihāra was founded by king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya between 29 and 17 BC. It

¹²⁰ T.2035.49.344b16–18, 456c27–28.

¹²¹ *Songshu* 5, vol. 1, pp. 83; 97, vol. 8, p. 2384; *Liangshu* 54, vol. 3, p. 800; *Nanshi* 2, vol. 1, p. 43; 78, vol. 6, 1965.

¹²² The *Nanchao Song huiyao* (p. 717), *Important Documents of the Southern Dynasty of the Song*, compiled by Zhu Mingpan in the second half of the nineteenth century, refers to the *Nanshi*, and concludes that there must have been three delegations: in 428, in 430 and in 435.

¹²³ *Liangshu* 3, Vol. 1, p. 71; 54, Vol. 3, p. 800; *Nanshi* 7, vol. 1, p. 205; 78, vol. 6, p. 1965 (*Jiaye* (or *jiashe*) *jialuo heliye* 伽葉伽羅訶梨邪). It is not clear to whom exactly this name refers. In 527, the reigning king in Sri Lanka was King Silākāla (Geiger 1960, p. 225). According to Lévi (1900, p. 424), “*jiashe*” might refer to *Kassapa*, “*jialuo*” to [Silā]kāla, while the origin of “*heliye*” might be the Sinhalese term *herana*, i.e., *śrāmaṇera* or novice. In that case, two names were intermingled, possibly the names of the reigning King Silākāla, who in India indeed became a novice (cf. Cūlv I, p. 36, 39.45–48), and the name of a son of the former King Upatissa, namely Kassapa, who disputed the legitimacy of Silākāla's kingship. With many thanks to Dr. Siglinde Dietz for the references to the Pāli literature.

¹²⁴ According to E. Zürcher (2002, p. 35, n. 25), it may be that the authentic Liang materials had been lost, and that the compilers of the Official History of the Liang chose to fill the gap by “borrowing” the Song texts.

became a strong rival of the Mahāvihāra, founded during the reign of Devānampiya Tissa (247–207 BC).¹²⁵ With the support of several kings, the Abhayagirivihāra gradually expanded. In his travel account,¹²⁶ the monk Faxian describes the monastery as a very rich place with five thousand monks, receiving the support of the royal house. The Mahāvihāra, according to Faxian, had three thousand monks. He describes it as the second most important monastery, also frequented by the king. He does not tell us about any rivalry between the two monasteries. Not a lot is known about what was particular to the Abhayagirivihāra. Most, if not all their texts have completely disappeared after king Parakkamabāhu I (1153–1186) decided to reunify the three Theravāda groups of Anurādhapura: the Abhayagirivihāra, the Jetavanavihāra¹²⁷ and the Mahāvihāra. The monks of the first two monasteries were re-ordained according to the Mahāvihāra tradition. Consequently, the Mahāvihāra texts gradually became the only ones to survive, while the Abhayagirivihāra viewpoints are only known from a very small number of quotations in non-Abhayagirivihāra Pāli texts.¹²⁸

In fifth and sixth century China, apart from the account of Faxian, no other texts report on the situation of the Sinhalese Buddhist communities. Also on the Pāli Theravāda tradition as a whole, the Chinese had little information since only a few Pāli texts were ever translated into Chinese. Of these, two texts are extant: the *Jietuo daolun* 解脫道論 (T.1648, Treatise on the Path to Liberation) and the *Shanjian li piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 (T.1462, “?Good for Seeing” Commentary). In addition, a translation of a Theravāda *vinaya* (*Tāpili* 他毘利) by the monk Mahāyāna¹²⁹ is mentioned in the catalogues but is no longer extant. Also the now lost *Wubai bensheng jing* 五百本生經 (Sūtra of the Five Hundred Jātakas), also translated by Mahāyāna was possibly based on a Pāli text.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Geiger 1960, pp. 186, 223; Reat, 1994, pp. 84–92.

¹²⁶ T.2085.51.864c24–865b12.

¹²⁷ In the third century, the Sāgalikas, later called the Jetavanavihāravāsins, split from the Mahāvihāra. The role of this school has remained obscure (Bechert 1993a, p. 11).

¹²⁸ von Hinüber 1996, pp. 22–23. One Pāli text, the *Saddhammopāyana*, the date of which is uncertain, is sometimes attributed to the Abhayagirivihāra tradition because of the title Abhayagirikavicakravartī given to its author (von Hinüber 1996, p. 203).

¹²⁹ This seems to be a surname given to a monk well-versed in Mahāyāna texts. See, for instance, the Indian monk Guṇabhadra (died 468) who was called ‘Mahāyāna’ because of his study of Mahāyāna texts (Huijiao, T.2059.50.344a5–6).

¹³⁰ von Hinüber 1996, p. 57. In addition, the *Youpoliwenfo jing* 優波離問佛經 (T.1466,

The *Jietuo daolun* or *Vimuttimagga* is a manual of the Theravāda tradition compiled by a certain Upatissa.¹³¹ The original Pāli text is lost, but the Chinese translation is still extant. It was made by the monk *Saṃghabhara¹³² 僧伽婆羅 of Funan¹³³ in 515.¹³⁴

The *Shan'jian lü piposha* is a partial translation into Chinese of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, a fourth or fifth century Mahāvihāra commentary on the Pāli *Vinaya*. The translation was made by the monk Saṃghabhadra in 488–489, and shows the influence of many other Chinese traditions.¹³⁵ It seems not to have been widely diffused, since the earliest biography works¹³⁶ do not even mention it once among the works studied by the Buddhist masters.¹³⁷ It is, however, briefly mentioned as an existing *vinaya* text in the additional commentary on the *vinaya* masters in the *Gaoseng*

Questions of Upāli), translated in the fifth century, has sometimes been considered as a text based on a Pāli original. This hypothesis is now rejected by most scholars (for more details, see Heirman, 2004, p. 377).

¹³¹ von Hinüber 1996, pp. 123–126.

¹³² Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 281: the reconstruction of the name is uncertain.

¹³³ Along the Mekong River. In the first centuries AD, Funan had a very important seaport frequented by both Indian and Chinese travellers. Because of the winds, these travellers were often obliged to remain in the port for several months. This stimulated a cultural dialogue, particularly between Funan and India (Tarling 1999, Vol. 1, pp. 192–196). See also Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 455–459.

¹³⁴ The Chinese version has been translated by N. R. M. Ehara, Soma Thera and Kheminda Thera under the title *The Path of Freedom by the Arahant Upatissa. Translated into Chinese by the Tipiṭaka Saṅghapāla of Funan* (Colombo 1961).

¹³⁵ Saṃghabhadra clearly underwent the influence of the Chinese environment he was living in. He (or his disciples, Bapat and Hirakawa 1970, p. liii) adapted the text to the Chinese habits, showing familiarity with the Chinese *vinayas*, particularly with the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* and the *Sarvāstivādaḥvinaya*. See Heirman, 2004.

¹³⁶ Huijiao, *Gaoseng zhuan* (T.2059) compiled around AD 530; Daoxuan, *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (T.2060), the final version of which has probably been compiled by Daoxuan's disciples shortly after his death in 667 (Wagner 1995, pp. 78–79); and Zanning, *Song gaoseng zhuan* (T.2061), compiled around 983, and covering the period between Daoxuan's death and the early Song (Dalia 1987, p. 168).

¹³⁷ Still, the work is mentioned in several catalogues: Fei Changfang, T.2034.49.95b18–c17, 119b4; Sengyou, T.2145.55.13b20–23, 82a23–b2; Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140a25; Yancong et al., T.2147.55.155b22–23; Jingtai et al., T.2148.55.188a4–5; Daoxuan, T.2149.55.262b2–29, 300b1–2, 310b9, 324a15–16; Jingmai, T.2151.55.363b21–24; Mingquan et al., T.2153.55.434a13–15, 470b9; Zhisheng, T.2154.55.535c9–10, 619c25–26, 695b5, 719c27–28; Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.833c6–834a7, 953a25–26, 1043b10–11.

The work also figures among the texts preserved in the Ximing monastery (*Ximing si* 西明寺) in Chang'an—where Daoxuan was the abbot—as indicated in the monastery catalogue copied by Daoxuan in his *Datang neidian lu* (T.2149.55.310b9). Cf. Daoxuan's biography, T.2061.50.790b7–791b26, translated into English by Wagner 1995, pp. 255–268; see also Forte 1983, pp. 699–701.

zhuan.¹³⁸ Also, the famous commentator Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) places it among the essential *vinaya* traditions on which he intended to base his *vinaya* commentaries,¹³⁹ along with the *vinaya* texts of the Mahāsāṃghika, the Dharmaguptaka, the Sarvāstivāda, the Mahīśāsaka, the Kāśyapīya,¹⁴⁰ and the Vātsīputrīya¹⁴¹ schools. As also together with some other basic texts: the *Pinimu jing* 毘尼母經 (?*Vinayamātṛkā*, T.1463), a commentary on the *vinaya* of an unknown school translated at the end of the fourth or at the beginning of the fifth century;¹⁴² the *Modeleqie lun* 摩得勒伽論, an abridged version¹⁴³ of *Sapoduo bu pinimodeleqie* 薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽 (?*Sarvāstivādavīṇayamātṛkā*, T.1441), a commentary on the *Sarvāstivādavīṇaya* translated by Saṃghavarman in 435;¹⁴⁴ the *Sapoduo lun* 薩婆多論, presumably¹⁴⁵ a reference to the *Sapoduo pinipiposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙 (?*Sarvāstivādavīṇayavibhāṣā*, T.1440), probably translated after the *Sarvāstivādavīṇaya* and before 431;¹⁴⁶ the *Pinaie lü* 毘奈耶律, in all probability a reference to the *Binaiye* 鼻奈耶 (T.1464), a *vinaya* text related to the Sarvāstivāda school, and translated by Zhu Fonian in 383;¹⁴⁷ the *Mingliao lun* 明了論, an abridged version of the *Lü ershi'er mingliao lun* 律二十二明了論 (T.1461, Explanatory Commentary on Twenty-two Stanzas of the Vinaya), a commentary on a lost *prātimokṣa* of the Saṃmitīyas translated by Paramārtha in 568,¹⁴⁸ and the *Wubai wen fa chuyao lüyi* 五百問法出要律義 (*Vinaya*

¹³⁸ T.2059.50.403b20.

¹³⁹ See T.1804.40.3b21–27.

¹⁴⁰ A note specifies that only the *prātimokṣa* (i.e., a list of precepts) is available. It has been translated into Chinese by Prajñāruci in 543 (Yuyama 1979, p. 43).

¹⁴¹ A note indicates that no Vātsīputrīya *vinaya* text is actually available.

¹⁴² Demiéville et al., 1978, p. 125; Yuyama 1979, p. 44. According to É. Lamotte (1958, p. 212), this text belongs to the Haimavata school. In the *Biqumi zhuan*, a collection of biographies of Chinese nuns compiled by Baochang 516 and 519 (Tsai 1994, p. 108), a *Pinimu jing* is linked to the Sarvāstivāda school (T.2063.50.947b29–c1).

¹⁴³ See Sengyou, T.2145.55.104c24; Fajing et al., T.2146.55.140b1; Yancong et al., T.2147.55.155b25–26; Jingtai et al., T.2148.55.188a7–8; Daoxuan, T.2149.55.258c1, 300b5–6, 310b12, 324a19–20; Jingmai, T.2151.55.362a24–25; Mingquan et al., T.2153.55.433c18–20, 470c13; Zhisheng, T.2154.55.527b30–c1, 619c21–22, 695b2–3, 719c23–24; Yuanzhao, T.2157.55.824b17–18, 953a21–22, 1043b6–7.

¹⁴⁴ Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 123; Yuyama 1979, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ According to Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 332, the title *Sapoduo lun* refers to the *Sapoduo bu pinimodeleqie*, T.1441. In that case, Daoxuan's enumeration would contain the same text twice. It thus seems more logical that *Sapoduo lun* is a reference to the *Sapoduo pinipiposha*, T.1440, referred to as “*lun*” (論) by the monk Zhishou in his introduction to the text (included in T.1440.23.558c18–559a13).

¹⁴⁶ Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 123; Yuyama 1979, pp. 8–9.

¹⁴⁷ Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 125; Yuyama 1979, pp. 7–8.

¹⁴⁸ Demiéville et al. 1978, p. 125; Yuyama 1979, p. 43.

Commentary on the Five Hundred Questions on the Essentials of the *Dharma*), a no longer extant text that, according to an additional note of Daoxuan, is a compilation on *vinaya* matters ordered by Emperor Wu 武 (r. 502–550) of the Liang 梁 dynasty.

The translator of the *Samantapāsādikā*, Saṃghabhadra, is said to be a foreigner,¹⁴⁹ or a man “of the western regions”.¹⁵⁰ He translated the text in Guangzhou, in the Zhulin 竹林 (Veṇuvana) monastery,¹⁵¹ together with the *śramaṇa* Sengyi 僧祿.¹⁵² The Pāli *Samantapāsādikā* is presented as a Mahāvihāra text.¹⁵³ Its Chinese translation, however, shows a probable Abhayagirivihāra connection.¹⁵⁴ This is particularly clear when with respect to the famous *vinaya* discussion between the Mahāvihārins and the Abhayagirivihārins, namely the debate on the nun Mettiyā,¹⁵⁵ Saṃghabhadra adheres to the Abhayagirivihāra viewpoint. Such an Abhayagirivihāra connection is also put forward with respect to the above mentioned *Vimuttimaggā*, which, according to many buddhologists,¹⁵⁶ might be affiliated to the latter monastery. Since, moreover, the most extensive contact between the Chinese and Sinhalese took place

¹⁴⁹ Fei Changfang, T.2034.49.95b19; Daoxuan, T.2149.55.262b3.

¹⁵⁰ Zhisheng, T.2154.55.535c12.

¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note that this is the same monastery where, according to T.2153, a Pāli *vinaya* was translated into Chinese, at around the same period (see note 159).

¹⁵² T.2034.49.95c3: 猗 instead of 祿.

¹⁵³ The introductory verses of the *Samantapāsādikā* state that the work intends to be a Pāli version of already existing Sinhalese commentaries in order “to make the orthodox opinion of the Mahāvihāra internationally accessible” (von Hinüber 1996, p. 103).

¹⁵⁴ See Heirman, 2004.

¹⁵⁵ This debate is the only matter on which we know the viewpoint of the Abhayagirivihāra *Vinaya* (von Hinüber 1996, p. 22). It discusses a statement in the Pāli *Vinaya* that tells us that the nun Mettiyā (Skt. Maitreyī) falsely accused the venerable Dabba Mallaputta (Skt. Dravya Mallaputra, Karashima 2000, p. 233, note 2) of having raped her; a violation of the first *pārājika* precept (leading to a definitive exclusion from the Buddhist status of monk or nun). When she later admits to have lied, the Pāli *Vinaya* (Vin, vol. 3, pp. 162.38–163.1; for the *vinayas* that have survived in a Chinese translation, see Heirman 2000a, pp. 31–34) wants her to be expelled. This statement lead to a legal discussion between the Mahāvihāravāsins and the Abhayagirivāsins, as it is clear from a passage in the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp, vol. 3, pp. 582.30–584.9), where the question is asked what the actual reason of Mettiyā’s expulsion is (see also von Hinüber, 1997, pp. 87–91; Hüsken 1997a, pp. 96–98, 102–105). The Chinese version of the *Samantapāsādikā* (T.1462.24.766c29–767a2) does not refer to the controversy between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagirivihāra, but it does point to the legal problem concerning Mettiyā’s expulsion. The Chinese text states that she had to be expelled because she herself acknowledged that she had committed a (*pārājika*) offence. This explanation corresponds to the Abhayagirivihāra position.

¹⁵⁶ For references, see Norman 1991, pp. 43–44; Skilling 1994, pp. 199–202; von Hinüber 1996, p. 126; Heirman, 2004, pp. 373–376.

during or just after the reign of the Sinhalese king Mahānāma, who was maybe more favourably disposed towards the Abhayagirivihāra than to the Mahāvihāra,¹⁵⁷ it is not impossible that when the Chinese came into contact with the Sinhalese monasteries, these monasteries were mainly connected with the Abhayagirivihāra.

4.3. *The Pāli Vinaya*

As mentioned in Faxian's travel account, it was not easy to obtain *vinaya* texts. Still, he finally succeeded in obtaining three *vinayas*. One of these, the *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, he found in Sri Lanka. Since at that time, *vinaya* matters were a prominent issue for the Sinhalese Theravāda masters, and since Faxian spent two years on the island, it is striking that he never obtained a Pāli *Vinaya* text, nor even mentioned the existence of any *vinaya* discussions. Still, he was well acquainted with both the Abhayagirivihāra and the Mahāvihāra, the two most important Theravāda monasteries. The fact that Faxian did not acquire any Pāli *Vinaya* text in Sri Lanka, does not imply that the Pāli *Vinaya* never reached China. The *Chu sanzang jiji*,¹⁵⁸ the catalogue compiled by Sengyou around 518, mentions that during the reign of Emperor Wu 武 (483–493) of the Qi 齊 dynasty, a certain monk called Mahāyāna translated two texts in Guangzhou: one is entitled *Wubai bensheng jing* 五百本生經 (Sūtra of the Five Hundred *Jātakas*), and the other is a Theravāda *vinaya* text, entitled *Tapili* 他毘利.¹⁵⁹ Sengyou further mentions that the two texts were never presented to the emperor,¹⁶⁰ and were subsequently lost. This explains why the two texts translated by Mahāyāna were never widely known in the Chinese monasteries. A new text had to be presented to the imperial court before it could be diffused. If this presentation did not take place, a text could easily disappear.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Adikaram 1953, p. 93.

¹⁵⁸ Sengyou, T.2145.55.13b16–19.

¹⁵⁹ According to the *Dazhou kanding zhongjing mulu* (T.2153.55.434a10–12), the translation of the *Tapili* took place in the “Bamboo-grove Monastery” (*Zhulin si* 竹林寺, Veṇuvana Monastery). This information is said to be based on Fei Changfang's catalogue. In the extant version of the latter catalogue (T.2034), however, this information is not included.

¹⁶⁰ The wording 不至京都 (“they did not reach the capital”), indicates that the texts were not refuted by the imperial court, but for some reason never made it to the capital Jiankang.

¹⁶¹ Kuo 2000, pp. 682–687. Some texts, however, did become popular even without

The question remains, however, why the two texts, and especially the Pāli *Vinaya*, never reached the imperial court. Was it because of a lack of interest in this *vinaya*? At the time that the Pāli *Vinaya* was translated, the *Sarvāstivādavīnaya* was firmly established in the south of China, mainly as a result of the efforts of the monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–417).¹⁶² The monasteries no longer felt that there was a lack of disciplinary texts, and this feeling might have prevented the spread of yet another *vinaya*. Still, in the fifth century, there was quite an eclectic interest in *vinaya* traditions, and many masters certainly studied more than one text (see further). Moreover, contrary to the Pāli *Vinaya* itself, the partial translation of the commentary on this *vinaya*, did gain some popularity and attracted the attention of the famous *vinaya* master Daoxuan. So, why not the Pāli *Vinaya*? Could there be any connection with the fact that the text was clearly a Hīnayāna text? This does not seem plausible since also all the other Chinese *vinayas* used for ordination in the Chinese monasteries are of Hīnayāna origin. Yet, at the time that the *vinayas* were translated into Chinese, the Sinhalese monks and nuns were almost exclusively Hīnayāna followers,¹⁶³ while monks and nuns ordained by means of another *vinaya*, were often closer to the Mahāyāna movement.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the Pāli Hīnayāna tradition as a whole was not very popular despite travellers such as Faxian who visited Sri Lanka. And even Faxian did not bring Theravāda texts with him. Instead, during his stay in Sri Lanka, he obtained copies of the *Āṅguttara*,¹⁶⁵ of the *Saṃyuktāgama*,¹⁶⁶ of a “Miscellaneous *piṭaka*”¹⁶⁷ (*zazang* 雜藏), and of the *vinaya* of the Mahīśāsakas.¹⁶⁸ Not one of these

having been approved by the emperor. These are mainly devotionals texts, or texts related to miracles (Kuo 2000, pp. 687, 690ff.). See also Drège 1991, pp. 195–208.

¹⁶² Zürcher 1972, vol. 1, pp. 229–230; Tsukamoto 1985, vol. 2, pp. 889–892.

¹⁶³ Although Sri Lanka was a Theravāda (and thus, traditionally, Hīnayāna) country, some monks also made use of Mahāyāna texts, particularly the monks belonging to the Abhayagiri vihāra. See, for instance, Bechert, 1976; 1993a, pp. 12–13; Wang 1994, p. 178; Kieffer-Pülz 2000, p. 300.

¹⁶⁴ Wang 1994, p. 178; Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 303–308.

¹⁶⁵ The manuscript of the *Āṅguttara* brought back by Faxian was not translated, maybe because in 413 Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian already had translated another *Āṅguttara* manuscript (T.1).

¹⁶⁶ The *Saṃyuktāgama* translated by the Central Indian monk Guṇabhadra between 435 and 443 (T.99) is probably the manuscript brought back by Faxian (de Jong 1981, p. 108).

¹⁶⁷ This text has been translated into Chinese by Faxian himself (T.745) and is possibly a part of a *Ksudrakapīṭaka* (de Jong 1981, p. 105).

¹⁶⁸ T.2085.51.865c24–25.

texts can be traced back to a Theravāda origin. So even though Faxian stayed in Sri Lanka for about two years, he seems not to have been interested in the Theravāda texts. Noteworthy also is that in the lists of the important schools, so popular in China from the fourth century onwards, the Theravāda tradition never appears. These lists mostly contain five schools,¹⁶⁹ known for their *vinaya* texts.¹⁷⁰ The Pāli *Vinaya* is never mentioned, and seems not have played any role. It was isolated in Guangzhou, in the south of China. Why did it remain so isolated? Was it because of political events? The *vinaya* was translated during the reign of Emperor Wu (482–493) of the Southern Qi dynasty. It was a quite prosperous period and a time of stability. After the death of Emperor Wu, however, the dynasty quickly went down. Ruthless and incompetent leaders succeeded one another. It was hardly a time to enlarge libraries under imperial sponsorship. This might account for the disappearance of the Pāli *Vinaya*. The chaotic period lasted until a skilful general overthrew the Qi in 502 and started his own dynasty, the Liang dynasty (502–557).¹⁷¹

It seems impossible to point out exactly why the Pāli *Vinaya* remained so unknown. Maybe it was a mixture of bad luck and bad timing, combined with the general lack of interest in the Pāli Hīnayāna tradition, and aggravated by the fact that there was no longer a real need for *vinaya* texts. The *vinaya* was lost very soon after its translation. Still, at least the awareness that such a copy ever existed made it to Jiankang, since in 518 Sengyou, who resided in the capital, included the *Tapili* in his catalogue, but indicated that it was lost.¹⁷²

5. THE ECLECTIC USE OF CHINESE *VINAYAS*

In the above, we have seen how in the course of the fifth century, the Chinese *vinaya* context totally changed. From an imperative need for disciplinary texts, the situation turned into an overwhelming richness. The fifth century saw the translation of all but one of the major *vinayas*, as well as of many additional *vinaya* texts. This, however, also caused

¹⁶⁹ Mostly the Sarvāstivādins, the Dharmaguptakas, the Kāśyapīyas, the Mahīśāsakas, and the Mahāsāṃghikas (see Lamotte 1958, pp. 593–594).

¹⁷⁰ Wang 1994, pp. 172–173. See also note 177.

¹⁷¹ For a detailed overview of the events of the Southern Qi, see Bielenstein 1996, pp. 169–189.

¹⁷² See note 158.

some problems. When strictly interpreted, all *vinayas* state that only a harmonious *saṃgha* (*saṃgrasaṃgha*) can perform legal procedures, such as ordinations. The terms *saṃgrā* and *saṃgha* imply that all monks and nuns who are present in the legal district (*śīmā*)¹⁷³ have to attend the ceremony; that there has to be unity in legal procedures and unity in the recitation of the precepts, this is unity in the recitation of the *prātimokṣa* at the *poṣadha*¹⁷⁴ ceremony;¹⁷⁵ and that there have to be enough monks or nuns in order to carry out a formal act in a legally valid way.¹⁷⁶ This kind of *saṃgha* is only possible within one and the same school (*nikāya*), defined by a common *vinaya*.¹⁷⁷ The disciplinary texts clearly leave no place for eclecticism. Still, several cases show that in fifth century China, this does not seem to have been an issue. At least for the translator of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, there was no problem to borrow freely from various sources.¹⁷⁸ Even more significant is that at the nuns' ordination ceremony in ca. 433, the participants probably did not belong to the same *vinaya* traditions. Although it is not said on which *vinaya* text the ceremony was based, it most probably relied on one of the *vinayas* translated into Chinese.¹⁷⁹ The Sinhalese nuns, on the other hand, in all probability belonged to the Theravāda school. In any case, it is clear that the obligatory presence of ten fully ordained nuns in order to perform a legally valid ordination ceremony received all the

¹⁷³ In order to have a legally valid procedure, any formal act has to be carried out within a well delimited district (*śīmā*). See note 25.

¹⁷⁴ A ceremony held every fortnight and attended by all monks/nuns of the district (*śīmā*), so that the unity of the order is reaffirmed. At this ceremony, the *prātimokṣa* (list of precepts) is recited.

¹⁷⁵ Pāli *vinaya*, vol. 3, p. 173.8–9 (see also the definition of “not to live in the community” (*asaṃvāsa*) in Vin, vol. 3: 28.20–22); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421.22.20c6–7; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425.22.28c23–25; *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428.22.595a15–16; *Sarvāstivādinaya*, T.1435.23.266c18–24. See also Hu-von Hinüber 1994, pp. 219–226; Tieken 2000, pp. 2–3, 10–11, 13, 26–27, who points out that “unanimous” is the prominent meaning of “*saṃgrā*”; Heirman 2002a, part 2, p. 327, nn. 290–292.

¹⁷⁶ Depending on the legal procedure, there should be four, five, ten or twenty fully ordained participants (see Heirman 2002a, part 2, p. 315 n. 228).

¹⁷⁷ Schools (*nikāya*) are defined by the recognition of a common *vinaya*, and thus of a common *prātimokṣa*. See Bechert 1993b, p. 54: “As a rule, monks belonging to different Nikāyas do not conduct joint Sanghakarmas [formal acts]. Though they may not always dispute the validity of each other's ordination, they do not recognise it as beyond dispute either. If there were doubts about the validity, the Sanghakarma would be questionable. If the validity of ordinations is called into question, the legitimacy of the Sangha is endangered.”

¹⁷⁸ See note 135.

¹⁷⁹ Before the ceremony could take place, the Sinhalese nuns had to learn Chinese (T.2059.50.341b6).

attention, to the expense of the *vinaya* tradition of the participants.¹⁸⁰ As for the later ordinations of the Chinese monks and nuns, the *vinayas* do not seem to be mutually exclusive. The south usually preferred the *Sarvāstivāda*vinaya, while in the north the *Mahāsāṃghika*vinaya prevailed, followed by the *Dharmaguptaka*vinaya.¹⁸¹ The latter *vinaya* gradually gained in importance until, in the north, it became the most influential one by the time the northern monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) wrote his commentaries. The south still mainly followed the *Sarvāstivāda*vinaya.

From the seventh century onwards, more and more protest was raised against the use of different *vinayas* in China. In his *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳), the monk Daoxuan regrets that even though the first ordinations [in China] were based on the Dharmaguptaka school, one followed [in the south] the Sarvāstivāda school.¹⁸² Also Yijing argues against the eclectic use of *vinaya* rules and stated that for a Buddhist community it is important to strictly observe only one *vinaya*.¹⁸³ The idea of the exclusive use of one *vinaya* in the Chinese monasteries was not only based on Buddhist motives, but political reasons also played an important part. When after a long period of fragmentation of the Chinese territory (317–589), the first emperor of the Sui dynasty (r. 589–605) came to power, he was bidding for the favour of the Buddhist community in his struggle to make the country one. At the same time, he also wanted to control the community and its ordinations.¹⁸⁴ The rulers of the early Tang, although less favourable towards Buddhism than the Sui rulers, continued this policy of control.¹⁸⁵ In this context, a unification of the ordination procedures would have been helpful to the court. It is therefore not surprising that when the very active *vinaya* master Dao'an 道安 (654–717), who seemed

¹⁸⁰ See Heirman 2001, pp. 293–298.

¹⁸¹ See Heirman 2002b, pp. 402–424.

¹⁸² Daoxuan, T.2060.50.620b6. See also Daoxuan's *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* (T.1804.40.2b19–20): one *vinaya* (*Dharmaguptaka*vinaya) is the basis, but, if needed, other *vinayas* can be consulted.

¹⁸³ See note 76.

¹⁸⁴ The search for unification of the Chinese empire and the control of the Chinese Buddhist monks are closely intermingled (see Wright 1957, pp. 93–104; Weinstein 1973, p. 283). Monks were required to obtain official ordination certificates, and disciplinary rules were promoted. See also Wright (1959, p. 68): “It was no accident that the Sui founder chose a Vinaya master as official head of the Buddhist communities of the realm.... [his words] expressed his wish that this specialist in the monastic rules should take full responsibility for controlling and disciplining the clergy of the whole realm.”

¹⁸⁵ Weinstein 1973 and 1987.

to have a good contacts with the Emperor Zhongzong, invoked the help of the imperial court to impose the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* all over the country, his request was granted.¹⁸⁶ It was most probably addressed to Zhongzong when the emperor was fully in power between 705 and 710.¹⁸⁷ After the imperial edict was issued, also the south of China used the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*.

6. CONCLUSION

The first period of Chinese Buddhism saw an intensive search for disciplinary rules, parallel to the growth of the Buddhist community. This search reached its peak in the beginning of the fifth century when, in a relatively short period, four complete *vinayas* were translated into Chinese. Once these *vinayas* were transmitted in China, the Buddhist community gradually became conscious of the advantages of using only one *vinaya*. This was to be the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*. The main reason for this choice seems to have been the firm belief among its defenders that the Dharmaguptaka school was the first to introduce an ordination to China. To follow this school thus assured the Buddhist community of a proper transmission of the ordination since the time of the Buddha. Political reasons also played their role. The fact of having only one ordination tradition probably simplified state control. In the beginning of the eighth century, around the same time that the monk Yijing translated the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya* in the hope to purify the Buddhist discipline in China by, as it were, starting all over again, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* was installed by imperial decree as the only right one in China. From that time until today, it has remained the only *vinaya* active in China. Two major supplements, however, have been added: first, the *bodhisattva* rules as a Mahāyāna supplement,¹⁸⁸ and later, the so-called “pure rules of Baizhang” that offer a set of rules for the practical organisation of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries.¹⁸⁹ These typical Chinese sets of rules, however, have to remain for now the subject of a different study. Together with the *vinaya* tradition translated from Indian texts, they form the core of the Chinese Buddhist disciplinary rules.

¹⁸⁶ T.2061.50.793c26–27. See also T’ang 1996, vol. 2, pp. 828–829.

¹⁸⁷ See Heirman 2002b, p. 414.

¹⁸⁸ See note 51.

¹⁸⁹ See note 69.

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EARLY BUDDHISM IN CHINA: DAOIST REACTIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that Buddhism entered China by way of the “Silk Road”, through western merchants as intermediaries. The “official” China, however, only late became aware of the trade between its own territory and the West—it was Zhang Qian 張騫 who reported to Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 140–87 BC) that on his mission to the west (140–134 BC) he had seen in Bactria products of Sichuan which had been brought there by way of India.¹ Trade between China and the West, especially the silk trade, by then, had already had a history of at least several hundred years. Chinese silk was found, together with the remnants of another Asian product, the domestic chicken, in the tomb of a Celtic prince in Heuneburg, southern Germany, dated to the fifth century BC.² Silk was also found in somewhat later layers of the Kerameikos in Athens.³

The Greek historiographer Herodotus in ca. 430 BC described with some precision the northern route of the Silk Road from its western “terminal” Cherson (extreme western part of the Crimean peninsula) to the land of the Argypaioi in Central Asia, situated some 3,000 km south-east of Cherson (probably in the Ili valley west of the Ferghana valley). From here it was the Issedones or the Seres as they were called on the southern route of the Silk Road who, assisted by Scythian interpreters, took over and controlled the trade well into Chinese territory, another 3,000 km to the east.⁴

In 97 AD a Chinese expedition, led by Gan Ying 甘英, was even sent to Da Qin 大秦 (the Roman Empire). Having reached Tiaozhi 條支 (Characene and Susiana) next to the Persian Gulf, however, he

¹ *Hanshu, Xiyu zhuan* 漢書西域傳, translated by A. Wylie in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vols. III (1874), pp. 401–452, V (1876), pp. 41–80, and X (1881), pp. 20–73, and XI (1882), pp. 83–115.

² Champion et al. 1994, p. 287; Spindler 1996, p. 71.

³ Haussig 1983, p. 16.

⁴ Herodotus, *History*, as summarised in Haussig 1983, pp. 17–19.

had to give up his plans as a consequence of negative advice provided by Parthian sailors (who no doubt feared that a successful Chinese mission could threaten their position in the east-west trade).⁵ Some three years later “envoys” from the Roman Empire reached China along the “Silk Road”:

冬十一月，西域蒙奇、兜勒二國遣使內附，賜其王金印紫綬。⁶

In the winter, in the eleventh month [of the twelfth year of the *yongyuan* era of Emperor Hedi's 和帝 reign (100 AD)], the two states of Mengqi 蒙奇 and Doule 兜勒 of the Western Regions sent envoys to [show their] allegiance [to the emperor], [the emperor] bestowed upon their kings golden seals on purple ribbons.

Some scholars have identified Mengqi with Macedonia and Doule with Tyre,⁷ the important eastern Mediterranean port and western terminal of a trade route that went through Palmyra (Syria, where Chinese silk has also been excavated)⁸ to Parthia and beyond.

During the Han dynasties (206 BC–220 AD) trade on the “Silk Road” became increasingly intense as a consequence of which more and more foreign merchants arrived in China. Under Emperor Ling 靈帝 (r. 168–190) Zhi Fadu 支法度, the grandfather of the famous translator Zhi Qian 支謙, settled there together with a group of several hundred men who all came from Kuṣāṇa (Yuezhi 月支).⁹ Already the Parthian (?) *upāsaka* An Xuan 安玄 who in 181 AD arrived in Luoyang 洛陽, was a merchant and for quite some time still practiced his profession until he—being able to recite a whole series of Buddhist *sūtras*—became involved in a translation project.¹⁰ Also at the end of the second century we find Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 who, too, acted as a translator of Buddhist texts in Luoyang. He was the son of a Sogdian merchant.

The important role merchants played in the growth and propagation of Buddhism can already be seen in the Pāli Canon. According to the Pāli *Vinaya*, the great merchant (*setṭhi*) of Rājagaha received and entertained the Buddha and his following. Famous is the story of Tapussa and Bhallika, both merchants, who are said to have become Buddha's

⁵ *Hou Hanshu* 88, p. 2909.

⁶ *Hou Hanshu* 4, p. 188.

⁷ Lin Meicun 1992.

⁸ Haussig 1983, p. 69.

⁹ *Chu sanzang jiji* T.2145.55.97b14.

¹⁰ *Gaoseng zhuan* T.2059.50.324b.

first lay followers¹¹ as well as that of Yasa, son of a wealthy merchant from Benares, his father and his four friends, all belonging to the *vessa* (Skt. *vaiśya*, merchant) caste, who converted to the new movement.¹² An analysis of the 75 names of the Buddha's most important disciples¹³ revealed that those originally belonging to the caste of the merchants represented by far the largest share, namely 44%.

Official accounts of early Buddhism in China are notoriously scarce and they begin to make their appearance when Buddhism already had gained a footing in China. However, they attest its presence in the area of Pengcheng 彭城 in Chu 楚, a flourishing centre of commerce and the eastern extension to the continental silk route,¹⁴ in 65 AD. It is here that the first known Buddhist community was to be found,¹⁵ and it is also from this place that we have the earliest description of a Chinese Buddhist "monastery".¹⁶ The large distribution of iconographic testimonies on Chinese soil, on the other hand, makes it plausible that some form of Buddhism must have started to intrude into this country already during the first century BC.

Initially, Buddhism must have been the denomination of the foreign merchants coming to China for business. They may have learnt some *sūtras* and may have listened to some *jātakas* at home, they need not necessarily have brought with them any written texts. Even if they had, there was certainly no need to translate them into any other language. All that changed when, due to individual contacts between foreigners and their Chinese trade partners, some Chinese became personally interested in this alien tradition. At some stage they must have felt it necessary to have first hand information at their disposal, especially after their trade partners had returned home and were no longer available as primary sources. So, only when a Chinese audience had to be served did translations become a necessity. As this first Chinese audience consisted of lay persons, the most suitable texts were those Buddhist *sūtras* which originally had been composed on behalf of a Buddhist lay community: Mahāyāna texts.

¹¹ *Mahāvagga* 1.4.

¹² *Mahāvagga* 1.7–10.

¹³ *Āṅguttaramikāya* 1.14.

¹⁴ Zürcher 1959, p. 26.

¹⁵ Maspero 1934, p. 106.

¹⁶ Zürcher 1959, p. 28.

It does not come as a surprise, then, that one of the earliest Buddhist *sūtras* translated into Chinese, the *Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra*—translated under the title “Dharma-mirror sūtra”, *Fǎjīng jīng* 法鏡經, by the Parthian layman An Xuan and the Chinese *śramaṇa* Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調 after 181 but before 190 AD—is mainly concerned with the lay *bodhisattvas*.¹⁷

In any event, the Buddhist *sūtras*, whether orally transmitted or as early translations, if they provided the Chinese with ideas and concepts they were already familiar with, they had to present them in a new light or had to offer new aspects. Or the contents of these texts must have satisfied certain needs in a better way than the traditional means the Chinese audience had at hand. Otherwise these scriptures would have hardly been acceptable to a Chinese audience. However, we must also be prepared for the possibility that Buddhist ideas, concepts, notions, stories, images and so on may have made their way to China through other “channels” than texts. Furthermore, while most scholars focused (and still focus) their attention on the “Silk Road” we should not forget that a much shorter way, although less convenient, existed that connected Southwestern China with Eastern India’s Brahmaputra Valley, the “Yunnan Route”.¹⁸ It was via this route that, for example, Indian cotton was imported into the southern Chinese state of Chu during the Warring States period (481–221 BC).¹⁹

2. SAVIOURS FROM THE WEST: XI WANG MU AND THE BUDDHA

Far away from the official state cult and from the *literati*’s reflections on deities and spirits, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population, usually the immediate victim of natural calamities, warfare and crop failures, felt a need for saviours it could turn to in times of despair. One such saviour deity was Xi Wang Mu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West, who was to become an important goddess in Daoism.²⁰ However complex the history of her myth may have been, by the Former Han dynasty (206 BC–6 AD) she had developed into a deity that could save people from all sorts of dangers and, more important,

¹⁷ A complete English translation with study was recently published in Nattier 2003.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Chen 1981.

¹⁹ Haussig 1983, p. 81.

²⁰ Frühauf 1999, Wu Hung 1989, pp. 108–141, Fracasso 1988, Loewe 1979, pp. 86–133. For her Daoist role during the Tang dynasty, see Cahill 1993.

who could bestow upon them immortality. She was thus some sort of ruler over life and death, could provide the elixir of immortality²¹ and lead the souls of the deceased to her paradise.

In her earliest known image, on the mural paintings of Bu Qian-qiu's 卜千秋 tomb in Luoyang, Henan (dated to the first half of the first century BC), she is depicted as sitting on wave-like clouds in a three-quarters pose, wearing her hair in the same way as her typical *sheng* 勝 headdress²² in later representations and expecting the arrival of the occupant of this tomb standing on a snake and his wife riding a three-headed phoenix.²³ Not only the departed souls were cared for by her, she also protected the living. Cui Zhuan's 崔篆 (the contemporary of the usurper Wang Mang 王莽, r. 9–23) *Yi lin* 易林 (Forest of Changes) therefore recommends:

[In case you are] pierced through the nose and bound to a tree [when you are] cornered by a tiger, [only if to Xi] Wang Mu you pray, this misfortune will not turn into a catastrophe [but] suddenly [you will be able to] return on your own.²⁴

Most impressive is the description of a mass movement of her adherents who, exhausted due to a severe drought, hurried to the capital where they expected an imminent cataclysm and the appearance of the goddess as sort of a Messiah to save those who believed in her. Of this incident three accounts are to be found at different places in Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han Dynasty).²⁵ Its original form, however, is preserved in Xun Yue's 荀悅 (148–209) *Qian Han ji* 前漢紀 (Records of the Former Han Dynasty) of 200.²⁶ The reconstructed passage reads:

During the first, second and third month of the fourth year of Emperor Ai's *jianping* era (3 BC) there was a great drought. People east of the [Hangu] pass were disturbing each other, roared and were running around in panic. They held stalks of straw or hemp, passed them on to one another, saying: “[We] are transporting the Queen Mother of the West’s tally.” The numbers of [those persons who thus] met on the

²¹ The earliest reference is *Huainanzi* 7.10a, this text being compiled sometime before 139 BC, cf. Le Blanc 1993.

²² An object made of jade, mentioned in *Huainanzi* 6.13a.

²³ Segment 5 in the upper register, fig. 43a, and, enlarged, fig. 43b in Wu Hung 1989, p. 113. Sun Zuoyun 1977, p. 62, fig. 17.

²⁴ *Yi lin* B, 1.33a and B 3.8a.

²⁵ *Hanshu* 11.342, 26.1311, 27C.1476.

²⁶ *Qian Han ji* 29.

streets amounted to several thousands. Some had dishevelled hair and went barefoot, broke down the barriers of gates by night, clambered over walls to make their way into the houses. Some ascended carriages, mounted [horses], and hastened to set up relay stations to pass on [the tally]. Having [thus] crossed 26 commanderies and principalities, they went westward, entered the pass and reached the capital.

That summer people gathered in meetings in the capital as well as in the commanderies and principalities. In the village settlements, in the lanes and paths across the fields, they prepared [offerings], set up the implements for divination boards (設張博具), sang, danced and worshipped the Queen Mother of the West. They also transmitted a letter, saying: "The Queen Mother of the West informs the Hundred Families: Those who wear this letter at their waist will not die. Those who do not believe my words shall look below the pivots of [their] doors—there will be white hair." Some were holding torches during the night, climbed the houses, beat drums, shouted out the name [of the goddess], and [drove] each other into panic and fear. They also said: "People with vertical pupils will arrive." By autumn [of the same year] it stopped.

As square or vertical pupils were marks of immortality, these people expected to arrive must have been the queen's guards in charge of punishing all those who did not believe in her and were thus not allowed to survive the imminent cataclysm. All others, we must infer, could count on the goddess to let them pass through the catastrophe unharmed. It is significant that the starving population of Shandong was moving to the west: that was the direction the Queen Mother was expected to arrive from. The stalks carried by the worried may well be a symbol for the life-expanding capability of the deity. In many of Xi Wang Mu's Han pictorial representations, we see figures approaching her holding boughs in their hands.²⁷

No later than 8 AD Xi Wang Mu became iconographically associated with a hare which, using mortar and pestle, is preparing the elixir of immortality.²⁸ This allows us to consider her sort of a patron saint for those seeking immortality. The ordinary beings who had her painted on the walls of their tombs may have hoped that their *hun* 魂 souls would be allowed to enter the Queen Mother's paradise which, from Han times on, was thought to be on the mythical mount Kunlun 崑崙 in the far west. The identification of the *bo* 博 (board) as *liu bo* 六博 or

²⁷ This was already observed by James 1995, p. 22.

²⁸ Sōfukawa 1979, fig. 43.

“divination board”²⁹ in this text, and not simply as a “gaming board” as some scholars assume,³⁰ is corroborated by the association of this board and its players with Xi Wang Mu on the same stone carving.³¹ The guarantor of immortality and entrance into her paradise is shown together with those who ask the divination board about their fate. And the panic-stricken people on the streets who expect both the final cataclysm and the imminent theophany of the Queen Mother of the West as their saviour are using the divination board to make inquiries about their fate.

A comparable role among the population of the Han dynasty was apparently attributed to the Buddha. Also coming from the West he was considered a god (either as a consequence of the historical Buddha’s transformation into a transcendent being in the Mahāyāna or as a misunderstanding among the population), as can be seen in a later source:

佛出西域，外國之神

The Buddha emerged in the Western Regions, he [is] a foreign god (*shen* 神).³²

The Buddha thus must have been considered by many as another saviour coming from far away and blessing those who believed in him. Precisely as the *sheng*, the Queen Mother of the West’s crown (which today serves to identify her iconographically), was carved above the entrance of cliff tombs at Pengshan 彭山 and Leshan 樂山, Sichuan,³³ so was the seated Buddha carved on the lintel above the entrance of cliff tomb IX at Mahao 麻浩 and on other tombs in Leshan.³⁴ There can be no doubt about the identification of the Buddha as he is represented in a typical position: with a halo surrounding his head and the remnants of *uṣṇīṣa*—a knot of hair on the top of the head and

²⁹ A *liu bo* board of Han times (found in a tomb in Hubei) is reproduced in Loewe 1979, p. 85, fig. 14.

³⁰ E.g., Wu Hung 1989, p. 128.

³¹ James 1996, p. 83 and ink rubbing in *Kaogu* 1979.6, p. 500: the players sitting on a mountain, at the right of the goddess.

³² See Fotudeng’s biography in *Gaoseng zhuan* 385c, translated in Wright 1948, esp. p. 355.

³³ Among them, Pengshan tombs 45, 166, 169, 530. Photograph in Wu Hung 2000, p. 82, fig. 5.

³⁴ Photograph in Rhie 1999, fig. 1.23.

thus sort of an “equivalent” of Xi Wang Mu’s *sheng*—, the left hand holding the end of his gown, the right hand raised in the gesture of the “fearlessness”, *abhayamudrā*.

It cannot be by accident that the Buddha became associated with the Queen Mother of the West on pictorial representations of the second century AD. The famous Yi’nan 沂南 tomb in Shandong contains a stone column with carvings on all four sides. One side shows on top the Queen Mother, another one has the King Father of the East at the corresponding position. This deity was introduced during the Later Han dynasty to let the Queen Mother fit the *yin-yang* scheme as the *yin* part, whereas the King Father came to act as the *yang* part.³⁵ On the third side of the column we find, in the centre, a seated figure with *uṣṇīṣa*, holding the gown with the left hand and raising the right one in the *abhayamudrā* gesture—which serve to identify the figure beyond any doubt as the Buddha. Both deities, the Queen Mother and the Buddha, must have been regarded as akin in caring for the souls of the departed and were thus worshipped together. Wu Hung, therefore, could say: “The Buddha’s powers and ability to help people resemble those of the Queen Mother. In this context, the association between the two was strengthened by the belief in the western abode of both and by their shared connection with immortality.”³⁶

It is even possible that, on Chinese soil, both divinities initially competed with each other to some degree, to be seen in the fact that the Buddha’s iconography—inherited from Central Asian (Gandhāran and Mathurān) art—irreversibly influenced that of the Queen Mother. The latter was formerly shown, as we have seen, in a three-quarters position looking at visitors who came to meet her or at companions such as the hare.³⁷ On the other hand, the traditional representation of the Buddha had him presented *en face* in his characteristic posture: holding his gown with his left hand and raising his right hand in the gesture of the *abhayamudrā*. In addition, he is symmetrically surrounded by deities, princes, disciples, worshippers or donors (who financed the sculpture) looking at him. During the first century AD, Xi Wang Mu’s position

³⁵ Both the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East are also carved in a detailed way on the façade of the same tomb, see figs. 25–26 in Zeng et al. 1956.

³⁶ Wu Hung 1989, p. 135.

³⁷ Examples are given in James 1995, figs. 4, 5, 8; Sōfukawa, loc. cit.; Wu Hung 1989, p. 113.

changed from the original three-quarters to a frontal one, facing the viewer in the same way as the Buddha does. Furthermore, whereas on most, and especially on all early representations the Queen Mother is portrayed as having “normal” shoulders, on some stone carvings and sarcophagi, however, they have “protuberances” whose tips are pointing towards the sky.³⁸ Some scholars interpreted them wrongly, I think, but understandably, as wings.³⁹ Whenever winged immortals or *xian* 仙 indeed occur in Han art, whether in stone carvings,⁴⁰ sarcophagi or even as sculptures, the tips of their wings usually point towards the earth (unless they are obviously flying in the air). The position of the “protuberances”, therefore, is atypical for wings. Furthermore, on the already mentioned stone column of the Yi’nan tomb, right in the middle of one side the Buddha (with *uṣṇīṣa*, *abhaya mudrā* and holding his garment) is shown with exactly the same “outgrowths” as Xi Wang Mu and Dong Wang Fu 東王父 (the King Father of the East) at the top of two other sides of the same column.⁴¹ Neither in Central Asian art nor in China is the Buddha portrayed as a winged being. Accordingly, these “epaulettes” must have a different meaning. An indication can be found in the carving on a stone coffin from Pixian 郫县, Sichuan:⁴² Here, each of Xi Wang Mu’s shoulder “decorations” is even split into three parts. This representation definitely excludes the attribution of “wings” to these adornments: they are nowhere seen on winged figures. It is again to the Buddha’s representations that we must turn to find an explanation. In Gandhāra of the Kuṣāṇa period Buddha sculptures were made that show the Buddha in *dhyānāsana* with flame-shoulders: with flames ascending from his shoulders. Examples were found from Gandhāra⁴³ to Kabul⁴⁴ and Paitava, Afghanistan.⁴⁵ In these examples, the flames are confined to the shoulders proper. Quite impressive is the flame-shouldered Buddha in gilded bronze in the Arthur M. Sackler

³⁸ Xi Wang Mu and Dong Wang Fu on the gables of the Wu Liang shrine, Wu Hung 1989, p. 110. Rubbing from stone sarcophagi in Wu Hung 2000, p. 89, figs. 18, 19.

³⁹ James 1996, p. 83.

⁴⁰ Wu Hung 1986, fig. 15: from the Wu Liang shrine. Clearly visible in the carvings on the facade of the Yi’nan tomb is the contrast between the wings of the two immortal “alchemists” at the sides of Dong Wang Fu who shows the same “protuberances” as his consort. See Zeng et al. 1956, figs. 26 (Dong Wang Fu) and 25 (Xi Wang Mu).

⁴¹ Drawing of the stone carving reproduced in Wu Hung 1986, fig. 7.

⁴² Rubbing reproduced in *Kaogu* 1979.6, p. 500, fig. 10, and in James 1995, fig. 21.

⁴³ Gandhāra example (ca. 2nd century AD) in Taddei 1974, pl. clxiii, fig. 1.

⁴⁴ Example from near Kabul (2nd–3rd century AD) in Taddei 1992, pl. 1.

⁴⁵ Photograph in Rhie 1999, fig. 1.49.

Museum, Harvard University Art Museum.⁴⁶ In this example, the flames range from the shoulders down to the middle of the upper arms. A series of five different types of flame-shouldered deities are shown by Wu Hung as they appear on Chinese bronze mirrors:⁴⁷ These examples range from Xi Wang Mu-/Dong Wang Fu-like examples (without the typical *sheng* crown, *nota bene*) sitting on a dragon,⁴⁸ to a more stylised deity,⁴⁹ to clearly defined Buddha-images⁵⁰ presented with crossed legs and the hands in *dhyānamudrā* of which fig. b⁵¹ has well-defined flames leaving the shoulders. Shoulder-flames seem to be an attribute of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, the “light producer”, the Buddha of the far remote past who was the first to ignite the light of the *dharma* in the world. A drawing after a Gandhāra sculpture is to be seen in Schumann (1995).⁵² To some degree both, the Buddha and the Queen Mother (or the King Father) were even exchangeable, as Wu Hung’s series shows.

3. THE *LIVES* OF LAOZI AND THE BUDDHA

Another saviour coming into prominence during the Han dynasty was Laozi 老子, the mythical author of the classic *Daode jing* 道德經 (Scripture of the Way and the Virtue). Sources of the first century BC still simply said that he had lived an extraordinarily long life: “Laozi probably lived over a hundred and sixty years of age—some even say over two hundred—as he cultivated the *dao* and was able to live to a great age”,⁵³ and that he nevertheless died in the end. It was only during the Later Han that Laozi became an immortal. Within both the early Daoist communities active in present-day Sichuan in the early second century AD and the imperial court, Laozi by then had become an entirely divine protagonist. As such he was identified with the *dao* itself and was thus considered the ultimate cause of creation, that which existed before creation took place, and capable of transforming into anything at any

⁴⁶ Colour photograph in Rhie 1999, pl. 1; black and white photographs in Rhie 1999, figs. 1.44 and 1.45.

⁴⁷ Wu Hung 1986, p. 277, fig. i.

⁴⁸ Loc. cit.: fig. a 1.

⁴⁹ Loc. cit.: fig. a 2.

⁵⁰ Loc. cit.: figs. b–d.

⁵¹ Loc. cit.

⁵² Schumann 1995, p. 129.

⁵³ *Shi ji* 63.2142, tr. Lau 1984, p. 9.

time. The only preserved fragment of the imperial stele *Shengmu bei* 聖母碑 (Stele for the Sage Mother) of 153 AD⁵⁴ reads:⁵⁵

老子者，道也。乃生於無形之先，起於太初之前，行於太素之元，浮游六虛 [...] ⁵⁶

Laozi is the *dao*, born prior to the Shapeless, grown before the Great Beginning, he lives in the prime of the Great Immaculate, and floats freely through the Six Voids [of the universe]. [...]

The same idea is reflected in the famous stele called *Laozi ming* 老子銘 (Inscription for Laozi), erected on imperial command in Kuxian 苦縣 (Henan) by Bian Shao 邊韶 on 24 September 165⁵⁷ in order to honour the recently deified Laozi. The relevant passage reads like this:⁵⁸

老子離合於混沌之氣，與三光為終始，觀天作讖[口]，降升[斗]星，隨日九變，與時消息 [...] 道成(身) [仙]化。

Laozi, separated from and united with the breath (or: “energy”) of the primordial chaos, began and [will] end with the three luminants (*sc.* sun, moon, stars). He observed the sky and made prophecies, descended from and went up to the stars [of the Dipper]. Following the course of the sun, he transformed nine times, he waxed and waned with the seasons. [...] [When his] *dao* was accomplished, he transformed into an immortal.⁵⁹

It was this notion as it were of Laozi that influenced the early Chinese understanding of the Buddha which shows the Buddha as “a deity without definite form”,⁶⁰ resembling the *dao* and capable of transforming into various appearances. As Mouzi’s 牟子 *Lihuo lun* 理惑論 (On the Correction of Errors) which, due to internal evidence, must date after 222 AD describes:

The Buddha is the original ancestor of the power of the *dao*, the end of the thread [connected to] the divinities. [...] Shadowy and indistinct, by transformations in different bodies and varied forms, [he appears in diverse realms]. Sometimes he is present, sometimes absent. He can be small or large, heavenly or earthly, old or young, hidden or manifest. He can walk on fire without being burned [...].⁶¹

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the most probable interpretation of the date given on the stele, see Seidel 1969, p. 37.

⁵⁵ Kohn 1998, pp. 39f.

⁵⁶ *Shengmu bei* apud *Taiping yulan* 1.4a.

⁵⁷ Seidel 1969, p. 37.

⁵⁸ Kohn loc. cit.

⁵⁹ Adopting the reading of the *Hunyuan shengji*, cf. Seidel 1969, p. 123.

⁶⁰ Kohn op. cit., p. 116.

⁶¹ Modified after Keenan 1994, p. 64.

In this early period, the Buddha in China obviously could not be imagined other than as a deity similar to the deified Laozi. However, whereas Laozi *was* the *dao*, the Buddha in the *Lihuo lun* was made its ancestor and thus even more elevated. That the author of the *Lihuo lun* must have been quite acquainted with the early Daoism can be seen in the fact that he quotes the *Laozi*-text no less than eighteen times. He may also have been familiar with some of the popular Daoist currents of his time.

As soon as original Buddha *vitae* were translated into Chinese, this early picture of the Buddha seems to have been eclipsed by a new one which in turn would subsequently inform all later Laozi *Lives*. The first of the two earliest-known Chinese versions of the life of Gautama Buddha, the work of two or possibly three translators, namely the Sogdian Kang Mengxiang as well as the Indians Zhu Dali 竺大力 (Mahābala?) and Zhu Tanguo 竺曇果 (Dharmaphala?), was produced in the early years of the third century,⁶² “presumably in the environs of Luoyang.”⁶³ This *Life of the Buddha* in two parts was made into two distinct Chinese scriptures, the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (Sūtra of the [Buddha’s] Origin and Deeds, Cultivation and Practice) and the *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經 (Middle Sūtra of the [Buddha’s] Origin and Deeds). Responsible for a later version was Zhi Qian 支謙 who, after having moved to the South shortly before 220 AD, completed it sometime between 222 and 229⁶⁴ in Southern China where he was active as a high official at the Wu 吳 court. Zhi Qian combined and re-edited the whole of the *Xiuxing benqi jing* and the first part of the *Zhong benqi jing* together with passages which he took from other sources⁶⁵ and made them into the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經.

On the Daoist side, in the decades before 320 AD at least one version of Laozi’s *vita* was compiled that shows remarkable parallels to the Buddhist *Taizi ruiying benqi jing*. This *Life of Laozi* was, in part even *verbatim*, worked into the Laozi composite *vita* that was included by Ge Hong 葛洪 in his *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (Lives of Divine Immortals). Comparing now both biographies we find the following interesting points both have in common:

⁶² Zürcher 1991, p. 284. Kohn 1998, p. 116 (n. 4) has “translated around 197 CE” and refers to Zürcher 1959 (p. 36) who, however, nowhere gives such a precise date.

⁶³ Campamy 2002, p. 209.

⁶⁴ Zürcher 1959, p. 309.

⁶⁵ Zürcher 1991, p. 284.

The *bodhisattva* transformed himself, and riding a white elephant, descended [like] a ray of sun. Because his mother was asleep during the day, [he] manifested himself [as] a dream to her and entered her through her right flank.⁶⁶

Laozi's *vita* has:

His mother felt a great meteor enter her, and thus conceived.⁶⁷

Despite the differences in detail, what both have in common is the fact that it was a heavenly appearance (elephant descending as ray of sun *vs.* meteor) that made the mother pregnant. Then the birth is described as follows:

Then Māyā grasped hold of the branch of a tree, and the baby issued forth from her right flank and came down to the ground.⁶⁸ He slipped to the ground, took seven steps, raised his hand, and, in a lion's voice, cried: "Among all divine beings, only I am lord [...]."⁶⁹

The relevant part in Laozi's *Life* reads:

[...] when he was born he emerged by piercing through her left armpit; [...] some say that his mother gave birth to him under a plum tree and that, being able to speak at birth, he pointed at the tree and said: "I'll take this as my surname".⁷⁰

Both biographies share the motif of birth from the mother's armpit and under a tree. While the Buddha leaves through the right, Laozi emerges through the left armpit. Then both babies are immediately able to speak at birth and both perform a hand gesture. Note that this *topos* of miraculous birth from any part of the mother's body but the womb has a long Indian history—cognate with Athena's birth from Zeus' head, thus reflecting a common Indo-European heritage—, as Aurva was born from the thigh,⁷¹ Pṛthu from the hand⁷² and Māndhātṛ, like Indra himself, either, according to one tradition, from the forehead⁷³ or, according to another, from his father's left side,⁷⁴ and Kākṣīvat from

⁶⁶ *Taizi ruying benqi jing* 473b21ff.; Eichenbaum Karetzky 1992, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Campany 2002, p. 194.

⁶⁸ *Xiuxing benqi jing* 463c11, Eichenbaum Karetzky 1992, p. 15.

⁶⁹ *Xiuxing benqi jing* 463c13, Eichenbaum Karetzky 1992, p. 16.

⁷⁰ Campany 2002, p. 194.

⁷¹ *Mahābhārata* I. 2610, as quoted in Cowell 1969, p. 6 n. 1.

⁷² *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* I.13, as quoted in Cowell 1969, p. 6 n. 2.

⁷³ *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* IV.2, as quoted in Cowell 1969, p. 6 n. 3.

⁷⁴ *Mahābhārata* III.1.10450, as quoted in Cowell 1969, p. 6, n. 3.

the upper end of the arm. The frequency with which this topic occurs in the Indian literature, both non-Buddhist and Buddhist, and its late occurrence in the Chinese Laozi-complex makes it most likely that this *topos* was “transferred” from India to China, rather than suggesting an independent parallel development in both cultures. Another important motif is the following: The Buddha *vita* says:

[Asita] saw the thirty-two signs of beauty (*lakṣaṇas*) [on the baby’s body].⁷⁵
 1. the body was golden in colour, 2. the top of the head had a fleshy protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*), 3. his hair was blue black, 4. between his eyebrows was a white tuft of hair that gave off rays of light (*ūrṇā*), 5. his eyes were purple in colour, 6. from top to bottom he was perfect, 7. his mouth had forty teeth, all even and white. [...]”⁷⁶

Compare this to the Laozi version where it says:

[In...] it is stated [...] that Laozi was of a yellow and white hue, had elegant eye-brows, a broad forehead, long ears, large eyes, and widely spaced teeth, as well as a square mouth and thick [lips?]. On his forehead there were patterns [symbolizing] the three [powers] and the five [phases], the sun and the moon. His nose was high and straight. His ears had three apertures each. On the soles of his feet were [patterns symbolizing] *yin* and *yang* and the five [phases], and in the palms of his hands there was the character “ten” (*sc.* celestial stems).⁷⁷

Again, there are differences in detail, especially with regard to the Daoist symbols appearing on Laozi’s body. But the fact that so many elements occur in both biographies cannot be just by accident. Therefore, Campany noted that the Laozi parallels “betray an imitation—probably a consciously competitive imitation—of the conception and (more especially) birth scenes of the two earliest-known Chinese versions of the life of Gautama Buddha.”⁷⁸

In contrast to Zürcher (1990) who differentiated analytically between a cult based at the imperial court and a popular one, it seems more likely that first there were the popular cults of Xi Wang Mu and Laozi which, as we have seen, became influenced by popular cults of the Buddha. As soon as these cults had gained in popularity and become strong enough that even the court could no longer ignore them, the same “amalgamation” found in the popular cult found its way to the imperial court.

⁷⁵ *Xiuxing benqi jing* 464a28, Eichenbaum Karetzky, p. 24.

⁷⁶ *Taiji ruiying benqi jing* 474a8, Eichenbaum Karetzky, p. 24.

⁷⁷ Campany 2002, pp. 198f.

⁷⁸ Campany 2002, p. 209.

4. MEDITATION

In a Chinese context, meditation, if compared with the long living and continuous Indian traditions, appears all of a sudden and at a rather late date. The oldest extant source so far known that refers to breathing meditation is the so-called “Duodecagonal Jade Tablet Inscription on Breath Circulation”. The inscription is found on a twelve-sided cylindrical jade object with three engraved characters on each side.⁷⁹ Although it was interpreted either as an ornamental part of a sword sheath, which was considered “not very probable” by Wilhelm,⁸⁰ or as a sword-handle,⁸¹ while others believe that it was the knob of a Daoist’s stick,⁸² its precise use is unknown. Its date is also uncertain. Some considered it to be of Qi 齊 State provenance and dated not long after 400 BC.⁸³ Guo Moruo compared the style of its characters with those on a bronze object found near Luoyang which was dated approximately 380 BC,⁸⁴ whereas Gilbert Mattos “suggests an origin in the San Jin area during the last part of the fourth century BC.”⁸⁵

Also of the fourth century BC (or shortly later) are the traces of the earliest form of meditation found in Chinese philosophical works like the *Guanzi* 管子 (Master Guan), *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Master Zhuang) and the *Laozi* (Old Master), the latter also being known under its later title *Daode jing* (Scripture of the Way and the Inner Power), of the fourth/third century BC.⁸⁶ These texts share a common vocabulary of and a concern for a meditation practice that Roth has termed “inner cultivation”.⁸⁷

The main characteristic of “inner cultivation” that can be deduced from these texts is that, in Roth’s words,⁸⁸

⁷⁹ Photograph provided in Wilhelm 1948, pl. xix. The text was translated by Wilhelm, op. cit., p. 387, Needham 1956, p. 242 and Roth 1999, pp. 162f. Roth also reproduces his critical version of the Chinese text.

⁸⁰ Needham loc. cit., referring to Chen Mengjia, and Lo Chen-yü according to Wilhelm 1948, p. 385.

⁸¹ Needham loc. cit.

⁸² Wilhelm loc. cit.

⁸³ Needham loc. cit.

⁸⁴ Roth 1999, p. 162.

⁸⁵ Roth 1999, loc. cit., referring to an unpublished paper by the late Gilbert Mattos.

⁸⁶ To this list the following later texts can be added: *Lishi chunqiu* of the late third century BC and *Huainan zi* of the second century BC, cf. Roth 1997.

⁸⁷ Roth 1997, p. 296.

⁸⁸ Roth 2000, p. 32.

it involves following or guiding the breath while one is in a stable [upright] sitting position. As one does this the normal contents of consciousness gradually empty out and one comes to experience a tranquillity that, as one's practice develops, becomes quite profound. Eventually one comes to fully empty out the contents of consciousness until a condition of union with the Way is achieved. This union is referred to by distinctive phrases such as "attaining the One" [*de yi* 得一], "attaining the empty Way" [*de xu Dao* 得虛道], and "the Profound Merging" [*xuan tong* 玄同]. After this union one returns and lives again in the dualistic world of subject and object but retains a sense or vision of its underlying unity. As a result, one lives in this world of distinctions in a profoundly transformed fashion, often characterised by an unselfconscious ability to spontaneously respond to whatever situation one is facing.

This resulting mode of being is usually characterised by phrases such as "guarding the One" [*shou yi* 守一], as in the *Zhuangzi* saying "once one knows how to guard the One, the myriad affairs are done" [*zhi shou yi, wan shi bi* 知守一, 萬事畢],⁸⁹ "embracing the One" [*bao yi* 抱一] or "holding onto the One" [*zhi yi* 執一].

It has been convincingly demonstrated, that this kind of breathing meditation involved a "process of concentration" that developed over a series of stages.⁹⁰ According to *Zhuangzi*, after some preparatory practices that serve to minimise possible disturbances of the process, one assumes an upright position (*zheng* 正), if properly done this leads to the practitioner's tranquillity (*jing* 靜) of the mind, tranquillity leads to lucidity (*ming* 明), lucidity to emptiness (*xu* 虛) of all conscious content, and "when one is empty," and thus experiencing a complete unity with the *dao*, "then one takes no action and yet nothing is left undone".⁹¹ Although the number of stages may vary from one text to the other,⁹² the notion that the breathing meditation practiced by early Daoists proceeds through various stages is well attested by quite a series of relevant texts.

Note that in India a tradition of meditation over several stages predates a similar Buddhist meditation technique⁹³ and informs the latter. Both are considerably older than the Chinese example and one might even speculate that the former may have influenced the latter.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *Zhuangzi yinde* 29/12/6.

⁹⁰ For the following, cf. Roth 1997.

⁹¹ *Zhuangzi yinde* 64/23/66–70; also cf. Roth 1997, pp. 305f.

⁹² A comparative table is conveniently provided by Roth 1997, pp. 312f.

⁹³ Mukherjee 1995 and 1996.

⁹⁴ Various scholars have dealt with the question of early Indian influences on the

However, when during the Han dynasty early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts occurred, the term *shou* 守 was adopted, as Livia Kohn observed, “to denote the effort of concentration of mind”⁹⁵ and was even used to translate the title of the *Mahāānāpānasamṛtisūtra* as *Da anban shou yi jing* 大安般守意經 (T.602; note that this text was not translated by Chen Hui 陳慧, as Kohn has it, but by An Shigao 安世高).⁹⁶ The meditation technique described in this text,

consists of the observation of respiration as it enters and leaves through the nostrils (*ānāpāna*), with the aim of a state of mindfulness (*smṛti*) and ultimately absorption of mind (*dhyāna*). It outlines the six basic stages of counting the breath, following the respiration, calm, observation, returning, and purifying. [...] The last two stages are explained as ‘unifying the mind’ and ‘guarding the mind’.⁹⁷

It cannot be just by accident that the Parthian (?)⁹⁸ An Shigao, who arrived at Luoyang in 148 AD and there organised probably the first translation team, to some extent concentrated on translating Buddhist meditation texts. He may thus have responded to an apparent need among his Chinese followers. Perhaps already being acquainted with the Daoist “guarding the One” technique they may have been eager to learn other meditation forms, too, and may have been tempted to do so by apparently equal technical terms, such as *shou* 守, used in the texts and their titles. Buddhism seems to have satisfied a demand which made it easier for this foreign religion to get a firm footing on Chinese soil.

