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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The two issues of *Buddhist Studies Review* for 2001 will contain papers from the Fifth Annual Conference of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies, 30 June – 2 July 2000. The conference was hosted by the Centre for Buddhist Studies at the University of Bristol and we are grateful to the University's Faculty of Arts Research Fund for a grant towards conference costs.

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STŪPA, SŪTRA AND ŚARĪRA IN CHINA, C. 656–706 CE†

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1. Shorter histories and larger questions

To a readership of Buddhologists, a study concentrating on a span of a mere fifty years—and at some remove from the lifetime of the Buddha, too—probably requires a word or two of explanation. The interrelationship between structures, texts and relics is surely a topic for investigation on the grand scale, so as to arrive at an understanding of how Buddhism deals with such matters as scripture and memory within the tradition as a whole. Why select a brief fragment of time, less even than an ordinary lifespan, from one particular regional branch of Buddhism, and subject it to microscopic examination? To state the obvious, because this study is not concerned with Buddhological matters in themselves, but with an attempt at historical reconstruction designed to answer a specific question.

And, as it happens, that high degree of specificity has not helped in reducing the research that follows to the truly microscopic level. China in the late seventh century was an environment which produced a vast amount of surviving textual information, so far from having to eke out what meaning we may from a strictly bounded collection of materials, it is much more of a problem to feel certain that one has read comprehensively enough to arrive at a definitive answer. This study may, then, be improved upon by future researchers possessed of greater assiduity, but the immediate aim here is simply to establish the area of research covered as an important one for making sense of human experience over the past one and a half millennia. For the question which we are attempting to answer is

† Since presenting my paper at the UKABS conference, I have also been able to benefit from some points brought to my attention by Chen Jinhua, to whom I am grateful.

this: what was the religious environment that encouraged the spread of the new technology of printing in late seventh century China?

Here, of course, I cannot answer this question completely, but only in so far as it concerns Buddhism, though I have presented a broader treatment of some of the issues involved in another lecture*. But to understand the need to focus on an answer—albeit a partial one—in Buddhist terms, we should note that the classic study on the origins of woodblock printing in China, which was based on research carried out more than three quarters of a century ago, is quite clear about the importance of Buddhism in the development of printing technology. It refers explicitly to ‘the duplicating impulse that has always been a characteristic of Buddhism’¹. This may sound slightly mysterious in isolation, but a standard general history of the book is more intelligible:

[O]ne of the ways by which the devout Buddhist ... acquired merit was by the ceaseless repetition, orally or in writing, of passages from the Buddhist scriptures. A method of endless reduplication of such merit-bringing passages by means of impressions on paper from wooden blocks was too precious an opportunity for Buddhist zeal to have overlooked².

Thanks to more recent work, by K. R. Norman and others on the oral nature of early Buddhist scriptures, and by Richard Gombrich and others on the link between the rise of Mahāyāna and writing, the general factors stimulating reduplication are now tolerably clear: Buddhists needed to repeat their scriptures orally, lest they forget them; Mahāyānists needed to propagate their ideas in writing as energetically as possible, lest their minority opinions disappear from

* To be published in a collection on China’s technological transfer to the world edited by Glen Dudbridge. A preliminary version is available as ‘The Rise and Spread of Printing: A New Account of Religious Factors’, SOAS Working Papers in the Study of Religions, 2001 (London: SOAS, 2001).

¹ T. F. Carter, revised and edited by L. C. Goodrich, *The Invention of Printing and Its Spread Westward* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), p. 40.

² Douglas C. McMurtrie, *The Book: The Story of Printing and Bookmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 85–86.

the face of the earth³. But whereas such factors, plus paper and rudimentary text transfer devices such as seals, were present almost from the start of Chinese Buddhism, there are no signs that Buddhists, once introduced to these resources, were in any sense looking for a way of combining them so as to embark on the mass manufacture of meritorious texts. It surely remains important to try to explain through a closer examination of all the factors involved why the large-scale move to woodblock printing took place when and where it did, even if that attempt at explanation remains at times tentative and incomplete.

2. *Printing and the seventh century*

Chinese scholars have long suspected that woodblock printing was known in China during the seventh century, and lately a few examples of *dhāraṇī* found in tombs have been dated by archaeologists there to this period, though I am not sure how securely⁴. Even so, by looking at some of the religious literature of the period, I have established to my satisfaction that the advantages of speed, accuracy and volume conveyed by printing would have been understood at this time⁵. I have also discovered that Taoists were stamping images from woodblock onto paper during the first half of the seventh century⁶. It may further be deduced that they were printing text as well

³ E.g. K. R. Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism* (London: SOAS, 1997), pp. 41–57 (and cf. 77–94); R. Gombrich, ‘How the Mahāyāna began’, in T. Skorupski, ed., *The Buddhist Forum*, I (London: SOAS, 1990), pp. 21–30.

⁴ Su Bai, *Tang-Song shiqi de diaoban yinshua* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1999), pp. 7–9, gives the most convenient summary of these materials I have seen recently. For some of my doubts over dating (which may perhaps now be set aside), see the study cited in the next footnote.

⁵ T. H. Barrett, ‘Images of Printing in Seventh-century Chinese Religious Literature’, *Chinese Science* 15 (1998), pp. 81–93.

⁶ T. H. Barrett, ‘The Feng-tao k’o and printing on paper in seventh-century China’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 60.3 (1997), pp. 538–40. This article only provides a *terminus ante quem* for my source; in a

during the latter half of the century⁷. Yet the earliest securely datable printed materials we have from East Asia are all Buddhist. The first is a *dhāraṇī* found inside a Korean pagoda (i.e. stūpa), which was constructed in 751. The latest scholarship on this object, a collection of conference papers from a seminar at Yonsei University, Korea, held October 19–20, 1999, continues to show heated disagreement between Korean and Chinese academics over whether this text, the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni*, or *Raśmivimalaviśuddhaprabhādhāraṇī*, first translated by 704, was made locally or exported from China⁸.

But until the discovery of this text in 1966, the first material evidence that the world had of woodblock printing was that deriving from a project undertaken in Japan between 764 and 770. During that period the ruler of Japan, the Empress Shōtoku, sponsored the creation of one million miniature pagodas containing printed copies of the same work found in Korea—which, as a mere record in the relevant Japanese chronicle we might be inclined to doubt, were it not that so many survive to this day. As Peter Kornicki notes in a recent summary of this episode, on which he is preparing a substantial monograph, the text in question had already arrived in Korea by 706, for an inscription on the inside of a reliquary box states that another copy was placed inside a pagoda in a different temple in Korea in that year. The proximate source for the Japanese enterprise might therefore have been Korean practice, but he suspects instead some connexion with the Empress Wu, the great Chinese example of female rule, who dominated the court for about fifty years from 655

review—*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10.3 (2000), pp. 419–20—of Florian Reiter's monographic presentation of the *Feng-tao k'o* I advance my reasons for dating it to the first half of the seventh century.

⁷ T. H. Barrett, 'Evidence for 7th Century Taoist Printing', *Needham Research Institute Newsletter* 17 (December, 1998), p. [5].

⁸ Thanks to the good offices of my student, Mr. June Seo, a set of these papers is available at the Needham Research Institute, Cambridge.

till shortly before her death in 705⁹. But how may we bridge the gap between the Taoist references of the seventh century and these eighth century materials, particularly in view of the fact that the Empress Wu is chiefly known for her public support for Buddhism, whatever her personal attitude towards the Taoist religion?

At the 1997 UKABS conference I presented research suggesting that the famous late seventh century pilgrim Yijing's remarks concerning the printing of short texts on *paper* for insertion into stūpas in India reflected not Indian practice (which used clay) but the legitimation for Chinese Buddhists of a practice already known to Taoists, with whom they were in competition for sacred space. I also suggested that Yijing's patron, the Empress Wu, might have stood to gain from this¹⁰. Since this paper was addressed to Buddhologists, I did not expatiate on the Chinese situation, for fear of introducing too much material on Taoism or on Chinese imperial politics, though I gave in footnotes one or two brief indications of my evidence. In the following remarks, however, I hope to provide some documentation suggesting several possible motives for interest in the use of printed texts as relic substitutes on the part of the empress within the context of Buddhist studies, with some tentative conclusions as to what motive in particular may have proved crucial. So before turning to the more specific research task outlined above, it is necessary at least to provide a general account of the phenomenon of the textual relic and its antecedents.

⁹ Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), pp. 114–117. The date of 706 he derives from p. 8 of Kawase Kazuma, 'Shiragi Bukkokuji Shakatō-shutsu no Muku jōkō daranikyō ni tsuite', *Shoshigaku* 2nd series, 33/34 (1984), pp. 1–9, which quotes a Korean epigraphic collection I have not had to hand, but we do return to this evidence below, in the penultimate section of this paper.

¹⁰ T. H. Barrett, 'Did I-ching go to India? Problems in Using I-ching as a Source for South Asian Buddhism', *Buddhist Studies Review* 15.2 (1998), pp. 142–156.

3. *Relics and texts in the Chinese Buddhist tradition*

The conception of relics and texts which came to prevail in China will, perhaps, be relatively unfamiliar to those primarily interested in the Buddhism of the Pāli canon. As I understand the situation described in these materials—for which I have gone little further than the recent recapitulation of earlier research by Kevin Trainor—images of the Buddha did eventually come to be recognized as relics of a sort within this tradition, and ‘relics of use’, objects associated with the Buddha such as the Bodhi-tree, also played a part¹¹. But primary interest remained with corporeal relics, as enshrined in the equivalents of stūpas or, to use the sinologist’s term, pagodas—the terminology even of Indian Buddhism is inevitably more complex than can be conveniently summarized here¹².

It goes without saying that the image of the Buddha was also of immense importance during the period of Chinese history we are about to consider, and one can point to important reasons for this in the Chinese context. Thus Glen Dudbridge has shown that Chinese tales collected about a century later regard Buddha images as supernatural actors in their own right, regardless of any orthodox clerical interpretation of what they were supposed to represent; these beliefs were probably established well before this point¹³. Looked at an-

¹¹ Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 89. Another very useful summary may be found in Steven Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 244–249.

¹² Cf. Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 196, n.38. For an account of Indian and Chinese enthusiasm for relics extending over the period covered here, but broader in scope and less chronologically organized, see Xinru Liu, *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600–1200* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapter One, pp. 25–48.

¹³ Glen Dudbridge, ‘Buddhist Images in Action: Five Stories from the Tang’, *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998), pp. 377–391, especially his remarks on pp. 386–7.

other, more ideological way, recent research has also stressed the benefits to the standing of both the local elite and the central state in village society of the public consecration of religious images even some two and a half centuries earlier in China¹⁴.

Even so, control of text by the state had a particular importance in the Chinese world, and the arrival of an imperial edict in local society was in itself evidently the occasion for public ritualized displays of state power which involved local religious communities as well¹⁵. In this respect, moreover, Chinese orientations towards respect for text coincided with those of the Mahāyāna tradition—hence, perhaps, one reason for its success in East Asia—and it is exclusively within the limits of the Mahāyāna tradition as known and understood in East Asia that I have attempted to grasp any larger background to the phenomena I shall describe.

The textualization of relics in the Mahāyāna context links up, of course, with the sacralization of the text, which we have already mentioned. But the point of linkage in doctrinal terms seems to have involved the concept of the *dharmakāya*, the corpus of the Buddha's teachings as a form of his presence—a key term as it emerged in the development of Buddhist doctrine, and one over which much ink has been spilt over the years. Again, my account must be minimal. The very ancient saying underlying this development, 'Whoever sees the Dharma, sees the Buddha', was already known in China in the third century CE¹⁶. The consequential treatment in religious prac-

¹⁴ Liu Shufen, on pp. 28–9 and 46 (summary) and of 'Art, Ritual and Society: Buddhist practice in Rural China during the Northern Dynasties', *Asia Major*, Third Series, 8.1 (1995), pp. 19–49.

¹⁵ E. O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), pp. 180–182, preserves a valuable Japanese observation of this from the mid-ninth century, when the state is generally reckoned to have been much weaker than it was in the seventh century.

¹⁶ N. Ross Reat, *The Śālistamba Sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), pp. 14, 27.

tice of Buddhist texts as relics may be detected there too from the early fifth century¹⁷.

4. *Introducing the empress*

Lastly, before embarking on my brief history, I should explain that the chronological limits of my survey are dictated by the period of ascendancy of the Empress Wu. In 655 she was well on her way to defeating her only two rivals in the imperial harem, so that by the start of 656 they had both been subjected to mutilation and judicial murder at her instigation. By 660 her husband's ill health had obliged him to cede to her a measure of executive power—unusual, but not unprecedented for an empress at this stage in Chinese history. His death in 683 next obliged her to rule through her sons, in the course of which she removed one who showed signs of independence in favour of a more pliable sibling. Eventually she took over as Emperor (using the male title) from 690 until a coup against her shortly before her peaceful death at an advanced age in 705¹⁸.

As we shall see, the bare outlines of her life are not enough to understand the course of religious events during this career. We should take into account from the start the fact that reactions to her were not, and since her lifetime have not ever been, neutral. In a male-dominated society she has generally, except in the case of one or two rare iconoclasts, inspired feelings of strong revulsion, and her whole

¹⁷ See Robert F. Campany, on pp. 37–40 of 'Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic functions of Sūtra Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies', *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies* 14.1 (1991), pp. 28–72.

¹⁸ Here and below my summary of the dynastic background follows the treatment in D. C. Twitchett, ed., *Cambridge History of China*, Volume Three, Part One (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Chapters Five and Six. Note in particular that the early involvement of the future empress in Buddhism, though doubted by some, can be confirmed by her own words, as demonstrated by Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1976), pp. 281–284.

career has been seen as the carefully planned outcome of a diabolically clever and scheming nature. The following remarks are not intended to exonerate her from all the charges laid against her, since in order to win and maintain her position she was obliged to perpetrate some fairly dark deeds, but rather than see her regime as the outcome of a well thought out plan, it would seem more natural to suppose that she was primarily concerned to ensure her own survival in unpredictable circumstances that were not of her own making; that she laid plans, but was not prescient enough to ensure that everything unfolded just as she wanted. In any case, it is not the personality of this empress as such that concerns us, but aspects of her knowledge of and deployment of Buddhism.

For this remarkable—indeed, terrifying—woman had as a teenager been a concubine of her husband's father, and on the old man's death had been consigned to a Buddhist nunnery, where she would have stayed indefinitely had she not already made sure to catch the attention of his heir apparent. From this, and from other indications of her early interest in Buddhism, we can assume as the starting point of our investigation not only the calculating nature unafraid of risks that is acknowledged by her friends and foes alike but also a basic knowledge of Buddhist texts and doctrines.

5. *The empress and India: first reports*

In the matter of the construction of multiple miniature pagodas, however, we do know that by 656 she had made the acquaintance of China's chief source of information at this time on the nature of this practice as current in India. For the great traveller and even greater translator Xuanzang maintained close relations with the throne, and in this year was invited to bestow the bodhisattva ordination on the newborn child of the empress—a precaution which Arthur Waley likens to vaccination¹⁹. If this association moved her to read his travel account of India, composed for the old emperor on his return

¹⁹ Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), p. 119.

from his travels, she would have found a full description of how the sagely Indian layman Jayasēna passed his time—quoted here as rendered into the splendid Victorian prose of Samuel Beal:

It is a custom in India to make little *stūpas* of powdered scent made into a paste; their height is about six or seven inches, and they place inside them some written extract from a *sūtra*; this they call a *dharmā-śarīra* (*fa-shi-li*). When the number of these has become large, they then build a great *stūpa*, and collect all the others within it, and continually offer to it religious offerings. This then was the occupation of Jayasēna; with his mouth he declared the excellent law, and led and encouraged his students, whilst with his hands he constructed these *stūpas*. Thus he acquired the highest and most excellent religious merit. In the evening, again, he would walk up and down worshipping and repeating his prayers, or silently sit down in meditation. For eating or sleeping he had little time, and relaxed none of his discipline night or day. Even after he was an hundred years old his mind and body were in full activity. During thirty years he had made seven *kōṭis* of these *dharmā-śarīra stūpas*, and for every *kōṭi* that he made he built a great *stūpa* and placed them in it. When full, he presented his religious offerings and invited the priests; whilst they, on their part, offered congratulations²⁰.

Xuanzang may also have told his later followers in China about this phenomenon, but the account of his meeting with the layman found in his biography, though it mentions a miracle involving the relics of the Buddha which they both witnessed together, passes over his preoccupation with the mass production of miniature texts and *stūpas*²¹. A number of points may, however, be made about this passage, on the assumption that the empress was, indeed, aware of it. First, although an authorial note in the text helpfully (indeed, mercifully) defines a *koṭi* here as one hundred thousand, the productivity

²⁰ Samuel Beal, *Si-yu ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981 reprint of London: 1888), Volume Two, pp. 146–7.

²¹ Samuel Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-tsiang* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1911), pp. 156–7.

achieved seems extraordinarily high, even for an activity that could presumably be carried on at the same time as participation in other tasks, somewhat in the same fashion as knitting²². The same may be said of the massive production of religious objects achieved by Xuanzang himself, according to the listings at the end of his biography²³. It may be in the Chinese case that we are dealing with the creation of religious images by stamping from woodblock on paper, for one late, second-hand, but not necessarily inaccurate source does allege that Xuanzang did use such a method to create five packloads of religious images annually²⁴. Even so, I notice, in the canonical literature recounting the devotion shown to and copying of various famous Buddhist texts in China, the admission that the total productivity credited in at least one case to a named person was achieved by copyists, for whom he acted as sponsor. That such a practice was common is also suggested by the fact that some of the production totals achieved by individuals appear in any case to exceed what would have been possible in a single human lifespan²⁵. This would

²² This passage, in the best edition of Xuanzang's work now available, is in Ji Xianlin, et al., ed., *Da Tang Xiyu ji jiao zhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 712.

²³ This part is not translated by Beal; again, a good modern edition supersedes the Taishō: see Sun Yutang and Xie Fang, eds., Huili and Yancong, *Da Ciensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 220.

²⁴ This assertion has recently been reexamined positively by Pan Jixing, *Zhongguo, Hanguo yu Ouzhou zaoqi yinshuashu de bijiao* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 42–45, in the light of the other passages concerning Xuanzang which we have adduced here. It should be said that although we normally think of the great pilgrim translator in terms of his contribution to Chinese textual awareness of Indian Buddhism, there is also some evidence that the religious objects he imported influenced the development of material culture, so there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the idea that his use of Indian technology and Chinese materials contributed to the advance of printing: see, for his apparent influence on sculpture, Li Wensheng, *Longmen shiku yu lishi wenhua* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993), pp. 47–57.

²⁵ The passage where a copyist is mentioned may be found in Taishō Canon vol.51, p. 46a. Compare also the great Sui period exegete Zhiyi (538–597), who

mean that the artefacts attributed to Jayasena and Xuanzang were actually from the ‘school of’, rather than the personal creations of the masters concerned—and each man seems to have had a goodly number of disciples.

Secondly, even though no mention is made of printing the scriptural passage inserted into the stūpas in India, there is every reason to believe that stamps were being used to create texts on clay, for there is plenty of archaeological as well as textual evidence to corroborate the account given by Xuanzang which makes entirely clear the printing element involved. Daniel Boucher, in the magisterial published version of his MA work, provides a very full explanation of this, which I can only synopsise here²⁶. Starting from the same notion of *dharmakāya* and the equation ‘He who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha’, he adds (as we have omitted to do) the simultaneous equation in our source that seeing the Buddha’s teaching on causality amounts to seeing the entire Dharma corpus. From the second century CE we find a short statement on causality already used in inscriptions to equate with a corporeal relic; from the end of the sixth century the practice of multiplying such statements, as cast into formal verse, by stamping them on clay is attested by innumerable archaeological examples.

But thirdly, there is still a significant gap between the practice described by Xuanzang and Boucher and the invention of printing as I

is said (*ibid.*, p. 23a) to have produced fifteen copies of the entire Buddhist canon during his lifetime, to say nothing of more than one hundred thousand gilded and painted wooden images: we should recall that in medieval Japan it took ten thousand people to copy out the Buddhist canon in one day. Granted that the canon was appreciably smaller in Zhiyi’s day, and that a Chinese monk was probably more single-minded than a crowd of medieval Japanese aristocrats, even so the resulting calculation suggests that Zhiyi must have taken more than one lifetime to complete his task, if it was carried out single handed. Cf. K. Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1982), p. 171.

²⁶ Daniel Boucher, ‘The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics’, *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies* 14.1 (1991), pp. 1–27.

understand it. Jayasena hoards up his little stūpas with their clay prints inside, until they are stored inside a larger one. There is no notion of distributing his printed material here, and indeed his clay stamps are not ideal material for distribution in any case, though the practice of simply making miniature stūpas out of clay, minus any obvious textual material, did apparently spread during the period under consideration from Central Asia (where it may have arrived in the sixth century) to the various kingdoms of East Asia²⁷. Only Xuanzang's alleged images on paper are said to have been distributed, as Taoist materials probably were by about this time; paper was a far easier material to transport, but despite its marginal availability around the area of Gilgit does not seem to have displaced clay further south in India, where distribution does not seem to have been envisaged.

The reasons for this we shall discover shortly, but before leaving Indian practice we should note one more facet of it which the empress would have known about through direct observation. For Xuanzang was not the only Chinese to inform their majesties of conditions in the subcontinent; an official named Wang Xuance was also sent out on at least three successive missions by the old emperor and by the husband of the empress, apparently to explore possible diplomatic cooperation with Indian kings. The date of his third mission has been somewhat in doubt, but the surprising recent discovery of an inscription which it left on its way through Tibet would seem to confirm that it went out in 658 and came back the following year²⁸. There are, however, clear indications that he went back yet again, in 660, and brought back a Buddha relic, a portion of skull-bone, which, given that the round trip always took about one year, was presented to the throne in 661, by which time the empress had,

²⁷ See the study of these forms, which are very hard to date except in the most general terms, by Ishida Mōsaku, *Bukkyō kōkōgaku ronkō*, vol 4 (Kyoto: Shibundō, 1977), pp. 245–262, and especially his estimate of dates on p. 253.

²⁸ See p. 263 of Huo Wei, “Da Tang Tianzhu shi chu ming” ji qi xiangguan wenti de yanjiu’, *Tōhō gakuho* (Kyoto) 66 (March, 1994), pp. 270–53 (reverse pagination).

as noted above, taken over executive authority. But besides this relic he had also acquired in India other religious items donated by monasteries, including four objects described as ‘Buddha seals’. This can only mean seals for stamping images of the Buddha, and so we can be fairly sure that at least the empress saw and understood the use of these items, since all such gifts were presented at court, not just extraordinarily numinous items such as relics. The sources on this fourth trip may be found cited in the *Fayuan zhulin*, a compilation on which more will be said shortly²⁹.

