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A Study on the Siddham Fragments Housed in the British Library

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Abstract: In 1909, the Kozlov expedition discovered two volumes of Siddham xylographs at Khara-Khoto, which are currently housed at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Fragments overlooked during the initial excavation were subsequently collected by Stein five years later and are now preserved in the British Library. This paper confirms that the two *dhāraṇī* fragments in the Stein collection, dated 1194 CE, represent missing pieces from the volumes held in Russia.

Key words: Sanskrit, *dhāraṇī*, Siddham, Tangut, Xixia

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1. Introduction

In 1909, the Kozlov expedition uncovered a substantial corpus of written monuments from a *stūpa* located outside Khara-Khoto. Among these, two volumes of Siddham *dhāraṇī* fragments are currently preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Initially cataloged under inventory numbers 6619 and 6620 alongside contemporaneous Xixia materials, they were subsequently reclassified into the Institute's Central Asian collection as SI 6563 and SI 6564. This recataloging led to their prolonged scholarly neglect, with only a brief mention in a 1960s registration card by E.I. Kychanov, who described them as “protective *dhāraṇī* incantations”.

Both the xylographs are in butterfly binding and exhibit varying degrees of damage. Surviving folios lack paratextual information, such as colophons or printing records. Although written entirely in Siddham script with 70 *akṣaras* per folio, discrepancies in textual orientation and page layout con-

firm their distinct compositional origins. These collections were subsequently published and analyzed by Shomakhmadov,¹ who significantly advanced the study.

Recent examination has identified British Library fragments Or.12380/628 and Or.12380/2880C as missing pieces from the corresponding Russian collection, thereby resolving longstanding textual discontinuities in the IOM materials.

2. Or.12380/628 + SI 6564 + Or.12380/2880C

SI 6563 features white margins (*bai kou* 白口) with double border lines on all sides, although its initial, middle, and concluding sections are partially lost. The extant 30ff. retain Chinese pagination marks ranging from 3–20, 24–27, and 35–42. Each folio contains ten lines of Siddham *akṣaras* arranged vertically from left to right, with seven *akṣaras* per line. Apart from the untitled.

Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī and subsequent abbreviated mantras, such as the *śaḍakṣarī-vidyā* (*om maṇi padme hūṃ*), *trimūrti-vidyā* (*om āḥ hūṃ*), and *dvyakṣarī-vidyā* (*om raṃ*), all other *dhāraṇīs* are accompanied by abbreviated Chinese titles: *Jing Fajie Zhou* 淨法界咒, *Jing Chu Ye Zhang* 淨除業障, *Shijia Xin Zhou* 釋迦心咒, *Dabei Zongchi* 大悲總持, and *Zunsheng Zhou* 尊勝咒.²

SI 6564 lacks margin markers and is framed by single borders, with both its beginning and ending sections missing. On the surviving seven folios there display Chinese paginations (10–12, 32–34), along with one fragment bearing illegible numbering. This imprint exhibits an unusual layout: Siddham *akṣaras* are written horizontally from left to right, with seven lines per folio and ten *akṣaras* per line. Besides the untitled *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī*, there are other texts include Chinese headings such as *Fa Sheli* 法舍利, *Bao Huoge Zhou* 寶獲閣咒, and *Bai Sangai Zhou* 白傘蓋咒.³