Towards the end of the Later Han dynasty (25–220) a new type of meditation appears in the Chinese sources. It is characterised by terms such as *si* 思 (lit.: think, contemplate), *sixiang* 思想 (lit.: contemplate and imagine), *sicun* 思存 (lit.: contemplate and preserve), or *cun* 存 (lit.: preserve). These verbs are usually collocated with an object as, for example, in the phrase *si shen* 思神 “contemplate the divinities” and mean “meditate on”, “visualise” or “concentrate your mental efforts on the image of”. Although this meditation technique may also start with

China of the Warring States and Western Han periods, for example Conrady 1906, Liebenenthal 1968, or, more recently, Mair 1990, and others. However, this topic needs more research.

⁹⁵ Kohn 1989b, p. 152.

⁹⁶ Zürcher 1991, p. 279.

⁹⁷ Kohn 1989b, p. 152.

⁹⁸ See the contribution of Xavier Tremblay in the present work.

breathing exercises, its goal is no longer to fully empty out the contents of consciousness until a condition of total unity with the cosmos is reached but rather to visualise a divinity in order to secure this superior being's presence or to enter into communication with it.

By the second half of the second century AD, visualisation as a specific meditation technique had become a common feature of various popular religious movements as is attested by epigraphical sources. Wangzi Qiao's stele *Wangzi Qiao bei* 王子喬碑 of 165 AD and attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192) describes how the emperor had sent an emissary to offer sacrifices in order to honour the spirit of the former prince Qiao who had turned into an immortal and at whose grave a temple had been erected. This immortal became known as being very powerful since sick and emaciated people who used to come, cleanse their bodies and pray for help were cured immediately, as long as they were reverent. Then the inscription goes on to say that ardent Daoists (*hao dao zhi chou* 好道之儔) came from afar “some [of whom] would converse about visualising in order to pass through the cinnabar field” (*huo tan si yi li dan tian* 或談思以歷丹田). The cinnabar field is a spot inside the human body, located below the navel. It is described in a text of perhaps the end of the Later Han, the *Laozi zhong jing* 老子中經 (Old Master's Middle Text), in the following way:

The scripture says: The Cinnabar Field is the root of the human being. This is the place where the vital power is kept. The five energies [of the five phases] have their origin here. It is the embryo's home. Here men keep their semen and women their menstrual blood. Meant for the procreation of children, it houses the gate of harmonious union of *yin* and *yang*. Three inches under the navel, adjacent to the spine, [the Cinnabar Field] lies at the base of the kidneys. It is scarlet inside, green on the left, yellow on the right, white on top, and black on the bottom. It is four inches around. Its location three inches below the navel symbolises the trinity of Heaven, Earth, and Humans.⁹⁹

Unfortunately, the inscription does not make clear how its phrase “some would converse about visualising in order to pass through the cinnabar field” is to be understood. Two possibilities seem to be plausible. Either it means that the breath is to be visualised as it passes through the cinnabar field and, possibly, beyond. For this we find a reference in a work that may date from between 164–255,¹⁰⁰ the *Huangting waijing jing* 黃庭外景經

⁹⁹ Schipper 1993, pp. 106f.

¹⁰⁰ Bumbacher 2001, p. 154.

(Scripture of the Yellow Court, Outer View). The relevant sentence reads:¹⁰¹ “breathe in and out and through the thatched cottage; thus [the breath] enters the cinnabar field” (*hu xi lu jian ru dan tian* 呼吸廬間入丹田). Or it refers to the meditating Daoists themselves who ought to visualise their own passing through the cinnabar field in order to meet there those body gods that occupy it as their residence. According to the *Laozi zhong jing*, this would be no other than the (divinised) Confucius: “its spiritual being is called Kong, its first name is Qiu, and its style is Zhongni. According to tradition, this spiritual being is a teacher” (*shen xing Kong ming Qiu, zi Zhongni, zhuan zhi wei shi ye* 神姓孔名丘, 字仲尼, 傳之為師也).¹⁰² As will be shown shortly, one could meet the gods residing in one’s own body by visualising them and then asking them, for example, for help. In any case, the sentence in question alludes to visualisation as a meditation technique.

Similarly, cognate to the *Wangzi Qiao* stele the already mentioned *Laozi ming* of 165 AD contains the sentence “[Laozi] visualised the cinnabar field” (*[Laozi] cunxiang dan tian* [老子] 存想丹田).¹⁰³ This is said about the sage when he still was a mortal being and practiced meditation in order to become an immortal: he visualised the cinnabar field as well as the “purple chamber of grand unity” in his head and, when this *dao* was accomplished and his body was transformed, he—like a cicada that leaves behind its *exuvias*—left the world.¹⁰⁴

The recently discovered stele *Fei Zhi bei* 肥致碑, dated 169 AD and erected to commemorate a local cult dedicated to Master Fei Bei in the area of Anle, east of the Liang county of Henan (the village where this stele was found in July 1991 in a Han dynasty tomb is now called Caizhuangcun 蔡莊村 and located east of Luoyang), refers to the same form of meditation.¹⁰⁵ Witness its sentence “[Xu] You’s son Jian, styled Xiaochang, [while his] heart was kind and [his] natural disposition was filial, constantly visualised [his body-] gods” (*[Xu] You zinan Jian, zi Xiaochang, xin ci xing xiao, chang sixiang shenling* [許] 幼子男建, 字孝萇, 心慈性孝, 常思想神靈).¹⁰⁶ Whether *shenling* indeed means the gods residing within You’s body or in a more neutral way may hint at

¹⁰¹ Schipper 1975, p. 1*.

¹⁰² *Laozi zhong jing* 1.13a.

¹⁰³ *Li shi* 3.1a–4a, present sentence on p. 2a; Seidel 1969, pp. 45–50, 121–128.

¹⁰⁴ Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Schipper 1997.

¹⁰⁶ Schipper 1997, p. 241.

no particular god at all, is of no importance for our purpose. What matters is the fact that this meditation consists of visualising (*sixiang* 思想) divine beings.

In a text written by members of an unknown early Daoist affiliation—located in the area of Chengdu in present-day Sichuan¹⁰⁷—, which was composed after 185 AD but before the end of the Han¹⁰⁸ and survives only as a manuscript found at Dunhuang, the *Laozi bianhua jing* 老子變化經 (Scripture of the Transformations of Laozi), we find Laozi addressing his followers, saying: “[if] in meditation you are losing me, [your] spirit will go away” (*jingsi fang wo, shen wei zou* 精思放我, 神為走).¹⁰⁹ Here, too, the adept’s task consists in visualising Laozi in his own body where he resides both in his essence (semen) and in his spirit (*wu yu jing shen* 吾與精神).¹¹⁰ In this case, preserving the mental image of Laozi has the effect that the god will save the adept from imminent catastrophes.

While not questioning this form of meditation as such, applying it to visualise the deified Laozi (the Most High Lord Lao, Taishang Laojun 太上老君), the manifestation of the One or the *dao*, as it is done in the above mentioned stelae, was severely criticised by adherents of the Daoist Heavenly Master tradition. To them is attributed a commentary to the *Daode jing*, the so-called *Xiang’er* 想爾 commentary¹¹¹ which has come down to us only as an incomplete manuscript (covering chapters 3 through the end of chapter 37), obtained from the Buddhist grottoes at Dunhuang by Sir Aurel Stein in the early twentieth century and now housed in the British Library.¹¹² It must have been written before 255 AD.¹¹³ As Anna Seidel has shown, this commentary at several places takes issue with Daoists who localise the One (*viz.*, in its manifestation as Laozi) in any specific part of the human body:¹¹⁴

Now, where does the *dao* reside in the body of a person? How can a person hold it fast? The One does not reside within the human body. Those who

¹⁰⁷ Seidel 1969, p. 73.

¹⁰⁸ Seidel 1969, p. 74.

¹⁰⁹ *Li shi*, loc cit., Seidel 1969, p. 71.

¹¹⁰ Loc. cit.

¹¹¹ A general introduction into what survives of the *Xiang’er* commentary and its first integral translation into any Western language is to be found in Bokenkamp 1997, pp. 29–124. Text edition: Rao 1991.

¹¹² Stein manuscript S 6825.

¹¹³ Bokenkamp 1997, p. 60.

¹¹⁴ Rao 1991, p. 12, tr. Bokenkamp 1997, p. 89.

say that it entrusts itself to the body are the same ones who are forever practicing false arts in the mortal world. Theirs is not the true *dao*. The One exists beyond heaven and earth. Entering into the space between heaven and earth, it comes and goes within the human body; that's all. It is there everywhere within your skin, not just in a single spot.

The author of the *Xiang'er* clearly states that some of his contemporaries not only believe that the One, in the form of a deity, resides within the human viscera and that's why they give it the name of the respective organ, but also that they visualise it by closing their eyes, in order to obtain good fortune.¹¹⁵ To facilitate meditation they imagine the divinity's coloured clothes, give it a name, a form and a size—which the *Xiang'er* considers wrong.

In fact, there still exist several early Daoist texts which focus both on body gods and how to visualise them. This concept is fully developed, for example, in the already mentioned *Laozi zhong jing* and the *Huangting waijing jing*. According to the *Laozi zhong jing*, some divinities that usually reside in heaven can, under certain circumstances, be made to dwell in specific organs within a person. There they can be visualised and addressed by means of prayers or other forms of communication. Of the fifth divinity it is said:

The scripture says: The Lord of the *dao* is the One. He is the Supreme Ruler of Heaven, the Middle Pole, the central star of the Northern constellation (*beichen*; i.e., the Pole Star). Then he is above the nine heavens, on a 100,000 foot [high] peak, in the palace of the Purple Room of the Grand Abyss. He wears five-coloured vestments, he is crowned with the Nine-Virtues crown. Above him is the Primal *pneuma* of Supreme Purity; he is [seated] under a nine-storied canopy of glittering five-colour clouds. Laozi and Taihe stand in attendance on each side. His clan name is "Rule the Polar Star", his personal name is "Virtue of the Polar Star on High", his style is "Glory of the Han".

[When] the human being has him too, he is in the palace of the Purple Room [in the human body], [seated] under a flowery canopy, in the county of Primal Nobility, in the village of Peaceful Joy. His family name [then] is "South Slope of the Hill" and his style "Brightness of the North". His body is yellow, he is nine-tenths of an inch high, and wears clothes of five-colour jewels. He is crowned with the Nine Virtues crown.

Visualise (*si* 思) him as being three inches high, [sitting] right in the palace of the Purple Room, under a flowery canopy. His spouse is the Jade Maiden of Obscure Radiance of the Ultimate Yin. She wears vestments

¹¹⁵ Rao loc. cit., Seidel 1969, p. 79, Bokenkamp 1997, p. 89.

of black and yellow five-colour jewels. She is nine-tenths of an inch high. *Visualise her* also as being three inches high. She dwells in the palace of Grand Simplicity, she feeds the son of the True Person with Cinnabar. He grows little by little, so as to becoming as big as your own body. If you can *preserve him in meditation* (*cun* 存), then speak with him. Then he will call you to go up to visit the Lord of the *dao*. The Lord of the *dao* is the One. He rides a chariot of cloudy mist [covered with] pearls and jade, and [a team of] horses of [the heaven of] the Nine Extremes. At times he rides [a team of] six dragons in order to drive to the earth. [When] you long visualise (*si* 思) him on the eight nodal days and on the first and fifteenth day of each month, when the sun sets and at midnight, utter the invocation, saying:

“Heavenly Spirit of Regulating Glory, [I], the True Person Wang Jia¹¹⁶ wish to obtain a long life. [You], the One of Utmost Mystery, guard my body. Noble lord of the Five Viscera, I wish lasting peace.”¹¹⁷

From these pieces of epigraphical and textual evidence we can conclude that from the year 165 AD onwards at the latest, in various Daoist circles from Sichuan to Meng (commandery of Liang, Henan) up to Luoyang, visualisation was practiced as a new form of meditation. Visualisation meant mentally contemplating a divinity (or its dwelling place) within one’s own body and thus keeping it there in order to profit from its protective power. Those who observed this practice were thus no longer concentrating on total unity with the cosmos as in the early form of meditation.

This new type of meditation appeared in China all of a sudden, not being the result of the evolution of any indigenous tradition. Although it goes without saying that independent innovations in religious beliefs do often occur—as far as visualisation is concerned, the earliest Daoist testimonies just discussed date from a time when Buddhist texts describing precisely this form of meditation became available in Chinese translations. To these Buddhist examples we now have to turn.

In India, mental vision or visualisation predates Mahāyāna Buddhism. Stephan Beyer has presented quotations from the *Bhagavadgītā*, a text whose composition is dated from the fourth to the third century BC,¹¹⁸ that give evidence of such a contemplative activity, the icono-

¹¹⁶ At several places, the adept calls himself by this name when invoking the gods. Professor Jao Tsung-i, of Hong Kong Chinese University, sees in this usage a possible allusion to the interregnum of Wang Mang (private communication).

¹¹⁷ *Laozi zhong jing* 1.3a–4a, also cf. Schipper 1995, pp. 120f.

¹¹⁸ Mylius 1988, p. 115.

graphic visualisation of a god:¹¹⁹ Kṛṣṇa says in verse five of the eighth chapter:

Whoever at the time of death, when he casts aside his body, *bears me in mind (smaran)* and departs, comes to my mode of being: there is no doubt of this.

And in verse 23 of the seventh chapter the same god declares:

Whatever state one may bear in mind (*smaran*) when he finally casts aside his body is the state to which one goes, for that state makes one grow into itself: so ever bear me in mind (*anusmaran*) as you fight, for if you fix your mind and *buddhi* on me you will come to me: there is no doubt of this.¹²⁰

And in the second verse of chapter twelve we hear Kṛṣṇa, when responding to a question by Arjuna, saying:

The one I consider most controlled (*yuktatama*) is the one who fixes his mind on me and meditates (*upāsate*) on me, ever controlled, possessed of the highest faith.¹²¹

On the other hand, the Buddhist tradition of *buddhānussmṛti*, visualising the Buddha (or a *bodhisattva*), is an old one. Already in a section held to belonging to the oldest strata of the text, at the very end of the *Sutta Nīpāta* which is generally considered one of the oldest extant Buddhist Pāli texts¹²² we find a Brahmin named Piṅgiya (the “wise”) saying:

There is no moment for me, however small, that is spent away from Gotama [Buddha], from this universe of wisdom, this world of understanding... *with constant and careful vigilance it is possible for me to see him with my mind as clearly as with my eyes*, in night as well as day. And since I spend my nights revering him, there is not, to my mind, a single moment spent away from him.¹²³

As Paul Harrison remarked, various forms of *anussmṛti* (literally, “recollection”, “remembrance”, and, by extension, “calling to mind”, “keeping in mind”; cf. *smṛti*, commonly translated as “mindfulness”) had been part of general Buddhist practice since the earliest times, and are

¹¹⁹ Beyer 1977, p. 333.

¹²⁰ Loc. cit.

¹²¹ Loc. cit.

¹²² Williams 1994, p. 217.

¹²³ *Sutta Nīpāta* vv. 1140, 1142; tr. Williams loc. cit., italics added.

amply attested in the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese translations of the Sanskrit *āgamas*.¹²⁴

In Mahāyāna texts, however, only recollections of the Buddha, the *vinaya*, and the *saṃgha* were important, and among these three *buddhānusmṛti* was pre-eminent.¹²⁵ In a canonical collection of the pre-Mahāyāna,¹²⁶ the *Ekottarāgama*, we see an *āgama* passage that describes the *buddhānusmṛti* in detail:¹²⁷

The Lord said:

A *bhikṣu* correct in body and correct in mind sits cross-legged and focuses his thought in front of him. Without entertaining any other thought he earnestly *calls to mind* (*anusmṛ-*) *the Buddha*. He contemplates the image of the Tathāgata without taking his eyes off it. Not taking his eyes off it he then calls to mind the qualities of the Tathāgata—the Tathāgata’s body made of *vajra*, endowed with the ten Powers (*bala*), and by virtue of the four Assurances (*vaśīśāradya*) intrepid in assemblies; the Tathāgata’s countenance, upright and peerless, so that one never tires of beholding it; his perfection of the moral qualities (*śīla*) resembling *vajra* in indestructibility, like *vaidūrya* in flawless purity.

In the early Mahāyāna the *buddhānusmṛti* was further developed. In one of the earliest *sūtras* translated into Chinese (by Lokakṣema in 179 AD), in the *Pratyutpanna*[*Buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita*]*saṃādhisūtra* it is made evident that if its directions for the practice of the *pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi* (the *saṃādhi* of direct encounter with the Buddhas of the present) were strictly observed then the Buddha Amitāyus would appear in front of the meditator:¹²⁸

The Buddha said to Bhadrupāla: “[...] In the same way, Bhadrupāla, *bodhisattvas*, whether they be ascetics or wearers of white (*sc.* laymen or laywomen), having learned of the Buddha-field of Amitābha in the western quarter, should *call to mind the Buddha* in that quarter. They should not break the precepts, and *call him to mind single-mindedly*, either for one day and one night, or for seven days and seven nights. After seven days *they*

¹²⁴ Harrison 1978, p. 36.

¹²⁵ Op. cit., p. 37.

¹²⁶ Although the Hīnayāna scriptures are written in Pāli, there must have existed a canon of its own written in Sanskrit. Fragments of such belonging to the Sarvāstivāda are seen among manuscripts found in East Turkestan and in Nepal as well as in Chinese and Tibetan translations. Here the Pāli expression *nikāya* corresponds with the term *āgama*.

¹²⁷ *Ekottarāgama* 554a20ff. Harrison op. cit., p. 38.

¹²⁸ *Banzhou sanmei jing* 905a10, pp. 13ff.

will see the Buddha Amitābha. If they do not see him in the waking state, then they will see him in a dream."¹²⁹

Note that in this context *bodhisattva* means the Buddhist adept, the meditator. In this state of *samādhi* the adept will then receive the direct transmission of the doctrine, the Buddha's oral presentation of the *dharma*. Our *sūtra* continues:¹³⁰

It is like the things a man sees in a dream—he is not conscious of day or night, nor is he conscious of inside or outside; he does not fail to see because he is in darkness, nor does he fail to see because there are obstructions. It is the same, Bhadrāpāla, for the minds of the *bodhisattvas*: when they perform this calling to mind, the famous great mountains and the Mount Sumerus in all the Buddha-realms, and all the places of darkness between them, are laid open to them, so that their vision is not obscured, and their minds are not obstructed. These *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* do not see through [the obstructions] with the divine eye, nor hear through them with the divine ear, nor travel to that Buddha-field by means of the supernormal power of motion, nor do they die here to be reborn in that Buddha-field there, and only then see; rather, while *sitting here they see the Buddha Amitābha, hear the sūtras which he preaches, and receive them all. Rising from meditation* they are able to preach them to others in full.

In other words, in the *Pratyutpanna[buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita]samādhisūtra* the Buddha explains to the householder-*bodhisattva* Bhadrāpāla the special state of meditation called *buddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi* by means of which the mental powers are focused in such a way that the devotees perceive themselves carried to other *buddha*-fields to see the present *buddhas* living there and expounding the *dharma*. The devotees are believed to retain what they were taught and to be able to communicate it to others once they emerge from this state of meditation.

Summarising the evidence, we may say: The traditional form of meditation in China was a multi-stage breathing technique leading to a condition of union with the One or the Way and thus eliminating any distinction of subject and object (itself probably already influenced by early Indian traditions). During the Later Han dynasty suddenly a new technique, visualisation, appeared in Daoist contexts. It was during the same period that the first Buddhist meditation texts were translated

¹²⁹ Harrison 1998, pp. 17f. For a translation of the Tibetan version which may be close to the lost Sanskrit original (but does not concern us here, as we are interested in Lokakṣema's version), cf. Harrison 1978, p. 43.

¹³⁰ *Banzhou sanmei jing* 905a17ff. Harrison 1998, p. 18.

into Chinese, and these texts were dealing with both a multi-stage meditation technique leading towards “unifying the mind” and akin to the Daoist “inner cultivation” as well as with the visualisation of the Buddha. Obviously, Buddhism was offering a technique for which a demand existed in China. Accordingly, two of the texts translated by Lokakṣema are, as Harrison says, “explicitly devoted to *samādhi* practice: the *Pratyutpanna[buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita]samādhisūtra* and the *Śūraṅgama-samādhisūtra* (Lokakṣema’s version of this is now lost). Further, many other texts in this corpus and elsewhere contain long lists of *samādhis* [...]”¹³¹ This makes it quite probable that Daoist visualisation was a consequence of the introduction of the Buddhist *buddhānusmṛti* technique into China. However, the Daoists used this form of meditation to their own ends: to visualise their own gods. In the Maoshan- 茅山 or Shangqing- 上清 tradition of Daoism—which became the leading Daoist denomination during the Tang dynasty—, visualisation was to play an eminent role.¹³²

5. BOOK CULT

In a Daoist text of around 320 AD, Ge Hong’s *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子内篇 (Inner Chapters of the Master who Embraces Simplicity), the following interesting passage is found:

In response to those who have received the *dao* and entered the mountain to give sincere thought to it, the god of the mountain will automatically open the mountain and let such persons see the scriptures, just as Bo He 帛和 got his in a mountain, and immediately set up an altar, made a present of silk, drew one ordinary copy, and then left with them. A purified place is always prepared for such texts, and whenever anything is done about them one must first announce it to them, as though one were serving a sovereign or a father.¹³³

Bo He 帛和 (alias Bo Zhongli 帛仲理) did not dare take away the original scripture, assuming that it is of divine origin and ought to be kept at this place for others to see it. That Bo He set up an altar is unambiguous evidence that he was convinced to see some divine presence there. The gods who in his view must have been if not the

¹³¹ Harrison 1995, p. 65.

¹³² Robinet 1993.

¹³³ *Baopuzi neipian* 19, p. 336, cf. Ware 1966, p. 314.

authors then surely the owners of the original scripture were given silk as present, the material on which further scriptures could be written. From this incident Ge Hong derived the general rule that whenever scriptures are found—besides revering them—the place has to be cleaned. We may infer from this example that this meant to sprinkle and sweep the ground if it was a cave and to put the scripture on a special repository, an altar. If it was found in the open, special measures were to be taken as the following example, taken from a fragment of the *Daoxue zhuan* 道學傳 (Biographies of Students of the *Dao*), which is attributed to Ma Shu 馬樞 (522–581) during the last quarter of the sixth century AD, shows:

[...] At the beginning of the Liang [dynasty] (502 AD), in the [vast] plain desert [around] the islet of the Kunlun mountains, there were three old lacquered boxes, inside [which] there was the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (“Scripture of the great peace”) in three parts written [on] yellow plain [silk] and [hand-]written by Gan Jun. The villagers held [them] in awe, extended the site [where] the scripture [was found], erected a meditation [hut] and made offerings [to it]. [...] ¹³⁴

In order to shelter the scripture it was no longer considered sufficient just to sweep the place, but it was felt necessary to erect a special building for it, a “meditation hut” or small shrine.

The scripture as a holy object renders the place where it exists sacred as well, the “quiet room” erected on their behalf is a dwelling place for gods. What we see in the villagers’ behaviour towards the found scripture, in the just quoted passage, is nothing other than a cult, a cult in which a book, the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (Scripture of the Great Peace), is worshipped. The villagers who found it treated it as one would treat a god or powerful spirit: on behalf of it they erected a shrine (a “meditation chamber”), where they could pray to it and sacrifice to it just as they would if it were a supernatural being. This passage may even be the first evidence of any Chinese Daoist book cult. Since Daoist scriptures—thanks to their origin as emanations from the primordial energy—were considered holy and since they were, at least in the *Shangqing* 上清 and *Lingbao* 靈寶 movements from the fourth century on, known to be surrounded and protected by supernatural beings, they had to be treated like holy persons such as gods or immortals. The villagers who were almost certainly unable to read the text surely

¹³⁴ *Daoxue zhuan* fragment 156, Bumbacher 2000, p. 270.

considered its appearance a good omen. Not knowing who had put it there and why, it must have seemed nothing but natural that gods or immortals deposited the scripture at this place. If indeed this were the case, then presenting offerings to the text would also mean offering to the gods, their former owners, who might in turn recompense the villagers' sacrifices by future blessings.

Not only probably poorly educated villagers living at the periphery of the civilised world held scriptures in such a high esteem. The same held true for intellectuals connected to the imperial court and at times working in the centre of the Chinese culture as well: The famous scholar and foremost Daoist of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (*zi* Tongming 通明, 456–536), also celebrated a cult of the book as attested in the following passage of another fragment of the *Daoxue zhuan*:

Moreover, [Tao Hongjing] took a 'magpie-tail' incense burner of real gold, followed [those who carried] the scriptures and sacrificed [to] them (i.e. the scriptures).¹³⁵

In so doing he followed what the Later Sage appearing in the fourth century scripture *Shangqing hou sheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖道君列紀 (Annals of the Lord of the *Dao*, the Later Sage, [from the Heaven of] Highest Purity) asked the prospective readers of sacred Daoist scripture to do:

Each time you intone this scripture or put its content to use, you should bow respectfully to them. Wash your hands and burn incense to the left and right of the writing.¹³⁶

This sort of cult, this book cult, however, was not unique to the Daoists, the Buddhists had it as well. We, therefore, now have to turn to what McMahan has called "one of the most important aspects of early Mahāyāna practice, that is, the worship of written sūtras".¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Daoxue zhuan* fragment 159, Bumbacher 2000, p. 273. I don't know more about this ritual, yet we may imagine that Tao had the box with the scriptures carried to the caves and followed the disciple who held it, himself swinging the incense burner. Probably the sacrifices were performed within the caves. One should not forget that caves were the places where holy scriptures were often found. It was not unusual to sacrifice to books: When villagers found the *Taiping jing* in three parts they sacrificed to it, see fragment 156.

¹³⁶ *Shangqing Housheng daojun lieji* (Annals of the Lord of the *Dao*, the Later Sage of [the Heaven of] *Shangqing*) 6b; cf. Bokenkamp 1997, p. 351.

¹³⁷ McMahan 1998, p. 256.

A short excerpt of Wang Yan's 王琰 (born ca. 454 AD) *Mingxiang jì* 冥想記 (Records of Signs from the Invisible [Realm])¹³⁸ says:¹³⁹

On another occasion this family suffered a devastating fire, in which everything was totally destroyed; but the [*Mahāprajñāpāramitā*] *sūtra* and [a] relic were found unscathed among the ashes. Wang Daozi of Kuaiji once visited [Zhou] Gao and asked for permission to *make an offering to [these two objects]*.¹⁴⁰

While this example still may seem not entirely convincing as together with the sacred scripture some relic is venerated as well—which apparently stands in the tradition of *śāstra*—, the following one is as clear as one could wish. In Buddhist biographical writing, in Huijiao's 慧皎 (479–554) *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), we find in Shi Faxian's 釋法顯 *vita* the following pericope:¹⁴¹

There was somebody whose family-name and personal name [I] forgot. He lived next to the Zhuqiao Gate [of the capital of Nanjing], [his family] for generations had served the correct transformation (i.e. Buddhism). He himself copied one part [of the *Da nihuan jing* 大泥洹經, Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*], he read it, recited it *and sacrificed [to it]*. As he had no separate *sūtra*-room, he stored it together with various [ordinary] books. Later, when wind and fire suddenly arose and [even] reached his house, [his] property and goods were entirely consumed [by it]. Only the *Parinirvāṇasūtra* was miraculously entirely preserved. The reduction to ashes did not encroach upon [it] nor did the colour of [its] scrolls change. When in the capital the whole [news] spread, everybody sighed about the spiritual wonder.

These are, however, the only examples of a Chinese Buddhist book cult in non-normative texts¹⁴² that I have found so far—which stands in sharp contrast to its importance in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism in general. However, note that already the *Lotus sūtra* referred to sacrificing to itself.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ On the *Mingxiang jì*, see Campany 1996, pp. 82f.

¹³⁹ *Mingxiang jì* apud *Fayuan zhulin* 18. 417b.

¹⁴⁰ Campany 1991, p. 35. Emphasis added.

¹⁴¹ *Gaoseng zhuan* T.2059.50.338b. Emphasis added. For a French translation that differs from mine, cf. Shih 1968, p. 115.

¹⁴² By “normative texts” I mean *sūtras*, texts that pre-scribe the believers' proper behaviour—in contrast to, e.g., biographical writings that describe how people were said to have acted.

¹⁴³ *Miaofa lianhua jing* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*) T.262.9.53a.

I now ought to sacrifice to Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue as well as to the *Lotus sūtra*.

However, we do have information about the high esteem in which *sūtras* were generally held in China as early as towards the end of the third century AD as a consequence of which their appearance was welcomed and greeted like famous personalities of high rank. Dao'an 道安 (312–385) in his catalogue of Buddhist scriptures that were available in China in his time, the *Zongli zhongjing mulu* 總理衆經目錄 (Comprehensive Catalogue of Scriptures) reports the following episode concerning Mokṣala's (Wuchaluo 無叉羅) and the Indian *upāsaka* Zhu Shulan's 竺叔蘭 Chinese translation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñā-parāmitāsūtra* called *Fanguang jing* 放光經:¹⁴⁴

When the *Fanguang [jing]* thereupon appeared, it widely circulated in the Chinese capital (i.e., Luoyang), and hosts of “retired gentlemen of tranquillized minds” (i.e., cultured lay devotees) made copies of it. The *upadhyāya* Zhi (支和上) at Zhongshan 中山 sent people to Cangyuan to have it copied onto pieces of silk. When [this copy] was brought back to Zhongshan, the king of Zhongshan and all monks welcomed the *sūtra* [at a place] forty *li* South of the city, with a display of pennants and streamers. Such was the way in which [this scripture] became current in the world.¹⁴⁵

As the king of Zhongshan 中山 must have been Sima Dan 司馬耽, who before 277 was king of Jinan 濟南 and who was bestowed the status of king of Zhongshan in that year, we know that, according to the *Jinshu* 晉書, he passed away October 9, 292. This event must, therefore, have taken place between December 31, 291, when the translation of this *sūtra* was finished, and the date of Sima Dan's death.¹⁴⁶

It is interesting that the few pieces of evidence we have attesting to a Daoist book cult cannot be traced back beyond Ge Hong. Once again he seems to be the starting point of an apparently new development in China. But as he compiled a sort of *summa* of the then available Daoist knowledge in Southern China which, for the most part, has not survived outside his own writings, it is perfectly possible that what he described was the result of an older—yet hidden—tradition.

A new aspect appears with the description of the discovery of the *Taijing jing* as related in the *Daoxue zhuan*. Erecting a meditation hut at

¹⁴⁴ *Chu sanzangjī jī* T.2145.55.48a15ff.

¹⁴⁵ Zürcher 1959, p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ Loc. cit.

the place where the scripture was found, not unlike erecting a temple, goes far beyond merely paying homage to the scripture or burning incense on behalf of it. Although it could be considered a logical next step after, as Ge Hong had described, “setting up an altar and making a present of silk”, it is noteworthy that the *Taiping jing* episode is said to have occurred in China’s far West. This may indicate where this behaviour came from: from Central Asia if not even from Northern India. In his seminal article Gregory Schopen has analysed the meaning and function of the phrase “*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*” as it appears in the Sanskrit version of the *Vajracchedikāsūtra* and in other early Mahāyāna *sūtras*.¹⁴⁷ In a detailed and differentiating study, whose argument does not have to be repeated here, he showed convincingly that the phrase ought to be rendered as “that spot of earth becomes an eminent sacred place”.¹⁴⁸ By “that spot of earth” is meant the place where a Mahāyāna *sūtra* is taught, illuminated, recited, taken up, made into a book, copied, worshipped, and adored—in short: the locality where the cult of the book, the cult of the *sūtra*, takes place. The underlying idea was that if the presence of the Buddha at a particular place rendered that place sacred and if the Buddha’s teaching (the *sūtra*) is “part” of himself then the presence of his *sūtra* would equally render the place where it actually is located a sacred one. Schopen goes on saying:

Once this formula was worked out and accepted, it could then be inserted into the text which one recited and wished to establish, and then the recitation, etc., of that text at a particular spot, on the basis of the associations asserted in the formula, would have, in effect, the effect of authoritatively legitimating that spot as a cultic center.¹⁴⁹

In other words, by using this “mechanism” it was possible to expand and develop new centres. We may thus see here one of the means by which the representatives of early Mahāyāna established their own “domain” in opposition to the *stūpa*-cult of Mainstream Buddhism. This formula also marks the shift from an oral transmission of the *sūtra* for which the presence of *bhāṇakas* was necessary to a transmission of the written text that could be read by anybody capable of reading. More importantly, however, was the fact that now “the spot of earth on which the book stands, is the focal point of the cult of the book—the organisational

¹⁴⁷ Schopen 1975.

¹⁴⁸ Op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁴⁹ Op. cit., p. 179.

centre around which the cultic activity (flower-*pūjā*, dancing, etc.) takes place.”¹⁵⁰

As this *sūtra*-cult had already been flourishing for three or more centuries within the Central Asiatic countries; and as the place where the *Tai ping jing* was discovered lies, according to the *Daoxue zhuan*, in the area where the trade routes from Central Asia to China passed through, it seems quite likely that this Daoist form of a book cult may have been “imported” from the West. Kohn’s statement, for which, however, she does not present any textual evidence: “[...the] practice of [Daoist] scripture veneration w[as] introduced from Mahāyāna Buddhism [...]”¹⁵¹ thus may indeed have a *fundamentum in re*.

6. APPROPRIATION OF BUDDHIST *SŪTRAS* BY DAOISTS

Another form of Buddho-Daoist interaction deserving to be discussed here is that of each side’s appropriation of whole texts originally belonging to the other tradition. Unfortunately, due to lack of space, we must restrict ourselves here to the discussion of one single example, namely of the transformation of a Buddhist text into a Daoist one. As appropriation was a two-way process, it goes without saying that Buddhist adaptations of Daoist texts ought to be analysed as well.

The received title of the text “traditionally regarded as the first Indian Buddhist scripture to be translated into Chinese”¹⁵² is *Sishier zhang jing* 四十二章經 (Scripture in Forty-two Sections). The claim of its primeval nature is already made in the first chapter of the *Gaoseng zhuan*, in Kāśyapa Mātanga’s biography. The received title, however, is not the original one. In fact, all early references call the scripture the *Fojing sishier zhang* 佛經四十二章 (Forty-two Sections of Buddhist Scriptures) or similar, which is also more accurate as far as its contents are concerned.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Op. cit., p. 181. Schopen further assumes that, “since each text placed itself at the centre of its own cult, early Mahāyāna (from a sociological point of view), rather than being an identifiable single group, was in the beginning a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults, all of the same pattern, but each associated with its specific text”.

¹⁵¹ Kohn in Kohn 2000, p. 303.

¹⁵² Sharf 1996, p. 360.

¹⁵³ An early version of this section was presented at the XVth EACS European Association for Chinese Studies Conference, Heidelberg University, August 25–29, 2004. A more detailed analysis is given in Bumbacher 2006 (forthcoming).

The text consists of two parts of unequal length and compiled at different times: an introductory narrative, relating Han Emperor Ming's 漢明帝 famous dream of a golden person with a nimbus who flew to his palace and was identified as the Buddha. It also says that the enlightened emperor sent messengers to the west who eventually brought our text to China whereupon *stūpas* and monasteries were erected and Buddhism vastly expanded. The second part of the text "is a short collection of aphorisms and pithy moralistic parables"¹⁵⁴ and consists of forty-two sections containing the Buddha's instructions on precepts, proper conduct and ethical behaviour to be observed by the monks and is mostly Hīnayānist in nature.

Most scholars agree that the introductory narrative must have been written after the Han dynasty but before ca. 300 AD, most probably around 250.¹⁵⁵ The main part, the forty-two sections, however, must be older. There exists in fact an unmarked early quotation in the famous memorial submitted by the scholar Xiang Kai 襄楷 in the year 166 AD which provides us with a *terminus ante quem*.¹⁵⁶

In the Nanjing area, between the years 364 and 370, a very gifted young man, called Yang Xi 楊羲 (330–?), became the religious medium serving members of the Xu 許 family, a clan of high officials. In a series of midnight visions, some dozen Immortals (*zhenren* 真人) from the Heaven of Supreme Purity (*shangqing* 上清) appeared to him, in order to communicate both their canonical writings and personal instructions,¹⁵⁷ many of them directed at individual Xu family members. The discontinuous portions of the revealed materials, namely the oral instructions and fragmentary poetic effusions dictated to Yang by his celestial visitors,¹⁵⁸ were edited by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) in AD 499 as *Zhen gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected). It is in this *Zhen gao* that we now find the Daoist version of the *Forty-two sections of Buddhist sūtras*.

Yang Xi apparently had separated both parts of the text. Accordingly, the narrative part is now to be found in *juan* 9 and the "forty-two sections" are included in *juan* 6 of the *Zhen gao*. The first or narrative part was not modified by Yang, this means that it is immediately recognizable

¹⁵⁴ Sharf, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Zürcher 1959, p. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Zürcher 1959, pp. 36–38.

¹⁵⁷ Strickmann 1977, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Strickmann 1977, p. 4.

as a Buddhist text. Furthermore, it preserves an earlier version than the received Buddhist one and can thus be used to emend the latter. On the other hand, the “forty-two sections” were altered by Yang Xi in a significant way. His modifications consist of three kinds: 1) he left out sections and parts that were not suitable to his intentions, 2) he substituted certain Buddhist terms by Daoist ones, and 3) he added sentences of his own to some sections. In addition, he made it clear right from the beginning that his version was no longer a document passed down over some time but that it was newly and orally transmitted by gods and immortals who came to visit him. Accordingly, his version starts with the sentence

The Lord Green Youth of [the Isle of] Fangzhu visited [me] and declared: [...]¹⁵⁹

The most obvious modifications appearing in Yang’s version are his omissions. As can be seen from the synopsis of the texts, Yang Xi left out entirely the very first three sections of the Buddhist version—for obvious reasons: They are defining specific Buddhist technical terms and are describing specific Buddhist practices Yang Xi considered unfit for inclusion in his own system, as it were. Take, for example, section 1 of the Buddhist version. Here the Buddha says:

Those who leave their families and go forth from their homes to practice the Way are called *shamen* (Skt. *śramaṇa* or ascetics). Those who constantly follow the 250 precepts in order to [realise] the four noble truths and progressively purify their intentions will become *aluohan* (Skt. *arhat* or “saints”). [...] Next is the *anahan* or “nonreturner” (Skt. *anāgāmin*): at the end of his life the spirits (*hun*) of a “nonreturner” ascend the nineteen heavens and there become an *aluohan*. Next is the *situohan* or “once-returner” (Skt. *sakṛdāgāmin*): the “once-returner” ascends [to Heaven] once and returns once and then becomes an *aluohan*. Next is the *xutuohan* or “stream-winner” (Skt. *srotāpanna*): the “stream-winner” dies and is reborn seven times and then becomes an *aluohan*. [...]¹⁶⁰

This section defines the various grades of Buddhist sainthood which was obviously of no use for Yang Xi. Similarly, he discarded the second part of section nine that deals again with the various sorts of Buddhist saints. The passage which is omitted in the Daoist version reads in its Buddhist version:

¹⁵⁹ *Zhen gao* 6.6a.

¹⁶⁰ *Sishier zhang jing* 722a.

[...] Feeding one thousand good men is not as good as feeding one who observes the five precepts. Feeding ten thousand men who observe the five precepts is not as good as feeding one stream-winner. Feeding one million stream-winners is not as good as feeding one once-returner. Feeding ten million once-returners is not as good as feeding one non-returner. Feeding one hundred million non-returners is not as good as feeding one *arhat*. Feeding one billion *arhats* is not as good as feeding one solitary *buddha* (*pratyekabuddha*). Feeding ten billion solitary *buddhas* is not as good as liberating one's parents in this life by means of the teaching of the three honoured ones. To teach one hundred billion parents is not as good as feeding one *buddha*, studying with the desire to attain buddhahood and aspiring to liberate all beings. [...] ¹⁶¹

The second section describing the Buddhist monks, the *śramaṇa*, is dropped, too. Its relevant passage reads in the Buddhist version:

The Buddha said: "Those who shave their heads and faces are *śramaṇa*. They receive the teaching, abandon worldly wealth and possessions, and beg, seeking only what is necessary. Taking a single meal at midday, and lodging a single night under a tree, they take care not to repeat either. [...] ¹⁶²

As the Daoists neither shaved their heads nor went around begging for food there was no need to keep this section in the Daoist version of the text. Also, sections concerning the Buddhist philosophy of the constituents of the body and the "I" or "self" are abandoned like the following, section 18:

The Buddha said: "Ardently contemplate the four primary elements that comprise the body. While each has a name, they are all devoid of self. The [sense of an] "I" emerges from the aggregate, but it is not long lived and is really but an illusion." ¹⁶³

Small wonder then, that the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence found no place in the Daoist version of the text as well, as Yang Xi did not include section 16 which reads:

The Buddha said: "When gazing at Heaven and Earth contemplate their impermanence. When gazing at mountains and rivers contemplate their impermanence. When gazing at the tremendous variety of shapes and forms of the myriad things in the world contemplate their impermanence. If you keep your mind thus you will attain the Way in no time." ¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ *Zhen gao* 6.8a.

¹⁶² *Sishier zhang jing* 722b.

¹⁶³ Op. cit., p. 723a.

¹⁶⁴ Loc. cit.

Besides omitting such typical Buddhist concepts, the second important kind of modification made by Yang Xi was his substituting certain Buddhist names and terms by Daoist ones. One example we have already come across: in the Daoist version it is no longer the Buddha who speaks but a whole series of Daoist deities and immortals. Furthermore, whereas the second part of section nine is omitted, the first part is kept in the Daoist version but the original expression *chi wu jie zhe* 持五戒者 (somebody who observes the five precepts) is substituted by the term *yi xue dao zhe* 一學道者 (one who studies the Way). Or elsewhere we find, for example, the term *shamen* 沙門 for *śramaṇa* replaced by either *yi ren* 一人 (one person)¹⁶⁵ or by *daoshi* 道士 (Daoist).¹⁶⁶

An interesting example is section ten. Here the Buddha, or in the Daoist version: Zi Yuan furen 紫元夫人 (Lady Purple Prime), are defining the “five difficulties” that exist on earth. Whereas both versions agree in the first three of them, namely:

[...] It is difficult for the poor to give alms, it is difficult for the very wealthy to study the Way, it is difficult to control fate and avoid death [...]¹⁶⁷

the Buddhist version then has

[...] it is difficult to attain a glimpse of the Buddha's *sūtras*, and it is difficult to be born at the time of a *buddha*.¹⁶⁸

Yang Xi's version now substitutes *fo jing* 佛經 (Buddhist *Sūtras*) by *dong jing* 洞經 (Grotto Scriptures), meaning Daoist texts. In addition, the original sentence “it is difficult to be born at the time of a *buddha*” is replaced by the phrase “is difficult to be born at the time of the Latter Sage of the *renchen* 壬辰 [year].” This now clearly refers to the apocalyptic and messianic ideas of the Daoists of the fourth (and fifth) century. The Latter Sage is, as Strickmann and others have shown, a messianic figure to appear in a *renchen* year when humankind will be tormented with catastrophes, inundations, famine, fire and, finally, with facing the end of the world, when only those will be saved who believe in the Latter Sage and follow his instructions.

Section 33 concerns a Buddhist monk who cherished the idea of returning to secular life. The Buddha seeing his intention summons

¹⁶⁵ Op. cit., p. 723c, *Zhen gao* 6.9b.

¹⁶⁶ *Sishier zhang jing* 724a, *Zhen gao* 6.6b.

¹⁶⁷ *Sishier zhang jing* 722c, *Zhen gao* 6.8a.

¹⁶⁸ *Sishier zhang jing* 722c, *Zhen gao* 6.8a.

the monk and discusses the issue. The Buddha is here the mortal but enlightened being of Hīnayāna Buddhism. In the Daoist version, it is the Taishang zhenren who, when a Daoist apparently longed for returning to secular life, changed himself into a mortal being and directly came down from Heaven to that man to discuss the situation with him. The mortal Buddha is here substituted by an immortal being capable of changing his form at will. (One may ask, however, whether this could not have been directly influenced by the Mahāyānist concept of a transcendent Buddha capable of assuming every form suitable to help human beings).

The third kind of modification made by Yang Xi are additions to the original Buddhist text, as, for example, in section 38 which in the Buddhist version reads:

The Buddha said: "Should a disciple venture several thousand miles from me yet remain mindful of my precepts, he is certain to attain the Way."¹⁶⁹

In the Daoist version, this is not only uttered by the Daoist immortal Taishang zhenren, but Yang Xi inserts the following phrases:

and if he investigates the "jade scriptures" and "treasure books", he is certain to become an immortal.¹⁷⁰

With this additional phrase Yang Xi makes perfectly clear that the Daoist goal, namely to become an immortal, is entirely different from the Hīnayānist goal, to become an *arhat* who will get out of *saṃsāra* by entering *nirvāṇa* or final extinction.

As we have seen, in order to transform the Buddhist text *Forty-two Sections of Buddhist Sūtras* into a Daoist one, Yang Xi first separated the "preface" or narrative part, which explicitly mentions the Buddha as well as the title of the Buddhist text, from the main body of the text. Then by a series of modifications he removed or substituted all unequivocally Buddhist aspects, and, finally, he had several Daoist deities and immortals directly reveal the text to himself. It thus was the gods who bestowed upon him their corrected—which means: Daoist—version of the text whose previous transmission by the Buddha the gods obviously no longer considered adequate. Note that the same scheme was already applied when the gods revealed to Yang Xi a new and revised version

¹⁶⁹ *Sishier zhang jing* 784.724a.

¹⁷⁰ *Zhen gao* 6.7a.

of the *Huangting jing* (Scripture of the Yellow Court) whose original version was a text cherished by the older Daoist tradition of the Celestial Masters. In both cases, the original versions that must have been quite well-known in Yang Xi's time were not criticised or discarded by him but simply relegated to a status of lower prestige by the newly revealed "authoritative celestial recensions"¹⁷¹ that were more accurate.

One may now ask why Yang Xi knew Buddhist texts in the first place. The answer probably lies in the fact that Xu Mi 許謐 (*alias* Xu Mu 許穆, 305–376?) had introduced him to the former King of Kuaiji 會稽, Sima Yu 司馬昱. Sima Yu is recorded in the dynastic histories as an ardent patron of Buddhism who fervently admired Buddhist monks like the famous Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366). Sima Yu, the future emperor Jianwen (r. 371–373), still as King of Langye employed Yang Xi in his own household. This court must be imagined as a place frequented by Buddhists. If not already before, then Yang Xi must have come into contact with Buddhist scriptures during his service at Sima Yu's court at the latest. It was probably here that he has seen the *Forty-two Sections of Buddhist Sūtras*.

It is interesting to note in this context that Yang Xi placed some historically high-ranking officials and generals of the early fourth century with well-known Buddhist sympathies or relations into his *shangqing* pantheon as officials of the Daoist nether world. Examples are the sometime President of the Board of Civil Office, Zhou Yi 周顗 (269–322),¹⁷² or the Generalissimo of the Central Army, Yin Hao 殷浩 (306–356),¹⁷³ or the General Protecting the Army, Feng Huai 馮懷 (*fl.* 340).¹⁷⁴

Furthermore—as Isabelle Robinet already observed—some of the immortals made known by Yang Xi had first been Buddhists themselves or had Buddhists as their disciples.¹⁷⁵ Lord Pei, Perfected Immortal of Qingling, originally came from a Buddhist family and in his early years was educated by a Buddhist monk. Later, when he had become a Daoist, he had Buddhist disciples as had Zhou Yishan, the Perfected of Ziyang. This cannot be by mere chance. Rather, by the time when Yang Xi acted as a private medium and religious specialist on behalf

¹⁷¹ Strickmann 1977, p. 10.

¹⁷² Mather 1976, p. 546.

¹⁷³ Mather *op. cit.*, p. 635.

¹⁷⁴ Mather *op. cit.*, p. 553. See also Robinet 1984, vol. 1, p. 87.

¹⁷⁵ Robinet 1984, vol. 1, pp. 87f.

of the Xu family—a family of high-ranking officials—, Buddhism had already taken firm root in at least the upper classes of the southern Chinese society. Yang Xi who also worked for a ruler with Buddhist interests, had to take this into account. As a Daoist introducing a new denomination that distinguished itself from the Celestial Masters' tradition on the one hand, and Buddhism on the other, he could not openly criticise Buddhism. However, by introducing immortals who had started as Buddhists but later turned Daoist he indirectly made clear that his denomination was superior. Precisely to this end he chose the Buddhist text *Forty-two Sections of Buddhist Sūtras* and had it revealed by members of his Daoist pantheon in a revised form, that is to say, he had it transformed into a Daoist, and thus a superior, text.

Yang Xi's intention turned into a veritable programme when the author(s) of the Daoist *Lingbao* corpus, which began to appear in about 400 AD or roughly a generation after Yang Xi in the same area, wrote their texts to supplant Buddhism. In order to do so they copied whole parts of Buddhist scriptures as translated by Zhi Qian, Mokṣala and Kang Senghui 康僧會 and, by rewriting them, integrated them into their own scriptures.¹⁷⁶

7. CONCLUSION

The interactions between the developing Daoism and the infiltrating Buddhism were quite complex and their nature changed with time. The Queen Mother of the West as a saviour goddess residing in remote western areas paved the way for the Buddha as initially just another saviour god from the west. On the other hand, once in China, his iconography irreversibly changed that of the Queen Mother. The earliest notions of the deified Laozi influenced the earliest known Chinese concepts of the Buddha. When the more sophisticated *Lives* of the Buddha had been translated they in turn informed the later *vitae* of Laozi. As far as meditation in the form of visualisation is concerned, the texts analysed so far seem to indicate that it originated with Buddhism and later found its way into China to enlarge the Daoist “supply” of meditation techniques. Similarly, it seems that the Daoist book cult was an adaptation of an older Buddhist concept.

¹⁷⁶ Bokenkamp 2004, p. 324 and especially note 23 on pp. 334f.

When Buddhism became widespread in China and was even to be found at the southern courts and among influential families, some Daoists felt pressed to take counter-measures. On the one hand, they tried to out-do their Buddhist rivals in court debates and private disputes in which they often seem to have been beaten due to their inferior discussion technique. Another way consisted in appropriating Buddhist texts, turning them into Daoist scriptures and, presenting them as directly revealed by the gods as corrections of the faulty Buddhist versions, thus compromising Buddhism as being inferior to Daoism.

To be fair we have to add that Buddhists, too, appropriated Daoist texts when producing what is now often called “apocryphal” texts (which are Chinese Buddhist texts that are not translations of Indian or Central Asian originals). Research into this subject is, however, only in its incipient stage and its preliminary results could not, due to lack of space, be included here. Other topics of mutual influence, such as, for example, eschatology had to be left aside here as well. Nevertheless, it should have become evident that the question of Buddhho-Daoist interactions is of prime importance and deserves to be investigated in a comprehensive and systematic manner. It may be regarded as a precedence of interactions between competing religions in general and thus serve historians of religion working on other religious traditions.

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TANTRIC THREADS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

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1. TANTRIC BUDDHISM—APPROACHES AND RESERVATIONS

Around the beginning of the common era, when Buddhism slowly started to spread in China, it was not yet perceived as a distinct religious teaching that came from India, but as some new formation of autochthonous religion. Only from the fourth century onward, as the translated textual corpus, ritual services and iconography reached a certain magnitude, Buddhism was apprehended as a salvific praxis in its own right, gradually gaining more and more popularity. Put under governmental control, it entered into rivalry with Daoism for imperial support. The emperors expected from Buddhism new forms of expert knowledge and an increase of sacral authority. Since then, the developments of Buddhism in China followed a course of appropriation of devotional, altruistic and ritual pragmatics backed by the institution of monastic order and imperial patronage. As far as Buddhism was regarded being a book religion, the validity of its truth claim was assured by textual authenticity and reference to so-called “masters of the law” (Skt. *dharmācārya*) who transmitted texts, took part in the process of translation and exegesis. They constantly introduced new forms of Buddhist praxis (Skt. *caryā*) as well, thereby extending the ground for further developments in China, Korea and Japan. In most cases, these “masters of the law” were monks from India and Central Asia.¹

With regard to this background, there is an ongoing scholarly debate on what praxis could be justifiably identified as “esoteric Buddhist” or placed in a heuristic category of “Tantrism”.² Academic discourse

¹ Hung 1999, pp. 226–232.

² For an attempt to determine some formative patterns common to most Tantric practices, see White 2000, pp. 7–18, 24–34. For a recent debate on the foundations of esoteric Buddhism, cf. the positions of Orzech 1998, pp. 125–128, 205–206; Abé 1999, pp. 202–204; Sharf 2002, pp. 263–278. For a detailed historical account of the conception of “Tantrism” as a western phantasm see the work of Hugh B. Urban 2003.

still tends to understand the manifold developments of Buddhism in China in terms of sinification, misappropriation, religious propaganda, cultural encounter or assimilation of collective identities, altogether conceptual matrices based on historical knowledge about the twentieth century³ which insinuate a prevalence of modern thought, judgement and criticism of ideology in the context of medieval Indian or Chinese culture. But perceptions of alterity and the related processes of “amalgamation” do not necessarily imply formations of cultural, political, ideological or racial identities, as may be inferred for instance from the anti-Buddhist polemic of Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824)⁴ or the Lingbao 靈寶 attempt to confront Buddhism by mimicking its “exotic” imagery and mantric speech.⁵

Whereas such inquiries tend to drift along metaphysical categories when they refer to the self-institution of a religion or the initial foundations of traditions, the heterogeneity of references as well as research interests does not allow a responsible discussion without paying close attention to the various frameworks of scholarship in which they are reproduced. In any case, such discussion would lead us beyond the scope of the following pages. Instead, I propose to regard nothing as fundamental—which seems to be particularly helpful for the case of Buddhism in China—as one faces a cauldron of dynamic becoming in thought and praxis rather than a repository of stable traditions and self-identifying denominations.

To begin with, what could be cautiously termed the “secret teachings” of Buddhism—a makeshift rendering of the rather ambiguous Chinese designation *mijiao*⁶ 密教—actually consists in variable assemblages of

³ Cf. the discussion in Sharf 2002, pp. 4–25.

⁴ See Gernet 1995, pp. 237–241.

⁵ They seem to be concomitants of aesthetic strategies as well as re-formations of “technical” knowledge motivated by differing cosmological frames of reference. This objection, however, does not mean to deny that there was in China a sense of threat, foreignness, politically motivated instrumentalism and adaptation related to Buddhist teachings, as can be seen in the writings of Han Yu. The “anti-Buddhist” Lingbao scriptures referred to the linguistic indeterminacy of a “Hidden Language of the Great Brahmā” (Chin. *da fan yin yu* 大梵陰語), deliberately locating the origin of divine signifiers in an “Indian” context by using graphs that were chosen by Buddhist translators to transcribe Sanskrit terms and spells, thus mechanically creating some sort of Sanskrit sounding hierolalia. Bokenkamp 1997a, pp. 63–67; 1997b, pp. 8, 385–392.

⁶ I refer to the Tantric Buddhist textual corpus and the related *praxis* as transmitted in Chinese language by conventionally using the expression “secret teachings” for Chinese *mijiao*. For a brief discussion on the term *mijiao* as a *post facto* categorisation and its historical background, see Sharf 2002, pp. 267–273.

hermeneutic, devotional, ritual and altruistic pragmatics. Their transmission and development can be better understood in terms of social function than in terms of fundamental doctrines.

Considering the difficulty in tracking down any clear cut criteria of Tantric Buddhism, one will have to take into account the various local and historical contexts in order to understand the meaning of its religious pragmatics,⁷ especially paying attention to its promulgators' promotional strategies. As many of them were not Chinese, their commitment did not exclusively refer to the political and social circumstances of a given Chinese locale, but was also motivated by competing or authenticating practices prevalent at other locales, reminiscent debates, and also by individual convictions. Needless to say, the complexities of human thought and social action should not be reduced to mere effects of local economic, political or historical conditions.

Hence, trying to isolate a seminal "Chinese" context would mean to neglect the dialectics of comprehensive thinking, taking the risk of confusing historical knowledge with an illusory "representation of the other in its own terms". Imposing an isolated "Indian" frame of reference, one would underrate for example the "exotic appeal" of the Tantric Buddhist pantheon to the Chinese or the variability of a Chinese terminology related to Sanskrit⁸ concepts and notions the Chinese Buddhists had to cope with even if they were unfamiliar with Sanskrit language. Buddhist texts composed by Chinese totally ignorant of any foreign language are still traversed by some sort of unmarked notional stratum affected by Indic languages, which conditions specific forms of expression—such as rhetorics, terminology and imagery—at least as far as the linguistic aspects refer to translated literature. The same applies to textual production in India: the skilful use of allusions to non-Buddhist literature for recursive strategies of adapting Buddhist tenets is a vital part of Buddhist rhetorics in medieval India and Central Asia.⁹

Understanding means comparing and relating alterity without any reference to identity: that was already the case in medieval China during the process of translation and exegesis, as can be seen in the various ways Chinese exegetes collated different translations of a certain

⁷ As documented by archaeological remnants, historical records and documents, biographies, iconography, ritual manuals, commentaries etc.

⁸ By conventionally using the term "Sanskrit" I refer not only to Sanskrit language but also to the other Indic languages in which Buddhism reached China.

⁹ For a socio-linguistic discussion of Tantric language, see Davidson 2002, pp. 232–290.

scripture with regard to terminological and doctrinal divergences. Hence, their reference to “Indian” (i.e., translated textual) authorities was not only significant for legitimatising purposes but also for establishing and contextualising new exegetical as well as pragmatic approaches. This seems to be particularly true for Tantric Buddhism in China. Not only the performance of Sanskrit sounds in mantric speech and the use of the Siddham script¹⁰ for meditation and visualisation but also special forms of word and sentence construction—as for example the nominal complex sentences in translated scriptures which follow syntactical models of Sanskrit against the demand on intelligibility—reminded a Chinese practitioner that he was actually *quoting* accommodated and estranged phrases, words and signifiers belonging to the realm of the divine.

A significant criterion of Tantric Buddhist praxis is the appropriation of ritual performance and language in respect of state formation, crisis of social order, and state protection, employing distinct expressions of what may be reservedly categorised as apotropaic ritualism. Its pragmatics point to a deliberately performative approach towards salvation, exceeding the repertoire of Mahāyāna praxis at least since the extensive transmission work of Śubhakarasiṃha (Chin. Shanwuwei 善無畏; 637–735), Vajrabodhi (Chin. Jingangzhi 金剛智; 671–741) and especially Amoghavajra (Chin. Bukong 不空; 705–774),¹¹ whose career at the imperial court was remarkable even by Tang-period Buddhist standards.

Therefore, in the pages that follow, I will attempt to contextualise only a few aspects that fostered and limited the spread of a praxis, introduced by distinct individuals at the Tang- and Song-court, and highlight significant functions of the “secret teachings” by reflecting upon some central points of attraction, social functions by which Tantric Buddhism became a tempting praxis. That does not imply the supposition of a self-conscious “Chinese school” or even a culture-crossing tradition of “secret teachings” pacing its way from

¹⁰ Skt. *siddham* means “perfected”; the Siddham script is a syllabic alphabet written in horizontal lines from left to right. The consonants have the inherent vowel “a” that can be muted. Vowels are written by using diacritical marks above, below, before or after the consonant they belong to, or as independent letters. Siddham was used in East Asian esoteric Buddhism to write down mantric speech and to copy *sūtras* in Sanskrit, practiced as exercises of calligraphy and meditation; cf. van Gulik 1980, pp. 72–79.

¹¹ For their biographies, see Chou 1945, pp. 241–332.

India to China. Bearing these reservations in mind, a short overview of the circumstances under which Tantric Buddhism spread in medieval India is quite revealing.

2. DISPLACEMENT OF BUDDHISM IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Buddhism may be approached as a methodology of salvation, based on karmic correlativity of causation and a meta-ethically conceived praxis. The praxis implements salvific *techné*—as for example meditation, altruism, rituals, reasoning—to realise its soteriological aim for the benefit of the others and oneself. Buddhist denominations differ on the doctrinal issue of categorisation and mediation of these *techné*, which in turn implies ethical questions. And ethical questions refer to the social, historical and political circumstances of a given locale.

Tracing the developments of Tantric praxis in India, Ronald M. Davidson scrutinised the socio-historical conditions between the sixth and ninth century, which proved to be unfavourable for institutional Mahāyāna. In the following, only a few significant aspects will be subsumed under five points:

1. Patronage crisis: after the fall of the Imperial Guptas around mid sixth century, Buddhism gradually lost its privileged position in religious life, competing with Brahmanic rites and the Purāṇic narrative which proved to be more suitable for the legitimising needs of the warlords of the medieval Indian warring states. Purāṇic Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ethics of violence and rhetoric of military glorification were more persuasive than Buddhist dialectics, justifying violence at best as a “skill in means” (Skt. *upāyakaūśalya*) for the “benefit of others” (Skt. *parahitāya*). Medieval Śaivism instead offered disinhibiting aesthetics based on an image of the king after the model of Śiva who was represented as an eroticised killer deity.¹²

2. Funding crisis: since late seventh century, donations to the monasteries went down as the great Indian merchant guilds significantly lost ground to their Arab and Sogdian competitors and the trade surplus flowed to the Middle Eastern Islamic caliphate.¹³

3. Tighter relations between clergy and kingship: Buddhist institutions increasingly relied on the support of the remaining Buddhist-friendly

¹² Davidson 2002, pp. 86–91.

¹³ Davidson 2002, pp. 79–83.

overlords. Monasteries became feudal for abbots and represented their overlords' sovereignty. As a result one can observe a decline in absolute number, a growth of institutional range and significance as well as an establishment of closer mutual relations between the grand monasteries (Skt. *mahāvihāra*).¹⁴ This process led to stronger ties between kingship and clergy. The latter was requested providing sacral legitimacy, scholarly expertise and ritual performance as means of state protection.¹⁵

4. Normativity and standards of validation: Not only for the adherence to the precepts (Skt. *vinaya*) but also for the self-referential validity of Buddhist teaching, terminology and methods of reasoning, the current trends of Buddhist thought proved to be detrimental: Candrakīrti's (ca. 600–650)¹⁶ sceptical criticism of Buddhist conceptual thought triggered the fall of the then disintegrating laity and monastic system as normative channels of moral pragmatics; on the other hand, Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660)¹⁷ attempted to validate Buddhist notions by employing standards acceptable to non-Buddhist systems of reasoning in order to ensure the viability of Buddhist doctrines against their opponents. In both cases the complexity of argumentation was inaccessible to the political and military authorities potentially supportive to Buddhism. What they observed instead was that Buddhism founded its truth claim on mere conventions or on Brahmanic standards of validation, thereby loosing its normative independence and value.¹⁸

¹⁴ For an eighth century Chinese description of the *mahāvihāras*, see Lahiri 1995, pp. 51–58.

¹⁵ Davidson 2002, pp. 106–111.

¹⁶ Candrakīrti was a Buddhist logician who became famous for his commentary *Prasannapadā* (The Clear Worded) on the thought of Nāgārjuna (cf. note 23). He advocated a radical epistemologic scepticism and argued against the use of independent inferences: An epistemologist's demand for an irrefutable justification is already irrelevant, since the objections he considers to be met cannot even arise if meaningful discourse is to be possible. The requirements presupposed by epistemology are themselves the evidence of what is the problem to be overcome. Cf. Arnold 2005, pp. 2–7.

¹⁷ Analysing crucial methodological problems of epistemology and logic, the Buddhist philosopher Dharmakīrti constructively attempted to validate Buddhist metaphysics by formal inference. "Correct cognition" was expected to resolve the incompatibility of concepts and rules of argumentation which separated the various philosophic traditions. In order to establish categories for what is correct and authoritative, he resorted to perception as the ultimate basis of truth: the persuasiveness of inference still refers to the nature of phenomena to be perceived.

¹⁸ Davidson 2002, pp. 100–101, 102–105.

5. *Siddha* and *vidyādhara* praxis: subsequently, the figure of the “perfected one” (Skt. *siddha*) or “bearer of magic knowledge” (Skt. *vidyādhara*) rose to an alternative, non-institutional form of Buddhist praxis analogous to Jaina and Śaiva ascetic paradigms. Siddhas claimed to be able to gain supremacy by way of their occult skill (Skt. *siddhi*) and knowledge of mystic enchantment (Skt. *māyāyogavid*) over supra-human forces, such as demons and divinities, as well as over the karmic matrix of reality. This in turn—according to what was propounded in the *Arthaśāstra* (Treatise on Policy; 1st–2nd century)¹⁹—qualified them as media of deception for political ends. Their expertise also comprehended rain making, restraining of fire, changing poison into antidote and similar protective and healing powers as expounded in early Tantric scriptures such as the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī* (Kingly Spell of the Great Peacock).²⁰

Following Davidson, one may conclude that Tantric Buddhist pragmatics developed not simply from an appropriation of new opportune models of religious praxis but in complex response to the displacement of institutional Mahāyāna owing to the feudalisation of medieval Indian society, structurally adapting itself to actual trends of thought and changes of socio-political order. This significant shift became manifest in the *tantras*, which were—to quote a formulation by David L. Snellgrove—“able to turn the notion of kingship to practical account.”²¹

Hence, a set of issues conditioning the composition of Buddhist *tantras* and the conception of a related praxis transmitted to China can be discerned: Ritual pragmatics constituted an important part of Tantric scriptures. Their implementation helped to reconcile Buddhist institutional life with the demands of the ruling and military class for a ritual sacralisation of the political sphere, which in turn paved the way to a Buddhist liturgy of empowerment. The Buddhist clergy aimed to compete with the Purāṇic narrative in providing a

¹⁹ The treatise is traditionally attributed to the Mauryan strategist and royal counsellor Kautiliya (3rd century BC) but was probably composed between the first and second century AD; Scharfe 1993, p. 293. The text deals with a broad range of issues regarding discipline, government, economics and military affairs, advocating social duties and law as techniques of rule independent of moral concerns.

²⁰ Davidson 2002, pp. 174, 187–190, 194–201. For an account of corresponding activities of legendary Korean monks as reported in the *Samguk yusa* (Bequeathed Matters of the Three Kingdoms), see the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke in this volume.

²¹ Snellgrove 1959, p. 204.

mythological ground for ritually sanctifying social order. The image of the Brahmanic priest, who verified the divinity of the king and bestowed legitimacy upon him, resonated in the Tantric Buddhist recasting of the coronation ritual as a purificatory ceremony of consecration (Skt. *abhiṣeka*).²² Meant for ultimate realisation, mantric speech made obsolete the complexities of epistemological reasoning as a ground for cognition. It also helped to avoid the “trap” of the sceptical reasoning of the Mādhyamikas,²³ which proved to be detrimental to the acceptance of Buddhist teaching among political and military authorities. Rituals evoked efficacious bonds between mundane reality and the realisation of the absolute. *Maṇḍalas*—mirroring the administrative grid of *sāmanta*-feudalism²⁴—represented domains (Skt. *kṣetra*) of sanctifying power relations, accessible through the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind, which had to be mastered by the hierophant (Skt. *ācārya*): this in turn implied a concept of the cosmic Buddha Vairocana as central source of all Tathāgatas’ saving recognition, heroic strength and skill in means, conferring “materialised empowerment” (Skt. *vikurvitādhiṣṭhāna*) upon the hierophant.²⁵ Consequently, the truth claim was based on the presence of the Buddha Vairocana as an emanating, all-pervading, omniscient and omnipotent absolute overlord (Skt. *rājādhirāja*) or victor (Skt. *jina*). Radicalising the Mahāyāna concept of “skill in means” and extending the Yogācāra²⁶ concept of “fundamental transformation” (Skt. *āśrayaparivṛtti*) into the realm of cosmology, the absolute was no longer conceived as being beyond the realm of language: it expressed itself and became perceptible in mantric speech.²⁷

²² Strickmann 1996, pp. 39–41; Davidson 2002, pp. 71–73, 84–85, 123–125.