6. *The empress and Aśoka*

But at this time she and her husband were already engaged in religious activities which, although apparently tangential, do in fact help to explain important factors in her involvement in texts and pagodas. In 659 the couple happened to have invited to the palace a monk renowned for his knowledge of spells, who mentioned to them an ancient pagoda some one hundred kilometers west of the capital, said to have been once attached to an establishment known as the Aśoka Monastery. Now places so named are not uncommon in China, for one of the ways in which the cognitive dissonance between a religion all of whose holy sites were in India and a China all of whose holy sites were originally non-Buddhist was to suppose that Aśoka, as a cakravartin world-ruler, must have ruled China once, though because of the famous ‘Burning of the Books’ by the First Emperor of China records as to this episode had been lost. This belief inspired a sort of sacred archaeology, already described to some extent by Zürcher, who points out both that it is so easy to unearth ancient structures in China that traces of allegedly Aśokan foundations were not too difficult for pious Buddhists to identify, and that the discovery of such numinous traces in themselves helped to legitimate the

²⁹ Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin* 29, p. 498a1;39, p. 597b7–12, in edition of Taishō Canon, vol.53, no. 2122. There is just a possibility that the ‘Buddha seals’ were rubbings taken from the relic, after the fashion mentioned by Yijing, which we shall consider below. But even this, as we shall see, is not without relevance to printing.

reigning monarch in a China where auspicious omens were given great political weight³⁰.

In that these ‘responses to stimuli’ (*ganying*) were in general not construed as accidental, but as reflections of the ruler’s virtue, discoveries of this type naturally allowed any ruler to bask amongst his (or, as we shall see, her) subjects in the reflected glory of the great Buddhist world-ruler. But we can most certainly go further than this, for Zhou Yiliang has noted well before the Tang the use of Sanskrit-based, Buddhist-tinged rhetoric in South and South-East Asian diplomatic correspondence with China in general, and flattering references to Aśoka in particular. These must surely have encouraged Chinese rulers to see the advantages of claiming Aśokan connexions and if possible projecting an overtly Aśokan role on the international stage as well³¹.

So it is not surprising to read that the emperor jumped upon this piece of information with alacrity: ‘Is that not the Aśoka who donated a lump of dirt when he was a lad?’ he asked, showing a detailed knowledge of the legend of king Aśoka³². ‘If there’s something there nowadays, then it’s one of the 84,000 stūpas!’ Doubtless, like the emperor, the reader will recall that with supernatural help the great monarch distributed 84,000 relics of the Buddha in stūpas (in some accounts known in China and elsewhere, within *vi-hāras*) across the length and breadth of his domains in a single day³³. On the thaumaturge suggesting that it would indeed be a good

³⁰ E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), pp. 277–280. Further information on Aśokan sites in China may now be found in a series of six articles by Murata Jirō in *Bukkyō Geijutsu*, issues 114 (1977) to 123 (1979).

³¹ Zhou Yiliang, *Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao shi zhaji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), pp. 214–215.

³² For the reference, see John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 200–201, and cf. the comments on pp. 56–69. The offering is made to the Buddha by a child who is, of course, the future Aśoka; the symbolism is too complex to discuss here.

³³ Strong, *King Aśoka*, pp. 219–221, and comments, pp. 115–19.

idea to check, the enthusiastic emperor replies, 'If we could find a relic that would be a good cause in the most profound way!', and issues instructions for preliminary ceremonies to be carried out for seven days before conducting a search. To cut a long story short, his agents found the relic, and, leaving behind a statue of Aśoka of equal size to the emperor, brought it back to the capital, where it was soon joined by the skullbone from India³⁴. When the relic was returned to its place of origin in 662, on the understanding that it would only be put on display every thirty years, it was accompanied by lavish gifts of clothing from the empress. There these textiles of hers remained undisturbed as property of the Buddha (or rather the fraction of him in that place), until rediscovered in 1981³⁵.

For the monastery in question is none other than that best known as the Famensi, whose lavish reliquaries and donated goods (mainly, in firmly identifiable cases, from later in the dynasty) have astonished the modern world, most recently though the 'Gilded Dragons'

³⁴ Patricia Karetzky, in n.30, p. 224, of 'The Representation of Women in Medieval China', *T'ang Studies* 17 (1999), pp. 213–271, suggests that the statue bore the emperor's features. There were precedents for this under the Northern Wei, but I am not sure that the evidence can be so construed in this case. The capital in question is now Luoyang, not (as above) Changan; the empress alternated between the two, but seems to have disliked Changan (perhaps fearing the ghosts of murdered rivals) and favoured Luoyang.

³⁵ *Fayuan zhulin*, 38, pp. 586b–587a. Much of the Chinese scholarship on these finds has been subsumed into a lengthy study by Kegasawa Yasunori, 'Hōmonji shutsudo no Tōdai bunbutsu to sono haikai', in Tonami Mamoru, ed., *Chūgoku no chūsei bunbutsu* (Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku Jimbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1993), pp. 581–641: see p. 591 (and comments, p. 595) for a late Tang inscription from the crypt which would appear to suggest that the surviving clothing includes a skirt which once belonged to the empress herself. For some spectacular illustrations of these materials (to say nothing of the other finds), see Wu Limin and Han Jinke, *Famensi digong Tang mi mantuluo zhi yanjiu* (Xianggang: Zhongguo fojiao wenhua youxian gongsi, 1998), pp. 457–9, though this important monograph is mainly devoted to the doctrinal implications of the discoveries.

exhibition in London³⁶. Those fortunate enough to have seen these will have witnessed quite tangible evidence for the imperial obsession with relics. But for our current purposes it is the notion of 84,000 stūpas as a symbol of monarchy that intrigues, for anyone interested in emulating the legendary distribution of such relics would perhaps have been prompted to think of the rapid creation of relics in textual form, and in China would no doubt think of texts on paper rather than clay. Would the empress have had such an interest stimulated? Not necessarily by the discoveries at the Famensi, one imagines, but some other reports reaching her in 661 are far more likely to have caused her to reflect on the manufacture of multiple pagodas. And here again the initial motive for launching an imperial investigation concerned the use of religious space.

7. *The empress and the Five Terrace Mountains*

For there was one great exception to the Indian location of Buddhist religious space, one extraordinary trump card possessed by the Chinese. In the northeast of China lies a series of peaks known as Wutaishan, the ‘Five Terrace Mountains’, which had become identified with a location mentioned in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, and were therefore by the seventh century widely believed throughout Buddhist Asia to be the abode of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī³⁷. The empress, whose family was from the area, at this point commissioned a sur-

³⁶ Carol Michaelson, *Gilded Dragons* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), pp. 148–162. Unfortunately, the surviving textiles were too delicate to send abroad for this exhibition.

³⁷ Or so it would seem from Chinese sources, though the best evidence for the widespread influence of this belief is somewhat later, as we shall see. The considerable body of recent research in various languages into the religious history of Wutaishan has not yet been brought together in any monographic study, though in English the articles by Raoul Birnbaum and Robert Gimello on this holy site may be read with particular profit, and the book by Du (see next note) covers much relevant material in Chinese; cf. also the article cited in n.66 below.

vey of this spiritual asset, and the results must have intrigued her³⁸. For there was plenty of evidence on the mountains of earlier imperial interest, specifically at first from the Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei, who reigned in the late fifth century. A forebear in the Northern Wei dynasty—a unique, half-foreign regime from which the seventh century ultimately derived many of its political institutions—had once savagely persecuted Buddhism, but Xiaowen is best known as a lavish (and perhaps guilt-stricken) patron responsible for the colossal Buddhist art carved out of the mountain at Yungang³⁹. On Wutaishan, it was discovered, his imprint had not been so colossal, but it was impressive, for large numbers of miniature pagodas in stone were found in the mountains, the carvings and (according to one passage) inlaid text or pattern (*wen*) upon them still visible⁴⁰.

Now if there were texts on them, the likelihood is that they would have contained the formula on causality studied by Boucher. A number of examples of short stone pagodas less than a metre tall inscribed with texts of this sort have been found not on Wutaishan but further west, and not from the late fifth century, but from its first half, when the region was initially not under the control of the Northern Wei but of the Northern Liang, on the Central Asian fringes of

³⁸ The speculation that some family interest may have spurred the interest of the empress may be found in Du Doucheng, *Dunhuang Wutaishan wenxian jiaolu, yanjiu* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1991), p. 111, though it is pointed out that on p. 110 that the Sui dynasty also took an interest in the holy sites there—this precedent in fact gains added interest in view of what follows below.

³⁹ James O. Caswell, *Written and Unwritten: A New History of the Buddhist Caves at Yungang* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), provides a recent summary of scholarship, pp. 13–28, showing firm evidence for imperial involvement in the project, even if the argument of his study is mainly directed against the assumption that all construction at this site was due to imperial patronage.

⁴⁰ *Fayuan zhulin* 14, p. 393a11–13, which mentions ‘several thousand’ of these pagodas with discernible *wen* on them, and 39, p. 596a11–12, which again speaks of discernible carving. We shall return to the other monuments of Wutaishan in due course.

China—indeed, conquest by the Northern Wei drove the last rulers of this dynasty right out of what was normally considered Chinese territory⁴¹. These pagodas, then, have been seen as the product of a distinct regional culture, but a recent analysis of their fusion of Buddhist and Chinese symbolism has revealed clear evidence of eschatological interests on the part of whoever made them, for to symbolism indicating the Buddhas of the past they add also pointers to Maitreya, Buddha of the future⁴².

But we cannot be sure that the stone pagodas of Wutaishan that were reported to the empress followed this format, and by the time that we get another report on their existence a couple of decades later they had evidently fallen into disrepair, so that though they still could be seen as late as the mid-ninth century, we learn nothing further of their form or function⁴³. All we can say is that the creation of multiple miniature pagodas was a practice for which the empress would have had Chinese imperial precedents by 662. There is no record of her immediately setting out to emulate this feat, but there is a record in the earliest surviving work to describe Wutaishan in detail, datable to 679, suggesting that she was interested in propagating knowledge of these miniature stūpas, and of the wonderful world of

⁴¹ These stone pagodas are briefly discussed with references to earlier scholarship as part of an overall survey of the distinctive Buddhist culture of the Northern Liang on pp. 71–72 of Susanne Juhl, ‘Cultural Exchange in Northern Liang’ in Søren Clausen, Roy Starrs and Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg, *Cultural Encounters: China, Japan, and the West* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), pp. 55–82; a more recent and detailed survey in Chinese may be found in the second part of the article by Liu Shufen introduced below, n.61.

⁴² Yin Guangming, ‘Bei Liang shita shang de *Yijing* bagua yu qi Fo yi Mile zaixiang’, *Dunhuang yanjiu* 57.1 (1997), pp. 81–89.

⁴³ For the next report, of 679, see Huixiang, *Gu Qingliang zhuan*, A, p. 1094a 11, in edition of Taishō Canon, vol.51, no. 2098. For the mid-ninth century, cf. Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary*, pp. 239, 243. For the Chinese literature on Wutaishan I have for ease of reference cited the Taishō editions, but have also consulted the annotated versions of Chen Yangjiong and Feng Qiaoying, *Gu Qingliang zhuan*, *Guang Qingliang zhuan*, *Xu Qingliang zhuan* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1989).

Wutai in general. For she at least permitted, or more likely encouraged, the compiler of her official report to issue a brief summary of his findings, accompanying a small map, which was apparently widely disseminated in the metropolitan area⁴⁴. As the proof of the acceptability of a part of her sickly husband's domain as the dwelling place of a bodhisattva this document would surely have been a useful tool in the propaganda of legitimation which seems to have constantly preoccupied the couple. Naturally we tend to think of such matters in Confucian terms in China, but during this period in Chinese history quite different approaches to the demonstration of the right to rule had already been tried out by other regimes, most famously by the Sui dynasty, which had immediately preceded the Tang, and the southern Liang dynasty, organizers and arbiters of much of the elite cultural heritage that the Tang had taken over. As we shall see, there is every reason to suppose that the empress would have had at least some of these precedents in mind⁴⁵.

8. *The empress and the Chinese Buddhist heritage*

For by 668, she would have had potentially at her disposal a source of information not only recapitulating the notable Buddhist events we have mentioned so far for her joint reign with her husband, but providing also a great deal of other items relevant to our topic as well. This was the *Fayuan zhulin*, on which we have relied not only for our account of Wang Xuance's last mission but also for its descriptions of the mission to investigate the Famensi and to survey Wutaishan. The *Fayuan zhulin* is a large encyclopaedia compiled by Daoshi, a monk who worked in a large metropolitan monastery

⁴⁴ Huixiang, *Gu Qingliang zhuan*, A, p. 1098c16–17; the line preceding this passage makes quite clear the agency of the empress in arranging the investigative mission, as would have been natural to someone writing in 679.

⁴⁵ For a very general account of Chinese kingship which at last begins to do justice to these alternatives, see Julia Ching, *Mysticism and kingship in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 206–234.

founded by the husband of the empress⁴⁶. It bears a preface by a layman, a fairly obscure bureaucrat of the day, but one who was used as a calligrapher by the emperor at one point, and so was presumably known to him⁴⁷. Anyone with the leisure to read all of it would, one suspects, gain a remarkable knowledge of seventh-century Chinese Buddhism and its sources. Whether its original readers included the empress we simply cannot tell, though it is not impossible.

Had she picked it up, she could have learned of a sūtra already translated which described the manufacture of minature pagodas with tiny Buddha images inside ‘as big as a myrobalan’—a fruit particularly associated with Aśoka⁴⁸. She could have read of rediscovered Aśokan stūpas not only in China, but further afield in Korea and Japan⁴⁹. And she could have studied in detail the attempts made by the preceding Sui dynasty to emulate Aśoka by distributing relics across the empire—and by request yet further, to the kingdoms of the Korean peninsula—by the dozen, rather than the thousand⁵⁰. This last information, moreover, she may well have picked up al-

⁴⁶ For this important source, see S. F. Teiser, ‘T’ang Buddhist Encyclopedias: An Introduction to the *Fa-yüan Chu-lin* and *Chu-ching yao-chi*’, *T’ang Studies* 3 (1985), pp. 109–128.

⁴⁷ Cen Zhongmian, *Jinshi luncong* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), pp. 97–99.

⁴⁸ *Fayuan zhulin* 37, pp. 580c–581a; cf. Strong, *Legend*, pp. 90–91.

⁴⁹ *Fayuan zhulin* 38, pp. 584c–589a (with Japan and Korea mentioned in the last two frames).

⁵⁰ *Fayuan zhulin* 40, pp. 602b–604a1—the last frame gives the precise reference to the distribution to the Korean kingdoms; Arthur F. Wright, ‘The Formation of Sui Ideology, 581–604’, in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 71–104, sets this episode in its larger context. I am also deeply indebted to Chen Jinhua for sending me a copy of his major unpublished monograph, ‘*Śarīra*, Sceptre and Staff: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics’, which constitutes an excellent reconsideration of the entire enterprise. In particular Chen includes an appendix containing a full translation of the original documents, as preserved in another seventh century compilation which again could have been read by the empress.

ready in any case, for the former rulers of the Sui, the Yang family, had married one of their lesser female family members to a military man who had been one of the first to abandon the dynasty when it failed and support the nascent power of the Tang dynasty. This man's reward was to see his own daughter received into the imperial harem, the very same daring young woman who was to become the Empress Wu—and, ironically, to break the power of the narrow elite that had dominated China through several changes of regime.

The members of that elite, of course, hated her and resented her power, so that had she not demonstrated an unrivalled efficiency in using it to the good of the dynasty she would soon have perished at the hands of her enemies. The main task that confronted the dynasty, now in its third reign, was the perpetuation of power won by force of arms, and it was for this reason therefore, as much as because of the unimpressive physical state of her husband already alluded to, that questions of ideology and the more abstract justification of power loomed large. Under such circumstances it was necessary to go beyond currying the support of the elite in order to seek the goodwill of as large a section of society as possible. Now, as it happens, for reasons not yet fully understood the late sixth century and the seventh were in China—and possibly further afield—an age of unusual doubt and anxiety, expressed in Buddhist circles in the notion of the 'decline of the dharma'. This was in itself not a new analysis of the bleak prospects for Buddhism as the memory of the appearance of the Buddha himself in our world faded into an ever more remote past, but it was certainly an analysis that gained renewed strength at this time⁵¹. And the word analysis is perhaps the wrong one in any case: the feelings of which I speak seem to have

⁵¹ Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time* (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, n.d., reprint of Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 1991), pp. 110–118, reexamines the notion that sixth century Hephthalite persecutions of Buddhism prompted the formulation of a new timetable of decline, which in conclusion here and on p. 136–7 is designated an East Asian concept. The sources she cites, such as studies by P. Magnin and James Hubbard, however, show that from the start it was an extremely powerful one.

been much more visceral and deep seated than anything susceptible to intellectual analysis. What everyone craved was the reassurance of a form of spiritual presence, an affirmative sense of the immediacy of spiritual power⁵².

9. *The empress and her translators*

It is against such a background, of course, that we must understand the interest of emperor and empress in relics. In the short term, however, a non-Buddhist solution to the question of spiritual presence probably tended to occupy more of their time. For the Tang ruling house claimed descent from Laozi, founder of Taoism, who in current belief occupied a position of cosmic power every bit on a par with the most uplifting Mahāyānist conceptions of Buddhahood. Alleged divine descent was not a novelty in China, but the potency of the particular connexion was obviously well worth exploiting, and I have described elsewhere how this was done⁵³. The empress herself, of course, could not claim divine descent in the same way, but the Taoist religion affords plenty of scope for divine motherhood, as she was evidently quick to appreciate.

Where this could no longer work as a preferred solution was, of course, a situation in which a rift had developed between mother and sons, and where the empress wished to act not as a mother but as a person in her own right. This, as I have already mentioned, is exactly what happened after the death of her husband, especially during the late 680s. It was surely at this point that the Buddhist answers to the problems of spiritual presence once more rose up her agenda—whence they had probably never been omitted, in that Buddhism seems to have had a somewhat firmer grip on the sentiments of the population of China than Taoism, which had been late

⁵² Collins, *Nirvana*, pp. 24–5, cautions against reading Christian presuppositions into this, though Chinese presuppositions were probably somewhat less distant from Christian ones than the South Asian modes of thinking which he explains later (reference in n.11 above).

⁵³ T. H. Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang* (London: Wellsweep, 1996), pp. 29–40.

in developing such institutions as a full-time celibate clergy on the Buddhist model, whereas the Buddhist *saṅgha* undoubtedly had played a major role in propagating the Indian religion in East Asia.

Nor had contacts with India ceased: in the final years of her husband's life, and in the years that followed, monks continued to arrive with new sources on Indian Buddhism. Many of these late seventh century missionaries have been studied by Antonino Forte in a number of widely scattered articles, which bring out some intriguing features less evident at other periods. For example, the new dynasty had been quite successful in extending its control into Inner Asia along the trade routes which either carried through to Iran or turned south through Kashmir into India, the area termed by Sir Aurel Stein 'Serindia', and this intermediate zone in due course produced once more learned monks familiar with both cultures and their languages. Whereas in principle an original text in an Indian language had been to the Chinese an obvious guarantee of Buddhist orthodoxy, whatever suspicions modern scholars now harbour about the products of the intermediate Serindian zone, during this period we find at least one clear example of an Indian at the court of the empress who in 693 was able to include panegyrics in Sanskrit on her behalf into a Buddhist composition and then translate the piece into Chinese⁵⁴. The Japanese scholar Osabe Kazuo, who has carried out a very useful study of the importation of new forms of Tantric Buddhism during the ascendancy of the empress also points out that several of these translations include what he loosely calls 'Taoist' elements,

⁵⁴ Antonino Forte, 'Hui-chih (fl. 676–703 A.D.), a Brahmin born in China', *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale* 45 (1983), pp. 105–134. For an earlier example of what must be taken as a Serindian product incorporating ideas from both cultures, see the research of Nobuyoshi Yamabe as reported on p. 6 of Valerie Hansen, 'The Silk Road Project: Returning Turfan's Scattered Treasures', *Revue Bibliographique de Sinologie*, n.s. 17 (1999), pp. 63–73. For a survey of the special significance of the area to the emergence of Tantrism for East Asia, see Todd Gibson, 'Inner Asian Contributions to the Vajrayāna', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 38 (1995), pp. 1–21.

that is, expressions which would seem more at home in a Chinese rather than an Indian religious environment⁵⁵.

Such a tailoring of translation to their audience likewise suggests to me the presence at least of bilingual intermediaries with a very keen political sense of the advantages of deliberately slanting Buddhist texts towards a potential Chinese readership. This makes me wonder in particular about another translation concerning the benefits of making images of the Buddha, carried out by a monk from Khotan in Serindia, Devendraprajña, in 691, who has also been the subject of an article by Forte⁵⁶. For this text seems to make a point of stressing the benefits of making Buddha images for women in particular, and despite the evidence that some authors adduce for an Indian background to such notions, one cannot help wondering to what extent it may have been written *ad feminam*⁵⁷.

10. The empress and the 'Crowning Glory'

Both the specific examples I have cited actually relate to a later phase in the career of the empress (or emperor, to use the male title she had assumed by that point) when, as we shall see, Forte's research has shown that in any case interpolations on her behalf may be plainly detected in one key translation. The phenomenon is mentioned here because it throws a cautionary backward light over the next episode that concerns us, namely the multiple translation and dissemination of the *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*, in Chinese the *Foding zunsheng*

⁵⁵ Osabe Kazuo, *Tō-Sō Mikkyōshi ronkō* (Kobe: Kobe Joshi Daigaku, 1982), pp. 1–33. We shall return to Osabe's observations below in due course.

⁵⁶ On this monk and his translations, see Antonino Forte, 'Le Moine Khotanais Devendraprajña', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 66 (1979), pp. 289–297.

⁵⁷ Note *Zao xiang gongde jing* A, p. 795b and especially 795c1–3, in edition of Taishō Canon, 16, no. 604. For some surprising materials on women and image dedication in early Buddhism, see Schopen, *Bones, stones, and Buddhist monks*, pp. 248–250; for women and stūpas in Indian materials, see e.g. Sugimoto Takushū, *Indo Buttō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1984), pp. 414–418.

tuoluoni jing, later as personified as a goddess and translated into English as ‘Crowning Victory’. In this form, which does not concern us here, ‘Crowning Victory’ has been shown by Rob Linrothe to have been the focus of a considerable cult in Tangut territory during the twelfth century, leading to the imperial printing and distribution of thousands of texts and images⁵⁸.

There is certainly no doubt that the Indian practice of combining text and stūpa to provide a site for relic worship in the fashion illuminated by Boucher became known in 680, for he renders into English a short work translated in that year which describes as before the creation of miniature pagodas as big as a myrobalan, but makes quite clear that now they might hold as relics the four-line verse on causality that is the object of his research⁵⁹. There is also no doubt at all that the ‘Crowning Victory’ text was also transmitted to East Asia at much the same time, for an actual Sanskrit manuscript of the text apparently dating to the seventh century survives to this day in Japan⁶⁰. What is less clear to me at present, pending the researches of other scholars, is the chronology not simply of the translation but of the dissemination of this key text, though we do already possess a number of useful studies relating to it, including an excellent two part article in Chinese by Liu Shufen⁶¹.