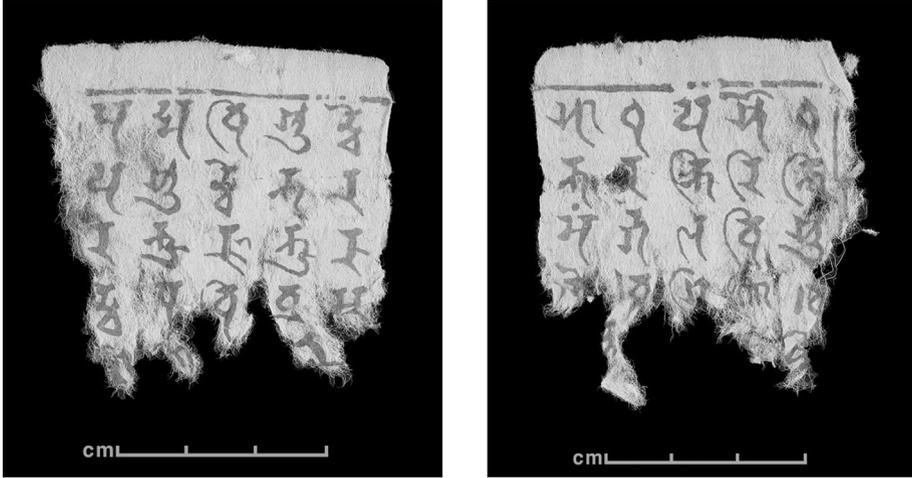
¹ SHOMAKHMADOV 2017; 2019.

² The Chinese version of *Jing Fajie Zhou* can only be found in *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji* 顯密圓通成佛心要集 and *Mizhou Yuanyin Wangsheng Ji* 密咒圓因往生集. The following four *dhāraṇīs* were identified by Shomakhmadov as *Jingchu Yezhang Tuoluoni* 淨除業障陀羅尼, *Shijia Xinzhou* 釋迦心咒, *Dabeixin Tuoluoni* 大悲心陀羅尼 and *Foding Zunsheng Tuoluoni* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼.

³ Shomakhmadov identified these *dhāraṇīs* as *Dasuiqiu Tuoluoni* 大隨求陀羅尼, *Yiqie Rulai Suixin Tuoluoni* 一切如來隨心陀羅尼, *Yinyuan Zhou* 因緣咒, *Guanzizai Pusa Ganlu*

Through comparative analysis of Sanskrit originals and Chinese transcriptions of parallel content, Shomakhmadov conclusively demonstrated that these *dhāraṇīs* were not directly transcribed from Sanskrit sources but instead reflect Tangut pronunciation based on a Chinese version. Although the compilers had a basic understanding of Sanskrit-Chinese transcription conventions, certain graphemic irregularities reveal limited familiarity with Sanskrit pronunciation.

The *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī* held significant prominence during this period, as evidenced by its inclusion in both versions SI 6563 and SI 6564, albeit in fragmented states. During the Kozlov collection from the *stūpa* outside Khara-Khoto, numerous fragments were overlooked. These neglected remnants were later retrieved by Stein five years later and are now primarily housed in the British Library. Among these is a fragment, Or.12380/628 (Pl. 1),⁴ originally part of a butterfly binding folio that is split into two pieces. Despite damage to its margins and lower section, the fragment preserves 40 Siddham *akṣaras*, with the content conclusively aligning with the *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī*.



Pl. 1

Or.12380/628 in the British Library

Zhou 觀自在菩薩甘露咒, *Dabao Louge Genben Zhou* 大寶樓閣根本咒, *Dabao Louge Xinzhou* 大寶樓閣心咒, *Dafoding Shoulengyan Xinzhou* 大佛頂首楞嚴心咒, *Baisangai Zhou* 白傘蓋咒.

⁴ http://idp.bl.uk/database/search_results.a4d?uid=103878470111;random=21671.

These fragments have thus far escaped scholarly attention. Below, we present the Romanization of the text alongside a comparative analysis with Amoghavajra's Chinese transcription (*Taishō* 20: 618), while also referencing the *DQ* (All Mantras in Mahāpiṭaka) compiled during the Qing dynasty.