²³ The negative dialectic “middle way” (Skt. *madhyamaka*) of reasoning developed since the 2nd–3rd century AD is traditionally ascribed to the legendary founding figure Nāgārjuna. The Mādhyamikas understand “emptiness” (Skt. *śūnyatā*) in a functional sense as an indication of the relational condition of all that can be known. All knowledge that depends on cognitive objects is relative, without any substance, and therefore it is unable to represent reality in itself. Consequently, the epistemological relativism is considered to be relative too and therefore irrelevant as an object of knowledge—yet, it serves as a means of soteriological detachment, the goal being to free the practitioner from wrong views and to circumscribe the absolute viewpoint by means of negation.

²⁴ On “*sāmanta*-feudalism” as system of administrative and political order in medieval India see Chattopadhyaya 1994, pp. 10–37 et passim; Davidson 2002, pp. 131–144.

²⁵ Wayman 1999, p. 28.

²⁶ As a fourth century outgrowth of Madhyamaka thought, the Yogācāra teaching is based on a theory of “consciousness-only”, a mentalist conception of reality. It achieves a systematic presentation of mind and cognitive procedures in terms of universal soteriology. The final aim is to induce enlightenment by introspective clarification of consciousness.

²⁷ See Wayman 1992, pp. 57–64.

The ritual expression of empowerment and divine recognition constituted not simply a “metaphorical” or “symbolic” but rather a technically operative connection between (Tantric) Buddhist praxis, political and promotional pragmatics. It was based on the practicing subject that identified itself with divine power, structurally depicted in *maṇḍalas* as enacted domains of power. The subject was conceived in terms of corporal authority (the domains of power inherited by human bodies) and recognition (as between authorities), i.e., as subject to a system of attraction and capture complementary to the organisation of the state apparatus. Its final object, the awakening to buddhahood, was understood as fundamental transformation of the self which implied a self-reification of the absolute, the Buddha Vairocana ritually invoked as bestowal of divine sovereignty, omniscience and omnipotence. The mythic interlocutor Vajrapāṇi became the eroticised Vajrasattva, as the *vajra*—formerly Indra’s sceptre-symbol of the indestructible, absolute force of divine kingship,²⁸ protector of the law (Skt. *dharma*)—represented a sublimation of the phallus,²⁹ not merely as symbol of legal power but also—and perhaps mainly so—as sign of desire for awakening (Skt. *bodhi*) and subjection to the cosmic Buddha Vairocana.

Tantric Buddhist scriptures of the late seventh and eighth century such as the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* (Compendium of the Truth of All Tathāgatas) and *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi* (The Ultimate Awakening of Great Vairocana), related treatises and commentaries, still referred to central concepts of the Mahāyāna in so far as the hermeneutics³⁰ of elite monastic doctrinal and ethical thought had to be kept largely intact as referential framework. But the rhetorics were part of a liturgy of divine recognition, legitimising the use of spells and violence in defence of the *dharma*.

Linked with the siddha figure, scriptures such as the *Susiddhikara* (About what is Good in Producing Success) and *Subāhupariṣcchā* (Questions of Subāhu) introduced topics and narratives of transcended personality, expansion of power and benefit as inseparable from salvific

²⁸ That is made explicit also in titles of scriptures which have a *-rājā* or *-rājñī* added, meaning “kingly...” or “king of...”. This convention is also preserved in many Chinese translations belonging to the *Vajrasekhara* (Vajra Pinnacle) texts by using the designation *wang jing* 王經 (“kingly scripture”); see, e.g., T.865, T.874, T.882, T.883, T.885, T.887, T.888, T.890, T.892.

²⁹ Davidson 2002, p. 197.

³⁰ The term “hermeneutics” here refers to a processual, discursive thinking and systems of interpretation by which meaning is construed and validated, as for example in exegetical writings.

accomplishment. Such concepts worked their way from the non-institutional periphery right into the heart of Buddhist institutional practice, and went beyond what was regarded as appropriate from a Mahāyāna point of view: the *Susiddhikara* for example placed the hierophant on the same level as the “Three Jewels” (i.e., *buddha*, *dharmā*, *saṃgha*) and—referring to his (occult) skills—compared him to bodhisattvas or even a buddha.³¹ The demonological stress is made explicit in the siddha’s envisaged ascent to the status of a “sorcerer sovereign” (Skt. *vidyādhara*rāja) or “perfect sorcerer” (Skt. *siddhavidyādhara*):³² located at the margins of civilisation both in mundane as well as mythic realms, he embodied a thaumaturgical link between mystic eroticism and necromancy, being a medium of divine force invoked through spirit-possession rituals (Skt. *āveśa*).³³

The importance attached to accomplishment by way of skill in means qualifies Tantric Buddhism as *techne*-oriented instrumentalism. This is explicitly testified in the *Mahāvairocanaṅghisaṃbodhi*, which became a basic scripture of the “secret teachings” throughout East Asia. An often quoted key sentence reads as follows:

Mind of awakening is the cause, compassion is the root, skill in means is the final ultimate.³⁴

When applied under “worldly conditions” of human action, skill in means cannot be separated from any appropriation of (divine) sovereignty and the option of deliberately serving as an instrument for political ends. Hence, Tantric Buddhist ritual as well as doctrinal forms of content are vested with a “technocratic” disdain regarding the limitations of ethics and law as appropriate only for incompetent subjects.

The rise of Tantric pragmatics strengthened the Buddhist ability to cope with contingency, conditioning its cosmological plan, ethic legitimisation and aesthetic representation in relation to skill in means, instrumentalism and salvific *techne*. Tantric Buddhism, whether based on monastic order or non-institutional *siddha* practice, appears to be the most *techne* oriented, decidedly “technocratic” form of Buddhism. This

³¹ T.893.18.605a4–7; tr. Giebel 2001, p. 136.

³² See Davidson 2002, pp. 187–188, 194–196.

³³ On the three basic types of Tantric ritual, *abhiṣeka*, *homa* and *āveśa*, see Strickmann 1996, pp. 49–52.

³⁴ T.848.18.1b29–c1.

development has to be understood within the context of a displaced Buddhist community's rather hopeless aspiration to regain lost authority and attraction, against or through the brutal circumstances of social disintegration, power politics and warfare in medieval India.

3. "SECRET TEACHINGS": TANTRIC POLICY AT THE TANG-COURT

Unable to avoid the manifold traps of worldly affairs while enjoying imperial support, Buddhist monks assumed administrative and political responsibilities. As translators or exegetes, they sometimes had to change the wording of or to insert passages into Buddhist scriptures to legitimise a certain political order; they served as media of diplomacy and represented imperial power throughout pre-modern East Asia.³⁵ Under the reign of empress Wuhou 武后 (r. 690–705) for example, scholar monks deliberately reconfirmed the sacral status of the Son of Heaven (Chin. *tianzi* 天子) in reference to the soteriological signification of the *cakravartin* ("universal overlord") and the *bodhisattva* as saviour: the empress was styled as the incarnation of the future Buddha Maitreya.³⁶

Texts and pragmatics bearing the apotropaic ritual stress of Tantric Buddhism were already known in fifth century China. Due to further activities of Central Asian and Chinese masters, the spread of Tantric ritualism and imagery continued, and, in all probability, during the seventh century, Korean monks who stayed in China became acquainted with these forms of expression of Mahāyāna Buddhism.³⁷

In the course of the eighth century, the implementation of "secret teachings" at the Tang-court reached a critical point. The "technology" of Tantric ritualism developed in medieval India was introduced and put into practice on a larger scale, serving a well defined aim: sacralisation

³⁵ The initial transmission of Buddhism from China to the Korean peninsula was, for example, the concomitant of a diplomatic mission: Sent by the Earlier Qin 前秦 (351–394) to arrange an alliance with the kingdom of Koguryō against the northern tribes, the monk Sundo 順道 arrived at the royal court in 372. There, he introduced Buddhist scriptures and images. See the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke.

³⁶ Exemplary is the Buddhist advocacy of the proclamation of the Zhou dynasty (690–705) by empress Wuhou/Wu Zetian 武則天 (625–705); Guisso 1979, pp. 304–306; cf. Forte 1976, pp. 125–170. See also Sen 2002, pp. 32–33; Chou 1945, p. 320.

³⁷ On the transmission, range and social function of esoteric Buddhism in Korea, see the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke.

and sanctification of social and imperial order, employing apotropaic *techné* for a Buddhist liturgy of state protection.

The traditional narrative of the transmission to China—documented by Amoghavajra in his *Jingangding jing da yujia bimi xindi famen yijue* 金剛頂經大瑜伽秘密心地法門義訣 (Instructions on the Gate of Teaching about the Secret State of Mind of the Great Yoga, the Vajra Pinnacle Scripture), a commentary related to the first part of the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* as abridged and translated by his teacher Vajrabodhi³⁸—serves to validate the promulgators' legitimacy. Recounting the mythic origin of the secret "root text", Amoghavajra stressed the divine and unchangeable truth expressed therein in contrast to the gradual decline of the Buddhist *dharma* in India. His purpose being to testify authenticity, he rendered Vajrabodhi's oral description of how these scriptures were finally brought to China:

I (i.e., Vajrabodhi) set forth from the western country to cross the southern ocean in a fleet of more than thirty great ships, each one carrying more than five or six hundred persons. Once, when all were crossing in convoy in the very middle of the great ocean we ran into a typhoon. All the ships were tossed about, and the ship I was on was about to be inundated. At that time I always kept the two scriptures I was bringing nearby so that I could receive and keep them and do the offerings. Now, when the captain saw that the ship was about to sink, everything on board was cast into the ocean, and in a moment of fright the one-hundred-thousand-verse text was flung into the ocean, and only the superficial text was saved. At that time I aroused my mind in meditation. Doing the technique for eliminating disasters, and the typhoon abated, and for perhaps more than a quarter mile around the ship, wind and water did not move. All on board took refuge in me, and bit by bit we got to the shore and arrived in this country.³⁹

Amoghavajra emphasised that the extant text is merely a fragment of the lost full-length scripture, "broad and long as a bed, and four or five feet thick."⁴⁰ Corroborating the fragmentary condition of the text on which Vajrabodhi's translations were based, Amoghavajra composed a summary indicating content and structure of the full length scripture, a mythical corpus consisting of 18 assemblies, generally referred to as the *Jingangding jing* 金剛頂經 (Vajra Pinnacle Scripture; Skt.

³⁸ T.1798.39.808a–821a; T.866.18.223b–253c.

³⁹ T.1798.39.808b16–25; tr. Orzech 1995, p. 317.

⁴⁰ T.1798.39.808a26.

Vajraśekharaśūtra).⁴¹ Thereby, he presented himself as an authority who has the whole teaching at his disposal, implying that its efficacy could be actualised by way of ritual *techné*. The narrative served to document not only the technical skills of his master Vajrabodhi, who was initiated into these “secret teachings”. In the following, Vajrabodhi also addressed the issue of his translation work, as it remained a question, in how far the efficacy and original meaning could be transmitted into Chinese language:

In the seventh year of the reign period Opened Prime (721 AD) [I] arrived in the Western Capital (Changan) and the Chan master Yixing sought consecration from me. When it became known that [I had] this extraordinary Gate of the Teaching, [he] commanded Íśvara to help translate it into Chinese. Yixing and the others, as it turns out, personally transcribed it. First [we] relied upon the order of the Sanskrit text and then [we] discussed its meaning so as not to lose words. [Yet] its meaning has not yet been [fully] explained.⁴²

As the authenticity of the text was prejudiced due to the process of translation, the Chinese version is rather intended to provide an abstract than a valid representation of the Sanskrit fragment, implying that in Chinese language the scripture merely mediates a truth claim. To become efficacious, a master’s oral instruction for the application of its teachings and rituals is required, indicating that the hierophant is not only of basic significance for any transmission but actually a powerful link to the realm of the divine, a mediator of power, ultimate realisation and truth, an authority who has the potential to serve as a thaumaturge and advisor for any “benevolent” overlord. As the ritual performance of the “secret teachings” was not meant to represent the absolute but to be a direct expression of the absolute, mantras for example, in Chinese significantly termed *zhenyan* 真言, were no longer understood as another sort of “divine spells” (*shenzhou* 神呪)⁴³ or simply as “true words”—which is a somewhat misleading English rendering of the Chinese term *zhenyan*: this term should be interpreted rather as “words of truth”—because *zhenyan* were functionally conceived as signifiers spoken by truth itself. In “words of truth” the absolute

⁴¹ Giebel 1995, pp. 107–117; cf. T.869.18.284–287.

⁴² T.1798.39.808b25–28; tr. Orzech 1995, p. 317.

⁴³ Cf. T.1796.39.579b19–21; T.902.18.898a24.

reifies itself as speech in ritual performance.⁴⁴ Consequently, *zhenyan* denotes mantric “Sanskrit” signifiers transcribed in Chinese translations as incidences of unconditional and therefore empowering, efficacious speech acts. To quote these “words of truth”, the Chinese texts used a distinct set of Chinese graphs belonging to the class of the “mouth” (Chin. *kou* 口) radical as well as the syllabic Siddham script, indicating that these were—as was the case in Sanskrit language practice—sounds performed, but not meanings to be reflected upon. There was never a provision of translated or “genuine” Chinese *zhenyan*.

Tantric Buddhist scriptures were translated in team work following the model of the 7th century bureaus of translation perfected by Xuanzang 玄奘 (600–664), but obviously in a somewhat downscaled manner.⁴⁵ The influential Chan monk Yixing 一行 (673–727), mentioned by Vajrabodhi as having taken part in the translation work, had already assisted Śubhakarasiṃha in translating the *Mahāvairocanaḥśaṃbodhi*, on which he composed extensive exegesis also inspired by Chan and Tiantai related conceptions. A confiscation of Śubhakarasiṃha’s manuscripts suggests that emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) who favoured Daoism initially was suspicious about Tantric pragmatics.⁴⁷ Yixing helped to formulate a doctrinal expression more consistent with Buddhist practices known in China, and facilitated their acceptance at the court. Subsequently, Śubhakarasiṃha translated Tantric scriptures such as the *Susiddhikara*⁴⁸ and the *Subāhuparipṛcchā*,⁴⁹ which instruct the whole range of siddha practices and precepts. These were of great importance for thaumaturgical, demonological, apotropaic and other mantic types of ritual as well as initiation criteria, and became influential in Tantric Buddhō-Daoist syncretisms and local cults as well.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Lehnert 2006, pp. 93–95.

⁴⁵ Wang 1986, pp. 123–131.

⁴⁶ For Yixing’s broad knowledge and eminent genealogical background as causes for his rise to political power under emperor Xuanzong, see Chen 2000, pp. 1–38; cf. Weinstein 1987, pp. 55–56.

⁴⁷ The *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* indicates that Śubhakarasiṃha, after having presented his first translation to the emperor, was not allowed to continue his work and to translate further manuscripts. See T.2154.55.572a12–15; cf. Chou 1945, p. 265 n. 78; Orzech 1998, p. 139. Another reason for emperor Xuanzong’s initial non-acceptance might have been the recent Buddhist support of empress Wuhou’s proclamation of the Zhou dynasty (690–705). However, the apotropaic “technology” of Tantric pragmatics finally turned out to be decisive for Xuanzong’s patronage of the “secret teachings” (Twitchett 1979, pp. 411–413). On Xuanzong’s patronage of Vajrabodhi, see Weinstein 1987, p. 55.

⁴⁸ Extant text in three recensions: T.893.18.603a–633c, 633c–663b, 663b–692a.

⁴⁹ T.895.18.719a–735b, 735–746b.

⁵⁰ Strickmann 1996, pp. 221–229, 236–241, 299–301.

Stressing accomplishment of occult skill (Skt. *siddhi*, Chin. *chengjiu* 成就) conferred upon the hierophant by the divine and further subverting the authenticating foundation of Mahāyāna, the imprint of *siddha* culture also becomes evident in Amoghavajra's translation of the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*—particularly in an allusion to Śākyamuni's awakening to buddhahood—where the name of the main interlocutor *bodhisattva* Yiqieyichengjiu 一切意成就 (“He Who Has Accomplished All Objectives”) reads in Sanskrit Sarvārthasiddhi which is a play on Siddhārtha, Śākyamuni's name prior to his awakening: “He Whose Objective is Accomplishment”.⁵¹

While Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra established the “secret teachings” at the court as ritual means of state protection and empowerment, one should give credit to Xuanzang, who was first in translating a fully developed Tantric *sūtra*, namely the *Prajñāpāramitānayaśatapañcāśatikā* (Perfect Insight of the Command of Truth in 150 Verses) which was integrated into the 600 fasciculi of his *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經 (Grand Prajñāpāramitā Scripture) as its tenth section, the *Liqu fen* 理趣分 (Section on the Command of Truth, Skt. *naya*).⁵² About a century later, shorter recensions of the *Prajñāpāramitānayaśatapañcāśatikā* were translated again by Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra—transmitted to Japan, the latter version became a central text for Shingon ritual practice.⁵³

Finally, Amoghavajra, Vajrabodhi's chief disciple, became the most prominent promulgator of “secret teachings” in China. Of Central Asian descent but having spent his life since his youth in the imperial capital Chang'an, he was not only proficient in Chinese and South Central Asian languages, but also gained insight into the pragmatics of polity and the play of power relations at the Tang-court. Thus, he became a prolific translator, compiler and exegete, who proved to be very skilful in his religio-political activities, gradually gaining influence under the reign of three succeeding emperors (Xuanzong 玄宗, r. 712–756, Suzong 肅宗, r. 756–762, and Daizong 代宗, r. 762–779). He achieved this status not by institutionalising the “secret teachings” but by becoming an institution himself, creating a *techné*-oriented praxis

⁵¹ T.865.18.207c10; Giebel 2001, pp. 10, 23.

⁵² T.220.7.986a24–991b9.

⁵³ Shingon is an esoteric Buddhist denomination in Japan, based upon the work of the eminent scholar monk Kūkai (774–835); see below. For an analysis and annotated translation of Amoghavajra's version see Astley-Kristensen 1991; cf. T.241.8.778b18–781c8; T.243.8.784a7–786b15.

that depended largely on his person and operated on ritual modules which he applied according to religious as well as political demands.

His career as confidant of the imperial family was also a consequence of his loyalty during the military revolt of general An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757) and the subsequent crisis between 756 and 763.⁵⁴ While emperor Xuanzong had to flee the rebels and to abdicate, the heir apparent Li Heng 李恒 (i.e., Suzong 肅宗, r. 756–762) entered into an alliance with Tibetan and Uighur forces in order to recapture the lost imperial authority of his family. Though Amoghavajra had been detained in the occupied capital he was able to secretly communicate strategically sensitive information to Li Heng. Besides, Amoghavajra performed rituals evoking the *vidyārāja* Acala in order to support the Tang loyalists.⁵⁵ In 759, after the rule of the Tang had been restored, Amoghavajra was regarded as a powerful protector of imperial order and assigned to consecrate emperor Suzong as *cakravartin*.

As far as Amoghavajra's aim was state protection, he introduced sumptuous rituals for a Buddhist liturgy of state and established the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī as official tutelary deity of the empire.⁵⁶ He received imperial permission to erect an altar for Tantric consecrations at the Daxingshan monastery (*Daxingshan si* 大興山寺),⁵⁷ where ritual performances for the benefit of the empire took place four times a year. Thus he became responsible for the ceremonial sacralisation of imperial order in a state of crisis: outside the walls of the imperial court poverty and famine spread across the empire that had been devastated by the rebellion.⁵⁸

In the summer of the year 765, when Amoghavajra was commissioned by emperor Daizong to prepare an actualised version of the *Renwang boreboluomi jing* 仁王般若波羅蜜經 (Scripture on Perfect Insight for

⁵⁴ On the An Lushan rebellion, see Dalby 1979, pp. 561–571.

⁵⁵ T.2120.52.827c24–828a24, 849a1–5; cf. Chou 1945, pp. 294–295; Orzech 1998, pp. 141–142, 201.

⁵⁶ Sen 2003, pp. 82–86. Likewise, the ritual manual *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (ca. 7th century) presents the youthful *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī as a mediator of divine empowerment in ritual context; cf. Wallis 2002, pp. 76–86.

⁵⁷ The *Daxingshan si* was erected around 557–559 and meant to be a state monastery (Chin. *guosi* 國寺); following a hiatus, its importance grew rapidly under Amoghavajra's auspices. See Wang 1986, pp. 6–12, 32–42.

⁵⁸ Peterson 1979, pp. 482–486. On Daizong's reign, see Dalby 1979, pp. 571–580; on Amoghavajra's services for Daizong, see Weinstein 1987, pp. 77–89.

Benevolent Kings),⁵⁹ the empire was threatened by the former Tibetan-Uighur allies. In winter of the same year however, the alliance broke apart after the sudden death of Pugu Huai'en 僕固懷恩, a leading Uighur military commander.⁶⁰ This fortunate turn of events was attributed to Amoghavajra's ritual practice around the new version which was given the descriptive title *Renwang huguo boreboluomiduo jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經 (Scripture on Perfect Insight of State Protection for Benevolent Kings),⁶¹ linking Confucian notions to the Tantric concept of state protection based again on a ritual devoted to the *vidyārāja* Acala. In 767, Amoghavajra initiated the ordination of 37 monks for repeated performances of rituals on Mount Wutai to "establish the state as a field of merit."⁶² Significantly, this number refers to the 37 central deities of the *vajradhātumaṇḍala*.

Charles Orzech's analysis (1998) of Amoghavajra's scripture showcases in what way the text had been adjusted to the political conditions at the Tang-court, closely associating deficiencies of imperial authority with Buddhist soteriological concerns, the rule of the Son of Heaven with the spiritual sovereignty of the Tantric hierophant (Chin. *asheli* 阿闍梨; Skt. *ācārya*):⁶³ stressing *techné* for state protection, the rhetoric and hermeneutics around this text as well as its ritual implementation promised control where there was disorder and destruction to the enemy of the state, who was conceived not only as a threat to imperial order but also to the dharma.⁶⁴ Subsequently, this scripture became one of the most venerated Buddhist *sūtras* at the courts of many East Asian empires and kingdoms.

Amoghavajra was successful in blending religious, administrative and political expertness into a unique concept of the sovereign hierophant

⁵⁹ The former version (T.245.8.825–834) was doubted to be a "apocryphal scripture" (Chin. *yijing* 疑經) or a Chinese "forgery" (Chin. *weijing* 偽經); while being traditionally attributed to Kumārajīva (350–413), it is of late fifth century origin; Orzech 1998, pp. 125–133, 289–291. For an imperial foreword to Amoghavajra's version in which emperor Daizong declares the necessity for actualising the text cf. T.246.8.834a10–b25.

⁶⁰ Peterson, 1979: 489–491.

⁶¹ T.246.8.834–845. English translation in Orzech 1998, pp. 209–274.

⁶² T.2120.52.835b17–c9; Orzech 1998, pp. 161, 186–191, 196–198.

⁶³ See Orzech 1998, pp. 160–167.

⁶⁴ A similar narrative—albeit not referring to that scripture—and function of Buddhist ritual for state protection is reported already for the 670s, when Tang-China attempted to invade the kingdom of Silla, and the Chinese fleet was repelled by a Korean monk. See the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke.

who protects the empire by means of his access to divine empowerment. In the year 771, on the occasion of emperor Daizong's birthday, he wrote a memorial, outlining his career in humble yet self-confident words:

I followed and attended the late Master of Tripiṭaka [i.e., Vajrabodhi] for fourteen years ever since my childhood, and was instructed in the doctrine of Yoga. I also visited India where I sought for [the doctrine] that I had not been taught and I found sūtras and commentaries which amounted to five hundred odd works. In the fifth year of T'ien-pao [746 A.D.] I returned to the capital. Emperor [Hsüan-tsung] ordered me to go to the palace and erect an altar for abhiṣeka. The Sanskrit sūtras which I brought back were all permitted to be translated. Emperor Su-tsung performed the homa sacrifice and abhiṣeka in the palace. The two emperors repeatedly ordered me to collect the Sanskrit texts [brought back] in the previous periods, to repair those [pattra leaves] of which the [binding] strings were lost, and to translate those [texts] which had not yet been translated. Your Majesty followed reverently your deceased father's intent in ordering me to continue translating and promulgating for the benefit of [the people of] all classes. From the T'ien-pao-period up to the present, the sixth year of Ta-li, in all [I have translated] one hundred and twenty odd chapters, seventy-seven works.⁶⁵

Amoghavajra, never confining himself to textual transmission, took advantage of his duties in the field of state liturgy. During his stay in India (741–746), he had experienced the Buddhist displacement, perceived its reasons, and understood the potential of the Buddhist appropriation of Tantric pragmatics as well as the suitability of its ritual and doctrinal features for political ends. Back in China, by skilfully applying the Tantric policy according to the special circumstances he encountered at the Tang-court, Amoghavajra was able to accomplish what Buddhist monks in India attempted less successfully: to improve the status of the dharma in polity by sacralising the emperor as the universal ruler, a *vidyādhara-cakravartin* (“universal overlord of the sorcerers”). Amoghavajra's remarkable career illuminates the way he understood to transform the Tang-court into a burning-mirror of Tantric pragmatics, thus securing a prominent status for Buddhism at the court without becoming entangled in the increasingly suspicious and hostile Confucian administration.

This ambivalent and implicitly prepotent placement of the “secret teachings” in relation to the state—to serve as a guarantee of state

⁶⁵ Chou 1945, pp. 297–298.

protection while keeping a certain amount of independence with regard to the emperor and his administration—may well be a reason for the negligence, by which Amoghavajra's legacy was treated in later Buddhist historiography eager to represent Buddhism as a fully integrated institution of imperial order. Although the scope of his activities surpassed that of Kumārajīva and Xuanzang, he neither reached a comparably lasting fame, nor was he conceived as a patriarch in the sense Huayan-, Tiantai- and Chan patriarchal lineages were construed. What remained after his death in 774 and the following persecutions of Buddhism in ninth century,⁶⁶ that was a complex, seemingly unsystematic corpus of Tantric scriptures, written in an awkward Chinese inaccessible to the Buddhist laity and without any broader significance for Mahāyāna scholasticism.

In Japan, where the “secret teachings” (Jap. *mikkyō* 密教) proved to be viable, Amoghavajra's achievements were outshined by Kūkai's 空海 (774–835) and Saichō's 最澄 (767–822) efforts of re-evaluation and systematisation in the institutional as well as doctrinal sphere. Saichō helped to restore common grounds for better relations between Buddhist institutions and the new forming Heian-period imperial order. And Amoghavajra's spiritual heir Kūkai was able to position himself as a religious guarantor of imperial authority and sanctity. His conception of “secret teachings” as a form of ritual practice for aristocrats and retired military leaders pointed towards a praxis of ritual services that should lead Buddhism to a privileged position by which governmental power could be influenced and channelled.⁶⁷

In medieval India, the image of the Brahmanic priest, who ritually verified the divinity of the king and bestowed legitimacy upon him, resonated in the Tantric recasting of the coronation ritual (Skt. *abhiṣeka*, Chin. *guānding* 灌頂) as a purificatory ceremony of consecration and initiation. With Kūkai and emperor Heizei 平城 (774–824, r. 806–809) who had withdrawn from public life in the fourth year of his reign, there is for the first time an emperor asking a Buddhist priest to grant him the ceremony of consecration, which finally led to a re-implementation of this ritual as a regular part of enthronement rites in medieval Japan.⁶⁸ Since then, Buddhist Tantric rituals retained a certain proximity to varying demands of state protection. In 1945,

⁶⁶ Dalby 1979, pp. 666–669; Gernet 1995, pp. 298–299, 304–306.

⁶⁷ Abé 1999, pp. 355–357.

⁶⁸ Grapard 2000, pp. 146–149.

only a few days before the fall of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, monks are said to have enacted an immolation ritual (Skt. *homa*) at Mount Kōya to vanquish the United States.⁶⁹

4. THE FAILURE OF THE “SECOND TRANSMISSION”

Due to changing socio-political circumstances and uprising Confucian claims to reconfirm imperial and social order in norms established by the Confucian classics, Buddhism gradually lost support at the court only a few decades after Amoghavajra's death. Amoghavajra's disciple Yuanzhao 圓照 (ca. 730–810) attempted to ameliorate the status of Buddhism in polity by emphasising the apotropaic bond between hierophant and emperor as vital for imperial authority. Although emperor Dezong 德宗 (r. 779–805) changed his initial anti-Buddhist attitude and started to patronise the monk Prajñā (?–810), the last Tang-period promulgator of “secret teachings”,⁷⁰ the praxis established by Amoghavajra was finally displaced along with the mid-ninth century persecutions of Buddhism and could not retrieve its former status anymore. Buddhist transmission and translation work was suspended because of the political and economic decline of the late Tang and the subsequent social disorder during the Five Dynasties period.

Since the beginning of the Song dynasty, Buddhist monasteries were restored and mass ordinations by imperial decree revived institutional monastic as well as lay practice. Buddhists were no longer regarded as representatives of a creed “incompatible with traditional values” and regained mainly for political reasons a privileged status at the court.⁷¹ Subsequently, related to ceremonial expressions of state formation and sanctification of rather delicate political relations to the states of Western Xia and Liao,⁷² the Tang-period Buddhist contribution to

⁶⁹ Saso 1991, p. 32; cf. Strickmann 1996, p. 41.

⁷⁰ Weinstein 1987, pp. 97–99.

⁷¹ Eichhorn 1973, pp. 290–293.

⁷² The political and hegemonic relation between the Song, Liao and the Tangut Xia were quite unstable. In 984, the Tanguts rebelled against the Song dynasty and formed an alliance with the Liao 遼 empire that has been founded 907 in the northeast and successfully attacked the Song empire. A short-lived peace agreement that the Tangut leader Li Jiqian 李繼遷 negotiated with the Song emperor in 997 was followed by new agreements between the Liao and Song which were arranged by Li Jiqian's son Li Deming 李德明. Subsequently he became a military commissioner and King of the Great Xia 大夏. After having conquered territories in the west, Li Deming started to reign

imperial and social order was recast, and Tantric rituals came into use again. A new wave of Buddhist transmission to China met imperial support in order to promote traditional learning.⁷³ Beginning in the year 973 with the Magadhan monk Dharmadeva (Chin. Fatian 法天, ?–1001), followed in 980 by the Kaśmīri monk Devaśāntika (Chin. Tianxizai 天息災, ?–1000) and his paternal cousin Dānapāla (Chin. Shihu 施護, ?–1017) from Uḍḍiyāna, translations of Buddhist Tantric scriptures were ordered anew.⁷⁴ Since 982, when the central “bureau for the transmission of *dharma*” (Chin. *chuanfa yuan* 傳法院) was established in Kaifeng 開封 at the Taiping Xingguo monastery (*Taiping Xingguo si* 太平興國寺) to provide technically refined translations of actual manuscripts, these three monks jointly translated a large number of Tantric scriptures, of which the scope of contents as well as the total amount of titles and fasciculi surpassed those of the textual corpus established by Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra; they also included actual enlarged recensions of texts which were translated for the first time during the Tang. In a certain sense, Dharmadeva’s, Devaśāntika’s and Dānapāla’s efforts seem to follow traces which the three Tang-period masters left behind; they also gained appreciation at the court and received honorary titles in the year 982 from emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 977–997), who declared that “the teachings of the Buddha are beneficial for the administration of the state.”⁷⁵

Although their work did profit from a strong imperial support, its significance was rather limited in comparison with Tang-period standards: the access to the new translations was very limited, and under the actual conditions of Buddhist practice the demand for these texts dropped also. Buddhist laity as well as learned monks lost interest in textual study, which seems to be especially true for the Song translations on which almost no exegetical literature was written. Due to a strong trend towards internal canonisation, the scholarly debate was

over his own empire located along the trade routes to Inner Asia. In 1038, after successfully fighting against the Song, his son proclaimed himself emperor of the Western Xia (Xixia 西夏). A few years later, he also broke his agreement with Liao. From then on, three empires coexisted in China: Song, Liao and Western Xia. Of the latter, there is no official dynastic history because it has never been accepted as an independent state by official Chinese historiography. See Twitchett & Tietze 1994, pp. 60–68, 98–100, 104–110, 114–123; cf. Dunne 1994, pp. 168–172, 176–179, 180–189.

⁷³ Sen 2003, pp. 114–119.

⁷⁴ Bowring 1992, pp. 80–82; on these monks, see also Sen 2002, pp. 43–46.

⁷⁵ T.2035.49.399a6; tr. Sen 2003, p. 115.

focused on Tang and pre-Tang translations. Chan denominations that traditionally claimed to be founded on direct intuitional transmission, as in opposition to textual studies and—which was the special case of the “secret teachings”—emphasised enactment of ritual manuals (supposedly) based on Indian sources, attempted to further ameliorate their own status by representing their proper aesthetics and ritual thought as more commensurate with Confucian and Daoist traditions than any other form of Buddhist praxis. The growing Chan influence over Buddhism in China became also apparent in the superimposition of Chan monastic rules on the Indian monastic codices (Skt. *vinaya*) that had been valid since the Northern and Southern Dynasties period,⁷⁶ and in the merging of denominations such as Tiantai and Huayan into institutional Chan.

The scholar-monk Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) argued for a separation of Buddhist praxis and learning from any Indian context, and tried to construe a Chinese Buddhist antiquity as a proof of validity and commensurability with Confucian and Daoist traditions. Representing Buddhism as deeply rooted in Chinese history and disapproving the contributions of Indian monks, Zanning hoped to consolidate the significance of Buddhism by emphasising Chan and its Chinese “origin”.⁷⁷ However, his aim to position Buddhism as an integrated part of the Confucian revival was rejected by Confucian officials immediately.⁷⁸ Hence, the “Indian” appeal of the Tantric pantheon, Sanskrit syllables in *dhāraṇī* practice as well as the ostentatious luxury of rituals gradually became obstacles for any further promulgation of the “secret teachings”—besides the fact that the significantly enlarged versions and newly translated Tantric scriptures such as the *Hevajratāntra* (Tantra of Hevajra) or the *Guhyasamājatantra* (Tantra of Secret Assembly) required thorough textual study as a preliminary to any ritual implementation. In fact even the Indian translators failed to adequately express the ritual thought of the *Anuttarayogatantra* (Tantra of Unsurpassed Mystic Union) expounded in these scriptures, and considerably omitted teachings of sexual yoga.⁷⁹

As the textual and doctrinal supply from India was no longer regarded to be essential for Buddhist praxis, influential Chinese Buddhists peti-

⁷⁶ Foulk 1993, p. 148.

⁷⁷ Wang 1984, pp. 277–289.

⁷⁸ Welter 1999, pp. 36–47.

⁷⁹ Sen 2002, pp. 56–57; 2003, pp. 126–132.

tioned to halt the state supported translation work and argued that it would be too much of an economic burden for the state, considering the quantity of scriptures still waiting to be translated without any substantial prospect to be studied and put into practice. Although there was still imperial interest in further translations and ritual enactment of Tantric scriptures, the increasingly hostile attitude among the Confucian administration as well as a growing lack of qualified translators and shortage of funds intensified the Buddhists' fear of appearing ostentatious, which in turn made the consuming enactment of sumptuous ritual practices appear inappropriate if not obsolete.⁸⁰

While the main part of Song-period Buddhist translation work was accomplished during the reign of the first four Song emperors and ceased almost completely after the death of Dharmapāla (Chin. Fahu 法護, ?–1058), Tantric ritual could not retrieve anymore its former status as a liturgy of empowerment and state protection.⁸¹ Because the Song emperors started to implement the doctrines of the Confucian classics to cut down the military element (Chin. *wu* 武) that had been sympathetic to Tantric ritual practice, the “secret teachings” lost validity as a means for bestowing sanctity upon imperial authority. The Confucian elite at the Song-court inaugurated new conceptions of morality by which social order could be sanctified also. The rise of the “true way learning” (Chin. *daoxue* 道學) induced an actualisation of Confucian governmental pragmatics and extensive state reforms, strengthening the civil sphere (Chin. *wen* 文).⁸²

The state-ritual was linked with the Confucius cult, and the civil examination system was reformed to recruit Confucian scholar-officials responsible for the preservation of imperial and social order. The emperor in turn was advised to “keep wise, learned, and straight-talking Confucians as confidants and mentors.”⁸³ They constituted an elitist administration, by which the emperor's power should be influenced and channelled. Confucian scholars such as Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1108) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) discussed functions and patterns (Chin. *li* 理) of natural, cosmological and moral

⁸⁰ Bowring 1992, pp. 83–86; Eichhorn 1973, pp. 294–299; Sen 2003, p. 239.

⁸¹ Since the Yuan dynasty, the Tantric Buddhist ritualism was replaced at the court by Lamaist liturgy, representing tight relations between the emperor and the Buddhist command of social and imperial order.

⁸² Kuhn 2001, pp. 133–149.

⁸³ De Bary 1991, p. 51.

order that had to be realised, cultivated and to which the emperor and his administration should obey.

Around mid eleventh century, one may suspect similar dialectics to be at work in favour of Chan practice and a Confucian revival, now displacing the “secret teachings” considered to be a rather obsolete “technology” of state protection: how to entangle a political centre into a master grid governed by divine forces of capture, which could be realised, shared and instrumentalised by the sovereign/hierophant,⁸⁴ ceased to be a fundamental problem of polity. Lacking the universalist context of state protection and imperial patronage, however, Tantric pragmatics still were suitable for a practitioner’s own prestige and profit, a situation conditioning further developments.

5. THE TURN TO “PROFANATION”

Since the Tang dynasty, Tantric pragmatics increasingly spread into local forms of religious Daoist practice. Ground for such developments was already paved centuries earlier when apotropaic rituals became a part of Buddhist lay practice. So-called proto-Tantric texts, such as Atikūṭa’s Chinese *Tuoluoni ji jing* 陀羅尼集經 (Collection of Dhāraṇī Scripture, tr. 653–654)⁸⁵ and the *Guanding jing* 灌頂經 (Consecration Scripture, tr. 5th century),⁸⁶ helped to constitute some sort of Buddh Daoist ritual praxis. Buddhist ritual pragmatics influenced and were influenced by Daoist ones, which in turn resonated in their respective doctrinal coinage. Topoi such as the operability of the human body, water and fire in rituals concerning consecration, immolation and spirit-possession furthered common grounds for Daoist as well as Buddhist praxis and doctrine.⁸⁷ Some parts of the *Guanding jing*, which are influenced by Daoist initiation documents (Chin. *lu* 錄), suggest a rather pragmatic interchangeability of Daoist and Buddhist rituals. Besides an apocalyptic rhetoric, the promise of therapeutic aims and

⁸⁴ Cf. White 2000, pp. 34–36.

⁸⁵ On this text, see Strickmann, 1996, pp. 133–136. Atikūṭa is said to be the first monk who performed the Tantric consecration ritual (Skt. *abhiṣeka*) in China; see the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke.

⁸⁶ See Strickmann 1996, pp. 78–87; cf. the chapter by Pol Vanden Broucke.

⁸⁷ Strickmann 1996, pp. 49–52; on *homa* ritual in Chinese and Japanese context, see *ibid.*, pp. 337–368.

curative power attributed to these scriptures and their ritual application attracted many lay followers.

During the Song dynasty and later, typical fields of Tantric pragmatics such as exorcism, ghost-possession and divinatory techniques remained viable in local traditions where Daoist and Buddhist praxis had merged.⁸⁸ Dream interpretation even gained new grounds of social function: Whereas Tantric scriptures such as the *Subāhuparipṛcchā* and the *Susiddhikara* contain prescriptions for the interpretation of dreams to estimate the adept's predisposition to initiation and attainment,⁸⁹ Confucian scholars who had to pass the civil examinations under the solid Confucian administration of the Ming and Qing period often requested services of Buddhist and Daoist monks considered to be experts in occult rituals and dream interpretation (Chin. *zhan meng* 占夢). Among Confucian scholars, dreams were regarded as indicators of a candidate's capacity to become an official, and the emperors too sought to determine or to confirm their policy by means of dream interpretation.⁹⁰ It was also common practice for Chan masters (Chin. *chanshi* 禪師) to teach *dhāraṇīs* as an apotropaic device used by Confucian scholars to pass the civil examinations.

The Tantric sacralisation of social order foreshadowed a structure of domination on which the post-Song Confucian state was founded: an almost inscrutable system of civil examinations, by which the entry into the state apparatus was controlled through "esoteric rituals" of exclusion and reciprocal inclusion. The aim was to establish a habit-forming meritocracy in the bonds of governmental authority, with its character of both initiation and ritual theatricality. Concomitantly, as was the case with the ritual operation of *maṇḍalas* as domains by which the initiate proceeds from the periphery to the realisation of the central power, the candidate for civil service has to pass hierarchical planes from the provincial up to the metropolitan examinations at the imperial palace, the centre of imperial order. Such forms of expression resemble "profaned", repressed or sublimated Tantric notions fallen into oblivion as such:⁹¹ sanctifying the hierarchy of social order and sacralising sovereignty by reference to an all-pervading, self-realising

⁸⁸ See Davis 2001, pp. 123–125, 134–136, 141–152.

⁸⁹ Strickmann 1996, pp. 299–301.

⁹⁰ Elman 2000, pp. 326–345.

⁹¹ See Davis 2001, pp. 188–191.

divine force. Nowadays, Daoist praxis still contains and actualises the inheritance of Tantric Buddhism in the sphere of religion.⁹²

6. AFTERTHOUGHT

Without reducing the manifold facets of Tantric pragmatics to the idea of a certain readiness to become instrumental as a Buddhist liturgy of state protection fashionable with the elite at the imperial court, one may conclude that an essential point of attraction consisted in the “technocratic” implementation of rituals. The technological appeal in conjunction with the demands of the ruling and military class for a sacral confirmation of social order and governmental authority sustained their spread not only in India but also in China, Korea and Japan. Relating divine empowerment and ritual practice, social and imperial order, sanctity and legitimacy, Tantric Buddhism became instrumental in different cultural spheres under different historical conditions. Generally, the rise of new concepts of leadership, political frameworks and procedures of state formation determined these conditions, whether it be the case of medieval India, eighth century Tang- and early Song-period China, the Three Kingdom period of Korea or early Heian-period Japan. But the “secret teachings” should not be understood simply in terms of religious policy, propaganda and ideology, insinuating a rationalist, secular concept of political power. Rather they seem to refer to a crisis of the mythological foundations for imperial sovereignty, a crisis inscribed in the sphere of divine empowerment: to remain authentic, legitimacy and spiritual attainment had to be confirmed by reference to divine forces, initially conceived of as being beyond the immediate reach of human competence. The novelty was the introduction of *techné* which promised not only control of these forces but also their utilisation for social or individual ends. Principally, the Buddhist formation called “secret teachings” is a hybrid belief in (religious) “technology”. Therefore, what appears to be a deliberate propagandistic conflation of the political and religious sphere in fact anticipates the insight that social order and imperial sovereignty are constituted by autonomic human action only.

⁹² Strickmann 1996, pp. 406–411.

The adaptation of Tantric policy, doctrine and praxis to local conditions, its promulgators' readiness to serve as means for political ends, was neither principally a Chinese indigenous development nor exclusively a concomitant of the Chinese appropriation of Buddhism. Moreover, the insistence on a distinct set of Tantric pragmatics as applied under different socio-political conditions did not obstruct its spread throughout East Asia until a local alternative such as the "true way learning" was conceived. Universalist efficiency promises and maybe also the occult appeal of Tantric ritual performance helped to refit imperial and social order into the religious sphere of unconditional legitimacy. These factors—among many others—proved to be beneficial for the development and adaptation of Tantric Buddhism to different socio-historical circumstances: ritualistic formations of Buddhism that conceived sovereignty in technical as well as political terms.

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THE ACCOUNTS OF MILBON, HYET'ONG AND MYŎNGNANG IN THE *SAMGUK YUSA*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Between the fourth and seventh centuries the Korean peninsula was basically ruled by three kingdoms. The three kingdoms or Samguk 三國 were those of Koguryō 高句麗 in the north, Paekche 百濟 in the southwest, and Silla 新羅 in the southeast.¹ In 668 the greater part of the peninsula, more particularly the territory south of the Taedong 大同江 River, was unified into the Silla kingdom. This dynasty is usually called T'ongil Silla 統一新羅, meaning Unified Silla, and lasted till 935.²

According to the oldest surviving official history of Korea, the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms) compiled in 1145 by the Confucian scholar Kim Pusik 金富軾 (1075–1151), Buddhism was transmitted to Korea from China during the Korean Three Kingdoms period.³ According to this source Buddhism reached Koguryō in 372 when Sundo 順道 arrived at the court with *sūtras* and Buddhist images.⁴ He was sent by the ruler of the Earlier Qin 前秦 (351–394) in Northeastern China to enter into an alliance with Koguryō against the northern tribes. Buddhism is said to have been introduced

¹ In addition there was Kaya 加耶, a federation of several tribal states along the lower reaches of the Naktong 洛東江 River in the south.

² T'ongil does not imply that the whole peninsula was unified. To the north of Silla lay the kingdom of Parhae 渤海 founded by Tae Choyōng 大祚榮, a former Koguryō general. For a comprehensive study of Parhae, see Reckel 1995. Also, in the late ninth century Unified Silla lost control over the northern and southwestern parts of the peninsula, which was effectively divided into three kingdoms again; Koryō, founded in 918, eventually carried the day, absorbing Silla in 935 and Later Paekche in 936.

³ On the introduction of Buddhism in Korea, see Grayson 1989, pp. 30–33; Vos 1977, pp. 133–134; Kamata 1987, pp. 9–22; Buswell 1989a, pp. 151–153; Lancaster & Yu 1989; Kim Y. 1995, pp. 37–74.

⁴ See the section on the second year of King Sosurim's reign in the *Samguk sagi*, Yi P. 1996, p. 166. On the introduction of Buddhism into Koguryō, see Tamuro 1985, pp. 3–6.

to Paekche in 384 by Mālānanda, an Indian or Serindian monk from the southern Chinese state of Eastern Jin 東晉 (316–420).⁵ Buddhism was officially embraced in Silla in 528 after the martyrdom of the courtier Ich'adon 異次頓, otherwise known as Pak Yōmch'ok 朴厭觸.⁶ The miracles surrounding his execution, which he had provoked by building a temple in the face of hostility towards the new religion, convinced everyone of the potency of Buddhism, thus paving the way for its acceptance.

During the Three Kingdoms period the Buddhist religion spread through the Korean peninsula and received royal patronage.⁷ By the sixth century Buddhism was introduced to Japan, at first from Paekche, and later also from Silla and Koguryō.⁸ In the Three Kingdoms period many Korean monks travelled to China to study Buddhism.⁹ Some of these monks also played an active role in the history of Chinese Buddhism. In Koguryō, the most eminent of these peripatetic figures was Sūngnang 僧朗 (5th century).¹⁰ He is said to have played an important role in the establishment of the Sanlun 三論 school in China. Another Koguryō monk P'ayak 婆若 studied under the Tiantai 天台 master Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597).¹¹ The Paekche monk Hyōn'gwang 玄光 made the journey to China to study Tiantai under Huisi 慧思 (515–577), a predecessor of Zhiyi.¹² The Silla monk Wōn'gwang 圓光 studied ten years in the new Sui 隋 empire (589–618).¹³ Chajang 慈藏, a member of the royal house of Silla, studied in Tang 唐 China.¹⁴ While Wōn'gwang is regarded as the founder of doctrinal studies in Silla, Chajang introduced monastic discipline and an administrative system for the *saṃgha*. Their biographies are even included in the *Xu gaoseng*

⁵ See the section on the first year of King Ch'imnyu's reign in the *Samguk sagi*, Yi P. 1996, p. 222. On the introduction of Buddhism into Paekche, see Tamuro 1985, pp. 6–10.

⁶ See the section on the fifteenth year of King Pōphūng's reign in the *Samguk sagi*, Yi P. 1996, pp. 36–37. On the introduction of Buddhism in Silla, see Tamuro 1985, pp. 10–12.

⁷ On Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms, see Grayson 1989, pp. 30–60; Kamata 1987, pp. 9–53; Vos 1977, pp. 133–138.

⁸ On the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, see Tamuro 1985, pp. 12–17.

⁹ See Grayson 1980, pp. 61–63.

¹⁰ See Grayson 1989, p. 33.

¹¹ See Grayson 1989, p. 38.

¹² See Grayson 1989, pp. 39–40, 80; Best 1991, pp. 178–195; Best 1982, p. 468.

¹³ See Grayson 1989, pp. 44, 48; Best 1991, pp. 195–196.

¹⁴ See Grayson 1989, pp. 52–54; Lee 1969, p. 9, n. 47.

zhuan 續高僧傳 (Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks) compiled by the Chinese monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667).¹⁵

Monks from the Three Kingdoms (Koguryō, Paekche, Silla) also undertook the long and perilous journey to India.¹⁶ The Paekche monk Kyōmik 謙益 (6th century) was the first Korean monk who is known to have traveled to India.¹⁷ Of the three kingdoms, Silla especially took an interest in the journey to India. As James Huntley Grayson points out:

It is an interesting fact that in I-tsing's (635–713) *Ta T'ang hsi-yü ch'ü-fa kao-sêng ch'uan* [sic] (Biographies of Eminent Monks of T'ang Who Sought the Dharma in the Western Regions), fully one-sixth of the biographies are about monks from Silla. This is an astounding figure considering the disparity in the size of the population of T'ang and Silla, and considering how recently Silla had become a civilized state. I-tsing records the name of only one monk from Koguryō, and there are no mentions of Japanese monks who completed the journey.¹⁸

In spite of the great activity of the early Korean monks, no primary sources compiled during the Three Kingdoms and the Unified Silla have come down to us. For the study of early Korean Buddhism, we have to rely on three traditional Korean historical sources compiled centuries later, in the Koryō 高麗 dynasty (918–1392): the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms), *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Bequeathed Matters of the Three Kingdoms) and *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* 海東高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks of Korea).

The *Samguk sagi* was compiled around 1145 in imitation of the Confucian-oriented Chinese dynastic history and deals with the history of the Three Kingdoms.¹⁹ Since the author Kim Pusik himself was a Confucian scholar, his work contains little data relating to Buddhism.

On the other hand, the *Samguk yusa* was compiled by the monk Iryōn 一然 (1206–1289) around 1285 and contains for the most part Buddhist legends and stories. Whereas the *Samguk sagi* stands for the official view of the Koryō Dynasty on the history of the Three Kingdoms, the *Samguk yusa*, based on material from popular sources, takes a

¹⁵ See T.2060.50.523c1–524b4 for Wōngwang; T.2060.50.639a8–640a8 for Chajang.

¹⁶ See Grayson 1980, pp. 57–60.

¹⁷ See Grayson 1989, p. 40; Best 1991, pp. 152–178.

¹⁸ See Grayson 1989, pp. 49–50.

¹⁹ On the *Samguk sagi*, see Kim T. 1976, pp. 11–17; Kim H. 1983, p. 29.

freer view.²⁰ The work contains myths, legends, ballads, an account of Buddhist history, and ancient Korean poems. Though the title *Samguk yusa* refers to the Three Kingdoms (Samguk), the greatest part of the text deals with Silla only.

The *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* is a collection of Buddhist biographies compiled by the monk Kakhun 覺訓 (n.d.) by royal order in 1215.²¹ Only the two first volumes of this work have survived to date. These volumes were discovered in 1914 by the abbot of Haein-sa 海印寺 in a small provincial temple. Compiled in these two volumes are historical facts about some thirty Buddhist monks of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla at the time when Buddhism was first imported from China.

Of these three works, the *Samguk yusa* contains several references to monks who rely on magic practices and who are said to have lived in the period of the Three Kingdoms. Part 6 of volume (*kwŏn* 卷) 5 of the *Samguk yusa* is entirely devoted to the activities of Milbon 密本, Hyet'ong 惠通 and Myŏngnang 明朗, three monks who use magic and *mantras* to protect the nation and to cure diseases.²² The *Samguk yusa* is the only source of information on these figures. For lack of early sources on Korean esoteric Buddhism (*milgyo* 密教), modern Korean publications dealing with the early history of esoteric Buddhism in Korea pay much attention to the stories of these monks recorded in the *Samguk yusa*.²³ Although the biographies of Milbon, Hyet'ong and Myŏngnang are clearly fictitious, many Korean scholars rely on the *Samguk yusa* and hold that *milgyo* existed as an independent school during Unified Silla. But, since the *Samguk yusa* was compiled centuries after Silla, questions may be validly raised concerning the reliability of the whole work.²⁴ Part 6

²⁰ See Kim T. 1976, pp. 30–34; Kim H. 1983, pp. 29–30; *KYIK*, *Shiden-bu* vol. 10, pp. 251–272. English translation in Ha & Mintz 1986. The translation is free and contains many inaccuracies. For a Japanese annotated translation, see *KYIK*, *Wa-Kan senjutsu bu*, *Shiden-bu* vol. 10, pp. 273–582 (hereafter *KYIK*).

²¹ On this text, see Kim T. 1976, pp. 18–23. Translated in Lee 1969.

²² See *HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 355a6–357a20.

²³ See for example the contributions on early Korean esoteric Buddhism in Taehan Pulgyo Chin'gak-chong Chungang Kyoyuk-wŏn 1986; Taehan Pulgyo Chin'gak-chong 1998; and Tongguk Taehakkyo Pulgyo Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn 1986. For the history of esoteric Buddhism in Korea, see Suh 1994; Sørensen 1993; Toganoo 1977, pp. 100–105; and the book-length survey by Sō 1995. For early Korean esoteric Buddhism, see also Grayson 1984; Grayson 1989, pp. 59–60, 80–93; Maeda 1919; Ahn 1991, pp. 18–20; Kamata 1987, pp. 102–107. For a short survey of contributions on *milgyo* by Western scholars, see Vanden Broucke 2000.

²⁴ On the problems concerning the historical reliability of the *Samguk yusa* as a primary source, see Sørensen 1993, pp. 74–75; Sørensen 2001.

of volume 5 of the *Samguk yusa* is titled *Sinju* 神呪, meaning “divine spell”. *Sinju* (Chinese *shenzhou*) is originally a Chinese term used for both *mantra*, a general Indian term for magic invocations, and *dhāraṇī*, a Buddhist term for the condensed version of a scripture, which also has magical properties. The Chinese character *zhou* 呪 is a common word in Chinese to refer generally to Buddhist and non-Buddhist magic formulas or spells.²⁵ The term *zhenyan* 真言 (Korean *chinŏn*, “true word”) however, the standard Chinese Buddhist translation of *dhāraṇī* or *mantra*, is not found in the *Samguk yusa*.²⁶ I shall examine the passages in the *Samguk yusa* dealing with Milbon, Hyet'ong and Myōngnang. These passages will be translated in full below.²⁷ Iryōn's insertions contained in the original text of the *Samguk yusa*, mostly comments on the sources or on textual problems, are indicated by () parentheses.

2. TRANSLATION

2.1. *Milbon, the Destroyer of the Erroneous*

Queen Sōndök 善德女王, Tōngman 德曼,²⁸ had been seriously ill for a long time.²⁹ The monk Pōpch'ōk 法惕³⁰ of the Hūngnyun-sa 興輪寺³¹ was summoned to take care of her. [He attended her] for a long time but [his efforts] were fruitless. At that time there was the monk Milbon. He was known throughout the whole country for his virtuous conduct. The ministers asked [the queen] to replace him [Milbon with Pōpch'ōk]. She summoned [Milbon] and invited him to enter the palace. Milbon stood outside the entrance of the queen's chamber and recited

²⁵ See Abe 1999, pp. 262–264; Strickmann 1990, p. 81.

²⁶ See Kojōn yŏn'gusil 1980.

²⁷ For the translation of these passages I have relied on the edition of the *Samguk yusa* found in *HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 355–357. I have also used the Japanese translation in *KYIK*, pp. 536–542; and the Korean translation in Kim P. 1995, pp. 512–525.

²⁸ First queen to rule Silla (r. 632–647). Personal name Tōngman, posthumous title Sōndök. There is one reference to an illness of Queen Sōndök in the section on the fifth year of her reign in the *Samguk sagi*. See Yi P. 1996, p. 47. According to the entry in this source she became seriously ill in 636. See Kamata 1987, p. 37; Kamata 1988, p. 143.

²⁹ The first two paragraphs of this story are also included in Grayson 2001, pp. 222–224. The first paragraph is also cited in Sørensen 1993, pp. 79–80.

³⁰ This monk is entered as Pōpch'ang in Yi 1993, p. 108 s.v. Pōpch'ang.

³¹ A temple no longer extant, in the Silla capital Kyōngju. Completed in 544. See Yi, 1996, pp. 669–671 s.v. Hūngnyun-sa.

the *Yaksagyōng* 藥師經.³² After a few passages the [staff with] six rings³³ which he held in his hands flew into her bedroom. It pierced an old fox and Pöpch'ök. They fell down and were thrown into the courtyard. The queen recovered from her illness. At that moment a five-coloured divine light radiated from the top of Milbon's head. Everyone who saw this was amazed.

[One day], when Prime Minister³⁴ Kim Yangdo 金良圖³⁵ was a boy, he suddenly became dumb and paralysed. He was neither able to speak nor move. All the time he saw a large demon coming [into his house] and leading a group of smaller demons. They ate up all the food which was served up in the house. A shaman came to perform a sacrificial rite, but the group of demons tried to outdo one another in insulting this person. Kim Yangdo wanted to tell the demons to get out of his house, but he could not speak. His father invited a monk from the Pömnyu-sa 法流寺³⁶ whose name is unknown to come and to read a Buddhist scripture. The large demon ordered the smaller demons to strike the head of the monk with an iron hammer. He fell down on the ground, vomited blood and died. A few days later, [the father] sent a messenger to invite Milbon. The messenger returned and said, "The monk Milbon accepted our invitation and will come." Hearing this, the group of demons all turned pale with fear. The smaller demons said, "If the monk comes, this will be unfavourable to us. It would be better to escape." But the large demon became rude and said in a self-possessed manner, "What harm can he do to us?" All of sudden, mighty gods appeared in the four directions. They were all wearing golden armour and carrying long spears. They caught the demons, tied them up, and left. Next, innumerable heavenly gods [descended]. They stood in a circle and waited. Shortly after Milbon arrived. Even

³² *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* (Medicine Buddha Scripture). See below, note 109.

³³ Probably a sistrum (Skt. *khakhara*). On this Buddhist attribute, see Saunders 1985, pp. 179–181.

³⁴ Süngsang 承相.

³⁵ The *Samguk sagi* informs us that he went to Tang six times and that he died at the Western Capital. His rank is given as *haech'an* 海漬, presumably the same as *p'ajinch'an* 波珍漬, the fourth of Silla's seventeen office ranks. See Yi P. 1996, p. 414. In the *Samguk yusa* (HPC, vol. 6, p. 316c6–7), it is stated that he gave his two daughters Hwabo 花寶 and Yönbo 蓮寶 as maidservants to the Hüngnyun-sa in the reign of King T'aejong (Muyöl, r. 654–661). See Lee 1969, p. 62, n. 283; *KYIK*, p. 536, n. 7.

³⁶ Location unknown. Also mentioned in the section on the sixth year of the reign of the Unified Silla King Hyosōng (r. 737–742) in the *Samguk sagi*. See Yi P. 1996, p. 91.

before Milbon started reading the scripture, the boy's disease was cured. He could speak and move his body. Then he told his story. Because of this [experience] Yangdo believed truly in Buddha. For the rest of his life, he did not renounce [his faith in Buddha]. He decided to make a statue of Maitreya with a *bodhisattva* to its left and right as the main [figure] of the O Hall 吳堂³⁷ of the Hŭngnyun-sa. At the same time he ordered a golden mural to be painted in the said hall.

Formerly, Milbon lived at the Kŭmgok-sa 金谷寺.³⁸ Kim Yusin 金庾信³⁹ had a close friendship with an old hermit.⁴⁰ No one knew who he was. Then, Such'ŏn 秀天,⁴¹ a relative of Kim Yusin, had been suffering for a long time from a malignant disease. Kim asked the hermit to go and have a look at him. [At that time], the monk Inhyesa 因惠師,⁴² an old friend of Such'ŏn happened to come from Chung-ak 中岳⁴³ to visit [the sick man]. When he saw the hermit, he said to him contemptuously, "Seeing your appearance [you look like] a foxy sycophant. How can you cure his disease?" The hermit said, "I received the command of Kim, [so] I was obliged [to come]." Inhyesa said, "Look at my supernatural power!" He held up an incense burner and said a spell over the incense. Suddenly a five-coloured cloud revolved around his head and heavenly flowers fell [to the ground]. The hermit said, "Your supernatural power is wonderful. I also have a skill. Let us try it. Stand in front of me!" Inhye obeyed. The hermit snapped his fingers. [At that moment] the monk rose more than one *chang* 丈⁴⁴ into the

³⁷ According to Kim P. 1995, p. 514, n. 1, this is the "dharma-hall" (*pŏptang*) of the monastery. According to Grayson 2001, p. 224, n. 3, it is another name for the lecture hall of a temple. Sørensen 2001, p. 277, n. 30: "This probably refers to a Chinese type of hall, i.e., 'O' may be taken as a reference to Wu in Zhejiang." 'O' is the Sino-Korean pronunciation of Wu, the name of an ancient kingdom and now still used to describe a region roughly coinciding with the modern Zhejiang province and the southern part of Jiangsu province.

³⁸ A temple that was located about 20 *ri* (Chin. *li*, about 400 meters) north of Kyŏngju. See Yi 1996, pp. 83–84 s.v. Kŭmgoksa; Kim P. 1995, p. 437, n. 8. This paragraph of the story is also included in Grayson 2001, pp. 208–209.

³⁹ Famous Silla general and member of the *hwarang* 花郎 or "Flower Boys", an elite youth corps. In a joint Silla-Tang attack he defeated Paekche in 660. See Pratt & Rutt 1999, p. 222 s.v. Kim Yusin; Vos 1954, 1955.

⁴⁰ Probably Milbon is meant here. See also Kamata 1988, p. 144.

⁴¹ No information on Such'ŏn.

⁴² An otherwise unknown monk, see Yi 1993, p. 246 s.v. Inhye.

⁴³ Chung-ak was one of Silla's five holy peaks. It is now called P'algong-san (1,192 m), and is located 22 km to the north of Taegu. It is the tallest mountain in the region. See Nilsen 1988, pp. 305–306; *KYTK*, p. 537, n. 20; Kim P. 1995, p. 514, n. 2.

⁴⁴ About 3 m. See Ogawa 1989, p. 1224.

air and turned upside down. After a time, he slowly came down and stuck with his head into the ground. He looked like a tall stake. People came from near by and tried to push him out, but he did not move. The hermit went away and Inhye spent the whole night with his feet in the air. The next day, Such'ŏn sent a messenger to Kim Yangdo. He sent the hermit to release the monk and to dissolve [the spell]. Inhye never displayed his talent again.

The eulogy [to Milbon] goes like this:

Crimson and purple mixed together are almost confounded with vermilion.⁴⁵

It is lamentable that fish eyes⁴⁶ deceive the ignorant.

If the hermit had not snapped his fingers lightly, many caskets would contain inferior stones.

2.2. *Hyet'ong who Subdues the Dragon*

The family background of the monk Hyet'ong is not known. When he was wearing white garments,⁴⁷ his house was at the western foot of Nam-san 南山 mountain,⁴⁸ [near] the mouth of the Ŭnch'ŏn 銀川洞 stream (nowadays a village to the east of the Namgan-sa 南澗寺).⁴⁹

One day, when he was playing on the bank of the stream to the east of his house he caught an otter and killed it. He threw its carcass into the garden. The next morning the body had disappeared. Hyet'ong [found] a trail of blood. He followed it up and found that the carcass [of the otter] had returned to its hole. It was crouching, protecting her five young. He stared with surprise [at this scene]. After a while, the boy was struck with admiration and felt many doubts and hesitations. Thereupon he renounced the world and became a monk. He changed his name to Hyet'ong. He went to Tang and visited [Shan]Wuwei

⁴⁵ Crimson and purple are “intermediate colours” (secondary colours, Chin. *jianse* 間色). *Jianse* are produced by mixing “correct colours” (primary colours, Chin. *zhengse* 正色). Vermilion is considered as one of the five *zhengse* (blue, yellow, vermilion red, white, and black). See Morohashi 1966–1968, vol. 8, p. 947b s.v. *kōshi* and vol. 6, p. 37c s.v. *shu*.

⁴⁶ Comp. 魚目混珠 “to mix up fish-eyes and pearls”, to confound things that differ but look alike. See Mathews, 1979, p. 1149, no. 7668; Morohashi 1966–1968, vol. 12, p. 717c s.v. *gyomoku konshu*.

⁴⁷ I.e., when he was still a layman.

⁴⁸ Mountain (494 m) in the southern part of Kyŏngju.

⁴⁹ This temple is no longer extant. See Yi 1996, p. 99 s.v. Namgan-sa.

Sanzang [善]無畏三藏.⁵⁰ Hyet'ong asked him to be instructed in Buddhism. [San]zang said: "How can a man from a barbarian tribe in the east be capable of being a vessel of the *dharmā*?" After all, he did not reveal the teaching. Hyet'ong could not bear to leave empty-handed easily. Although he served [the master] for three years, he was not allowed [to become his disciple]. He then angrily [went into] the garden and put a fire-pot on his head. A little later, the crown of his head burst with a thundering sound. When [San]zang heard this, he came out and saw [what was going on]. He took away the brazier and touched the crack [in Hyet'ong's head] with his fingers. He pronounced a spell and the wound healed. It left a scar shaped like the character *wang* 王. Because of this, he was called Preceptor Wang. From then on [Sanzang] considered [Hyet'ong] as a monk with a great capability and granted him the sealed transmission.

Then, at the Tang court a princess took ill.⁵¹ Emperor Gaozong 高宗 asked Sanzang to save her.⁵² But he proposed that Hyet'ong [should go] in his place. Hyet'ong received the imperial order and went to another place. [There] he filled a silver vessel with one *mal* 斗⁵³ of white beans and pronounced a spell. [Thereupon the beans] changed into divine warriors clad in white armour. They [tried] to exorcise the demon of ill health, but were unable to expel it. Then he filled a gold vessel with one *mal* of black beans and pronounced a spell. [Thereupon the beans] changed into divine warriors clad in black armor. He ordered [the warriors of] the two colours to expel [the demon] together. All of sudden, a dragon⁵⁴ ran away, and the princess was cured of her illness. [But] the dragon was angry with Hyet'ong at being expelled and came over [from Tang] to the Muning 文仍 forest⁵⁵ in Hyet'ongs native country. There it killed people and caused considerable damage.

⁵⁰ Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735). Born into a noble family in Orissa, he renounced his status and became a Buddhist monk. Eventually he became the first notable propagator of esoteric Buddhism in China, where he arrived in 716.

⁵¹ This paragraph is also included in Grayson 2001, pp. 224–225. See also Inoue 1989, pp. 63–64.

⁵² This is impossible because Śubhakarasiṃha arrived in the Tang capital Chang'an only in 716. Emperor Gaozong reigned from 650 to 683. See below.

⁵³ A dry measure, 5,944 litres in Tang. See table in Ogawa 1989, p. 1224.

⁵⁴ Chin. *jiaolong* 蛟龍. A scaly dragon that lives in rivers. For this form of dragon, see Visser 1913, pp. 76–81.

⁵⁵ Location unknown.

At that time, Chǒng Kong 鄭恭⁵⁶ was sent on a mission to Tang. He met Hyet'ong and said: "The venomous dragon that you have driven out has come to our country and is doing much harm. Please expel it quickly." In the second year of Linde 麟德,⁵⁷ *ülch'uk* 乙丑, Hyet'ong returned to Silla together with Chǒng Kong and expelled the dragon. [This time], the dragon got angry at Chǒng Kong and dwelled in a willow tree that stood outside the gate of his residence.⁵⁸ Chǒng Kong was unaware [of the presence of the dragon]. He just enjoyed the dense foliage and was fond of the tree.

At that time, King Sinmun 神文王⁵⁹ died and King Hyoso 孝昭王⁶⁰ ascended the throne. A burial mound and a road for the funeral procession were constructed. [But] Chǒng Kong's willow obstructed the way and the authorities ordered the tree to be cut down. [Then] Chǒng Kong said angrily: "It is better to cut off my head, do not cut down this tree!" The officials reported this to the king. He furiously ordered his minister of justice,⁶¹ saying: "Chǒng Kong relies on the supernatural techniques of Preceptor Wang. He is planning to disobey and to disdain the king's command. [Moreover], he says to have his head cut off. Well, we should comply with his request." Thereupon they executed him and threw his family in a pit. Then the courtiers entered into a discussion: "Since Preceptor Wang is very good friends with Chǒng Kong, he must be involved. [Therefore] we should eliminate him first." And so [the king] ordered armoured soldiers to arrest Hyet'ong. Hyet'ong was at the Wangmang-sa 王望寺.⁶² When he saw the soldiers coming [to the temple], he climbed on the roof carrying a stone bottle, an ink-stone, red ink and a brush. He shouted: "Look at what I am doing!" He drew a line [in red ink] around the neck of the bottle and said: "It would be better for you to look at your neck." [The soldiers] looked, and they all had a red line around their necks.