It would seem fairly certain, at least, that a translation, perhaps a revision of earlier work done in 679, was made in 682 by the trans-

⁵⁸ See p. 96 of Rob Linrothe, ‘Xia Renzong and the Patronage of Tangut Buddhist Art: The Stūpa and Ushinīshavijayā Cult’, *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 28 (1998), pp. 91–121. The references given in this article are extremely useful for an understanding of much of the imagery with which we are dealing here, even though they refer to a later stage in the development of the cult concerned. I have also borrowed Linrothe’s translation of the title of our text, more for its succinctness than its literal accuracy.

⁵⁹ Boucher, ‘Cult of the Relics’, pp. 8–10.

⁶⁰ Linrothe, ‘Xia Renzong’, p. 97, n.20.

⁶¹ Liu Shufen, ‘*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* yu Tangdai zunsheng jingchuan de jianli: jingchuang yanjiu zhi yi’ and ‘Jingchuang de xingzhi, xingzhi he laiyuan: jingchuang zhi yanjiu er’, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 67.1 (1996), pp. 145–193, and 68.3 (1997), pp. 643–786, respectively.

lator already responsible for the 680 text examined by Boucher⁶². The date is given in the surviving preface by Yanzong, biographer of Xuanzang, and the text, while not identical with later translations, makes clear that one of the functions of the *dhāraṇī* was to turn any stūpa containing it into a relic site⁶³. The problem arises with the text which bears the name of Buddhapāli, for here we are dependent on an undated preface by one Zhijing, which appears to have been written shortly after 689, that is, during the very period when the empress was moving towards abandoning the Tang dynasty to rule in her own right⁶⁴. Zhijing claims to have obtained his information from Divākara, the translator of the 682 version, who had conveniently died in 688, but early in the next century it was already noted by a normally well-informed but discreet bibliographer that his chronology of events is somewhat awry⁶⁵. Whatever the actual truth of the matter, the story given by Zhijing became extremely widely known, and is even depicted in a small surviving sketch of the Tang period, while the text concerned eclipsed all other translations in popularity⁶⁶.

And no wonder, for Zhijing states that in 676 Buddhapāli had travelled from India to prostrate himself at Wutaishan, declaring that since the Buddha's decease all other spiritual beings were hidden;

⁶² For whom see Antonino Forte, 'Divākara (613–688), un monaco indiano nella Cina dei T'ang', *Annali della Facoltà di lingue e letterature straniere di Ca' Foscari*, 13.3 (1974), pp. 135–174. A convenient survey of the 'Crowning Victory' translations of this period by Misaki Ryōshū may be found in Makita Tairyō and Fukui Fumimasa, eds., *Tonkō to Chūgoku Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1984), pp. 115–129.

⁶³ *Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing*, (no. 969), pp. 355b, 356b–c, in Taishō Canon, vol.19.

⁶⁴ *Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing* (no. 967), pp. 349b–c, in *ibidem*.

⁶⁵ Zhisheng, *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* 9, p. 565b5–8, in Taishō Canon, vol.55, no. 2154.

⁶⁶ For the sketch, see pp. 96–7 and the reproduction of the ms. P. 4049 p. 98 of Zhao Shengliang, 'Mogaoku di 61 ku Wutaishan tu yanjiu', *Dunhuang yanjiu* 37.4 (1993), pp. 88–107; for the popularity of this version of the text, see the survey by Misaki cited above, n.62.

only the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in these mountains continued the Buddha's work, and that therefore, since he had always regretted living in an age without a Buddha, he had crossed the shifting sands in the hope of a meeting. He looks up, of course, to see an old man approaching, who congratulates him on his earnestness, but points out that China is deeply encumbered by bad karma, and that the saṅgha there is none too observant; only the 'Crowning Victory' text can overcome these defects. Buddhapāli confesses that he has not brought a copy with him, to which the old man replies that in that case there is no point in meeting Mañjuśrī; he had better go back and get it, to distribute in China and remedy the situation; only then will his interlocutor tell him the whereabouts of the bodhisattva.

The Indian returns, and reports back again in 683 with the text to the emperor, who commissions others, including Divākara, to translate it, and keeps it in the palace, giving Buddhapāli a reward. This he responds to by saying that he is not in the translation business for the money or fame, but had hoped to benefit sentient beings. The emperor hands back the Sanskrit original, which Buddhapāli has translated with permission outside court circles at the monastery where Daoshi had lived, after which he takes it off to Wutaishan, never to be seen again, leaving both translations to circulate. Later in 687 Zhijing meets up with Divākara, who goes over both translations with him, paying particular attention to the pronunciation of the Sanskrit, so as to come up with a definitive version.

It is obvious both that this story raises problems concerning the earlier translations and that the emperor, who in 683 was still her ailing husband, does not come out of this very well—indeed, he is guilty of wishing to keep a text of potential mass benefit to the nation to himself. This was no doubt a very convenient thing to emerge just as the empress, rapidly abandoning her recently assumed role of Holy Mother, found it expedient to be done with husband, children and with Taoism, the cult of the Li family, and started looking overtly to Buddhism to legitimate her undisguised personal rule. The story might even provide a convenient excuse to cover her own relative neglect of Buddhism while exploring Taoist options.

And while tales of Indians coming to worship at Wutaishan may already be found in the text of 679 to which we have already alluded, the clearly articulated notion that only China now gave any prospect of contact with an important bodhisattva must be seen as consistent with the attitudes towards sacred space already displayed by the empress. One hopes that future research may uncover more details concerning Zhijing. All we can say at present is that two other monks associated with the dissemination of the ‘Crowning Victory’ text, Xinggan and Bolun, have been identified by Professor Forte as close supporters of the empress in her ideological manoeuvres at this crucial time⁶⁷.

But there is one more point to be made about the ‘Crowning Victory’. The Buddhapāli version recommends dissemination by four methods, and besides the use of writing on clay or paper that we have already mentioned, three of them are epigraphic, in the sense that they require writing upon hard surfaces such as walls, mountains and pillars. The latter means of dissemination has attracted the most attention, since epigraphers have found many examples providing excellent examples of the highly regarded calligraphy of the Tang⁶⁸. This should perhaps not surprise us, when the text itself claims that the very shadow of a pillar bearing its words, the very least particle of dust blown from its surface, could cause the removal of bad karma from anyone within range⁶⁹. But the assiduous research of Liu Shufen has established that the multitude of pillars found cannot be regarded simply as equivalents to the other Tang period steles whence epigraphers are wont to take copies of such materials for other reasons.

Thus it is certainly quite possible that the Empress Wu was alive to the wider symbolism of these new structures, in terms of what has been seen as the association between the pillars of Aśoka, the

⁶⁷ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 99.

⁶⁸ Note the survey by Du Weisheng in Xu Ziqiang, *Beijing tushuguan cang shike xulu* (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988), pp. 176–187, of calligraphic materials in his institution collected from pillars featuring this *dhāraṇī*.

⁶⁹ Taishō Canon 19, p. 351b.

stūpa form, and the notion of an *axis mundi*, for an immense octagonal obelisk known as the Axis of the Sky was later one of the glories of her capital⁷⁰. For our purposes, however, it is more immediately significant that to Liu, the format of the pillars on which the ‘Crowning Victory’ text was transcribed shows unambiguously that they also served as stūpas containing the dharma-body of the Buddha—in short, that the practice already described of inserting text within to serve as a relic was in an important sense the primary purpose of the new form⁷¹. This, indeed, may explain why they became so popular (for example under the Liao dynasty) in memorial contexts⁷². And Liu shows, too, that whatever the true story of the arrival of the text, the earliest dated version of a pillar dedicated to it is 689⁷³. In this way the Buddhapāli story enhanced the appeal of Wutaishan, trump card of the empress in the Buddhō-Taoist struggle over sacred space, and at the same time encouraged the spread across the landscape of a new sanctifying device suitable for local erection which did not require any investment from the state⁷⁴.

11. The empress moves to centre stage

This means that this new form of stūpa had started to spread before the empress finally plumped for Buddhist forms of legitimation and

⁷⁰ Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1988), pp. 233–243; the final page suggests the Aśokan link. See also e.g. Sugimoto, *Indo Buttō*, for more on the wider symbolism.

⁷¹ Liu Shufen, ‘Jingchuang de xingzhi’.

⁷² Its relative dominance over other texts in this role during the Liao, at least in epigraphic situations, may be seen from Chen Shu, comp. and ed., *Liao wen cun* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), *juan* 9–12, pp. 220, 224, 230, 240, 245, 257, 280, 297, 305, 307, 314, 318, 324, 348, etc.

⁷³ Liu’s table at the end of the second part of the study, ‘Jingchuang de xingzhi’, cites the date from a brief mention of this monument in a report entitled ‘Shaanxi suojian de Tangdai jingchuang’, *Wenwu* 1959, 8, pp. 29–30.

⁷⁴ This is explained by Liu’s earlier article in English, already cited above in n.14, which stresses not simply the benefits to the central state but also to local elites that might derive from the erection of Buddhist structures in rural society.

founded her own, personal dynasty, the Zhou, in 690⁷⁵. It is interesting to note the role played by images and stūpas in the process of legitimation. Forte's very thorough study of this crucial phase in the career of the empress has uncovered the fact that for all the subsequent discussion of the part played by a work known as the *Great Cloud (Mahāmegha) Sūtra*, a completely undeniable interpolation supporting the empress in another Buddhist text, the *Rain of Jewels (Ratnamegha) Sūtra*, has been generally overlooked. This equally important prophecy of female rule produced in 693 reads in part 'May you practise the Ten Good Rules, apply my Law, magnify and maintain it, and erect stūpas and temples'⁷⁶. Two sentences later this spurious prophecy further announces that 'Your name will be Yue-jingguang, Pure Moonlight', which very much reinforces the same point.

For Erik Zürcher has shown that here there is a deliberate reference to the messianic figure Prince Moonlight, the subject of an earlier spurious prophecy to the Sui ancestors of the empress, which he translates: 'He will patronise Buddhism on a grandiose scale, notably by the reproduction and spread of holy texts, the making of Buddha images of every kind, and the establishment of Buddha sanctuaries in all parts of the empire'⁷⁷. In the original 'reproduction' does not plainly signify printing, but 'sanctuary' does stand for stūpa. And if the empress felt obliged to fulfil this prophecy as assiduously as the Sui had done, then she had plenty to do, for we know from the *Fayuan zhulin* that they had financed the (evidently purely manual) creation of literally hundreds of thousands of volumes of sūtras, probably well over half a million in total, to say nothing of 20,358 images⁷⁸. What better response could there be to

⁷⁵ Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, p. 42.

⁷⁶ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 130.

⁷⁷ Erik Zürcher, on pp. 25–27 of 'Prince Moonlight', *T'oung pao* 68 (1982), pp. 1–75, citing Taishō Canon, vol.14, no. 545, p. 849.

⁷⁸ *Fayuan zhulin* 100, p. 1026b4, gives the precise figures for the first reign alone of '46 canons, 132,086 volumes': these two figures cannot be equivalents, since the contemporary canon contained six thousand and ninety-eight volumes,

the fear, quite apparent in Chinese Buddhist and Taoist circles, that with the onset of final, irreversible religious decline, pending the appearance of a supernatural figure with the power to renew all things, all sūtras and other relics would disappear from this world?⁷⁹

In Buddhist circles, moreover, we do not have to rely simply on a few scattered prophetic utterances to gauge the profound insecurity that afflicted Chinese civilization in the late sixth and seventh centuries over the future of its sacred texts. Ample testimony still survives in the form of the impressive number of sūtras that from this time on started to be carved out of the mountain stone of north China in the explicit hope that this durable medium would outlast the decline that was bound to come. The first efforts in this vein date to the Northern Qi dynasty of the late sixth century, and focus in particular on texts associated with the ‘decline of the dharma’⁸⁰. But by Tang times the massive project to carve the whole canon in the form that now survives at Fangshan was already under way, and both the contemporary reports and a surviving inscription in situ explaining the aim of the project make it perfectly plain that the same motivation inspired

according to the standard history compiled by seventh century scholars, *Sui shu* 35 (Beijing; Zhonghua shuju, 1973), p. 1095. We should also add in some more for the second reign, though the figures given for this in the *Fayuan zhulin* would appear only to cover volumes conserved, not new products. It is all in all no wonder that this *Sui shu* bibliography chapter concludes (p. 1099) that the Buddhist literature in circulation at this time, thanks to popular emulation of the state’s productivity, outweighed the Confucian classics by a factor of ‘several tens of hundreds’.

⁷⁹ The original, less threatening form of this ancient doctrine is explained in Collins, *Nirvana*, pp. 247–8; cf. Zürcher, ‘Prince Moonlight’, p. 28, for much more profound Chinese pessimism at this point.

⁸⁰ The most recent research into the phenomenon is that contained in Kegasawa Yasunori, ed., *Chūgoku Bukkyō sekkō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1996), which has English summaries of relevant chapters on pp. 495–498: see also pp. 108–131 for a full survey in Japanese of the beliefs involved, by Odani Nakao. For an earlier assessment of the stone scriptures of the Northern Qi, see Yagi Sentai, ‘Hokusei no kokkyō ni tsuite’, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 27.1 (1978), pp. 128–9.

this remarkable feat as well⁸¹. So it was not in the hope of gaining more reading materials that printing spread in China, but rather in the fear that what they had to read and to value—in some quantity, one might add, on the evidence from the Sui period—might not last. Against any objective account of the rude good health of East Asian manuscript culture we may dismiss this fear as entirely illusory, but it was nevertheless a political fact, and one which the empress needed to turn to her own purposes. Ideally, too, in her campaign (as revealed by the ‘Crowning Glory’ preface) to contrast her own inclusivism with the exclusive, ‘divine kingship’ model of legitimation favoured by her Tang in-laws, she needed to make the sacred available in a mass way more easy of access than texts carved in or on distant mountains.

12. *The empress plays Aśoka*

As it happens, we can be quite sure that by the time that the empress made her move to set up her own dynasty, she had taken on another role, one which we have seen her toying with even in the early days of her ascendancy, and one in which the mass distribution of potent symbols from the centre to the periphery formed the most important characteristic. For her propagandists state, in their commentary on the *Great Cloud Sūtra*, a text only rediscovered in this century, that she had already acquired through an auspicious discovery in her capital more than ten thousand relics. To judge by sources located by Forte in his translation of this work, this had taken place in 677, though their ideological use seems to have been delayed until after her husband’s death, till 684, when the omen was associated with

⁸¹ Apart from the work of Kegasawa, mentioned in the preceding note, it is also possible to consult an English translation of a contemporary description from the *Mingbao ji* of Tang Lin in Donald E. Gjerston, *Miraculous Retribution* (Berkeley: Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 165–166, and a preliminary account of recent research by Lewis Lancaster, ‘The Rock-cut Canon in China: Findings at Fang-shan’, in T. Skorupski, ed., *The Buddhist Heritage* (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1989), pp. 143–156: note in particular the inscription mentioned on p. 147 at n.13, *ibid.*

the renaming of Luoyang as a 'holy capital' (*shendu*) and other reforms in administrative nomenclature⁸².

This delay in itself is worth remarking, and not only in view of what we have already said with regard to the 'Crowning Victory' concerning the contrast she seems to have been at pains to spell out between her husband's implied desire to keep Buddhist blessings to himself and her own conspicuous commitment to distributing them. For at the same time, as one expert on her reign has already pointed out, her measures of 684 may well have been prompted by the appearance of a Buddhist 'false messiah' and the consequent need to anticipate further popular charlatans by taking on a messianic role herself—another theme already touched upon that we will need to explore further⁸³.

For our immediate purposes, however, the most significant information added by the propaganda team of 690 is that in a former incarnation the empress had vowed to construct ten times the number of pagodas (that is, reliquaries) made by Aśoka himself, and further that by the time that they were writing she had already distributed the relics of 677 to the 'Four Continents'. The last phrase can only mean that she had already taken on an international Aśokan role by sending at least some of the relics overseas⁸⁴. Given that they would therefore have been contained in pagodas of a portable size for transport, a definite historical antecedent for the later Japanese distribution of thousands of relics inside small wooden pagodas becomes immediately apparent, no matter what it was that justified the Japanese ruler's use of relics in printed, textual form.

We can unfortunately expect no confirmation of this in non-Chinese records. The recently formed Japanese centralized state produced its earliest surviving historical works soon after the Empress

⁸² Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 202, nn. 112, 113; cf. Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian* 203 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), p. 6421.

⁸³ R. W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China* (Bellingham, Washington: Western Washington University, 1978), p. 35.

⁸⁴ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 203; cf. pp. 208, 269.

Wu's reign. But it remained too concerned with its own international standing to mention either in its accounts of the late seventh century or in describing its own later eighth century relic distributions the receipt of any relics from China, for this could well be construed as an acknowledgement of the Aśokan status of the empress, and hence of their subordination. Later Korean sources are much more free in describing relics in the Korean peninsula as being of Chinese origin, but nothing of particular relevance to the empress appears to be contained in them, and unfortunately no documentary sources now survive from the seventh or eighth centuries that might provide more useful information⁸⁵. The best that can be said is that Chinese diplomatic records for 681 and 693 detail contacts that could have allowed for a transfer of relics to the newly unified Korea to have taken place⁸⁶. Equally there is nothing to show in this case either that relics in three dimensional, solid form were accompanied to Korea by textual relics, whether printed or in manuscript. But here, as we shall see, the evidence of archaeology, unknown until the late twentieth century, does allow us to conclude that by 706 at the latest in Korea both three dimensional and textual relics were used in conjunction—and in the latter case, the text in question was so newly translated that it must have been deliberately distributed by the central authorities in China, whether at the behest of the empress herself or of her successor.

And it must be stressed that there is plenty of evidence, some of which we shall review shortly, to show that the empress continued to be obsessed with relics and stūpas for the rest of her reign. In the light of what has been said, however, concerning the particular anxieties over the loss of text and the prophetic messages promising messianic renewal of the textual resources available, it is absurd to do as some have done and imagine her to be the victim of some peculiarly anile form of religious fervour, preoccupied with doubtful

⁸⁵ For Korean traditions on the importation of relics as they existed at a much later point, see Iryōn (1206–1289), *Samguk yusa*, 3, pp. 993a–c, in edition of Taishō Canon, vol.49, no. 2039.

⁸⁶ Wang Qinruo, *Cefu yuangui*, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 964.9b, 10a.

tokens of sanctity. As we have discovered already, in the apocalyptic atmosphere that had prevailed since the sixth century it was vital for any ruler to be able to preempt the messianic longings of the masses and pose as the very embodiment of utopian prophecies—as Aśoka *redivivus*, Maitreya, or anyone else, all at the same time, the more the merrier, in accordance with the same ‘belt and braces’ principle that suggested, as we have just noted, the use of both textual and solid relics at the same time⁸⁷. So pious in her way the empress may have been, but it was power that she really understood—power, and the role of propaganda in securing and diligently upholding it.

13. *Once more the empress and India*

It is therefore against this background, and particularly against the chronology of her quite unique efforts at legitimating female rule that I would understand the apparently offhand remark by Yijing about printing on paper in India. Following the research of Wang Bangwei, I note that Yijing returned briefly to China in 689, just when questions of Buddhist legitimation became crucial, allegedly by accident when a ship he was visiting cast off and set sail. He then returned to the world of normative Buddhism that was supposed to exist beyond China—though only to Southeast Asia, not India—and in 691 was able to send his authoritative account of his observations thence to the empress, before returning himself the next year. He is

⁸⁷ Note that on pp. 136–7 of Kang Le, ‘Zhuanlunwang guannian yu Zhongguo zhonggu de Fojiao zhengzhi’, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan yuyan lishi yanjiusuo jikan* 67.1 (1996), pp. 109–143, the measures taken by the empress in 693, which included the assumption of a title embodying a claim to universal monarchy of the Aśokan type, is seen as the culmination of Chinese trends conflating the separate ‘world-ruler, world-renouncer’ categories of South Asian thought. The best study of what the ideologists employed by the empress actually did, however, is still Forte, *Political Propaganda*, the third chapter of which teases out exactly how popular belief in a messianic Maitreya figure was preempted by having the empress take on this role within safe limits. For an earlier example of a ‘pre-incarnation’ of Maitreya, see Hsiao Bea-hui, ‘Two images of Maitreya: Fu Hsi and Pu-tai Ho-shang’, PhD dissertation, SOAS, 1995.

certainly quite explicit about his aim in this work about helping his ruler achieve the goal of a Buddhist Utopia⁸⁸. We can now see exactly how printing on paper would have played a part in achieving that.

But there is one more aspect of Yijing's account of India that bears indirectly upon printing which has not been remarked before, but which nevertheless merits some discussion. For in another text written at the same time and sent back to China, he remarks equally casually that a monk who had been sent to India on a mission by the husband of the empress had 'taken a printed impression from' (*qu qi yinwen*) a skullbone of the Buddha, possibly the very one that was later conveyed to China, to divine his future⁸⁹. The reference is explained once again by consulting Xuanzang, who describes in more detail how at another relic site a paste spread on a cloth was used to take an impression of the bone in question, again for the purpose of fortune telling⁹⁰. Evidently the practice was well enough known by Yijing's time not to require explanation. The terminology obviously overlaps with that of printing, reminding us that the Chinese use of rubbings can be dated to a stage not long before the invention of the print technology we are considering: though (as experts have pointed out in the past) the two techniques do differ, in some ways, rubbing is much closer to printing than stamping with a seal-like object⁹¹. But if taking an impression of a text could be seen in the same auspicious light as taking one from a relic, this would explain how a printed object could nevertheless be invested with a borrowed sanctity, for otherwise, in the case of copying, the sanctity of the text

⁸⁸ Barrett, 'I-ching', pp. 149, 150.

⁸⁹ See Wang Bangwei, ed., *Da Tang Xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan jiaozhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 11, and cf. Liu, *Silk and Religion*, pp. 34, 42.

⁹⁰ Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, p. 96, and more fully, *Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, p. 59.

⁹¹ For both techniques in the background to printing, see Li Shuhua, 'Yinzhang yu muta de qi yuan ji qi duiyu diaoban yinshua faming zhi yingxiang', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 28 (1957), pp. 107–121.

was very much understood as a product of the correct behaviour of the copyist, as contemporary sources attest⁹².