Or.12380/628:	पद्म	विशुद्ध	संधया	संध		
Transliteration:	<i>padma</i>	<i>viśuddhe</i>	<i>śādhaya</i> ⁵	<i>śodha-</i>		
Amogavajra:	鉢納麼二合	尾秣第	戌引馱野 ⁶	戌引馱		
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>padma</i>	<i>biśuddhe</i>	<i>śodhaya</i>	<i>śodha-</i>		
Or.12380/628:	य	शुद्ध	भरा	भरा	भिरि	भि-
Transliteration:	<i>ya</i>	<i>śuddhe</i> ⁷	<i>bhara</i>	<i>bhara</i>	<i>bhiri</i>	<i>bhi-</i>
Amogavajra:	野	舜入第	跋囉	跋囉	鼻哩	鼻
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>ya</i>	<i>śuddheśuddhe</i>	<i>bhara</i>	<i>bhara</i>	<i>bhiri</i>	<i>bhi-</i>
Or.12380/628:	रि	भुरु	भुरु	मंगला	विशु-	
Transliteration:	<i>ri</i>	<i>bhūrū</i>	<i>bhūru</i> ⁸	<i>mamṅala</i> ⁹	<i>viśu-</i>	
Amogavajra:	哩	步嚕	步嚕	嚩去譏擲	尾舜入	
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>ri</i>	<i>bhuru</i>	<i>bhuru</i>	<i>maṅgala</i>	<i>biśu-</i>	
Or.12380/628:	द्ध	पवित्र	मुक्ख	खगिनि	खा-	
Transliteration:	<i>ddhe</i>	<i>pavitra</i>	<i>mukhe</i> ¹⁰	<i>khagini</i> ¹¹	<i>kha-</i>	
Amogavajra:	第	跋尾怛囉二合	穆棄	渴祛藥反擬拈	渴	
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>ddhe</i>	<i>pabitra</i>	<i>mukhi</i>	<i>khagini</i>	<i>kha-</i>	

⁵ *śādhaya*, should be written “*śodhaya*” as in inv. № 6563.

⁶ *Xu* 戌, should be corrected as *shu* 戌.

⁷ *Śuddhe*, the same as in inv. № 6563, but in the Cixian's version and *DQ* it reads repeatedly.

⁸ *bhūrū-bhūru*, exhibits differently in various edition. The most similar form is “*𑖀* (bhū) 部嚕部嚕” in *Pubian Guangming Qingjing Chisheng Ruyibaoyinxin Wunengsheng Daming-wang Dasuiqiu Tuoluoni* 普遍光明清淨熾盛如意寶印心無能勝大明王大隨求陀羅尼 (*FS*, 28:54).

⁹ *mamṅala*, “*rga*” should be corrected as “*ga*”.

¹⁰ *khe*, reconstructed according to the stroke remaining.

¹¹ Phonetical inconformity with *DQ*.

This folio represents a missing leaf from the SI 6564 in the Kozlov collection. Although there are differences in textual orientation (read horizontally versus vertically), each butterfly-binding folio consistently comprises 70 *akṣaras*. Based on this standardization, the damaged portion of Or.12380/628 can be inferred to lack three lines totaling 30 *akṣaras*.

Furthermore, comparative analysis with corresponding content in SI 6563 reveals a textual gap of 100 *akṣaras* between Or.12380/628 and SI 6564. This lacuna corresponds to one complete folio (70 *akṣaras*) plus the missing three lines (30 *akṣaras*) from Or.12380/628, which is equivalent to the content spanning from line 5 of f. 8 to line 9 of f. 9 in the SI 6563 imprint.¹²

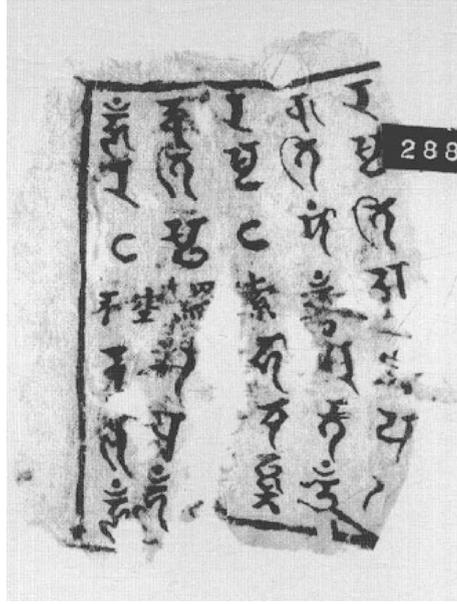
(*kha*) *gīṇi khara-khara jvalitaśi-khare samantaprasa- <ri>tāvabhāṣi-taśuddhe jvala-jvala sarva{ñū}devagaṇāsamantā karṣaṇi satyavrate tara-tara tāraya māṃ nāgavilokite lahu-lahu hurū-hurū kṣiṇi-kṣiṇi sarva grahabhākṣaṇi piṅgale-piṅgale cumu-cumu sumu-sumu suvicare tara-tara nā (gavilokini)*