⁵⁶ Otherwise unknown.

⁵⁷ The year 665. *Ülch'uk* is the cyclical sign. During the reign of Emperor Gaozong, the fifth year of the reign of King Munmu of Silla.

⁵⁸ For the dragon as an inhabitant or protector of trees, see Visser 1913, pp. 15–16. The same work also refers to a tale of a serpent or dragon as the spirit of a willow on Kōyasan (where the main temple complex of the Shingon esoteric sect of Japan is located) in Japan. See *ibid.*, pp. 202–203.

⁵⁹ Died in 691; son of King Munmu who established Unified Silla in 668.

⁶⁰ Crowned in 692, son of King Sinmun.

⁶¹ *Sagu* 司寇.

⁶² This temple was located in North Kyōngsang Province. See Yi 1996, p. 454 s.v. Wangmang-sa.

They looked at each other with astonishment. Hyet'ong shouted, "If I break off the neck of this bottle all your heads will be severed [from your bodies]. How about this?" The soldiers ran away hurriedly. They went to the king [to show him] their necks with the red [line]. The king said: "The supernatural powers of the monk are beyond the control of human power. Leave him alone."

[Later on] the daughter of the king fell ill. He summoned Hyet'ong to cure her. He healed her [disease] and the king was very glad. Then Hyet'ong said: "Chǒng Kong became the victim of the dragon and has been punished too severely by the authorities." When the king heard this, he felt remorse [for his decision] and remitted the punishment [he had inflicted on Chǒng Kong's] wife and children. He gave Hyet'ong the title of *kuksa* 國師.⁶³

The dragon had already taken revenge on Chǒng Kong and went to Kijang Mountain 機張山,⁶⁴ where it changed into a bear spirit. It committed still more cruelties and the people were in deep distress. Hyet'ong entered the mountain. He admonished the dragon and gave it the precept not to kill [living things], whereupon the spirit stopped doing harm.

In the beginning, King Sinmun got an abscess on his back and asked Hyet'ong to examine it. Hyet'ong arrived and said a spell over it. [The abscess] healed instantly. Then he said: "His Majesty, in times long past,⁶⁵ you were a district steward.⁶⁶ By mistake, you decided to make a slave of the freeborn man Sinch'ung 信忠.⁶⁷ [Therefore], he felt resentment [against you]. Rebirth after rebirth he will take revenge. This malignant abscess is also caused by the curse of Sinch'ung. You should build a temple for him. If you pray for divine protection, [the spell] will break." The king was deeply [impressed by Hyet'ong's words]

⁶³ "National Preceptor", the highest rank for monks with an outstanding ability in the Koryŏ Dynasty. See *Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaekkwa sajŏn*, vol. 3, pp. 673–676 s.v. *kuksa*.

⁶⁴ Unidentified.

⁶⁵ I.e., in a previous life.

⁶⁶ *Chaegwan* 宰官.

⁶⁷ The same name appears also in another story in the *Samguk yusa*, titled *Sinch'ung kwaegwan* (Sinch'ung Steps out of Office), in part 8 of vol. 5. See *HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 364c10–365a22. The figure in this story was an official in the reign of King Hyosŏng (r. 737–741). This is probably a different person of the same name. See *KYK*, vol. 10, p. 540, n. 68. This name is also mentioned in the section on the third year of the reign of King Hyosŏng and on the sixteenth and twenty-second year of the reign of King Kyŏngdŏk (r. 742–765) in the *Samguk sagi*. See Yi P. 1996, pp. 90, 93–95.

and built a temple, called Sinch'ung Pongsŏng-sa 信忠奉聖寺.⁶⁸ When the temple was finished, a song was heard in the sky:

Because the king has built a temple, I am released from my suffering and reborn in heaven.

My hatred has vanished.

(Some sources include this event in the biography of Chinp'yo 眞表,⁶⁹ but this is a mistake.)

The Chŏrwŏn-tang 折怨堂 was built on the place where [this] song [was heard]. The hall and the temple still exist.

Before this, after Milbon, there was a high monk called Myŏngnang.⁷⁰ He entered the Dragon Palace⁷¹ and obtained the divine seal (what is called *mudrā*⁷² in Sanskrit, is called *sinin* 神印 “divine seal” in this [country]). For the first time he founded [a temple] in the Sinyurim 神遊林 forest (now Ch'ŏnwang-sa 天王寺)⁷³ and offered numerous prayers against invasions from neighbouring countries.

Now, preceptor [Wang] transmits the essence of [Shan] Wuwei [sanzang] [善]無畏[三藏]. He travels throughout the dusty world, saving and guiding people. At the same time, he builds temples and eliminates resentment with his knowledge of the former existences. The esoteric doctrine is flourishing. The Ch'ongji-am 攄持畧⁷⁴ on Ch'ŏnma[-san]

⁶⁸ A temple which was located in Kyŏngju, Sŏngdong-dong. See Yi 1996, pp. 265–266 s.v. Pongsŏng-sa.

⁶⁹ The story in the *Samguk yusa*, titled *Chinp'yo chŏn kan* (Chinp'yo Transmits the Tablets), in part 5 of vol. 4. See *HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 350a20–351b9. See also the subsequent story, titled *Kwandong P'ung-ak Paryŏnsu sŏkki* (The Record on Stone of the Paryŏnsu Temple on Mt. P'ung-ak in Kwandong), *HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 351b10–352c7.

⁷⁰ This passage probably belongs to the next story, “Myŏngnang's Divine Seal”; see below.

⁷¹ Dragons play a conspicuous role in protecting the Buddhist religion in the early stages of its development in Silla. As they appear not only in the Indian Buddhist tradition, but also in Chinese and Korean legends and folklore, albeit in different roles, they provided an ideal vehicle to introduce a new tradition. The association of dragons with water stems from the Chinese tradition, so it is not surprising to find them protecting and aiding Korean monks who traversed the sea to find the Law in China. Visits to the Dragon Palace under the sea, a recurring motif in the biographies of monks, are also commonly seen in later folk narrations. See below, note 81.

⁷² Transcribed *munduru* 文豆婁. See below, note 132, and also p. 296 for more evidence that this is a transcription of *mudrā* and that it is here used not in its standard sense of hand gesture, but rather in the sense of a seal on which the name of a Buddha is engraved and which is endowed with magical properties.

⁷³ See below, note 130.

⁷⁴ The term *ch'ongji* (Chin. *zongchi*), “all-retaining”, is a Sino-Korean translation for

天磨[山] and the Chusök-wŏn 呪錫院⁷⁵ on Mo-ak 母岳 are all subsidiary [temples] of this school.

Someone says that Hyet'ong's name as a layman was Chonsŭng Kakkan 尊勝角干.⁷⁶ *Kakkan*⁷⁷ is the high rank of grand councillor⁷⁸ in Silla. [But] I have not yet heard of any evidence of Hyet'ong's career as an official. It has been said that he shot a wolf, but the details remain unknown.

The eulogy to [Hyet'ong] goes as follows:

The mountain peaches and the apricots in the valley cast an oblique shadow on the fence.

Spring deepens on the path and the flowers on both banks [are in bloom].

Fortunately the young master caught the otter in a leisurely way.

He chased the demon and the [teachings] outside [the path] far away from the capital.

2.3. *Myŏngnang's Divine Seal*

According to the *Pon'gi* 本記⁷⁹ of the Kŭmgwang-sa 金光寺,⁸⁰

Myŏngnang was born in Silla. He entered Tang China and studied the [Buddhist] path. On his voyage back [to Silla] he was invited by the Sea Dragon. He entered the palace of the dragon where he transmitted the esoteric teachings.⁸¹ The dragon donated 1,000 *yang* 兩⁸² [to Myŏngnang]

dhāraṇī. *Am* is a small Buddhist temple. This temple existed on the Sŏnggŏ-san in Kyŏng-gido Province (Yŏngnam-myŏn, Kaep'ung-gun). See Yi 1996, p. 601 s.v. Ch'ongji-sa.

⁷⁵ Yi 1996, p. 551 s.v. Chusök-wŏn, refers to the Talsŏng-sa. A temple which existed on Mo-ak Mountain (793 m), North Chŏlla Province (Chong'in-tong, Wansan-gu, Chŏnju-si). See *ibid.*, p. 114 s.v. Talsŏng-sa.

⁷⁶ Not identified.

⁷⁷ The highest of the seventeen official ranks in Silla, also called *ibŏlch'an*. See Lee 1984, pp. 50–51; *KYK*, p. 262.

⁷⁸ *Chaesang* 宰相.

⁷⁹ An otherwise unidentified book.

⁸⁰ A temple no longer extant in Kyŏngju (Changch'angjuk, Nam-san, T'aptong). See Yi 1996, p. 84 s.v. Kŭmgwang-sa. But according to Kim P. 1995, p. 522 n. 2, a former temple in Minam-myŏn, Wŏlsŏng-gun, Northern Kyŏngsang Province.

⁸¹ This is reminiscent of the Dragon Palace where Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 AD, one of the greatest Buddhist philosophers) received the scriptures and comprehended their ultimate meaning after reciting them for ninety days. See Lee 1969, p. 23 n. 38. See also Kamata 1988, pp. 142, 147 n. 2. The Paekche monk Hyŏn'gwang is also said to have expounded the *dharma* in the palace of the Sea Dragon while returning to Korea. See Best 1991, p. 192. For the contacts of Myŏngnang and other Korean monks with the Sea Dragon, see Buswell 1989b, pp. 52–53, 53 n. 29.

⁸² 37.3 kg. See Ogawa 1989, p. 1224.

(someone says 1,000 *kŭn* 斤).⁸³ Thereupon, Myōngnang continued his voyage under the ground and arrived at the bottom of a well in his residence [in Silla]. He donated his house to change it into a temple. He decorated the *stūpa* and the statues with the gold given to him by the Dragon King. The brilliance was special. Therefore it was called Kūmgwang[-sa] (gold-glow temple).

(According to the *Sūngjŏn* 僧傳⁸⁴ it is called Kūmu-sa 金羽寺,⁸⁵ [but this] is a mistake).

His *hwi* 諱⁸⁶ was Myōngnang and his *cha* 字⁸⁷ Kugyuk 國育.⁸⁸ He was the son of Chaeryang 才良,⁸⁹ a *sagan* 沙干⁹⁰ of Silla. His mother was called Lady Namgan 南澗.⁹¹ Others say that she was Pōpsūngnang 法乘娘, a daughter of the *sop'an* 蘇判⁹² Murim 茂林⁹³ of the Kim 金 clan,⁹⁴ and the younger sister of Chajang.⁹⁵ [Chaeryang had] three sons. The eldest son was called Kukkyo Taedōk 國教大德, the second son Ŭian 義安 Taedōk.⁹⁶ Myōngnang was the last. In the beginning, his mother became pregnant after she had a dream in which she swallowed a blue gem.

[Myōngnang] entered Tang China in the first year of Queen Sōndōk⁹⁷ and came back in *ŭlmi* 乙未, the ninth year of Zhenguan 貞觀.⁹⁸ In *mujin* 戊辰, the first year of Zongzhang 總章,⁹⁹ the Tang

⁸³ 596.82 kg. See Ogawa 1989, p. 1224.

⁸⁴ "Biography of Monks". Not identified. The *Haedong kosŭng chŏn*?

⁸⁵ Not entered in Yi 1996.

⁸⁶ His personal name. See Pratt & Rutt 1999, pp. 308–309 s.v. Names, personal.

⁸⁷ Name given on coming of age.

⁸⁸ Otherwise unknown.

⁸⁹ Otherwise unknown.

⁹⁰ The eighth rank in the seventeen Silla office ranks. See Kim P. 1995, p. 522, n. 4; *KYK*, p. 262.

⁹¹ Otherwise unknown. See Yi 1993, p. 55 s.v. Namgan Puin.

⁹² The third rank in the seventeen Silla office ranks. See Kim P. 1995, p. 187, n. 7.

⁹³ The father of the master Chajang (7th century). Mentioned in Chajang's biography in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (T.2060.50.639a11) and in the *Samguk yusa*, vol. 4, part 5, titled *Chajang chōngnyul* (Chajang Establishes the Monastic Rules), *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 346a3.

⁹⁴ Powerful clan which furnished the line of rulers in Silla. See Henthorn 1971, p. 35.

⁹⁵ Not mentioned in Chajang's biographies.

⁹⁶ Kukkyo is otherwise unknown. *Taedōk*, title of monks with great virtue. Cf. Skt. *bhadanta*. A monk called Ŭian is also mentioned in the section on the fourteenth year of the reign of King Munmu of Silla in the *Samguk sagi*. See Yi P. 1996, p. 75; Yi 1993, p. 34 s.v. Kukkyo, p. 228 s.v. Ŭian.

⁹⁷ 632.

⁹⁸ 635, during the reign of the Tang emperor Taizong. *Ŭlmi* is the cyclical sign.

⁹⁹ 668, during the reign of the Tang emperor Gaozong. *Mujin* is the cyclical sign.

general Li Ji 李勣¹⁰⁰ commanded a large army and destroyed Ko[gu]ryō in alliance with Silla. Thereafter he stationed his remaining troops in Paekche to attack and destroy Silla. [But] the people of Silla knew this and dispatched troops to repel [the Tang army]. When [Emperor] Gaozong heard this he became enraged and ordered Xue Bang 薛邦¹⁰¹ to mobilise troops in order to attack [Silla]. Hearing this, King Munmu 文武 became afraid and requested the monk to drive away the enemy by performing a secret ritual. (This fact is found in the biography of King Munmu).¹⁰² From this time forth, Myōngnang was regarded as the founder of the Sinin-jong 神印宗.¹⁰³

When our [King] T'aejo 太祖¹⁰⁴ founded [Koryō], the country was troubled by pirates. The king asked the two great monks Kwanghak 廣學 and Taeyōn 大緣,¹⁰⁵ the descendants of Anhye 安惠 and Nangyung 朗融,¹⁰⁶ to perform a ritual to repulse and subjugate [the pirates]. They are all in Myōngnang's lineage. Therefore, Myōngnang is considered as one of the nine patriarchs, with Nāgārjuna as the first.

(According to the records of the [aforementioned] temple three masters are *vinaya* patriarchs, but this is unclear.) Furthermore, [King] T'aejo founded the Hyōnsōng-sa 現聖寺¹⁰⁷ and made [this temple] the headquarters of the entire school [of Myōngnang].

¹⁰⁰ Li Shiji 李世勣. He conquered Koguryō in 668. See Twitchett 1997, p. 284; Lee 1984, p. 67.

¹⁰¹ The Tang general Xue Rengui 薛仁貴. See Jamieson 1970, pp. 85–87; *KYIK*, p. 335, n. 26.

¹⁰² See story titled *Munho-wang Pōmmin* (King Munho Pōmmin) in *Samguk yusa*, vol. 2, part 2 (*HPC*, vol. 6, pp. 287b–289b). King Munmu (r. 661–81) established Unified Silla in 668. See below, note 125.

¹⁰³ The *Samguk yusa* is the oldest extant source that mentions this school. It is doubtful whether the Sinin-jong existed as a school of Korean esoteric Buddhism in (Unified) Silla. See Sørensen 1993, pp. 86–87. Suh 1994, pp. 282–284.

¹⁰⁴ Wang Kōn 王建 (r. 918–43), the founder of the Koryō dynasty.

¹⁰⁵ These monks are mentioned again in the passage following the story of Myōngnang. See *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 357: “According to a footnote in a notice pasted on a pillar of the Tolbaek-sa, Kwanghak and Taeyōn are the sons of Chōngninyō, the mother of Myōngjunyō. Her mother was Ajinyō, the mother of Kōch'ōn, the local headman (*hojang*) of Kyōngju.” According to Kim P. 1995, p. 524, n. 2, the Tolbaek-sa is a former temple in Kyōngju. But according to Yi 1996, p. 139 s.v. Tolbaek-sa, the temple was located in Kaesōng. See also Yi 1993, p. 32 s.v. Kwanghak, p. 63 s.v. Taeyōn.

¹⁰⁶ The monks Anhye and Nangyung only appear in this story of the *Samguk yusa*. See Yi 1993, p. 177 s.v. Anhye. According to the *KYIK*, p. 542, n. 91, the four characters An 安, Hye 惠, Nang 朗 and Yung 融 probably represent the names of four monks, i.e., Anham 安含, Hyet'ong, Myōngnang and Yungch'ōn 融天. Anham and Yungch'ōn are both mentioned in the *Samguk yusa*, see *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 318b11–12 and p. 362c7. See also Anham's biography in Lee 1969, pp. 83–88.

¹⁰⁷ This temple was located in Kaesōng. See Yi 1996, pp. 636–637 s.v. Hyōnsōng-sa.

3. MILBON, HYET'ONG AND MYÖNGNANG

The legendary stories of Milbon contained in the *Samguk yusa* are our only source of information on this monk.¹⁰⁸ The text contains no information on his descent, his Buddhist career, and so forth. Milbon is represented here as a renowned master skilled in healing diseases by reciting Buddhist texts. This story explicitly mentions the *Yāksagyōng*, the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* (Medicine Buddha Scripture).¹⁰⁹ In both stories, Milbon is summoned after the fruitless efforts of another monk. By reciting he succeeds in healing illness. He is also more successful than the non-Buddhist exorcists in driving away demons. The old fox probably represents an indigenous spirit.¹¹⁰ This story tells us that Milbon's skills exceed those of other monks relied on by the queen or by high Silla officials and that he was more successful in subduing native spirits than the local shamans.¹¹¹ Although it is difficult to regard Milbon as a historical figure, he is considered by Korean scholars as one of the founders of Korean esoteric Buddhism (*milgyo*).¹¹²

Hyet'ong is not mentioned in any other Korean or Chinese source.¹¹³ Apart from the fact that his house was near a stream along the western side of Mt. Namsan near Kyōngju 慶州, the *Samguk yusa* contains no further biographical data on Hyet'ong as a layman. Hyet'ong is said to have studied under Wuwei Sanzang. Wuwei Sanzang is the abbreviated name of Shanwuwei Sanzang, the esoteric Buddhist Tang master Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735). But Hyet'ong's discipleship is chronologically impossible. It is said that Hyet'ong returned to Silla in the second year of Linde (665), but at that time Śubhakarasiṃha was not yet active in China. He reached the Tang capital Chang'an

¹⁰⁸ See Sørensen 1993, p. 80; Yi 1993, p. 97 s.v. Milbon.

¹⁰⁹ Several Chinese translations. Most popular version is the translation by Xuanzang (602–664, famous for his pilgrimage to India and as a translator), T.450.14. For more on the versions and the contents of this text, see Birnbaum 1979, pp. 52–61. The Medicine Buddha is a manifestation of the Buddha based on the metaphor of healing: the Buddha's teaching is often compared to a medicine for the deluded. However, the Medicine Buddha was also thought to have the ability to cure actual diseases.

¹¹⁰ For an example of a Chinese monk exorcising a fox out of the body of an ill woman, see the story quoted from the *Liang gaoseng zhuan* 梁高僧傳 in Kieschnick 1997, p. 84.

¹¹¹ See also Inoue 1989, pp. 67–68; Suh 1994, pp. 265–266.

¹¹² See Sørensen 1993, p. 79; Suh 1994, p. 264.

¹¹³ See Sørensen 1993, p. 80; Yi 1993, p. 352 s.v. Hyet'ong.

in 716, that is to say half a century after Hyet'ong is supposed to have left Tang.¹¹⁴ Among the disciples of Śubhākarasimha were the Unified Silla monks Hyōnch'o 玄超, Pulgasaŭi 不可思議 and possibly Ŭirim 義林.¹¹⁵ However, no Chinese source or biography of Śubhakarasiṃha mentions Hyet'ong.¹¹⁶

Similar to Milbon, Hyet'ong is said in the *Samguk yusa* to have healing skills in which he relied on spells or formulas to cure Tang and Silla princesses. A new element here is the dragon, which is expelled from the body of the Chinese princess. This Chinese dragon comes to Silla to take revenge and even transforms into a bear spirit. In other words, this local spirit turns into a demonic creature disturbing the people.¹¹⁷

The *Samguk yusa* is the only source, which mentions Myōngnang.¹¹⁸ The story of Myōngnang contains more "concrete" biographical elements than the two preceding. It relates that Myōngnang's familiar name or *cha* was Kugyuk, and that he was the son of Chaeryang, a high official of Silla. According to this story, Chaeryang had three sons who all became monks, namely Kukkyo, Ŭian and Myōngnang. His mother was Namgan, a daughter of Murim, who was a high aristocratic official of the third rank in the seventeen Silla office ranks. Except for Murim, none of the aforementioned names appear in any other surviving sources. According to the story, Myōngnang's mother is a sister of the renowned monk Chajang. In other words, the *Samguk yusa* tells us that Myōngnang is a nephew of the great master Chajang. Unfortunately, neither Myōngnang nor Chajang's sister is found in the biographies of Chajang. The biography of Chajang is found in Daoxuan's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* and in volume 4 of the *Samguk yusa*.¹¹⁹ Chajang went to China in 636 or 638, returning in 643.¹²⁰ According to the *Samguk yusa*, Myōngnang was in Tang China from 632 and came back to Silla in 635, one or three years before his maternal uncle Chajang made the journey. Comparing these dates, the family relationship between these two monks

¹¹⁴ For a biography of Śubhākarasiṃha, see Chou 1944, pp. 251–272.

¹¹⁵ For these monks, see Sørensen 1993, p. 82; Suh 1994, p. 263; Kamata 1987, pp. 105–106.

¹¹⁶ The problem of Hyet'ong's discipleship under Śubhākarasiṃha is discussed in Kamata 1987, p. 104.

¹¹⁷ See Inoue's (1989, pp. 63–68) discussion and interpretation of the dragon's transformation in Hyet'ong's story.

¹¹⁸ See Yi 1993, p. 84 s.v. Myōngnang.

¹¹⁹ See above, note 93.

¹²⁰ See Lee 1969, p. 9, n. 47.

should be considered with caution.¹²¹ In spite of all the names in this story, there is again practically nothing that we can substantiate.

In the story it is also said that Myōngnang repelled the Tang fleet by performing a ritual. As a matter of fact, after assisting Silla in conquering Paekche in 663 and Koguryō in 668, the Chinese kept troops stationed in these conquered states, appearing set to invade the kingdom of Silla in the 670s.¹²² As a reaction to the Tang attempt to control the entire peninsula, Silla attacked the Tang forces. In 671 Silla occupied the former Paekche capital Sabi 泗沘. And in 676, the Silla army succeeded in driving back the Chinese forces.¹²³

In the story devoted to Myōngnang it is said that after stopping the Chinese invaders, he was considered as the founder of the Sinin-jong, the School of the Divine Mudrā. The *Samguk yusa* is the first source that uses this denomination. The name of this school is also mentioned in the *Koryō-sa* 高麗史 (The History of the Koryō Dynasty), compiled in 1451.¹²⁴

Of the three stories I have discussed so far, the biography and activities of Myōngnang excel in detail. Unlike Milbon and Hyet'ong, Myōngnang is also mentioned in other volumes of the *Samguk yusa*. Namely, in the story devoted to King Munmu included in *kwŏn* 2:¹²⁵

*Kakkan*¹²⁶ Kim Ch'ŏnjon 金天尊¹²⁷ reported to [the king], saying, "Recently, there is the monk Myōngnang. He entered into the Dragon Palace, transmitted the secret teaching and returned [to Silla]. Please summon him and ask him."

Myōngnang said, "South of Nang-san 狼山 mountain¹²⁸ there is the Sinyurim 神遊林 forest.¹²⁹ If you build the Sach'ŏnwang-sa 四天王寺¹³⁰ there and establish a place for practicing, that will be good." At that time, a messenger from Chōngju 貞州¹³¹ came running and reported, "Innumerable Tang troops reached our frontiers and are

¹²¹ A discussion of this can be found in Kamata 1988, p. 195.

¹²² For the military operations of Tang in Korea, see Twitchett 1997, pp. 232–235, 282–285; Jamieson 1970, pp. 83–94; Lee 1984, pp. 66–71.

¹²³ On Silla's expulsion of Tang, see Lee 1984, pp. 69–71.

¹²⁴ See Sørensen 1993, p. 86; Suh 1994, p. 283; Suh 1995, p. 151.

¹²⁵ See *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 288a. The following passage is also included in Grayson 2001, pp. 218–220.

¹²⁶ See above, note 77.

¹²⁷ Otherwise unknown.

¹²⁸ To the south of Kyōngju.

¹²⁹ On the southern slope of Nang-san mountain.

¹³⁰ A temple no longer extant, see Yi 1996, pp. 299–300 s.v. Sach'ŏnwang-sa.

¹³¹ Kaep'ung-gun in Kyōnggido. See Kim P. 1995, p. 140, n. 1.

threatening us from the sea.” The king called Myōngnang and said, “The enemy attack is likely to occur at any moment. What should we do?” Myōngnang said, “If we build a temporary [temple] with silk of various colours, that will be good.” Then he constructed a temple of silk and with grass he made images of the Divine Kings of the Five Directions. Myōngnang headed [a group of] twelve monks who were excellent in *yoga* and performed [together] the secret ritual of the *mudrā*.¹³² And then, even before the troops of Tang and Silla confronted one another, wind and great waves arose ragingly. All the Tang vessels sank under the water. Afterwards, [the king] reconstructed the temple and called it the Sach'ōnwang-sa. Until the present, the altar has not yet disappeared. (According to the *Kuksa* 國史¹³³ [the temple] was rebuilt in *kimyo* 己卯, the first year of Tiaolu 調露.)¹³⁴

In *kwōn* 4 he is mentioned again as the patriarch of the Sinin-jong and as the founder of a temple called Kūmgang-sa 金剛寺¹³⁵ in Kyōngju:

Myōngnang, the founder of the Sinin [school] had newly built the Kūmgang-sa and organised a celebration of its completion.¹³⁶

Although the ritual in *kwōn* 2 is not described in detail, Korean scholars are of the opinion that the subjugation performed by Myōngnang is based on the *Guanding jing* 灌頂經, better known as the *Consecration* or *Abhiṣeka-sūtra*.¹³⁷ The Chinese translation of this text is traditionally attributed to Śrīmitra of the Eastern Jin (d. 343), a Kuchean master reknown for his occult powers. It seems however probable that Huijian 慧簡 (n.d., fl. 457), known to have adapted many early Chinese *sūtra* translations, composed or compiled this scripture in the middle of the

¹³² Transcribed *munduru* 文豆婁. According to the translation in Grayson (2001, p. 219): “...the secret rites of the Bodhisattva Manjusri...” The Japanese translation in *KYK*, p. 336: 文を作りて密教の法を豆婁す. The Japanese translator adds in a note (*ibid.*, p. 336 n. 45) that the meaning is unclear, and wonders whether 豆婁 is not a phonetic translation of the Sanskrit root \sqrt{dhy} . Kamata (1987, p. 103) and Toganoo (1977, p. 104 n. 5) translate it as *mantra*.

¹³³ The *Samguk sagi*. See *Silla pon'gi*, vol. 7, *Munmu-wang*, in the *Samguk sagi* (Yi P. 1996, p. 76); *KYK*, p. 336 n. 48.

¹³⁴ 679. During the reign of Tang Emperor Gaozong. The nineteenth year of the Silla King Munmu.

¹³⁵ A former temple. See Yi 1996, p. 82 s.v. Kūmgang-sa.

¹³⁶ See *Samguk yusa*, vol. 4, part 5, the story titled *I Hye tongjin* (The Two Hyes Mingle with the Dust). See *HPG*, vol. 6, p. 345c10–11.

¹³⁷ T.1331.21. The title refers to an esoteric initiation rite for Buddhist believers, but the book itself is a compilation of *dhāraṇī sūtras*. On this text, see Strickmann 1990, pp. 75–118.

fifth century.¹³⁸ The Korean scholar Pak T'aehwa 朴泰華¹³⁹ refers in his contribution to a collection of papers devoted to Korean esoteric Buddhism to a passage in book 7 of the *Guanding jing*, titled *Guanding fumo fengyin dashenzhou jing* 灌頂伏魔封印大神呪經, meaning “Seals (*mudrās*) and Great Spells that Subdue Demons”.¹⁴⁰ In this passage we find practically the same unusual phonetic translation for *mudrā* as mentioned in the *Samguk yusa*, namely *wentoulou* 文頭婁, Sino-Korean *munduru*.¹⁴¹ Both the *Samguk yusa* and the *Guanding jing* note that this term means *shenyin* 神印, “divine seal”.¹⁴² Judging from the index to the esoteric Buddhist section (*Mikkyō-bu* 密教部) in the *Taishō* edition, this exceptional phonetic transcription for *mudrā* is only used in the *Guanding jing*. The author of this apocryphal text probably employed the unusual Chinese transcription *wentoulou* in order to give the impression that the text is a genuine translation from an Indian original.¹⁴³ The phonetic transliteration is included as a headword in the Japanese esoteric Buddhist encyclopedia *Mikkyō daijiten* 密教大辭典.¹⁴⁴ In this lexicon it is not explained in its standard meaning of hand-gesture, but as a seal of gold, silver or sandalwood on which the name of a deity or Buddha is engraved. The interpretation of the *Mikkyō daijiten* is based on the same passage in the *Guanding jing*. According to this scripture, one should write the names of the Divine Kings of the Five Directions (Chin. *wufang shenwang* 五方神王) on a round piece of wood.¹⁴⁵ The text mentions the names of these deities, but their Sanskrit-seeming names in Chinese transcription do not appear in any Buddhist source.¹⁴⁶ It is said that with this seal one will be able to cure diseases and to expel fear and demons.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ Strickmann 1990, pp. 90–93.

¹³⁹ See Pak 1986, pp. 19–20.

¹⁴⁰ T.1331.21.515b14 and following. For an English translation of this chapter of the *Guanding jing*, see Strickmann 1993, pp. 21–27.

¹⁴¹ See T.1331.21.515b16.

¹⁴² See T.1331.21.515 b25; *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 356b14.

¹⁴³ See Strickmann, 1993, p. 22 n. 34, pp. 28–29.

¹⁴⁴ *Mikkyō daijiten*, p. 2170 s.v. *monzuru*.

¹⁴⁵ See T.1331.21.515 b15–16.

¹⁴⁶ See T.1331.21.515 a29–b8; Strickmann 1993, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ In his study of the Daoist seal, Strickmann (1993, p. 21) writes about Chapter VII of the *Guanding jing*: “The work furnishes the most explicit account of the Daoist ritual of exorcistic sigillation—but this time, in a Buddhist context.”

4. CONCLUSION

The passages devoted to Milbon, Hyet'ong and Myŏngnang are an interesting combination of historical facts and fictional elements. These monks are presented as thaumaturges specialised in exorcism or in healing. Thus they follow in the footsteps of Hŭkhoja 黑胡子, a legendary figure thought to have been one of the earliest transmitters of Buddhism to Silla, who is said to have cured a royal princess.¹⁴⁸ Examples of this ability to heal daughters of sovereigns are also found in the Chinese biographies of the esoteric Tang masters Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi (671–741) and Amoghavajra (705–774).¹⁴⁹ This pattern of monks performing miracles reminds us of the idealised biographies found in the Chinese hagiographic literature.¹⁵⁰ Although much of the material in the *Samguk yusa* is clearly fictitious, it is more than likely that in the seventh century Korean monks had already become acquainted with esoteric Buddhism in China. Around the time Hyet'ong and Myŏngnang are said to have functioned in China, a number of Chinese and Central Asian masters had already been active in Tang. Zhitong 智通 (± 653) for example, was translating scriptures devoted to the Avalokiteśvara with a thousand hands.¹⁵¹ And in 652 the Indian monk Atikūta arrived in Chang'an 長安 where he performed the first *abhiṣeka* (esoteric initiation rite) in China.¹⁵²

From the stories in the *Samguk yusa* it appears that the activities of Milbon, Hyet'ong and Myŏngnang were limited to the court. One curious instance of the usage of *dhāraṇī* outside the court circles may be found in volume 2, in the story of Queen Chinsŏng 眞聖女王 (887–898) who ruled at the end of Unified Silla. In this story Queen Chinsŏng is accused of bad government. According to the *Samguk yusa*, someone who opposed the corruption of her court scattered leaflets on the road. These pieces of paper contained a spell, which at first sight looked like a *dhāraṇī*, but actually was a criticism against her misrule.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ See Lee 1969, p. 51.

¹⁴⁹ See the examples mentioned in Sørensen 2001, p. 280; Sørensen 1993, p. 80.

¹⁵⁰ On this subject, see Kieschnick 1997.

¹⁵¹ See Kamata 1987, p. 104; Yamasaki 1988, p. 17.

¹⁵² See Kamata 1987, p. 104; Yamasaki 1988, p. 17.

¹⁵³ See *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 296a–b; *KYK*, p. 357; Kim P. 1995, pp. 186–187.

Nammu 南無¹⁵⁴ mangguk 亡國¹⁵⁵ ch'allinaje 刹尼那帝¹⁵⁶ p'anni p'anni
sop'anni 判尼判尼蘇判尼¹⁵⁷ uusamagan 于于三阿干¹⁵⁸ pui 晁伊¹⁵⁹
sap'aga 娑婆訶.¹⁶⁰

Someone explained the [dhāraṇī], saying, “Ch'allinaje refers to the queen. P'anni p'anni sop'anni corresponds with two sop'an. Sop'an is a degree of nobility. Uusamagan [represents] three or four favourite ministers.¹⁶¹ Pui is [Lady] Puho 晁好.¹⁶²

The spell imitates the often meaningless, foreign-sounding utterances as well as the repetition of words characteristic of dhāraṇīs, and moreover frames them between two genuine Sanskrit words, *namas* and *svāhā*, both invocations used when addressing a god. Despite this formal resemblance, it is actually a pastiche of a dhāraṇī, using Sino-Korean titles and perhaps native Korean words transcribed in Chinese characters to lampoon Queen Chinsōng, who ruined the state by entrusting her cronies with government affairs. The choice of a pseudo-dhāraṇī as a vehicle for this criticism is significant, in that it may have been intended to poke fun at the over-reliance of the court on Buddhist ritual in general and dhāraṇī in particular.¹⁶³ Introduced by Milbon,

¹⁵⁴ Sanskrit *namas*.

¹⁵⁵ “To ruin the nation.”

¹⁵⁶ The characters 刹, 尼, 那, and 帝 are used to transcribe Indian sounds in dhāraṇī and mantra. E.g., 刹 *kṣe, kṣa*; 尼 *nī*; 那 *na*; 帝 *te*. This set of characters, however, does not appear to correspond to any Indian term. The meaning of the character 帝 is “emperor, empress.”

¹⁵⁷ Sop'an is the third rank in the seventeen Silla office ranks. See *KYIK*, p. 262.

¹⁵⁸ 于于三阿干 is perhaps to be read as 干干三阿干 “kan'gansamagan”. 阿干 = 阿尺干 *ach'ōgan*. *Achōgan* is the sixth rank in the seventeen Silla office ranks. Also called *Ach'an*. See *Han'guk hanja-ō sajōn*, vol. 4, p. 724 s.v. *agan*. *KYIK*, p. 262.

¹⁵⁹ See *infra*, note 162.

¹⁶⁰ Sanskrit *svāhā*. “Hail! Hail to! May a blessing rest on...!” in classical Sanskrit used in making oblations to the gods, is very common at the end of Buddhist dhāraṇīs and mantras. The words before *svāhā* are often untranslatable or names of gods and goddesses (Siglinde Dietz, e-mail communication).

¹⁶¹ Compare with 與其夫魏弘匝干等三四寵臣 at the beginning of this story: “Within a few years of gaining the throne, her wet-nurse Lady Puho, together with her husband Wi Hong chapkan (= chapch'an, third of the seventeen Silla government ranks?) and three or four sycophantic ministers, usurped power and meddled in politics.” see *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 296 a14–15.

¹⁶² The wet-nurse of Queen Chinsōng mentioned in the beginning of this story, see *HPC*, vol. 6, p. 296 a 14.

¹⁶³ This is chiefly attested in the royal ancestor cult; more than ten *stūpas* dating to the Unified Silla period have been found to contain the *Wūgou jīngguāng dà tuoluōmì jīng* 無垢淨光大陀羅尼經 (*Dhāraṇī* of Undefined Pure Light, T.1024.19.717–721, Skt. *Rasmivimalavīsuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī*), evidently used to pray for the wellbeing of deceased kings and create merit on their behalf. This dhāraṇī was only introduced in 706, so

Hyet'ong and Myŏngnang in the course of the seventh century, by the tenth century *dhāraṇīs* had obviously been completely assimilated, at least by the upper strata of society, although their potency clearly did not remain uncontested.

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THE BUDDHIST WAY INTO TIBET

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the time of lHa-tho-tho-ri-gnyan-btsan the Tsinta-ma-ni'i-gzungs, the sPang-bkong-phyag-rgya-ma and other [books] fell from heaven and were worshipped. Because of this, the life-span of the king and that of the kingdom increased. This became known as the “Beginning of the Holy Doctrine”.¹

Thus 'Gos-lo-tsa-ba gZhon-nu-dpal, the author of the Tibetan chronicle *Deb-ther-sngon-po*, the “Blue Annals”, which he wrote in 1478 AD, starts his account about the humble beginnings of Buddhism in Tibet. The origins of Buddhism are put down to a mythical past intricately interwoven with the indigenous origin myths of the Tibetan people. Apart from this mythical encounter with the Buddhist doctrine, what historical evidence is there to establish reliable facts about the Buddhist way into Tibet, to re-tell the advent of the *dharma* in the land of snow?

There are not many but at least a few independent sources which the historian of religion can examine to get a more or less accurate account about the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. But first we have to consider the setting of the stage.

2. THE TERRITORY AND ITS INHABITANTS

Which region do we mean when we speak of “Tibet”? Tibet in pre-modern times comprised a much larger territory than today's Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), a part of China. The historic kingdom of Tibet at the height of its power in the seventh to ninth centuries covered a vast area, reaching from Northern China to Northern India. Dunhuang 敦煌 on the Silk Road and Northern Yunnan 雲南 were under Tibetan dominion, and even Western Central Asia felt the Tibetan military pressure. The very name “Tibet” bears witness to this

¹ *Deb-ther-sngon-po*, vol. 1, p. 63 (lines 14–17).

expansion of the Tibetan empire because it derives from the Arabian “Tubbat” by which the Arabs called the Tibetans whom they encountered in Western Central Asia during these centuries. The Tibetans call themselves *bod-pa* and their country *bod*, respectively *bod-yul*, a name which is already found in the Old Tibetan sources.

In the south the Tibetan empire of the royal period included Ladakh and parts of Nepal and Northern India. The frontiers of political Tibet have, however, together with the changing fortunes of its rulers, shifted over time. In later centuries ethnic Tibet included the area from the Easternmost Kham district to mNga'-ris in the west and Ding-ri in the south, near the Nepalese border. To the north stretched the vast expanse of the Byang-thang, the “Northern Plain”, as the region is called in Tibetan, which even today is sparsely inhabited by pastoral nomads, without permanent settlements.

For our purpose we will mainly concentrate on the provinces of dBus and gTsang, which together comprise Central Tibet, because these two central provinces provided the setting for the first encounter of the Tibetans with Buddhism. dBus and gTsang are considered to be the “heart” of Tibet, an image which is stressed in indigenous myth and confirmed in Buddhist ritual, as we shall later see.

The ethnic origins of the Tibetan people are still unknown. There is extensive evidence of racial diversity through the ages, the one exception being Eastern Tibet, where the people seem to have descended from the nomadic Qiang 羌 tribes who are attested to in Chinese sources as early as the third century AD and whose movements into the Tibetan plateau are carefully described in the Chinese records.

3. THE SOURCES

The available Tibetan sources upon which I have based my presentation in this essay, can be divided into two main groups, each of them specified by (a) the date of origin and (b) the intention of the (sometimes unknown) authors. The first group consists of the so-called Dunhuang documents and the Old Tibetan inscriptions preserved on pillars and carved on stones in Lhasa and its vicinity. Some of the stone inscriptions were also written down in later literary sources of the second group, the so-called “religious histories” (*chos-'byung*), or in works like the *Mani-bka'-'bum* which contain much material from these early times. If we choose an emic way to classify the sources we can differentiate

them as belonging (1) to the *snga-dar*, the “early spread [of the *dharmā*]”, including the period from the seventh to the ninth century, and (2) the *phyi-dar*, the “later spread [of the *dharmā*]”, starting in the late tenth century and continuing up to the present. Both groups of sources testify to the curious mixture of historical and mythical narration that characterises the narrative of the advent of Buddhism in Tibet.

3.1. *The snga-dar Group*

A first category of important sources testifying to the advent of Buddhism in Tibet are the inscriptions, mostly on pillars, but sometimes also on rocks, found in Lhasa and its vicinity, but increasingly also in other parts of the country.² The earliest inscription relating to Buddhism in Tibet is the *rdo-ring*, the stone pillar near the entrance to the great temple of bSam-yas, Tibet’s first Buddhist monastery. This inscription can be dated to around 780.³ A few other stone inscriptions on pillars erected in Lhasa and rock inscriptions found in various parts of the country testify to the extent of the Buddhist expansion during the royal period.

By far the most important textual sources of the royal period are, however, the documents discovered at the end of the nineteenth century by the two scholar-explorers Paul Pelliot and Sir Aurel Stein in the caves of Dunhuang of East Turkestan. In this remote region, they found not only Buddhist temples and shrines, but also archaeological evidence of the Tibetan presence in the area in the form of military posts, bringing to light, among material remains like clothing and armour, fragments of official papers written in Tibetan and inscribed tally-sticks used by the Tibetan troops for local records and message plaques, many of them dating to the eighth and ninth century.⁴ The most important find included the discovery of caves which were sealed off in the late tenth century. One of them, the so-called “library cave” (cave 17) served as a ritual “burial place” of scriptures in as many as 24 different languages, among them a few texts written in Old Tibetan. One of these texts, today known as the *Dunhuang Annals*, recounts events at the royal

² See, for example, Tsering 1982, p. 363. A photo of the inscription of Brag-lha-mo is given on page 397.

³ See Richardson 1985, pp. 26–31, and Scherrer-Schaub 2002, p. 267 n. 20, confirming Richardson’s opinion.

⁴ See Richardson & Snellgrove 1980, p. 76.

Tibetan court of the Yar-lung dynasty and its most important affairs of state. Another text, the so-called *Dunhuang Chronicle*, consists of the same contents as the *Dunhuang Annals*, but tells them in a more literary fashion. It also contains legends about the mythical origins of the Tibetans. The Dunhuang documents unwittingly and unintentionally tell us about the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet far more than any later pious distortions. Their accounts are not modelled after a Buddhist teleological scheme, but rather narrate the encounter of the Tibetans with Buddhism as one of the many events during that time which bore enough significance to be told and written down. The advent of Buddhism into Tibet is not considered of prime importance to the fate of the Tibetan empire and its people, on the contrary: Buddhism is sparsely mentioned, and sometimes not at all, in these texts. The Dunhuang documents are thus of primary importance to the historian of religion, because they counterbalance the Buddhist ideological view of this period which is dominant in nearly all of the later literary sources.

Yet another literary genre, which at first sight does not have anything at all to do with the Buddhist expansion in Tibet, must be considered here. I refer to the *sGra-sbyor-bam-po-gnyis-pa*, the commentary to the bilingual glossary *Mahāvyūṭpatti*. In the characterisation of Cristina Scherrer-Schaub it was at the same time “a *vademecum* destined for translators, a public act, and a richly argued lexicographical commentary”.⁵ New fragments of the text have only recently come to light in Tabo in Western Tibet. The *Mahāvyūṭpatti* itself also proves important as a source which helps us determine the extent of the establishment of the Buddhist institution as an “integral part of the Tibetan empire.”⁶

3.2. *The phyi-dar Group*

The overwhelming majority of the Tibetan literature dates from the *phyi-dar*, the “later spread [of the *dharma*]”. Among the bulk of literature to be considered here only very few texts were actually written in the first two centuries of the *phyi-dar*, the tenth and eleventh centuries. Important for our topic is the *dBa'-bzhed*, the royal chronicle dealing with the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. This chronicle, probably compiled in the tenth century, deals extensively with the major events which led

⁵ Scherrer-Schaub 2002, p. 278.

⁶ Scherrer-Schaub 2002, p. 264.

to the transformation of Tibet into a Buddhist country. Closely connected to this work is the *sBa-bzhed*, of whose various versions I rely on the one published in Beijing in 1980. This version probably dates back to the twelfth century.⁷ Another important source which in itself is not an historical text but rather a collection of myths and legends concentrating on the first historical Tibetan king, Srong-btsan-sgam-po, and his kingship, provides us with the mythical foundations of the Tibetan empire and tells about the origin of the Tibetan people, albeit already in a Buddhist guise. The *Mañi-bka'-'bum*, as this text is called, in its present form is probably a work of the fourteenth century, but contains much older material.

A third text needs to be mentioned, the “Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies” (*rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long*), written in 1368 by the famous Sa-skyapa scholar bSod-nams-rgyal-mtshan.

Apart from these sources I draw upon a variety of religious histories such as the famous Tibetan-Buddhist scholar and writer Bu-ston's (1290–1364) “History of Buddhism” (*Chos 'byung*), the already cited “Blue Annals” and the *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston*, the “Joyous Feast for the Learned”, written in 1565 by the Kar-ma bKa'-brgyud-pa author dPa'-bo-gtsug-lag-'phreng-ba. In his chronicle *dPa'-bo-gtsug-lag* cites almost verbatim some of the edicts and inscriptions from the royal period, thus verifying the earlier documents from the *snga-dar* period.

All the historical accounts of this second group of sources have one aspect in common: they describe the advent of Buddhism in Tibet from a biased point of view. History, in the eyes of these later Buddhist historians, denotes the unfolding of the *dharma* in Tibet and pursues a purely teleological aim. Tibet is to be proven as the Buddhist country *par excellence*, where the *dharma*, persecuted and ultimately destroyed in its motherland, is to be preserved and cherished. Thus historical events do not have an intrinsic value in themselves, but are only worthy to be memorised and told because of their relevance to the spread and propagation of the *dharma*. History therefore has to be rewritten and transformed into a Buddhist foundation myth of the Tibetan people, whose cultural and religious identity is solely established through its conversion to Buddhism. The accounts given by later historians about the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet have therefore to be read and interpreted in this special light.

⁷ See Sørensen 1994, p. 634, for a discussion of its date.

4. THE ORIGINS OF THE YAR-LUNG DYNASTY

Our knowledge about Tibet in the centuries preceding the formation of the Yar-lung dynasty is extremely scarce, due to the lack of sources apart from mythological narratives. We can, however, deduct from later political and social developments that the distinguishing factor of early Tibet was a general lack of centralised political power. Early political organisation consisted of small-scale socio-economic communities occupying a clearly delineated territory that had its centre in one distinguishing feature of the landscape, usually a mountain. The ruling clans grounded their historico-cultural and religious identity in these mythical centres of their communities. Gradually the small-scale communities were united into greater units, ruled by more powerful or charismatic leaders. Around 600 AD the local rulers of the Yar-lung valley, on the south side of the gTsang-po river in Central Tibet, began to play a more dominant role in the game for power and succeeded in gaining control over most of Central Tibet in the first decades of the seventh century. They were, however, not the only petty chieftains striving for political power. In all probability a greater political unity, the kingdom of Zhang-zhung, located in the region which is nowadays Western Tibet, already played an important role in local political power formations. Zhang-zhung had a distinct culture and probably language. In later historical accounts it played an important, if not contested, role as an adversary of Buddhism, being closely connected to the Bon religion of Tibet.

The rulers of the Yar-lung valley slowly gained supremacy over the chiefs of the gTsang-po river valley and extended their power over the people living on the fringes of the valley and beyond. gNam-ri-long-btsan or gNam-ri-srong-btsan, as he was also called, was elevated to be the leader of an alliance of local rulers at the beginning of the seventh century. The local chieftains who submitted to him later became the nobility in the newly founded kingdom of the Yar-lung dynasty. They formed shifting and politically unstable alliances with the Tibetan kings and served under them as “great ministers” (*blon-chen*) or obtained the position of “maternal uncle” (*zhang*) through marital ties with the ruling clan.

Apart from these glimpses of early Tibetan history, the beginnings of the Tibetan ascension to power is told in various myths relating to the divine origin of its early kings. According to the *rGyal-rabs-gsal-*

*ba'i-me-long*⁸ the first mythical king came down from the mountain Yar-lha-sham-po:

He first descended upon the summit [of mount] lHa-ri-rol-po [in the Yar-lung valley] and looking around he realised that the snow-mountain Yar-lha-sham-po was high (*mtho*) and that the country of Yar-lung was fertile. Thereupon he descended on the bTsan-thang-gong-ma mountain, where he was spotted by cattle-tending herdsman. When he reached the bottom they asked him: "Whence do you come?" and he pointed his fingers towards heaven. [They then knew] that he was a divine son (*lha-sras*) descending from heaven, and they proclaimed: "[You are] elected our ruler!", and so they went off carrying [him] by making their necks [function as] a throne. [Thus] he was called the Mighty Neck-throned Lord (*rje-nya-khri-btsan-po*). He was the first Tibetan king.⁹

The mythical account of the first Tibetan king, gNya-khri-btsan-po, mirrors the indigenous Tibetan cult of the mountain and the mountain-gods that is closely connected to the Tibetan royal dynasty. The king was believed to be of divine origin, he descended from heaven respectively from the mountain. This idea is founded in the cult of the mountain which even nowadays plays a dominant role in the world-view of the small Tibetan communities which usually live in villages situated at the base of a mountain. The mountains are generally considered to be sacred by the Tibetans. They are believed to be the incorporation of the "deity of the territory" (*yul-lha*) of a specifically delineated region, often in unison with the "male god" (*pho-lha*) of the most powerful clan of a given community living in the proximity of the mountain. The mountain god is thus considered to be interrelated with the community, having a family relationship with it by acting as its chieftain. Perhaps the most sacred mountain to the Tibetans of the early royal period was Yar-lha-sham-po, mentioned in the above cited quotation from the *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long*. Yar-lha-sham-po was the sacred mountain of the Yar-lung dynasty, and the king was explicitly identified with the mountain, thereby acting as the chieftain for the whole of Tibet. In this way a centralised political authority was established for the first time in Tibet in the seventh century.

⁸ For a discussion of the author and the date of compilation see Sørensen 1994, pp. 28–34.

⁹ *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long*, p. 55 (lines 5–12). See also Sørensen 1994, p. 139.

The significance of the mountain in connection with the person of the king in the indigenous religious tradition is also expressed in the title “mighty one” (*btsan-po*), which the early Tibetan kings bear as an integral part of their name. The title corresponds to the class of *btsan*-deities, hero-warriors, to which the mountain-deities usually belong.

Nya-khri-btsan-po, the first mythical king of the Tibetans, had seven descendants who in the Tibetan world-view were not just ordinary human beings but gods. They lived on earth during day-time, at night returning to their heavenly abode. They were believed to have finally returned to their divine home at the time of their “death”, which took place as soon as their eldest son was able to ride a horse. This usually happened when the youth turned thirteen. It is not clear whether the coming of age of the eldest son included the ritual death of the father. The divine power of the king, however, was believed to diminish over the years and finally to pass over to the son. The first kings did not have a burial place on earth. According to the indigenous world-view of the Tibetans they were connected to heaven by a rope (*dmu*). The son of the last of the seven celestial kings unfortunately cut off the rope which connected him to his heavenly home, and thus was the first king who had to be given an earthly burial place. From then onwards the Tibetan kings turned into human beings and were given a burial place on earth. The sources tell us that on this occasion the leaders of the Yar-lung dynasty called on religious specialists from the adjacent kingdom of Zhang-zhung in order to conduct the appropriate burial rites, thus for the first time relying on foreign religious specialists. The burial rituals centring around the tombs of the Tibetan kings build an integral and important part of the Tibetan religious tradition during the royal period.

The list of the mythical Tibetan kings is much longer than the above mentioned seven and differs slightly from source to source. In the *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston* the historian dPa'-bo-gtsug-lag mentions all in all twenty-seven kings before the advent of king lHa-tho-tho-ri-gnyan-btsan, during whose reign the sacred Buddhist relics fell from the sky onto the roof of his palace, as legend tells us. The legend may hint at a first contact of the Tibetans with Buddhism much earlier than later historiography claims. The reign of lHa-tho-tho-ri, although not proven historically, can be approximately dated to the fifth century. It does not seem impossible at all that the Tibetans came into contact with Buddhist monks during that time, considering the fact that Tibet in the fifth century was surrounded by countries where Buddhism was well established and flourishing. We find evidence in early texts as well

as in rock inscriptions that not only Buddhism, but also Nestorianism and Manichaeism were well known by Tibetans during the first millennium.¹⁰

5. TIBET UNDER THE REIGN OF SRONG-BTSAN-SGAM-PO: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE *DHARMA*

The son of gNam-ri-srong-btsan, Srong-btsan-sgam-po, who succeeded his father to the throne in approximately 620 AD, was able to consolidate the power of the newly founded dynasty and even extended his military conquests further. He conquered the adjacent kingdom of Zhang-zhung¹¹ and moved the capital of his kingdom to Lhasa (then called *Ra-sa*, “seat of the goats”). He built a palace on the place where later, in the seventeenth century, the fifth Dalai Lama erected the Potala palace, thus drawing on the powerful image of the realm of Avalokiteśvara whose incarnation according to later Buddhist belief this first Tibetan king was. Srong-btsan-sgam-po successfully stabilised his military and political power through marriage alliances with the ruling houses of the neighbouring countries. Among several other wives legend credits him with marrying a Chinese and a Nepalese princess. The marriage to a Chinese wife from one of the small Chinese kingdoms is attested to in Chinese sources, whereas historical evidence for his marriage to a Nepalese princess in Nepalese sources is still lacking. As the Tibetans had close contacts to Nepal during the reign of Srong-btsan-sgam-po, it is, however, entirely credible that he secured his dominance by marital ties to one of the Nepalese ruling houses.

In Buddhist historical records of the *phyi-dar* group the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet is closely connected to Srong-btsan-sgam-po and his reign, especially his marriage politics. Buddhist historians claim that both wives of the kings were pious Buddhists and managed to arouse interest in this religion in the king. The cultural stereotype behind this argument is obvious: the king of a barbarian nation is “tamed” by the influence of a woman and a religion devoted to non-violence. We will see later that the dichotomy inherent in this cliché is an important Tibetan strategy to establish cultural-religious identity in opposition to a Barbarian, “non-Buddhist” other.

¹⁰ Uray 1995 [1983], pp. 399–429.

¹¹ Cf. Uray 1979, pp. 289–299.

The Chinese princess, Wencheng 文成, according to legend brought to her marriage with the Barbarian king a statue of the Buddha in his youth, the famous Jo-bo image which came to be the most sacred Buddhist statue in Tibet. The Jo-khang temple, which still today remains the country's most sacred temple, was built to accommodate the image. The Nepalese princess allegedly brought another statue, also highly venerated by the Tibetans, and the Ra-mo-che temple in Lhasa was later constructed to house this image. The two princesses and the king himself were considered to be incarnations of Avalokiteśvara and his two consorts, the Chinese wife being Green Tārā, and the Nepalese wife, the Buddhist goddess Bhṛkūtī.

Although later literary tradition sees Srong-btsan-sgam-po as the first of the three *dharma*-kings of Tibet, who actively promoted the establishment of Buddhism, the Dunhuang documents do not support this assumption. Judging from them, the period of Srong-btsan-sgam-po was still strongly governed by the pursuit of indigenous religious practices, centring around the king's person and his divine origin. The cult of the divine kingship is well documented in the tombs of the kings in the Phyongs-rgyas valley not far from Lhasa. The supernatural descent of the kings claiming divine origin was ascertained, among others, in titles like "god" (*lha*), "supernaturally wise divinity" (*'phrul-gyi-lha*), and "son of the gods" (*lha-sras*), and confirmed in the origin myths of the Tibetan people.

Far from being a devoted Buddhist, the king nevertheless set in motion a cultural revolution which directly smoothed the path to the Buddhist conversion of the country: he sent his minister Thon-mi-sam-bho-ta to India with the order to bring back a script for the Tibetan language. Literacy was thus inaugurated by this king. The old Tibetan chronicle *dBa'-bzhed* informs us about this crucial moment for the cultural history of Tibet:

Thon-mi-gsam-po-ra was sent by royal order in order to get the Indian doctrine and the model of the alphabet. [Returning to Tibet] he was accompanied by Li-byin, an Indian versed in reading and writing, and took with him some [texts] of the doctrine such as *Chos-dkon-mchog-srin*,¹² *Pad-ma-dkar-po*,¹³ *Rin-po-che-tog*,¹⁴ *gZugs-grva-lnga* and *dGe-ba-bcu*... As far

¹² *Ratnameghasūtra*.

¹³ *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*.

¹⁴ *Mahāsannipātaratnaketuḍhāraṇīsūtra*.

as the alphabet is concerned, Li-byin and gSam-po-ra transformed the Indian script into the Tibetan script.¹⁵

The tenth century *dBa'-bzched* already mirrors the Buddhist view: most important was the collection of sacred Buddhist texts. The real intention of Srong-btsan-sgam-po to provide the Tibetan language with a script will probably for ever be shrouded in uncertainty, but it is probable that he intended the use of a script for more mundane purposes. Chinese sources suggest that writing was in use in Tibet as early as 648,¹⁶ the *Dunhuang Annals* affirm the date 655 as the year where a set of laws was written down.¹⁷ The new script was apparently first used for legal purposes.

At this early stage in the transmission of the *dharma* to Tibet there were probably only a few Buddhist masters from India and Nepal present at the royal court. Alongside the indigenous religious rituals Buddhist rituals were practiced for (but seemingly not by) the king. The old and the newly arrived religion existed side by side, a fact which is also clearly stressed by the old inscriptions. The Tibetan rulers are here described as patrons of the new faith, at the same time being worshipped as divine leaders and protectors of the indigenous religious tradition.

5.1. *Early Buddhist Temples*

Although Srong-btsan-sgam-po cannot be called a Buddhist himself, at least not in the way that he abandoned his traditional religious beliefs and practices in favour of the new religion, his temple founding activities and his invitation of Indian Buddhist masters to the royal court allow the conclusion that he supported Buddhism to a certain extent.

Perhaps the earliest temple to be built in Central Tibet was the Jo-khang at Lhasa, which was first known under the name of 'Phrul-snang of Ra-sa, the ancient name for the Tibetan capital. It was allegedly built by Srong-btsan-sgam-po himself, to give a home to the Jo-bo Rin-po-che, the image of the 12-year old Śākyamuni brought to Tibet by his Chinese bride. The Ra-mo-che temple at Lhasa and the impressive chapel of Khra-'brug in the Yar-lung valley are also

¹⁵ *dBa'-bzched*, fol. 1v (lines 6f.), see Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, fol. 1v and pp. 26–27.

¹⁶ Uray 1955, p. 106.

¹⁷ Bacot 1940–1946, pp. 13, 31.

traditionally ascribed to Srong-btsan-sgam-po. Although the Ra-mo-che, also known as rGya-btags Ra-mo-che, “Ra-mo-che belonging to the Chinese (?)”, is one of the oldest Buddhist establishments in the country, it was probably founded by the bride of Khri-lde-gtsug-btsan, one of Srong-btsan-sgam-po’s successors, the Chinese princess Jincheng 金城, who travelled to Tibet in 710 AD.

The later Buddhist chronicles mention twelve “boundary and limb-binding” chapels which were built by Srong-btsan-sgam-po, thus referring to the myth of the *she*-demon who had to be subjugated by erecting Buddhist chapels and temples on her outstretched limbs. The authenticity of these accounts is, however, contested, with the one exception, perhaps, of the small chapel of dBu-ru-ka-tshal, erected at a point where the Mal-gro-ma-chu joins the sKyid-chu river.

Even in the early period of consolidating its military power, the ideology of the Yar-lung dynasty, based on the belief of its divine origin, was prone to change. In 649 AD Srong-btsan-sgam-po received the Chinese title *baowang* 寶王 from the Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗 (649–683) on the occasion of the latter’s enthronement. *Baowang*, an imperial prerogative of the “King of the West” in Chinese culture is often connected with the Buddha Amitābha whose spiritual “son” is Avalokiteśvara. The path identifying this first historically ascertained Tibetan ruler with the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara was probably smoothed in this way. Furthermore the identification of the two wives of Srong-btsan-sgam-po with the two consorts of the *bodhisattva* seems to date back to the royal period. Thus we may conclude that, although the indigenous religious tradition was still prevalent in the time of Srong-btsan-sgam-po, the new faith was slowly taking root and indigenous myths were transformed into Buddhist ones.

6. TIBET UNDER THE REIGN OF KHRI-SRONG-LDE-BTSAN, EMPEROR AND *DHARMAĀJA*

Srong-btsan-sgam-po’s immediate successors took no great interest in Buddhism, although Khri-lde-gtsug-btsan (704–754 AD) founded some chapels, according to an inscription dating to the eighth century. Later historians of the *phyi-dar* assert that Buddhism was suppressed after the reign of Khri-lde-gtsug-btsan and then restored under his son and successor Khri-srong-lde-btsan (730–797 AD). The ancient edicts preserved in the chronicle of dPa’-bo-gtsug-lag confirm this opinion, although it is doubtful that the attitude of the royal court towards

Buddhism was of vital importance to the flourishing of the *dharma* at that time. It is worth considering that during the royal period, before being proclaimed the state religion during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan and even after this significant event, Buddhism did not play such a prominent role in Tibetan society as later Buddhist historians would have us believe. The *Dunhuang Annals* do not mention Buddhism at all, and the *Dunhuang chronicle* only incidentally comments upon the new religion. The official discourse in the early royal period was certainly not governed by religious affairs. On the other hand, the presence of Buddhist teachers in the country, the building of Buddhist chapels and the first attempts of translating Mahāyāna scriptures from various languages, including Sanskrit, into Tibetan, all suggest a slow but steady infiltration of Buddhist ideas and concepts.

It was Khri-srong-lde-btsan, whom later historians regard as the second *dharmarāja* among the kings of the royal period, after Srong-btsan-sgam-po, who firmly established Buddhism in Tibet and even let the new religion be proclaimed as state religion. During the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan the Tibetan empire reached its greatest expansion. The aggressive policy of the ruler brought the Tibetans to the height of their political and military power. Tibetan troops were stationed in East Turkestan and Northern China as well as in the Western regions of the Hindukush and adjacent areas.¹⁸ It is maybe more than just historical coincidence that the same king who brought the Tibetan empire to its broadest expansion also proclaimed Buddhism as the new state religion. The question arises whether with the expansion of the empire the power of the king needed to be legitimised other than by referring to the indigenous beliefs in his divine origin. As already stressed, the cult of the mountain is deeply grounded in the indigenous belief in a *pho-lha* ("male god"), bound to the ruling clan, and the *yul-lha* ("deity of the territory"), who was merged with the *pho-lha*. A society which no longer is bound to clan structures clearly needs other, clan-extending elements to shape a collective socio-cultural identity. Buddhism as a religion not bound to ethnicity certainly provided the necessary unifying authority in a broader socio-cultural context. This observation could serve as an explanation for the interest and active support Khri-srong-lde-btsan gave Buddhism and its protagonists.

¹⁸ See Beckwith 1987.

6.1. *Adherence to the Royal and Religious Laws:
Proclaiming Buddhism as State Religion*

As already mentioned, the *rdo-ring*, the stone pillar in front of the main temple (*lha-khang*) of bSam-yas monastery, bears the earliest inscription relating to Buddhism in Tibet. It records that the bTsan-po, i.e. Khri-srong-lde-btsan, made a vow to maintain the religion of the Buddha established in the temples of Ra-sa, bSam-yas etc. It also mentions a detailed text concerning the advent of Buddhism preserved separately.¹⁹ The inscription and accompanying authoritative account were also preserved in the *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston* of 1565 and can be considered, in the words of Giuseppe Tucci, as “the foundation-chart of Tibetan Buddhism”. Buddhism became the official religion by royal command of the emperor Khri-srong-lde-btsan.

The detailed text the *rdo-ring* refers to is faithfully reproduced in the *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston*, with only a few minor deviations. dPa'-bo-gtsug-lag explicitly states that the inscription is a summary of two documents which he describes as edicts (*bka'-gtsigs*) and of which the texts are also given. Although dPa'-bo-gtsug-lag calls both documents *bka'-gtsigs*, only the first is an edict, whereas the second is a *bka'-mchid*, a statement or exposition, an authoritative account. The first text explains why the edict was necessary, mentions the names of the ministers who witnessed it and were bound to it by oath. The very act of swearing an oath to promote Buddhism as the state religion of the Tibetan empire stresses the importance of the traditional religious customs, most of all the cult of the mountain. In this oath nine mountain deities are invoked to bear witness to the oath. Most of these nine mountains were located in regions which were conquered by the Tibetan army. The fact that these nine deities had to be invoked in order to confirm the act of establishing Buddhism in Tibet shows the significance of the mountain cult for the Tibetan people and their indigenous concepts for constituting their political and socio-cultural identity. Moreover it demonstrates the incorporation of indigenous Tibetan religious concepts into the Buddhist world-view, thereby transforming Indian Buddhism into the Buddhist tradition peculiar to Tibet.

The edict (*bka'-gtsigs*) reproduced in the *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston* lists the temples and religious communities to which sealed copies of the edict

¹⁹ The Tibetan text of the inscription is given in Richardson 1985, p. 28.

and the secondary document which was composed at the same time were sent. The names of the temples and communities enable us to get an impression of the expansion of Buddhism in the royal period. The second document, the *bka'-mchid*, narrates the history of the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, and may thus, as Hugh Richardson stresses, be seen as the first example of the literary genre of "religious history" (*chos-'byung*) which in later times became so popular in Tibet.²⁰ The text describes the founding of the *Pe-har* temple at Ra-sa as the starting point of Buddhism in Tibet and also stresses that there was a persecution of the doctrine after the death of Khri-lde-gtsug-btsan. It is a curious coincidence that the temple of Pe-har should have been the starting point of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, according to this old document from the royal period. The guardian deity Pe-har was to play a crucial role throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism in the late sixteenth century, and it is still today one of the most powerful guardian deities of the dGe-lugs-pa order of Tibetan Buddhism. From a political point of view it may well be the most important deity, because through the oracle of gNas-chung, the state-oracle of the dGe-lugs-pa residing in the gNas-chung monastery near 'Bras-spungs in Central Tibet, Pe-har still influences processes of political decision in the Tibetan exile government.

6.2. *Buddhism at the Royal Court*

Khri-srong-lde-btsan supported the spread of the new religion by inviting Indian Buddhist masters to the royal court at Lhasa. The two most famous teachers who went to Tibet in this time were Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla. Unfortunately we do not know much about the great Mahāyāna scholar Śāntarakṣita (ca. 723–787 AD), who is said to have come from Za-hor.²¹ The *dBa'-bzched* tells us that dBa'-gsal-snang (belonging to the dBa' clan, as his name suggests) went to Nepal and invited Śāntarakṣita to Mang-yul. After a stay in Mang-yul the mKhan-po Bo-dhi-sa-tva, as he is usually called in Tibetan sources, was invited to come to Central Tibet. He stayed at the Pe-har-gling temple of Lhasa, where he was examined for two months by three ministers of the king, who suspected the Indian master's teachings to be black magic.

²⁰ See Richardson 1980, pp. 62–73.

²¹ *dBa'-bzched*, fol. 5v, see Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, p. 41.

When the ministers came to a positive conclusion of their investigation which dispelled their suspicion the king met Śāntarakṣita for the first time and was taught the fundamental principles of the Buddhist doctrine. According to the *dBa'-bzhed* the emperor acquired great faith in the new religion, but then disaster befell Tibet:

[The king] thought about translating many doctrinal treatises (*dar ma*) of India, but then [the royal palace of] 'Phang 'thang was flooded, the royal castle of lHa sa was struck by lightning and burnt down, great famine as well as epidemics affecting people and animals occurred. All the great *zhang blon* considered [the calamities] as the consequence of practicing the doctrine and [the bTsan po], growing suspicious, decided to abandon it for a short while.²²

The struggle for power and influence at the royal court of the Yar-lung dynasty is thus described in symbolic language.