What we cannot see is any immediate evidence of the empress putting Yijing's new and useful snippets of information into practice. Though a number of factors may be involved, the main reason for this probably lies in the extremely hostile attitude taken towards the empress by our standard historical sources, which are overwhelmingly conventional (or, if you wish, Confucian) in tone, and typically exercise their revenge against her assault on patriarchy by simply ignoring much of what she did. One day, perhaps, some chance discovery may illuminate her work, just as a chance discovery among the Dunhuang manuscripts, S.2713, dated to 670, shows the otherwise unknown popular expectations of apocalypse which she had to outbid with her presentation of her own messianic claims in order to calm the outbreak of wilder imaginings amongst her subjects through a judicious doctrine of 'realized eschatology'. In this short text, the Buddha Dīpaṃkara predicts that Mount Tai is about to collapse, releasing tens of thousands of devils upon the land, and that in the fourth month on the fifth day of 670 a noxious wind will arise from Mount Tai which can kill in two days; only one copy of the prophecy can save an individual, or two a whole family, or three a whole village⁹³. It was against the sporadic propagation of

⁹² Most notably in a story known in several versions in the seventh century and later, translated e.g. by Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, pp. 162–3, in which a copyist is obliged to spend eight years in isolation in order to produce a particularly efficacious transcription of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

⁹³ The full text of this prophecy, of which the original came in three copies, is printed e.g. in Jiang Liangfu, *Mogao ku nianbiao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), p. 241. For Dīpaṃkara's emergence as a significant Buddhist figure, see pp. 68–70 of Richard Gombrich, 'The Significance of Former Buddhas in the Theravādin Tradition', in Somaratna Balasooriya et al., eds., *Buddhist Studies in honour of Walpola Rahula* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1980), pp. 62–72; John Lagerwey, 'Dingguang gufo: Oral and written sources in the study of a saint', *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998), pp. 77–129, shows how the cult of a tenth century thaumaturge who adopted the name Dīpaṃkara has lasted into modern times; Nagai Masayuki, 'Jōkō butsu shinkō kenkyū shiron',

just such disturbing visions that a more efficient technology for spreading the supernatural prestige of the monarch had to be directed so as to promote social order and stability.

But if the terrifying fears that might grip the wider populace are generally as hidden from us as the solutions that a daring ruler might devise to calm them, at least we can tell something from the moralising of the convention-bound bureaucrats who dominate our sources. Precisely because they hated the empress, their reactive tut-tutting involuntarily reveals at least something of her activities relating to relics and other signs of the Buddha's presence. Thus Antonino Forte has devoted the greater part of a laboriously researched monograph to what is still at times a quite tentative reconstruction from our reluctant witnesses of the programme of building work carried out by the empress in her capital. Pagodas on a small scale, even if in large numbers, may well have escaped their attention—we hear nothing from them of the relic distribution attested by the document of 690 examined above—but the symbolism of metropolitan architecture was something which they felt more strongly about. For the endeavours of the empress in this sphere constituted a no less than startling attempt to equip the centre of her world with gigantic symbolic structures, including one housing a massive Buddhist statue⁹⁴.

in Nihon Bukkyō Gakkai, ed., *Bukkyō to takyō to no tairon* (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1997), pp. 79–92, uses materials including some overlap with Lagerwey to suggest cogently a belief in hidden reincarnations of Dīpaṃkara, though his invocation of Manichaean influence fails to persuade.

⁹⁴ Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, especially pp. 53 onwards, though the introductory study may also be construed as showing to what lengths Buddhists were prepared to go to compete with their Taoist rivals over sacred space: the visions of a normative ordination platform described relate much more to the use of platforms by Taoists, whereas the original Buddhist tradition was content to mark off ordination areas simply by ropes. Something of the standards which the Taoists set in this regard, on the basis of early imperial ritual, may be gathered from John Lagerwey, 'Taoist ritual space and dynastic legitimacy', *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995), pp. 87–94.

14. Ruling through relics

These structures were the scandal of the age, and that is why a measure of denunciation of them at least survives, whereas her lesser projects are only heard about occasionally, even indirectly, in our conventional sources. But hear about them we do, even so. In 694, for example, penalties for the theft of any form of Buddhist image, public or private, were included with those for 'great sedition'⁹⁵. This was a category of crimes against the symbols of state power, for which the penalty was instant decapitation for the least offense, with the lesser penalty of strangulation merely for conspiring to carry them out⁹⁶. In 699 an edict was issued forbidding the incorporation of relics of the Buddha into the annual observances of the Buddhist 'ghost festival' in China, as had been done by the monks at one named institution⁹⁷. The perceived problem seems to have been that the context—a festival now ably reconstructed by S. F. Teiser—involved treating the decease of the Buddha as an occasion of actual rather than apparent loss⁹⁸. The promulgation of an edict suggests that there were fears that this practice might spread, indicating that relics were by this point very widely available, though we should remember that in their manifestation as very small, jewel-like objects (some of which have been on display in London recently in

⁹⁵ Wang Pu, ed., *Tang hui yao* 41 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), p. 873.

⁹⁶ Wallace Johnson, *The T'ang Code* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 63–4.

⁹⁷ Song Minqiu, ed., *Tang da zhaoling ji* 113 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1959), p. 587. The given date of this document is the fifth month of 700, but this can only be correct if it was issued at the very start of the month: see Han Lizhou, *Tang wen kaobian chubian* (Xi'an: Shansi chubanshe, 1992), p. 209; otherwise we must probably assume that a year has been accidentally added, though in either case the month seems curiously disassociated from the timing of the festival.

⁹⁸ S. F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): see pp. 71–77 for a translated description of the event dated to seven years before the edict.

the ‘Gilded Dragons’ exhibition) three-dimensional, solid relics were considered to have had the power of spontaneous multiplication⁹⁹.

The next year, in 700, the empress was in the Sanyang Palace, a new residence which she had had built on Mount Song, the Central Peak of the Five Sacred Peaks of China, which lay close to her capital. A ‘foreign monk’, whose name our sources do not deign to mention, had persuaded her to stage a massive public enshrinement of a relic, but the ceremony was cancelled due to the furious protests of one of her most famous ministers¹⁰⁰. This was Di Renjie (607–700), the model for the sagacious and upright Judge Dee of the Chinese detective novels¹⁰¹. Di’s objections were not, however, allowed to control events: the year 701, for example, was declared a new era entitled ‘Great Footfall’, when a new footprint of the Buddha was discovered on Chinese territory, and though there are indications that hostile witnesses later tried to put it about that some terrible deception by criminals lay behind this, the most judicious traditional authorities reject that suggestion as betraying internal inconsistencies¹⁰². Footprints of the Buddha were, of course, one of the most dramatic of ‘traces’ showing that those feet did in ancient times walk upon China just as much as India; other examples had already been identified in earlier phases of the ongoing efforts to sanctify Chinese space in Buddhist terms¹⁰³.

⁹⁹ Michaelson, *Gilded Dragons*, p. 146, gives an illustration of these tiny transparent crystals, ‘the size of butter beans’. An example of spontaneous multiplication is given below.

¹⁰⁰ Wang, *Tang hui yao*, 227, p. 602.

¹⁰¹ David McMullen, ‘The Real Judge Dee: Ti Jen-chieh and the T’ang Restoration of 705’, *Asia Major*, Third Series, 6.1 (1993), pp. 1–81.

¹⁰² Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian* 207, p. 6554.

¹⁰³ See for examples, and for some background, the article ‘Bussokuseki’, in P. Demiéville, ed., *Hōbōgirin*, Volumes 2–3 (Tokyo: Maison Franco-japonaise, 1930, 1937), pp. 187–190, and n. 9, p. 102, of T. H. Barrett, ‘Exploratory Observations on Some Weeping Pilgrims’, in T. Skorupski, ed., *The Buddhist Forum*, Vol. I (London: SOAS, 1990), pp. 87–110. Probably the fullest account of the background is Kanai Kasatarō, *Bussokuseki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Na-

By this time, of course, the empress was about halfway through the last decade of her personal rule, and of her life. Natural vigour and skilful use of cosmetics meant that she was even by the extraordinary standards of her career a rather exceptional old lady—a sort of Mae West figure, but with real pretensions to divinity. To judge from conventional sources, she was mainly engaged towards the end in an attempt to construct one last massive Buddha image. One of her earlier grandiose efforts made of lacquer still survived somehow, even though the structure destined to house it had not reached completion¹⁰⁴. This new statue, however, was to be of bronze, and to stand on a mountain slope to the north of the city. It was to be financed by levying a donation of a single coin from each and every Buddhist monk and nun in her empire, a method which assumes a particular significance because a donation of a single coin was an echo of one of Aśoka's actions, recorded for example in the *Fayuan zhulin*¹⁰⁵.

Whether they were aware of this or not, her Confucian officials kept up a barrage of protest from the time the plan was first mooted in 700 right the way through to 704, when she finally dropped the idea. Their arguments are in fact utilitarian, that the money could be used to charitable purposes, since this is where the proper purposes of Buddhism lie, not in opulent displays of extravagance. Thus the memorial sent in to her by a complaining bureaucrat that seems finally to have tipped the balance accuses her of 'making an end of the trees on the mountains in order to create stūpas, exhausting the smelting of metals to make images'¹⁰⁶. We need not take such rhetoric at face value, but it does suggest that the empress had made a

kayama shobō, 1971), pp. 238–324, though on the last two pages of this study he seems to take an unduly hostile attitude to the empress and her reign period.

¹⁰⁴ Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, pp. 82–93.

¹⁰⁵ Wang, *Tang hui yao* 49, p. 1003; *Fayuan zhulin* 37, p. 579b; cf. Strong, *Legend*, pp. 254–5.

¹⁰⁶ Wang, *Tang hui yao* 49, p. 1005; the preceding pages carry the criticisms of other ministers, including Di Renjie, some of which are excerpted and translated by Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 151–153.

good job of keeping up messianic appearances in terms of the goals that had earlier been set for her.

15. *Old age and mountains: Wutaishan and Taishan*

But by this stage we also get hints of another agenda beyond appearances, an agenda yet closer to her heart that we cannot discern in her earlier years. What it was emerges most clearly from a contrast between the attitudes she displayed in her later years towards three of China's most sacred mountains. We have already remarked on her evident interest in Wutaishan, and it must be said that her signs of interest there were quite public, and demonstrably known to all. Indeed, there are even signs that her well-known munificence in the region gained in the telling over time. For one of our chief sources for Wutaishan in the ninth century, the travel diary of the Japanese monk Ennin, who was there in 840, lists as structures associated with the empress, or 'Old Woman Wu' as she was remembered more colloquially, three iron pagodas on the 'Central Terrace' of the mountain range; one iron pagoda on the 'Western Terrace'; and one iron pagoda surrounded by many small stone ones on the 'Northern Terrace'¹⁰⁷. Yet the author of our source of 679 on the mountain makes it clear that the largest of the three central iron pagodas was erected by local people in 673, whilst the one on the northern terrace was his own work¹⁰⁸. It is even imaginable that the cluster of smaller pagodas there had accumulated later as a result of the Buddhist equivalent of the practice of 'burial *ad sanctos*', which certainly produced such an effect in South Asia¹⁰⁹. The practice has not been examined in China, but I have noticed one example at least,

¹⁰⁷ Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, pp. 239, 240 and 243 respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Huixiang, *Gu Qingliang zhuan*, pp. 1094a, 1099b, respectively.

¹⁰⁹ See Gregory Schopen, 'Burial *Ad Sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archaeology of Religions', in *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*, pp. 114–147, originally in *Religion* 17 (1987), pp. 193–225. If, of course, the concept of 'ad sanctos' is capable of being extended to include relics in textual form, the whole use of texts in Chinese funerary practice might need to be considered.

dated to 717¹¹⁰. What appears to be a secular version of the same custom—burial near one's ruler—would certainly appear to have been carried out in the seventh century¹¹¹.

As it happens, an even later source on the Wutaishan area, compiled in 1059, does tell us that in 702 the empress ordered a nun to construct a pagoda on the Central Terrace, but since it is said to have taken a year to complete, it must have been much larger than any of the small or medium-sized structures mentioned so far¹¹². What is most astonishing about this account is that it is said that the following year, after a separate mission charged with refurbishing a monastery had witnessed a most gratifying series of omens, which were duly reported to the empress, she ordered her craftsmen to fashion a likeness of herself out of jade to dispatch to the mountain to worship Mañjuśrī. This attracted such crowds that it had to stop short of the mountain to receive their worship in a monastery in Taiyuan¹¹³. Such a public use of an image as a surrogate is, I think, unparalleled in Chinese history, though her grandson, who clearly learned many lessons from her but used them mainly in the service of the Li family religion of Taoism, did distribute imperial icons about his domain¹¹⁴. This may, however, have been the only way open to her to pay her respects to her favourite Buddhist site, since it has been pointed out

¹¹⁰ See Dong Gao, ed., *Quan Tang wen* 228 (Beijing: Palace edition, 1818), p. 14a2–3. This practice could, of course, also explain the earlier miniature pagodas found on the mountain, but we are told explicitly that in the seventh century they were not understood that way.

¹¹¹ See the diagram on p. 191 of David McMullen, 'Bureaucrats and cosmology: the ritual code of T'ang China', in David Cannadine and Simon Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 181–236.

¹¹² Yanyi, *Guang Qingliang zhuan* A, p. 1106c, in edition of Taishō Canon, vol.51, no. 2099.

¹¹³ Yanyi, *Guang Qingliang zhuan* A, p. 1107b.

¹¹⁴ Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, p. 62; cf. p. 64.

that at this time a journey to the remote and occasionally dangerous northern borders of China would have been distinctly unwise¹¹⁵.

Whatever the truth of these accounts, the persistence of stories about the empress and Wutaishan contrasts quite dramatically with the situation regarding another of China's most sacred peaks, Mount Tai in the East. There epigraphic evidence in abundance gives us excellent contemporary documentation of what the empress was up to on the mountain. Yet this material would seem to relate to much less public (or at least publicized) activity, leading modern scholars to conclude from it that she had religious interests quite different from those ostensibly reflected in her more flamboyant construction enterprises¹¹⁶. Mount Tai has a long history in Chinese religion: traditionally the most important ceremonies in the state cult were conducted there whenever a ruler could claim to have brought good government to the empire—something which none had dared to claim for centuries before the time of the empress and her husband, who undertook the ceremonies in 666. This event is fully recorded in conventional sources, and there seems to have been a deliberate stress on its national, public nature, even if the numbers who would have observed on the mountaintop would probably have been quite limited¹¹⁷. At the same time if the empress had later ordered public Buddhist ceremonies on the mountain, this would not have been a surprise: the god of Mount Tai was also considered to be Lord of the Dead in some circles, and this belief was one element in Chinese

¹¹⁵ See p. 10 of Xiao Yu, 'Wu Zetian yu Wutaishan', *Wutaishan yanjiu* 6 (1986), pp. 7–10.

¹¹⁶ Note Rao Zongyi, 'Cong shike lun Wu hou zhi zongjiao xinyang', *Zhongy-ang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 45.3 (1974), pp. 397–418; and Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ See Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 170–194, especially pp. 184–188.

religion which seems to have influenced the formation in China of popular Buddhist texts¹¹⁸.

But all the inscriptions on Mount Tai mentioning the empress are in fact Taoist. And not only that: they date to 661 and 678, during her husband's Taoist phase; to 691 and 692, when her new dynasty was busy using Buddhism to legitimate itself; and to 696, 698, 701 and 704, right through almost to the end of her reign¹¹⁹. This consistent pattern may at first sight seem something of a puzzle, but recently Antonino Forte has advanced evidence suggesting that what hostility we may find towards Taoism during the early years of the Zhou dynasty stemmed not from the empress, but from her alleged lover, the popular religious leader Xue Huaiyi, who though important to her assumption of direct rule, was disposed of in 695¹²⁰.

The majority of the sources make clear that the ceremony carried out for the empress involved the ritual known as dragon hurling, or 'tossing dragons', in which inscribed messages were attached to small metal dragons and cast from a great height, theoretically so as to wing their way as messengers of the gods. Recent scholarship on Tang Taoism has been in two minds about this, seeing the practice as originally dedicated to seeking the personal immortality of the monarch, but later modified to become a ritual dedicated to the common weal¹²¹. All the inscriptions on Mount Tai, at any rate, would appear to stress the wellbeing of society as a whole, though it is worth noting that Taoist inscriptions for 691 by the team of imperi-

¹¹⁸ Osabe, *Tō-Sō Mikkyōshi*, pp. 34–64. The materials drawn upon here are, as Osabe notes, hard to date, but the 'Prophecy of Dīpaṃkara' cited above (n.93) demonstrates that this merging of belief may safely be taken to date back in some forms at least to the time of the empress.

¹¹⁹ Chen Yuan, comp., Chen Zhichao, Zeng Qingying, eds., *Daojiao jinshi lue* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), pp. 56, 67; 79–80 and 80; and 81, 82, 93, 94 and 95 respectively.

¹²⁰ Antonino Forte, 'The Maitreyist Huaiyi (d.695) and Taoism', *Tang yanjiu* 4 (1998), pp. 15–29.

¹²¹ See p. 89 of Russell Kirkland, 'Dimensions of Tang Taoism: The State of the Field at the End of the Millennium', *T'ang Studies* 15/16 (1997–8), pp. 79–123.

ally appointed ritualists survive from one or two other locations such as the birthplace of Confucius, while that for Mount Tai makes it clear that all five Sacred Peaks were selected as sites for Taoist ceremonies in that year. This all suggests that however much a collection of epigraphic materials such as that relating to Mount Tai may help us in understanding the empress, the bulk of our evidence even in this category had unfortunately disappeared before antiquarian scholars and students of calligraphy from Song times onwards embarked upon their remarkable efforts towards preserving inscribed sources of the Tang period and earlier.

16. *A message from Mount Song*

It is a pity in particular that we do not possess more information to clarify all that she did on the central Sacred Peak, Mount Song, which we have already had occasion to mention above as the site of a palace and of the abortive enshrinement of a relic. The empress, like her husband before her, seems to have been obsessed with this sacred space, to an extent which hints that something beyond the admittedly important symbolism of the centre attracted them to it: I have suggested elsewhere that the cause may have been astrological, that they both felt that their fates were literally governed by this mountain¹²². Yet in May 1982 one unexpected piece of additional information precisely dated to the year 700, was found on its slopes, in the form of an inscription from a metal dragon, one of a very small number from medieval times that actually got away¹²³. Omit-

¹²² Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, pp. 44–5.

¹²³ The text is published in Chen, Chen and Zeng, *Daojiao jinshi lue*, p. 93, but misprints the name of the officiant charged with the task, who was a very important provincial religious reformer of the age. The inscription as reported on p. 11 of 'Henan dixia wenwu xin faxian', *Zhongyuan wenwu* 19.3 (1984) reveals him to have been Hu [Fa]zhao, for whom see Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, p. 44; Li Fang, ed., *Taiping guangji* 313 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), p. 2495; *Xiuzhen shihshu* 36.8a–10b (HY text no. 263 in the Taoist Canon).

ting only the details of the official responsible and the date of the ceremony, it says just this:

With respect, Wu Zhao, ruler of the Great Zhou, delights in the True Way, and the long-lived holy immortals. She has respectfully sent to the Central Peak, to the gate of lofty Mount Song, and cast a metal tablet, begging the Three Officers and Nine Departments of the world of the dead to remove the criminal name of Wu Zhao from their records.

The records mentioned here—one hardly needs to explain—totted up misdeeds to the point where a summons of death was issued; they have been seen as one of the key features distinguishing Taoism from other forms of native Chinese religion¹²⁴. Of all the empress ever wrote or said, of all that historians ever did to transmit to posterity her crimes and achievements, these few words, doubtless known only to her trusted intermediary who actually carried out the ceremony give us the most unmediated, unrehearsed private picture of the real person that we can possibly hope to retrieve. And it is a picture of a forthright and powerful woman who is facing up to the prospect of death and punishment for her crimes, and who will do whatever she can to escape her fate. It is in this sense that I have referred to the empress as ‘pious after her fashion’, and I make no apology for this seeming diversion from Buddhist studies into another religious tradition in order to establish the point. For we shall find that we need to keep the dragon’s message in mind when we turn to the last category of evidence bearing on the topic of *stūpa*, *sūtra* and *śarīra* in China up to the year 705.

17. *The last translations*

This category is the balance of the Tantric materials surveyed by Osabe, of which we have only considered one or two from the earlier portion of the career of the empress. Naturally Buddhist texts, and not just Tantric ones, continued to be translated throughout her

¹²⁴ Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 65.

reign, and of these perhaps the most famous was the retranslation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, completed in 699¹²⁵. It is noteworthy that this occasion too was used by the empress to assert to her public the success of the translation team (which she had assisted clerically herself) in averting eschatological collapse. For in her preface to the work she says ‘Who would have thought that in the latter five hundred years we would suddenly receive word from the Golden Mouth?’¹²⁶. Here the ‘Golden Mouth’ is, of course, the Buddha’s, and the ‘latter five hundred years’ is unambiguously in China a period of the withering away of Buddhism¹²⁷. As before, too, making public the benefits of Tantric texts to all was still very much the approach stressed by the empress. Some time after 697, for example, Bolun, whom we have encountered above as involved in the dissemination in the Buddhapāli version of the ‘Crowning Victory’ text, wrote a preface for a text and icon featuring the Thousand-armed Guanyin, in which he contrasts earlier problems in transmission with the straightforward attitude of the empress, who immediately orders her palace women to produce embroidery versions and her craftsmen to distribute painted copies¹²⁸. Mention of these lavish measures, however, calls to mind that the first reference to printing

¹²⁵ For general accounts of Buddhist translation at this time, and this project in particular, see pp. 297–303 of Stanley Weinstein, ‘Imperial Patronage in the Formation of T’ang Buddhism’, in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the T’ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 263–306, and Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T’ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 44–47.

¹²⁶ Dong, comp., *Quan Tang wen*, 97.7a8–9.

¹²⁷ On this phrase in South and East Asia, see Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, pp. 91–92, n.89; 106, n.111; p. 118.

¹²⁸ The version carrying this preface is no. 1057 in Taishō Canon, vol.20; for the order see p. 83c10. The cult of Guanyin in this form became remarkably popular during the Tang: see Kobayashi Taichirō, *Kobayashi Taichirō chosaku shū*, VII: Bukkyō geijutsu no kenkyū (Tokyo: Dankōsha, 1974), pp. 1–296, for a comprehensive study, though the brief mention of this preface on p. 89 simply takes the information given at face value and does not consider its historical background.

on paper by Taoists comes very far down a list of acceptable media in which to create images, so it is perhaps no wonder that references to printing texts are so hard to come by¹²⁹.

For that matter the multiple construction of small pagodas, even quite expensive ones, also seems to have been nothing special in T'ang times. A survey of the monasteries in the capital carried out in the middle of the ninth century discovered one with several tens of thousands of such pagodas surviving out of an even greater number which had originally been manufactured in some haste to deal with a spontaneous multiplication of relics; by comparison another establishment housed one hundred thousand small gilded images produced to expiate the killing of an innocent monk¹³⁰. Even allowing for some hyperbole, it would seem reasonable to assume that the state would have been easily capable of feats achieved by private citizens. True, one *dhāraṇī* translated for the empress by the Khotanese Śikṣānanda, the monk responsible for bringing her the new text of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, did suggest that it was so potent that to place it inside a stūpa would create as much merit as making one hundred thousand ordinary stūpas¹³¹. But this proffered shortcut probably did nothing to discourage mass manufacture, no more than the theoretical lower limit of one to ten invocations of the name of Amitābha ever discouraged Pure Land devotees in China from chanting the holy name incessantly.