This fragment can be seamlessly joined to f. 10 of SI 6564. Consequently, British Library fragment Or.12380/628 is identified as the missing folio 8 of SI 6564.

In addition to Or.12380/628, another Siddham *dhāraṇī* fragment, Or.12380/2880C (*YHW*, 3:261), is preserved in the British Library collection (Pl. 2). This fragment exhibits an identical typographical structure and script style to SI 6564, confirming its origin from the same imprint. Although severely damaged, the fragment retains the left half of the folio, with Siddham *akṣaras* arranged horizontally from left to right. Each complete folio originally consisted of 7 lines with 10 *akṣaras* per line, but only 5 *akṣaras* per line remain legible. The content encompasses at least three *dhāraṇīs*: the first three lines represent the concluding portion of the initial *dhāraṇī*, which corresponds to Amoghavajra's Chinese version, *Chishengguang Daweide Xiaozai Jixiang Tuoluoni Jing* 熾盛光大威德消災吉祥陀羅尼經 (*Taishō*, 19:337).

Below, we compare the text of Or.12380/2880C with Amoghavajra's transcription and the *DQ* (9: 194–195), proposing reconstructions for the damaged sections (in brackets).

¹² Romanization of the *akṣara* is suggested by Shomakhmadov.



Pl. 2
Or.12380/2880C in the British Library

Or.12380/628:	𑖀	𑖄𑖅	𑖄𑖅	[𑖄𑖅𑖅	𑖄𑖅]
Transliteration:	<i>hūṃ</i>	<i>jvara</i> ¹³	<i>vāra</i> ¹⁴	[<i>prajvara</i>	<i>prajva-</i>]
Amogavajra:	𑖀	入𑖄二合囉	入𑖄 ¹⁵ 囉	鉢囉二合入𑖄二合囉	鉢囉入𑖄 ¹⁶
DQ:	<i>hūṃ</i>	<i>jvala</i>	<i>jvala</i>	<i>prajvala</i>	<i>prajva-</i>
Or.12380/628:	𑖅	𑖄𑖅	𑖄𑖅	[𑖄𑖅	𑖄𑖅 𑖄𑖅]
Transliteration:	<i>ra</i>	<i>tiṣṭha</i>	<i>tiṣṭha</i>	[<i>cchiri</i>	<i>cchiri</i> <i>spho-</i>]
Amogavajra:	𑖅	底瑟姪二合	底瑟姪二合	瑟致二合	瑟致二合 薩普二合
DQ:	<i>la</i>	<i>tiṣṭha</i>	<i>tiṣṭha</i>	<i>cchiri</i>	<i>cchiri</i> <i>spho-</i>

¹³ *ra* is written as “*la*” in *DQ*.

¹⁴ A *ru* 入 (*j-*) is missed here in the Chinese original.

¹⁵ Two characters *Erhe* 二合 (binom) are missed here.

¹⁶ Two characters *Erhe* 二合 (binom) are missed under *boluo* 鉢囉 and *rufu* 入𑖄 respectively.

¹⁷ Chinese *sezhi erhe* 瑟致二合 is used to transcribe Sanskrit (𑖄) *ṣṭi* that unsimilar to *DQ*.