Śāntarakṣita was a learned Mahāyāna scholar, and the doctrine he taught was mainly concerned with philosophical issues about the right way to salvation. His language of thought was Sanskrit, a language which over many centuries had developed a rich and differentiated philosophical terminology. The Tibetan language of the time was lacking in this sophisticated terminology. As already stressed, the first texts to be written down in the Tibetan language were of a legal nature, and many of the documents discovered at Dunhuang were concerned with administrative and legal matters. Even the texts Ariane Macdonald examined and used as the basic source material for her amazing description of an indigenous Tibetan religion, allegedly highly structured and organised and propagated by the kings of the Yar-lung dynasty,²³ by close examination talk more about a moral way of life and political wisdom. That is to say, they present a kind of common good which the king had to adhere to in order to reign successfully,²⁴ rather than a religion. In the early times of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet two divergent aspects that even nowadays determine the religious life of the Tibetans, were already apparent: on the one hand a pragmatic attitude towards religious issues, and on the other, the focus on soteriological ideas. The pragmatic orientation reveals itself in the need

²² *dBa'-bzhed*, fol. 8r, see Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, p. 46. The term *zhang-blon* can denote (1) "uncle-minister" and (2) "uncles and ministers", see the detailed explanation in Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, p. 29 n. 36.

²³ Macdonald 1971, pp. 90–321.

²⁴ Cf. Stein 1985, pp. 83f.

to cope with the dangers and vicissitudes of everyday life that for the common people was determined and influenced by various demonic powers that had to be dealt with. Soteriological issues were relevant in monastic circles where the individual salvation from the cycle of existences and the attainment of buddhahood became increasingly important. Both these divergent aspects found adequate expressions in the emphasis on the *mahāsiddha* type of Buddhist saint and in the standardisation of the translation language which expressed the high degree of philosophical sophistication the Tibetan Buddhists had already reached in these early times.

6.3. *Padmasambhava: Mahāsiddha and Folk-hero*

In order to propagate the Buddhist *dharma*, a way had to be found to explain the abstract philosophy of Buddhism in terms the people could easily understand. The problem of understanding in Tibetan sources is dealt with in the narrative of the sojourn of Padmasambhava, the Tantric master from Uḍḍiyāna, today's Swat area of Northern Pakistan, who according to legend was asked by Śāntarakṣita to come to Tibet and help convert the Tibetan people to Buddhism:

Once upon the time, when the bCom ldan 'das²⁵ was dwelling in the world, there was no one among all the gods and the *nāga* of 'Dzam bu gling²⁶ who was not bound by the order of the Buddha. However, in this land of Tibet gods and *nāga* have escaped [from] control and seem to have prevented the bTsan po from practicing the holy doctrine. At present, nobody in 'Dzam bu gling possesses greater powers in the use of the *mantra* than the *mkhan po* of U rgyan, called Pad ma sa[m] bha ba. [...] If most of the wicked gods and *nāga* are subdued, bound by oath and firmly instructed, the land will become peaceful.²⁷

The *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long*, written nearly three centuries later, is even more explicit:

In order to bind the 'Dre and *Srin* by oath, the Teacher Padmasambhava was invited from the land of U-rgyan, whereafter he bound the 'Dre and *Srin* of Tibet by oath.²⁸

²⁵ Tibetan for Sanskrit *bhagavān*, an epithet of the Buddha.

²⁶ Sanskrit *Jambudvīpa*, our world in Buddhist cosmology.

²⁷ *dBa'-bzhed*, fol. 11v, see Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, p. 54.

²⁸ *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long*, p. 204 (lines 1–3). The 'dre and *srin* are two classes of Tibetan local demons.

Padmasambhava may well be called the leading Buddhist hero of the *snga-dar*, at least judging in retrospect. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are well known today as the two leading Indian masters who propagated Buddhism during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, but even today Padmasambhava remains the folk hero for the common people, renowned for his ability to subdue the local demons and deities and subjugate them as guardian deities to the new and more powerful faith. Today in nearly every Tibetan household one will find a statue or *thangkha* of Padmasambhava, and countless tales retell his miraculous deeds performed for the sake of converting the Tibetan people to Buddhism.

6.4. *The Foundation of bSam-yas*

bSam-yas, “Beyond imagining”, was the first monastery to be founded in Tibet, and the construction of this monastery marks the beginning of organised monastic Buddhism in Tibet, as the royal edict which proclaims Buddhism as the state religion in Tibet clearly demonstrates. Khri-srong-lde-btsan may thus be considered the first truly Buddhist emperor, although later legend starts the line of Buddhist kings with Srong-btsan-sgam-po.

According to most of the later sources the monastery was founded in 779 AD at the behest of the king by Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava. The latter’s involvement, however, is not attested to in one of the oldest accounts about the construction of bSam-yas, the *dBa’-bzhed*. Therefore the active role of the master from Uḍḍiyāna may well belong to a later mythological narrative.

According to tradition bSam-yas was constructed after the model of Oḍaṇṭapuri (Bihar/India). A great complex of buildings was arranged around one main temple. The Central temple with four sides oriented to the four quarters lays down the plan of a *maṇḍala*. The whole complex of the monastery was conceived as a symbolic representation of the universe.²⁹

The most important Buddha image in the main temple (*dbu-rtse-chen-po*) of bSam-yas was the meditational Buddha Vairocana, who was present in the middle floor (*bar-khang*) and in the upper floor (*steng-khang*), where he is presented in his form as Vairocana Sarvavid,

²⁹ A concise description of bSam-yas’s appearance before 1950 gives Richardson 1998f, pp. 315–316.

the “all-perceiving Vairocana”. The images attest to the importance of the cult of Vairocana in the royal period which will be dealt with later in this essay.

The ancient monastery of bSam-yas and its various temples and chapels are described in detail in later literary sources. Moreover a variety of temples constructed during the *phyi-dar* took as their model the temple-complex of bSam-yas.³⁰

6.5. *The Establishment of the Saṃgha in Tibet*

Alongside the construction and consecration of the first monastery in Tibet, of which Śāntarakṣita became abbot, seven men were chosen, who were ordained by the Indian master and subsequently called the “seven chosen ones” (*sad-mi-mi-bdun*). These first monks (*dge-slong*) of Tibet all belonged to the Tibetan nobility, among them the most conservative, who put much emphasis on the veneration of the god-like king.

The *saṃgha* was apparently growing fast. In the same year that bSam-yas was consecrated (779 AD) the sources tell us that a hundred people, among them some female members of the royal family, took the Buddhist vows. The necessity to see to the sustenance of the monastery and its community arose, and the emperor was obliged to act as patron of the *saṃgha*,³¹ as his role models from surrounding Buddhist countries probably suggested to him. The *dBa'-bzched* gives some details concerning the arrangements to support the *saṃgha*:

From then on, the offerings for the Three Jewels and the food for the *saṃgha* were provided by the *khab so chen po*. Clothing was completely provided thanks to the wealthy people. Every year each monk had to be offered 12 *khal* of barley.³²

dBa'-gsal-snang, or Ye-shes-dbang-po, as he is called by his clerical name, who according to tradition was responsible for the invitation of Padmasambhava and Śāntarakṣita to Tibet, was appointed head of the Buddhist community by the king after Śāntarakṣita's death. He requested the emperor to assign estates to the monastery so that its

³⁰ See for example the description of the temple of Grva-mda' in the *Zhi-byed-chos-byung*, Kollmar-Paulenz 1993, pp. 161–162.

³¹ For the following I rely on Dargyay 1991, pp. 111–127.

³² Wangdu & Diemberger 2000, p. 73. Tib. *khab-so* is probably an office, see op. cit., p. 73, n. 271.

maintenance would be secured. The bTsan-po obliged and according to the *dBa'-bzhed* assigned three subject-households to each monk and 200 to one monastery. Other sources speak of 100 subject-households for one monastery. These subjects assigned to the monasteries were withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the state and placed under the monastery's jurisdiction.

Apart from the general monastic community a group of monasteries (the so-called *ring-lugs*)³³ was affiliated with the royal palace and received even more generous support, including 70 *khal* of barley every month.

The emperor's active promotion of Buddhism also led to a number of changes in the legal system. Corporal punishment like blinding people or cutting off the noses of women unfaithful to their husbands, were forbidden by royal edict. The restraint from corporal punishment was also enforced under the emperor Ral-pa-can, who exempted the monastic members of his government from carrying out acts of corporal punishment, because these were contradictory to the monastic vows.

The most important privilege the *saṃgha* received during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan was, however, the exemption of the monks from tax-payments and military service.

Ye-shes-dbang-po seems to have been a shrewd politician, because he persuaded the king who wanted to attribute seven households to each monk to reduce this number to three households, a precaution that the generous grants would not meet with too much resistance from the nobility. The reduction was, however, challenged by Myang-ting-nge-'dzin who himself played an important role in the spread of the doctrine, but was more inclined to Chinese Buddhism, as we shall see. Due to Myang-ting-nge-'dzin's opposition Ye-shes-dbang-po withdrew from his leading position in the monastic community. The emperor immediately appointed a successor, dPal-'byangs, who also came from the dBa' clan, as spiritual leader of the Buddhist community.

Myang-ting-nge-'dzin was held in high esteem also after Khri-srong-lde-btsan's death. He acted as guardian to the young Khri-lde-srong-btsan (r. 800–815 AD) and helped him establish his power. The inscription at the Zhwa'i-lha-khang, a small temple some fifty miles to the northeast of Lhasa, on two pillars flanking the entrance of the *lha-khang* record the privileges granted by the king to Myang-ting-nge-

³³ See Dargyay 1991, pp. 111–127.

'dzin, who was minister of state during Khri-lde-srong-btsan's reign. Myang-ting-nge-'dzin is called by his title *bande* ("monk") in the inscription. The ecclesiastic title *bande* apparently was already in use during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, but in public it appears for the first time in the Zhwa'i-lha-khang-inscription. According to Richardson³⁴ this inscription provides the first contemporary evidence that a monk acted as minister of state. The privileges granted to him were extended to the family of his grand-uncle, as the celibate Myang-ting-nge-'dzin had no children of his own.

6.6. *The Debate of bSam-yas*

During the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan a Chinese Buddhist scholar by the name of Mahāyāna arrived in Tibet. According to a Chinese document from Dunhuang (PT 4646) he had been summoned by the emperor himself, soon after the Tibetan conquest of the region in 787.³⁵ He taught the doctrine of *dhyāna* at the royal court and soon gained many followers, nearly 5,000 in number.³⁶ The Indian teachers obviously viewed his success with resentment and wanted the teachings to be stopped. The Chinese sources from Dunhuang, which mirror a pro-Chinese viewpoint of the issue, maintain that Khri-srong-lde-btsan approved of the Chinese teachings, thus implying that the Indians were fearing the loss of their privileges. The *dBa'-bzched* tells us about self violations of some of the disciples of Mahāyāna and even suicide attempts that were apparently triggered by the plots the Indians schemed in order to get the Chinese monks expelled from Tibet. These incidents are also reported by the Chinese sources from Dunhuang. According to the *dBa'-bzched* the king, after having consulted with Ye-shes-dbang-po, invited the scholar Kamalaśīla from India in order to set up a philosophical debate about the different doctrinal opinions.

The religious debate taking place at bSam-yas is seen by later Tibetan historians as a turning-point in the history of Buddhism during the *snga-dar*, the early spread of the doctrine. On the outside the debate of bSam-yas solely concentrated on philosophical issues: The Indian monks missionising in Tibet propagated a gradualist approach towards buddhahood, as laid down in the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures, whereas

³⁴ Richardson 1985, pp. 44–5.

³⁵ See Demiéville 1952, pp. 25, 154.

³⁶ Demiéville 1952, pp. 33, 162.

their Chinese antagonists preached a sudden enlightenment, founded in the teachings of the Chinese Chan school of Buddhism. According to tradition the contest between the two rival parties took place in the Byang-chub-sems-bskyed-gling temple, situated at the north side of the monastic complex of bSam-yas. Tradition has it that the king himself presided over the debate, an assumption not altogether credible. The sources, however, differ as to the exact location of the dispute, and also to its length. Paul Demiéville³⁷ drew the attention to a Chinese document from Dunhuang which states that thirty Indian monks and three Chinese monks were invited to Lhasa. Moreover the sources from Dunhuang point to Mahāyāna being sent to various places. The discussions about the controversial issues were apparently held during many months, probably a whole year.

The Indian party at the great debate consisted of the Paṇḍita Kamalaśīla, who upon the death of Śāntarakṣita was invited to Tibet; the successor of Śāntarakṣita as abbot of bSam-yas, Ye-shes-dbang-po; and several monks from the Tibetan nobility, foremost of the influential sBa' clan. The Chinese side was led by the famous Hva-shang Mahāyāna, who was accompanied by a few Chinese monks and Myang-ting-nge-'dzin. Moreover the Chinese side was supported by many of the noble ladies at the royal court, notably by one of the queens, Byang-chub of the 'Bro clan.

This wide-spread support of the Chinese teachings from some of the most powerful clans at the royal court was probably one of the strongest arguments for the event. In retrospect it is difficult to judge which of the various possible reasons leading to the famous debate was decisive, but we should not deny the strong political undertones of the debate.³⁸

Among Tibetologists there is an ongoing discussion whether the debate of bSam-yas took place or whether it is an ideological construction of a later time, invented to justify the strong influence of the Indian gradualist doctrine on Tibetan monastic Buddhism. Be that as it may, the historicity of the debate of bSam-yas is not as important for the construction of Tibetan history as *Heilsgeschichte* as is its intrinsic mythical value. The debate of bSam-yas has long since turned into one of the great founding myths of an essentially Buddhist Tibet.

³⁷ Demiéville 1952, p. 25.

³⁸ See Richardson 1998c, pp. 203–206.

Who then won the debate of bSam-yas? Interestingly enough both sides claimed victory for themselves. The Indian side claimed that it was ordered by royal command that the gradual path to enlightenment should be followed from then onwards. This is collaborated by the authoritative account (*bka'-mchid*) of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, where it is stated that

the accumulations of world-transcending merit and knowledge...are, in addition to the ten virtues, the four truths, the twelve elements that arise from the accumulation of causes, the thirty-seven principles leading to enlightenment and the ten surpassing perfections and so on.³⁹

The Chinese side, however, maintained that around 794 the victory of the Chinese was affirmed by a royal decree. From the Dunhuang documents we learn that the Chinese monk Mahāyāna indeed left Central Tibet and travelled to Dunhuang where he became one of the leading Buddhist teachers of the Tibetan administration. He cannot, therefore, have fallen into disgrace as later sources claim.

If we consider the factual results of the debate, it becomes clear that over the centuries the doctrine of sudden enlightenment played a vital role in various traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, notably, to name but two, the rDzogs-chen branch of the rNying-ma-pa that teaches the doctrine of sudden enlightenment, and the gCod tradition, the tradition of “cutting through ego-clinging” by visualising one’s own body as food-offering to the demons. As the notion of orthodoxy and heterodoxy is contested in Tibetan Buddhism, due to the lack of a central authoritative institution which decides on religious doctrines, the theory of sudden enlightenment nowadays can be found in nearly every Tibetan tradition, even in the dGe-lugs-pa teachings who generally follow the Indian gradual path. The dGe-lugs-pa have adopted teachings like the gCod which adhere to the doctrine of spontaneous enlightenment.

7. THE INFLUENCE OF CHINESE BUDDHISM IN THE *SNGA-DAR* PERIOD

The doctrine of spontaneous enlightenment which is favoured by Chan Buddhism, has never ceased to fascinate Tibetan Buddhists. The fact

³⁹ *mKhas-pa'i-dga'-ston*, vol. 1, p. 375 (lines 3–6). The translation follows Richardson 1998g, p. 94.

that despite the negative propaganda following the debate of bSam-yas at the end of the eighth century this doctrine is even nowadays being followed within the main stream of Tibetan Buddhism, brings us to the interesting question about the role Buddhist teachers other than Indians played during the royal period in Tibet. Apart from Indian monks and scholars who travelled to Tibet, there is textual evidence that, even before the arrival of Indian Buddhists, Tibet was regularly visited by Chinese Buddhist monks as well as Buddhists from the surrounding Central Asian areas which were widely influenced by Buddhism.

Buddhism, when it was brought to Tibet by monks from India, was in all probability not a new religion, but already known through Chinese mediation. Not only did Chinese monks visit Tibet and translate Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan, but also Tibetan nobles received their education partly in China. Between 705 and 710 AD an imperial decree was issued by the Chinese emperor that allowed the admission of the sons and grand-sons of the Tibetan nobility to the imperial state-school in order to study the Chinese classics.⁴⁰ Not only from China, but also from the regions bordering on Western Tibet Buddhist influence was observable in these early times. Ananta, who served as personal translator of Śāntarakṣita on his first visit to Tibet around 763, came from Kashmir. Many of the first translations of Buddhist scriptures were prepared from Chinese, Khotanese and Bengali originals, as Bu-ston tells us in his *Chos-'byung*.⁴¹ For a long time scholars neglected the evidence of the Buddhist transmission via China and Central Asia in favour of the “Indian angle”, but textual evidence points to a multi-faceted picture. Tibet during the royal period was in no way a secluded country, and the influence of the surrounding cultures is noticeable in the textual and archaeological sources.

8. INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN THE ROYAL PERIOD

We can only gain glimpses of the traditional Tibetan beliefs of the royal period from texts written in Old Tibetan and fragments that survived, mostly from Dunhuang. There are, of course, many remnants of the traditional religious concepts in the so-called *mi-chos*, the “religion of

⁴⁰ Demiéville 1952, p. 188 (note).

⁴¹ *Chos-'byung*, fol. 891 (lines 4–5): *rgya dang li dang za hor la sogs pa sna tshogs nas bsgyur bas...*

men", as the indigenous religious tradition is called in later Buddhist sources. This *mi-chos* should not be confused with the Bon religion which often is claimed to be identical with the indigenous religion of the Tibetans. The religion we (and also the Tibetans) today call "Bon" was introduced to Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries, from the country the Tibetans call Zhang-zhung. In the titles of *bon-po* texts a large vocabulary of the so-called "Zhang-zhung language" is preserved. For a long time considered a fictitious language, linguists have now found out that the words of the Zhang-zhung language show close links with Himalayan languages like Kinnauri and Eastern Tibeto-Burmese dialects like Gyarong in Sichuan. The linguistic evidence points to the origins of the Bon religion in a Tibeto-Burmese environment, probably in Western Tibet, around the Kailash mountain. The doctrines of the Bon religion reveal striking similarities with Tibetan Buddhist doctrines, a fact which led many Western scholars to accuse the Bon-po of plagiarism. Nowadays, it is, however, a well established fact that quite a few *bon-po* texts have been copied by the Buddhists and not the other way round. In short, the history of the Bon religion is in many aspects still unknown to us, and further research in the early history of the encounter of Bon and Buddhist beliefs will probably shed some new light on this early period of Tibetan history.

Returning to our subject, the "nameless religion", as R. A. Stein⁴² has called the traditional beliefs, they seem to have concentrated on the person of the king, as already elaborated. Especially important were the funeral rites, performed at the royal court by the *bon-po*. Contrary to the later meaning of the word, *bon* in this early period probably designated the officiating priest. The *bon*-priests were concerned with guiding the soul of the deceased safely to the land of the dead. Animal sacrifices were necessary to safeguard the souls because they were supposed to be guided by animals, such as sheep, horses, yaks etc. The funeral rites for the kings were performed with sacrificial offerings of their servants and ministers, who accompanied their lord to the realm of the dead. The world of the ancient Tibetans was populated by a host of spirits, who constantly had to be appeased because generally they were supposed to have an ambivalent, if not malevolent, character. This traditional belief in ghosts and spirits was, as we shall see, used by the Buddhist missionaries as a means to convert the Tibetan people.

⁴² Stein 1972, p. 191.

9. ORIGIN MYTHS

In Tibetan sources the origin of the Tibetan people and their rulers are presented in different, sometimes contradicting myths. In the earliest legends and myths the Tibetan people originate from the coupling of a forest-monkey and a demoness of the rocks, a *srin-mo*. In some accounts their meeting-place is supposed to be the Yarlung valley, the ancient “heart of Tibet”, in others it is the southeastern region of Amdo. The off-spring of the monkey and the demoness, which became the Tibetan people, were half monkey, half human in the beginning, and thus, being considered “wild”, had to be tamed. The myth is retold in the *Mani-bka’-’bum*, a corpus of scriptures allegedly written by Srong-btsan-sgam-po, the first of the three so-called “*dharma-kings*”, but actually a divergent corpus of texts focusing on the cult of the king as *bodhisattva*. Already in the *Mani-bka’-’bum* the origin myth is “buddhisised”: the monkey turns into a *bodhisattva*, whereas the wild demoness becomes a cipher for the Tibetan people, who need to be converted from their barbarian to a Buddhist way of life. In the *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba’i-me-long* the narrative goes thus:

Then Ārya Avalokiteśvara bestowed on an ape who displayed miracles the vow of a lay-devotee and afterwards sent him to the snow-covered realm of Tibet in order to meditate. There the ape [sat] meditating on a black rock, and while he was meditating on benevolence, compassion and the thought of enlightenment, and showing affection for the profound doctrine of emptiness, a rock-demoness, tormented by [her] *karman*, approached [him], and, after showing many signs of passion and desire, went off again.⁴³

The story carries on with the demoness begging the ape become her husband, which the *bodhisattva*-monkey first denies her, pointing to his vow of a Buddhist lay-devotee. The demoness, however, describes the fate which will befall Tibet if the monkey does not obey her: she will cohabit with a male demon and the country will be inhabited by “ogress-infants”, thus turning the land of snow “into a town of ogresses whereafter sentient beings, wherever they are, will be devoured by ogresses.”⁴⁴ Thereupon the monkey agrees to marry the demoness, after consulting with Avalokiteśvara, who predicted

⁴³ *rGyal-rabs-gsal-ba-me-long*, p. 49 (line 16)–p. 50 (line 3). See also Sørensen 1994, p. 127.

⁴⁴ Sørensen 1994, p. 128.

that in a future time the Teaching of the Buddha will spread and diffuse to last [there] for a long time...⁴⁵

In even later sources the *bodhisattva*-monkey himself is identified with the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, so that in the end the Tibetan people descend directly from Avalokiteśvara. The transformation of the wild, untamed Tibetan people into civilised Buddhists is thus perfected. Buddhism in the Tibetan cultural context always denotes civilisation, whereas a people not yet buddhisised are considered wild and uncouth. This juxtaposition is unfolded in many images in Tibetan sources. Tibet as a paradisiacal garden is set against the wilderness of the southern mountain slopes where wild people like the lHo-pa and the Mon-pa lived and still live.

10. BUDDHIST MISSIONARY STRATEGIES: THE *SRIN-MO*

The Tibetan indigenous gods and goddesses were “tamed” by the Buddhist masters who came to Tibet to promote the *dharma*. “Taming the local gods and goddesses” in mythical speech explains the ritual and symbolic transformation of the Tibetan landscape. Metaphorically speaking, Tibet is transformed from a wilderness in the grip of ferocious deities and demons into the garden landscape of a “*buddha*-field”. In the *Maṇi-bka’-’bum* the land is associated with the body of a *srin-mo*, a local malevolent demoness, who has to be suppressed in order to establish the new religion in Tibet. The Chinese bride of Srong-btsan-sgam-po pronounced that a *srin-mo*, a *she*-demon, was responsible for the trouble she experienced in order to get the precious image of the twelve-year-old Śākyamuni to Lhasa. Moreover she predicted that the malevolent influence of the demon was responsible for the political instability prevalent during that time in Tibet. The *srin-mo*, who was envisaged as incorporated in the landscape, was successfully tamed by erecting thirteen temples on her outstretched limbs. Her heart was nailed down by building the Jo-khang on it, the most important temple in Lhasa, the capital and heart of the country. By erecting Buddhist temples in the Tibetan landscape the country was effectively “maṇḍalised”. The local deities and demons were subjugated and incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon by acting as guardians of the superior Buddhist

⁴⁵ Sørensen 1994, p. 129.

religion. This subjugation is still an ongoing process. The local deities at the fringes of Tibetan society are still being incorporated into the ever growing Tibetan Buddhist pantheon. The taming of the indigenous mountain deities promotes the transformation of the autochthonous notion of space, *gnas*, into a Buddhist notion, the maṇḍalisation of the landscape. Tibetan indigenous territory is thus transformed into Buddhist territory.

11. THE CULT OF VAIROCANA

The transformation of the wilderness into a *buddha*-realm can also be seen in the cult of Vairocana, that was prevalent during the royal period. In the *sBa-bzhed*, one of our earlier sources of the *phyi-dar* dating to the twelfth century, we find a detailed description of the construction of bSam-yas. In this first Tibetan Buddhist monastery the Buddha Vairocana was installed as the central divinity in the second storey. The four-faced Sarvavid Vairocana was installed in the uppermost shrine, whereas on the lowest storey Śākyamuni is the central divinity, here considered as the *nirmāṇakāya*, an emanation of Vairocana. Already H. Richardson pointed out the significance of Vairocana displayed in a variety of temples in Central Tibet during the late royal and the early post-royal period.⁴⁶ Vairocana was apparently associated with the royal cult. Iconographical evidence points to the promulgation of the cult of Vairocana throughout a wide part of the Tibetan empire, as icons of Mahāvairocana have been found recently in as many as three different places in far Eastern Tibet by the art-historian A. Heller.⁴⁷ The accompanying inscriptions of the icons date them to the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan's son Khri-lde-srong-btsan. Murals and icons of Vairocana closely resembling the ones found in Eastern Tibet have also been found in cave 25 in the Yulin 榆林 grottoes in Anxi 安西 county of Gansu 甘肅 province and in cave 14 at Dunhuang.⁴⁸ The cult of Vairocana was probably promulgated since the time of the emperor Khri-srong-lde-btsan and actively promoted by him, as the king and his empire were considered to be corresponding with the Buddha and his *buddhakṣetra*. Therefore the omnipresence of Vairocana in the royal

⁴⁶ Richardson 1990.

⁴⁷ See Heller 1994, pp. 335–349.

⁴⁸ See Kapstein 2000, p. 63.

period can be considered, in the words of M. Kapstein, as a “demonstration of the imperial agency of a universal legislator”.⁴⁹ As the country is transformed from a wild, uncultured territory into a maṇḍalised space, so the king is transformed from a divine ancestor and mountain-hero into a *buddha* and *bodhisattva*.

12. THE STANDARDISATION OF THE LANGUAGE

In the Tibetan case language can serve as an evaluation scale for the “buddhasisation” of the country during the royal period. The reason for this at first sight astonishing argument is the fact that the translation activities of the first Tibetan translators were monopolised by the state. The above already mentioned *sGra-sbyor-bam-po-gnyis-pa*, in the first place an instruction manual for translators and a lexicographical commentary to the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, at the same time lays down the normative principles the translators had to adhere to. The version of the text that is preserved in the Tibetan *bsTan-gyur*, the canonical collection of commentaries to the scriptures attributed to the Buddha (the so-called *bKa’-gyur*), opens with an authoritative decision (*bkas-bcad*) on the part of the emperor Khri-lde-srong-btsan to codify the norms and rules of translating the Buddhist scriptures into the Tibetan language. The codification implies the fixed use of already established terms that must be entered in a register of words.⁵⁰ The register of words had to be approved of by the bTsan-po and the council of ministers. The translation procedures for Buddhist scriptures were thus highly bureaucratised, as early as the eighth century.

Buddhist scriptures were translated and distributed even in the earliest times of the *snga-dar*. The earliest *sūtras* to be translated were the *Ratnamegha* and the *Laṅkāvatāra*, both with respect to the concept of *cakravartin* being of political influence during the time of the Chinese empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (625–705; r. 690–705). Scherrer-Schaub mentions that their “presence is attested during the VIIth and VIIIth

⁴⁹ Kapstein 2000, p. 64.

⁵⁰ *bsTan-gyur*, Toh. No. 4347, vol. *co*, fol. 131v (line 1ff): *theg-pa-che-chung-las-byung-ba’i-rgya-gar-gyi-skad-las-bod-kyi-skad-du-bsgyur-cing-ming-du-btags-pa-rnams-dkar-chag-tu-bris-te/nam-du-yang-gzhung-lugs-de-las-mi-bsgyur-zhing-kun-gyis-bslab-tu-rung-bar-gyis-shig*... For a translation and detailed discussion of the diplomatic language used in the text, see Scherrer-Schaub 2002, pp. 278f.

century in China and as far as Turfan, Khotan and North West India”.⁵¹ She argues that these texts were probably translated at an early time into Tibetan (probably from the Chinese) and also played a role in the debate of bSam-yas, because they are referred to in the Dunhuang Chinese records as well as in the *Bhāvanākrama* of the Indian scholar Kamalaśīla. According to Scherrer-Schaub,⁵² who is one of the leading authorities on the issue, the examination of the textual tradition of the *sGra-sbyor-sgam-po-gnyis-pa* of which, apart from the canonical *bsTan-'gyur* version, a Dunhuang manuscript exists and recently text fragments were discovered at Tabo in Western Tibet, reveals the existence of a first authoritative decision which was already laid down in 763 AD or a little later. It was deemed necessary on the occasion of translating the above mentioned *Ratnamegha* and *Laṅkāvatāra* and led to the preparation of word-lists which were later probably incorporated in the *Mahāvyutpatti*. This first attempt to regulate the translations of Buddhist texts was carried out by a joint committee of translators and scholars in the presence of the bTsan-po. The date 763 also applies to the compilation of the first of the three *vyutpattis*,⁵³ the *Svalpavyutpatti* (“small repertory”). A second authoritative decision was issued by the emperor Khri-srong-lde-btsan and the council of ministers in 783 AD. The second decision can be considered a further step on the formalisation of the translation procedures, because now

a special chancery procedure for creating Tibetan terms was instituted under the authority of the Commissioner of the Bhagavat (*bcom ldan 'das rin lugs*) officiating in the college of translators (*dar ma bsgyur ba'i lo tsā ba'i grar*), who had to refer to the supreme authority (*btsan po*).⁵⁴

The process of laying down the authoritative rules and principles for translation ultimately culminated in the third decision of 814 and at the same time in the compilation of the *Mahāvyutpatti*. In this latest step towards a fixed Buddhist terminology the extent of the formalisation becomes evident in the elaborated chancery procedure. The Commissioner of the Bhagavat is now accompanied by a committee (*mdun-sa*) and by a “college for proposals of great revision... of Buddhist texts

⁵¹ Scherrer-Schaub 2002, p. 298.

⁵² In the following I rely on Scherrer-Schaub 2002, pp. 263–340, whose argumentation and discussion of the relevant documents appears extremely convincing to me.

⁵³ These are bilingual, Sanskrit-Tibetan, terminological word-lists respectively dictionaries.

⁵⁴ Scherrer-Schaub 2002, pp. 314–315.

(*dha rmma ṣ'u chen 'tshal ba'i rgyar*)⁵⁵ having its seat at the imperial palace. The period of the second *dharma*-king Khri-srong-lde-btsan thus saw a rigorous enforcement of the ecclesiastical administration not only with respect to the monastic communities but also the scholarly endeavours to promote Buddhism.

13. RAL-PA-CAN AND THE END OF THE "EARLY PROPAGATION" OF THE *DHARMA*

The state-promotion of Buddhism during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan led to an ever increasing proximity between the state and the *saṃgha*, an issue of some importance in nearly every Buddhist country. During the reign of Ral-pa-can, who came to power around 815, major modifications concerning the role of the *saṃgha* took place, which led to unrest and dissatisfaction among the nobility who feared for their privileges, culminating in the assassination of the king.

The appointment of monk-ministers already under Ral-pa-can's predecessors brought about a shift of power from the secular to the clerical. The monk-ministers, mainly coming from the leading clans of sBa'/dBa' and Myang, exercised a considerable amount of power in the affairs of state. Ral-pa-can enforced this power-shift by putting the *saṃgha* in charge of the Lower Assembly of the royal government. Unfortunately we do not know the exact function of this administrative unit, but it is clear from the sources that Ral-pa-can strengthened the power of the *saṃgha* at the expense of the Tibetan nobility. According to later sources Ral-pa-can was so extremely pious that he allotted seven households for the maintenance of one monk, which led to unrest among the noble families. But this is probably a later exaggeration, because in the Chinese sources we do not find hints at excessive religious piety with this king. The sources, however, attest to his general weakness and that he left the administration of state affairs in the hands of his ministers, their chief being a monk-official, Bran-ka dPal-gyi-yon-tan.

The reign of this last of the three *dharma*-kings also saw the settlement of the peace treaty with the Chinese emperor of the Tang dynasty. Since the time of Srong-btsan-sgam-po the Tibetan relations with China were determined by military clashes, but also often by diplomatic

⁵⁵ Scherrer-Schaub 2002, p. 315.

endeavours which usually led to unstable marriage alliances between the Tibetans and the Chinese. In 821/822 AD the emperor Muzong 穆宗 concluded a peace treaty with the Tibetan emperor Ral-pa-can and his monk-minister dPal-gyi-yon-tan, who, in the inscription commemorating the treaty, is said to have been “carrying out the administration with power over both outer and inner affairs.”⁵⁶ This bilingual, Tibetan-Chinese inscription recording the treaty which was apparently ratified at Lhasa, is probably the most important of the early Tibetan inscriptions. It is engraved on a stone pillar outside the Jo-khang in Lhasa. The treaty was solemnly conjured through indigenous religious and Buddhist rituals:

...in order that this agreement establishing a great era when Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet and Chinese shall be happy in China shall never be changed, the Three Jewels, the body of saints, the sun and moon, planets and stars have been invoked as witnesses; its purport has been expounded in solemn words; the oath has been sworn with the sacrifice of animals; and the agreement has been solemnised.⁵⁷

The lasting significance of the indigenous religious beliefs even in the late royal period are testified to, not only by the fact that these rituals performed for the treaty were to be put in force; but also by a number of terms in the inscription which characterise the Tibetan kings as *’phrul-gyi-lha*, “supernaturally wise divinit[ies]”, who “came from being gods in heaven to be lords of men” (*gnam-gyi-lha-las/myi’i-rgyal-por-gshegs-te/*)⁵⁸ and whose power is symbolised in the might of their helmet (*dbu-rmog*). Buddhism during the time of Ral-pa-can had firmly taken root in Tibet, but the indigenous Tibetan religious tradition was equally present in people’s minds. This co-existence of the two different belief systems during the *snga-dar* prepared the ground for the interdependence of Buddhist and indigenous religious concepts which in the early *phyi-dar* provided the basis for Tibetan Buddhism as we encounter it today.

The political tensions prevalent in the reign of Ral-pa-can between the supporters of the new faith and the nobility that anxiously wanted to preserve their privileges, brought about the downfall of the king in 836. A group of ministers, led by the dBa’ clan, brought about the disgrace and death of dPal-gyi-yon-tan and afterwards assassinated the

⁵⁶ *North Inscription*, see Richardson 1985, p. 129.

⁵⁷ *West Inscription*, see Richardson 1985, pp. 125–127.

⁵⁸ *East Inscription*, see Richardson 1985, pp. 108, 109.

king, Glang-dar-ma, the brother of Ral-pa-can, is known, according to new textual evidence perhaps unjustly, in later Buddhist accounts as a cruel persecutor of the Buddhist faith. He reigned for only a short time before suffering the same fate as his brother. As there was no heir to the royal line, and also the charisma of the divine kingship was quickly fading, the royal dynasty of Tibet came to its end.

In the middle of the ninth century, the “dark age” of the later Buddhist historians starts, denoting a time where the spread of the *dharma* was brought to a standstill and decline, a situation, which was to change once again a century and a half later, when the “later spread” of the *dharma* was inaugurated and finally converted the whole of Tibet to Buddhism. But this is another story.

14. THE EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM IN TIBET DURING THE ROYAL PERIOD

In the royal edict proclaiming Buddhism as the state religion Khri-srong-lde-btsan ordered the authoritative account (*bka'-mchid*) to be transmitted to the religious communities in Tibet and to the neighbouring countries under Tibetan jurisdiction:

Also, the text of an authoritative account of how the religion of the Buddha came to Tibet both in earlier and later times has been deposited together with the edict. Thirteen copies like this have been written. One has been placed in the archives. Two have been sealed and one each deposited with the religious communities of the 'Phrul-sngang temple of Ra-sa and the Bsam-yas Lhun-gyi-grub temple of Brag-dmar. Ten copies have been sealed at the end and one each given to the 'Phrul-sngang temple of Ra-sa, the temple of Bsam-yas Lhun-gyis-grub, the temple of Bkra-shis-lha-yul of Khra-'brug, the religious community of the palace, to the Rgya-btags Ra-mo-che of Ra-sa, Khams-sum Myi-ldog-sgrol of Brag-dmar, to the country of Bru-sha, the country of Zhang-zhung, to Mdo-smad and to the jurisdiction of sde-blon, to be held by the religious community of their temples.⁵⁹

Whereas most of the temples mentioned are situated in Central Tibet, the text mentions also Bru-sha, that is Gilgit, and Zhang-zhung, nowadays probably Western Tibet, as well as mDo-smad, Northeastern Tibet. Beside the textual evidence that the spread of the *dharma* even in the

⁵⁹ Richardson 1998g, pp. 92–93.

snga-dar period was not limited to Central and Western Tibet, we also possess supporting evidence from archaeology. In the 1980s two Tibetan scholars discovered rock-carvings of Buddhist images and inscriptions in the sKye-rgu-mdo region of Kham.⁶⁰ sKye-rgu-mdo is better known as Jyekundo, a place which was visited quite often by Western travellers in the region. A rock inscription dating to the reign of king Khri-lde-srong-btsan (776–ca. 815) bears witness to the importance the new religion had already gained among the nobility:

Holy texts of prayers were inscribed in the reign of the emperor Khri lDe-srong-btsan, for the lord, ministers, benefactors, and all sentient beings; [...]

Whatever sentient beings may see them, touch them, prostrating themselves before them, hear of them or remember them will have moral reward...

By virtue of their devotion, may the Emperor, the father and his offspring and all sentient beings realise Enlightenment, the supreme goal!⁶¹

Around the rock-carvings and inscriptions in the area the legend of Wencheng, the Chinese wife of king Srong-btsan-sgam-po, is deeply engraved in the cultural memory of the local Tibetans. Even today people believe that Wencheng is responsible for the Buddhist relics in this region, which from the point of view of Central Tibet is quite remote.

The advanced state of administrative institutions even in the frontier districts of the Tibetan empire of the royal period are also documented in some texts found in Dunhuang. One such text, Pelliot No. 997, deals with the inventory of the property of the Yu-lim temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) in the Kva-cu district bordering on China in Northeastern Tibet. The document attests to the highly structured organisation of the small monastic communities which must have been numerous in that time, even in these remote areas.⁶²

⁶⁰ Karmay 1998, pp. 55–65.

⁶¹ Karmay 1998, p. 62. The Tibetan text is also given by Karmay, *ibid.*

⁶² See Richardson 1998e, p. 280, referring to Thomas 1935–1963, vol. 2, p. 109.

15. CONCLUSION

We have seen that Buddhism penetrated into Tibet in diverse ways and under highly complex socio-political circumstances. The new religion was not simply introduced from India around the seventh century, but probably found its way to the Tibetan plateau much earlier, in all probability from China and the Buddhist oasis states of Central Asia. The amount of early Tibetan translations of Buddhist texts from the Chinese and Khotanese languages confirm this assumption. For a long time Tibetologists suspected that Buddhism at the time of Srong-btsan-sgam-po and his immediate successors was limited to the court and the small circle of the nobility. In the light of the new evidence that emphasises the advanced and widespread administrative structures of the Buddhist institution we have to reconsider this opinion. Buddhism even in these early times was more widespread than hitherto assumed and perhaps also more engrained in the lives of the people. This assumption is supported, in my opinion, by the findings in Dunhuang. Many fragments in Old Tibetan were nothing else than writing exercises by members of the Tibetan troops stationed in East Turkestan, pointing at a widespread literacy among the Tibetans during these times. We cannot say to what degree people adhered to Buddhist religious ideas and rituals, but we have to stress the fact that the new religion was able to establish its monastic communities and temples even in remote corners of the Tibetan empire in the royal period, apparently finding donors (*yon-bdag*) among the local nobility or the common people. Maybe further research will highlight the role the common Tibetan people played in the establishment of Buddhism during the royal period.

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THE LATER SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN TIBET

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a simple and a complex answer to the question of what Tibetans mean by the “later spread” of Buddhism in Tibet (*bstan-pa phyi-dar*, or simply *phyi-dar*). The simple answer might read roughly like the following: The “later spread” is a collective term for the missionary movements in Tibet of the late tenth to around the thirteenth century. During that period numerous Buddhist masters—Indians and Tibetans—brought Indian traditions of Buddhist exegesis, philosophy and ritual to Tibet and thereby revived what was left of Tibetan Buddhism after the collapse of the old empire. This period can be regarded as formative for Tibetan Buddhism as we know it today, since the origins of the monastic traditions with all their social and doctrinal diversities are connected to these early movements in some way or another.

The complex answer has to deal with the ideological implications of the concepts used in Tibetan statements concerning the “later spread” and the meaning of these statements in Tibetan cultural communication. Such an answer can, of course, not be given within this paper. However, a few words on the problems involved may be said in this introduction. The problems can perhaps be demonstrated if we ask what sources on the “later spread” are available apart from religious texts. The simple, but maybe surprising, answer is: none. Of course, we have other sources, architectural, artistic, archaeological, textual etc., that shed light on the period of Tibetan history in question. But these do not say anything about a thing called “later spread”. This is due to the fact that this concept only makes sense within a specific religious framework of commemoration of the past. Thus, writing an article on the “later spread” means to write about a specific notion deeply rooted Tibetan religious culture.

Our main sources on the “later spread” of Buddhism in Tibet are texts belonging to different genres of Tibetan historiography.¹ These

¹ See the section on the *phyi-dar* group of sources in the contribution of K. Kollmar-Paulenz in this book. My presentation relies largely on the same choice of sources.

works were written by religious specialists for a specific religio-political purpose and date from a time considerably later than the historical period in question. Although the motives behind Tibetan Buddhist historiography have, as far as I know, never been studied systematically, we can say at least the following: The *chos-'byungs* ("religious histories") and similar genres of Tibetan historiography are, above all, religious statements. Their primary concern is not to give answers to the question of what happened in the past, but of what is the meaning of certain past events for the present.² They communicate the "Great Story" of Tibetan Buddhism to an audience that identifies with this narration, and in commemorating the religious past of the country, Tibetan historical works communicate religious values, construct group identities and legitimate models of social differentiation—for example, the social supremacy of the clergy³ or the relationship between the clergy and worldly aristocracy. Under this perspective it is quite understandable, that our sources concentrate on the stories of past religious heroes, since it is the religious work of those extraordinary people that is believed to have formed Tibet into the religious society which is attempted to be (re-)created or preserved by commemorating these stories. Average lay-Buddhists, even ordinary monks, appear in these sources only as numerical factors or as role-specific walk-ons. Thus, in the "later spread" accounts we hear of people converting to Buddhism, and eventually adopting a religious life, because a certain Buddhist master evoked their confidence in the *dharma*. But we do not hear a word on the social processes and structures involved in the establishment of Buddhism as the religion of the great masses of Tibetan population—for example, the strong dependency of Tibetan peasants from their respective landlord, who, moreover, frequently was no-one other than the head of a large, land-owning monastic estate himself.

Hence, in following the accounts of the "later spread" in Tibetan historical sources, neither "Tibetan history", nor "Tibetan Buddhism", nor "Tibetan Buddhists" are represented, but a specific class of Tibetan

² Cf. also Schwieger 2000, Kapstein 2000 and Bretfeld 2003.

³ I use this term for lack of a better one. What I mean is the totality of Tibetan Buddhists who chose religious activities as their main profession. This includes many more lifestyles than that of a celibate monk or nun living in a monastery. For a detailed discussion of the various models of Buddhist specialists, see Samuel 1993, pp. 270–289.

religious specialists telling its own history, which is interpreted dependent on the respective horizons, concepts and intentions of the individual authors.

As I have said above, there is no such thing as “later spread” apart from the use of this term in specific acts of speech. The same holds true for other concepts—religious or otherwise. If this appears hair-splitting to the readers, I would insist on the great relevance of this observation when we consider the social forces implied in the production of symbols like these. As indicated above, religious symbol-production—the making of religious meaning—was mainly the area of responsibility of religious specialists. In the case of the “later spread”-symbol we are dealing with a concept of historical hermeneutics. Its main function is to be an element in a concept of history employed to structure Tibet’s past according to a specific religious worldview. This concept defines Tibetan history as a series of cultural epochs comprising:

- (a) a pristine epoch when Tibetans had no knowledge of Buddhism. This is followed by
- (b) the period of the “earlier spread” (*snga-dar*), temporarily nearly congruent to the glorious age of the Tibetan empire, when *bodhisattva* kings invited and sponsored Buddhist scholars from almost every part of the known Buddhist world (7th–9th century).⁴ This epoch ended with the persecution of the (alleged) anti-Buddhist king Glang-dar-ma, who is said to have destroyed Buddhist institutions in Central Tibet. The result was
- (c) a period of political and religious chaos lasting for about one century; commonly referred to as the “dark age” of Tibetan history. New light appeared when Buddhism was revived by fresh impulses—this time from India only—when
- (d) the “later spread” was taking place. As an epoch, the “later spread” lasts to the present day insofar as—with one exception—all Tibetan Buddhist traditions identify themselves as the heirs of transmission lineages of Buddhist teachings unbroken since the protagonists of the “later spread”; in other words: up to now Buddhism did not again cease to exist on Tibetan soil.

In this context the label “later spread” gets a far greater meaning than a simple denotation for certain religious movements. As we see, this concept has a binary structure based on the single criterion of existence or non-existence of Buddhism on Tibetan soil in a certain period of

⁴ Cf. the contribution of K. Kollmar-Paulenz in this book.

history.⁵ Furthermore, these periods are associated with political and social order or disorder respectively: The great time of Tibetan influence in Asian politics, its inner unity guaranteed by strong and wise kings, emerged and decayed together with the presence of Buddhism in Tibetan society; with the disappearance of Buddhism social and political chaos also followed; and the “later spread” brought a renaissance of Buddhism and at the same time a new phase of Tibetan social and cultural prosperity. Thus, one of the most important statements of Tibetan Buddhist historiography is the close interrelatedness of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan society. This spreads further light on our sources and what we can gain from them. To put it briefly: Talking about the “later spread” is not talking about “factual history”, but talking about an important aspect of Tibetan Buddhist self-perception.

In addition to these cultural implications of the terms and stories we are dealing with, the situation is still more complex. Even if we consider only the social minority of the Buddhist clergy, Tibetan Buddhism is no homogeneous entity, but a conglomeration of very divergent opinions, styles, norms and worldviews that are in constant synchronic and diachronic flux. This, of course, has an impact on Tibetan statements about history, and the meanings of terms and concepts used in them vary with the intentions and the historical and social context of the respective speakers. To give an example: As we will see below, some of the early protagonists of the “later spread” are said to have encountered religious communities in Tibet who practiced Buddhist rituals and kept Buddhist identities; the same sources state that Buddhism had vanished from Tibet completely during the “dark age”, because those religious communities did not have a correct understanding of Buddhism and practiced wrong rituals—and, therefore were no Buddhists at all. For us, it is not possible to ask those communities what they would think about such a statement. A still different speech-act is made, when these anecdotes were used in polemical literature in order to prove, that the rNying-ma-pas—the only school of Tibetan Buddhism that claims a direct connection to the “earlier spread”—were in reality derived from those pseudo-Buddhists of the “dark age” and, therefore, likewise were no Buddhists at all. Moreover, rNying-ma-pa historiographers, consequently, put lesser emphasis on the relevance of the “later spread” move-

⁵ I think this is based on the older Buddhist concept that structures world history into periods where a Buddha has, and has not appeared.

ments for Tibetan Buddhist history, since they believe that Buddhism had never completely vanished from Tibet. (Not to speak of the Bon-pos, Tibet's biggest non-Buddhist minority, who structure Tibetan history in a completely different way.)

This example demonstrates that history and its concepts—in the example, the notion about what Buddhism “really” is—is subjected to a social discourse, that creates and re-creates its objects with every act of speech.⁶ And this forming of objects—or making of meanings—is a result of a complex constellation of the power displayed by the actors. And even if we could utilise all works of Tibetan historiography—the monuments of this discourse—for our presentation, we would still hear only a few voices of the complex polyphone concert of Tibetan history-making.

From the perspective of these reflections, my own presentation can only be regarded as a radical reduction of the actual complexity of the topic. It is confined by a certain choice of original sources and secondary literature. Furthermore, I choose only a few of the multitude of narrations and statements given in the sources, namely those that I deem to be representative and relevant for this survey. For example, the reader should not expect a history and detailed explanation of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy or doctrinal cycles. Methodologically, this paper tries to give an impression of the perspective on Tibetan history from the tenth through thirteenth century as represented by the group of actors characterised above. Anyway, it is an interpretation, synthetically constructed under the influence of further evidence of other sources and historic-critical reflection. And the fact that ancient Tibetan historiographers are not able to react to my interpretation has to be kept in mind, though this is surely a self-evident observation.

2. THE “DARK AGE”

When in 842 the last Tibetan king Glang-dar-ma was assassinated,⁷ the large Tibetan empire quickly began to disintegrate. The strongholds in the Turkestan and Chinese regions were soon lost, and Tibet proper

⁶ Cf. Foucault 1973, p. 74.

⁷ The regicide of Glang-dar-ma is a common mythological stereotype in Tibetan histories. For a discussion of the ethical implications of this myth, see Schlieter 2003.

split into a multitude of small political units ruled by local chieftains. Tucci described this situation with the following words:

[Tibet] split up into a number of self-governing states, nearly always at loggerheads. It is perhaps too ambitious to call them states: they were simply wealthy families, owning much land and pastures, which with their offshoots, kinsfolk, clients and retainers, exercised sovereignty over a whole region. These families formed a local aristocracy, whose power was based on the resources of the territory under their control; they claimed a divine origin, tracing their ancestry to ancient heroes, and could count upon armed forces which were the true foundation of their power.⁸

In some areas, Glang-dar-ma's descendants participated in the competition for hegemony over the scattered remnants of the old empire, but none of them succeeded to establish himself as the undisputed heir of the old kingdom. It is important to note, that this fragmented situation formed the political background when the "later spread of Buddhism" began.

The century immediately following the empire's breakdown is presented as a "dark age" in later literary sources. Especially the sources of the *chos-'byung* genre characterise these years as an interruption of the religious advances that had been achieved in the glorious days when the empire was flourishing. Thus, in the historical narrative constructed in these sources, this "dark age" serves as an intermediate period between the "earlier" and the "later spread of the doctrine". This is not undisputed within Tibetan historiography. A controversial point is how far-reaching the extinction of Buddhism in Tibet actually was. In some contexts, this point was of considerable importance for the legitimization of later religious institutions, especially since the rNying-ma-pa school traces its traditions back to the tantric systems allegedly introduced by Padmasambhava and some others in the eighth century and, therefore, had an interest to prove that these texts and teachings had been transmitted without interruption by tantric lay-practitioners throughout the "dark age".⁹ A major part of the *chos-'byungs*, however, speak of a complete eclipse of Buddhist traditions at least in the central Tibetan provinces dBus and gTsang from the time after Glang-dar-ma

⁸ Tucci 1999, p. 3.

⁹ Dudjom Rinpoche (20th century) even states in his history of the rNying-ma-pa school (1991, p. 612) that Glang-dar-ma explicitly spared the tantric master gNubs sangs-rgyas ye-shes from prosecution, whom the rNying-ma-pas include in their lineage of tradition-bearers, together with his followers.

until the “later spread” began. The exact dating was a matter of discussion among Tibetan historians.¹⁰

This “dark period” was not only “darkened” by the absence of Buddhism from Central Tibet, but, as the *chos-'byungs* state, also by ignorant pseudo-Buddhist monks and tantrics who, longing for material reward, pretended to keep up Buddhist traditions and spread false doctrines under the name of Buddhism. To quote the words of Bu-ston as one example out of many similar statements in other texts:

At that time in dBus and Tsang religious discipline, the exposition of the Doctrine, and the study and preaching of it had altogether ceased. The stewards of the monasteries wore petticoats with collars, called themselves Sthaviras and Arhats, and said that they were observing the monastic rules. In reality, they kept (only) the 4 basic precepts during a very short time, namely the 3 months of the summer retreat. Then, having performed the rite of *pravāraṇa* (which concludes the summer retreat), they did no more observe (any) precepts. The tantrists did not understand the meaning of the Tantras and followed wrong methods like *sbyor* and *sgrol*.¹¹

However, even if Bu-ston informs us about people using Buddhist terminology (Sthaviras/Arhats)¹² to represent themselves, and about (apparently different) people following Buddhist tantric texts, he likewise explicitly says that the Buddhist doctrine had ceased to exist during that time. For him these “monastery stewards” and the tantrists who practiced sexual rites (*sbyor*) and ritual killing (*sgrol*) were completely mistaken about what Buddhism “really” was. They were not *real* Buddhists and, therefore, no Buddhists at all.

Unfortunately we have only very few sources that can be dated to the early post-imperial period and that could throw some more light on the religious culture of this time. However, there is some amount of indirect evidence speaking on behalf of quite a different picture of Buddhist activities during the so-called “dark age” than the later sources would have us believe. 1.) The rNying-ma-pa school claims that its tantric transmissions never disappeared since they were introduced to Tibet by Padmasambhava and some other masters of the “early spread”. It is difficult to judge the extent of historical accurateness

¹⁰ The different attempts to date the beginning and the end of the “dark age” were discussed by 'Gos lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu-dpal, *Blue Annals*, pp. 60ff.

¹¹ Bu-ston 146b–147a; translation Obermiller 1999, p. 203, partly modified.

¹² Sthavira (Tib. *gnas-brtan*) means a monastic elder (Pāli *thera*); Arhat (Tib. *dgra-bcom*) is the term for someone who has reached *nirvāṇa*, without having fulfilled the *bodhisattva* path (i.e., without having become a fully enlightened Buddha).

of this claim, since the proof of unbroken transmission lineages of authoritative texts and practices became an indispensable prerequisite of religious legitimization in the early “later spread” period. Therefore, a certain amount of “invention of tradition” cannot be excluded. Nevertheless, a continuation of Buddhist tantric activity during the “dark age” is highly probable. There is even sound evidence that major developments of the tantric systems associated to the rNying-ma-pa tradition, actually date from this time.¹³ Also some of the *tantras* found in Dunhuang seem to have been written during this period.¹⁴ 2.) The *chos-'byungs* typically begin their accounts of the “later spread” with a story of some Buddhist monks who fled Central Tibet during the time of Glang-dar-ma's persecution and built up small religious centres in North-Eastern Tibet (Kham) where monastic traditions are said to have been upheld throughout the “dark age”. This information, however, has to be balanced in the light of certain Chinese sources that point to an even greater amount of Buddhist activity in North-Eastern Tibet during the tenth century.¹⁵ 3.) Some of the scattered lineages of the royal family do not seem to have abandoned Buddhism completely after the collapse of the empire. Thus, the erection of a Vairocana temple in Bya-sa (Central Tibet) in the early tenth century is believed to have been sponsored by dPal-'khor-btsan, a descendant of Glang-dar-ma.¹⁶ Anyway, the traditional picture of Glang-dar-ma as an apostate king, who was mislead by evil ministers to rigorously eradicate Buddhism from Tibetan soil, has been questioned by Tibetologists, since a prosecution of Buddhism is not mentioned in the earliest available sources. It seems that the last king of the empire actually did no more harm to the Tibetan Buddhist religion than a reduction in patronage.¹⁷

We will probably never get an accurate picture of the religious scenery in Tibet during the period after the downfall of the empire, and to put forward a speculation about these matters is not in the scope of this paper. What is important for us, is that the later Tibetan historical sources most probably present a much simplified picture of the factual state of things in their historical accounts concerning tenth century Tibet. This might partly be due to a general lack of informa-

¹³ Cf. Germano 2002.

¹⁴ Cf. Kapstein 2000, pp. 12 and 208 n. 48.

¹⁵ Cf. Kapstein 2000, p. 12.

¹⁶ Cf. Richardson 1998, p. 178.

¹⁷ Cf. Kapstein 2000, p. 11.

tion about this period already at the time when the Tibetan authors started to get interested in this topic. But this is only one side of the affair. On the other side, I think, we also have to explain the specific representation of this age in the *chos-'byungs* from their inherent notion of history and meaning. As we have seen, most authors attribute to this period a certain sombre quality. To these authors, the “darkness” of this age is not due to a lack of information—indeed, the shortage of information about this period itself bears meaning for the story these authors have to tell: it “proves” that this period was a time of discontinuity and cultural standstill. Within the general plot of the narrative of Tibetan history the “dark age” serves as a silent pause after the catastrophe and, perhaps more important, as a dramaturgical contrast to the “light” that then follows, namely the renaissance of true religion, the “later spread”.

3. THE RELIGIOUS KINGS OF WESTERN TIBET AND THE NOTION OF BUDDHIST RENAISSANCE

3.1. *The Return of Buddhist Monasticism to Central Tibet*

The *chos-'byungs* tell quite a lot of stories connected to the “later spread” of Buddhism in Tibet. From the immanent chronology of these sources, the first story is the decision of Klu-mes Tshul-khrims-shes-rab and five other monks to bring back the tradition of Buddhist *Vinaya* (monastic codex) from the Eastern Tibetan province Khams to Central Tibet, where they re-established the *samgha* and built many monasteries.¹⁸ Most sources take the arrival of these so-called “six men of dBus and g'Tsang” (*dBus g'Tsang-gi mi-drug*) in Central Tibet as the beginning of the “later spread” and calculate its dating from this event. A long story narrating the survival of the monastic tradition in Khams to where a small group of Buddhist monks fled from Central Tibet at the dawn of the “dark age” is told in the *chos-'byungs* and possibly goes back to a history of

¹⁸ The actual importance of these “Eastern Vinaya monks” for the re-establishment of Buddhism in Central Tibet was emphasised by R. Davidson (2004) recently. In this brilliant study, which was published too recently to become fully incorporated in this paper, Davidson argues that the Buddhist culture brought to dBus and Tsang from Eastern Tibet had already acquired a firm social position quite a time before the West-Tibetan kings started their programme of reintroducing Buddhism in Tibet. Their influence remained strong at least up to the 12th century, when they gradually became assimilated by the emerging tantric movements, mainly by the bKa'-gdams-pas.

the “later spread” by Klu-mes himself.¹⁹ Despite the importance of the story of the “six men” as a fixed point for the “later spread”, it seems to me that, ideologically, the “later spread” myth owes much more to another narration, namely the activities of the *dharma*-kings of Western Tibet, who promoted the propagation of the Buddhist teaching in Tibet with great financial gratitude.²⁰

3.2. *Ye-shes-'od and Rin-chen bzang-po*

As we have seen, the “later spread” has been modelled by later authors as a renaissance of truth against the background of a “dark age” characterised by subversive activities of unknowing pseudo-Buddhist pretenders. Although this dualistic view might be a topos of later literature, the motive of correcting corrupted religious practices appears to be more than a mere invention of literary fantasy. Actually, it seems quite likely that at least the activities of the kings of Western Tibet, a major incentive of the “later spread”, were in fact intended to be a socio-religious programme to replace certain tantric practices that circulated in Tibet of the late tenth to eleventh century by officially scrutinised—and maybe state-controlled—religious communities.²¹

Ye-shes-'od was the first in a series of prominent figures of the royal house of Western Tibet, who played active roles in the “later spread”. It seems that around the beginning of the tenth century Ye-shes-'od's grandfather, Nyi-ma-mgon, who claimed ancestry of the Yar-lung dynasty, had succeeded in uniting different local clans of mNga'-ris (West-Tibet) under one rule. Thereby he built up a kingdom of considerable dimensions containing the vast, mainly pastoral highlands

¹⁹ It is not clear if this work, the *bsTan-pa phyi-dar-gyi lo-rgyus* by Klu-mes, actually existed. It is cited in the *Bod-kyi chos-srid zung-'brel skor-pa* by Dung-dkar Blo-bzang'phrin-las (20th century); cf. Martin 1997, no. 3. The story of the survival of these monastic groups in Khams is frequently retold by Tibetan historiographers who, however, are at odds about many a detail (cf. Uebach 1987, pp. 36ff.). Already in the fifteenth century 'Gos lo-tsā-ba dZhon-nu-dpal (*Blue Annals*, pp. 1084ff) complained about the inconsistency of the sources.

²⁰ Cf. also Richardson (1998, p. 113), who states: “(...) the arrival of Klu-mes Tsul-khri-mes shes-rab in 978 AD marked the beginning of the *phyi-dar*. (...) but in Tibetan minds the *phyi-dar* is dominated by the coming of Atiśa; and the part played in bringing that about by 'Od-srung's descendants, the Western Tibetan kings Ye-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od, has quite obscured the fact that the blood of Srong-btsan Sgam-po no longer ran in the royal veins.”

²¹ For an in-depth study of the genealogy of the royal house of Western Tibet and its religio-political programme, see Vitali 1996.

west of Central Tibet, bordering Nepal in the south and present-day Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh in the west.²² Nyi-ma-mgon's grandson Ye-shes-'od resided in Pu-hrang in the southern corner of mNga'-ris close to the Nepalese border. He probably shared rule with his son or nephew lHa-lde, and together they reigned over Phu-hrang and the north-western area Gu-ge with its royal city Tsaparang. Ye-shes-'od's dating is uncertain, Karmay infers from indirect evidence that he died towards the end of the tenth century.²³ He is said to have taken up the vows of a Buddhist monk while still staying in office as king of Phu-hrang. A eulogy composed by his son (or nephew) Zhi-ba-'od (11th century) calls him *bla-ma byang-chub sems-dpa'* Ye-shes-'od, thus equating him to the great *bodhisattva*-kings of the imperial period.²⁴ His main impact on the "revival" of Tibetan Buddhism was the invitation of Buddhist scholars from India and Kashmir to Western Tibet and, still more important, his initiative to send 21 young Tibetans to study Buddhist traditions in Kashmir. The foremost of them was Rin-chen bzang-po, who returned to Tibet in 985 after a 10-year stay in Kashmir and became famous as a translator (*lo-tsā-ba*) and a Buddhist scholar of high reputation.

According to later sources, with the decision to send Rin-chen-bzang-po and his fellows to Kashmir, Ye-shes-'od's reacted against certain misunderstandings or even misuses of Buddhist tantric texts that were spread in the Tibet of his time. The above-mentioned eulogy by Zhi-ba-'od states:

Furthermore, the hidden meaning of the secret *mantra* was vitiated, and it was further corrupted by the practices of the rites of 'sexual union', 'deliverance'²⁵ and the '*tshogs* offering'.²⁶ To find out whether these practices were correct at all, the *lo-tsā-ba* Rin-chen bzang-po was sent to Kashmir.²⁷

Though some doubts have been raised by Western scholarship whether Ye-shes-'od considered tantrism to be a genuine Buddhist teaching at

²² Cf. Jackson 1976, Petech 1977.

²³ Karmay 1998a, p. 6, n. 26. Due to contradictions in the sources, there are many uncertainties concerning the identification and genealogical connections of the rulers of this Western Tibetan kingdom. Cf. Karmay 1998a and 1998b, Snellgrove 1987, pp. 471f.

²⁴ I.e., Ye-shes-'od, the Lama-*bodhisattva*, cf. Karmay 1998a, p. 4.

²⁵ "Deliverance" (*grol*) means ritual killing in this context.

²⁶ *tshogs*-offering (Skt. *ganacakra*), a tantric ritual involving collective sexual rites.

²⁷ Cited in Karmay 1998a, p. 6.

all,²⁸ it is nevertheless quite possible that his efforts to invite Indian Buddhist masters and to send Tibetans to study Indian traditions were at least partly due to the existence of Buddhist groups within his dominion, who used to perform practices suspicious to the king. It seems that Rin-chen bzang-po composed a “refutation of false *tantras*” (*sngags-log sun-'byin*) after his return, but this text is no longer available. As Kashmir was a well-known centre of Buddhist learning in the tenth century and the part of India best accessible from mNga'-ris, Ye-shes-'od and his successors established close connections to the Buddhist culture of this country. This was manifested in the Kashmiri style of architecture and artwork of many early religious buildings of Western Tibet.

Information on Rin-chen bzang-po's life and work is not consistently transmitted.²⁹ The sources agree that he took up the life of a Buddhist monk at the age of 13 (970 AD) and at the age of 18 he was sent to Kashmir, where he studied under various Buddhist masters for nearly 10 years. When he returned to Tibet in 985 he began his great project to translate Buddhist texts into Tibetan. A great number of the translations that were later included in the Tibetan Buddhist canon (*bKa'-'gyur*) bear his name or those of his disciples in the colophons. It seems that Rin-chen bzang-po was mainly interested in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and, above all, tantric texts. The “Great Translator” (*lo-tśā-ba chen-po*), as he was nicknamed later on, was highly patronised by the rulers of Pu-hrang: lHa-lde, the son (or nephew) and successor of Ye-shes-'od, appointed him as his *Vajra Master* (*rdo-rje slob-dpon*) and Head Priest (*bdu'i mchod-gnas*); this king also sponsored the construction of a large number of monasteries in Western Tibet and Ladakh for Rin-chen bzang-po, as well as two further travels to India, from where he returned in the company of Buddhist scholars, artists and craftsmen. If this information is reliable, Rin-chen bzang-po's merits for the “later spread” of Buddhism in Tibet cannot be overestimated. Some of the monasteries he established all across the Western Tibetan country³⁰ gradually developed into centres of monastic learning and gave home to translation groups collaborating in the work of translating Buddhist

²⁸ Martin 1991, p. 142.

²⁹ Cf. Tucci 1988 for a detailed discussion of the sources. Chapters on his life in later historical works like the *Blue Annals* are based mainly on a biography (*rnam-thar*) composed by dPal-ye-shes, one of his disciples (edited in Tucci 1988, translated in Snellgrove & Skorupski 1980).

³⁰ The sources speak of the suspicious number of 108 monasteries founded by Rin-chen bzang-po.

scriptures and commentaries that had not found their way into Tibet (or did not yet exist) in the period of the “earlier spread”. Foremost among these were the monasteries of mTho-lding (Tho-ling), the royal capital of Gu-ge, where much of the translation work was done. Ye-shes-'od and lHa-lde invited further Buddhist scholars from India; the *chos-'byung* gives long lists of their names and scholarly activities.

With the collaboration between Rin-chen bzang-po and the Western Tibetan kings of the late tenth to early eleventh century, Buddhism once again became a governmental sponsored religion on Tibetan soil and probably also the religion favoured by the nobility of the Western Tibetan regions. If Davidson is right, the West-Tibetan Buddhist movement deserves much less credit to the country-wide revival of Tibetan Buddhism than the *chos-'byung* texts suggest. Buddhist life in the Central Tibetan regions dBus and gTsang remained largely outside their influence. Up to the twelfth century Central Tibet seems to have been a dominion of multiple Buddhist groups including the “Eastern Vinaya monks” who conflicted with older established Buddhist family traditions and functionaries laying claim on the responsibility for the maintenance of the old temples. Some of these older communities later established a shared identity and became known as the rNying-ma-school. Even after Atiśa, the most famous Indian missionary of the period who was invited to Tibet to foster the religious programme of the kings of Gu-ge Pu-hrangs—we will turn to him in a moment—, visited Central Tibet, his success seems to have been rather modest.³¹

3.3. *Tantric Buddhism*

Perhaps one of Rin-chen bzang-po's greatest impacts on Tibetan Buddhism was that he made tantric Buddhism presentable to the court. In the following centuries more and more tantric teaching traditions arrived from different parts of India and were transplanted into Tibetan religious society. With the “later spread” movements tantric concepts and symbols became omnipresent in Tibetan Buddhism, and virtually no Tibetan school would have disagreed that tantric practice was an integral part of the Buddhist path and even a supreme method to realise buddhahood. Hence, it is necessary to say a few words on tantric Buddhism in general. I will confine myself to some sociological

³¹ Cf. Davidson 2004, pp. 84–116.

and structural aspects; for a detailed introduction to the history of tantric Buddhism, its symbolism and doctrine, Snellgrove (1987) may be recommended to the readers. The following explanations serve a hermeneutical purpose—namely to give the reader an idea of what our sources are talking about. Therefore, I think it might be sufficient to present an idealised, normative picture balanced by sociological or historic-critical investigations.