For rather than any change in the methods advocated by texts of this later period, it was their aims which have been seen as distinctive. In general, it was only over a decade after the death of the empress that the first Tantric texts started to be translated which produced the East Asian Tantric system known today, for example in

¹²⁹ Since the appearance of my study, listed above in n.6, the passage in question has been translated by Florian C. Reiter, *The Aspirations and Standards of Taoists Priests in the Early T'ang Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998), pp. 85–6.

¹³⁰ Duan Chengshi, *Youyang zazu*, supplement, 5 (Beijing; Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 249, 251.

¹³¹ *Baiqian yin tuoluoni jing*, Taishō Canon vol.21, no. 1369, pp. 885c–886a.

Japanese Shingon. Even so at this point, when the goals of Tantric practice were still much more open, one specific benefit seems to be mentioned more frequently than any other, and this, as Osabe's survey makes clear, was long life¹³². This may not necessarily relate to the 'Taoist' elements he describes, or even to a Serindian input into the texts, since it is possible to find *dhāraṇī* designed to confer long life in non-Chinese materials also¹³³. Now that we have read the dragon's message, we can be sure that the empress paid close attention to all such materials. But they must have presented her with a problem, for how could she put such texts to use without appearing to be pursuing entirely private interests, especially after having made such a point of public spiritedness in all her religious activities?

18. *The first printed text*

This question must have been posed in particular by the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing*, the text printed copies of which survive in Korea and Japan. Its author, a Tokharian whose name seems to have been Mitrasena or Mitraśānta, came to China in 702, according to some remarks by Fazang (643–712) concerning a translation with which they were involved together up to 704¹³⁴. Since this same source states that his work at that time consisted of reviewing an existing translation by Śikṣānanda, it may well be that a catalogue of 730 is correct in suggesting that his work on our earliest printed text was likewise one of revising an existing version by Śikṣānanda as well; unfortunately neither this source nor any other gives a precise

¹³² Osabe, *To-Sō Mikkyōshi*, p. 26, n.13, commenting on Taishō Canon nos. 1080, 1082, 1083, and cf. pp. 27–8, n.21.

¹³³ This is shown by a preliminary study of the topic by Hatsuzaki Shōjun, 'Emmei-hō ni kansuru Bukkyō keiten no kenkyū', *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 15.1 (1966), pp. 225–9, though one of the texts he cites (p. 236) from Taishō Canon 20, p. 584, was translated in 693.

¹³⁴ Cf. p. 9 of the translation of this information in D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930), pp. 7–10, drawing on p. 430b of Taishō Canon vol. 39, no. 1790.

date for the completion of the work¹³⁵. But what it does show is that again he was working together with Fazang, which may well be significant for several reasons.

First, we know that Fazang's full-time dedication to Buddhism started at the age of fifteen when he burned off a finger as an offering at the Famensi; he would therefore have been familiar from an early age with the legend of Aśoka and his distribution of relics¹³⁶. Secondly, a passage in one of his earlier works, even if it may not be taken as proof of a familiarity with printing, at the very least shows that he appreciated the instantaneousness with which text can be created by a large seal or the like¹³⁷. Thirdly, as Stanley Weinstein observes, he was not just a famous exegete, but also carried out such practical tasks as praying for rain on behalf of the empress—though it may be noted that even his most philosophical essay for the empress, by collapsing distinctions of space and time, actually serves her religious purpose of bringing the time of the Buddha's enlightenment closer once more to a fearful populace¹³⁸. Fourthly, his earliest biography reveals that following conversations with the empress

¹³⁵ Zhisheng, *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 9, p. 566a9 and 11, b25, c2.

¹³⁶ Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang*, p. 46. The chronology does not quite work, unless (as is likely) 'fifteen' is a conventional figure alluding to the career of Confucius in Analects 2.4.1, and he was actually a few years older when he made this pilgrimage.

¹³⁷ This source is explored in the article in *Chinese Science* 15 listed above, n.5; to the discussion of the date of the work in question given there may now be added A. Forte, *A Jewel in Indra's Net* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 66–68, which shows that it existed in some substantial form by 690, though it is of course impossible to guarantee absolutely that the passage I discuss was included at that date.

¹³⁸ Cf. p. 332 of the translation of his 'Chapter on the Golden Lion' by Leon Hurvitz, in W. T. de Bary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 329–333. For Weinstein's observation, see n. 115 above.

it was he who was charged in 704 with going to the Famensi and after due rituals escorting the Buddha's relic back to the capital¹³⁹.

One suspects therefore that he would have known exactly what to do when presented with the problem of how to create a public context for the private goal contained in his newly translated text. His new product consisted of four *dhāraṇī* texts interspersed with praise of their benefits¹⁴⁰. The first, for example, guarantees that if seventy-seven copies are placed in seventy-seven miniature clay pagodas, it will add one year to one's life, and that even if this is done posthumously, it will secure a rebirth in a heaven, while the rest of the *dhāraṇī* weigh in with even more benefits, so that finally it is stated that by placing ninety-nine copies of all four in miniature pagodas almost limitless rewards are possible¹⁴¹. For the empress to carry out such a ritual for herself would have exposed her to the public charge of seeking personal gain in a way that she had always been anxious to avoid, and but for the accidental discovery of her dragon message in the twentieth century would have successfully concealed from history entirely.

Now the obvious solution was to distribute this new talismanic import in Aśokan fashion across her empire as a demonstration both of her legitimacy as a Buddhist ruler and of her desire to share her good fortune. The smallest units of administration under the early Tang empire totalled only some one and a half thousand plus units, but if all territories which entertained friendly relations with the court such as Korea and Japan were included, that would have driven the number up towards a couple of thousand¹⁴². It would have been

¹³⁹ Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn, Pŏpjang Hwasangjŏn, pp. 283b–284a in Taishō Canon, vol.50.

¹⁴⁰ *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing*, Taishō Canon no. 1024 in Vol. 19, pp. 717c–721b.

¹⁴¹ Taishō Canon, vol.19, pp. 718b, 718c, 720c–721a.

¹⁴² For the total of 1551 administrative units before the rise of the empress, see Li Tai, comp.; He Cijun, ed., *Guadi zhi jijiao*, general preface (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 5; the empire would have been slightly larger in her day.

enough to distribute a few copies, or even one copy, to each: no one would worry about overproduction at the centre, since it did not tax the scribal resources of the bureaucracy, to judge from the surviving evidence for the later Japanese enterprise¹⁴³.

It is, in fact, an even later episode which gives us the greatest reason to believe that Japanese practice was inspired by a distribution of relics in textual form carried out by the empress. For in the tenth century Qian Shu (929–988), the ruler of the small but prosperous state of Wu-Yue, with territory around the mouth of the Yangtse river, seems to have followed a dynastic policy of strong ideological support for religion, and Buddhism in particular, in order to promote its image in the interstate diplomacy of the period¹⁴⁴. In particular there is plenty of surviving evidence to show that he engaged over a number of years in the Aśokan distribution of relics in textual form, using a *dhāraṇī* unknown in the time of the empress that was translated in the late eighth century by the great confidante of emperors and Tantric master Amoghavajra¹⁴⁵. Copies of this work, variously dated, have been found in China both inside and outside his home territory¹⁴⁶. There is a trace of the distribution of at least one of his textual relics to Korea also, with which he had close diplomatic ties¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴³ Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, p. 116.

¹⁴⁴ There is a good brief account of Wu-Yue, including an account of Qian Shu's religious activities, by Edmund H. Worthy, Jr., 'Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wu Yüeh, 907–978', in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 17–44.

¹⁴⁵ The text in question is no. 1022 in the Taishō Canon. Amoghavajra represents a later phase in imperial Chinese Buddhism, which may now be studied through Charles D. Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁶ As noted in Tsien Tsuen-hsuei, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. V.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 157–8.

¹⁴⁷ See Hwang Su-yōng, ed., *Chūngbo Hanguk kŭmsŏk yumun* (Seoul: Iljisa, 1981, third edition), p. 177, for the relic. For a recent summary of the extensive, simultaneously religious and diplomatic relations between Wu-Yue and

But the impact of his distribution of 500 copies to Japan was particularly marked: the manufacture of miniature pagodas, which for a while saw a certain vogue in that country, invariably thereafter used Amoghavajra's text in preference to the one translated in the days of the empress¹⁴⁸. It should not be assumed that our hypothetical distribution by the Empress Wu must necessarily have served as the proximate model for his actions: Abe Jōichi, in a brief account of Qian and the Aśokan ideal, notes a fourteenth century source that speaks intriguingly of a distribution of relics in the mid-ninth century, following a centralization of these objects during the great Huichang persecution of Buddhism¹⁴⁹. But what this episode does show is that though over time the texts involved may have changed, the Sui precedent of playing the Aśokan role, not simply by the production of 84,000 miniature pagodas (as in the Tangut case studied by Linrothe) but in particular by the distribution of relics in such pagodas throughout East Asia as a whole, was by no means forgotten, even centuries later¹⁵⁰.

19. *The end of the empress*

What this does not explain, however, is why a copy of the text (printed, as we might now surmise, even though copies in manu-

Korea, see pp. 356–7 of Wang Tsui-ling, 'Sugyōroku no seiritsu', *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 48.1 (1999), pp. 358–355 (reverse pagination).

¹⁴⁸ There are several studies bearing on this episode: see e.g. Okazaki Jōji, 'Sen Kōshuku hachi man yon sen tō kō', *Bukkyō geijutsu* 76 (1970), pp. 111–125, and cf. Ishida, *Bukkyō kōkogaku ronsō*, 4, pp. 263–271.

¹⁴⁹ Abe Jōichi, *Chūgoku Zenshūshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Seishin shobō, 1963), p. 96. I have not as yet located any earlier source that confirms this centralization and redistribution, but it would not seem to be intrinsically impossible.

¹⁵⁰ Nor did the switch to Amoghavajra's text immediately lead to a complete abandonment of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* as a text associated with relics: for an example of such a use from 1096, see Chen, *Liao wen cun*, 9, p. 252, though this source, while mentioning 2,000 miniature pagodas along with 20 grains of relics and five copies of the text, does not seem to be associated with any act of distribution.

script certainly did circulate later) did not arrive in Korea until 706, well after the removal of the empress¹⁵¹. But the biography of Fazang cited above shows that he would have been preoccupied with the Famensi relic from late 704 into the first month of 705, so he perhaps could not turn his attention to any scheme immediately, if one existed, and by the end of that month the empress had been deposed. All her grandiose religious undertakings were cancelled at once, and Yang Wulian, her chief of engineering, was packed off to a remote provincial post¹⁵². But no one dared lay a finger on her, so that it was not until much later in the year, on 16th December, that she actually died¹⁵³. Doubtless fearful that her spirit in death might be even more formidable than in life, her son and successor immediately revived her favourite scheme for a giant metal statue, aban-

¹⁵¹ Manuscript copies of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* may be found among the Dunhuang manuscripts, mainly (seven) in the Beijing collection, but also two in London, S1634 and S4156, and one in Paris, P3916. Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 99, notes that the Paris manuscript forms part of a small collection of texts in a notebook, a format which to judge from other similar examples suggests the regular use of the text by a ritual practitioner. He also gives on the preceding page a well-known example of a text (the *Diamond Sūtra*) often copied in manuscript in the tenth century from a printed exemplar—this, however, only becomes detectable with the rise of commercial printing, since the copyists faithfully copy in the printer's colophon. What happened in the case of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni* can only remain hypothetical. Whether the copies of our text listed by Japanese pilgrims to China in the ninth century were manuscripts or not is an even trickier problem, which is here dealt with in an Appendix, below.

¹⁵² Dong, *Quan Tang wen* 269.9a5; this is the source used by Forte and dated below, n.154. For Yang, see the rather contradictory images presented in Zhang Zu, *Chaoye qianzai* 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), p. 36, and 6, p. 142; D. C. Twitchett, *Financial Administration Under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; second ed.), p. 86 for the context of the former, more negative remarks.

¹⁵³ Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian* 208, p. 6596, converted into the Western calendar.

done as we have said in 704¹⁵⁴. If the distribution of the translation for its beneficial posthumous effects on her (to which we have already drawn attention) was ordered at the same time because it was another item left on her agenda, then the work would have been carried out in 706. In both cases a certain amount of haste would have been called for in order to deploy the necessary good karma towards her next reincarnation, which in current belief would have been determined in a mere seven weeks; printing would have commended itself for its speed if nothing else under the circumstances¹⁵⁵.

The final argument for associating the new *dhāraṇī* in printed form with the funeral rites of the empress, however, entails the corollary that far from being a left-over agenda item, now was the time that it came into its own. For Greg Schopen has shown that, with other similar works, it was used precisely as a funeral text in monuments in India¹⁵⁶. And not only that: the inscription of 706 in Korea shows very plainly that that was precisely how it was used already by the end of the fifth month there (12 August in the Western calendar). For it was found in a pagoda originally erected for the repose of King Sinmun (r. 681–692) by his widow and his son King Hyoso (r. 692–792); following their deaths, the reliquary was added by the latter's brother, King Sōngdōk (r. 702–737), not simply (as the inscription states) for their posthumous benefit, but also (as he

¹⁵⁴ This we know from the renewal of protest against it: see Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, pp. 69–70, where he uses the protesting memorial for its review of earlier schemes; he suggests (n.63) 28th December for the edict reviving her plans for the statue.

¹⁵⁵ For the time scale of rituals determining rebirth, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings* p. 23–25, and Michihata Ryōshū, 'Chūgoku Bukkyō to shichishichisai', *Shūkyō kenkyū* 34 (1961), pp. 85–86: though later rituals envisaged memorial services at fixed intervals, forty-nine days was probably the time limit uppermost in contemporary minds.

¹⁵⁶ Schopen, 'Burial Ad Sanctos', p. 121, and n. 32, p. 142, making the explicit connection with the earliest East Asian printed materials.

states with un-Chinese directness) to increase his own lifespan¹⁵⁷. In view of the surmise that the copy of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni* referred to was in fact one distributed by the empress in printed form, it is unfortunate that no surviving trace of paper material was found by the archaeologists responsible for the discovery, though some decayed slivers of thin bamboo have been seen as evidence for the original existence of a bookbag in the pagoda, presumably containing the text in question¹⁵⁸.

The funerary use in Korea of the the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni* is, even so, firmly attested not only by this inscription but by later evidence as well¹⁵⁹. And once the possibility is admitted that the text arrived in Korea in conjunction with ceremonies marking the passing of the empress, it seems to me highly improbable that such a 'one-off' operation of manufacture and distribution would have been undertaken under pressure of time had not earlier exercises of this type taken place already using other texts, so that everyone knew exactly what to do. Once again, one suspects the agency of Fazang, who by this point had probably accumulated considerable experience in handling 'Aśokan affairs'—indeed, a couple of years later, in 708, we find an inscription bearing his name on a relic casket, newly provided at that time, amongst the Famensi finds¹⁶⁰. This would, then, increase the likelihood that the various factors impelling the empress to carry out some distribution of texts by printing had already resulted in action earlier in her own reign or even those of her sons or husband.

¹⁵⁷ The inscription and the other contents found in the reliquary are analysed in Umehara Sueji, 'Kankoku Keishū Kōfukuji tō hakken shari yōki', *Bijutsu kenkyū* 156 (1950), pp. 31–47; cf. Hwang, *Hanguk kŭmsŏk yumun*, pp. 140–141.

¹⁵⁸ See p. 65 of Kayamoto Somato, 'Nissen jōdai jiin no shari shōgongu ni tsuite', *Bukkyō geijutsu* 32 (1958), pp. 52–81.

¹⁵⁹ As is made clear by the study of Kayamoto (see preceding note), and cf. Chōsen sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen kinshi sōran*, vol.1 ('Heijō': Chōsen sōtokufu, 1919), p. 55, no. 29; Hwang, *Hanguk kŭmsŏk yumun*, pp. 161, 166, 172.

¹⁶⁰ Wu and Han, *Famensi digong Tang mi mantuluo zhī yanjiu*, p. 70.

20. *The empress in retrospect*

I am aware, of course, that we have now reached our target date without turning up the least piece of concrete evidence to say that the empress ordered the printing of anything. But while I should repeat that there is still plenty of room for research even into the materials used in this study, I rather suspect that no such evidence exists. We have already mentioned the historiographic bias against her; we have also drawn out her pursuit of private objectives which she deliberately hid from view; and where ideological control was at stake, one doubts that much would have been allowed to survive in public documents anyhow. One of her ministers, alarmed by the all too blatant deprivations of her chief of police early in her reign, cites Laozi's dictum that 'the sharp instruments of the state are not to be shown to outsiders'¹⁶¹. Even so, in associating her name with the emergence of printing I do not think that we are simply constructing a tottering tower of hypotheses.

Rather, what we have is a field or forest of separate hypotheses growing naturally together to constitute not any specific structure, but a much wider and quite unmistakable environment. That environment was the product of many factors, but it was tended by one person in particular, the Empress Wu, whether the ultimate harvest came before or after her death. Why did printing spread in China, when the seal was known across the Old World from high antiquity? Not, surely, because the Chinese wanted more books, as the statistics for sūtra production under the Sui make abundantly clear. It is more likely in the light of the information reviewed above that printing arose for a number of unambiguously religious reasons associated primarily with Buddhism: to mollify Chinese ethnocentrism by making China more Buddhist; or to calm the apocalyptic fears of a population that fancied it saw the signs of the Buddha's presence fading away as time passed; or to justify the rule of a woman both

¹⁶¹ Wang, Tang hui yao 41, p. 867; the saying, from Daode jing 36, is itself diplomatically blunted by most translators: Michael LaFargue, *The Tao of the Tao Te Ching* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 158, 159, is one exception.

nationally and internationally in terms of the fulfilment of Buddhist prophecy; or to salve the conscience of that same woman in her old age, disturbed by the thought that in order to seize and retain her grip on power she had been obliged to kill repeatedly; or, finally, to reassure her nervous son that his late mother had been dispatched to a world pleasant enough to stop her spirit from returning to the one now under his control.

It is possible, of course, that someone had already hit upon printing as a cheap way of manufacturing and selling *dhāraṇī* texts in the seventh century; it is even just possible that the idea occurred independently in Korea and Japan. But there are some indications that might be taken to suggest that it was not until the empress took over from the Tang to rule in her own right that the state became involved in printing, and thus bestowed on it a crucial degree of legitimacy. For the research of Fujieda Akira in the Dunhuang manuscripts has uncovered the singular fact that several dozen copies of the *Lotus* and the *Diamond Sūtras* were actually copied out at the capital, using the resources of state employed copyists in various parts of the civil service, between 671 and 677, evidently in order to provide good exemplars of well edited versions of popular works, though perhaps also to promote acceptable, orthodox Buddhist literature in the face of more dubious concoctions, such as the *Dīpaṅkara* prophecy, which we will recall dated to 670¹⁶². As there is no reason to think that Dunhuang was particularly favoured with these centrally disseminated texts, we must assume that rather a large number were created for China as a whole. Since these, and also the copy of the equally widely distributed commentary studied by Forte in his first monograph on Empress Wu's political propaganda, all exist in manuscript, evidently printing did not commend itself even for the accurate volume production of a work as short as the *Diamond Sūtra* at this point. This is why I have guessed that the funerary associations of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* may have been important, in that the element of speed of multiple production

¹⁶² There is a useful summary of Fujieda's work in Jean-Pierre Drège, *Les bibliothèques en Chine au temps des manuscrits* (Paris: ÉFEO, 1991), pp. 85–86.

would also have been crucial, along with accuracy and volume, in the situations in which it was used. Even so, Fujieda's work does illuminate yet another facet of the medieval Chinese state's persistent and large-scale involvement in the control of textual material—an important aspect of the background to the adoption of printing that could easily be the topic of monographic study in itself.

But, in short, the probability is that printing spread in order to meet the religious needs of China under the exceptional rule of one of its most Buddhist sovereigns. Without her and her unusual sensitivity to popular Buddhism, no doubt, the story would have had much the same ending: some of the basic preconditions for printing, such as paper, were there all the time, and so I have not discussed them¹⁶³. But if there was something distinctive about the empress that marked her off from the male rulers who dominate the rest of Chinese history, it was undoubtedly her open-mindedness—even her daring—in coopting the power of popular religious sentiment to strengthen her regime¹⁶⁴. Most rulers in China after the dramatic and disturbing Yellow Turban uprising of the late second century CE worried (and perhaps still worry) obsessively about the power of popular religion to inspire revolts capable of overthrowing dynasties, and were far more concerned to repress rather than to harness religious movements. The only possible parallel that comes to mind

¹⁶³ The broader background, which I have ignored for present purposes, may be found in Constance R. Miller, *Technical and Cultural Prerequisites for the Invention of Printing in China and the West* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1983).

¹⁶⁴ Thus, apart from the Maitreyanist leader Xue Huaiyi and the Taoist reformer Hu Fazhao, whom we have already encountered, the empress also gave credence to a nun who claimed to be a Buddha and her associates, even though they are accused by the historians of having 'misled the masses', a propensity which all emperors tended to regard with some alarm, despite the willingness of many of them to listen to all kinds of holy men who flattered them with more personal attention to their longevity, good fortune, etc. See Sima, *Zizhi Tongjian* 205, pp. 6494–5, dated to 694. Of course, as we have seen, 'co-opting' just as frequently meant forestalling such movements by posing as some form of messiah herself.

is the last Empress Dowager at the end of the Qing, trying much more ineptly to use the Boxers to shore up her tottering power.

So, finally, where does the foregoing information leave our understanding of the introduction of the distribution of texts from woodblock? In some ways, not radically different, in that Buddhism has been shown to have played a major (but not the sole) part in its success. Even so, the specific Buddhist ideas involved have, perhaps, emerged with greater clarity. And it is probably safe to say that while there is nothing that is obviously and specifically 'female' about the origins of printing, its widespread adoption now has to be seen against the overall background of the ideological innovations introduced by the Empress Wu. These were, after all, largely a reflection of her unique position as a female ruler, which in turn elicited from her daring and sometimes unique solutions to the problem of legitimating herself. Without the empress, the saga of the discovery and spread of the new technology would, at the least, have been a very different and probably much longer story.

Appendix: Ninth-century Japanese Buddhist catalogues of acquisitions from China: print or manuscript?