Or.12380/628:	𑀓	𑀧𑀢𑀓	𑀲𑀢[𑀢]	𑀲𑀢	𑀲𑀢]
Transliteration:	<i>ta</i>	<i>sphoṭa</i>	<i>śāṃti[ka]</i>	<i>sriye</i>	<i>svāhā]</i>
Amogavajra:	吒	薩普二合吒	扇底迦	室哩二合曳	娑嚩二合賀
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>ta</i>	<i>sphoṭa</i>	<i>śantika</i>	<i>śrīye</i>	<i>svāhā</i>

The beginning of line 4 retains a four-character Chinese title: *Bukong Juansuo* 不空罽索, which corresponds to the *dhāraṇī* in Amoghavajra's Chinese version, titled *Bukong Juansuo Piluzhenafō Daguandingguang Zhenyan* 不空罽索毘盧遮那佛大灌頂光真言 (*Taishō*, 19:606). This *dhāraṇī* also appears in the Liao dynasty compilation *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfō Xinyao Ji* 顯密圓通成佛心要集 by Daoshen (*Taishō*, 46: 1005).¹⁸ Drawing on these sources, we align the fragment Or.12380/2880C with Amoghavajra's transcription and the *DQ* (9: 157–158) as follows:

Or.12380/628:	不空罽索	𑀓	𑀲[𑀲𑀢]	𑀲𑀢 ¹⁹ 𑀢]
Transliteration:		<i>om</i>	<i>a[mogha</i>	<i>vairoca-]</i>
Amogavajra:		唵	阿謨伽	尾嚩左
<i>DQ</i> :		<i>om</i>	<i>amogha</i>	<i>bairoca-</i>

Or.12380/628:	𑀢	𑀢𑀲𑀢𑀲 ²⁰	𑀢(𑀢)	𑀢𑀲 ²¹	𑀢]
Transliteration:	<i>na</i>	<i>mahāmu[pro</i>	<i>maṇi</i>	<i>padme</i>	<i>jvā-]</i>
Amogavajra:	曩	摩賀母 ²² 捺囉二合	麼拏	鉢納麼二合	入嚩二合
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>na</i>	<i>mahāmudra</i>	<i>maṇi</i>	<i>padme</i>	<i>jva-</i>

Or.12380/628:	𑀢	𑀢𑀲𑀢 ²³ 𑀢	[𑀢]
Transliteration:	<i>la</i>	<i>pravardaya</i>	[<i>hūm</i>]
Amogavajra:	囉	鉢囉二合鞞哆野	吽
<i>DQ</i> :	<i>la</i>	<i>pa²⁴ravardaya</i>	<i>hūm</i>

¹⁸ In addition, there is another sample of *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji* housed at the IOM RAS: TK 270, xylograph, accordion binding, seven and a half fold surviving. The Chinese transcription characters are contrasted by Ranjana Sanskrit (*EHW*, 4: 358–359).

¹⁹ *ro* is written as “𑀲 ru 嚩” in *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji*.

²⁰ “𑀢 (dra) 捺囉二合” according to *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji*.

²¹ “𑀢 (dma) 納麼二合” according to *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji*.

²² The Siddham form is missing. It may be complemented as according to “𑀢 (mu) 母” as in *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji* and Or.12380/2880C.

²³ “𑀢 (rta) 哆” according to *Xianmi Yuantong Chengfo Xinyao Ji*.

²⁴ The *akṣara* “a” seems to be excrescent.

The bottom line of fragment Or.12380/2880C preserves only four ritual particles: *hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ oṃ*. A caesura is likely required between the third and fourth *akṣara*, as the final particle (*oṃ*) is uncommon in *dhāraṇī* terminal positions according to mantric conventions. The lack of critical lexemes in this line prevents definitive identification of its textual source. Nonetheless, it can be conclusively established that, although they cannot be physically rejoined to the extant portions of SI 6564, the colophon immediately following it unequivocally identifies this as the concluding folio of the *dhāraṇī* collection.