Tantrayāna, Vajrayāna and Mantrayāna are used synonymously in Tibetan Buddhist literature. Commonly, Tibetan authors understand these terms as denoting a distinct type of religious practice within the framework of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The envisaged goal of spiritual development is that of Mahāyāna: the state of a fully awakened Buddha. However, whereas it is believed that by “ordinary” Mahāyāna practice, as laid down in the *sūtras*, a *bodhisattva* (a living being aspiring for enlightenment) needs a minimum of three “countless world-cycles” to reach the goal, tantric teachings are believed to provide special methods (*thabs*, Skt. *upāya*) to become a Buddha within only one lifetime (at minimum). This “short-cut to enlightenment” is taught in a special class of Buddhist texts: the *tantras* (Tib. *rgyud*, the synonymous designation *sngags* [*mantras*] is also usual). Thus, Tibetans usually classify Mahāyāna teachings and practices as being either sutric, i.e., “ordinary” Mahāyānistic, or tantric. Most *tantras*—like the *sūtras*—are believed to have been revealed by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Although, evidently, *tantras* were studied and practiced in the great monasteries of India contemporary to the “later spread”, their typical social setting appears to have been groups of free-roving *yogins* outside the monastic environment. These groups were organised as exclusive circles centred around a Guru—the Sanskrit equivalent for Tibetan Lama (*bla-ma*)—who instructs his disciples in the teachings he (or she), in turn, had once learned from his (or her) own master. In this way, group identity was produced by affiliation to transmission lineages defined by specific interpretations of tantric texts, symbols and artefacts as well as practical instructions on meditative and ritual techniques passed on from master to pupil. Important tantric masters of the past are often referred to by the epithet (*mahā*)*siddha* (“[great] perfected one”, Tib. *grub* [*chen*]).

Tantric methods have to be kept secret. They are open only to adepts deemed worthy (i.e., spiritually advanced enough) by the Guru. An adept is introduced to a tantric system by a series of initiations, called *dbang-skur* (“empowerments”) by the Tibetans.

Only a person “empowered” by the initiations and instructed face-to-face by a qualified master, is authorised to read tantric texts and is deemed capable to perform the associated practices in the correct way. A *tantra*, read or practiced without having acquired these prerequisites, is considered to be useless—even dangerous to the spiritual health of the adept. The usual interpretation, also used by Tibetans, explains tantric methods as the transformation of emotional energies, like desire or hatred, into spiritual powers that can be used to achieve enlightenment. Transformation (*sgyur-ba*) is the important term here: while “sutric” Mahāyāna practice aims at the eradication (*spang-ba*) of desire and hatred in order to reach buddhahood, tantric practice makes intentional use of the very same passions and transforms them into the wisdom and the liberating power of an enlightened being. In order to achieve this, special meditation techniques and rituals are employed which involve deity visualisation,³² the use of *maṇḍalas*, the recitation of *mantras*—especially the more advanced stages of tantric practice which include sexual rituals and intentional breaking of social conventions (e.g., consuming substances commonly considered as impure). Sexual and violent symbolism is typical in tantric contexts.

Tantric Buddhism is an extraordinary complex conglomeration of texts and practices. The textual basis is provided by the *tantras* themselves, commonly referred to as the “root texts”, accompanied by a bulk of commentarial and liturgical literature and traditions of oral instructions varying from one transmission lineage to the other. In Tibet tantric literature is usually arranged in categories of so-called “outer” and “inner” *tantras*, i.e., textual cycles (“root text” and additional literature) suitable for the less and more advanced practitioners respectively. In the “new schools” of Tibetan Buddhism the “outer *tantras*” are further classified into a *kriyā*, *caryā* and *yoga* class, while the “inner *tantras*” constitute the *anuttarayoga* class. However, the classification scheme and the exact allocation of individual texts can vary. Only tantric cycles of the *anuttarayoga* class include sexual rituals and more than one stage of initiation. The most important *tantras* of the *anuttarayoga* class are the *Hevajra*-, *Cakrasaṃvara*-, *Guhyasamāja*- and *Kālacakratantra*.

³² By “deity” an emanation of a Buddha or *bodhisattva* is meant in the tantric context.

3.4. *Atiśa and the First Tibetan Buddhist School*

Next to Rin-chen-bzang-po the second great figure of the “later spread” is Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982–1054), usually called Jo-bo-rje, the “venerable master”, or Atiśa by the Tibetans. His contributions to Tibetan Buddhism are not only known from a considerable number of biographical and historiographical sources,³³ but also by his own literary products, including his famous work on Buddhist soteriology, the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, or “Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”. Atiśa was a kind of mixture of a celibate scholar-monk and an accomplished tantric *yogin*. The numerous biographical accounts of his life pay special attention both aspects of his person.

According to tradition, Atiśa spent most of his life as a senior monk (*gnas-brten chen-po*, Skt. *mahāsthavira*) in the reputable monastery of Vikramaśīla, where he eventually received an invitation to Western Tibet by Byang-chub-'od, Ye-shes-'od's successor to the throne of mNga'-ris. According to the *Deb-ther sngon-po*, Atiśa's invitation by Byang-chub-'od was due to the still not overcome misinterpretations of Buddhist doctrine circulating in Tibet:

Though many monks are found in the country of Tibet; there exist many wrong practices in respect of sByor (sexual practices) and sGrol (ritual murder) in the study of Tantra. (...) Paṇḍitas, invited previously, did excellent work in some parts of Tibet, but their work did not benefit the whole of Tibet. But, if we were to invite Jo-bo-rje (i.e., Atiśa), he would be able to refute these heresies and thus, benefit for the Doctrine would arise.³⁴

Atiśa was thus invited to Tibet and arrived in mNga'-ris via Nepal in 1042. He spent about three years in the monastery of mTho-lding (Guge) where he impressed Byang-chub-'od and various Buddhist scholars assembling from all across the country with his immense knowledge and bestowed on them numerous tantric initiations. Requested by the king to clarify disagreements between the Buddhists of Tibet on various points of the *dharma*, he composed the *Bodhipathapradīpa*. On one occasion Atiśa also met with Rin-chen bzang-po who was already an old man of 85 years at that time. The relationship between the two scholars is a suggestive motif of the narration. Rin-chen bzang-po, hitherto depicted as Tibet's leading authority on tantric studies, debated with

³³ These have been studied in great detail by H. Eimer (1977).

³⁴ *Blue Annals*, p. 245.

Atiśa on the correct way *tantras* have to be meditated on and finally had to surrender to the greater experience of his younger opponent. He then retreated from public life and for the last ten years of his life meditated in solitude according to Atiśa's method. On his way back to India Atiśa met with 'Brom-ston rgyal-ba'i 'byung-gnas, who became his main devotee. After this auspicious encounter the master changed his plans and proceeded to Central Tibet together with 'Brom-ston, where both continued missionary activities and visited bSam-yas, Lhasa and many other places before he died in sNye-thang (to the south of Lhasa) in 1054.

In Tibetan Buddhist historiography Atiśa's importance considerably exceeds that of Rin-chen bzang-po, and he may justly be regarded as the dominant figure associated with the "later spread". The first Buddhist school-tradition emerging from this period—the bKa'-gdams-pa, the "ones teaching the (Buddha's) words"—refers to Atiśa as its founder. The main centre of the bKa'-gdams-pa order was founded 1057 by Atiśa's primary pupil 'Brom-ston in Rva-sgreng near Lhasa. Thus, the story of Atiśa also marks a local shift in the "later spread" accounts from Western to Central Tibet. The bKa'-gdams-pa school was of major importance for the further development of Tibetan Buddhism.

A major factor of Atiśa's success was probably the fact that he taught a systematic approach to Buddhism based on a specific choice of practices and a corresponding theoretical foundation. The heritage of a clear-cut set of teachings associated with a charismatic representative of the highly reputed masters and institutes of traditional Buddhist learning in Northern India, was surely a vital precondition for the community of his followers to develop an identity as a distinct Buddhist school. His system included a reasoned mixture of conventional Mahāyāna doctrine and tantric practice, as well as a characteristic synthesis of monastic and tantric lifestyle.

Some scholars have suggested that Atiśa's royal patrons of mNga'-ris had expected from his invitation a more radical turn towards monastic Buddhism than Atiśa had actually effected. As Samuel conjectures: "The Tibetans who invited Atiśa may have wanted a fully rationalized and non-Tantric Buddhism."³⁵ From the historian's point of view

³⁵ Samuel 1993, p. 470; compare also Snellgrove 1987, p. 481: "Having practiced his religion earlier in life under the guidance of famous tantric *yogins*, he [*scil.* Atiśa] could scarcely be expected to change his views later in order to please a few leading people in Tibet, who wanted a far more thorough "reformation" than he was prepared to countenance."

such a speculation may be justified at least in the case of Ye-shes-'od. However, if there is any credibility in the Rin-chen-bzang-po story, it is unlikely that the subsequent kings were completely unaware of the wide acceptance tantric Buddhism enjoyed in India of the eleventh century, also in the monasteries. An official letter (*bka'-shog*) by Zhi-ba-'od—a younger brother of Byang-chub-'od and Buddhist scholar of some reputation who seems to have held considerable political authority over the Gu-ge district of Western Tibet and its religious estates after his brother's retirement—indicates that within the generation immediately after Ye-shes-'od, tantric Buddhism was accepted by members of the royal family.³⁶ This document was published as a stigmatisation of “wrong” *tantras*, that is to say, those *tantras* that Zhi-ba-'od considered to be composed by Tibetans (i.e., *tantras* not authenticated by Indian origin). “Authentic” *tantras*, on the other hand, were allowed to be practiced—with the restriction that monks have to keep their celibacy and must not (at least not physically) enter into the sexual aspects of tantric practice:

Those who have taken vows as monks must observe their monastic rules, and (when) they take up the practice of the Mantrayāna they should make efforts to observe the vows of the *tantras* belonging to the class of Kriyā, Upāya, Yoga and even the *Guhyasamāja*, etc. without breaking their monastic vows.³⁷

This rule concords with Atiśa's solution to the problematic coexistence of two religious ideals that include celibacy and sexual ritual respectively, as laid down in his *Bodhipathapradīpa*. While most parts of this work are devoted to “conventional” Mahāyāna practice and indicate an implicit preference for monastic lifestyle, the last few verses take up the topic of tantrism and sexual religious practice. For Atiśa tantrism is an optional supplement to the Mahāyāna path, a more convenient (*bde-ba*) method to develop spiritual qualities.³⁸ In principle, the tantric option is open to monastic practitioners also, but only the first stage of tantric initiation is allowed for them, since the higher stages involve sexual practices:

If somebody wishes to practice the secret mantras taught in the Kriyā-, Caryā-*tantras* etc., he should please a worthy teacher with all kinds of

³⁶ Cf. Karmay 1998b.

³⁷ Translation Karmay 1998b, p. 37.

³⁸ *Bodhipathapradīpa* (ed. Eimer 1978), pp. 245–248.

veneration, precious offerings and performances of austerities, for the purpose of receiving the “teacher initiation” (from him). [...]

Since it is strictly forbidden in the *Ādibuddhamahātantra*, the “secret initiation” and the “wisdom initiation” must not be taken by celibate practitioners. If somebody, who is established in celibate asceticism, takes these (two) initiations, he would break the vow of asceticism, since he would turn to actions forbidden (for him).³⁹

The opposition of the two normative codes of monasticism and tantra remained a problem for Tibetan Buddhism throughout its history. A literary genre, the so-called “Three Vow-literature” (*sdom-pa-gsum*), emerged from the thirteenth century onwards written by authors, who tried to regulate the application of these and other religious norms in a highly elaborated systematic way.⁴⁰ Solutions similar to Atiśa’s became a standard pragmatic way to cope with the problem of *tantra*-practicing monks for different school traditions. It seems that, apart from the bKa’-gdams-pa, other Tibetan schools—since they were more closely connected to the Indian tradition of wandering tantric *yogins*—did not put much emphasis on formal monastic discipline during the first period after their foundations. By that time, however, the fully ordained celibate practitioner became one of the most important types of religious specialists within all these traditions. According to D. Snellgrove this development can be best explained as an effect of the great influence of the normative standards established by Atiśa and his immediate followers.⁴¹

Normative concepts like the recommendation and regulation of a monastic life are, of course, mainly theoretical, even if they were laid down in highly revered religious texts. Social reality can be a completely different matter. But just like the rhetorical cliché of “false *tantras*”, lamentations and polemics against an alleged general moral decline of Tibetan monasticism is often found in the Buddhist literature of Tibet. We hear of tantric sexual rites that were carried out by monks ignoring their vows of celibacy, or of a general recession of people who decide to take these vows in the first place. Also Tsong-kha-pa’s (1357–1419) “reformation” of the bKa’-gdams-pa seems to have been mainly motivated by his intended return to Atiśa’s principle of a balanced correlation of monastic and tantric practice that he deemed to

³⁹ *Bodhipathapradīpa* (ed. Eimer 1978), pp. 247–264; my translation.

⁴⁰ For a comparative study of this genre, see Sobisch 2002.

⁴¹ Snellgrove 1987, p. 493.

have been abandoned in favour of tantric lay-practice by the majority of bKa'-gdams-pa of his time; the "re-introduction" of the monastic codex is presented by Tsong-kha-pa's biographers as one of his "Great Deeds".⁴²

4. LATER RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS OF THE "LATER SPREAD"

Only slightly later than the bKa'-gdams-pa several other Buddhist schools were founded in different parts of the country. In the accounts of the foundation of the other schools we do not hear much about "wrong *tantras*", and also the motif of a revival of Buddhism seems not to be dominant.

While the tantric traditions of the bKa'-gdams-pa were mainly centred on texts of the *tantras* of the so-called *yoga* class,⁴³ with the following schools a concentration on *tantras* of the more advanced *anuttarayoga* class became en vogue. Commonly, these transmission lineages are believed to go back to a "root-teacher" who acquired his oral instructions directly from a tantric deity. In some cases a long series of Indian transmission-holders separate the respective Tibetan school-founder from the "root-teacher". The concept of continuing special transmission lineages constitutes a major factor of school identity. Tantric initiations are usually granted to every person deemed as a "suitable vessel", notwithstanding his/her primary school association. Mobile *yogins* wandering from master to master collecting whatever instruction and initiation is to be gained from them, are figures frequently appearing in Tibetan history. Thus, mutual exclusion is not a vital characteristic for Tibetan Buddhist schools. In fact, their history—especially their intellectual development—through the centuries is largely a result of mutual influences on multiple levels. Thus, school identities are not so much based on exclusiveness, but rather on the concept of responsibility for the qualified and legitimate continuation of the school-specific transmissions. Other factors are a certain degree of doctrinal diversity, a series of great figures in the schools' intellectual development, as well as local settings and political constellations.

⁴² Cf. Kaschewsky 1971, p. 182.

⁴³ 'Brom-ston is said to have convinced Atiśa not to give higher tantric instructions openly.

4.1. *Sa-skyapa*

The Sa-skyapa school was founded by dKon-mchog rgyal-po (1034–1102), a member of the mighty Khon clan residing in the area called Sa-skya (“pale earth”) in gTsang, including important trade routes between the agricultural regions of dBus, the regions of Western Tibet and Nepal. In 1073 dKon-mchog rgyal-po established the monastery Sa-skya—simply called after its local setting, as was the school that developed inside its walls—as a centre of religious learning and practice based on the teachings he received from his master, the travelling translator ’Brog-mi (992–1072). According to the “Blue Annals” (*Deb-ther sngon-po*),⁴⁴ ’Brog-mi had travelled to India where he studied Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions under several great Paṇḍitas of the monastic university of Vikramaśīla. Afterwards he went further east and became a disciple of Prajñā-īndraruci who bestowed on him the initiation in the tantric cycle of Hevajra. Prajñā-īndraruci belonged to a transmission lineage ultimately going back to the *mahāsiddha* Virūpa, who is believed to have received his instructions on the *Hevajra-tantra*—one of the great *anuttarayoga-tantras*—directly from the goddess Nairātmyā, the female companion of Hevajra himself.

Due to its favourable local setting the Sa-skyapa monastery quickly rose to remarkable wealth and political influence. Throughout its history it remained closely linked to the noble family of Khon. The abbot of the Sa-skyapa school, the *Sa-skya-khri-chen*, has always been a member of this clan. Though the Sa-skyapa order is traditionally presented as putting less emphasis on formal monastic discipline, the *Sa-skya-khri-chens*—at least in early times—were usually fully ordained monks, while a son of a married brother was normally recruited as the next abbot. This model of uncle-nephew-succession, copied by several other schools, assured that the affairs of the school remained in the hand of the family and caused their joint rise to power.

Sa-skyapa soon developed to one of the great centres of Buddhist monastic learning in Tibet. Although it remained particularly connected to the transmission of the *Hevajra-tantra*—Hevajra is also believed to be the “tutelary-deity” of the school—other branches of Buddhist learning—Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna literature, Madhyamaka philosophy, logic, *Abhidharma*—were also pursued and integrated into an elaborate

⁴⁴ *Blue Annals*, pp. 205f.

doctrinal system by a series of great Sa-skyapa scholars. Among them Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251) deserves particularly to be mentioned. He is popularly known as Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita (or in the short form Sa-Paṇ), the “Scholar of Sa-skyapa”, due to his vast learning. After he was appointed as the *Sa-skyapa-khri-chen* in 1216, a life of immense literary productivity followed. In his numerous works he turned to various branches of traditional Buddhist learning like epistemology, the theory of religious debating and the classification of the “three vows” as well as poetic and musical theory, astrology and medicine. His reputation as a universally learned scholar was one of the reasons that in 1244 he was summoned to the court of Köden Khan to negotiate the surrender of the Tibetan country to the world’s new political power, the Mongol empire.

4.2. *bKa'-brgyud-pa*

The bKa'-brgyud-pas, the “ones (following) the transmission of the teachings”, are strictly speaking not one school but a multitude of several traditions⁴⁵ with different founders, allocations and, to a certain degree, own school identities. What justifies speaking of them as a unity, is the fact that all these traditions trace their origins back to the tantric master Mar-pa (1012–1096) and his main pupil, the famous *yogin* Mi-la-ras-pa (1040–1123). To be exact, the disciples of Mi-la-ras-pa’s pupil sGam-po-pa (1079–1153) were the ones who founded different communities and thus started the branches of the bKa'-brgyud-pa. Accordingly, all branches of the bKa'-brgyud-pa look back to a shared transmission lineage up to sGam-po-pa.

These three “fathers” of the bKa'-brgyud-pas are interesting also from a sociological perspective, since they represent three different lifestyles that can be found among tantric practitioners up to the present day: Mar-pa was a tantric master who lived the life of a householder and had a wife and children; Mi-la-ras-pa was a roaming *yogin* living in the solitude of mountain caves, while sGam-po-pa was a tantric monk in accordance with the bKa'-gdams-pa model and dwelt in a settled monastic community together with his pupils.

Mar-pa is presented as having been a student of 'Brog-mi in his youth. But in contrast to the Sa-skyapa founder dKon-mchog rgyal-po,

⁴⁵ Traditionally 4 major and 8 minor branches are differentiated.

Mar-pa was dissatisfied with the teaching methods of this master. The *Deb-ther sngon-po* explains that 'Brog-mi charged large fees for his instructions that Mar-pa was unable to afford. He then decided to go to India on his own account to search for a suitable teacher⁴⁶ and finally met Nāropa, a tantric *siddha* who bestowed on him the teachings that later became the fundamentals of bKa'-brgyud-pa doctrine. Nāropa himself is an extremely interesting figure. The story of his "mystical odyssey" is frequently retold in Tibetan literature.⁴⁷ Mar-pa travelled to India and Nepal several times to meet Nāropa and other *siddhas*. When he finally settled in Central Tibet, he had gathered numerous tantric teaching traditions, including instructions on *anuttarayoga tantras*—like the *Hevajra*, the *Cakrasaṃvara* and the *Guhyasamāja*—as well as the *Mahāmudra*, the practice of the "Great Seal". The latter is a tantric teaching based on the so-called "direct introduction (of the mind) to (its) own nature" (*ngo sprod pa*), particularly associated (though not exclusive) to the bKa'-brgyud-pa tradition. After his settlement Mar-pa led the life of a householder and became renowned for his eccentric teaching methods and his harsh character. In addition to the mother of his children he is said to have had not less than eight other wives who served him as tantric partners. Apparently Mar-pa became quite wealthy because of the fees he charged from his many disciples.

The story goes that before Mar-pa honoured his devoted student Mi-la-ras-pa with the transmission of his teachings, he treated him with disrespect and assigned him many hardships and drudgery for several years. Tradition interprets his hard times with Mar-pa as a process of spiritual purification that became necessary, since Mi-la-ras-pa was a student of black magic in his youth and had killed many people when he cast an evil spell on his aunt and uncle who had cast his family into poverty. Finally he was accepted by Mar-pa, who initiated him in the complete transmissions of the lineage. Subsequently Mi-la-ras-pa decided to practice in solitude and lived in a mountain cave for many years until he became enlightened and started to accept disciples. The rest of his life he spent as a wandering and teaching *yogin*. His special characteristic is the woollen cloth that he used as his only garment;

⁴⁶ *Blue Annals*, p. 208.

⁴⁷ Already in 1933 a German translation of the *Nā-ro-pa'i rnam-thar* was published. This translation by A. Grünwedel, who regarded Nāropa as the main representative of late Indian Buddhist "necromancy" and "witchcraft", is very poor. The interested reader is better advised to turn to H. Guenther's English translation (Guenther 1963).

this is responsible for his name: Mi-la-ras-pa, “the man from Mi-la wearing a woollen cloth”. Mi-la-ras-pa is probably the most studied Tibetan Buddhist figure in Western Tibetology; his life-story and his famous “*vajra*-songs” are available in various translations in several European languages.

Among Mi-la-ras-pa’s many students sGam-po-pa deserves special mention. He was a fully ordained monk in the bKa’-gdams-pa order, when he met with the great *yogin*. After he meditated according to Mi-la-ras-pa’s instructions for several years, he went to sGam-po (hence his name), where he settled near a bKa’-gdams-pa monastery. He assembled a great number of pupils and taught a synthesis of bKa’-gdams-pa monasticism and the numerous transmissions he was initiated to by Mi-la-ras-pa. This synthesis gave rise to the bKa’-brgyud-pa order with its diverse succession lineages founded by his pupils in different parts of the country. We will hear about some of them later.

4.3. *Other Schools*

Next to the schools already discussed, the “later spread” produced quite a number of smaller school traditions.⁴⁸ Among them the Zhva-lu school (named after the Zhva-lu monastery founded in gTsang as early as 1040) to which the perhaps most revered scholar of Tibetan Buddhism—the “all-knowing” Bu-ston Rin-po-che (1290–1364)—belonged. In the wider sense of the “later spread” concept, the controversial Jo-nang-pa⁴⁹ and the dGe-lugs-pa, which became the dominant power in Tibet from the 17th century onwards, may be mentioned; but these were founded considerably later (in the 14th and 15th centuries respectively) and, thus fall out of the scope of this paper.

Only one example, the gCod-pa, may be discussed briefly here, mainly as a case study demonstrating the dialectical character of the interrelations between Tibetan Buddhist school traditions. The gCod school had considerable influence on Tibetan tantric practice while its

⁴⁸ Apart from these “small schools” the *chos’byungs* refer to a considerable number of individual Tibetan and Indian missionaries active during the “later spread”. Most of them apparently did not succeed in institutionalising their respective transmissions and sooner or later became absorbed by the prevailing schools or vanished completely. No doubt, there will have been plenty of additional cases that escaped Tibetan “social memory” completely.

⁴⁹ On this highly interesting school and its controversial philosophical doctrine, that was used as official reason to legitimate its destruction by the 5th Dalai Lama, see Ruegg 1963 and Gruschke 2002 (for further literature see the latter publication).

teaching was controversial in intellectual discourse. Additionally, we will take a closer look at the rNying-ma-pa and the non-Buddhist Bon tradition from the same perspective. These fall inside the scope of this paper insofar as both traditions developed their identities as school systems in reaction to the “new” schools, albeit they draw their roots back to earlier Tibetan history.

4.3.1. *The gCod School*

The main representatives of this school are Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas (11th/12th century) and the (female) *yoginī* Ma-gcig lab-sgron-ma (1055–1149). The former is said to have been an Indian *yogin* who visited Tibet several times. During his third visit he met with Ma-gcig who became his pupil and later systemised his teachings. Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas taught a special kind of tantric ritual called *gcod*, what literally means “cutting through”. The *gcod* ritual is a highly complex procedure involving a visualised self-sacrifice to fierce flesh-eating demons.⁵⁰ It is preferably executed at night at spooky places—cemeteries or other locations believed to be frequented by dangerous demons and spirits. After initial ritual actions the *gcod* practitioner summons the demons living in the place and invites them to consume his body. He then visualises his own body being cut into gory pieces and devoured by the assembled demons. This is regarded as an act of generosity, one of the major Mahāyāna virtues. The deeper effect aimed at by the ritual is the elimination of every aspect of clinging to an *ego*. By offering one’s own body one “cuts through” the process of discursive thinking (*rnam-rtoḡ*) which is responsible for the illusions of worldly existence.

The tradition was mainly kept up by free-roving *yogins* or small communities living in scattered hermitages. Many of them became known for their unconventional behaviour. Certain aspects of the theoretical background of the *gcod* ritual have continuously provoked attacks against the gCod tradition by doxographers of the other schools. Especially dGe-lugs-pa authors seem to have been annoyed by the teachings of the gCod school.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the *gcod* ritual was assumed by adherents of

⁵⁰ Different versions of the ritual are described in Evanz-Wentz 1960. Additional information on the gCod tradition and more recent results of research can be obtained from Kollmar-Paulenz 1993 and 1998. The former includes a German translation of the only known *chos-’byung* written from the gCod perspective, the *’Zhi-byed dang gCod-yul-gyi chos-’byung rin-po-che’i phreng-ba thar-pa’i rgyan* by Khams-smyon ’Jigs-bral chos-kyi seng-ge (19th century).

⁵¹ For example Klong-rdol-bla-ma Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang (1719–1794) who polemicalises

several other schools and especially became part of the ritual repertoire of the bKa'-brgyud-pa order; even the dGe-lugs-pa school had their own tradition of *gcod* (the latter fact is mainly due to the sympathy of the 2nd and 5th Dalai Lamas for the gCod tradition). Thus, *gcod* is one of the examples for the side by side existence of harsh criticism on one hand and high reputation on the other. This ambiguous attitude towards teachings and practices of other school traditions is quite typical for Tibetan Buddhism and holds also true for the *Mahāmudrā* practice as interpreted by some teachers of the bKa'-brgyud-pa lineages as well as for the *rdzogs-chen* system of the rNying-ma-pas, which brings us to the next section.

4.3.2. *The rNying-ma-pas*

As already mentioned above, the rNying-ma-pas rose about the eleventh century apparently out of a liaison of several traditions based on the so-called “old *tantras*”, which are believed to have been introduced to Tibet by Padmasambhava and other tantric masters of the “earlier spread”.⁵² Their name—rNying-ma-pa, the “Old Ones”—is derived from this connection to a tradition older than the other Tibetan schools, which are, in turn, referred to collectively as the “new schools” (*gsar-ma*). Hence, the formation of the rNying-ma-pas as a distinct Buddhist school tradition was a reaction to the school systems emerging with the “later spread” and propagating “new *tantras*”. A major step in bringing these “old” traditions together into a more or less unified school tradition seems to have been made by the scholar Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po (1012–1088), who was a proponent of the “old *tantras*” as well as a translator of “new *tantras*”. He wrote several treatises in order to synthesise the teachings of the “old *tantra*” tradition into a coherent doctrinal system. All in all, he held the “old *tantras*” to be superior to the “new” ones in several respects. One of the reasons for this judgement was the view that the “old *tantras*” were a rare revelation of the Buddha transmitted secretly by small circles of initiated people, and

against its doctrine (among others) in his *Theg-chen-gyi mngon-pa'i sde-snod-las byung-ba'i dbu-ma'i skor-gyi ming-gi rnam-grangs*.

⁵² The history and literature of the rNying-ma-pa tradition was subject to a number of studies during the last decades. Among them only a few may be mentioned for further reference: Dargyay 1977, Karmay 1988, Ehrhard 1990, Achard 1999; see also the articles on the rNying-ma canon in Eimer & Germano 2002. A *chos-'byung* from the rNying-ma-pa perspective is available in an excellent English translation by Dudjom 1991.

that they had only survived on Tibetan soil, having been introduced by the early translators based on the last existing copy—this was also his explanation for why this textual tradition was completely unknown to the protagonists of the “later spread”. Rong-zom chos-kyi bzang-po also wrote a *chos-'byung* centred on the transmission of the “old *tantras*” by family lineages of tantric lay-practitioners from Padmasambhava down to his time.⁵³ The development of a distinct rNying-ma-pa philosophy reached its peak with the literary activity of Klong-chen rab-'jams-pa (1308–1364). Another important event in the early history of the school was the foundation of the first rNying-ma-pa monastery of Kaḥ-thog in Derge (Eastern Tibet) in 1159.⁵⁴

Next to texts transmitted in unbroken tradition since the “earlier spread”—rNying-ma-pas call these texts *bKa'-ma* tradition—they rely on a second source of authoritative scriptures, the so-called *gter-ma* tradition. *gTer-ma* literally means treasure. These treasures are texts believed to have been concealed by Padmasambhava and others during the “earlier spread”, because these masters of old noticed that Tibetans were not yet mature enough for certain teachings. These were afterwards rediscovered by special people, who are believed to have a *karmic* disposition to find these hidden texts. Most *gter-stons* (treasure finders) were commonly regarded to have been disciples of Padmasambhava in a previous life. The perhaps best known *gter-ston* was O-rgyan gling-pa (1323–1360), who discovered the famous “Tibetan Book of the Dead” (*Bar-do-thos-grol*) among many other texts. Collections of rNying-ma-pa texts are numerous and usually voluminous. Generally each of the great rNying-ma-pa monasteries of Central and Eastern Tibet is associated with the transmission of a specific collection. Most important is the exceedingly large collection of the *rNying-ma-rgyud-'bum*, the “100,000 old *tantras*”. The rNying-ma-pas group their tantric literature similarly, but not identically to the *tantra*-classes of the “new schools”.

By form and contents the “old *tantras*” differ considerably from the “new *tantras*” that were translated to Tibetan by the protagonists of the “later spread”. Disputes between both parties could obviously therefore

⁵³ The text itself is lost, but numerous citations are contained in *chos-'byungs* dating from the twelfth century onwards (cf. Germano 2002, pp. 226ff.). Rong-zom chos-kyi bzang-po already wrote his texts in an atmosphere that demanded a defence of the rNying-ma *tantras* against a growing tendency of doubts about their authenticity (cf. Karmay 1988, p. 13).

⁵⁴ For a history of the abbots of this monastery, see Eimer 1978 and 1982.

not be avoided. Some polemicists among “new *tantra*” adherents identify the “proto-rNying-ma-pas”, who are credited with the transmission of the “old *tantras*” during the “dark age”, with the deteriorated pseudo-Buddhists described in the “dark age” accounts of historiography. They further conclude that the “old *tantras*” were faked by them, since these texts contained “heretical” views which cannot have been taught by Padmasambhava etc.

A major difference between the rNying-ma-pas and the “new schools” is that they divide the class of “inner *tantras*” into three separate classes (instead of one). This might sound peripheral, but has been an important factor for rNying-ma-pa identity and a strong incentive for polemical debates. Practice based on *tantras* of the first two of these three classes—*mahāyoga* and *anuyoga*—are believed by the rNying-ma-pas to produce the same results as the practice of *anuttarayogatantras* of the “new schools”. But, according to rNying-ma-pas, there is a still higher teaching, transmitted only in the “old *tantras*” and the *gter-mas* of their school. This teaching is called *rdzogs-chen*, the “Great Perfection”, revealed in the texts of the third *tantra*-class called *atiyoga*. It is not the place here to go into the doctrinal and practical aspects of *rdzogs-chen*.⁵⁵ For us, it is important, that this opinion to possess a teaching exceeding what the “new *tantras*” have to offer, has been a major element of rNying-ma-pa self-confidence throughout Tibetan Buddhist history, and, as one might expect, has prompted sharp criticism from proponents of the other schools.⁵⁶

On the other hand, a strong party can also be found among adherents of the “new schools”, who hold the “old *tantras*” and *rdzogs-chen* in high esteem. Especially due to a certain similarity between *rdzogs-chen* and the *Mahāmudrā* teaching of the bKa’-brgyud-pas, a syntheses between these two practices was attempted as early as the thirteenth century by the Karma-bKa’-brgyud abbot Karma Pakṣi (1204–1283); this synthesis was further developed from the seventeenth century onwards, and formed an important foundation for the “non-sectarian movement” (*ris-med*) of the nineteenth century. Within the dGe-lugs-pa order we find tendencies to radically reject *rdzogs-chen* as well as voices who revere it as a precious special revelation of the Buddhas—the latter

⁵⁵ To the interested reader Karmay 1988 and the recent publication by S. van Schaik (2004) may be specially recommended.

⁵⁶ Cf. also Achard 1999, pp. 9f.

tendency is mainly due to the 5th Dalai Lama's special inclination towards this practice and is also represented for example by the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas.

4.3.3. *The Bon Religion*

In order to complete the picture, a word on Tibet's largest non-Buddhist religion should also be added. Western research on Bon is still at the beginning.⁵⁷ Several theories have been propounded to explain the origins of Bon. They range from considering it to be a religion strongly influenced by Manichaeism⁵⁸ to the theory that Bon is a form of Buddhism brought to Tibet from Sogdia and Bactria during the "dark age" that then constructed its own myths and restyled its religious vocabulary in order to differentiate itself from the Buddhist traditions emerging with the "later spread".⁵⁹

The Bon-pos themselves view their tradition as the old indigenous religion of Tibet that existed there long before Buddhists ever set a foot on Tibetan soil. According to them, Bon was transmitted to Central Tibet from the Zhang-zhung country, what was the ancient name of Western Tibet. Ultimately the teachings of Bon were attributed to the founder gSen-rab, who had lived in sTag-gzig—an unidentified country still further west—ca. 18. 000 BC [!]. Consequently, Bon-po historiographers draw a completely different picture of early Tibetan history than their Buddhist colleagues: To them the old Tibetan kings were devoted followers of Bon religion prior to the advent of Buddhism. With the triumph of Buddhism the adherents of the old religion had to face hard times: What is a triumph for the one, is a disaster for the others. Thus, Bon historiography tells of the great suffering Bon-pos endured under the early Buddhist kings of Tibet, who also conquered the kingdom of Zhang-zhung and eliminated its great Bon tradition completely. In Central Tibet the situation is said to have been hardly better: Bon priests were expelled by Khri-srong-lde-btsan, their faith and practices prohibited.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Important steps were taken by D. Snellgrove, S. G. Karmay, P. Kvaerne and D. Martin. For an extensive bibliography on Bon studies and sources, see Martin 2001.

⁵⁸ This was the opinion of the German Tibetologist H. Hoffman, the pioneer of Bon studies; many others followed his theory.

⁵⁹ This theory was put forward by D. Snellgrove.

⁶⁰ Cf. Martin 2001, p. 8.

While Western Tibetology strictly discriminates between the later Bon tradition and the indigenous Tibetan religion for good reasons, Tibetans themselves (Bon-pos and Buddhists) conflate them. However, a systemised religious tradition calling itself Bon appears in the late tenth century at the earliest. Bon texts are believed by their followers to have been translated from originals written in the language of Zhang-zhung. Most of them are said to have been hidden as *gter-mas* during the Bon persecution of Khri-srong-lde-btsan and to have been recovered from the early eleventh century onwards. Bon soon became the object of Buddhist polemics,⁶¹ aiming mainly at the great similarity of Bon doctrine and symbols to their Buddhist counterparts. Indeed, many aspects of Bon theory and practice are strikingly similar to Buddhism, especially to the rNying-ma-pa traditions (in polemics rNying-ma-pas were often accused of being Bon-pos in a Buddhist disguise, while Bon-pos were attacked as plagiarists). There is no simple answer to the question of who influenced whom, as we have to deal with a complex dialectical process. P. Kvaerne puts it into words:

By the eleventh century, however, an organized religious tradition, styling itself Bon and claiming continuity with the earlier, pre-Buddhist religion, appeared in central Tibet. It is this religion of Bon that has persisted to our own times, absorbing doctrines from the dominant Buddhist religion but always adapting what it learned to its own needs and its own perspectives. This is . . . not just plagiarism, but a dynamic and flexible strategy that has ensured the survival, indeed the validity, of a religious minority.⁶²

From the late eleventh century Bon-pos developed a monastic system similar to Buddhist monasticism. The first monastery was founded in gTsang by Bru-chen gyung-drung bla-ma, while Menri, founded in 1405 in gTsang, is regarded as the main Bon monastery of Central Tibet. Next to monasticism, Bon religious specialists are often found to lead the lives of roaming *yogins*.

5. POLITICS AND CANONISATION

The “later spread”, as a phase characterised by the import of Buddhist traditions from India and commonly viewed by later tradition as a revival movement of Tibetan Buddhism, can be said to have come to

⁶¹ Cf. Martin 2001.

⁶² Kvaerne 1987, p. 277.

an end about the thirteenth century. This termination is artificial. As I have said in the introduction, Tibetans refer to the “later spread”—as a cultural epoch—to still be running. Nevertheless, there are four points that mark a major caesura of Tibetan Buddhist history during this time:

- (1) Buddhism became firmly established in Tibetan society, mainly due to alliances of monastic institutions to local aristocracy; some monasteries had risen to considerable influence and their leaders started to play roles in domestic and foreign politics.
- (2) Tibetan Buddhists started to convert foreigners.
- (3) Buddhism disappeared from India.
- (4) The canonisation processes of Tibetan Buddhist textual transmissions began.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries Buddhism extended its influence over most parts of Tibet. While plenty of quite large monastic communities quickly grew up around individual charismatic masters and likewise quickly vanished again with the reduction of support from local nobility and their subjects after these masters’ deaths, some communities managed to secure the lasting support of local noble families and developed wealthy monastic estates. I will mention only three of these, because of their decisive roles in thirteenth century politics:

- a) The Sa-skya-pa, whose close relationship to the Khon-family was already mentioned.
- b) The Karma-bKa’-brgyud, going back to a disciple of sGam-po-pa named Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa (1110–1193)—also known as Karma-pa—who founded the mTshur-phu monastery in the sTod-lung valley near Lhasa.⁶³ This branch of the bKa’-brgyud-pa seems to have been the one who invented the principle of abbot-succession by conscious reincarnation of the decayed predecessor—the so-called Tulku (sprul sku) system that was later adopted by the dGe-lugs-pa school. Hence, the abbots of mTshur-pu are believed to be reincarnations of the monastery’s founder and bear the title rGyal-dbang Karma-pa or Zhva-nag-pa “Black Hat Karma-pa”.
- c) The ’Bri-gung-pa, also a branch of the bKa’-brgyud-pa, founded by ’Jig-rten mgon-po (1143–1217), who established the Mi-nyag

⁶³ For a very informative article on the history of the Karma-bKa’-brgyud school, see Richardson 1998, pp. 337–378.

sgom-rings monastery in 'Bri-gung. The founder belonged to the sKyu-ra family, that played a role for the school's history similar to the one played by the Khon family for the Sa-skya-pa.⁶⁴ Next to the abbot, the 'Bri-gung-pa school established an office called *sgom-pa*, whose occupant regulated the civil affairs of the monastery and commanded over military forces.

During the early phase of the "later spread" Tibet was, despite its inner weakness, not a sphere of interest to foreign countries, the situation changed in the thirteenth century with the emergence of Asia's new political power, the Mongol empire. When in 1240 an army sent by Köden Khan (grandson of Činggis) invaded the Central Tibetan heartland, looting villages, killing people and destroying the monasteries Rva-sgreng and rGyal Lha-khang north of Lhasa, the chieftains of the various Tibetan areas were engaged in constant warfare with each other. So, there was no possibility of preventing Tibet from falling under Mongol supremacy. As it was a usual procedure of the Mongols with newly conquered territories, Köden ordered that a representative of the Tibetan people had to mediate between the Mongol court and the local political rulers. Since at that time Tibet neither possessed a central government, nor any dominating centre of political power, the Tibetan nobility decided that Sa-skya Paṇḍita should represent Tibetan interests to the imperial court. The choice of a Buddhist monk as representative of the Tibetan people indicates that by the thirteenth century Buddhism had developed a cultural power capable of integrating the diverging political forces of the country. It is hardly a coincidence that Sa-skya Paṇḍita was chosen, as he was not only a Buddhist scholar of high reputation, but also the leader of one of the most influential principalities of Tibet.⁶⁵ Sa-skya Paṇḍita was commanded by Köden Khan to visit his court in Liangzhou 涼州. In 1247 a missive was sent back to Tibet that informed the local rulers and leading monasteries about the conditions he had "negotiated" with the Khan regarding Tibet's surrender.⁶⁶ Tibet was now tributary to the Mongol empire,

⁶⁴ Cf. Sperling 1987.

⁶⁵ The worldly leader of the Khon family, Sa-skya Paṇḍita's brother, had died in 1239, and his sons were still children when the Mongol invasion occurred in 1240. Therefore, the political responsibility must have been in the hands of Sa-skya Paṇḍita at that time, cf. Schuh 1977, p. XVII.

⁶⁶ A highly interesting study of the various missives from Mongolian rulers to the Tibetan clergy was made by D. Schuh (1977).

while the Sa-skya-pas were directly responsible for the administration of the Tibetan districts. Sa-skya-pas were appointed direct representatives of the Mongol court and had to be consulted by local rulers in all important matters.

The Sa-skya-pa relations to the Mongol empire were further enforced later when 'Phags-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1235–1280)—nephew and successor of Sa-skya Paṇḍita—was invited to the court of Qubilai Khan, the founder of the Sino-Mongolian Yuan dynasty. 'Phags-pa managed to establish a “patron-priest relationship” (*yon-mchod*) with Qubilai by bestowing on him the initiations of the *Hevajra-tantra*. 'Phags-pa in turn was granted the title “imperial instructor” (*dishi* 帝師). This not only bestowed further privileges on the Sa-skya-pa, but also established the regular transference of enormous financial resources to Tibetan religious institutions.⁶⁷ Tibetan and later Mongol sources present the activities of Sa-skya Paṇḍita and 'Phags-pa as the first persons responsible for the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism. However, the actual impact of the Sa-skya-pa Lamas on the religion of the members of the Mongol imperial family—not to speak about Mongol people outside the court—was hardly as successful as these sources would have us believe.

Meanwhile representatives of other Tibetan schools had also established connections to the Mongol empire. The most important rivals to the Sa-skya-pa's influence on the Mongols rose from the 'Bri-gung-pa and the Karma-bKa'-brgyud schools. Karma Pakṣi (1204–1283), the 2nd Karma-pa, was invited by Kublai in 1255. But his stay at the Yuan court was short, apparently due to intriguing Sa-skya-pa officials who feared for their political influence.⁶⁸ He then travelled to Karakorum where he served as a religious instructor to Möngke Khan and his family. Also the 'Bri-gung-pa became related to Möngke Khan and thus established a counterbalance to the Sa-skya-pa dominance in Tibet. The rivalries between these two schools intensified later on and in 1290 led to the destruction of the 'Bri-gung monastery by a Sa-skya-pa army supported by Yuan cavalry.

Roughly at the same time when Tibet fell into political dependence on the Mongol empire, efforts were undertaken to gather and systemise the various collections of Buddhist texts transmitted in the different

⁶⁷ Cf. Schuh 1977, p. XXVI.

⁶⁸ Cf. Schuh 1977, p. XXI.

monasteries of the country. The process of unifying these materials in a grand collection is very complex, so I will not go into the details here.⁶⁹ The enormous amount of Tibetan translations of Buddhist scriptures produced during the “earlier spread” were for the most part still available, and these were supplemented by the even greater number of texts translated by the *lo-tsa-bas* (“translators”) of the “later spread”. It seems that first some monasteries possessed individual collections of texts gathered together from different sources cumulatively. Contemporary to the beginnings of Sa-skya-pa dominance, comprehensive catalogues and classification systems were produced by Sa-skya-pa scholars and later by inhabitants of the bKa’-gdams-pa monastery at sNar-thang. This collecting activity finally resulted in the compilation of the *bKa’-gyur*, “(collection) of translations of the word (of the Buddha)”, in sNar-thang in the early fourteenth century. This so-called “Old Narthang *bka’-gyur*” served as the conceptual prototype for a large number of further *bKa’-gyur* collections that were produced in the course of time; the exact contents vary to a certain degree—some, for example, include, others strictly exclude literature of rNying-ma-pa affiliation. The voluminous *bKa’-gyur* collections are believed to contain the totality of the words spoken by the Buddha and translated into the Tibetan language, additionally translations of commentaries and treatises written by Buddhist scholars were collected in the, still more voluminous, *bsTan-gyur*, “translations of explanations”, collections.

The reasons why the production of these collections was undertaken at this time are still not completely clear—*nota bene*, the collecting and editing of *bKa’-gyur* and *bsTan-gyur* material was an extremely costly enterprise. No doubt, the financial resources and changes in Tibetan infrastructure, that came together with the Mongol/Sa-skya-pa supremacy, provided the most important material preconditions.

An important motive was most probably that at about the same time the Buddhist traditions of India had vanished completely, due to several reasons—destructions of some of the great Buddhist monasteries by invading Muslim troops being one of them.

Perhaps, the project was strongly influenced by the notion that with the “earlier” and “later spread” of Buddhism Tibetans had inherited the most valuable cultural asset available on earth, and had become responsible for its complete preservation and further continuation

⁶⁹ An excellent survey can be found in Skilling 1997.

through the centuries to come. And perhaps with the *bKa'-gyur* and *bsTan'-gyur* they had produced a material representation of this notion and a means to face this mission.

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THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM AMONG THE MONGOLS

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1. EARLY MONGOLIAN CONTACTS WITH BUDDHISM

The Mongols entered upon the stage of world history when, in 1206, Činggis Khan united the Mongolian and Turkic tribes of Northern Mongolia to form a Mongolian state, which was soon to become one of the greatest world empires. Concomitant with Činggis Khan the Mongolian history of Buddhism began. It is not known to what extent the Mongols already had come into contact with Buddhism at an earlier time.¹

Buddhism reached the Mongols from four different directions: from the Uighurs, from the Tanguts, from Tibet and from China.

1.1. *Činggis Khan and Uighur Central Asian Buddhism*

It is not unlikely that Činggis Khan had come into contact with Uighur Central Asian Buddhism already at an early date.² When in 1204 he won over the Turkic Naiman in the west of the Mongolian tribal territories,³ Tatatonga 塔塔統阿 (Mong. *Tatutungya), the keeper of the seal of the Naiman king Tayang Khan, fell into the hands of the Mongols.⁴ Tatatonga was no Naiman, but an Uighur, i.e., a member of the people living to the west of the Naiman, north and south of the Tianshan 天山, and which between 730 and 840 had founded a great empire in the territory of present-day Mongolia. Later on, this group of people was driven to the west and to the south by the Kirgiz. The Uighur were a highly cultivated people that adhered to three religions: Buddhism,

¹ It is difficult to say how much the Buddhist culture of the Liao 遼 (Kitan, 907–1125) and Jin 金 (Jurchen, 1115–1234) dynasties of Northern China was known to the ancestors of the Mongols of Činggis Khan's time.

² On Uighur Buddhism and its literature, see Elverskog 1997, particularly the introduction, pp. 5–9 ("Historical Background").

³ *Secret History of the Mongols*, § 196 (de Rachewiltz 2004, pp. 122–123). See also Franke 1948, pp. 264–265.

⁴ Franke 1948, p. 276; Delger 1989, p. 12; Kara 2005, p. 25.

Nestorian Christianity, and Manichaeism.⁵ In their writings they used primarily a script that had been derived from the Sogdian script and which is referred to as Uighur script. The Uighur Tatatonga assumed office with Činggis Khan and apparently taught the Mongols Uighur script. This script began to be used also for representing the Mongolian language.⁶ To the present day, the Uighur-Mongolian script is widely used by the Mongols. The religious literature of the Mongols was recorded in this script.

It is most probable that Činggis Khan discussed Buddhism with Tatatonga. Already for centuries, Buddhism had played a very important role for the Uighurs who possessed a rich literature on it in their language.⁷ Above all, the sons and younger brothers of Činggis Khan, who were introduced to the Uighur script by Tatatonga, must have received knowledge of Buddhism. We do not know when the first Buddhist texts were translated from Uighur into Mongolian. We know that there were translators, but none of their works have been preserved. Yet, the Uighur language must have had a strong influence on the Mongolian language from a very early time on. This is especially true for Buddhist terminology. It is remarkable that Mongolian has a large number of Sanskrit loanwords that were transmitted from Uighur. Although there are Mongol and Tibetan translations of these Sanskrit-Uighur words, up to the present the Sanskrit-Uighur forms are very often preferred. For the central Buddhist concept *nirvāṇa* the Mongols use the word *nirvan* that was borrowed from Uighur. The Mongolian interpretative translation *yasalang-ača nögčigsen*, “the [state of] having transgressed suffering”, is only seldom used, and is a word-for-word interpretation of *mya-ngan-las ’das-pa*, the Tibetan rendering of *nirvāṇa*. The many Sanskrit concepts in Mongolian can be explained by the fact that Turkish/Uighur Central Asian Buddhism had already firmly taken root among the Mongols before they became inclined to the Tibetan form of Buddhism.

1.2. *Činggis Khan and Tangut Buddhism*

Činggis Khan must have also become acquainted with Tibetan and Tangut Buddhism at a very early date, more precisely between 1205

⁵ Klimkeit 1988, p. 63.

⁶ On the introduction of the Uighur script, see the section “The Rise of the Uyghur-Mongolian Script” in Kara 2005, pp. 25–32.

⁷ Klimkeit 1988, pp. 203–206; Elverskog 1997.

and 1209, during his campaigns against the Xixia 西夏 empire, the empire of the Tangut (Tib. Mi-nyag; Mong. Tangyud, Qasin Irgen) (982–1227).⁸ This empire stretched from the Nanshan 南山 Mountains and the Takla Makan to the Ordos bend of the Yellow River. The territory in which the Tanguts settled was an old Buddhist site in which Central Asian, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhism met and a peculiar Tangut form of Buddhism developed.⁹ The influence of Tangut Buddhism in Mongolia appears to have been much greater than has been generally accepted to the present day. In the course of the excavations at the so-called palace-hills on the grounds of the Mongolian imperial capital Karakorum, fragments of sculptures and frescos have been found which are representative of the style of the Tangut art of Qara Qota (Khara Khoto) in the northwest of present-day Inner Mongolia.¹⁰

Apart from Tangut communities of monks, there were also Tibetan, Chinese, and Tangut-Chinese communities in Xixia.¹¹ It goes without saying that these cannot have remained unknown to the Mongolian aggressors. We do not know whether Tangut and Chinese monks of Xixia visited Mongolia. However, there are indications that Tibetan bKa'-brgyud-pa and Sa-skyapa monks of Xixia came to Mongolia and even met Činggis Khan there. Mentioned by name are g'Tsang-pa Dung-khur-ba, a disciple of Zhang Tshal-pa br'Tson-'grus-grags-pa (1123–1193), the founder of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa, and Zi-na dGe-bshes, a learned Sa-skyapa monk. Činggis Khan is reported to have been so favourably struck by g'Tsang-pa Dung-khur-ba that he granted the Buddhist clergy exemption from taxes.¹²

1.3. *Činggis Khan, His Successors, and Chinese Buddhism*

During his campaign against the Jin 金 state (Mong. Altan Ulus, 1115–1234) that lasted from 1211 to 1216, Činggis Khan encountered representatives of Chinese Buddhism. Already in 1214, the thirteen-year-old monk Haiyun 海雲 (1202–1257) paid his respects to him.¹³ Haiyun belonged to the Chan or Meditation school (Chin. *chanzong*

⁸ Or 1038–1227. The year 1038 marks the formal commencement of the Xia state and the Tangut imperial history. See Dunnell 1996, pp. xiii–xiv.

⁹ For the Buddhist art of Khara Khoto, see Pjotrowskij 1993.

¹⁰ Hüttel 2005, p. 145.

¹¹ Kyschanow 1993, p. 56.

¹² Čoyji 1998, pp. 122–125.

¹³ On Haiyun, see Franke 1952, pp. 173–175; Čoyji 1998, p. 126.

禪宗) that had a very big influence in Northern China at the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ It is possible that Haiyun met Činggis Khan once more later on. In 1219, together with his teacher Zhongguan 中觀, he met two Chinese generals in the Mongolian army that served under the command of Muqali, one of the closest companions of Činggis Khan. These generals recommended the two monks for the protection of Muqali. The latter was so impressed by the two monks that he wanted to send them to Činggis Khan. It is not clear whether they ever reached Činggis Khan, but Činggis Khan issued an order that is seen as the start of the official recognition of Chinese Buddhism by the Mongols. In this order, the monks were commanded to pray to Heaven and to pronounce benedictions (for the well-being of the ruler, his family and the state). It was further promulgated that the two should be “put at the head”.¹⁵ This can only mean that Činggis Khan transferred the sovereignty over the Buddhist clergy in China to them, or, more precisely, to Haiyun.

The Chan master (Chin. *chanshi* 禪師) Haiyun also enjoyed the highest esteem from Činggis Khan’s successors Ögedei (r. 1229–1241), Güyüg (r. 1242–1246), and Möngke (r. 1251–1259). Already in the year 1229 Ögedei Khan issued a law by which the Buddhist monks (*quwaraγ*) as well as the Daoist monks (*bombo*) were exempted from all taxes and contributions. This was a measure of great political importance, since in the last years of the Jin dynasty, the Buddhists had largely suffered prejudice to the advantage of the Confucians (Mong. *bičig-ün surγayulitan*). Also, in 1247, Güyüg Khan bestowed Haiyun with the sovereignty over the Buddhist monks. This appointment was confirmed by Möngke Khan when the latter assumed power in 1251.¹⁶

Of great importance was Haiyun’s relation to Činggis Khan’s grandson Qubilai. Tradition has it that Qubilai wanted to learn from Haiyun whether it was possible to pacify the world with the religion of the Buddha, and that he also asked which one of the three doctrines, Buddhism, Daoism or Confucianism, would be the most suitable. For Haiyun, naturally, this was Buddhism, inasmuch as Buddhism also had rules for worldly order, the “Rule of Kings” (Mong. *qayan-u ǰasaγ*, Chin. *wangfa* 王法). It is most probable that the conversations with Haiyun

¹⁴ Eichhorn, p. 311.

¹⁵ Čoyji 1998, p. 128.

¹⁶ Čoyji 1998, pp. 128–133; Abramowski 1979, p. 19.

had a great impact on the formation of Qubilai's political and religious world-view.¹⁷

Also the Khitan nobleman Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1189–1243), a higher official of the Jin, contributed to this.¹⁸ Yelü Chucai had assumed office with Činggis Khan in the period of the conquest of the Jin empire. In his service under Činggis Khan and Ögedei Khan, he contributed greatly to the development of an administrative system that also fulfilled the rulers' needs in dealing with sedentary communities. He is credited with the famous—though much older—saying that an empire can be conquered from the saddle of a horse, but cannot be governed from a saddle.¹⁹ Yelü Chucai was a Buddhist, and he definitely influenced Činggis and Ögedei as such.

Haiyun was not the only dignitary who belonged to the Chan school and to whom the Mongolian Khans paid their respects. Also Wansong Zhanglao 万松長老 (1166–1246) and, above all, Zhanglao Fuyu 長老福裕 (1203–1275) enjoyed the same prestige. In the time of the Great Khans Güyüg and Möngke, the supreme control over the Buddhist monks in Karakorum, the capital of the Mongolian empire, rested with Zhanglao Fuyu.²⁰

1.4. *Early Mongolian Relations with Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism*

The first contacts with Buddhism in Tibet proper date from 1240. In 1227, Činggis Khan finally destroyed the Tangut empire Xixia. As a result, the Mongolian empire became a direct neighbour of Tibet. After Ögedei ascended the throne in 1229, his son Köden (Godan) (1206–1251) was enfeoffed with the western part of the former Tangut empire. In 1240 he sent an army to Central Tibet. This brought the whole territory from Kong-po in the southeast of Tibet to the border with Nepal under Mongolian rule. The Mongolian troops were under the supreme command of general Doorda (Tib. Dor-ta/rDo-rta). The main army of the Mongols advanced to the territory in the Northeast of Lhasa. They destroyed the Rva-sgreng and rGyal-lha-khang monasteries and killed five hundred monks. When, farther to the east, the Mongols also sought to attack the 'Bri-gung monastery, the principal

¹⁷ Čoyġi 1998, pp. 131–133.

¹⁸ On Yelü Chutsai, see Franke 1948, pp. 277–279; Franke & Trauzettel 1968, p. 224; Munkuev 1965, pp. 11–29.

¹⁹ On this saying, see Munkuev 1965, pp. 19, 73 and 106 n. 97.

²⁰ Čoyġi 1998, p. 135.

seat of the 'Bri-gung-bKa'-brgyud-pa school, sPyan-snga Rin-po-che Grags-pa-'byung-gnas (1175–1255), a high Lama, prevented this by causing stones rain from heaven.²¹ Whatever the means through which sPyan-snga Rin-po-che achieved this may have been in reality, this legend is typical for the tactics of the Tibetan Lamas to demonstrate the strength and value of their religion through alleged wonders and, through this, to impress the Mongolian rulers. It is not improbable that this is one of the reasons why the Mongolian conquest of Tibet seems to have been less cruel than the conquest of other lands had been.²²

Obviously, Doorda was not only impressed by the 'Bri-gung-pa Rinpoche, but also the representatives of other schools impressed him so much that he suggested prince Köden to invite a high Lama to his court: either sPyan-snga Rin-po-che in person, or sTag-lung Chos-rje, a famous Lama of the sTag-lung bKa'-brgyud-pa school,²³ or Sa-skya Paṇḍita, the head of the Sa-skya school, who was renowned for his erudition.

Köden decided to invite Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251).²⁴ Despite his high age of 63, Sa-skya Paṇḍita accepted the invitation and, in 1244, left the Sa-skya monastery in Southwest Central Tibet for the long and difficult journey. Two of his nephews, the ten-year-old 'Phags-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan (1235–1280)²⁵ and the six-year-old Phyag-na (1239–1267),²⁶ accompanied him. In the eighth month of the year 1246, they reached Köden's encampment in Sira Tala, the "Yellow Plain", in the neighbourhood of Liangzhou 涼州, in the central part of present-day Gansu 甘肅 province.²⁷

Sa-skya Paṇḍita's visit to Köden is the actual genesis of Mongolian relations with Tibet in general, and with Tibetan Buddhism in particu-

²¹ On sPyan-snga Rin-po-che Grags-pa-'byung-gnas, see Roerich 1976, pp. 571–579.

²² Čoyji 1998, p. 142. On the Mongolian raid into Tibet, see, e.g., Tucci 1949, pp. 9, 652; Čoyji 1998, pp. 137–139. About the legend, see Ferrari 1958, p. 112 n. 116; Tucci 1949, pp. 634, 692–693 n. 25.

²³ Probably = Sangs-rgyas-yar-'byon Shes-rab-bla-ma (1203–1272), abbot of sTag-lung. Cf. Roerich 1976, pp. 627–629; Ferrari 1958, p. 81 n. 18; Wylie 1962, p. 181 n. 607.

²⁴ On Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan, see Bosson 1969, pp. 2–7.

²⁵ On 'Phags-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan, see, e.g., Ferrari 1958, pp. 150–151 n. 501; Everding 1988, pp. 100–112.

²⁶ On Phyag-nay (Phyag-na-rdo-rje), see Everding 1988, p. 230 n. 315.

²⁷ Čoyji 1998, pp. 140–150.

lar. The causes of the invitation were certainly complex.²⁸ Inasmuch as the word-to-word content of Köden's order was heavily inspired by Buddhism, the question whether Köden's order to Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita as it is preserved in a Sa-skyapa work of 1629 is the Tibetan translation of a Mongolian original, can be left aside, since, in this form, it can hardly be from Köden himself.²⁹ The reason mentioned for the invitation, however, leads one to suspect the true ground: Köden summons Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita because he needs a Lama who can show him how to correctly reward his parents as well as Heaven and Earth for their benefaction. This indicates that Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita should pray to Heaven and pronounce benedictions, in the same way that Činggis Khan had already demanded of the monks Haiyun and Zhongguan. This supposition is affirmed by a writing of Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita to the monks and laymen of Tibet, probably written in 1249,³⁰ because here Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita issued an explicit admonition of Činggis Khan to pray to Heaven (not to Buddha!) and utter benedictions. The Mongol rulers were, at least up until the time of Qubilai Khan, hardly interested in the religious question of truth. Shamans, Daoists, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists only had one duty: to use their power to conciliate the extra-worldly powers. As long as they obediently performed their regular duties, they were all treated equally and were exempted from taxes and contributions.³¹

A further substantial ground for the invitation of Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita was obviously a pure political one. The head of the Sa-skyapa school Kun-dga'rgyal-mtshan was not merely a religious dignitary, but was above all one of the most influential political personalities of Tibet. It must have been of the greatest importance for Mongolian influence on Tibet that one of the most prominent representatives of the Tibetan leading class was present at the court of the princes who were responsible for Tibet. As the Paṇḍita states in the writing to the monks and lay people of Tibet mentioned above, he had complied to the request

²⁸ For literature, see Everding 1988, p. 230 n. 314.

²⁹ The text is preserved in the *Sa-skyapa gdung-rabs* of Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams, see the edition by the Tibetan Printing Press 1989, pp. 80–81; Mongolian translation in Čoyji 1998, pp. 147–148; English rendering in Shakabpa 1967, pp. 61–62.

³⁰ The text is preserved in the *Sa-skyapa gdung-rabs* (see the preceding note 29), pp. 135–140; Mongolian translation in Čoyji 1998, pp. 153–158; English summary in Shakabpa 1967, pp. 63–64.

³¹ See, e.g., the Mongolian documents in 'Phags-pa script published in Poppe 1957, pp. 46–55.

of Köden himself with the aim of warding off the threatening calamity of Mongols in Tibet.³²

As would soon become obvious, Sa-skya Paṇḍita was much more than a sort of political hostage. As one of the most prominent Buddhist clergymen of Tibet, he used his sojourn in the Buddhist Liangzhou to preach to the believers—Tangut, Chinese, Uighur and also Mongols—present there.³³

We do not know whether Sa-skya Paṇḍita and Köden discussed the importance of Buddhism for the organisation of worldly affairs, as Qubilai and Haiyun had also done. It is, however, possible since Sa-skya Paṇḍita wrote a famous didactic collection of sayings, in which it is said, for example: “There are, to be sure, very many rulers, but those who rule according to the *dharma* are very few.”³⁴ More probable is that Sa-skya Paṇḍita impressed the Mongolian princes with his medical knowledge. It is recorded that he cured Köden from a serious disease. Köden is recorded to have been so impressed by this that he became a Buddhist believer. Medical and leadership skills, and, above all, the supernatural powers of the Tibetan Lamas who were diligent in tantric practices were important means of showing the superiority of Buddhism and thereby making this religion acceptable. It is not unlikely that Köden was ordained by Sa-skya Paṇḍita personally, and that the latter was chosen as his personal Lama. Even if, for Köden, this may not have been more than an outward act, the two of them would, from that moment on, have been formally connected as “object of offering (= Lama) and almsgiver”, religious guide and worldly patron (Tib. *mchod-gnas/yon-bdag*, Mong. *takil-un oron/öglige-yin ejen*). Thereafter, the relationship of “object of offering and almsgiver”, religious guide and worldly patron, must have played a decisive role in the relationship between the Mongolian monarch and the Buddhist clergyman.³⁵

Sa-skya Paṇḍita had no opportunity to return to Tibet. In 1251, he—as did his host Köden—died in Liangzhou.³⁶ Not only did he achieve his aim of preventing the destruction of Tibet and its culture, he was also able to pave the way for the Mongolian princes to accept

³² Čoyji 1998, pp. 153–154, 158.

³³ Čoyji 1998, p. 152.

³⁴ *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi/Legs-pa bshad-pa rin-po-che'i gter/Sayin üge-tü erdeni-yin sang*, Saying No. 199, see Bosson 1969, pp. 164, 244. For the earliest Mongolian translation, see Ligeti 1973, p. 74.

³⁵ Schmidt 1829, p. 113; Čoyji 1998, pp. 151, 163, 166.

³⁶ Schmidt 1829, p. 113; Čoyji 1998, p. 165.

Tibetan Buddhism, thereby bestowing upon the Sa-skyapa school a special importance.

Nevertheless, there are indications that the Mongolian princes also had good relations with other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Each of the four sons of Tolui, Činggis Khan's youngest son, was granted a certain territory as a fief. Each of these four territories were respectively dominated by different schools. This implies that Möngke, who in 1251 became the fourth Mongolian Great Khan, had a special relationship with the 'Bri-gungpa, that Qubilai had a special relationship with the Tshalpa, Ülegü (Hülegü) with the Phag-mo-grupa, and Ariγbuqa with the sTag-lungpa.³⁷

The Sa-skyapa preserved their leading position in Tibet. To them, Möngke Khan—as Köden supposedly had already done—entrusted the highest supervision over the whole Buddhist clergy in Tibet, and they were exempted from all taxes and contributions.³⁸

An event that was of even greater impact for the relations between the Mongols and Tibetan Buddhism, was the encounter of Qubilai, Möngke Khan's younger brother and later successor, with 'Phagspa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan. In 1251, Qubilai marched with his army against the realm of Dali 大理 in the present-day southwestern Chinese Yunnan 雲南 province. On his march to the south, he came in the neighbourhood of Liangzhou where Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita resided. He invited Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita over, but, as the latter was ill, he sent his nephew 'Phagspa to Qubilai. Qubilai was impressed by the clever and cheerful young man. 'Phagspa did not stay for long with Qubilai, since Sa-skyapa Paṇḍita died and 'Phagspa returned to Liangzhou. A second encounter followed soon, when Qubilai marched back to the North in 1253. In the meantime, 'Phagspa had succeeded his uncle as head of the Sa-skyapa. Tradition has it that Qubilai asked many questions about the history of Tibet and about Buddhism and was so impressed by the answers of the young monk, that he became a religious follower, received the consecration of the *tantra* deity Hevajra from 'Phagspa, and chose him as his spiritual guide.³⁹

A little later, Qubilai invited another high Tibetan clergyman: Karma Pakši Chos-kyi-Bla-ma (1204–1283), the second hierarch of the Karma

³⁷ Čoyji 1998, pp. 165–166.

³⁸ Čoyji 1998, pp. 167, 169.

³⁹ Abramowski 1979, pp. 18, 21; Čoyji 1998, pp. 170–175. On 'Phagspa and Qubilai, see also Franke 1978, pp. 58–63.

bKa'-brgyud-pa school.⁴⁰ Karma Pakši came to Qubilai in 1255, but the two do not seem to have been on very good terms with each other, since the sources state that they did not become "object of offering and almsgiver". Already in 1256, Karma Pakši accepted an invitation of the Great Khan Möngke to come to Karakorum. He took Karakorum as his place of residence and founded a great monastery. Möngke's death in 1259 was followed by a struggle over his succession. Karma Pakši sided with Ariḡbuqa, Qubilai's opponent who was in command over Karakorum. Qubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294) triumphed, and had Karma Pakši arrested. Karma Pakši was not condemned to death, and released in 1264. Thereafter, he retreated to his Tibetan home monastery mTshur-phu.

It is not clear what the reason may have been that Karma Pakši's attitude towards Qubilai was, from the very start, a negative one. Possibly the rivalry with the Sa-skyapa hierarchy 'Phags-pa whose growing influence may have been viewed with anxiety by Karma Pakši played a role in this.

2. THE MONGOLS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIONS IN GENERAL

The high degree of esteem which Qubilai held for 'Phags-pa's abilities is attested by the fact that he engaged him in an attempt to solve the long-lasting conflict between Daoists and Buddhists that constituted a serious threat to the internal peace in the Mongolian empire.⁴¹

When Činggis Khan set off on his great campaign to the West in 1219, he invited a famous Daoist sage: the Daoist master Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (1148–1227), also called Changchun 長春, head of the Quanzhendao 全真道 school.⁴² Despite his old age, Changchun accepted the invitation and, in 1222, reached Činggis Khan's encampment, which apparently lay south of the Hindukush and north of Kabul. Činggis Khan questioned him about the elixir of longevity and about the art of ruling. He was so impressed with the wisdom of the master, that already in 1223 he granted the monks of the Quanzhendao school exemption from tax duties. We have good grounds to accept that Činggis

⁴⁰ On Karma Pakši, see Douglas & White 1976, pp. 41–46; Čoyji 1998, pp. 175–182.