As pointed out above, at n. 145, we know from the Dunhuang finds that manuscript copies of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni-jing* circulated in Tang China, even if the precise dating of these exemplars is unclear. It might be thought that the catalogues of their acquisitions made by Japanese pilgrims in China, since (as Peter Kornicki has pointed out) they distinguish printed materials in their listings, should provide some evidence to place such manuscripts at least in the ninth century, when these monks were active¹⁶⁵. It is certainly true that these catalogues mention the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni-jing* several times, but the presumption that since they are not indicated as printed exemplars they must be manuscripts is not

¹⁶⁵ Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, p. 118, n.9, gives four apparent references to printed matter listed in such catalogues, which are all to be found in volume 55 of the Taishō Canon.

an entirely safe one¹⁶⁶. This is because a close look reveals that the distinction between print and manuscript is only made in certain texts, and for certain purposes; there is no way to be certain in the case of any of the exemplars mentioned that they should be placed either in one category or the other.

The first mention of printing, which is in a catalogue of acquisitions by Ennin (793–864), is apparently of one hundred ‘stamped Buddhas in fine copper’ and ‘a stamp in the form of a pagoda for making impressions in clay’—the Indian practice already noted above for the seventh century¹⁶⁷. There is thus no direct connection with woodblock printing. There would appear to be a reference to a printed text of the ‘Crowning Victory’ in another catalogue by one of Ennin’s contemporaries, Eun, but this is made a little uncertain by the frequent reference in these sources (which are particularly interested in Tantric materials) to *mudrās*, the Chinese translation term for which uses the same word, *yin*, ‘a seal’, also covers the literal products of printing. If there has been some displacement of text in this catalogue (and the copyists responsible, though good, were clearly fallible), then this casual reference to printing disappears¹⁶⁸.

Unambiguous references to printed materials do occur in a further work compiled by the pilgrim Shūei (809–884), but his catalogue is unusual for the amount of physical description of his acquisitions that it contains, and the mention of printing seems in one case primarily designed to distinguish one version of a collection of texts from slightly different manuscript versions elsewhere in his listings¹⁶⁹. Elsewhere he does list two printed dictionaries commercially

¹⁶⁶ For examples of listings of our text in these sources, see Taishō no. 2161, p. 1063b; no. 2165, p. 1074c; no. 2166, p. 1076c; no. 2167, p. 1032c; p. 2168, p. 1091a; no. 2172, p. 1098c.

¹⁶⁷ Taishō no. 2167, p. 1084c; cf. no. 2176, p. 1132a, for a later mention of the second object, which may perhaps be read to mean a pagoda formed of clay from a matrix, though this seems unlikely. The exact metal used in the former object is also a little unclear from the dictionary references I have consulted.

¹⁶⁸ Taishō Canon, no. 2168, p. 1090c.

¹⁶⁹ Taishō Canon, no. 2174A, p. 1110a.

produced, but here the mention of printing is in each case part of their titles¹⁷⁰. Even in this catalogue, then, we cannot be sure that we are consistently given information on whether a work is printed or not. In a somewhat similar fashion, the iconographic section of a catalogue by Ennin's disciple Annen (841–985) includes details on the physical format of icons not found elsewhere in his listings for texts, and here too there is one clear reference to a print¹⁷¹. But this may mean that elsewhere in his work Annen does not distinguish between print and manuscript.

In short, then, unambiguous references to printed books in these materials are somewhat rare—only three explicit examples in the work of Shūei, by my count—but this in itself tells us nothing about the circulation of printed materials in China at the time or even about the nature of the materials brought back. I should note, too, in this connection that I hope to publish a study showing that Japanese sources appear to preserve the text of a piece of printed material brought back at the end of the eighth century which was not even listed in the relevant catalogue of acquisitions. Unfortunately for us, the vibrancy of the contemporary manuscript culture was such that printing did not appear as some major marvel, but rather started off as a technique suitable for relic equivalents that would never be read or for ephemera, and so the distinction between print and manuscript just did not interest observers in the same way that it does us.

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¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1111b

¹⁷¹ Taishō Canon, no. 2176, p. 1131c. This is not mentioned by Kornicki, who is concerned only with books.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VITAKKASAṄṬHĀNA SUTTA

PADMAL DE SILVA

Abstract

This paper examines the *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikāya from a psychological perspective. This discourse deals with unwanted, intrusive cognitions that interfere with one's meditative efforts. Five strategies for dealing with these are given, presented in an hierarchical order. The paper elucidates and comments on these, with special reference to the techniques used, in present day clinical psychology and psychiatry, to counter intrusions/obsessions.

The *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* (Majjhima Nikāya, 20¹) addresses a particular matter of practical significance for the meditator. It recognizes that one's meditative efforts can be, and often are, hindered by the appearance in consciousness of unwanted intrusive cognitions. The discourse offers specific strategies for countering these. These are explained and further elaborated in Buddhaghosa's commentary the *Papañcasūdanī*².

The Buddha is reported to have given this discourse at Jetavana. It was intended for monks intent on higher consciousness—i.e., those engaged in meditation with the purpose of attaining mental development. Such a monk, the Buddha said, should reflect on 'five things' from time to time. This shows the importance that was attached to the problem of unwanted intrusions. The Buddha then went on to describe the five strategies for dealing with them. A summary of these is given below.

¹ Vol. I, pp. 118–22.

² Vol. II, pp. 87–94. An English translation of the *sutta* and its commentary can be found in Soma Thera, *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts: A discourse of the Buddha with the commentary and marginal notes*, The Wheel Publication 21, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1960).

Strategies for the control of intrusive cognitions

When unwanted, unwholesome cognitions occur during meditation, one is advised to use one of five strategies in order to eliminate them. These are presented in a hierarchical fashion, each to be tried if the preceding one fails.

1. *Switch to an opposite or incompatible thought.* The first is to reflect on an object which is associated with thoughts which are the opposite of the unwanted thought. This means that if the unwanted cognition is associated with lust, one should think of something promoting lustlessness; if it is associated with hatred, one should think of something promoting loving kindness; and if it is something associated with delusion or confusion, one would think of something promoting clarity. This exercise of switching to a thought that is incompatible with the unwanted one, 'like a carpenter getting rid of a coarse peg with a fine one,' is said to help eliminate the unwanted intrusion.

2. *Ponder on the disadvantages: 'Scrutinise the peril'.* If, however, the unwanted thought still keeps arising, one is advised to ponder on the perils and disadvantages of the thought. This would help one to immediately rid one's self of the thought in question, 'like in the case of a young man or woman, who is eager to look nice and clean, would be revolted and disgusted if he/she finds the carcass of a snake, dog or human being round his neck and would immediately cast it aside.'

3. *Ignore and distract.* If that too fails, the technique of ignoring the unwanted thought is recommended. One is to strive not to pay attention, 'like a man who closes his eyes or looks in another direction in order to avoid seeing a visual object that he does not wish to see.' It is suggested that various distracting activities may be used in order not to pay attention, or dwell on, the unwanted cognition. These include: recalling of a doctrinal passage one has learned, concentrating on actual concrete objects, or indeed some unrelated physical activity, like darning a worn out part of one's robe.

4. *Reflect on removal of the sources of the thought.* If the unwanted cognition still persists, then a further strategy is recommended; this is to reflect on the removal or stopping of the sources

of the target thought. This is explained with the analogy of a man walking briskly who asks himself ‘Why am I walking briskly?’ and then slows down his pace as he sees no reason to walk briskly; then reflects on his walking and stops and stands; then reflects on his standing and sits down, and finally reflects on sitting, and then lies down.

5. *Control with forceful effort.* If the above strategy, too, fails then a fifth method is advocated, which is to forcefully restrain and dominate the mind, ‘with clenched teeth and tongue pressed hard against the palate.’ This use of effort is likened to ‘a strong man holding, restraining and dominating a weaker man.’ One is to use the ‘effort of one part of the mind to control another.’

The recommendation is, very clearly, to use these five strategies in a hierarchical way. Each of the five is to be resorted to if the preceding one fails. This is compared to the progressive use of five weapons in battle. The bow is to be used first; if the bow breaks, use the spear, and then the sword etc.

Comparison with modern psychological techniques

These strategies can profitably be compared with the techniques used in present-day clinical practice for the problem of obsessions, which are—by definition—unwanted, intrusive cognitions (see de Silva & Rachman 1998, Rachman 1978). These techniques have been developed within the framework of behaviour therapy. In the following paragraphs, the strategies given in the *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* and those used in behaviour therapy today will be briefly examined.

The first strategy here (*Switch to an opposite or incompatible thought*) is not very different from thought-switching or thought-substitution described by, among others, Rachman and Hodgson (1980) and Sturgis and Meyer (1981). In this technique, the client is instructed and trained to switch to thinking a thought different from the unwanted cognition. The Buddhist technique has the added refinement that the thought to be switched to should be both incompatible with the original one, and a wholly acceptable one in its own right. It is of historical interest to note that James Alexander (1928)

offered exactly the same advice to his readers. He advocated instant switching from disturbing thoughts to ones opposite in character; for example, 'poverty thoughts' were to be opposed with 'money thoughts', dismal thoughts with cheerful thoughts, and failure thoughts with success thoughts. Another interesting modern parallel to this technique, this time from the domain of motor behaviour rather than cognition, is the habit-reversal method advocated by Azrin and Nunn (1973), in which the client practices movements that are the reverse of the motor habit, such as a head jerk or a tic, which is the target to be eliminated.

The third strategy (*Ignore and distract*) is essentially similar to the distraction techniques of modern therapists (Rachman 1978, Wolpe 1973). The idea is that the client should engage his/her attention on a different stimulus or activity, either cognitive or physical. The Buddhist texts, as we have seen, offer suggestions as to what distractions might be usefully employed; these include both cognitive and physical distractions.

The fifth strategy (*Control with forceful effort*) is essentially similar to what has been called thought-stopping. In the thought-stopping paradigm today, the client is helped and trained to stop the unwanted thought with a simple, eventually subvocal, command (Wolpe 1958, 1973). In the method recommended in the *Vitakka-saṅḥāna Sutta*, internal commands and resources are used to stop the target cognition. It may be argued that it also has an element of distraction, in that the physical effort recommended could well act as a distracting action.

Thus, three of the five strategies recommended in the *Vitakka-saṅḥāna Sutta* have direct parallels in modern psychological therapy. In addition, it may be noted in passing that the second strategy described (*Ponder on the disadvantages*) is very similar to another behaviour therapy technique, albeit one used more in other contexts than in dealing with unwanted thoughts. This covert sensitization, proposed first by Cautela (1967), in which the client is asked to imagine, as vividly as possible, the unpleasant and harmful consequences of an undesirable action/behaviour that one wishes to eliminate or control. This then leads, it is claimed, to a reduction in the target behaviour.

It is worth commenting, at this point, on the other main technique used in modern behaviour therapy for dealing with unwanted, intrusive cognitions. This is satiation/ habituation training; that is, getting the client to expose himself/herself to the thought repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods (de Silva & Rachman 1998, Rachman 1978, Salkovskis 1999). While this notion is not encountered in the *Vitakkasaṅḥāna Sutta* or its commentary, a parallel of this in Buddhism is found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Majjhima Nikāya, 10; cf. Dīgha Nikāya, 22). This discourse outlines the important meditational technique of mindfulness. Mindfulness training is not simply a formal method of meditation but is a general self-improvement skill, with the person training himself/herself to be aware of his/her body and bodily actions, including breathing, of feelings and sensations, and of consciousness or thoughts, as they happen. In developing mindfulness or awareness—one might say continuous monitoring—of one's thoughts, one is advised to be alert to all thoughts that arise, including unwanted ones. If an unwanted thought arises, one is to face it directly and continuously, rather than try to get rid of it. The similarity between this and the way modern clinicians instruct patients to dwell on the unwanted thought or obsession, in a satiation/habituation paradigm, is all too obvious. (cf. de Silva 1984, Parkinson & Rachman 1980).

Discussion

The striking parallels between the strategies described in the *Vitakkasaṅḥāna Sutta* on the one hand, and modern behavioural techniques on the other, for dealing with unwanted, intrusive cognitions provide an impressive example of the resemblance of modern psychological concepts and practices to similar notions in religious, philosophical, and scientific systems of ancient times. In the present case, the specific and well-defined modern techniques for dealing with a particular psychological problem were used and advocated over 2,000 years ago, in a context very different from present-day clinical practice. Kazdin (1982) has called the instances of the use, in earlier times, of specific techniques similar to current behavioural methods 'historical precursors' of the latter. There is no demonstrable or im-

mediate continuity between these precursors and the emergence of the present methods, although the two sets of techniques may be similar in both aim and in practice. In fact, a good number of techniques found in Buddhism have striking parallels in behaviour therapy (de Silva 1984). The fact that Buddhism is essentially empiricist/experientialist in its basic stance makes this similarity understandable. Despite the apparently mentalistic concepts and terms sometimes used, as in parts of the descriptions previously discussed, the Buddhist position has strong behavioural elements (cf. Mikulas 1978, 1981). When behaviours needed to be changed, practicable and verifiable methods for achieving such change were used and advocated.

As for the more general issue of the history of ideas in psychology, the point has already been made that 'historiographic research ... need not be limited to the standard authors' (Mountjoy & Lewandowski 1984). The discovery of modern psychological concepts and techniques in ancient texts and systems which, as far as we are aware, have no demonstrable connection with the developments within the present day psychology may appear to be nothing more than a coincidence. Yet, the overall continuity and evolution of man's experimentation with, and endeavour to understand and control, behaviour and experience are highlighted by such parallels. Further, the investigation of these parallels opens new vistas and helps to create new and useful perspectives from which to study and evaluate current developments. In the case of applied sciences, such as the technology of behaviour therapy, such studies may have even more urgent uses. Firstly, as both de Silva (1996) and Mikulas (1978, 1981) have argued, the ancient system may well provide relevant ideas and techniques which are testable and potentially adaptable for contemporary use. The recent experimental and clinical studies of Buddhist meditational techniques (e.g. Teasdale 1999) are a case in point. Secondly, the demonstration of the similarity between a modern and an ancient system, especially a religious system, in some of their aspects is likely to make the new system, and its techniques, more acceptable to a client population adhering to the religion in question. With regard to Buddhism and behaviour therapy, some evidence on this point has already been presented for both

Thailand (Mikulas 1983) and Sri Lanka (de Silva & Samarasingha 1998).

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BUDDHIST SAṄGHA GROUPINGS IN CAMBODIA

IAN HARRIS

1. Introduction

The shadow of the Pol Pot era hovers so horrifyingly over the recent history of Cambodia that it is sometimes hard to credit the fact that anything of enduring value has continued to function in the country. Cambodia actually possessed a vigorous Theravāda Buddhist culture before civil war broke out in the early 1970s, and despite attempts to extinguish most vestiges of that culture between 1975 and 1978, it soon reasserted itself in the years following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge. The purpose of this paper is to offer a preliminary survey of the re-emergence of Buddhism since that time.

Elsewhere, Jackson (1989) has successfully demonstrated that the intellectual and institutional history of Thai Buddhism over the last century cannot be understood without some knowledge of the wider political background. The same holds good for Cambodia. In this light, I offer a brief overview of relevant political changes from 1970 to the present day before indicating how specific Buddhist groupings have emerged, in part, as a reflection of these processes. The groupings are not presented chronologically but are arranged according to their beliefs and practices along a continuum stretching from modernism to traditionalism. I hope that, in this way, readers will be able to more clearly appreciate the manner in which various sections of the rapidly evolving Cambodian Buddhist monastic order (Saṅgha) have responded to the very considerable challenges of the last twenty years.

2. Historical setting

Following the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk in 1970 Cambodia gradually slid into disorder and violence, a process that culminated in the fall of Phnom Penh to extreme nationalistic communists in

April 1975. The resulting state of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) lasted only until the end of 1978 when it was overthrown by a fraternal invasion of Vietnamese communists. The devastation and horror of the DK period is well-known, at least, in general outline.

In its initial stages the persecution of Buddhism involved the intimidation and re-education of the laity resulting in a steady diminution of alms-giving, coupled with the relocation of monks to 'safer areas'. The logic of the process led rapidly to exhaustion, starvation, forcible disrobing, and execution, at least for uncooperative members of the Saṅgha. Monasteries were routinely destroyed or employed for alternative purposes. Only a handful of monks survived the period in Cambodia itself. Those who could took the chance to flee to neighbouring countries. In short, we see the virtual elimination of institutional Buddhism by an organization that in its early stages had shown some modest sympathy towards Buddhist ideals¹. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that Buddhism disappeared *in toto*. My own interviews with survivors suggest that the secret performance by defrocked monks and lay ritual specialists (*achar*) of traditional rites to comfort the sick malnourished, be-reaved and terrified was reasonably widespread².

With the overthrow of DK and the establishment of a Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)³ in January 1979 we witness a continued suppression of religion in line with the socialist emphasis on rationality, science and the dignity of work. However, in spite of initial signs of mass support after the traumas of the previous years, the regime rapidly lost its popularity and was required to look for additional support to bolster its legitimacy. The two strongest institutions in the country had traditionally been the

¹ For Buddhist elements in the ideology and practice of the Khmer Rouge, see my *Buddhism in Cambodia: A History* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press), in press.

² It might be argued that, under conditions of such extreme persecution, Buddhism reverts to this most basic apotropaic form.

³ Despite an initial feeling of euphoria popular opinion soon turned against the Vietnamese-backed regime; not surprisingly given the fact that Vietnam is regarded as Cambodia's traditional enemy.

Saṅgha and kingship, but the regime could not play the monarchist card, for Sihanouk was already forming alliances with its enemies. With only the monastic order to fall back on, Buddhism was partially restored around August 1979. Initially monks were regarded as state employees and issued with identity cards. In addition, they were not permitted to go out on alms-rounds. In contravention of the norms of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) they were also expected to engage in agricultural labour. The authorities clearly preferred the cultivation of the soil over the cultivation of potentially disruptive mental states!

The fourth congress of the PRPK in June 1981 resolved that ‘the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea must be constantly enlarged and developed and must have a political line acceptable to each social layer, in particular the monks, intellectuals, the ethnic minorities ...’ In September of the same year Ven. Tep Vong was ‘elected’ president of a Unified Saṅgha. This unification, which effectively dissolved the boundaries between the pre-1970s royalist and pro-Thai *Thommayut* and the larger *Mohanikay* monastic fraternities (*nikāya*), seems to have been modelled on prior developments in Vietnam where Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism had been unified in the early 1960s⁴. Party propaganda urged monks to uproot ‘unhealthy beliefs’, be patriotic, follow the party line, and study the example of figures like Ven. Hem Chieu who led anti-colonialist demonstrations in the early 1940s. In an interview with the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (September 1981), Ven. Tep Vong claimed 3,000 monks, and 700 pagodas under construction, nationwide. Around the same time, Pen Sovann, secretary-general of the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP), said: ‘As far as monks are concerned, our Front has a well-defined political line: to respect the traditions, mores and customs of our people. All monks who have direct relations with the people are members of the Front.’ (quoted by Kiernan 1982, 181)

Towards the middle of the decade a government-sponsored mass ordination of 1,500 monks took place in Phnom Penh (Kiernan

⁴ Vietnamese Buddhism underwent state-controlled re-unification once more in 1981.

1982, 173, 177, 181) and various restrictions on monk ordination were lifted in mid-1988. In the run-up to the establishment of the new State of Cambodia (SOC, declared April 1989), precipitated by a gradual Vietnamese military withdrawal, Hun Sen, a prominent member of the administration, apologized for earlier 'mistakes' in the treatment of Buddhism and conspicuous acts of Buddhist piety by party dignitaries started to be widely reported. The Vietnamese finally withdrew from Cambodia in September 1989 and in mid-October 1991, a few days before signing the Paris Peace Accord, the KPRP changed its name to the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). In the process it renounced 'authentic Marxist-Leninism', its history of revolutionary struggle, embraced the 'free-market', and elected a new Party hierarchy.

After six months, the Party's newspaper, *Pracheachon* (no. 1061, 24 May 1992) was declaring that the CPP was the 'little brother of the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* Party', the Cambodian experiment with anti-communist Buddhist socialism led by Sihanouk from 1955⁵. The New Political Platform of the CPP, adopted at the Extraordinary Party Congress on 17–19 October 1991 stated that:

The citizens' honour, dignity and life must be protected by laws. The death penalty is abolished. Buddhism is the state religion with the Tripitaka as basis of laws. All religious activities are allowed in the country. The traditions, customs and cultural heritage of the nation must be preserved and glorified, as well as the traditions of all the nationalities living in the Cambodian national community. (*Kampuchea* no. 623, 21 October 1991, 3–4. quoted in Frings 1994, 363).

⁵ The editorial goes on to add that this view had been endorsed by Sihanouk, 'with the brightness of a bodhisattva'. Shortly after this we hear that the CPP is the 'rightful heir (*neak bondo ven troeum trouv*) of the line of the People's Socialist Community (*sangkum reastr niyum*)' (*Pracheachon* no. 1091, 27 June 1992). As Frings (1994, 360) points out, this must have led to some consternation in the ranks for, as late as 1987, the Party's official line was that Sihanouk's experiments with Buddhist socialism were a sham for they maintained 'the prerogatives of the exploiting class' and were 'nothing more than a capitalist regime distinguished as socialist in order to build capitalism'.

In November 1991 Sihanouk returned to the country from long-term residence in China, the following month investing *saṅghareach* (= *saṅgharāja*) for each of the two pre-1975 monastic fraternities, with official restoration of both ecclesiastical hierarchies following in February 1992⁶. For the first time since the mid-1970s both *nikāya* enjoyed theoretical equivalence.

The UN-sponsored elections in May 1993 arising out of the Paris Peace Accord were conducted under the principle of universal adult suffrage. This meant that monks voted for the first time in Cambodia's history. Although this decision was not supported by many who felt that monks should stand aloof from the political process⁷, the decision did lead to wide-spread politicization of the Saṅgha which has, to a certain extent, persisted down to the present as the forthcoming discussion will demonstrate.

As a result of protracted haggling following the results of the election, FUNCINPEC⁸ a royalist party led by Sihanouk's eldest son, Prince Norodom Rannaridh, were forced to share power with the CPP. The new Constitution restored Sihanouk to the throne and the two *saṅghareach* were appointed to a Royal Council charged with selecting a new king when Sihanouk dies. Violent conflict between the CPP and FUNCINPEC broke out in July 1997 to the advantage of the former. Subsequent elections in July 1998 produced a more clear-cut result in favour of the CPP.

⁶ The title of *samdech* was re-introduced for a senior monks around this time, although it had already been conferred on Son Sann (1911–2000), a political ally of Sihanouk, and would be later offered to the leaders of the CPP and FUNCINPEC (Marston 1997, 176).

⁷ A senior monk, Ven Non Nget (interview 18 November 1999), told me that both he and Ven. Bour Kry made unsuccessful representations to Yasushi Akashi, special representative of the UN secretary-general, to try to prevent monastic voting. I have also found reasonable evidence that some individual abbots dissuaded monks from voting when the time came.

⁸ Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant, neutre, pacifique et coopératif.