3. Or.12380/2880 Chinese Votive Text

The fragment Or.12380/2880 comprises three folios. In addition to the aforementioned *dhāraṇī*, two folios contain a relatively well-preserved Chinese votive text (*fayuan wen* 发愿文). Unlike the Siddham *dhāraṇī*, this text adheres to traditional Chinese scribal conventions, written in vertical columns from right to left. The complete text reads:

The *dhāraṇī* is the quintessence of all Buddhas and the core of Bodhisattvas. Its efficacy is boundless, bestowing inexhaustible blessings. Those who recite it swiftly fulfill the Six Pāramitās; those who carry it eradicate the Three Poisons. Like an alchemical elixir that transmutes iron into gold, a single *mantra* transforms the mundane into the sacred. Indeed, it is the expedient path to transcend worldly suffering and the essential ferry across the sea of anguish. With such supreme merits, we engaged artisans to engrave these woodblocks. Through this merit, we repay the Fourfold Benevolence above and nurture the beings within the Three Realms below. May all sentient beings in the Dharma Realm collectively attain rebirth in the Pure [Land].

Printed and distributed on the 17th day of the 10th month, Tianqing 1st year.²⁵

This colophon definitively establishes the printing and distribution of the *dhāraṇī* collection in the first reign year of Tianqing (1194 CE). Sho-

²⁵ Chinese original: 夫陀羅尼者，是諸佛之頂，乃菩薩之心，功能廣大，利益無窮。誦持者速圓六度，佩戴者殄滅三毒。其猶還丹一粒，點鐵成金；真言一字，轉凡成聖。寔可謂脫塵勞之捷徑，越苦海之要津。有斯勝益，命工鏤板。□此功德，上報四恩，下資三有，法界含靈，同生淨□。時天慶元年十月十七日印施。

makhmadov, although overlooking this dedicatory inscription, nonetheless accurately dated the two *dhāraṇī* collections to the late 12th c. However, his subsequent conjecture that they were commissioned by Empress Dowager Luo during the reign of Emperor Huanzong (r. 1193–1206), remains questionable, as it does not fully align with historical records of her patronage activities.²⁶ Shomakhmadov based his hypothesis on Empress Dowager Luo's exile to Khara-Khoto during this period, where she eventually passed away. He argued that her political marginalization would have driven her to use low-quality, inexpensive paper for printing, despite her devout Buddhist commitments.

However, as is widely acknowledged, Empress Dowager Luo's withdrawal from political affairs did not occur until after Emperor Xiangzong's ascension to the throne in 1206. In 1194, when the *dhāraṇī* collection was printed, she still firmly held power as regent. Emperor Renzong passed away on the 20th day of the 9th month of the 24th reign year of Qianyou (1193). Following his death, for the subsequent three annual death anniversaries, Empress Dowager Luo commissioned large-scale printings and distributions of Buddhist scriptures. Among the Khara-Khoto materials, there are three such texts documented.

1. *Renwang Huguo Bore Boluomiduo Jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經 (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra for Benevolent Kings Protecting the State*), printed and distributed on the 20th day of the 9th month, the 1st year of Tianqing (1194).

2. *Zhuan Nüshen Jing* 轉女身經 (*Sūtra on the Transformation of Female Form*), distributed on the same date in the 2nd year of Tianqing (1195).

3. *Dafangguang Fo Huayanjing Puxian Xingyuan Pin* 大方廣佛華嚴經普賢行願品 (*Chapter on Samantabhadra's Vows from the Avataṃsaka-sūtra*), printed in the 3rd year of Tianqing (1196).

Each colophon concludes with the dedication: "Respectfully offered by Empress Dowager Luo".²⁷

The votive postscript accompanying the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra for Benevolent Kings* states:

²⁶ The assertion that Empress Dowager Luo embraced Buddhism following her exile to Khara-khoto originates from an unverified hypothesis proposed by Men'shikov (MEN'SHIKOV 2005: 240).

²⁷ NIE 2016: 129, 176.