⁴¹ On the conflict between the Buddhist and the Daoists, see Franke 1948, pp. 308–309, 482; Thiel 1961; Waley 1963, pp. 29–33; Rossabi 1988, pp. 37–42.

⁴² Waley 1963; Čoyji 1998, pp. 183–184.

Khan not only granted the Daoists this privilege, but also granted all representatives of other religions the same privilege, provided that they be willing to pray to Heaven and to pronounce benedictions. It is revealing that until the end of Mongol rule in China, all edicts granting exemption from taxes to Daoists, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, make reference to Činggis Khan.

The generosity of the Mongol rulers does, however, not mean that mutual relations between the different religions were free of conflicts. In the time of Möngke, the Chan master Haiyun had responsibility over the Buddhists, while the patriarch Li Zhichang 李志常 (1193–1256), a disciple of Changchun, was the highest authority in Daoist matters.⁴³ Notwithstanding the equal status of both religions, serious arguments between them occurred. The Daoists used their strong initial position to take possession of Buddhist monasteries, to destroy Buddhist statues, and to compose slanderous writings against the Buddhists. The Buddhists defended themselves and filed complaints with Möngke Khan who thereupon summoned the protagonists of both parties—the Daoist patriarch Li Zhichang and Fuyu Zhanglao, the abbot of the Buddhist Shaolin 少林 monastery in Karakorum, to his compound in Karakorum in 1255. The abbot succeeded in proving that the Daoists were wrong and consequently overcame the Daoist patriarch with his argumentation.⁴⁴

Because the Daoists did not properly fulfil the duties that had been imposed on them, Möngke Khan summoned a second meeting in the Yellow Palace (Sira Ordo) in the neighbourhood of Karakorum in 1256. The Buddhists were represented by a delegation led by Fuyu Zhanglao and by Namo 那摩 (or 南無), a monk from Kashmir, who had already come to Mongolia under Ögedei and who had been appointed “state teacher” (Mong. *ulus-un baysi*, Chin. *guoshi* 國師) by Möngke.⁴⁵ The meeting ended without result because the leader of the Daoist faction, the patriarch Li Zhichang, died.⁴⁶

Since the problems had not been settled and the attitude of the Daoists did not change, Möngke ordered his brother Qubilai to organise a third meeting in the newly built city of Shangdu 上都 (also known

⁴³ On Li Zhichang, see Franke 1952, p. 149; Waley 1963, pp. 17–19; Čoyji 1998, pp. 185–186; Abramowski 1979, pp. 19, 38 n. 86.

⁴⁴ Čoyji 1998, pp. 184–190.

⁴⁵ On Namo, see Čoyji 1998: 193; Franke 1952, p. 175.

⁴⁶ Čoyji 1998, pp. 102–103; Franke 1952, p. 175; Waley 1963, p. 18.

as Xanadu) in the eighth month of the year 1257. There were over 700 participants, an extraordinarily high number. Among the Buddhist representatives were, again, Zhanglao Fuyu and Namu, but this time also 'Phags-pa was present as a representative of Tibetan Buddhism. Also monks from the former Xixia empire and Dali were invited. The Daoist representatives were led by the new patriarch Zhang Zhijing 張志敬 (1219–1270). Confucian scholars functioned as arbitrators. The discussion again resulted in a defeat for the Daoists. They were once again ordered to return the seized monasteries to the Buddhists and to burn the incriminated Daoist books.⁴⁷

After Qubilai's accession to the throne in 1260, the dispute between Buddhists and Daoists did not end, as the Daoists did not return all seized monasteries and secretly made new impressions of the forbidden books. In 1280, this resulted in bloodshed in the capital Dadu 大都, present-day Beijing 北京. The dispute between Daoist and Buddhist monks ended with the most severe punishments for the Daoists. Qubilai ordered a new inspection of Daoist books. These were altogether judged to be deceitful and were burnt on imperial order, except the *Daodejing* 道德經 which was considered to be the only true book composed by Laozi 老子, the alleged founder of Daoism. With this, the Buddhists finally defeated the Daoists.⁴⁸

In conformity with the religious policy as created by Činggis Khan, Daoism still enjoyed the same rights and taxation privileges as the other religions did. In political matters, however, a decisive change had taken place already under Möngke: the preferential treatment of Buddhism over the other religions. Under Qubilai, a further change started: the preferential treatment of Tibetan Buddhism.⁴⁹ Qubilai later became the emperor of China and founded the Yuan 元 dynasty (1279–1368)⁵⁰ after his victory over the Chinese emperor of the Song 宋 Dynasty (960–1279). His successors gave Tibetan Buddhism preferential treatment that, in the end, would become fatal.

⁴⁷ Čoyji 1998, pp. 194–200.

⁴⁸ Čoyji 1998, pp. 201–203.

⁴⁹ Čoyji 1998, pp. 198–204.

⁵⁰ The date of the Yuan dynasty is under discussion (1271–1368, 1272–1368, 1280–1379, 1280–1389 and even 1260–1380). There can be no doubt that the dynasty did not end in 1367, but in 1368, since the last Yuan emperor Toyon Temür left his capital, Beijing, only in 1368. See Haenisch & Olbricht 1969, pp. 27ff.

3. BUDDHISM UNDER QUBILAI KHAN

Qubilai's policy was determined by his confidential relationship with his Tibetan religious teacher 'Phags-pa. It is beyond question that Qubilai not only expected religious advice from the learned head of the Sa-skyapa school, but—above all—wanted to use him also for his political aims. One of these aims was the expansion of Mongolian power in Tibet. Such an expansion was obstructed by the political activities of contending schools and their alliances with equally contentious Mongolian leaders.⁵¹ A second aim was the obvious pursuit of Qubilai to bring the different Buddhist schools in the whole Mongolian empire under a unified leadership so as to facilitate a more efficient control over these politically, socially and economically important concentrations of power.

The speed with which Qubilai wanted to achieve both these goals is evident from the fact that already in the year 1260, the year he was chosen as Great Khan, he appointed his confidant 'Phags-pa as "state teacher" (Chin. *guoshi*) and delegated the administration of Tibet and the higher control over the whole Buddhist clergy in the Mongolian empire to him.⁵² Very soon, a special office was established for this aim, the "General Administrative Office" (Mong. *yerüŋkeyilen jasaqu küriyeleng*, Chin. *zongzhiyuan* 總制院) which was renamed "Office for Buddhist Affairs" (Mong. *delgerenggüi jasaγ-un küriyeleng*, Chin. *xuanzhengyuan* 宣政院) in 1288. The first president of this office was 'Phags-pa.⁵³ The local administration in Tibet was represented by a "Grand Minister" (Tib. *dpon-chen*). The latter function was filled by 'Phags-pa personally as highest Buddhist clergyman in the whole empire.⁵⁴

A consequence of 'Phags-pa's exceptional position of power was that, very soon, the Sa-skyapa took the leading political position among the Tibetan schools, and further also won preference over the Chinese Buddhists. The Chan Buddhists, which under Möngke still had held the leading position, were not only forced out of this position through

⁵¹ Čoyĭji 1998, p. 208.

⁵² Everding 1988, p. 106; Delger 1989, p. 71; Čoyĭji 1998, p. 220.

⁵³ Eichhorn 1973, p. 311; Franke 1948, p. 480; Delger 1989, pp. 77–87, 114; Čoyĭji 1998, pp. 253–256.

⁵⁴ On 'Phags-pa and the political role of the Sa-skyapa in Tibet, see Rossabi 1988, pp. 143–145 and Petech 1990.

the policy of Qubilai, but they even lost their independence and were subordinated to the Tibetan “state teacher”.⁵⁵

In 1270, the authority of ’Phags-pa further increased through his appointment as “imperial teacher” (Chin. *dishi* 帝師).⁵⁶ With this, he became the first of a series of “imperial teachers” that only ended during the time of emperor Toyon Temür/Shundi 順帝 (r. 1333–1368).⁵⁷

The “imperial teacher” had an elaborate amount of duties, both religious and administrative: as court clergyman, he bestowed initiations, performed consecrations, and prayed for the longevity of the emperor and the well-being of the state. He was authorised to propagate the doctrine, to give explanations of the religious scriptures, and to found and restore monasteries and temples.⁵⁸ As already mentioned, his most important political and administrative duty undoubtedly was the administration of all matters relating to the Buddhist clergy in the whole empire, and the responsibility for regular and secular matters of Tibet.

The “imperial teachers” were provided with substantial means for executing their tasks. Already under Qubilai, but especially under the later emperors, the Tibetan Buddhist clergy was so heavily supported and juridically favoured that this caused resentment among the Confucian officials, ordinary people, and followers of other religions. The large allowances also became an increasing problem for the state finances. Not seldom did the monks behave so arrogantly and domineeringly that they were not even afraid of insulting members of the imperial family. Instead of setting an example for the doctrine of the Buddha, they shamelessly used their privileges and sowed fright and fear. As a rule, the emperors only reacted against this phenomenon out of bigotry or political calculation when their own interests or the interests of the state allowed them no other possibility.⁵⁹

Under the last emperor of the Yuan Dynasty, Toyon Temür, the increasingly fast moving decline of Mongolian rule over China was accompanied by moral decay at the court and among the Buddhist clergy. The negative role of the Tibetan Lamas has obviously been one of the reasons that caused a quick collapse of Mongolian rule in China.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Delger 1989, pp. 69–71; Čoyji 1998, pp. 231–233.

⁵⁶ Tucci 1949, pp. 14–15; Everding 1988, p. 106.

⁵⁷ Čoyji 1998, pp. 130, 268; Tucci 1949, p. 15; Delger 1989, pp. 62–69.

⁵⁸ Delger 1989, pp. 69–76.

⁵⁹ Delger 1989, pp. 53–60, 106–113.

⁶⁰ Franke 1948, p. 534; Franke & Trauzettel 1968, p. 240; Delger 1989, p. 61.

Notwithstanding their leading position, the Sa-skyapa were not the only representatives of Tibetan Buddhism that came to the Mongolian court. Basically, Qubilai and his successors continued a policy of good neighbourship with all religions. It is, therefore, no surprise that the emperors Jiyayatu/Tuγ Temür (Wenzong 文宗, r. 1330–1332) and Toγon Temür even invited the third Karma-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje (1284–1339)⁶¹ and the fourth Karma-pa Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1340–1383),⁶² the successors to Karma Pakši.

The picture that emerges especially from the Chinese sources concerning the role of Tibetan Buddhism in the time of the Yuan Dynasty is obviously one-sided. The very concrete proofs for its dark side cannot be denied, but the activities of the Lamas in the Mongolian empire cannot have been only negative. The question as to how far Tibetan Buddhism was only a religion of the court and the nobility can be left aside.⁶³ It is likely that the Lamas would have also tried to convert the Mongolian common people. Whatever the success of their missionary activity with the adherents of the so-called Mongolian shamanism may have been, it is a fact that at least among the Mongolian princes, a sincere interest in the new religion existed. The best example for this is Qubilai, who already discussed the doctrine of the Buddha with Haiyun and who urged his religious guide 'Phags-pa to compile an introduction to Buddhism for the crown prince Čingim. 'Phags-pa complied with this request and, in 1278, compiled a short work in Tibetan, titled "Explanation of what should be known" (*Shes-bya rab-gsal*).⁶⁴ In this masterly *abhidharma* tractate, 'Phags-pa describes the complete Buddhist world-view, starting from the four elements and continuing up to the liberation from suffering. Obviously soon afterwards, the *Shes-bya rab-gsal* was translated into Mongolian under the corresponding title *Medegdekiün-i belgetey-e geyigülügči*.⁶⁵ It was thought to be so important that it was also translated into Chinese in 1306 and incorporated into the Chinese Buddhist canon.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Douglas & White 1976, p. 49.

⁶² Shakabpa 1967, pp. 71–72; Douglas & White 1976, pp. 55–58.

⁶³ The view that Buddhism was only the religion of the upper class is held by Delger 1989, pp. 117–119.

⁶⁴ For an English translation, see Hoog 1979.

⁶⁵ See Bareja-Starzyńska 2002, pp. 14–15. The translator is unknown.

⁶⁶ Taishō Tripitaka vol. 32, no. 1645: *Zhangsuozhi lun* 彰所知論, translated by Shaluoba 沙羅巴 (Tib. Shar-pa, 1259–1314). See Heissig 1959, p. 28 and Franke 1978, p. 57.

The desire for a demanding explanation of the religion shows that the Mongols were not only interested in Buddhism out of tactical-political considerations. It can also be doubted that the translation activity that started soon afterwards, was only rooted in the desire of the emperor to acquire religious merit. Rather, there must have existed a genuine interest in making the most important Buddhist texts also available in Mongolian. The earliest transmitted Buddhist works in Mongolian date from the end of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century.⁶⁷ Known by name and partly preserved are the translations of a series of fundamentally important Buddhist prayers and doctrinal texts. To these belong, e.g., a hymn to the tutelary deity Mahākālī,⁶⁸ the “Heart *Sūtra*” (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*),⁶⁹ the *dhāraṇī* collection “The fivefold protection” (*Pañcarakṣā*),⁷⁰ the famous doctrinal poem of Śāntideva “The Entry into the Way to Liberation” (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*),⁷¹ and, not least, the “*Sūtra of Golden Light*” (*Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, Mong. *Altan Gerel*),⁷² a work that up to the present day is highly esteemed by the Mongols and in which, among other things, the duties of the king are elaborately dealt with.⁷³ Already in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the famous didactic collection of sayings of Sa-skya Paṇḍita was translated into Mongolian.⁷⁴ The intellectual achievement that was attained by translators such as Chos-kyi-'od-zer⁷⁵ and Shes-rab-seng-ge⁷⁶ is admirable and, considering the difficult religious technical language, shows that the technique of translating into Mongolian must have already had a long history.

It is hardly improbable that all these texts, some of which are still popular in present-day lay Mongolian Buddhism, were only circulating

⁶⁷ Cérénsodnom 1987, pp. 233–244/Cérénsodnom 2002.

⁶⁸ Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 114–120.

⁶⁹ Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 106–108.

⁷⁰ Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 234–235.

⁷¹ Cérénsodnom 1987, p. 234/Cérénsodnom 2002, p. 264; Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 75–95. For the edition of the Mongolian translation by Chos-kyi-'od-zer (1305), see Vladimircov 1929.

⁷² Cérénsodnom 1987, p. 235/Cérénsodnom 2002, pp. 264–265. See also Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 136–138.

⁷³ Chapters 12, respectively 20 (depending on the version).

⁷⁴ Cérénsodnom & Taube 1993, pp. 64–74; Cérénsodnom 1987, pp. 237–241/Cérénsodnom 2002, pp. 267–271. For the edition of the Mongolian text (translation by Sonom Gara), see Ligeti 1973.

⁷⁵ Heissig 1954, p. 17; Cérénsodnom 1987, p. 234/Cérénsodnom 2002, p. 264; Klafkowski 1987, pp. 376–377.

⁷⁶ Heissig 1954, p. 17; Cérénsodnom 1987, p. 242.

in elite circles and were unknown to the common people—regardless of how these texts may have been understood. Also the monasteries, for which so much generosity had been displayed, cannot have been hermetically sealed from the common people. A final statement about Buddhism in the time of the Great Mongolian Empire cannot yet be made.

4. THE END OF THE YUAN DYNASTY AND THE NORTHERN YUAN EMPIRE

In 1367, the Yuan dynasty collapsed. Revolutionary troops of the former Buddhist monk Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398) conquered Dadu, present-day Beijing. As emperor Hongwu 洪武 (1368–1398), Zhu Yuanzhang founded the Ming 明 Dynasty (1368–1644). The Mongol emperor Shundi fled to the summer capital Shangdu in the North.⁷⁷ This, however, was—at least according to Mongol tradition—not the end of the Yuan Dynasty, but the beginning of a Northern Yuan that ended with the Manchus, the successors of the Ming.⁷⁸ Provided the corresponding Manchu tradition is correct, the second Mongolian dynasty ended in 1635. In this year, Qongyor Ejei, the son of the last Great Khan Ligdan (r. 1604–1634),⁷⁹ is reported to have transmitted the seal of the Yuan to the Manchu ruler Hûwang Taize (r. 1626–1643), the son of Nurhaci (1559–1626), the initiator of Manchu power.⁸⁰ From 1636, the ruling house was called Qing 清. In 1644, under Hûwang Taize's son Shunzhi 順治 (1644–1661), the Qing dynasty succeeded the Ming dynasty.⁸¹

The Northern Yuan were not much more than a weak reflection of the powerful Mongolian empire. The time from the late fourteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century is characterised by internal fights and, above all, by wars with the Western Mongolian Oirats who, in the fifteenth century, succeeded in founding an empire.⁸² The

⁷⁷ Franke 1948, pp. 549–551; Haenisch & Olbricht 1969, p. 27.

⁷⁸ A proof of this ideological concept is the Mongolian chronicle *Dai Yuwan-u Bolor erike* ("Crystal Rosary of the Da Yuan") by Rasipungsuy (1775), which relates the history of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty until the submission of Ligdan Khans son to the Manchu. See Mostaert 1959, pp. 10–16.

⁷⁹ Heissig 1979.

⁸⁰ Bawden 1989, p. 47.

⁸¹ Franke & Trauzettel 1968, p. 273.

⁸² Bawden 1989, pp. 23–24; Hambly 1969, p. 245.

decline of central power implied a serious weakening in the position of the Buddhist clergy, but was not the end of Buddhism. Although later sources lament about the “dark times” in which the power of shamans recovered and people no longer lived according to the rules of religion, but, rather, engaged in sinful deeds,⁸³ there still were Lamas in Mongolia, and new monasteries were even built.⁸⁴ Mongolian princes, especially the Western Mongolian rulers *Toyon Tayiši* (r. 1418–1440) and *Esen Tayiši* (r. 1440–1455/6), even sent high-ranking monks as members of missions of tribute and commerce to the courts of the Ming emperors and requested them to bestow official titles on these clerical envoys.⁸⁵ The Lamas hardly ever belonged to the *dGe-lugs-pa* or “Yellow Hats”, the fourth school of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by *Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa* (1359–1419), but rather were representatives of the *rNying-ma-pa*, *bKa’-brgyud-pa* and *Sa-skyapa*, i.e., the “Red Hats”. In 1431, a *dhāraṇī* collection was printed in Beijing in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian.⁸⁶ This indicates that in these times there were Mongolians who were Buddhists.

5. REVIVAL OF BUDDHISM UNDER ALTAN KHAN AND THE RISE OF THE DGE-LUGS-PA SCHOOL

The situation of Buddhism in Mongolia changed considerably by the end of the sixteenth century. In 1566, Altan Khan (1507–1582), the powerful ruler of the Southwestern Mongolian *Tümed*, sent his nephew *Qutuytai Sečen Qongtayiji* (1540–1586) on a military mission to Northeastern Tibet. On this mission, he came into contact with Lamas who apparently belonged to the *dGe-lugs-pa* and who instructed the *Qongtayiji* about this most recent Tibetan school. In any case, *Qutuytai Sečen Qongtayiji* suggested to Altan Khan in 1576 that he invite the highest representative of the *dGe-lugs-pa*: *bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho* (1543–1588). The Lama accepted this invitation and, in the fifth month of 1578, reached the place called *Čabčiyal*, in the neighbourhood of Lake Kukuror, where Altan Khan was expecting him.⁸⁷

⁸³ Jiryal 1996, p. 152.

⁸⁴ Serruys 1963 and Serruys 1966. About the building of monasteries, see Serruys 1963, pp. 192–193.

⁸⁵ Zlatkin 1964, p. 35; Serruys 1963, pp. 187ff.; Jiryal 1996, p. 151.

⁸⁶ Serruys 1963, p. 187; Heissig 1976b, pp. 8ff.

⁸⁷ Jiryal 1996, pp. 153–159. The most important source on Altan Khan, the time and

It is obvious that both the Khan and the Lama expected mutual benefits from this invitation. The question as to what the precise benefits involved really were cannot be answered with certainty. Probably, the Lama hoped for support from the powerful Mongol leader in his effort to strengthen the position of the dGe-lugs-pa versus the other schools. The Khan, on his part, may have thought that the dGe-lugs-pa were especially useful to enforce the moral and educational power of the Buddhist religion for a renaissance of the Mongolian society and, at the same time, for the foundation of his political position in relation to the other Mongolian princes and China, the borders of which he scourged again and again. It is notable that for this aim, the relationship between Qubilai and 'Phags-pa was taken as an historical example. Altan Khan bestowed the Lama bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho with the title "Dalai Lama", i.e., "ocean-like teacher". bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho was the third of a series of human incarnations of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, the tutelary deity of Tibet. He likewise is the third Dalai Lama, as his two predecessors were posthumously also referred to as Dalai Lama. bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho, in turn, bestowed the Mongolian Khan with the title "Cakravartin Sečen Khan". By doing so, he explicitly awarded him the same status as the real ruler of the world (*cakravartin*) Qubilai, whose epithet was Sečen, "the wise one".⁸⁸

5.1. *Translation Activity*

The encounter between Altan Khan and the third Dalai Lama was the start of a new era in the history of Buddhism in Mongolia. The statement that this was a "second conversion of the Mongols" is not tenable.⁸⁹ As we have seen, Buddhism maintained its position in Mongolia, also after the fall of the Yuan, even if to a far lesser extent than under the ideal conditions of the time of the Great Mongolian Empire.

the political developments leading to alliance between Altan Khan and other Mongol princes with the dGe-lugs-pa is Altan Khan's biography *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*, "The Book entitled 'Precious Clearness'", composed about 1607. It was translated and studied by Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz (2001) and Johan Elverskog (2003). For translations into Japanese and Chinese, see Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. xi and Elverskog 2003, pp. 1–2. About the meeting of Altan Khan with the Dalai Lama and the consequences for the history of Mongolian Buddhism, see also Heissig 1970, 327ff.

⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., Jiryal 1996, p. 156. The mutual conferring of titles is described in detail in the biography of Altan Khan, see Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, pp. 300–302; Elverskog 2003, pp. 160–162.

⁸⁹ This has already been pointed out by Serruys 1963, p. 186.

Apart from the indications in the sources, the revival of the translation of Buddhist texts into Mongolian is also a proof of this. This revival is part of a tradition that cannot have been completely interrupted. Such texts as the “Perfection of Wisdom” (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and the translation of the “Sūtra of Golden Light” (*Altan Gerel*) on Altan Khan’s request,⁹⁰ required a profound knowledge of Buddhist terminology that cannot be achieved in a few years. Regardless of how skilful such translators of this period as Bandida Siregetü Güüsi Čorji (1570–1638)⁹¹ may have been, they must have had access to other translations that facilitated their work. These translations can therefore not have been destroyed after the fall of the empire. A proof for this is the fact that the texts mentioned above had already been translated in the Yuan period and, hence, were only re-edited.⁹² This is probably also true for Bandida Siregetü Güüsi Čorji’s translation of the *Shes-bya rab-gsal*, the “Explanation of what should be known”, ’Phags-pa’s *abhidharma* work of 1278, the second Mongolian version of which, *Čiqula kereglegči*, “The Essentials”, is not a word-for-word translation of the Tibetan original, but a revision.⁹³ In favour of translation activity that goes back to the period before the “second conversion” are the manuscript finds of Olon Süme in Inner Mongolia⁹⁴ and of Kharbukhyn Balgas (Qara Buqa-yin Balyasun) in Outer Mongolia.⁹⁵ The Mongolian texts, which for the most part are only fragmentarily preserved, date from around 1600. They represent a great number of religious and divinatory texts on different themes and are typical practical texts of the form still used today. Thus these texts prove that already at the end of the sixteenth century the Buddhist praxis had become a part of the daily life of the Mongols. It is also noteworthy that, at this time, the Mongolian language was more in use as a religious language than it was later on, or even today.

The concept “second conversion of the Mongols” following a period of decline is both untenable and politically biased.⁹⁶ With this terminology it should be postulated that the older “Red” schools of Tibetan

⁹⁰ Serruys 1963, p. 186.

⁹¹ Heissig 1959, pp. 33–34 (Siregetü Guosi Čorjiva); Jiryal 1996, p. 160.

⁹² Heissig 1976a, p. 271; Cêrênsodnom 1987, p. 235; Cêrênsodnom 2002, pp. 264–265.

⁹³ See Bareja-Starzyńska 2002. Only recently Dr. Bareja-Starzyńska has published a Polish translation of the *Čiqula kereglegči*, together with a detailed commentary, see Bareja-Starzyńska 2006.

⁹⁴ See Heissig 1976a.

⁹⁵ See Chiodo 2000 and 2004.

⁹⁶ For a critical evaluation of the positions held by Tibeto-Mongolian and western historiography, see Dumas 2005.

Buddhism had proven to be unable to keep the religion of the Buddha alive among the Mongols. However, the initiatives of the “Yellow Hats” school, the dGe-lugs-pa, and the support of a new Qubilai were necessary to let the religious light shine again. The reproach of the older schools definitely was not unfounded. The contact between Altan Khan and the third Dalai Lama indeed introduced a renaissance of Buddhism amongst the Mongols. This renaissance not only affected the circles of the nobility, but, consequently, became deeply rooted amongst the common people and determines the identity of the Mongols up to the present day.

5.2. *Missionary Strategies of the dGe-lugs-pa*

In 1578, Altan Khan returned to the Tümed territory. How strong his relation to the Dalai Lama was becomes evident from the fact that he appointed a larger number of higher officials as intermediaries. The Dalai Lama, on his part, appointed Duyingqor (Dus-'khor) Qutuytu⁹⁷ Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, a higher clergyman, as representative to Altan Khan.⁹⁸ Already in 1579, Altan Khan had the Yeke Joo monastery (Chin. Dazhao 大照), the “Great Monastery”, built after the model of the Čabčiyal monastery. Yeke Joo was built in the city of Kōkeqota, the present-day capital Huhhot of Inner Mongolia, a city founded by Altan Khan.⁹⁹

Altan Khan died in the first month of the year 1582. His son Sengge Dügüreng Qongtayiji (1521–1585) succeeded him.¹⁰⁰ He continued his father's policy. Soon after he came to power, he and his spouse Jönggen Qatun invited the Dalai Lama, who had not returned to Central Tibet but was then residing in Eastern Tibet, to Kōkeqota (Huhhot) in order to execute the funeral ceremonies for the deceased ruler. bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho complied with the request and left the sKu-'bum (Gumbum) monastery in the neighbourhood of Xining 西寧 in 1584. As was common for clergymen, he gave religious instruction to the local people—Tibetans and Mongolians—on his way. In the Ordos region, in the big bend of the Yellow River, he settled an armed conflict between the local princes. In 1585 the Dalai Lama

⁹⁷ Mong. Qutuytu is a title granted to high reincarnated lamas. It corresponds to Tibetan Rin-po-che.

⁹⁸ Jiryal 1996, p. 160.

⁹⁹ Altan Orgil 1981, pp. 75, 266.

¹⁰⁰ Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, pp. 64, 247 n. 189.

reached Kökeqota. Already in the same year or the year after, Sengge Dügüreng Khan died.¹⁰¹ Following the example set by his father, he, too, founded a monastery in Kökeqota: the Siregetü Joo Keyid, of which the first Qutuγtu, i.e., reincarnated Lama, was to be the famous translator Bandida Siregetü Güüsi Čorji.¹⁰²

In 1587, the Dalai Lama complied with the request of Jasaγtu Tümen Khan (r. 1558–1592), the nominal Mongolian Great Khan, to proceed to the southeastern Mongolian region of Čaqar.¹⁰³ It appears that Jasaγtu Tümen Khan was at first an adherent of the “Red Hats”, as it is reported that in 1576 he was converted by a certain Ildün Janggiduyči Garma Lama.¹⁰⁴ The term “Garma” implies that it may have been a monk of the Karma-bKa’-brgyud-pa. The success of the Dalai Lama with the Tümed apparently made the Khan convert to the doctrine of the “Yellow Hats”, the dGe-lugs-pa, and made him assure them that they could expand their doctrine amongst the Eastern Mongols.

In the delegation of the Dalai Lama there were many learned Tibetan and Mongolian monks. One of them was another famous translator: Ayusi Güüsi.¹⁰⁵ The sojourn of the Dalai Lama and his delegation in the Čaqar region is a good example for the efficient missionary technique of the dGe-lugs-pa: they did not restrict themselves to proclaiming the doctrine, but they founded schools in which such topics as literature, history, grammar, calligraphy and translation were also taught. The importance of these schools for the cultural development was immense. It is definitely no coincidence that it was the Čaqar ruler Ligdan Khan who initiated the first compilation of the collected words of the Buddha in Mongolian translation, the *Ganjur* (Tib. *bKa’-gyur*). This gigantic work was completed in 113 volumes by a committee of thirty five scholars in only half a year, between November 1628 and May 1629. The editors under the guidance of the famous translators Kun-dga’-’od-zer, Sidity Ananda and Samdan Sengge revised older translations, but also new translations were made. The “Ligdan Ganjur” quickly spread in many manuscript copies throughout Mongolia.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 247 n. 189.

¹⁰² Schmidt 1829, p. 249; Altan Orgil 1981, p. 266; Ya 1991, p. 25; Jiryal 1996, pp. 160–161.

¹⁰³ Serruys 1967, p. 11 n. 17; Ya 1991, p. 25. Jiryal 1996, p. 161, gives 1586 as the date of the invitation.

¹⁰⁴ Schmidt 1829, p. 201.

¹⁰⁵ Jiryal 1996, p. 161; Kas’janenko 1993.

¹⁰⁶ See Heissig 1957; Heissig 1954, pp. 40–41; Heissig 1962; Heissig 1979, pp. 35–36; Jiryal 1996, pp. 161–162; Kollmar-Paulenz 2002.

As an effect of the invitation of the third Dalai Lama by Sengge Dügüreng, the Čaqar region became of primary importance for the expansion of the Yellow Doctrine in Eastern Mongolia. Also in the southwest, however, the activities of dGe-lugs-pa missionaries led to an ever-increasing number of princes who were interested in the new religion, who collected books, and who used these books to enhance their prestige.¹⁰⁷ With the third Dalai Lama, a new era had begun. His fame had also reached Northern Mongolia as Abadai Sayin Khan (1554–1588), one of the most powerful princes of Northern Mongolia had visited him in 1587, i.e., during his sojourn in Čaqar, in order to receive the title of Khan from him¹⁰⁸ and in order to invite him to the north.¹⁰⁹ The Dalai Lama, however, did not comply with the invitation, nor did he comply with an invitation sent to him by the Ming emperor Wanli 萬曆 (1573–1619). In 1588 bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho died during a sojourn in the Eastern Mongolian Qaračin.¹¹⁰

6. THE ERA AFTER ALTAN KHAN

6.1. *The Question of Succession of the Dalai Lama*

The question of the successor to bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho was solved in a very significant way. According to the Buddhist doctrine, the Dalai Lama could decide himself whether or not and where he would be reborn. The plant of missionary work in Mongolia was still very weak, but the good relations with the Mongolian princes were promising, but had to be dealt with with care. Therefore, the Dalai Lama decided not to reappear in Tibet, but in Mongolia, and, more appropriately, in the family of Altan Khan, descendent of Činggis-Khan, as son of Sümer Dayičing, the fourth son of Sengge Dügüreng Khan, the oldest son of Altan Khan of the Tümed. This decision was realised by Bandida Siregetü Güüsi Čorji, the first reincarnated Lama (Tib. *sprul-sku*, Mong. *qubilyan*) of the Siregetü Joo monastery in Kökeqota, and some other high-ranking Lamas who had come to Mongolia for this purpose. Together with the princes of the Tümed, they appointed

¹⁰⁷ Jiryal 1996, p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ Schmidt 1829, p. 253; Bawden 1989, p. 30; Ya 1991, p. 26; Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 331 n. 667.

¹⁰⁹ Cendina 1999, pp. 42–43.

¹¹⁰ Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, pp. 336–337. According to Jiryal 1996, p. 162, the Third Dalai Lama died in the Čaqar territory.

the grandson of Altan Khan, Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, who was born in 1589 as the reincarnation of bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho.¹¹¹ He became the fourth Dalai Lama and the only Mongol to serve in this function (1589–1616).¹¹²

Proceeding with this choice was in no way in accordance with the prescripts. The decision whether the selected child is real or not cannot be made by monks in the province, but has to be done by the central authority in Lhasa. This is the reason why in 1592 an examination commission was sent to the Tümed region. They came to a positive result and, upon their return to Lhasa, reported the news to the abbots of the three authorised monasteries: dGa'-ldan, Se-ra, and 'Bras-spungs (Drepung). After a long deliberation, the choice was confirmed.¹¹³ Later, reincarnations of high Lamas were determined according to political points of view.

The choice of a Mongolian Dalai Lama definitely had an important impact on the further destiny of Buddhism in Mongolia, and, more particularly, on the further destiny of the Yellow Doctrine. The latter was not influenced by the fact that Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho did not personally work in Mongolia. In 1602, at the age of twelve, the boy was brought to Tibet, and in 1603 he was enthroned as the fourth Dalai Lama in the Rva-sgreng monastery, north of Lhasa.¹¹⁴ Thereafter he lived in the 'Bras-spungs monastery in the neighbourhood of Lhasa. Up to the present day this is the most favoured study centre in Central Tibet for Mongolian monks. In 1607 he took the vow as a novice with Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1570–1662)—the first Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che ("Precious Great Paṇḍita")—abbot of the bKra-shis-lhun-po monastery in Western Central Tibet. The Dalai Lama Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho did not live a long life. He died in the 'Bras-spungs monastery already in 1616. A Tibetan of Central Tibet was recognised as his reincarnation, the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617–1682), the "Great Fifth". His political fate was, if in a different way, as closely linked to the events in Mongolia as it had been for the third and fourth Dalai Lamas.

¹¹¹ He should not be confused with the earlier mentioned Duyingqor (Dus-'khor) Qutuytu Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, the appointed representative to Altan Khan.

¹¹² See Jiryal 1996, pp. 162–163.

¹¹³ About his life, see Ya 1991, pp. 27–28; Jiryal 1996, p. 163.

¹¹⁴ According to Jiryal 1996, p. 163, the Fourth Dalai Lama was enthroned in the sNar-thang monastery.

6.2. *Propagation of the dGe-lugs-pa School among
Different Mongolian Tribes*

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the dGe-lugs-pa school, the “Yellow Doctrine” (Mong. *sir-a-yin śāsin*), not only took root amongst the Southern and Southeastern Mongolian tribes, but also among the Western Mongolian Oirat, in East Mongolia and in North Mongolia. Every noble family of the Oirat was obliged to devote one of their sons to being Lama.¹¹⁵ Among these were two princes of the Qośod tribe: Neyiči Toyin (1557–1653)¹¹⁶ and Caya (Zaya) Bandida Namqayi-*jamso* (Nam-mkha’i-rgya-mtsho, *Oγtarγui-yin Dalai*) (1599–1662).¹¹⁷ Both played an important role in the propagation of the dGe-lugs-pa school: Neyiči Toyin among the Eastern Mongols, and Caya Bandida among the Oirat.

The dGe-lugs-pa considered doing away with shamanism as one of their most important tasks in spreading the Buddhist faith. The “Black Faith” (*qara śāsin*), the “religion of the shamans” (*böge-yin mörgöl*), is the popular religion of the Mongols. Its most important functionaries, the shamans, were the natural enemies of the Lamas, who hardly had any chance to win the hearts of the people as long as these shamans and their shamanistic family idols—the *ongγon* figures—were not destroyed. Therefore, one of the first steps taken by Altan Khan after his meeting with the Dalai Lama was to burn and liquidate the shamans.¹¹⁸

Shamanism was particularly strong among the Eastern Mongolian tribes, the Qorčîn, Ongniγud, and others (and is, up to the present, still not “exterminated”). It is evident that the resistance against Buddhism was particularly strong there. Together with one of his pupils, Neyiči Toyin saw it as his task to break the power of the shamans, and he fought a bitter battle with them. It is reported that when he used his magic powers to cure a severely ill Ongniγud princess and in the process to defeat a great shaman, this impressed the common people so much that many converted to Buddhism. When he cured an ill female shaman, Aoba, the impact on Tüsiyetü Khan of the Qorčîn

¹¹⁵ Jiryal 1996, p. 164.

¹¹⁶ On his life, see Heissig 1953; Klafkowski 1987, pp. 351–361.

¹¹⁷ On his life, see Norbu 1990/Norbo 1999; Jiryal 1996, p. 166.

¹¹⁸ Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, pp. 298–299; Elverskog 2003, pp. 158–159.—According to the Biography of first rJe-btsun-dam-pa, the Dalai Lama himself burnt the *ongγon* idols, see Bawden 1961, p. 35. For the function of the *ongγon* see Heissig 1970, pp. 312–315.

was so great that he also became a Buddhist and supported Neyiči Toyin in his battle. They finally succeeded in forcing the nobility and the common people, as well as the shamans, to hand in their *ongyon* figures. These were subsequently burnt. The statement in the sources that this was the end of the veneration of *ongyon* figures should not be taken literally, because, even up to the present day, there are shamans in Eastern Mongolia.¹¹⁹

Neyiči Toyin did not restrict himself to the battle against the “Black Faith”. He preached, took care of the recitation of holy scriptures, built and consecrated monasteries, in short, he did everything to spread the Yellow Doctrine among the Eastern Mongols.¹²⁰

Contrary to Neyiči Toyin, Caya Bandida Namqayijamso (Tib. Nam-mkha’i-rgya-mtsho), the second great monk from the Qošod tribe, stayed in his Western Mongolian homeland after his period of study in Tibet. There also, the shamans and their followers were the major opponents of the dGe-lugs-pa. Caya Bandida did not consider the battle against the “Black Faith” to be his most important duty but rather the translation of texts from Tibetan. He and his disciples translated more than two hundred Tibetan works, some of which were very elaborate.¹²¹ Among these were not only canonical works, but also the Sa-skyapa hierarch bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan’s (1312–1375) famous Tibetan historical work “The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies” (*rGyal-rabs gsal-ba’i me-long*),¹²² a biography of the second Dalai Lama dGe’dun-rgya-mtsho (1475–1542)¹²³ and a new translation of ’Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan’s *Shes-bya rab-gsal*.¹²⁴ In 1648, after Caya Bandida had created a script for the Oirat language—a language that deviates from Eastern Mongolian especially in sound and lexicon, his translations as well as the translations done by his disciples were also transmitted in the “clear script” (*todo bičig*).¹²⁵ This is a further indication that the Buddhist monks were preoccupied with making religious texts accessible in the vernacular language. Up to the most recent times, new copies of many of these works were distributed.

¹¹⁹ Heissig 1953, pp. 524–526; Klafkowski 1987, pp. 354–355; Bawden 1989, pp. 32–33.

¹²⁰ Huth 1896, pp. 257ff.; Heissig 1953, p. 20; Ĵiryal 1996, p. 166.

¹²¹ List of the translated works in Damdinsürüng 1959, pp. 327–334.

¹²² Damdinsürüng 1959, p. 328, no. 38.

¹²³ Damdinsürüng 1959, p. 329, no. 45.

¹²⁴ Damdinsürüng 1959, p. 328, no. 40. Bareja-Starzyńska 2002, p. 14.

¹²⁵ Šagdarsürün 2001, p. 115.

Altan Khan's invitation to the third Dalai Lama was not only the beginning of the expansion of the dGe-lugs-pa in Southern and Western Mongolia, but also in Northern Mongolia. In 1586 or 1587,¹²⁶ Abadai Tayiji, a powerful Qalqa prince and direct descendant of Činggis Khan, visited the Dalai Lama. On this occasion, the latter is reported to have declared that the prince was an incarnation of the *bodhisattva* Vajrapāṇi, the tutelary deity of the Mongols, and he is further reported to have bestowed Abadai Tayiji with the honorary title "Great Vajra Khan of the Dharma" (*nom-un yeke vačir qayan*).¹²⁷ Already in 1586, in the direct neighbourhood of the ruins of the former capital Karakorum, Abadai had founded the Erdeni Joo monastery¹²⁸ after the model of Altan Khan's Yeke Joo monastery in Kökeqota.¹²⁹ The new monastery was to be consecrated by no one less than the Dalai Lama. However, the latter complied neither with the first nor with the second invitation. He sent the Sa-skyapa monk Blo-gros-snying-po as representative, and, later on, the famous translator Siregetü Güüsi Čorji, who became the first superior of Erdeni Joo.¹³⁰

It was no coincidence that a Sa-skyapa monk was sent as representative of the highest dGe-lugs-pa hierarchy. The first monks of Erdeni Joo, the majority of whom were Tibetans, did not belong to the dGe-lugs-pa, but to the Sa-skyapa, i.e., they were members of the school to which also the great Mongol missionary of Qubilai's time, 'Phags-pa, had belonged. The Sa-skyapa were Red Hats, but in contrast to the Karma-pa they were apparently not regarded as enemies by the "Yellow Hats". They were rather regarded as models for the ideal balanced relation between worldly and religious matters, between king and Lama. This is confirmed by the fact that many Sa-skyapa monks joined the delegation of the third Dalai Lama.¹³¹

6.3. *Erdeni Joo and the Development of a Northern Mongolian Religious Centre*

Erdeni Joo soon developed into the religious centre of all Northern or Qalqa Mongolia. Yet, it remained a Sa-skyapa monastery up to the

¹²⁶ Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 332 nn. 671, 674.

¹²⁷ Cf., e.g., Schmidt 1829, p. 253; Bawden 1961, pp. 36, 38.

¹²⁸ About the history of this monastery, see Cendina 1999. See also Sagaster 2005.

¹²⁹ Cendina 1999, p. 34; Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 331 n. 667.

¹³⁰ Cendina 1999, p. 42.

¹³¹ Cendina 1999, pp. 35–43.

eighteenth century. It most likely only became a dGe-lugs-pa monastery under the 7th abbot Dag-pa-dar-rgyas (1734–1802).¹³²

The first monastery of the Buddhist renaissance in the Qalqa territory is inseparably associated with the first Great Lama of the dGe-lugs-pa in Northern Mongolia: the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu Blo-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan, also called Öndör Gegen ("The High Illustrious") and Janabaĵar (from the Sanskrit Jñānavajra) (1635–1723).¹³³ Like the fourth Dalai Lama, he was also of noble descent and belonged to a family that had played an important role in the dGe-lugs-pa missions. Blo-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan was the son of the first Tüsiyetü Khan ʾombodorĵi (1594–1655), the leading prince of Western Qalqa Mongolia, and great-grandson of Abadai Khan. His elder brother Čaqundorĵi (died 1699), with whose fate he would be closely connected, was the second Tüsiyetü Khan.¹³⁴ Completely in line with the consequent dGe-lugs-pa system of reincarnated Lamas (Tib. *sprul-sku*, Mong. *qubilyan*), Blo-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan was seen as the reincarnation of Tāranātha Kun-dga'-snying-po (born 1575), a famous Tibetan clergyman.¹³⁵ It is striking that Tāranātha belonged to the Jo-nang-pa, a school with which the dGe-lugs-pa had no particularly good relations.¹³⁶ The Jo-nang-pa were a sub-school of the bKa'-brgyud-pa. Tāranātha was a famous theologian and historian, and was in this function apparently well suited to serve as former incarnation in the line of the rJe-btsun-dam-pa. His reincarnation Blo-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan, was, notwithstanding the obvious religio-politically determined "discovery", a strong personality who contributed significantly to the spreading of the dGe-lugs-pa school in Qalqa Mongolia. He not only made himself a name as theologian and politician, but also as an artist. Even to this day, his bronze sculptures are among the most significant creations of Buddhist art in general.¹³⁷

The status of the first rJe-btsun-dam-pa as highest clergyman of Qalqa was confirmed by the fact that the princes organised three separate ceremonies for him in Erdeni Ĵoo. In these ceremonies, the religious teacher, the Lama, was invoked to provide a "Firm Stay" (*batu orosil*),

¹³² Cendina 1999, pp. 36, 48.

¹³³ For his biography, see Bawden 1961, pp. 1, 41–67; Kämpfe 1979/1981.

¹³⁴ Bawden 1989, p. 53; Cendina 1999, p. 46; Veit 1999, p. 53.

¹³⁵ Ferrari 1958, p. 155 n. 561; Bawden 1961, p. 1; Cendina 1999, p. 46.

¹³⁶ Cendina 1999, p. 46; Ferrari 1958, p. 155 n. 561.

¹³⁷ Cultēm 1982.

i.e., to stay in his present existence for a long time for the sake of the doctrine and living beings. Öndör Gegen stayed in Erdeni Joo quite often, although he did not make this monastery his main residence. The reason for this appears to have been the fact that he was a confirmed dGe-lugs-pa and Erdeni Joo was dominated by the “red” Sa-skyapa. In any case, in 1647, he founded the Barayun Küriye, “the Western monastery”, a real dGe-lugs-pa monastery not far away from Erdeni Joo and from the place where he, in 1641, had been declared to be an incarnation of Tāranātha. This monastery also did not become the permanent residence of Öndör Gegen. His permanent residence was a tent monastery (*örgöge*), his “palace” in which he lived a nomadic life according to Mongolian tradition.¹³⁸

7. TIBET’S RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL IMPACT ON MONGOLIAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

As a consequence of the renaissance of Buddhism in Mongolia due to the dGe-lugs-pa, the relations between the Mongols and Tibet became closer than they had been in the time of the Great Empire, let alone in the “dark times” that followed. With the desire to meet the Mongolian Dalai Lama and to travel to the holy places of the new religion, more and more Mongolian princes and monks travelled to Tibet. The Snowy Country became more and more the religious homeland of the Mongols, the place from which the holy doctrine originated, the place of the gods from which they expected more effective protection than they did from the gods of the shamans. From Tibet, the Mongols received a new, higher culture which they combined with their own tradition to form a unique novelty, and this was to decisively influence all facets of the Mongolian society.

Although the contacts between Mongolia and Tibet may not be as intense as they have been in the past, they have not been interrupted to the present day. Today Mongolian monks study in Tibetan monasteries, be it in Tibet or in exile in India, especially the sGo-mang division (sGo-mang grva-tshang) of the ’Bras-spungs (Drepung) monastery in the South Indian Mundgod which has the same meaning for the Mongols as the main monastery near Lhasa has enjoyed.

¹³⁸ Cendina 1999, pp. 47–48.

The importance of Tibet for Mongolian culture and society does not exclude that the religious contacts have only too often also been used for political aims. This was already the case in the thirteenth/fourteenth century, and also played an important role in the encounter of Altan Khan with the third Dalai Lama. The intention of the “Yellow Hats” dGe-lugs-pa to use the Mongolian power in their feud with the “Red Hats” and especially with the Karma-pa, is fully confirmed by the events in the first half of the seventeenth century. Töröbayiqu Güüsi (Gušri) Khan (1582–1655)¹³⁹ of the Western Mongolian Qošod tribe, a descendent of Činggis Khan’s brother Qabutu Qasar, e.g., got rid of the two main opponents of the dGe-lugs-pa. In 1640 he defeated Don-yod, the ruler of Be-ri, in the Eastern Tibetan Khams, an adherent of the non-Buddhist Bon religion and embittered enemy not only of the dGe-lugs-pa but also of the other Buddhist schools. In 1642, Güüsi Khan conquered bSam-grub-rtse, the capital of the Southern Tibetan district of g’Tsang, the later g’Zhis-ka-rtse (Shigatse). The regents (*sde-srid*) of g’Tsang were resolute adherents of the Karma-pa and saw the good relations between the dGe-lugs-pa and the Mongols not only as a danger for the prominence of the “Red Hats”, but also for the independence of Tibet. The regent Karma-bsTan-skyong-dbang-po (r. 1620–1642) was captured and executed soon after. Güüsi Khan granted Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617–1682), the fifth Dalai Lama, the conquered territories, the “Thirteen Districts of Tibet” (*khri-skor bcu-gsum*) as fief. He followed the example set by Qubilai Khan, who gave the same present to the Sa-skyapa hierarchy ‘Phags-pa. As a consequence, the Dalai Lama was both the worldly leader and the highest religious authority of Tibet. In worldly affairs the Tibetan Lama was subordinated to the highest authority of the Mongolian Khan, who passed on the governmental matters to a Tibetan regent.¹⁴⁰

8. CHINAS INTERFERENCE WITH TIBETAN-MONGOLIAN POLITICS

The reign of the Qošod Khans in Tibet lasted seventy-five years, though until the enthronement of lHa-bzang Khan (1703–1717) this

¹³⁹ Zlatkin 1964, pp. 167–169 *et passim*; Ĵiryal 1996, pp. 177–178.

¹⁴⁰ Tucci 1949, pp. 62–64; Shakabpa 1967, pp. 105–107, 110–112; Ĵiryal 1996, pp. 181–182.

power might have been merely nominal.¹⁴¹ The real power in Tibet was in the hands of the regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (1653–1705), who succeeded in gradually regaining independence for Tibet. For this aim he not only had to take care of the interests of the Qoşod, but he also had to navigate between the two great powers that around 1700 struggled for leadership in Eastern Central Asia: the Jungar (Junggar) empire and China. Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho chose the side of the Buddhist Jungar. lHa-bzang Khan wanted to reinforce the weakened position of the Qoşod in Tibet. For this purpose he sought the support of China. In 1705 he killed the regent. The emperor sent a resident to Lhasa, but the Qoşod were the rulers over Tibet also thereafter. In 1717 a Jungar army under the command of Tshe-dbang-don-grub, a brother of the Jungar leader Tshe-dbang-rab-brtan (r. 1697–1727), invaded Tibet. The Jungar conquered Lhasa and killed lHa-bzang Khan. The Jungar invasion invoked an immediate reaction of the second Qing emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722), who did not accept an expansion of Jungar power in Tibet. In 1720 Chinese troops conquered Lhasa and expelled the Jungar. From then on, Tibet was once again under the rulership of the Middle Kingdom.¹⁴²

8.1. *Contacts between Ming China and Tibet*

After the fall of the Yuan (1368) the Ming Dynasty also carefully watched the religious developments in Mongolia, and especially in Tibet. Oirat (Oyirad) envoys to the Chinese court headed by Lamas prove the importance of Buddhist clergymen in diplomacy. The Ming emperors continued their contacts with the Karma-pa hierarchs. Emperor Yongle 永樂 (1403–1424), for example, invited the fifth Karma-pa De-bzhin-gshegs-pa (1384–1415)¹⁴³ for a visit to Beijing, and, at the same time, contacted Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa (1357–1419), the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa school. The latter did not personally comply with the emperor's invitation, but sent his disciple Byams-chen-chos-rje Shākya-ye-shes (1354–1435) as his representative to the Chinese court.¹⁴⁴ The activities and successes of the dGe-lugs-pa and, especially, of the third

¹⁴¹ Jiryal 1996, pp. 193–195.

¹⁴² Zlatkin 1964, p. 358; Petech 1966, pp. 337–339; Shakabpa 1967, pp. 131–139; Jiryal 1996, pp. 193–195. The classic study of the events leading to the establishment of rule in Tibet is Petech 1972.

¹⁴³ Shakabpa 1967, pp. 83–84; Douglas & White 1976, pp. 61–65.

¹⁴⁴ Shakabpa 1967, p. 84; Everding 1988, pp. 138–148.

Dalai Lama must have aroused the interest and probably also unrest on the part of the Ming emperor Wanli (1573–1619), who would have invited the Dalai Lama to Beijing in 1578 if the latter had not resided with the nominal Mongolian Great Khan *Ĵasaytu Tümen Khan* in the *Čaqar* territory, not far from the Chinese capital. Even if this announcement is correct, the Dalai Lama could not have complied with the invitation, since he died in 1578.

Tibetan sources report that emperor Wanli sent an envoy to the fourth Dalai Lama *Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho* in 1616.¹⁴⁵ The aim of this mission was not only to bestow the Dalai Lama with an honorary title, but also the wish to become informed about the growing strength of the *dGe-lugs-pa*.

8.2. *Contacts between Qing China (the Manchus) and Tibet*

Soon, the interest of the *dGe-lugs-pa* was no longer directed towards the increasingly weaker Ming Dynasty, but towards the growing power that shortly after would take over the rulership of China: the Manchus. The interest was a mutual one. In 1637 and 1639, the prince *Hûwang Taize* invited the fifth Dalai Lama to the Manchu capital *Mukden*.¹⁴⁶ In 1642, a Tibetan mission headed by *Ilayuyŋsan Sečen Chos-rje*, obviously a Mongolian dignitary, reached *Mukden*.¹⁴⁷ It was significant that the envoys handed over the writings of three leading political powers in Tibet: the fifth Dalai Lama, *Karma bsTan-skyong-dbang-po*, the regent of *gTsang*, and the seventh “Red Hat” (*Zhva-dmar-Ĵ*) *Karma-pa Ye-shes-snying-po* (1631–1694).¹⁴⁸ They all hoped for support from the coming power in China. The answers of *Hûwang Taize* were cautious, as he was not yet able to judge the situation in Tibet with certainty, but it was clear that the Manchus also were sympathetic towards the *dGe-lugs-pa*.¹⁴⁹

This sympathy very soon developed into a close relationship. When the fifth Dalai Lama learnt that in the year 1644 the Ming Dynasty had collapsed and that *Shunzhi* (r. 1644–1661), the first emperor of the Manchu *Qing* Dynasty, was enthroned, he sent him his felicitations. Thereupon, the Dalai Lama was invited to Beijing in 1651. The

¹⁴⁵ Tucci 1949, p. 55; Shakabpa 1967, p. 96 (without date).

¹⁴⁶ *Ĵiryal* 1996, p. 213.

¹⁴⁷ Tucci 1949, pp. 64–65.

¹⁴⁸ Ferrari 1958, p. 168 n. 704; Douglas & White 1976, p. 149.

¹⁴⁹ Tucci 1949, pp. 64–65.

Tibetan hierarch, who reached Beijing at the end of 1652 and who returned home two months later, was given a great reception. He was also awarded the title “Dalai Lama” by the emperor. As was fitting for this honourable guest, a wonderful temple complex was erected: the “Yellow Temple” (Mong. Sira Süme, Chin. Huangsi 黃寺)¹⁵⁰ which is, to the present day, the seat of the Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che in China. The Dalai Lama and the Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che are the highest dignitaries in the hierarchy of the dGe-lugs-pa school.¹⁵¹

For the new rulers of China, the relations to the new power in Tibet, the dGe-lugs-pa, were of prominent importance for two reasons. In the first place, it was the case that they could not realise their aspirations over Tibet—which they had inherited as emperors of the Middle Kingdom—without paying attention to religious interests. The matter was further complicated by the fact that the overlords of Tibet were Mongolians who, in the line of the Mongolian tradition, saw themselves as protectors of the religion. This religion was the religion of the dGe-lugs-pa. In the second place, the rulers of the Qing had to take the power of the dGe-lugs-pa into account in their policy towards the Mongols in the Mongolian motherland, Inner and Outer Mongolia, in the Kukunor territory, and in Jungaria to the north of present-day Xinjiang 新疆.

8.3. “*Ruling by Means of Religion*”: *The Manchu Submission of Mongolian Tribes*

The Inner Mongolian princes had submitted themselves to the Manchus during the first half of the seventeenth century.¹⁵² The Manchus very soon acknowledged this respect, and promoting their religion was an important means for them to make allies of their new subjects. Already Nurhaci (1559–1626), the initiator of Manchu power, saw how important it was to respect the Lamas in order for him to win the people over. He prohibited the destruction of monasteries and granted the clergymen exemption from taxes and from regular legislation. Nurhaci’s successor Hūwang Taize continued this policy of ruling the Mongols by means of religion. He even had a temple built at each of the four city gates of the capital Mukden. He further built another temple for a

¹⁵⁰ For the Yellow Temple (Huangsi), see Arlington & Lewisohn 1935, pp. 238–240.

¹⁵¹ Tucci 1949, p. 68; Jiryal 1996, p. 214.

¹⁵² Miller 1959, pp. 2–5; Bawden 1989, pp. 46–47.

bronze statue of the tutelary deity Mahākāla, one of the most important tutelary deities of the Mongols. The creation of the statue had been ordered by no one less than Qubilai, and it had withstood the turbulences of the next centuries, until it, eventually, arrived in Čaqar and, from there, fell into the hands of the Manchus as war booty. Although the Manchus had to deal with the old problem of moral depravity of the Lamas and other abuses, and although they had to reduce the number of monks, this did not change their fundamental attitude towards Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism.¹⁵³

The Mongols of Outer Mongolia, the Qalqa territory, only submitted half a century later, in 1691. Religious grounds may have involved a secondary level only, but they did play an essential role and had to be dealt with carefully by the Kangxi emperor.

The reasons for the association of the Qalqa were closely related to the political developments among the Oirat, their western neighbours. A decade after the enthronement of Kangxi a political power came to the foreground in the Oirat territory that not only posed a serious threat to the Qalqa Mongols, but also to the Qing. The protagonist of the drama was Galdan (1644–1697), the sixth son of Bayatur Qongtayiji (r. 1635–1653), the Jungar Khan. As would become habitual for later Oirat princes, Galdan became a monk. He was seen as a reincarnation of the Western Tibetan dBen-sa-sprul-sku Blo-bzang-bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho (born 1605), who is reported to have been sent to the Oirat by the Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che and the Dalai Lama to spread the doctrine of Tsong-kha-pa there. At the age of thirteen Galdan went to Tibet where he studied with the first Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan in the bKra-shis-lhun-po monastery, and with the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho in Lhasa. When his older brother Sengge, the successor to Bayatur Qongtayiji was murdered in 1671, Galdan returned to the life of a layman and went back to his homeland to avenge his brother and to grasp power for himself. In 1676 he defeated his enemies. In the following years he conquered almost the whole of Eastern Turkestan.¹⁵⁴

In order to avoid an expansion of the Jungar empire into the neighbouring Qalqa territory towards the east, the Tüsiyetü Khan Čaqun-dorji, the ruler of the Western Qalqa and elder brother of the first

¹⁵³ Jiryal 1996, pp. 208–213.

¹⁵⁴ Čimeddorji 1991, pp. 45–50; Jiryal 1996, pp. 188–192.

rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu, invaded Galdan's homeland and killed one of Galdan's younger brothers. This resulted in a war between Galdan and the Qalqa princes that lasted for ten years. During this war, Galdan pushed forward through the Qalqa territories and into Chinese territory. The Tüsiyetü Khan and the first rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu fled, and eventually found shelter in Chinese territory near the Southern Mongolian Sünid tribe. In 1689, Galdan demanded of the Qing to hand over his enemies, but this demand was not heeded. This meant an immediate confrontation between Galdan and the Qing. The Qalqa saw no other way to escape the threat of Galdan than to submit to the Qing in 1691. The following campaigns of Kangxi against Galdan ended in 1696 with his crushing defeat in the battle of Jayun Modu, to the south of present day Ulaanbaatar. A year later, Galdan died.

Kangxi's victory over Galdan was more than just the destruction of an enemy who formed a serious threat to Chinese power in the northeast. It was also a victory over those powers in Tibet that not only strove to exterminate the alien rule of the Qoşod Mongols, but also for the full independence of Tibet.

With their support of the Qalqa, the Qing had also won the sympathy of the Buddhist clergy, whose leader had found asylum in Chinese territory. The rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu also joined the submission ceremonies that were performed in Dolonor (Doloyan Nayur) in the southeast of Inner Mongolia in 1691.¹⁵⁵

The respect that emperor Kangxi showed to the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu and to the religion of his new subjects was in conformity with the principle of the Manchu emperors to use religion to attain political aims. In the person of the rJe-btsun-dam-pa, Outer Mongolia now had a supreme religious authority that stood under Manchu Qing influence. At this point, Kangxi thought it proper to also appoint a supreme representative of the dGe-lugs-pa in Inner Mongolia and, above all, in the capital Beijing. Accordingly he summoned Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-chos-ldan (1642–1714), the first representative of the reincarnation line of the lCang-skya Qutuytus, a respected higher Lama from the dGon-lung monastery in the Tibetan-Mongolian-Chinese border region in the neighbourhood of Kukunor to Beijing.¹⁵⁶ Unlike the fourth Dalai Lama and Öndör Gegen, the first lCang-skya Qutuytu did not descend from

¹⁵⁵ Bawden 1989, p. 79.

¹⁵⁶ On the first lCang-skya Qutuytu, see Sagaster 1967.

a noble family, but was the son of a simple Chinese merchant and a Tibetan or Mongolian mother. The high position that was intended for him is evident in an invitation letter by Kangxi from the year 1693 transmitted in the biography of the Lama. The emperor stated that he needed an able Lama in Beijing. He would not have been able to invite the Dalai Lama or Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che, since these were too old (Kangxi did not yet know that the Dalai Lama had already died in 1682). He therefore summoned the lCang-skya Qutuytu, since he had heard that he also possessed great abilities. Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-chos-ldan complied with the request and became the first Great Lama of Beijing and Inner Mongolia. He simultaneously assumed the function of clergyman at the court, and, in 1706, was appointed “Great State Teacher” (Chin. *da guoshi* 大國師). Together with the Dalai Lamas, the Paṇ-chen Rin-po-ches and the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytus, the lCang-skya Qutuytus were, from that moment on, one of the highest and most influential representatives of the dGe-lugs-pa. After him many other high Lamas were also summoned to Beijing. In this way, Beijing became one of the most important centres of the Yellow Doctrine.¹⁵⁷

8.3.1. *Tasks of Lamas in Beijing*

The tasks of the Lamas who resided in Beijing were not only of a religious nature. Through them, the emperors had control over the administrative structures, and they used them as intermediaries between the government and the religious authorities in Tibet and Mongolia or for settling disputes. Thus, the first lCang-skya Qutuytu was dispatched to a meeting of princes in Küreng Belčir, to the south of the Qangyai Mountains in Northern Mongolia in 1685, i.e., before he was summoned to Beijing. On this occasion the long-lasting struggles among the Qalqa, in which eventually Galdan had also interfered, had to be solved. Apart from the Qalqa princes and the Oirat nobility, also the first rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu and envoys of the emperor participated in this meeting—a proof that Kangxi had an active interest in the events taking place in Mongolia, long before 1691. Through his skill in negotiations the lCang-skya Qutuytu contributed to the recognition of Qing leadership by the Kukunor Mongols in 1697. Kangxi was so impressed by the Qutuytu that, in 1697, he sent him as his representative to the

¹⁵⁷ Miller 1959, pp. 69–86; Sagaster 1967, pp. 105–108, 126–127; Ĵiryal 1996, p. 220.

enthronement of the sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs-dbyangs-rgya-mtsho (1683–1706). This task was a very delicate one because the regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (1653–1705) had concealed the death of the fifth Dalai Lama in 1682, and had informed the emperor only in 1697. Kangxi was furious but thought it necessary to demonstrate imperial presence at the occasion of the enthronement. He advised his envoy to decisively refuse to “bow” to the regent, i.e., to perform the kowtow (*koutou* 叩頭), as this would have implied approval of the scandalous behaviour of the regent. For reasons that are not completely clear, the Qutuytu did “bow” and, upon his return to Beijing, was condemned to death. However, the emperor granted him amnesty. In any case, he lost his title of Qutuytu and was degraded to the rank of an ordinary monk. He was eventually pardoned in 1701.¹⁵⁸ The tasks that the emperor assigned to his religious envoys could be very risky, especially when, as can be surmised from the case described above, the interests of the commissioner were not the same as those of the messenger.

9. MANCHU POLITICS AND THE PROFITS FOR BUDDHISM

It was not only the emperor who used the services of religion and its representatives for his own aims. Buddhism also profited from Manchu politics. The promotion the religion enjoyed under the first Qing emperor Shunzhi, but especially under his son Kangxi and his successors, was so great that it can hardly be explained by political motives alone, but also permits one to surmise a genuine interest of the emperors in Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism. Everywhere in the country, and particularly in Beijing, monasteries to which an official status and respective rights were bestowed, were established with financial support of the court.

Yet, both the building of monasteries and the corresponding establishment of monastic communities were important for the spreading of the dGe-lugs-pa among the Mongols. The language of education and cult may have been Tibetan, but already from the Yuan period onward, important texts were also translated into Mongolian. The translation activity flourished anew with the dGe-lugs-pa mission. The transmission of the holy scriptures in the language of the new

¹⁵⁸ Sagaster 1967, pp. 118–121.

adherents certainly did not only serve to accumulate religious merit, but also served those who did not know Tibetan, i.e., above all, the lay people, by allowing them to have access to the texts in their mother tongue. Far more economical than the multiplication of manuscripts, was the block print technique. As a great amount of starting capital was needed for procuring the printing blocks, the financial assistance that the Manchu rulers provided was very welcome.

Very soon Beijing became the most important location for printing Mongolian texts.¹⁵⁹ Already in 1659, i.e., under emperor Shunzhi the “Sūtra of the Golden Light” (*Altan Gerel*) was printed. Not all texts had to be newly translated. Often, one could rely on previous translations. These were, as a rule, revised. This was also the case for the printed edition of the Mongolian version of the *bKa’-gyur*, literally the “Translation of the Words (of the Buddha)”. Already in 1700, a Tibetan woodcut of the *bKa’-gyur* had been made in Beijing, as the imperial promotion also included the printing of works in the “church language” Tibetan. In 1717, Kangxi ordered that the *bKa’-gyur* should also be printed in Mongolian. Thereupon, an editorial committee of thirty-five Tibetan and Mongolian scholars was convened. In a surprisingly short time, by 1720, they revised the 113 volumes of the Mongolian *bKa’-gyur* of the time of Ligdan Khan, rearranged them in 108 volumes, and prepared them for printing.¹⁶⁰ A short time later, the same treatment was given the second great collection of canonical writings, the *bsTan-gyur*, the translation of doctrinal texts of the Indian “church fathers”. Already in 1724, shortly after the enthronement of the new emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (1723–1736), the Tibetan printed edition of the *bsTan-gyur* was completed. In 1741, Yongzheng’s successor Qianlong 乾隆 (1736–1795) issued the order also to print the *bsTan-gyur* in Mongolian. Once again, a great number of Mongolian and Tibetan scholars were convened in Beijing. This time one could only partially fall back upon already existing translations. A greater part of the texts had to be retranslated. The work on the 226 volumes lasted from 1742 to 1749.

The Beijing edition of the *bsTan-gyur* has a remarkable particularity both in its Tibetan and Mongolian versions: it has an appendix which is extremely unusual. The “canonical” collections *bKa’-gyur* and *bsTan-gyur* consist only of translations of works of the Buddha

¹⁵⁹ About the printing activities of Mongolian texts in Peking, see Heissig 1954.

¹⁶⁰ Heissig 1954, pp. 39–42, 84–85; Sagaster 1967, p. 25; Kämpfe 1976, p. 192.

and his Indian followers. In the Beijing *bsTan-'gyur* the works of two non-Indians are included: the twenty volumes of the work of Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, and the seven volumes of the work of the first lCang-skya Qutuytu Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-chos-ldan.¹⁶¹ The reason for this is clearly religio-political. This great honour was not so much intended for the venerable second Buddha Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa school, but for his highest representative at the imperial court, who, through the reincarnation process could maintain a long-lasting presence in Beijing. Also Kangxi's successor Yongzheng was very much interested in the institute of the lCang-skya Qutuytus. Already in 1724, in the year the printed Tibetan *bsTan-'gyur* was finished, the new emperor summoned the second lCang-skya Qutuytu Ye-shes-bstan-pa'i-sgron-me Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717–1786), the reincarnation of the first lCang-skya Qutuytu, to Beijing.¹⁶² There the young monk became acquainted with the future emperor Qianlong, and he learnt Chinese, Manchu and Mongolian with him.¹⁶³ After the enthronement of Qianlong, Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje became one of the most influential advisors of the new ruler. He participated appropriately in creating the printed edition of the *bsTan-'gyur*,¹⁶⁴ and made himself a name as scholar through his own numerous writings.¹⁶⁵ Before all else, however, Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje was a clergyman at the court and, in this function, had to fulfil diplomatic tasks and be present at important ceremonial events. In 1780, he set out to encounter the third Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan-ye-shes (1738–1780) in order to escort him on his visits to Jehol and Beijing, and to take care of him until his death in the eleventh month of the same year.

10. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN QIANLONG AND ROL-PA'I-RDO-RJE

The relations between Qianlong and Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje were characterised by trust and respect. This does not mean, however, that the emperor deviated from the principle of Manchu religious policy to use religion as a means to “pacify” the Mongols and the Tibetans. For achieving this goal, he did not shrink from interfering in the discovery of reincarnated

¹⁶¹ Sagaster 1967, p. 25.

¹⁶² On the second lCang-skya Qutuytu, see Kämpfe 1976.

¹⁶³ Kämpfe 1976, p. 82.

¹⁶⁴ Heissig 1954, pp. 84–85; Kämpfe 1976, p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, the works listed in Taube 1966, pp. 112–115.

Lamas. In theory, this was a purely religious matter. In practice, however, the system served religious aims and family politics, as, for example, was the case for the discovery of the fourth Dalai Lama in the family of Altan Khan. In 1792, Qianlong stipulated that from that moment on, higher Lamas, and especially the Dalai Lamas, the Paṇ-chen Rin-po-ches, the lCang-skya Qutuytu and the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu were to be decided upon through a lottery, for which golden urns were to be used.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, the prevention of manipulations by clergy and nobility meant that from then on also the emperor could influence the choice of candidates.

In the same manner as the higher clergymen, the great monasteries were also controlled by the emperor. They steadily grew in number. When the first lCang-skya Qutuytu died in 1714, the following monasteries obtained official allowances to organise the ceremonies for the deceased: the twenty-four monasteries of Beijing, the monasteries of Jehol, the six monasteries of Kökeqota, the monasteries on the holy Wutai 五臺 Mountain in the northeast of Shanxi province, the monastery of Jaya Paṇḍita Qutuytu Blo-bzang-'phrin-las (born 1642) in the Qalqa territory, and the monastery of the first rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu.¹⁶⁷

The monastery of rJe-btsun-dam-pa was no longer called Örgöge ("Palace"), in 1714, but Yeke Küriye ("Great Monastery"). As seat of the highest Lama of Qalqa, it soon started to challenge the position of the Erdeni Joo monastery as leading monastery. The nomadic tent city Yeke Küriye moved around in the Orkhon Valley and, later on, in the entire middle part of Northern Mongolia, until it reached the place of the present-day capital Ulaanbaatar in 1778. Already from a very early date, the residence of the rJe-btsun-dam-pa functioned as the capital of Qalqa Mongolia. It underwent name changes two more times: in 1778 to Da Küriye (likewise meaning "Great Monastery"), and in 1911 to Neyislel Küriye ("Capital Monastery") or Boyda-yin Küriye ("Monastery of the Holy One [rJe-btsun-dam-pa]"). In 1924, it received its present name Ulayan Bayatur Qota/Ulaanbaatar Khot ("Town of the Red Hero"). The name Uрга, under which the town was known in the West, is derived from *örgöge* (pronounced *örgöö*), "palace".¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Lessing 1942, pp. 58–60; Jiryal 1996, p. 220.

¹⁶⁷ Sagaster 1967, p. 136.

¹⁶⁸ The development from Örgöge (Örgöö) to Ulaanbaatar is told in Idšinnorov 1994. See also Majdar 1972, p. 64 and Cendina 1999, p. 48.

Already in 1651, Öndör Gegen had founded a monastery on the grounds of present-day Ulaanbaatar: the “Eastern Monastery”, Jëgün Küriye.¹⁶⁹ Soon, more monasteries were erected in the capital, especially the Gandang Tegčĭnling (Gandan Tëgčĭnlin, Tib. dGa’ldan Theg-chen-gling) monastery, in the year 1809. This monastery is the main monastery of the dGe-lugs-pa in Mongolia to the present day.¹⁷⁰ In the whole country more and more monasteries were founded, and also the number of monks increased accordingly. In 1921, there were about seven hundred large and 1,000 small monasteries, and about 113,000 monks in Outer Mongolia. Every family tried to provide one of their sons to a monastery in order to gain religious merit, but also because of economic motives.¹⁷¹ Also in Mongolia, life was more comfortable in a monastery than it was in an ordinary family. Many of these monks returned to their families and took care of the religious life of the country. The great number of monasteries and their economic privileges, along with the great number of monks who, at least theoretically, lived in celibacy, increasingly became a problem for economy and politics.

Fundamentally, the monasteries played a positive role. They were economic enterprises and commercial centres with big markets that took place during the big religious festivals. Above all, the monasteries were centres of art, science and education, where many young noblemen learnt reading and writing. The doctors who were educated in the monasteries contributed considerably to the medical treatment of the people. There were no religious borders between the different Mongolian territories, just as there were no such borders between Mongolia, Tibet and China. An increasing number of pilgrims travelled to Central Tibet, but also to the great monasteries of Eastern Tibet, above all to sKu’bum Byams-pa-gling (Kumbum, Chin. Ta’ersi 塔爾寺, founded in 1573, in the vicinity of the birthplace of Tsong-kha-pa),¹⁷² and to Bla-brang bKra-shis-’khyil (Labrang, founded in 1708).¹⁷³ Also the holy Wutai Mountain was a popular place of pilgrimage. High Lamas and also simple monks were trained in Central or Eastern Tibet, and did

¹⁶⁹ Majdar 1972, p. 65.

¹⁷⁰ Pozdneyev 1971, pp. 75–77; Majdar 1972, p. 66; Majdar & Pjurveev 1980, pp. 103–104.

¹⁷¹ Bawden 1989, p. 160.

¹⁷² About this monastery, see particularly Filchner & Unkrig 1933 and Wylie 1962, pp. 108–109, 193–194 (note 745).

¹⁷³ On Bla-brang bKra-shis-’khyil, see Wylie 1962, pp. 105–106, 191 (note 106).

not only bring their theological knowledge back to Mongolia, but also artistic knowledge and abilities. In this way, especially the Labrang monastery instigated the development of a peculiar Mongolian style of painting and sculpture. The architectural form of the monasteries was certainly very much influenced by Chinese architecture.¹⁷⁴

Buddhist scholarship was by no means a one-way track from Tibet to Mongolia. Mongolian scholars on their part made a great contribution to the spiritual culture of Tibet, be it as theologians or as historians. In this respect, Sum-pa mKhan-po Ye-shes-dpal-'byor (1704–1788), a high Lama from the Kukunor area, e.g., wrote a famous work about the history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China and Mongolia.¹⁷⁵ One of the most important Tibetan-speaking logicians was Blo-bzang-rta-mgrin, also called rTsa-ba rTa-mgrin (Zava Damdin) (1864–1937) from the Qalqa territory. He is also the author of a history of Buddhism in Mongolia.¹⁷⁶ The Mongolian disciples of Tibetans very soon became masters themselves.¹⁷⁷

11. dGe-lugs-pa Buddhism as the Religion of the Common People in Mongolia

Also in Mongolia, dGe-lugs-pa Buddhism was already at a very early date not only the religion of monks and nobility, but increasingly also the religion of the common people. By performing their rituals, monks provided protection against the dangers of every-day life. At the same time, they also contributed to the moral education of the people by urging them to obey the ten precepts so as to ensure themselves of a better existence, and, eventually, to attain buddhahood. Proof for this is seen in the manuscript discoveries of Olon Süme and Kharbukhyn Balgas. They show that already at the end of the sixteenth century the same texts were used in both Inner and Outer Mongolia. These texts definitely were used for the religious welfare of the lay community. The

¹⁷⁴ See, e.g., Pozdneyev 1978, p. 67; Majdar 1972, pp. 20–42; Majdar & Pjurveev 1980, pp. 50–123.

¹⁷⁵ dPag-bsam ljon-bzang, “The Wishing Tree”, completed in 1748. About the author and his work see Vostrikov 1970 and Pubaev 1981. Sum-pa mKhan-po also composed a History of Kukunor, *mTsho-sngon-gyi lo-rgyus*, published and translated in Yang 1969, pp. 4–5, with chronological data on his life.

¹⁷⁶ “The Golden Book” (*gSer-gyi deb-ther*), edited in Lokesh Chandra 1964. On his work and life, see Lokesh Chandra, pp. v–vii.

¹⁷⁷ A Catalogue of Tibetan works written by Mongolian authors is Bjambaa 2004. For historical works in particular, see Bira 1970.

Mongolian monasteries had permanent exchanges between each other and with Tibet. The network of relationships and dependencies was, above all, closely intertwined, because the high Lamas very often stood in a teacher-disciple relationship and were connected to each other in a peculiar way through consecrations and vows. Thus, the second Beijing lCang-skya Qutuytu took the vow as novice from the second Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che Blo-bzang-ye-shes-dpal-bzang-po (1663–1737) in the Tibetan bKra-shis-lhun-po monastery in 1735. In 1771, the second lCang-skya Qutuytu took the vow of novice from the third rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu Ye-shes-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1758–1773), the Great Lama of Northern Mongolia, who was of Tibetan descent, in the Southern Mongolian Dolonor.¹⁷⁸

11.1. *Growing Discontent with the Moral and Economic Corruption of Higher Clergymen*

In the course of time, the old malady that had already contributed to the end of Mongolian rule over China set in anew: the moral and economic corruption of higher clergymen, coupled with the corruption of princes and the lack of education of simple monks and laymen. The system of the reincarnated lamas, the Qubilyan, who enjoyed important economic privileges, continued to be expanded. During the period of autonomy (1911–1924), there were seven real Qutuytus—reincarnated Lamas—and forty other high Lamas that had been granted the title Qutuytu alone in the capital of Northern Mongolia. Many of these Qutuytus were false saints who cared little about the religious and worldly concerns of their protégés. The highest saints themselves, the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytus, who all had the honorific name “The Holy”, Boyda, provided inglorious examples.¹⁷⁹ The seventh Boyda Ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-dbyang-phyug-'phrin-las-rgya-mtsho (1850–1869) was a drinker and loved sexual pleasures that were forbidden for him as high dGe-lugs-pa clergyman. Even worse was his successor, the eighth Boyda Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-chos-kyi-nyi-ma-bstan-'dzin-dbang-phyug (1869–1924). He also was a drinker, suffered from syphilis and had two official wives successively.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Kämpfe 1976, pp. 90, 111.

¹⁷⁹ Chapter 8 in Pozdneyev 1971, pp. 321–392 deals with the lives of the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytus. On the names, portraits and short biographies of the nine Boydas, see “Mongolyn esön Bogdyn tuxaj” (“About the nine Boydas”) in *Bilgijn zül* 1999, pp. 2–3.

¹⁸⁰ Bawden 1989, pp. 165ff.

In the nineteenth century, the discontent with the clergymen increased. The monks criticised the Lamas in sharp words, who in their opinion no longer obeyed the precepts of their religion and exploited the common people. When the desultory resistance eventually came together in a reform movement in the early twentieth century, it was already far too late.¹⁸¹

12. INDEPENDENCE OF OUTER MONGOLIA—LIBERATION FROM MANCHU RULE AND NATIONAL RENAISSANCE

In 1911 the Qing rulership collapsed. Outer Mongolia declared its independence in the form of a monarchy, led by the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu, who received the official title Boyda Gegen, the “Holy Illustrious”.¹⁸² This choice was a clever one, as the eighth Boyda was, despite his moral weakness, a strong personality who enjoyed respect both of the nobility and of the common people.¹⁸³ The liberation from Manchu-Chinese rule was seen as an act of a national renaissance that found its special expression in the person of the Boyda. Although he was a Tibetan by birth, from a theological viewpoint he was none other than the first rJe-btsun-dam-pa of the seventeenth century in a new incarnation, and, thus, a descendent from Činggis Khan. Officially, however, another claim was made: the governmental motto of the new king of Mongolia was: “The One who is elevated by many” (Olan-a ergügdegsen). According to the Buddhist conception, “The One honoured by many” (Mahāsammata) was the first king of mankind. The governmental motto of Boyda Gegen inferred a promising new start.

13. THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF MONGOLIA AND THE SEPARATION OF STATE AND CHURCH

This new start, however, did not last long. The people’s revolution of 1921 did not lead to the abdication of the king, but when the Boyda Gegen died in 1924, the monarchy was dissolved and the People’s

¹⁸¹ Bawden 1989, pp. 166ff.

¹⁸² Zlatkin 1964, pp. 87–89; Rupen 1964, p. 61; Baabar 1999, p. 136; Barkmann 1999, p. 97.

¹⁸³ On the Eight rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu/Boyda Gegen, see Bawden 1989, pp. 195–196.

Republic of Mongolia was declared. In 1926, state and church were separated, and in 1929 a party decree prohibited the installation of a new rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu and all the other Qubilyans.¹⁸⁴

The Buddhist faith was so deeply rooted in the minds of the people and the influence of the clergy was so great that the religious policy of the party was at first a very careful one. Soon, however, an open battle started. Between 1936 and 1939 almost all monasteries were destroyed and a great number of Lamas were killed.¹⁸⁵ Those who survived were forced to return to lay life. Only the Gandan monastery in Ulaanbaatar, which had been closed in 1938, was allowed to take up “work” again in 1944, to serve as a show case for the liberal communist religious policy. It became the centre of the communist organisation “Buddhists for Peace”. In the 1970s, a religious academy was even founded. It not only served for the education of monks from Mongolia, but also for monks from Buryatia and Kalmykia. Buddhism became free again only after the democratic revolution of 1990.

The establishment of a Mongolian national state in the north triggered a pan-Mongolian pursuit in the Mongolian territories of China after 1911, which, however, was not supported by all high Lamas. It was above all the sixth lCang-skyā Qutuytu Chos-dbyings-ye-shes-rdo-rje (1891–1958)¹⁸⁶ who obviously feared the competition of his Northern Mongolian fellow functionary, the rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu, and who sided with the Chinese. To avoid a separation of the Mongolian territories, the Republic of China continued the religious policy of the emperors and granted the honorary title “great state teacher” (*da guoshi*) to the lCang-skyā Qutuytu.¹⁸⁷ In doing so, he followed the example set by the Great Khan Qubilai, who immediately after his enthronement had granted the title *guoshi* to his advisor 'Phags-pa.¹⁸⁸ The promotion of the religion was even more important in the 1930s, when Japan occupied Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. In order to sever Mongolia's political and religious connection to China, Japan tried to “Japanise” Mongolian Buddhism, and sent many young monks to the holy Kōyasan Mountain in Japan, the centre of the Shingon school. With the aim of preventing this politically motivated dominance over the inherited belief

¹⁸⁴ Sanders 1968, p. 66; Bawden 1989, pp. 260, 263.

¹⁸⁵ Rupen 1964, pp. 277–278; Bawden 1989, pp. 372–373; Baabar 1999, p. 363.

¹⁸⁶ On the sixth lCang-skyā Qutuytu, see Yang & Bulag 2003.

¹⁸⁷ Yang & Bulag 2003, p. 88.

¹⁸⁸ Jagchid 1980, p. 235.

and of “purifying” the religion, an inter-Mongolian countermovement arose. Its success, however, was very soon thwarted by the victory of Chinese communism.¹⁸⁹

14. THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND COMMUNIST RELIGIOUS POLICY

Like all other religions in the People’s Republic of China, Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism was also sacrificed by the communist religious policy. Especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) monks were forced to return to lay life; a large number of monasteries were destroyed or used for non-religious purposes.¹⁹⁰ In 1976, however, a favourable turn occurred: It was again allowed to take the religious vows. Everywhere in the country monasteries were restored or newly built. In the monasteries, printing religious literature was allowed once more, and even governmental publishing houses published religious and religio-historical works on a great scale. The tenth Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1938–1989) was released from prison and lived in Beijing as neighbour of Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平. His monastery there was the “Yellow Temple” (Sira Süme/Huangsi), in which he founded an academy for Higher Tibetan Buddhist studies.¹⁹¹ The presence of Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che in Beijing was of great importance for Mongols and Tibetans. Every week he received worshippers in his residence, and on his travels through the country he even visited the Oirat in the remote Tianshan region. That the communist religious policy had not changed, however, became evident from the problems that occurred on the occasion of the discovery of the reincarnation of the tenth Paṇ-chen Rin-po-che, when the candidate acknowledged by the Dalai Lama was not recognised by the Chinese Government.¹⁹² Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism has not recovered from the consequences of the Cultural Revolution up to the present.

In 1948, the sixth lCang-skyä Qutuytu fled to Taiwan together with the national Chinese government. He died there in 1954. The communist government apparently did not consider it to be opportune to

¹⁸⁹ Jagchid 1980, pp. 235–239.

¹⁹⁰ Jagchid 1980, p. 238.

¹⁹¹ Tib. Krung-go bod-brgyud mtho-rim nang-bstan slob-gling; Chin. Zhongguo zangyu xigaoji foxueyuan 中國藏語係高級佛學院.

¹⁹² The dramatic events are discussed in Barnett 1996, pp. 32–35.

engage in the discovery of his reincarnation. Yet, there is a seventh lCang-skyā Qutuytu. He is a young Čaqar Mongol who, after fleeing to India, presently studies in the 'Bras-spungs monastery in Mundgod in Southern India, where he is, naturally, a disciple of the "Mongolian" sGo-mang sub-branch.

The Northern Mongolian rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu has been resurrected. The party decree of 1929, which prohibited the appointment of the rJe-btsun-dam-pa and of all other Qubilyans, had no positive effect. The eighth Boyda Lama reincarnated as the ninth rJe-btsun-dam-pa Qutuytu bSod-nams-dar-rgyas in 1932 in Lhasa. Presently, he lives as a Tibetan refugee in Dharamsala in North India, the seat of the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who, in 1991, confirmed his reincarnation.¹⁹³ The prospects of the Boyda Lama to resume his former function in Mongolia, however, are not hopeful. When, in 1999, he succeeded in obtaining a visa for Mongolia, he was joyfully received by his not too numerous adherents, and he could even travel to Erdeni Joo. Yet, he did not receive official recognition. Within the scope of religious freedom, Buddhism has enjoyed constitutional rights since 1992.¹⁹⁴ However, the Boyda Lama's return to political and social supremacy is desired by almost no one. Yet, Buddhism remains the religion of the Mongols. Since 1990, also in Northern Mongolia, monasteries have been restored and new ones built. Many former monks have again become Lamas, and many young men have become clergymen. Also the Red Doctrine has been reborn and can no longer be kept on a leash by their adversaries, the "Yellow Hats". Contrary to what might be expected, the "Red Hats" do not call themselves Sa-skyā-pa or Karma-pa, but rNying-ma-pa. Thus, they profess to belong to the oldest of the four great Tibetan schools. It is noteworthy that also many women have taken the religious vow and have founded monasteries that, mainly, belong to the "Red Hats" school.

15. OUTLOOK

Whether or not the many monasteries and the many Lamas denote a renaissance of Buddhism is a moot question. It is sure, however, that the situation in the present-day state of Mongolia is better than in the

¹⁹³ *Bilgijn zül* 1999, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Mongol ulsyn iindsen chuul* 1992, p. 5 (I, Article 9).

Mongolian territories of China. Nevertheless, the new freedom still bears the scars of the past. The harm done to the education of monks, caused by the interruption of the indigenous educational tradition and by the failure of communication with the Tibetan centres, still cannot be fully eradicated. The difficulties that have arisen through the coerced damage to the *vinaya* rules in communist times must be added to this. It goes without saying that married monks cannot leave their families behind. Because of this, Mongolian Buddhism is reproached by the Tibetans as no longer “pure”. The reaction to this has been the concept of a uniquely Mongolian Buddhism.

The problem of the past goes back to precommunist times. The Lamas still appear not to have completely understood that a religion also has a social responsibility, and that compassion with living beings cannot be only theoretical, especially in those cases where one strives to withstand the competition of foreign missionaries. This is also true for the transmittance of religious contents to lay people. How long will lay people be satisfied with reciting *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, procuring holy water, and buying credit notes for Tibetan texts which are recited in the temple by monks in order to protect them from all kinds of dangers? In the meantime, monasteries and lay organisations may be concerned with providing a deeper understanding of the Buddhist doctrine through education and publication; however, as long as this practice predominantly proceeds according to the old traditional forms and remains without discourse with the new world, the result remains uncertain.

The contemporary problems hardly form a real danger for Buddhism in Mongolia. The religion is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the Mongols that neither physical force nor intellectual doubt can seriously harm it. Just as before, the Buddha remains one of the two pillars on which the Mongolian identity rests. The other pillar, of course, is Činggis Khan.¹⁹⁵

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¹⁹⁵ About the role of Buddha and Činggis Khan as identification figures, see Sagaster 1999.

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THE SPREAD OF CHAN (ZEN) BUDDHISM

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the development and spread of the so-called Chan School of Buddhism in China, Japan, and the West. In its East Asian setting, at least, the spread of Chan must be viewed rather differently than the spread of Buddhism as a whole, for by all accounts (both traditional and modern) Chan was a movement that initially flourished within, or (as some would have it) in reaction against, a Buddhist monastic order that had already been active in China for a number of centuries. By the same token, at the times when the Chan movement spread to Korea and Japan, it did not appear as the harbinger of Buddhism itself, which was already well established in those countries, but rather as the most recent in a series of importations of Buddhism from China. The situation in the West, of course, is much different. Here, Chan—usually referred to (using the Japanese pronunciation) as Zen—has indeed been at the vanguard of the spread of Buddhism as a whole.

I begin this chapter by reflecting on what we (modern scholars) mean when we speak of the spread of Buddhism, contrasting that with a few of the traditional ways in which Asian Buddhists themselves, from an insider's or normative point of view, have conceived the transmission of the Buddha's teachings (Skt. *buddhadharma*, Chin. *fó fǎ* 佛法). I then turn to the main topic: the spread of Chan. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to explaining how medieval Chinese Buddhists themselves conceived of the transmission of *dharma* (*chuan fa* 傳法) within the Chan lineage (*chanzong* 禪宗), and the tropes they used to talk about that process. In closing, I briefly review modern theories of the rise and spread of Chan and present my own revisionist account of the development of Chan in China and its spread (as Zen) to Japan and the West.

2. CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND METAPHORS FOR THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

What do we have in mind when we speak of the spread of Buddhism? Do we imagine something like butter being spread on a slice of bread? Water spreading over the land when a river floods its banks? The spread of fire through a forest, or the spread of a contagious disease through a population? What I wish to call attention to is our habitual, often unconscious use of metaphorical language. My point is not that we should try to avoid such language, for after all, that is impossible. But it is well to stop and think about the implications of the figures of speech we use.

If, for example, we conceive of Buddhism being spread like butter on bread or fertiliser on a field, some sort of purposive human agency is implied. Perhaps King Aśoka, with his rock-carved edicts and monuments, or missionary monks who set out from India into Central Asia, could be said to have spread Buddhism in this manner. The spread of flood waters or forest fires, on the other hand, are basically natural phenomena. Such metaphors could be appropriate in historical or social scientific studies where the spread of Buddhism is measured by numbers of monks ordained, monasteries built, or other observable, quantifiable data. The metaphor of contagious disease is a suggestive one, quite appropriate to the cross-cultural transmission of religious beliefs and practices. If Buddhism is conceived as arising in India and subsequently spreading all over Asia like some strain of flu that starts in Hong Kong and eventually infects people all over the world, the implications are that it will infect some individuals and not others; that certain populations will be more susceptible than others; and that it can coexist in a population with other religious pathogens.

There are a number of conceptual models that have been applied specifically to the spread of Buddhism from India and Central Asia to China. The title of Erik Zürcher's excellent book, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, suggests a military motif: Buddhism as a great foreign, Indian and Central Asian army which invades and succeeds in subjugating the vast Chinese empire. Kenneth Chen, on the other hand, has a book entitled *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, which also seems to assume that Buddhism was an intrusive force, but one that was substantially changed by Chinese culture. The operative metaphor for Chen, perhaps, is one of the civilising or domestication of a barbarian intruder. The notions of the exportation and importation of Buddhism,

meanwhile, suggest a mercantile model: the transportation of a product from one place to another for profit. Buddhism is thus viewed as one of the many valuable commodities traded along the Silk Road that linked India and China in ancient times.

Whatever metaphors we choose to employ in speaking about the transmission of Buddhism around the world, there will be certain pros and cons to their use. To the extent that “spread” implies the distribution of a homogeneous substance (e.g., butter or water) over a widening area, it is not a very apt figure of speech, for the various forms of Buddhism that we recognise as existing in different parts of the world (and in different historical periods) are not homogeneous, but rather diverse in character and content. The spread of a fire may be a more fitting metaphor in this respect, for the process of combustion varies greatly depending on the fuel being consumed and other environmental factors. The biological disease model suggests that all Buddhists everywhere should display the same recognizable symptoms of religious practices and beliefs, which is hardly the case, but it does have the advantage of allowing for evolution on the part of the pathogen over time as it spreads to new hosts and adapts to new ecological niches.

The key issue in any discussion of the spread of Buddhism is: how do we want to conceive of “Buddhism” itself, and what signs or marks do we want to take as evidence of its existence at any given place and time? In the other chapters that appear in this volume, there is much written about various types of linguistic, textual, art historical, and archeological evidence for the presence of Buddhism in Gandhāra, Bactria, Greece, and early China at various periods. There is nothing wrong with this kind of reasoning, but the basic question still remains: what criteria do we employ when we attach the label “Buddhism” to particular ideas, texts, images, institutions, and behaviors, or any combination of those? In point of fact, there is no single, uniform set of criteria that everyone agrees on, so it is up to individual scholars to question their own assumptions, establish a consistent pattern of usage, and make that usage as transparent as possible to their readership.

It should also be cautioned that the appearance in a given place of texts or icons that we conventionally call “Buddhist” does not necessarily mean we would want to say that “Buddhism” also exists or existed there. For example, the British Museum in London is filled with hundreds of artifacts identified as Buddhist, none of which we would take as evidence for the spread of Buddhism to England. Their presence in that alien land is, rather, a vestige of the age of colonial domination,

when the collecting of such trophies and curiosities bespoke an attitude of cultural superiority and “scientific” interest in the strange beliefs and practices of “less civilised races.”

“Buddhism,” actually, is a term coined by Europeans in the eighteenth century. It took quite a while for the Western explorers, military men, missionaries, traders, and diplomats who set out to explore and colonise the “Orient” to realise that the god Fo they encountered in China had any connection to the Buddha of Ceylon or the tantric deities of Nepal. The very idea of “Buddha-ism” as one world religion among others, chiefly Christianity, Judaism, “Hinduism” and “Mohammedism” (the last two are also eighteenth century Western-language neologisms), was the product of a cross-cultural, comparative, “scientific” approach that arose out of the Enlightenment in Western Europe and the colonial experience.

Nineteenth century scholarly notions of the origins and spread of Buddhism were based on the Christian model of a single extraordinary man who founded the religion, and the subsequent conversion of people through exposure to his gospel. The modern search for the historical Jesus, the “real” man behind the embroidered and contradictory accounts of his life given in the Bible, found a counterpart in Western scholarship that sought to find the “historical Buddha” and his “original” teachings. As Philip C. Almond shows in his book *The British Discovery of Buddhism*,¹ a number of nineteenth century English and German intellectuals took the Pāli Canon as representative of “original Buddhism” and professed to find in it a rational, humanistic ethic that was free from the superstitious elements of other religions and thus ideally suited for the modern, scientific age. But the forms of Buddhism that could actually be observed in practice in Theravāda countries where the Pāli Canon was held sacred appeared to them to have been corrupted by an admixture of popular, irrational beliefs in magic, spirits, and the like. From their point of view, Mahāyāna and tantric forms of the religion were entirely beyond the pale, being too hopelessly syncretic and degenerate to even be regarded as true Buddhism. According to this model, the spread of Buddhism from its source in the person of the ancient Indian Buddha was basically a process of devolution or dilution, like water which gushes from a pure spring and

¹ Philip C. Almond. 1988. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

then becomes more and more muddied and polluted as time passes and it flows further from its origin.

Few Western scholars today, of course, would want to posit any sort of “original” or “pure” Buddhism as a standard for tracking the spread of the religion from India to other lands. Nevertheless, to the extent that we study Buddhism as a world religion that has a point of origin in ancient India and a history of subsequent transmission to other geographical areas and cultures, we are still following the paths mapped out by our eighteenth and nineteenth century predecessors. I do not advocate abandoning the term Buddhism, but I do think we should use it advisedly. For me, Buddhism is not a single phenomenon with an identifiable essence, but rather just a conventional designation for a wide range of texts, doctrines, rituals, art objects, architectural forms, and social and institutional arrangements that display certain similarities and can be shown to have certain historical connections. Viewed collectively, moreover, those diverse phenomena do not necessarily exhibit any single trait that might be taken as a common denominator.

Long before the coining of the word Buddhism in French, German, and English, of course, various branches of the Buddhist tradition had come up with their own indigenous terms for the teachings of the Buddha (*buddhadharma*) and metaphors for its spread. One early expression, “turning the wheel of the dharma (*dharmacakra*)” invoked an image of military conquest by a king’s chariots to refer to the promotion of Buddhist ideas, practices, and institutions. Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, on the other hand, is filled with tropes such as “*dharma* body” (*dharmakāya*) and “matrix of the *buddha*” (*tathāgatagarbha*) which suggest that the true teachings of the Buddha are universal and eternal: they do not need to be spread in any concrete sense, only discovered or tapped into by living beings in whatever realms of existence they find themselves.

The Mahāyāna stress on the “skillful means” (*upāya*) employed by *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* to lead beings to liberation represents yet another model for the spread of Buddhism, one that differs radically from those employed by Western scholars. In this view, *any* teachings or practices can serve as a device to awaken beings to the truth discovered by the Buddha, provided they are appropriate to the audience and situation. The display of beautiful Buddhist artifacts at the British Museum, for example, could be construed as a device, skillfully arranged by Avalokiteśvara (himself appearing there in various Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese guises) to attract beings in a remote barbarian land, who would otherwise have no contact with the *dharma*. A few of

the barbarians may even have been moved to travel east in search of Buddhist teachers, and eventually become monks or nuns.

Such insiders' views of the spread of Buddhism, of course, are not constrained by modern "scientific" notions of space, time, or the evolution of species: the spread of the *dharma* is often viewed as something that takes place over an infinite number of lifetimes and realms of rebirth and is subject to karmic conditioning. Thus, if a person wanders into the British Museum, is impressed by the Buddhist art on display there and decides to learn more about the religion, that would be interpreted not as a mere accident, but a result of their good karmic roots established sometime in a past life.

3. TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF CHAN

Chinese Buddhist histories trace the "original propagation of the teachings of Buddha from the west" (*fōjiào xīlái xuānhuà* 佛教西來玄化) to a dream experienced by Emperor Ming of the Later Han Dynasty (Han Mingdi 漢明帝) in the seventh year of the Yongping 永平 era (64 AD), in which he reportedly saw a "tall golden man with a brilliant halo." According to the traditional account, courtiers interpreted the dream as a vision of the Buddha, a sage of the western lands, whereupon the emperor dispatched a delegation to the west in search of the *buddhadharma* (*fōfǎ* 佛法). The mission returned three years later to Luoyang 洛陽, the capital, with two Indian monks (or *bodhisattvas*), a painted image of Śākyamuni, and a copy of the *Sūtra in Forty-two Chapters* (*Sishier zhang jīng* 四十二章經) carried by a white horse. The emperor then had the White Horse Monastery (*Baima sì* 白馬寺) built to house the monks and translate the *sūtra*.² Although modern scholarship regards this account as legend, the story does accurately reflect the medieval Chinese understanding of what the spread of Buddhism to their country involved: foreign monks coming from India and Central Asia; Chinese missions to those western regions in search of the *dharma*; the importation, reproduction, and worship of *buddha* images; the translation of Buddhist scriptures from Indic languages; the creation

² T.1494.39.516b.26–516c.10. See also: T.2035.49.29d.8ff; T.2035.49.470a.10ff; T.2037.49.766b.3ff; T.2103.52.147c.20ff; T.2113.52.582a.17ff; T.2118.52.814b.3ff; T.2122.53.1029b.19ff; T.2126.54.236b.20ff; T.2149.55.220b.5ff; T.2154.55.478a.16ff; T.2157.55.775a.2ff.

of monastic institutions based on Indian *vinaya* (*lǜ* 律) texts (or Chinese adaptations of same); and the patronage (or at least toleration) of all those activities by the imperial court and bureaucracy.

The story of Emperor Ming's dream and the ensuing importation of Buddhism provides an interesting backdrop and contrast to the set of legends we are concerned with here: those which tell of the transmission to and subsequent spread in China of the Chan lineage (*chanzong* 禪宗). The central figure in the latter account is an Indian monk named Bodhidharma (*Putidamo* 菩提達摩 or 菩提達磨), who is said to have been the twenty-eighth in a series of Indian Chan patriarchs and the founding patriarch (*chuzu* 初祖) of the Chan lineage in China. Some early records have Bodhidharma coming overland from the "western regions" (*xiyu* 西域) of India and Central Asia and arriving in Luoyang, the capital, during the latter half of the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty (r. 386–535).³ Most later accounts have Bodhidharma arriving in China by sea in first year (520) or the eighth year (527) of the Putong 普通 era of the Liang 梁 dynasty.⁴ All accounts agree, however, that Buddhist monastic institutions were already well established and flourishing in China when the Indian monk arrived. The role he is depicted as playing in the transmission of Buddhism is thus very different from that played by the two Indian monks reportedly sponsored by Emperor Ming during the Han.

The earliest mention of Bodhidharma in any Chinese historical record occurs in the *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielan jì* 洛陽伽藍記), written by Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之, with a preface dated 547. Bodhidharma appears in a section of the text dedicated to the Yongning Monastery (*Yongning si* 永寧寺), a major Buddhist monument located in the walled city near the imperial compound. Its most prominent feature was a towering nine-storied *stūpa*, an architectural

³ This account first appears in the *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielan jì* 洛陽伽藍記); (T.2092.51.1000b.19–23). Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) elaborates on it in his *Additional Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳), stating that Bodhidharma "initially came into the Song 宋 kingdom [r. 420–479] in the region of Nanyue 南越, and later went north and crossed into the kingdom of [Northern] Wei 魏 [r. 386–535]" (T.2060.50.551b.27–29).

⁴ See, for example, the *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* (*Chuan fa zhengzong jì* 傳法正宗記), completed in 1061, which gives the date as 520 but notes that *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (*Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), compiled in 1004, gives 527 (T.2076.51.742b.21–23). For a detailed account of the many and sundry versions of Bodhidharma's hagiography in medieval Chinese literature, see Sekiguchi Shindai 1967.

prodigy that was topped with thirty tiers of golden plates on a mast and festooned with golden bells. In the course of his description of this *stūpa*, Yang remarks:

At the time there was a monk (*shamen* 沙門) of the western regions (*xiyu* 西域) named Bodhidharma (*Putidamo* 菩提達磨), a foreigner from Persia (*Bosiguo huren* 波斯國胡人). Starting from the wild frontier, he came wandering into this central land [China]. When he beheld the golden plates reflecting the sunlight and illuminating the undersides of clouds, and the precious bells that chimed in the wind and reverberated beyond the heavens, he chanted a eulogy and sang its praises [saying], “This is truly a divine work.” He said that in his one hundred and fifty years he had traveled to many countries, and there was nowhere he had not been, but he had never encountered so splendid a monastery as this in Jambudvīpa (*yanfou* 閻浮) [i.e., India, or, the entire world].⁵

Bodhidharma was so impressed, Yang informs us, he stayed for several days chanting “Adorations” (*namo* 南無) with palms together (*he zhang* 合掌).⁶ The *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* says nothing about Bodhidharma transmitting a particular teaching from India or establishing a lineage in China. The chief function of the Indian monk in the text is to lend credibility to the author’s assertion that, although Buddhism had begun to make inroads in China from the time of Emperor Ming’s dream, it attained an unprecedented level of prosperity during the Wei dynasty due to imperial patronage.⁷

In later sources, of course, we do find Bodhidharma portrayed as the founder of the Chan lineage in China, the transmitter of a special *dharma* that had been handed down directly from Śākyamuni Buddha through a line of Indian patriarchs. Those sources, too, depict the Indian monk confronting a prosperous Buddhist monastic institution that is already well-established in China at the time of his arrival. However, in keeping with their sectarian agenda, they show Bodhidharma belittling, rather than praising, the outward signs of Buddhist religiosity. In the full-blown Bodhidharma legends that appear in Song dynasty

⁵ T.2092.51.1000b.19–23.

⁶ T.2092.51.1000b.24. Bodhidharma appears in one other place in the text, as a visitor to the Xiufan Monastery (*Xiufan si* 修梵寺), which he also praises (T.2092.51.1004a09–11).

⁷ Yang states that by the Yongjia 永嘉 era (307–313) of the Jin 晉 dynasty, only forty-two monasteries had been built in the area of Songluo 嵩洛, meaning the capital, Luoyang, and its environs, which included Mt. Song and the Luo river valley. However, “after our imperial Wei received the [heavenly] design and housed itself in splendor in Songluo, devotion and faith increasingly flourished, and *dharma* teachings (*fajiao* 法教) prospered all the more” (T.2092.51.999a.9–12).

(960–1279) Chan literature, for example, there is a famous dialogue that purportedly took place between him and Emperor Wu of the Liang (Liang Wudi 梁武帝) shortly after his arrival:

The emperor asked: “I have constructed monasteries, had *sūtras* copied, and allowed the ordination of a great many monks and nuns; surely there is a good deal of merit (*gongde* 功德) in this?” The Venerable One (*zunzhe* 尊者) [Bodhidharma] said, “There is no merit (*wu gongde* 無功德).” The emperor asked, “How can there be no merit?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “This [merit you seek] is only the petty reward that humans and *devas* obtain as the result of [good] deeds that are tainted [by greed, anger, and delusion]. It is like the reflection of a thing which conforms to it in shape but is not the real thing.” The emperor asked, “What, then, is true merit?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “Pure wisdom is marvelous and complete; in its essence it is empty and quiescent. Merit of this sort cannot be sought in this world.” The emperor then asked, “What is the first principle of sacred truth?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “Wide open and bare; there is nothing sacred.” The emperor asked, “Who is it that is facing me?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “I do not know.” The emperor did not understand, and things ended there. The Venerable One knew that this encounter (*jiyuan* 機緣) had not tallied (*bu qi* 不契) [i.e., the emperor’s deluded state of mind did not match Bodhidharma’s awakened one].⁸

The point of this story is that although Buddhism was flourishing in China with imperial patronage at the time Bodhidharma arrived, the Chinese were engaged with the religion at a relatively superficial level, that of acquiring spiritual capital or “merit” (*gongde* 功德) through the performance of good deeds. Bodhidharma, in contrast, is depicted as the advocate of a new and deeper understanding of Buddhism, in which the only truly meritorious action is the attainment of awakening. It is interesting to note that the activities engaged in by Emperor Wu to promote Buddhism in this story are virtually identical to those attributed to Emperor Ming of the Han in the earlier historical records: supporting a monastic community, making *sūtras* available, and entertaining foreign monks. In the Chan literature, however, Emperor Wu is used as a foil to stress the originality and superiority of Bodhidharma’s transmission of the *dharma* vis-à-vis the established Buddhist institution.

The oldest source in which Bodhidharma is clearly identified as the founder of a lineage in China is an epitaph written by followers of a monk named Faru 法如 (638–689), who at the end of his life resided

⁸ *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* (*Chuan fa zhengzong ji* 傳法正宗記), T.2078.51.742b.27–742c5. See below for an explanation of the trope of “tallies” (*qi* 契).

at the Shaolin Monastery (*Shaolin si* 少林寺) on Mount Song (*Song shan* 嵩山) near Luoyang, the eastern capital of the Tang. The epitaph claims that Faru was the recipient of teachings (*zong* 宗) transmitted from the Buddha through a line of Indian teachers to the Tripiṭaka [master] (*sanzang* 三藏) Bodhidharma. It states that Bodhidharma brought the teachings to China and transmitted them to Huike 慧可, after which they were passed down to Sengcan 僧璨, Daoxin 道信, Hongren 弘忍 (601–674), and finally Faru himself.⁹ A key feature of Bodhidharma's *dharma*, according to the epitaph, is that it was “handed down without scriptures” (*xiang cheng wu wenzi* 相承無文字).

During the eighth century, a number of other groups within the Buddhist order seized on the foregoing account of Bodhidharma's line of transmission, appropriating it to bolster their own claims to spiritual authority and gain imperial patronage. In a text entitled *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure* (*Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶紀), disciples of an eminent monk named Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706) asserted that he too, like Faru, was a *dharma* heir of Hongren in the sixth generation of Bodhidharma's lineage.¹⁰ A subsequent text called the *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* (*Lengjia shizi ji* 楞伽師資記), written between 713 and 716, highlighted Shenxiu as Hongren's leading disciple and relegated Faru to obscurity.¹¹ The followers of Shenxiu, led by a monk named Puji 普寂 (651–739) and others, succeeded in gaining imperial support and eventually became known to posterity as the “northern lineage” (*beizong* 北宗) of Chan.

That name, ironically, was coined by a vociferous opponent, the monk Heze Shenhui 荷澤神會 (684–758). In works such as the *Treatise Determining the Truth About the Southern Lineage of Bodhidharma* (*Putidamo nanzong ding shifei lun* 菩提達摩南宗定是非論),¹² written in 732, Shenhui argued that the rightful heir to the fifth patriarch Hongren was not Shenxiu, whose lineage he dubbed “northern,” but his own teacher Huineng 慧能 (638–713), putative scion of an orthodox “southern lineage” (*nanzong* 南宗) of Bodhidharma. Huineng, who was also championed in

⁹ Yanagida Seizan 1967, pp. 487–488. See also John McRae 1986, pp. 85–86.

¹⁰ T.2838.85.1291a–c. For complete editions of the text see Yanagida Seizan 1967, pp. 559–572; for a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971a, pp. 328–435.

¹¹ T.2837.85.1283c–1290c. For a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971a.

¹² Hu Shi 1968.

the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu tan jing* 六祖壇經),¹³ eventually (by the mid-tenth century) came to be universally regarded as the ancestor of all living branches of the Chan lineage.

From the *Record of the Successive Generations of the Dharma Treasure* (*Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記),¹⁴ composed around 780, we know of two Buddhist movements in Sichuan 四川 that also strived to legitimise themselves by appropriating the myth of Bodhidharma's lineage: (1) the Jingzhong school, made up of followers of Wuxiang 無相 (694–762) based at the Jingzhong monastery (*Jingzhong si* 淨衆寺) in Chengdu 成都; and (2) the Baotang school, consisting of followers of Wuzhu 無住 (714–774) based at the Baotang monastery (*Baotang si* 保唐寺). Those movements were both influenced by Shenhui's polemical writings and imitated his strategy of tracing their lineages back to the fifth patriarch Hongren.

Other claimants to Bodhidharma's lineage accepted Huineng as the sixth patriarch and sought to provide themselves with genealogical credentials by linking their leaders to him as his spiritual descendants, brushing aside Shenhui's claim to the position of seventh patriarch in the process. Followers of the so-called Hongzhou lineage (*Hongzhou zong* 洪州宗) promulgated a genealogy that extended from the sixth patriarch Huineng through an obscure monk named Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677–744) to their own teacher Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788), who was closely associated with the Kaiyuan monastery (*Kaiyuan si* 開元寺) in Hongzhou 洪州. Various followers of Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790), meanwhile, traced their lineages back to Huineng through Shitou's teacher Qingyuan Xingsi 青原行思 (d. 740). By the advent of the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279), a period when the Chan movement came to dominate the upper echelons of the Chinese Buddhist monastic institution, all recognised members of the Chan lineage traced their lines of spiritual descent from either Mazu or Shitou.

In the course of these developments, which involved successive appropriations and elaborations of Bodhidharma's lineage by various competing (and otherwise unrelated) groups within the Chinese Buddhist *saṃgha*, the bare bones of the lineage myth came to be fleshed out in various ways and widely accepted as historical truth. Early versions

¹³ For Chinese text and annotated English translation, see Philip B. Yampolsky (tr.). 1967. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁴ T.2075.51.179a–196b; for a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971b.

of the lineage, such as those found in Faru's epitaph, the *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure*, and the *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Laikāvātāra*, assumed a direct connection between Śākyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma, but gave no details. Later works, such as Shenhui's writings and the *Platform Sūtra*, constructed genealogies of Indian patriarchs to fill in that gap. The version of the early lineage that gained universal acceptance from the Song dynasty on, which posits twenty-eight Chan patriarchs in India (culminating in Bodhidharma) and six in China (from Bodhidharma to Huineng), appears first in a text called the *Baolin Record* (*Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳),¹⁵ compiled in 801 by a follower of Mazu's Hongzhou school.

The conception of Bodhidharma's lineage as a vast family tree, with a main trunk (*benzong* 本宗) that extends from Bodhidharma to Huineng but also includes a number of legitimate collateral branches (*pangchu* 傍出), is first attested in the following works by historian Guifeng Zongmi 圭峯宗密 (780–841): *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China* (*Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxitu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖);¹⁶ *Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序);¹⁷ and *Subcommentary on the Sūtra of Perfect Awakening* (*Yuanjue jing dashu chao* 圓覺經大疏鈔).¹⁸ The oldest unambiguous use of the name “Chan lineage” (*chanzong* 禪宗) to refer to Bodhidharma's line actually occurs in the last of these works, where Zongmi uses the expression “six generations of the Chan lineage” (*liudai chanzong* 六代禪宗) to refer to the line of patriarchs extending from Bodhidharma to Huineng.¹⁹ Zongmi's version of the main trunk of the lineage in China (which extended from Huineng to Shenhui in the seventh generation and then came down to himself) was rejected by later historians, but his vision of the Chan lineage as a multi-branched family tree did become the norm in the genre of Chan genealogies known as “records of the transmission of the flame” (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄). The oldest extant work in that genre is the *Patriarchs Hall Collection* (*Zutang ji* 祖堂集), compiled in 952.²⁰ The most famous and influential is the *Jingde Era*

¹⁵ Yanagida Seizan 1983.

¹⁶ ZZ 2–15–5.433c–438c.

¹⁷ T.2015.48.399a–413c.

¹⁸ ZZ 1–14–3.204a–4.41b.

¹⁹ T.48.401b2.

²⁰ Yanagida Seizan 1984.

Record of the Transmission of the Flame (*Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), completed in 1004.²¹

As the myth of the Chan lineage took shape and developed from the eighth through the eleventh centuries, the nature of the special *dharma* (teaching or insight) purportedly handed down from Śākyamuni to Bodhidharma was also spelled out in greater detail. The notion that the *dharma* transmitted to China by Bodhidharma did not rely on scriptures, we have seen, was there from the start in Faru's epitaph. By the early ninth century, the idea had emerged that what Bodhidharma brought to China was nothing other than the "buddha-mind" (*foxin* 佛心), meaning the very awakening of Śākyamuni Buddha, as opposed to the doctrines (contained in the *sūtras*) in which he expressed that awakening. As Zongmi put it in his *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China*,

When Bodhidharma came from the west he only transmitted the "mind-dharma" (*xinfa* 心法). Thus, as he himself said, "My *dharma* uses mind to transmit mind; it does not rely on scriptures" (*wo fa yi xin chuan xin bu li wenzi* 我法以心傳心不立文字)." This mind is the pure original awakening (*benjue* 本覺) possessed by all living beings. It is also called the *buddha*-nature (*foxing* 佛性), or the awakened spirit (*ling jue* 靈覺). [...] If you wish to seek the way of the Buddha you should awaken to this mind. Thus, all the generations of patriarchs in the lineage only transmit this.²²

The expressions "transmitting [*buddha*-] mind by means of mind" (*yi xin chuan xin* 以心傳心) and "not relying on scriptures" (*bu li wenzi* 不立文字) were apparently shibboleths of the Chan movement in Zongmi's day, but the meaning of the latter was hotly contested.²³

Zongmi himself took the position that Bodhidharma did not literally reject the use of *sūtras*, but only cautioned against getting hung up on them:

When Bodhidharma received the *dharma* and brought it personally from India to China, he saw that most of the practitioners in this land had not yet obtained the *dharma*, and that they merely took names and numbered lists for understanding and took formal affairs as practice. He wanted to make them understand that the moon does not consist in the pointing

²¹ T.2076.51.196b–467a.

²² ZZ 2–15–5.435c.

²³ For a detailed account, see T. Griffith Foulk. 1999. "Sung Controversies Concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an", in: Peter N. Gregory and Daniel Getz (eds.), *Buddhism in the Sung*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 220–294.

finger and that the *dharma* is one's own mind. Thus he simply transmitted mind by means of mind without relying up scriptures, manifested the principle, and destroyed attachments. It is for this reason that he spoke as he did. It was not that he preached liberation entirely apart from scriptures.²⁴

Zongmi's point of view was accepted by some later Chan historians, notably Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–976), author of the massive *Records of the Source Mirror* (*Zong jing lu* 宗鏡錄).²⁵

Many in the tradition, however, took the position that the Chan lineage transmitted “mind” alone, apart from any scriptures or doctrines. A Hongzhou school text entitled *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind by Chan Master Duanji of Mount Huangbo* (*Huangbo shan duanji chanshi chuan xin fayao* 黃檗山斷際禪師傳心法要), for example, states that:

From the time the great master Bodhidharma arrived in China he only preached the one mind and only transmitted one *dharma*. Using *buddha* to transmit *buddha*, he did not speak of any other *buddhas*. Using *dharma* to transmit *dharma*, he did not speak of any other *dharma*. The *dharma* was the *dharma* that cannot be preached, and the *buddha* was the *buddha* that cannot be grasped, since their wellspring is the pure mind. Only this one thing is truth; all other things are not truth.²⁶

This passage makes clear that Huangbo Xiyun 黃檗希運 (–850?) took a position different from Zongmi on the question of Bodhidharma's teaching methods and use of scriptures.

The *Patriarchs Hall Collection*, compiled in 952, agrees with Huangbo and his Hongzhou school that the Chan lineage literally dispensed with scriptures. In its biography of Bodhidharma, we find the following exchange:

Huike proceeded to ask [Bodhidharma], “Master, can this *dharma* [you have just taught] be set down in writing (*wenzi jilu* 文字記錄) or not?” Bodhidharma replied, “My *dharma* is one of transmitting mind by means of mind; it does not rely on scriptures.”²⁷

The *Patriarchs Hall Collection* is also the locus classicus of another slogan that came to be used to characterise the Chan lineage: “A separate transmission outside the teachings” (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳).²⁸

²⁴ *Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu*), T.2015.48.400b17–26; see also T.2015.48.405b2–4.

²⁵ T.2016.48.415a–957b.

²⁶ T.2012A.48.381b17–21.

²⁷ *Zutang ji*, Yanagida (ed.), *Sodōshū*, 37a.

²⁸ Yanagida (ed.), *Sodōshū*, 130b.

By the middle of the Song, Bodhidharma's unique approach to teaching Buddhism was summed up in the following four-part slogan:

A separate transmission apart from the teachings;
 (jiāowai biéchuan 教外別傳)
 Not relying on scriptures;
 (bù lì wénzì 不立文字)
 Pointing directly at the human mind;
 (zhí zhǐ rén xīn 直指人心)
 Seeing the nature and attaining buddhahood.
 (jiàn xìng chéng fó 見性成佛).

The oldest extant text in which the four phrases are cited together is the *Chrestomathy from the Patriarchs' Halls* (*Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑),²⁹ a lexicon compiled by Mu'an Shanqing 睦菴善卿 (n.d.) in 1108 and printed in 1154. By this time, the Tiantai 天台 School had clearly identified itself as the "teachings lineage" (*jiaozong* 教宗) in contradistinction to Chan, so the idea of a "separate transmission apart from the teachings" was also understood as an expression of the rivalry between the two schools.

Perhaps the single most famous anecdote in all of Chan lore is the story of how the Buddha Śākyamuni founded the lineage by transmitting the *dharma* to the first Indian patriarch, Mahākāśyapa. The oldest source in which we find this account is the *Baolin Record* (compiled 801), where at the end of his life the Buddha tells Mahākāśyapa:

I entrust to you the pure eye of the *dharma* (*chingjing fayen* 清淨法眼), the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa* (*niepan miaoxin* 涅槃妙心), the subtle true *dharma* (*weimiao zhengfa* 微妙正法), which in its authentic form is formless (*shixiang wuxiang* 實相無相); you must protect and maintain it.³⁰

Precisely the same words are attributed to Śākyamuni in the *Patriarchs Hall Collection* (compiled 952),³¹ and the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (compiled 1004).³²

Later in the Song, the story was further elaborated. In the *Tiansheng Era Extensive Record of the Flame* (*Tiansheng guang deng lu* 天聖廣燈錄), compiled in 1029, the Buddha is said to have "secretly entrusted" (*mi fu* 密付) the "collection of the eye of the subtle true *dharma*" (*weimiao zhengfa yanzang* 微妙正法眼藏) to Mahākāśyapa at the *stūpa* of Many Sons (*bahuputraka-caitya*,

²⁹ ZZ 2-18-1.66c.

³⁰ Yanagida (ed.), *Hōrinden*, 10b.

³¹ Yanagida (ed.), *Sōdōshū*, 12a-b.

³² T.2076.51.205b.28.

duozi ta 多子塔),³³ and to have publicly pronounced on Vulture Peak (*Ling shan* 靈山) that “I have the collection of the eye of the true *dharma* (*zhengfa yanzang* 正法眼藏), the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa*, which I pass on to Mahākāśyapa.”³⁴ That public naming of his dharma heir, the text tells us, took place when the World Honoured One (*shizun* 世尊) held up a flower to instruct the assembly (*chihua shizhong* 持華示衆), and Kāśyapa smiled faintly.

This version of the transmission story eventually gained widespread acceptance in Song Chan records. It appears in its full-blown form as the sixth case in the *Gateless Barrier* (*Wumen guan* 無門關), a collection of *koans* (*gong'an* 公案) compiled by Wumen Huikai 無門慧開 (1184–1260) and printed in 1229:

The World Honoured One Holds Up a Flower (*shizun nian hua* 世尊拈花)

When the World Honoured One long ago was at a gathering on Vulture Peak, he held up a flower to instruct the assembly. At that time, everyone in the assembly was silent; only the venerable Mahākāśyapa broke into a faint smile. The World Honoured One said, “I have the collection of the eye of the true *dharma*, the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa*, the subtle *dharma* gate which in its true form is formless. Not relying on scriptures, as a separate transmission apart from the teachings, I pass it on to Mahākāśyapa.”

Wumen says:

Yellow faced Gautama [i.e., Śākyamuni] is certainly unscrupulous. He forces one of good family to be his maidservant, and displays a sheep's head while selling dog meat. I was going to say how remarkable it was. But if at the time the entire assembly had smiled, how could the transmission of the collection of the eye of the true *dharma* have occurred? Or again, supposing that Mahākāśyapa had not smiled, how could the transmission of collection of the eye of the true *dharma* have occurred? If you say that the collection of the eye of the true *dharma* has a transmission that is the old yellow faced one deceitfully hawking his wares at the village gate. If you say that there is no transmission, then why was Mahākāśyapa singled out for approval?

[Wumen's] verse (song 頌) says:
Holding up the flower,
His tail is already exposed;

³³ ZZ 2B–8–4.306a.

³⁴ ZZ 2B–8–4.3306c.

Kāśyapa cracks a smile,
Humans and *devas* are nonplussed.³⁵

In his commentary and verse on this case, Wumen intentionally problematises the story of the “World Honoured One holding up a flower.” The flower is supposed to represent a wordless mode of teaching, but if one takes it as a symbolic gesture, a representation of the formlessness and ineffability of the true *dharma*, then it suffers from precisely the same defect as a verbal sermon which says out loud, “the true *dharma* is formless and ineffable.” The basic problem is that *all* modes of teaching and pointing, verbal or otherwise, must fail to convey a truth that is beyond teaching or pointing. Wumen’s point is that the spread of the *dharma*, as that is envisioned to have occurred within the Chan lineage, is inconceivable; and yet, he holds as a matter of historical record, it actually took place.

Wumen revels in this paradox, turning it into an intellectual “barrier” (*guan* 關) that a practitioner of Chan must somehow pass through. Through most of its history, however, the Chan movement in medieval China was at pains to explain how a “transmission of [*buddha*-] mind by means of mind” could take place without making use of scriptures or verbal teachings, or at least, how it could be imagined to take place. The answer to that problem, though never stated explicitly as such, was through the use of metaphor and other forms of indirect speech. That is to say, the transmission of *dharma* from master to disciple (patriarch to patriarch) within the Chan lineage was likened to a number of other processes in which some sort of communication or replication took place without the use of words or signs.

One trope commonly used in the Chan tradition to denote the transmission of *dharma* from master to disciple is the lighting of one lamp with another, which is called “transmitting the flame” (*chuan deng* 傳燈). From Song times on, collections of biographies of patriarchs in the Chan lineage were referred to generically (and in their titles) as “records of the transmission of the flame” (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄). The intentional spread of a fire, of course, is an example of a process in which the giver loses nothing of the thing given. That, and the fact that a flame gives light (a symbol of clear vision and comprehension), make “transmitting the flame” an apt metaphor for the communication of knowledge or insight. The image also suggests that the *dharma*

³⁵ T.2005.48.293c.12–25.

transmitted by the Chan patriarchs—the *buddha*-mind, or “flame” of awakening—has been passed from one generation to the next without ever being allowed to die out.

Another metaphor that appears frequently in Chan literature is that of a seal (*yin* 印)—a carved insignia that leaves a mark (with ink) on paper and is used to validate official documents. The “transmission of mind by means of mind,” in this case, is likened to the kind of perfect replication that occurs when a seal is used, the idea being that the awakened mind of the master directly contacts and “stamps” the mind of the disciple, leaving an identical and indelible impression upon it. There is frequent reference in the tradition to the “seal of the *buddha*-mind” (*foxinyin* 佛心印), or simply the “mind seal” (*xinyin* 心印) or “*buddha*-seal” (*foyin* 佛印). For example, the *Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries* (*Chanyuan qinggui* 禪院清規), compiled in 1103, refers to the entire Chan lineage as “all the generations of patriarchs who transmitted the seal of the *buddha*-mind” (*lidai zushi chuan foxinyin* 歷代祖師傳佛心印).³⁶ Chan records often describe Mahākāśyapa and Bodhidharma, who are emblematic of the lineage in India and China respectively, as bearers of the “seal of the *buddha*-mind.”³⁷ The metaphor of the seal works nicely because it operates on two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, it suggests a means of communicating and sharing knowledge that is direct and exact: one mind presses against another and leaves its mark. Words may be present, of course, for seals have things written on them, but the act of stamping itself does not make use of words. On the other hand, the metaphor of the seal implies that the granting of dharma transmission in the Chan lineage, being akin to the stamping of an official document, is an act that is publicly accountable and guaranteed valid.

A third trope, “sympathetic resonance” (*ganying* 感應, literally “stimulus and response”), derives its descriptive force from a phenomenon observable in certain musical instruments (e.g., bells): the sound of one

³⁶ Kagamishima Genryū 鏡島元隆, Kosaka Kiyū 小坂機融, and Satō Tatsugen 佐藤達玄 (eds.). 1972. *Yakuchū zennen shingi* 訳注禪苑清規. Tōkyō: Sōtōshū Shūmichō, p. 13.

³⁷ See for example, *Discourse Records of the Four Houses* (*Sijia yulu* 四家語錄), ZZ 2–24.5.842b2; *Tiansheng Era Record of the Spread of the Flame* (*Tiansheng guang deng lu* 天聖廣燈錄), ZZ 2B–8–4.662b5; *Records of the Source Mirror* (*Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄), T.2016.48.521a12; *Jingle Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (*Jingle chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), T.2076.51.341c11–12.

can start another of the same pitch resonating on its own, without any visible contact between them. In ancient China that phenomenon was used as a paradigm to explain invisible correspondences and connections that were believed to exist between all kinds of beings and forces in the cosmos, such as humans and spirits: people reach out (*gan* 感) with offerings and prayers, and the spirits respond (*ying* 應) by effecting palpable changes in the realm of natural and social phenomena. When used to describe the transmission of mind in the Chan lineage, the trope of sympathetic resonance has a somewhat different force: it suggests that the lively (albeit inaudible) “vibrating” of a Chan master’s awakened mind stimulates a corresponding vibration in the mind of his disciple. This, of course, is consistent with the notion of a mysterious yet powerful means of communication that does not rely on words or signs. A good example is found in Zongmi’s *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China* (*Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxitu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖):

When Bodhidharma came from the west he only transmitted the “mind-dharma” (*xinfa* 心法)... If you wish to seek the way of the Buddha you should awaken to this mind. Thus all the generations of patriarchs in the lineage only transmit this. If there is a sympathetic resonance and a tallying [of the mind of the disciple with the mind of the teacher] (*ganying xiangqi* 感應相契), then even if a single flame (*deng* 燈) is transmitted (*chuan* 傳) to a thousand lamps (*deng* 燈), the flames will all be the same.³⁸

Zongmi here mixes the metaphors of “transmitting the flame” and “sympathetic resonance.” He also makes use of another metaphor, that of “matching tallies” (*xiangqi* 相契).

Originally, tallies (*qi* 契) were pieces of bamboo or wood that were notched or inscribed as a means of keeping records and making contracts. To guarantee the authenticity of the latter, tallies would be split in half, held by separate parties to an agreement, and subsequently honoured only if the two halves matched. When used to refer to the relationship between a Chan master and his disciple, the expression “matching tallies” thus suggests that dharma transmission takes place only when the mind of the latter matches that of the former, which is to say, when the disciple attains the same level of understanding or insight as the master.

³⁸ ZZ 2-15-5.435c.

As should be clear from all the discussion of Chinese Chan as a “lineage” (*zong* 宗) deriving from Śākyamuni and Bodhidharma, the most powerful metaphor at work in the literature is that of genealogy. The Chan tradition as a whole is compared to an extended clan, the various branches of which can all be mapped out in a single family tree. For members of the Chan clan, legitimacy depends on being able to trace one’s own spiritual “blood lines” (*xuemo* 血脈), or line of *dharma* transmission, back to the founding patriarch Bodhidharma. Carefully maintained and updated genealogical records are essential, and the collections of biographies known as “records of the transmission of the flame” (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄) serve that function. Patriarchs (*zushi* 祖師) in the lineage are literally “ancestral” (*zu* 祖) “teachers” (*shi* 師), and are to be worshipped in the same way as clan ancestors in annual memorial services (*ji* 忌). Disciples of Chan masters (*chanshi* 禪師) “inherit the *dharma*” (*si fa* 嗣法) from their teachers, just as the eldest son in a patrilineal clan inherits the property (and status as clan head) from his father. Viewed from the standpoint of this genealogical model, the “spread” of Chan is something akin to the growth of a family over time, with more and more descendants in each succeeding generation.

4. MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF THE SPREAD OF CHAN AND ZEN

Modern scholarship on the history of Chan and Zen is fairly sophisticated in its use of text-critical and historiographical methods. Over the course of the past seven or eight decades, researchers have conclusively demonstrated that all the stories of *dharma* transmission linking the Buddha Śākyamuni with Bodhidharma through a series of Indian patriarchs are figments of the Chinese historical imagination, gradually elaborated from the seventh through the twelfth centuries. The Chan school itself has thus been shown to be a product of the Chinese adaptation and interpretation of Buddhism; there is no longer any question of it having “spread” from India to China. Nevertheless, many of the key features of the medieval Chinese Chan school’s conception of its own identity and character have continued to colour the ways in which modern scholars view the rise and spread of the tradition. The main reason is that the modern fields of Zen studies (Jap. *zengaku* 禅学) and the history of Chan/Zen (Jap. *zenshūshi* 禅宗史) have been dominated from their inception (now more than a century ago) by scholars affili-

ated with one or another of the schools of Japanese Zen Buddhism, which are still deeply rooted in traditions imported from China in the thirteenth century.

Japanese scholars today continue to employ the traditional genealogical metaphor of “lineage” (Chin. *zong*, Jap. *shū* 宗) when speaking of the history of Chan and Zen, without distinguishing sodalities that we would want to call “historical” (e.g., social and institutional arrangements involving real people) from those that are better labeled “mythological” (e.g., groups that have fictional figures and spirits of the dead as active members). Thus, the emergence of Chan as the dominant school of Buddhism in the Song dynasty is still treated in modern histories as a matter of an increasingly widespread “transmission of the flame,” and the importation of Chan into Japan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is still described in terms of “*dharma* transmission” from individual masters to disciples, resulting in the establishment of some fourteen different branch lineages.

The traditional conception of Chan as a “separate transmission apart from the teachings,” moreover, has predisposed modern scholars to view the early Chan lineage as a sectarian movement that rejected mainstream Chinese Buddhist monastic institutions, ritual practices, and *sūtra* exegesis. The story of Bodhidharma’s encounter with Emperor Wu of the Liang, for example, is still regarded as representative of the “rebellious” spirit of early Chan, even by scholars who know full well that it is a fiction dreamt up half a millennium after the purported fact. The iconoclastic rhetoric attributed to the Tang Chan patriarchs in Song genealogical records, as well as that found in Song *kōan* collections (e.g., Wu-men’s colourful description of Śākyamuni as a pimp and a cheat in the *Gateless Barrier*, quoted above), have often been cited as evidence of Chan sectarianism.

If I were to define the Chan/Zen tradition as a single, unambiguous object of historical research, I would present it as a discourse—a set of ideas and tropes. The identifying feature of the discourse would be the notion that the enlightenment of the Buddha Śākyamuni, a formless *dharma* (teaching or insight) called the *buddha*-mind, has been preserved by being handed down through an elite spiritual genealogy of masters and disciples—a lineage of patriarchs founded in China by an Indian monk named Bodhidharma. By this definition, to study the spread of Chan/Zen would be to research of all the circumstances through which that discourse arose, was communicated, and had an influence on people’s thinking and behavior at different times and places. By the

same token, any literature, art, religious practices, doctrines, institutional forms, or social arrangements that promoted or were directly informed by that discourse would be regarded as Chan/Zen phenomena.

As demonstrated in the preceding pages, a discourse about the special transmission of *buddha*-mind through Bodhidharma's lineage first appeared in China in the late seventh century. It gradually spread and was adopted by a series of competing sodalities of Buddhist clergy and lay followers during the Tang dynasty (618–906) and emerged in the Song dynasty (960–1278) as the dominant ideology within the Buddhist monastic institution as a whole. As I have shown elsewhere, neither the Chan slogans pertaining to “separate transmission” and “non-reliance on scriptures,” nor the iconoclastic rhetoric attributed to Chan patriarchs, can be taken as descriptive of any actual state of affairs among the historical promoters of Chan ideology.³⁹ Generally speaking, the monks who spread and benefited from the Chan discourse throughout the Tang and Song resided in mainstream Buddhist monasteries and engaged in a full range of traditional Buddhist religious practices.

From my point of view, the so-called transmission of Zen from China to Japan in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) was a complex event with many facets, but it is convenient to analyze it as having two distinct dimensions: (1) the communication to Japan of Chan mythology, ideology, and teaching styles; and (2) the establishment in Japan of monastic institutions modeled after the great public monasteries of Southern Song China. The first was accomplished largely through the media of texts (chiefly “records of the transmission of the flame” and *koan* collections) that contained Chan lore, and rituals such as “ascending the hall” (Chin. *shang tang*, Jap. *jōdō* 上堂) and “entering the room” (Chin. *ru shi*, Jap. *nisshitsu* 入室) in which the distinctive rhetorical and pedagogical forms of Chan were reenacted. The establishment of Song-style monasteries in Japan, on the other hand, was facilitated by various “rules of purity” (Chin. *qinggui*, Jap. *shingi* 清規) that were brought from China at the same time. Many elements of elite Chinese literati culture, including poetry, calligraphy, ink painting, landscape gardens, and the social etiquette of drinking tea, were introduced to Japan at this time in conjunction with the Song-style monastic institutions. Both the institutions and the genteel arts practiced within them thus came to be labeled as “Zen” in Japan.

³⁹ Foulk 1993, pp. 147–208.

Over the course of the centuries in Japan, there have been many changes in the monastic institutions and practices associated with the Zen schools, but the traditional Chan/Zen discourse about “*dharma* transmission” and “lineage” has endured, providing a sense of identity and continuity with the past. In recent years, people in Europe and America have become interested in Zen Buddhism and taken up practices associated with it, such as sitting in meditation (*zazen*) and *kōan* study. A comparison of Zen training centres in the West with the Japanese monasteries on which they are modeled reveals a great many differences, both procedural and cultural, but there is one remarkably consistent unifying thread: practitioners of Zen everywhere are concerned with the lineage of their teachers, and the spiritual authority bestowed by “*dharma* transmission.” That mode of discourse, in my view, is the best marker for gauging the spread of Zen. It is quite remarkable that a set of tropes first conceived in China more than a thousand years ago still resonates so meaningfully today among people from different cultures around the world.

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