3. Emergence of Saṅgha groupings

(i) Mohanikay Modernists

The Mohanikay had grown in strength and influence during the French colonial period, particularly as a result of organizational activities of monks such as Ven. Chuon Nath (1883–1969; *saṅghareach* 1948–1969⁹) and Ven. Huot Tath (1891–1975; *saṅghareach* 1969–1975¹⁰). Both had studied critical scholarship in Hanoi (1922–3) under Louis Finot, Director of the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), and Victor Goloubew. Consequently, they did much to modernize and 'improve' the intellectual credentials of the order in tune with the teachings of the Pāli canon and western notions of rationality. Their reformed Saṅgha grouping, the Thommakay¹¹, was vehement in its criticism of the 'corrupt practices' of the unreformed segment of the monastic order. So bitter was the resulting dispute that a group of senior Mohanikay monks lobbied King Sisowath who, in 1918, with French blessings, issued an ordinance specifically referring to the split between 'modernists' (*buak dharm thmī* = group of the new dhamma) and 'traditionalists' (*buak dharm cās* = group of the old dhamma) and forbidding 'teaching reforms or ... spreading among the faithful modern ideas which conflict with traditional religion'¹². This does not seem to have been entirely successful for, as late as January 1954, a proscription written by Chuon Nath designed to be displayed throughout the country, pointed to the importance of *vinaya*-observance and discouraged the recitation of mantras, practice of magic, water sprinkling, and healing (Bizot 1976, 20, n. 3).

⁹ For a brief biography see Leang Hap An, *Biographie de Samdech Preach Saṅghareach Chuon-Nath, supérieur de l'ordre Mohanikaya*, Phnom Penh, Institut Bouddhique, 1970 (Série de Culture et Civilisation Khmères, Tome 7)

¹⁰ Executed a few days after the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh in April 1975.

¹¹ Kiernan (1985, 3f).

¹² Quoted, without attribution, by Keyes (1994, 47). Also mentioned, without a date, by Martini (1955, 418, n. 1).

Ven. Mahāghosānanda (b. 1929) is an heir to the modernism of Chuon Nath. Born in Takeo province, he became a monk at the age of fourteen. Having studied at the Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, he traveled to India to work for a doctorate at the newly-established Buddhist University of Nālandā. While there he seems to have come under the influence of Nichidatsu Fujii the founder of the Japanese peace-oriented Buddhist sect Nipponzan Myohoji who was himself involved with the work of Gandhi. In 1965 Mahāghosānanda moved to a forest hermitage in southern Thailand under the tutelage of the *vipassanā* master Ajahn Dhammadaro, remaining there for 13 years. However, in 1978 he made his way to the Cambodian refugee camps on the Thai border that were growing rapidly as a result of the impending collapse of Democratic Kampuchea. In this new context he helped establish temples for spiritual, educational and cultural uplift of his people. In cooperation with Peter Pond, a Christian social-activist, he formed the Inter-Religious Mission for Peace in Cambodia in 1980. One of the aims of the organization was to identify, support and re-ordain surviving Cambodian Buddhist monks. To aid this process, he founded over thirty temples in Canada and the United States in these early years¹³. As a result his standing in the Cambodian exile community began to grow. It seems that he was elected *samdech* by a small gathering of monks and laity in Paris in 1988, although he regarded the position as provisional stating that he would resign when conditions in Cambodia returned to normality and a fully valid hierarchy had been established (Maha Ghosananda 1992, 15ff)

As conditions in Cambodia improved following the creation of the SOC, Mahāghosānanda took up residence at Wat Sampeou Meas, Phnom Penh. He first came to general prominence as the leader of a Buddhist peace march (*dhammayietra*) in May 1992 in which around 350 monks, nuns and lay people escorted more than one hundred refugees from the border camps back to their villages. Since that time the marches, organized by the Dhammayietra Centre

¹³ Mahāghosānanda also worked as a consultant to the UN Economic and Social Council from 1980.

for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR), based at Wat Sampeou Meas, have become annual events.

The CPR had originally been formed by Bob Maat (a Jesuit), Liz Bernstein and a Paris-based Mohanikay monk, Ven. Yos Hut, at Taprya on the Thai-Cambodian border close to Site 2 refugee camp. They then co-opted Mahāghosānanda and gradually the Dhammayietra movement was formed, although the first march was organized almost exclusively by foreigners. Indeed, as late as 1997 the \$27,000 necessary for the organization of the sixth Dhammayietra came mainly from 'Christian and ecumenical foreign NGOs [Non Governmental Organizations], International Organizations, and King Sihanouk' (Yonekura 1999, 86). More recent marches have focused on specific issues. The 1995 march was intended to raise awareness of the issues surrounding landmines, while the 1996 event highlighted the adverse impact of large-scale deforestation¹⁴. Other more localized marches have been organized against prostitution in Phnom Penh's Toul Kok red-light district and in support of stranded Vietnamese fishing families, a pariah group in contemporary Cambodia¹⁵.

Engaged Buddhism in Cambodia received more general support from a massive influx of foreign NGOs in the run-up to the 1993 elections. The activities of the German-based Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) and its funding of a socially engaged 'development-oriented Buddhism' is particularly instructive. Since 1994 the Buddhism for Development (BDF)¹⁶ organization based at Wat

¹⁴ The sixth march in 1997 entered the Khmer Rouge strongholds of Pailin and surrounding areas in the northwest of the country. However, Mahāghosānanda claimed that he had been invited twice by Ieng Sary, ex-DK Foreign Minister, and that the movement was more generally supported by the Khmer Rouge (*Cambodia Daily*, 18 March 1997). Indeed, the marchers were greeted by Ieng Sary, Y Chhien (mayor of Pailin), and other important KR defectors on their arrival in Pailin. Interestingly, nuns outnumbered monks by 80 to 26 on the 1998 march.

¹⁵ *Phnom Penh Post (PPP)* 3/5, 11–24 March 1994, p. 1; and 3/7, 8–21 April 1994, p. 4.

¹⁶ My interview with Peter Schier, Permanent Representative of KAF in Cambodia, 11 December 1997. BDF, founded in 1990, has its origins in veteran

Anlongvil, Battambang province has received around \$750,000 from the KAF. In the field it concentrates on the training of Buddhist monks in rural development work, the establishment of rice and money banks, tree-nurseries and compost-making activities. It has also held a series of annual national seminars on Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society. One of the BDF's senior activists, Ven. Heng Monychenda¹⁷, has written a number of books, including *Preahbat Dhammik* (1996) which aim to give Buddhist-based moral guidance to Cambodian politicians.

One final example of a reformed Mohanikay activist also has close connections with Mahāghosānanda. Ven. Yos Hut¹⁸ is the chief monk (*chau adhikar*) of Wat Lanka, Phnom Penh, and President of the Fondation Bouddhique Khmère that has offices in Cambodia and France. One of its current projects is the construction of a hospital (begun in 1996) in Kampong Trabek, Prey Veng province¹⁹. Recently a certain level of hostility between the local authorities in Kampong Trabek district and monks associated with this work has crystallized in the attempt to defrock Ven. Khot Khon, abbot of Wat Beng Bury for supposed sexual misconduct and involvement in politics. The latter charge arises from the visit of several high profile FUNCINPEC officials, including Prince Sisowath Satha, to the monastery (*PPP* 9/12, 9–22 June 2000). It seems that the chief monk of Kampong Trabek district has attempted to solve the dispute by suggesting that Khot Khon either returns to the lay life or moves to another monastery. Both alternatives indicate a level

politician Son Sann's attempts to revivify Khmer Buddhist culture in the refugee camps on the Thai border, a project also funded by the KAF.

¹⁷ Now disrobed following a brief spell as a graduate student at Harvard.

¹⁸ When the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia Yos Hut was pursuing postgraduate studies in Paris. After a spell in Australia he worked for the United Nations Border Relief Organisation on the Thai border until 1990. (Kalab 1994, 62f). My own interviews with him (30 November 1997, 20 November 1999) indicate that he is well-acclulturated within the NGO community.

¹⁹ Yos Hut is also planning a forest monastery, with associated educational and development-oriented features, on c. 100 hectares of land recently acquired some 25km from Phnom Penh, just off Highway One.

of government (i.e. CPP) opposition to aspects of the engaged Buddhist agenda and more generalized political interference in the internal administration of the Saṅgha.

It is unsurprising that NGOs, particularly the KAF with its Protestant Christian ethos, harbour doubts about the future of Buddhism in Cambodia unless it moves in a more socially engaged direction. However, such attitudes are also echoed by the King himself who has described such work as ‘an important contribution to the revival of the concept of “Buddhist Socialism” which ... [he] encouraged during the historic *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* period’²⁰ of the 1950s and 60s. It is in this light that we should interpret Ven. Mahāghosānanda’s appointment as Sihanouk’s special representative for the protection of the environment in 1994²¹. The post is an entirely novel creation, having formed no part of the pre-1975 monastic hierarchy, but given official opposition to Mohanikay activism, it is tempting to regard the construction of such extra-ecclesiastical roles as an attempt by the King to construct an alternative and non CPP-controlled Buddhist hierarchy. Having said that, most reformed

²⁰ *Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society: Proceedings of the 1st National Seminar on Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society held in Phnom Penh, 21–23 November 1994* Anlongvil and Phnom Penh, Buddhism for Development in Cooperation with the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs, 1996; p. 50.

²¹ At about the same time the King conferred the title of ‘International Patriarch’ on Mahāghosānanda. (David Channer, personal communication, 5 October 1997). Environmental concerns have been much in the air in recent years. An Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee for Environmental Education, involving the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs and some Buddhist Associations, has produced an environmental manual for primary teachers and a seminar organized by the Buddhist Institute in November 1997 produced a White Paper on the subject. Perhaps most surprisingly, Ta Mok - the most brutal of surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, is known to have expressed typically idiosyncratic environmentalist views: ‘Whoever destroys the forest is not allowed to be a leader ... Whoever blows up and shoots fish are *yuon* [a derogatory term for the Vietnamese] and have their throats cut ... Whoever burns the forest, if arrested, has to be burned alive’ (*Khmer Rouge Papers for 7 December 1997*, quoted in *PPP* 7/10, 22 May–4 June 1998).

Mohanikay monks have managed to steer clear of explicit political favoritism. For instance, when the King sent a letter to the CPR committee asking them to call off the 1994 walk for fear of violence, Mahāghosānanda ignored the advice (Yonekura 1999, 85). The march was subsequently attacked, but since that time the movement has even more strenuously sought to be non-partisan. All banners, military uniforms and weapons are forbidden on the march and the organization tries to weed out ‘undisciplined monks’.

For Mahāghosānanda and his monastic supporters social change can only be successfully achieved through radical transformations of individual minds. The arena of explicit political activity makes no sense unless it is premised on such an assumption. This ‘mysticism’ (Hughes 2000), when combined with the non-partisan nature of the movement, leads almost inevitably to a desire for the complete separation of church and state. Another prominent engaged monk, Ven Hok Savann, has made precisely that point, on the grounds that the Saṅgha will lose the people’s respect if it is seen to be involved in ‘politics instead of practicing the traditional monk’s discipline.’ (Letter to PPP 13–26 August 1993; 6)

(ii) Thommayut

The monastic order in Cambodia has been divided into two fraternities (*nikāya*) since 1855 when King Norodom imported the newly-formed Thommayut (*dhamayutika nikāya*) from Thailand through the agency of Maha Pan, a Khmer monk belonging to King Mongkut’s spiritual lineage. Norodom subsequently had Wat Botum Vaddey constructed, according to the demarcation ritual (*nadīsīmā*) of the newly formed order, adjacent to the new royal palace in Phnom Penh as the headquarters of the new order and Maha Pan was subsequently installed as its *saṅghareach* (Meas Yang 1978, 38).

In Thailand the introduction of the new order had passed off without opposition. This was not the case in Cambodia where frequent skirmishes between Mohanikay and Thommayut monks seem to have occurred with some regularity (Bizot 1976, 9). The influence of the colonial power may have been a factor here since the French regarded the Mohanikay, particularly those belonging to its reformed wing, to exercise a beneficial influence on the populace and towards

the protectorate. Thommayut monks, on the other hand, were regarded as potentially intransigent, not least because it was thought that they owed their allegiance to the Thai court (Forest 1980, 143).

There is little to distinguish the two orders in terms of doctrine yet they disagree over the interpretation of some elements of discipline, most notably the wearing of robes, of sandals, the carrying of the begging bowl, and the consumption of drinks after midday. Differences may also be noted in the two order's pronunciation of Pāli and techniques of liturgical recitation (Brunet 1967, 202). The essentially urban Thommayut has also been much smaller in terms of numbers and geographical spread²².

Some evidence exists to suggest that Thommayut monks suffered even greater discrimination during the DK period than their Mohanikay co-religionists; the communists certainly made a distinction between rural and city monks. In the early days of the revolution the former were characterized as 'proper and revolutionary' while the later were classed as 'imperialist', probably as a result of their close associations with Thailand²³. We have already noted that during the early PRK period institutional Buddhism was re-established under a Unified Saṅgha. Many prominent figures of the time argued that this arrangement was devised, at least in part, to eliminate the elitist and monarchical influences of the Thommayut. One senior monastic source claimed that after unification 'our monks are neither Mohanikay nor Thommayut but Nationalist monks'²⁴. It was only in December 1991 that Sihanouk once again created two *saṅghareach*: Ven. Tep Vong taking control of the

²² A 1959 survey of the country's monasteries found 1725 belonging to the Mohanikay and only 106 affiliated to the Thommayut (Chuon Nath 1976, 41). Today only around three percent of the monastic population belong to the Thommayut (Statistics from the Centre for Advanced Studies and the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs published in *Cambodia Report* II/2, March–April 1996, p. 23).

²³ Chantou Boua (1991, 229). Also see Ponchaud (1990, 234) on the Khmer Rouge's claim that Buddhism is a foreign religion.

²⁴ Yang Sam p. 86.

Mohanikay with Ven. Bour Kry becoming his Thommayut equivalent²⁵.

Like the prominent reformed Mohanikay monks mentioned in the previous section, Bour Kry had been living in the Cambodian diaspora during the DK and PRK periods. When Phnom Penh fell in April 1975 the only Cambodian monk in Paris was Ven. Yos Hut who had gone there for postgraduate studies. He was eventually joined by refugee monks who had escaped via Thailand. A house in a southeastern *banlieue* of the city was subsequently bought and Wat Khemarāram established in its garden. However, personal and political differences soon began to affect the exile community. Martin (1994, 251) notes that in the late 1980s the Khmer New Year was celebrated on three successive Sundays at Vincennes by three separate factions, FUNCINPEC, Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF), and neutrals, each with their monastic supporters. It was only a matter of time before many of the monk residents, including Yos Hut himself, formed other Khmer monasteries mainly in and around Paris. This left Bour Kry at Wat Khemarāram.

It was around this time that Sihanouk favoured Bour Kry with a number of ceremonial titles²⁶ in recognition of the fact that one of his sons had spent time as a temporary monk under Bour Kry's tutelage. Given Bour Kry's Thommayut affiliations it is hardly surprising that he was both closer to the royal family and rather more traditional in his observance of *vinaya* than the other Cambodian monks in France. Only Wat Khemarāram, for instance, was properly delimited by *sīmā* markers. Nevertheless, Bour Kry did seem to have a reputation as a very competent astrologer at this time and, despite opposition from more traditionally-minded Khmers, he encouraged women to take a more active role in ceremonies. He also seems to have encouraged his supporters to make financial contributions to FUNCINPEC (Kalab 1994, 69).

²⁵ These dates were supplied by Bour Kry when I interviewed him on 9 December 1997.

²⁶ Kalab (1994, 61) claims that Buor Kry possessed a ceremonial fan embroidered with the words, 'Head of all monks in France'.

Today at Wat Botum, the symbolic centre of the order and home of the *saṅghareach*, Thommayut monks are greatly outnumbered²⁷ and physically isolated in a separate section of the compound from members of the Mohanikay. This situation reflects the relatively short history of the newly formed order. As we have already noted all monks at Wat Botum were part of a unified (and essentially Mohanikay) order before 1991. Official suspicion of monarchical and pro-FUNCINPEC organizations and individuals clearly remains. Hostility to foreign influence is probably another factor for Thommayut monks, although they are once more permitted go to Thailand for higher ordination (*upasampadā*), may easily be distrusted for the same reasons as fellow order members in the colonial period. A good example of such suspicion today is that, despite the re-establishment of a full Thommayut hierarchy, some high-ranking positions are actually occupied by prominent pro-government Mohanikay monks who, one assumes, are in an ideal place to feed back intelligence to the relevant authorities²⁸.

Thommayut monks do not appear to possess the developmentalist fervour of their reformed Mohanikay counterparts. This may simply be because the Mohanikay is overwhelmingly the largest order. It is also far more rural than the Thommayut. However, senior Thomma-

²⁷ Ordinations into the Thommayut seem to have gathered pace since the early 90s. 150 monks were reported to have been ordained in early July 1992 alone (*PPP* 1/2, 24 July 1992, p. 6). In November 1999, Ven Non Nget supplied me with the following figures for Wat Botum: Mohanikay – c. 600; Thommayut – c. 200.

²⁸ The second figure in the hierarchy is traditionally the *mongol tepeachar* (*maṅgaladevācārya*). This position was until recently held by Ven. Oum Som (1918–2000), a Mohanikay abbot of Wat Mohamontrey, Phnom Penh who was also Inspector General of Buddhist education and Director of the Buddhist University. Oum Som was one of the few post-DK survivors of Chuon Nath's Thommakay grouping. He claimed that he maintained the life-style of a monk, despite having been forcibly disrobed, throughout the Democratic Kampuchea period [*PPP* 9/15, July 21–Aug 3 2000). He was also one of the first group of seven monks to be re-ordained in the early PRK period. His critics sometimes accused him of being a 'communist monk'. As we shall see shortly, he was a prominent critic of the young monks' demonstrations in 1998.

yut monks who have been invited to developmentally-oriented events have shown some reluctance to attend. This can be explained in a number of ways. The order's strict observance of monastic discipline, such as the prohibition on handling money and digging the soil, may be a factor. Another possibility is that the Thommayut hierarchy are concerned about the adverse impact the receipt of international funds might have on the traditions of Cambodian Buddhism. Given their contacts with Thailand they will clearly be more aware of this as a potentially divisive issue. A final likelihood is that the feuding noted during the exile in Paris has not been entirely healed. Certainly, the Thommayut are not entirely unconcerned with wider social questions, a fact underlined by a recent well-publicized disagreement between Bour Kry and the Mohanikay *saṅghareach*, Ven Tep Vong²⁹. Following a conference for monks organized by the National AIDS Authority in May 2000 the two *saṅghareach* appeared to be at loggerheads about how best to respond to the HIV/AIDS problem. Tep Vong's view is that the scale of the problem has been greatly inflated by Cambodia's enemies in order to discredit the political leadership of the CPP. He also argues that the right course of action is a crack-down on brothels and prostitutes. For him AIDS is a form of karmic punishment and monks need not take any role in comforting the sick. Bour Kry, on the other hand, argues that monks should minister, 'moral support to the sick, so they can die peacefully—even though they have committed a bad thing' (PPP 9/12, 9–22 June 2000). He is, however, less convinced of the notion that monks might act as a conduit for the dissemination of the safe sex message, since this would involve them in employing language incompatible with their discipline. Unlike the reformed Mohanikay who actively engage in AIDS education, and the Mohanikay hierarchy who tend to view the epidemic as a foreign and ideological threat, the Thommayut appear to be steering a middle course.

²⁹ In actual fact, feuding between Tep Vong and Bour Kry seems to have been on-going since at least 1998 (PPP 7/22, 2–15 October 1998).

(iii) Young monks

Angered by the results of the 1998 election, Sam Rainsy Party³⁰ supporters organized a rally at the Olympic Stadium, Phnom Penh, on 22 August. Six days later monks led a candlelight procession close to the National Assembly. One week later a second demonstration was attended by around 7,000 people, including a significant number of monks. After the rally the crowd eventually growing to c. 15–17,000 moved off in the direction of the National Assembly where a number of anti-Vietnamese speeches were made, at least one by a young monk (*PPP* 7/19, 4–17 September 1998)³¹.

According to unconfirmed reports, another young monk was severely injured and subsequently disappeared outside the Hotel Cambodiana on 7 September, where Sam Rainsy was sheltering following a grenade attack on Hun Sen's compound. Around 300 monks, some holding posters denouncing Hun Sen, others carrying wreaths for monks missing from previous demonstrations, were in the vanguard of a march through central Phnom Penh on the following day. One of the leaders, Ven. Chin Channa³² used a megaphone to remind listeners of the example of Ven. Hem Chieu, the anti-colonialist monk of the early 1940s. Having been photographed by a pro-government newspaper in an earlier demonstration he was branded a dangerous activist and wanted posters appeared in Phnom Penh monasteries. He was subsequently spirited out of the city by

³⁰ Sam Rainsy was FUNCINPEC Finance Minister until late 1994 when, following an unsuccessful campaign against corruption, he subsequently founded his own party.

³¹ Although it is fairly commonplace for Khmer to express extreme anti-Vietnamese sentiments, yet I have been struck by the number of times they have cropped up in conversations with young monks. They are, in part, a coded criticism of Hun Sen through his alleged connections with Vietnam.

³² Born in 1975 near Sisophon Chin Channa became a novice monk at Wat Tik Thlar, in his home village, in June 1991. He was inspired by a visit of Mahāghosānanda to the wat on the first Dhammayietra in April 1992. Shortly after this event he continued his education by learning Pali in Mongol Borei before attending Wat Damrey Sa in Battambang. He came to Wat Unnalom in February 1998 to enroll at the Buddhist University.

international human rights activists. The aim of the young monks' demonstration of 8 September had been to claim the body and hold funeral services for the monk reported killed the previous day³³. However, lack of experience in organizing demonstrations combined with possible infiltration by *agent provocateur* led the event to spiral out of control (PPP, 2–15 October 1999)

On 9 September two monks were reported as having been shot by police outside the US Embassy where they had gone to gain support for an end to the post-election violence. One of them subsequently had an AK-47 bullet removed from his body and survived. He reported witnessing the shooting of another monk in the back of the leg. A body with head injuries retrieved down-river at Peam Chor, Prey Veng province, on 11 September had a shaved head and eyebrows, although curiously it was dressed in a police uniform (*Cambodia Daily*, 17 October 1998)³⁴. The demonstrations gradually died down over the next few days.