On the first anniversary of the late emperor's passing, I commissioned artisans to engrave this *sūtra*, producing 10.000 copies in Tangut and 20.000 in Chinese for distribution among officials and masses. Moreover, I invited the State Preceptor of Mystic Mahāyāna, the State Preceptor of Ultimate Vinaya, as well as Chan masters, to preside over grand dharma assemblies lasting seven days and nights. Additionally, I engaged the Dharma Master of Exegetics and Master Huizhao to conduct three-day-and-night ceremony for unobstructed pure land and water.²⁸

Votive Text for the *Sūtra on the Transformation of Female Form*:

On the second anniversary of Emperor Renzong's passing, I commissioned artisans to engrave woodblocks for this *sūtra*, producing over 30.000 copies in both Tangut and Chinese scripts. Furthermore, more than 30.000 colored devotional icons were crafted to distribute throughout the state to officials and masses, universally bestowing blessings upon all who encountered them.²⁹

Votive text for the *Chapter on Samantabhadra's Vows from the Avatamsaka-sūtra*:

Grand Dharma Assemblies were conducted, featuring 3.355 fire-offering altars and 18 large-scale almsgiving ceremonies.

Scriptural Recitations included: 328 sets of the scripture, 247 sets of the *Tripitāka*, 81 sets of miscellaneous *sūtras*, and 5, 548, 178 volumes of major canons and individual texts.

Ordinating 3.000 Tibetan, Tangut, and Chinese monks, with 30.590 monks receiving alms and 171 ritual banners being erected.

Distributions encompassed 77.276 icons of the Eight Stūpas of Enlightenment and Purification of Karmic Obstacles, 93.000 copies of Tangut and Chinese *Transformation of Female Form*, *Benevolent Kings* and *Samantabhadra's Vows*, and 16.088 prayer bead strings.

²⁸ Tangut original: 敝救孺銀徧髮綑，瑣筵滌蕩茲類祀，級羽麗綸敝敝構屍
 論報發報，殿瓶效發祥。慨解隨散茲銀齋隨影敝繼請隨影、禪悅影報現
 筵，級散禪鄉黃綑發多凱形。慨憐憐視影敝善憐悅影報現筵，誠發慨敢談
 前散職視發散綑散多凱形。

²⁹ Chinese original: 遂於二周之忌晨，命工鏤板，印造斯典番漢共三萬餘卷，並彩
 繪功德三萬餘幀，散施國內臣民，普令見聞蒙益。

Preaching 61 sets of *Mahāyāna sūtras* in Tangut and Chinese, as well as 1.149 Mahāyāna repentance ceremonies.

All private hashslingers in the Empress Dowager's palace are liberated to be functionaries, and 70.779 sheep were released for meritorious liberation. One general amnesty was proclaimed.³⁰

The grandeur of the merits generated from the three *dharma* assemblies increased progressively each year, making it financially unsustainable for anyone outside the Xixia imperial household due to the economic constraints of that era. Notably, these ceremonies were temporally aligned with the production of the manuscript SI 6564 and Or.12380/2880. This fact confirms that Empress Dowager Luo was not so impoverished as to be unable to afford printing paper, thus suggesting that she was not the patron responsible for the publication of the *dhāraṇī* collection.

Existing Xixia monuments indicate that the court's adoption of Buddhism was primarily aimed at "safeguarding the state" and pursuing "eternal imperial sovereignty" through exoteric teachings, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. In contrast, esoteric *dhāraṇīs* are seldom featured in royally commissioned texts.

By contrast, commoners and officials sought "personal protection", aiming to alleviate suffering from calamities (especially illness) and secure rebirth in the Pure Land.

This marked distinction is vividly reflected in the Xixia votive inscriptions, including those composed by high-ranking officials. A quintessential example is the 1167 CE votive inscription authored by Ren Dejing 任得敬, the highest Imperial preceptor and supervisor of significant military and political affairs.³¹ While battling an illness, he commissioned the printing of the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

In the spare time from official affairs, I have consistently upheld this *sūtra* with unwavering sincerity, cultivating profound faith. Now, suffered from

³⁰ Chinese original: 大法會燒結壇等三千三百五十五次，大會齋一十八次。

開讀經文：藏經三百二十八藏，大藏經二百四十七藏，諸般經八十一藏。大部帙經並零經五百五十四萬八千一百七十八部。

度僧西番、番、漢三千員，散齋僧三萬五百九十員，放神幡一百七十一口。

散施：八塔成道像淨除業障功德共七萬七千二百七十六幀，番漢《轉女身經》《仁王經》《行願經》共九萬三千部，數珠一萬六千八十八串。

消演番漢大乘經六十一部，大乘懺悔一千一百四十九遍。

皇太后宮下應有私人盡皆捨放並作官人。散囚五十二次，設貧五十六次，放生羊七萬七百七十九口，大赦一次。

³¹ Chinese original: 太師上公總領軍國重事。

persistent misfortunes and unrelenting illness, where days pass without reprieve and medicinal remedies prove ineffective, I hereby resolve to commission woodblocks for its printing. Through this meritorious act, I seek divine assistance: If my remaining years are still allotted, I hope to swiftly recover. If fate proves inexorable, I hope to attain rebirth in the Pure Land.³²

In the seventh reign year of Tianqing (1200 CE), a high-minister He Zongshou 賀宗壽, while suffering from illness, commissioned the compilation of *Mizhou Yuanyin Wangsheng Ji* 密咒圓因往生集 (*A Collection of Esoteric Mantras for the Causes of Rebirth*). This work systematically gathered *dhāraṇīs* from canonical sources and presented them in a bilingual format, featuring Chinese characters alongside Siddham transcriptions. The preface explicitly connects his Buddhist piety to his physical ailment, suggesting a profound interplay between religious devotion and personal well-being.

Zongshou, long afflicted by illnesses, sought solace in Śakyamuni during periods of medical treatment. Through praying to the Buddha, I repented for my past misdeeds and gained numerous benefits that purified my mind and body. I carefully compiled efficacious esoteric mantras from various *sūtras* into this collection, naming it “Esoteric Mantras for the Causes of Rebirth”. To ensure its accuracy and widespread dissemination, benefiting both the living and the departed, I invited eminent saṃghas from the Western Regions and authentic monks from the Eastern Land to meticulously collate the texts three times. The version was then engraved and printed in both Chinese and Sanskrit scripts for eternal circulation.³³

Regardless of their motivation, sponsoring such large-scale textual projects necessitated considerable financial resources. This observation leads to such a plausible hypothesis that although anonymous, the patron behind the year 1194, Siddham *dhāraṇī* collection likely belonged to the same socio-political elite as figures like the “King of Qin and Jin” and He Zongshou, officials who possessed not only the means but also personal incentives to fund Buddhist publications.

³² Chinese original: 予論道之暇，恒持此經，每竭誠心，篤生實信。今者災連伏累，疾病纏綿，日月雖多，藥石無效。故陳誓願，鏤板印施，仗此勝因，冀資冥佑。倘或天年未盡，速愈沉痾；必若運數難逃，早生淨土。(NIE 2016: 168).

³³ Chinese original: 宗壽夙累所鍾，久纏疾瘵，湯砭之暇，覺雄是依。爰用祈叩真慈，懺摩既往，虔資萬善，整滌襟靈。謹錄諸經神驗密咒，以為一集，遂命題曰“密咒圓因往生”焉。然欲事廣傳通，利兼幽顯，故命西域之高僧、東夏之真侶，校詳三復，華梵兩書，雕印流通，永規不朽云爾。(NIE 2016: 178).

Abbreviations

- DQ* — *Dazang Quanzhou* 大藏全咒 [All Mantras in Mahāpīṭaka]. LIN Guangming 林光明 newly ed., Taipei: Jiafeng Publishing House, 2001.
- EHW* — *Echang Heishuicheng Wenxian* 俄藏黑水城文獻 [Heishuicheng Manuscripts Collected in Russia] 4. St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Nationality Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House ed., Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1997.
- FS* — *Fangshan Shijing* 房山石經 [Stone Scriptures in Fangshan]. China Association of Buddhism & China Library of Buddhism ed. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2000.
- YHW* — *Yingcang Heishuicheng Wenxian* 英藏黑水城文獻 [Documents from Khara-Khoto in the British Library]. The Second North-west Minzu College, Chinese Classics Publishing House, the British Library ed., Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2005.

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