Some evidence suggests that an American-based monk, Ven. Yem Rithipol, residing temporarily at Wat Botum may have had some involvement in the organization of demonstrations (*Cambodia Daily*, 11 September 1998). Evidently he tried to persuade his fellow monks to style the 8 September event a 'peace walk', along the lines of those organized by Mahāghosānanda, rather a 'demonstration'. He was over-ruled by activists, one of whom is reported as saying: 'If the government wants to keep Buddhist monks from getting involved in politics, they should not allow monks to vote. But we do

³³ Some reports suggest that the idea for the 8 September event may have emerged among some monks connected with the Campaign to Reduce Violence for Peace, a consortium of local NGOs facilitated by westerners and some Khmer-Americans (Gyallay-Pap, personal communication, 10 December 1999). Their initial intention had been to 'beg violence', in other words to draw any aggression down upon themselves, and so defuse a potentially dangerous situation.

³⁴ On 16 September Thomas Hammarberg, the UN human rights envoy, reported 16 bodies 'including two in saffron robes' found since the beginning of the police crackdown on demonstrators. Estimates given to me by leaders of the young monks are significantly higher.

vote.’ Ou Bun Long, a prominent member of the Khmer Buddhist Society (KBS)³⁵ and a spokesman for the Sam Rainsy Party, also defended the monks’ actions saying that they were not in technical violation of *vinaya*.

Although a number of senior Saṅgha members have agreed, mainly in private, that the monks’ actions were justified, the demonstrations were almost immediately condemned by those thought to be close to the ruling party. Ven. Oum Som, for instance, appeared on national television on 10 September to say that: ‘Monks from the provinces and pagodas of the city have attended illegal demonstrations with civilians. This is against the rules of Buddhism.’ There is certainly some justification in the criticism, since this was during the three-month rainy season retreat (*vossa*), a time when monks should be largely secluded in their monasteries. However, Oum Som also accused the monks of causing their own injuries through fear and ill-discipline, a charge repeated by an Interior Ministry spokesman who also claimed that some of the monks involved in demonstrations were not ‘real monks’³⁶.

Throughout this period there seems to have been genuine anxiety among some members of the Phnom Penh Saṅgha that they were under police surveillance. Twelve monks are reported as having barricaded themselves into a room at the top of one of the buildings at Wat Unnalom and there were repeated rumours that monks had gone

³⁵ The KBS was founded by Khmer-Americans in the early 1990s. Funded partly by USAID for non-Buddhist-related development work it soon made successful bids for lavish, though poorly-audited funds, from the UN Centre for Human Rights in connection with human rights training with some rather vaguely defined Buddhist content (Gyallay-Pap, personal communication 10 December 1999). Ou Bun Long is a former director of the KBS.

³⁶ When I interviewed Ven. Non Nget (b. 1924), leader of the Mohanikay segment at Wat Botum and significant supporter of Hun Sen (18 November 1999), he repeated these charges and added that some monks had also used sling-shots against the police. His official position in the Mohanikay hierarchy is Samdech Preah Bodhivong. He is, therefore, one of the three Samdech Sangh in the *Rājagaṇa* of the First Class immediately below Tep Vong.

missing (*PPP* 7/20, 12–17 September 1998)³⁷. I am reliably informed that Ven. Tep Vong called in members of Hun Sen’s bodyguard unit and military police supplied by municipal governor, Chea Sophara, who used electric cattleprods and small arms to flush out dissidents within the monastery. ‘Unnalom monks know how to run!’ was a much repeated maxim at the time. Not surprisingly, relations between Tep Vong and young monk activists have deteriorated significantly over the last few years to the extent that the Mohanikay *saṅghareach* is variously accused of corruption, rudeness, simony, nepotism, philistinism, and lack of patriotism by his opponents.

Given the heightened tension, very few lay people attended city monasteries during the annual fortnight of offerings to the ancestors (*pchum ben*) which began on 20 September 1998, a fact borne out by a letter that the King is reported to have written to Hun Sen asking him to authorize the free movement of monks during the ceremonies. Around fifty percent of Phnom Penh-based monks attempted to leave their monasteries for the country immediately after the troubles although a significant number were ordered off trains and turned back at road checkpoints (*Cambodia Daily*, 17 September 1998 and *PPP*, 2–15 October 1998). Despite the government’s partial success in preventing the spread of monastic disaffection, it seems likely that a fairly wide circle of young Saṅgha members were radicalized across much of the country in the next few months.

Attempts to mark the first anniversary of the September 1998 demonstrations with a ceremony at Wat Unnalom were frustrated by a formal Saṅgha declaration issued by Tep Vong calling for the arrest of the organizers. However, the event did subsequently take place at Wat Botum after the Thommayut *saṅghareach* Ven. Bour Kry gave the necessary permissions. Evidence of Sam Rainsy’s connection with radical elements at Wat Unnalom also continues. On 23 October 2000 he began a hunger strike near the National Assembly to protest about corruption in the distribution of supplies to flood victims. After two days he was forced to withdraw to Unnalom so

³⁷ Various interviews I conducted with monks in autumn 1998 confirmed the widely-held view that between 5 and 17 monks permanently disappeared around this time.

that the authorities could prepare for the November Water festival and a forthcoming state visit of the Chinese President Jiang Zemin. He remained there a further three days claiming that he wished to share the people's physical knowledge of hunger, but appears to have received minimal support³⁸. Having said all of this, I do not wish to claim that young monks support Sam Rainsy in any particularly explicit manner. A more likely explanation is that implicit politicization occurs through regular discussion of grievances with the many poor students who also live in and around urban monasteries. Certainly, some of the latter are members of the Students' Movement for Democracy, others are Sam Rainsy Party activists³⁹.

(iv) Mohanikay hierarchy

In May 1978, Heng Samrin gave a speech just inside the Cambodia's Eastern Zone where he revealed the existence of a dissident grouping within the Khmer Rouge. He called on 'all patriotic forces regardless of political and religious tendencies' including 'Buddhist monks and nuns' to join a united front to help 'topple the reactionary and nepotistic Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang' (Heder in *PPP* 8/6, 19 March–1 April 1999). Following the successful overthrow of the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese-supported government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) gradually reversed some of the most extreme anti-religious policies, endorsing 'the right to freedom of opinion, association, and belief'. In 1982 Heng Samrin, now General Secretary of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), announced that Cambodian Buddhism would 'last forever', since it was a religion in harmony with democratic principles. He also praised the positive contribution of Buddhists to society, particularly those with a nationalist outlook, such as Achar Hem

³⁸ As Olivier de Bernon (personal communication, 13 November 2000) has pointed out, Sam Rainsy recognized that his Gandhian 'mode d'expression' was inappropriate in the contemporary Cambodian political context.

³⁹ Ven Yos Hut told me (interview, 19 November 1999) that he believed some Sam Rainsy Party members had taken robes with a specific intention to infiltrate the Saṅgha.

Chieu⁴⁰. In 1984, he made the additional point that monks must be prepared to fight to protect the State against its enemies, for the existence of the State is the necessary condition for the flourishing of Buddhism itself. They should be particularly vigilant with regard to fellow monks who may be using the ordained state for acts of subversion and they should ‘completely discard unhealthy beliefs’⁴¹. Around the same time Ven. Tep Vong, then the President of the ‘Unified’ Cambodian Buddhist Saṅgha, reinforced this message when he argued that some forms of political violence could be condoned by Buddhism, specifically citing the example of the Buddhist-inspired freedom fighters (*issarak*) of the 1950s (Löschmann 1991, 24).

In September 1979 seven ‘carefully chosen’ former senior Saṅgha members had been re-ordained at Wat Unnalom by monks from Vietnam headed by Thich Bou Chon, adviser to the Central Commission of Vietnamese Theravada Buddhism. The delegation comprised a mixture of Khmer who had fled to Vietnam during the DK period plus some ethnic Khmer from southern Vietnam (a region termed Kampuchea Krom (lower Cambodia) by the Khmer)⁴². The youngest of the seven, Ven. Tep Vong (b. 1932) claimed to have been imprisoned and sentenced to four years forced labour at the beginning of the DK period (Danois 1980, 73). During the August 1979 show-trial of Pol Pot (*in absentia*), held in Phnom Penh by the PRK authorities, he had given evidence that Pol Pot had personally executed 57 monks, including three of his own neph-

⁴⁰ Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS, *Asian and Pacific Daily Report*, 2 June 1982. Ven. Hem Chieu was generally referred to by the title *achar* in the PRK period. Such laicization of Buddhist heroes has certainly been attractive to a variety of communist regimes. Ponchaud’s (1990, 232) observation that, in the modern period, it has been *achars* rather than ordained monks who have tended to be in the vanguard of the political resistance movement, needs to be read in this light. Forest (1992, 88) also confirms the association of *achars* and ‘mouvements de contestation’. The fluid nature of monkhood in Cambodian society means that the same person can be an *achar* and a monk at separate times in their life.

⁴¹ Keyes 1994, 62.

⁴² Keyes 1994, 60, n. 36.

ews⁴³. Tep Vong was subsequently elected Saṅgha President, at the same time gaining the posts of Vice-President of the Khmer National Assembly and Vice-President of the Central Committee of the Khmer United Front for National Construction and Defense (KUFNCD). There can be little doubt, then, that Tep Vong and other early ordainees⁴⁴ were held in high regard by the Vietnamese-controlled party apparatus. It has been difficult for these monks to break free from the implications of this link, so much so that a commonly heard complaint from young monks today is that Tep Vong spends too much time in Vietnam. Indeed, the original seven have sometimes been described as ‘Vietnamese monks in Khmer robes’⁴⁵.

These early allegiances have remained firm down to the present day. Following the violent conflict between the CPP and FUNCINPEC in July 1997, for instance, Ven. Oum Som is claimed to have told Saṅgha members that FUNCINPEC were in league with the Khmer Rouge and should be ‘sent out of the city’. We have also noted in our consideration of the young monks’ demonstrations in September 1998 that senior members of the Mohanikay hierarchy can generally be expected to take a very pro-CPP line. Indeed, Tep

⁴³ *FBIS, Asian and Pacific Daily Report*, 21 August 1979 quoted in Yang Sam (1987, 69). No independent evidence has ever been found to support these allegations.

⁴⁴ Ven. Non Nget, told me that he was one of the original seven to have been reordained in September 1979. He was appointed *chau adhikar* of Wat Lanka, Phnom Penh in 1981. He looks back with fondness to the PRK and SOC periods, a time when ‘there were no robbers in pagodas’. It is difficult to interpret this comment but I tend to read in the light of something else he said to me—‘Heng Samrin’s time was better than Hun Sen’s’—probably the groan of an old campaigner who feels himself rather marginalized under a new dispensation (interview, 18 November 1999).

⁴⁵ When Michael Vickery (1986, 196, n. 9) questioned Mme Peou Lida, Vice-President of the PRK Salvation Front, also responsible for Religious Affairs, on this matter she denied any explicit Vietnamese involvement in the re-ordinations. Nevertheless, his opponents do refer to Tep Vong as a ‘false monk’ and ‘a Communist ... [who] has always been devoted to the Vietminh’ (Martin 1994, 237).

Vong is closely associated with Chea Sim, Chairman of the CPP and president of the National Assembly. According to one of my informants (letter, 27 November 2000), Chea Sim⁴⁶ actually made a donation of robes and 120 million riels to Wat Unnalom monks during the kathin ceremony of 1996. Having received this on behalf of the Saṅgha, Tep Vong then, allegedly, transferred it back to another CPP member on Chea Sim's behalf. Naturally this angered and alienated many younger monks.

Another effective way of ensuring that monasteries operate in accord with the party line is through the appointment of management committees. Each monastery has such a body consisting of a majority of lay members (*achar*), many of whom are ex-monks. In the early PRK period, these placemen specifically ensured that a proportion of donations to the monastery were redirected to socially useful purposes such as hospitals, roads, schools, etc. More recently they have had a significant impact on the stifling of dissent, particularly given the CPP-oriented individuals often appointed⁴⁷. An excellent example is Hun Neang⁴⁸, prime minister Hun Sen's father, chairman of the Wat Botum committee and hardly an ideal figure to bring about reconciliation between the Mohanikay and Thommayut factions at the divided monastery.

We have already had cause to note Tep Vong's strong defense of the *karma* doctrine in the context of AIDS. Not unsurprisingly, this also has its political dimension. In a speech over the 2000 New Year period Sam Rainsy had appealed for his supporters to stop having faith in *karma* on the grounds that the doctrine is traditionally interpreted on an individualistic basis. He argued that when people habitually envision suffering as a result of their own actions this un-

⁴⁶ Chea Sim has also contributed funds towards the rebuilding of Wat Po Ampil in Takeo province. This may explain why it was the target of a grenade attack that killed one person on 26 March 1998 (*PPP* 7/7, 10–23 April 1998).

⁴⁷ The imposition of CPP appointees appears to be more prevalent in Phnom Penh than in country districts where elders are in a better position to block unwelcome interference.

⁴⁸ Apparently, Hun Neang had been a monk who disrobed around 1945 to join the anti-French resistance (Mehta & Mehta 1999, 15, 22f).

dermines the responsibilities of corporate organizations. This can, in turn, lead to poor governance and associated social ills. This fairly explicit attack on the actual government led some prominent CPP members to accuse Sam Rainsy of treason, in the sense that he seemed to be attacking the state religion or, more accurately, undermining the governing party's dependence on a carefully choreographed form of institutional Buddhism⁴⁹. Tep Vong's interjection may be seen as part of this wider CPP campaign to discredit its political enemies.

(v) Unreformed Mohanikay

As well as the explicit or 'exterior path' (*phlūv krau*) described in the writings of the Pāli canon, and upon which the reformed Mohanikay has taken its stand since at least the time of Chuon Nath, a 'hidden' (*lāk*) or the 'interior path' (*phlūv knuñ*) is also attested in the traditions of Southeast Asian Theravāda Buddhism (Bizot 1992, 33ff). Adepts of this unreformed Mohanikay tradition distinguish themselves from their reformed brethren in a variety of ways but most especially by their use of a series of 'non-orthodox' ritual and meditative techniques termed *mūla kammaṭṭhāna*⁵⁰. One of the criticisms regularly levelled by the modernists—those who know Pāli (*anak ceḥ pālī*)—against the traditionalists—those who adhere to the ancient rites (*anak kān' purāṇ*), whom I shall refer to by the simplified rendering *boran* from now on⁵¹—is that, despite their emphasis

⁴⁹ Letter of Bora Touch in *PPP* 9/18, 1–14 September 2000.

⁵⁰ Ordinarily the word *kammaṭṭhāna* refers to the traditional list of subjects for meditation; Buddhaghosa lists forty of these at *Vism* 110. However, in Cambodia it refers to special 'tantric' practices.

⁵¹ The Thai equivalent *burana* has the sense of 'reconstruct, rehabilitate, repair, or restore' and is often used in the context of rebuilding temples, etc. Its companion term, *watthana(kan)*, on the other hand, invokes growth or increase. Rhum (1996, 350f) has pointed out that in pre-modern Thailand, to say something was 'traditional' simply meant that it formed part of a class of things deemed 'good'. Nowadays, when it is necessary to legitimate something by reference to its fit with the internal workings of society it is termed 'traditional'. The term 'modernity', on the other hand, tends to validate by reference to external factors.

on palm-leaf manuscripts, they have merely memorized them by rote and have no fluency in the sacred language. However, this rather misses the point. In this tradition palm-leaf manuscripts are rarely read for their literary, didactic or intellectual content. Many monks are rarely literate in that sense. It is the power of the words themselves that is regarded as the primary factor inherent in such texts⁵².

It seems that the *boran* movement began to re-establish itself around the beginning of 1989 after state control of religion was significantly diminished and the country was moving away rapidly from doctrinaire communism towards the warm embrace of capitalism. The tradition had flourished particularly in the provinces of Siem Reap and Kompong Cham before the 1970s, a significant figure from the earlier part of the century being Ven. Mony Ung Choeum, chief monk of Kompong Cham, who appears to have had a number of run-ins with Ven. Chuon Nath (Marston 2000, 3). One of the most active figures in the movement to re-establish these initiatory and ritual traditions has been Ven. Daung Phang, originally the chief monk of Kroch Chmar district, Kompong Cham province. He is said to have the power of prophecy and is adept at various magical practices. In addition, Daung Phang is closely associated with Hun Sen who also comes from Kroch Chmar⁵³. Having already held a number of annual traditional monastic rites of probation (*parivāsa*)⁵⁴ at his home monastery of Wat Velo Vanaram, in February 1997 he organized a similar event at Wat Prek Barang⁵⁵, Kompong Luong, quite close to Phnom Penh. This seems to have

⁵² The printed works first produced by Buddhist reformers clearly had a profound impact on the concept of monastic literacy in Cambodia in the first half of the twentieth century. However, one of the problems with these Khmer texts was that they were actually printed in Vietnam. This made them even more unattractive to traditionalists (Marston 1997, 18ff).

⁵³ A rumour circulates to the effect that Ven Daung Phang has a direct phone line to Hun Sen (Marston 2000, 8).

⁵⁴ Unlike normal Theravāda usage, which envisages *parivāsa* as a period of suspension and penitence for an individual monk who has infringed certain rules of discipline, in the unreformed Mohanikay of Cambodia the term refers to a collective rite of purification through asceticism.

⁵⁵ Ven Daung Phang is now the abbot of this monastery.

provoked considerable opposition from modernizers. Indeed, when Ven. Daung Phang held a repeat of the rite the following year at Wat Champuskaec he was sternly rebuked by Ven. Non Nget⁵⁶, the dispute becoming so heated that unsuccessful attempts to adjudicate were made by the Ministry of Cults. Either in an attempt to reach a compromise or, perhaps, as a way of opening up a breach between himself and Non Nget, Tep Vong was a major participant in similar *parivāsa* rituals in 1999 and 2000. The latter was a rather grand affair within the precincts of Angkor Thom—an event clearly designed expressly to establish a connection between the traditionalists and the ancient Angkorian state (de Bernon 2000, 6–8).

Wat Champuskaec, some ten kilometers south of Phnom Penh on the eastern bank of the Bassac river, is another centre for the traditionalists. Its *chau adhikar*, Ven. Om Lim Heng (b.1964), seems to act as a quasi-official chaplain to Hun Sen who lives in nearby Takhmau. His photograph, prominently displayed in a rather magnificent thousand Buddha hall within the monastery compound, shows him wearing a medal, conferred by Hun Sen, hanging from monastic robes⁵⁷. Yet another monk with magical powers, Om Lim Heng specializes in mass lustrations. Indeed, so many people can gather at the monastery during peak times that he is obliged to use a power hose to accomplish this task. Another speciality is his protective lustration of expensive motorcars. Given the high incidence of

⁵⁶ Non Nget appears more hostile to the political affiliations of the *boran* movement than to its ideals and practices, a point reinforced by his own claim to possess supernatural abilities. He also admitted to having both Thai and Khmer teachers in the past, although ‘the Khmer have more magical powers’ (interview, 18 November 1999). Disputes between traditionalists and modernists can occur within the same monastery. The current situation at Wat Bo, Siem Reap is a case in point. Likewise, in Kompong Cham, there is evidence that the laity will only feed monks that champion its own particular viewpoint (Marston 2000, 4).

⁵⁷ Despite his relative youth, Ven Om Lim Heng has a senior position in the national hierarchy of the Mohanikay (*Rājagaṇa* of the Second Class). Although I have not been able to confirm this, it is widely rumoured that he bought the position from Ven Tep Vong.

car-theft and general lawlessness in the country, this is particularly appreciated by his followers.

Wat Champuskaec must be one of the wealthiest religious establishments in the land. The inauguration of its ceremony hall on 18 March 2000 was a particularly lavish occasion. Hun Sen appears to have contributed \$110,000 dollars to the Wat's \$600,000 building programme. Other major donors include Hok Lundy, Head of Police, Cham Prasith, Minister of Commerce, and Moeung Samphan, a three star general and father in law of Hun Sen's eldest daughter (*PPP* 9/6, 17–30 March 2000). We have already seen how, in the late 1980s, Hun Sen apologized for earlier 'mistakes' in the treatment of Buddhism. Opulent pietistical acts by party leaders were also widely reported after this time⁵⁸. The resurgence of conspicuous merit-making by the *nouveaux riches*, most notably high ranking politicians and members of the military who, it is claimed, have often appropriated enormous amounts of State property and land following the end of the communist era, has now become a significant feature of lay Buddhist activity.

As Evans (1993, 133) has noted, the rapaciousness associated with many modern forms of Southeast Asian governance, whether it be monarchical, military dictatorship or socialist, has meant that the only safe and emotionally satisfying (since it may be viewed as a means of expunging previous misdeeds) means of channelling surplus wealth is through the sponsorship of religious rituals. *Boran* wats in Cambodia appear to prosper disproportionately in this sort of climate. Wat Samraung Andeth, near Phnom Penh, is another example. The magical powers of its *chau adhikar*, Ven. Roth Saroeun, attract many donations from politicians and businessmen keen to advance their careers through contact with his special powers. The success of his entrepreneurial magic means that the monastery has become a refuge for large numbers of orphans and poor students

⁵⁸ Hun Sen was frequently to be seen after the 1993 elections personally sponsoring village works of one sort or another. Indeed, he even wrote songs inspired by these events which were broadcast on the radio. One of the more popular, 'The Life of a Pagoda Boy' tells the story of his life as a pagoda boy at Wat Neak Von, Phnom Penh, in the mid-1960s.

from the provinces who can be assured of basic food supplies and lodging⁵⁹. Clearly, such wealth distribution has been an important feature of institutional Buddhism throughout its history.

Another feature of the *boran* movement is its view that Buddhist modernists are merely ‘adepts of insight meditation (*vipassanā*)’. In this connection, Ven. Daung Phang has claimed that *vipassanā* practice is ‘foreign’ and ‘different from the traditional Khmer *kammaṭṭhān*’ which he teaches. Modernist influences, then, come from outside the country while traditional practices are an expression of true khmeritude. The reformed segment of the Saṅgha, it seems, has been seduced into following an alien and unpatriotic path. In a recent study of the role of Buddhist ideals in the Burmese political context, Houtman (1999, 307f) has argued that *vipassanā* practices have been preferred by members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) as a means of coping with the psychological stresses of imprisonment and repression⁶⁰. The military, on the other hand, are inclined towards a more magical, concentration-oriented (*samatha*), practice ‘since it permits power over [the external world] *loka* ...’ The crux of Houtman’s position is that mental culture is not just about private psychological spaces. Initiatory practices of the *samatha*-type are certainly about the cultivation of a hierarchy of interior states, but such states reflect and endorse traditional hierarchical and non-democratic forms of social order. Insight meditation (*vipassanā*), on the other hand, places its emphasis on bare awareness, analytic (as opposed to synthetic) reasoning, the dissolution of hierarchy and a consequent suspicion of traditional power structures. It is, therefore, more in tune with the democratic ideals of the NLD.

There are clear parallels here between the Burmese and Cambodian religio-political contexts. The unreformed Mohanikay in Cam-

⁵⁹ When I interviewed Roth Saroeun (16 November 1999) he assured me that it was necessary to generate income equivalent to 150kg of rice per day to supply the 350 monks, 150 nuns, 100 orphans and an unspecified number of students living at the monastery.

⁶⁰ Jackson (1989) has also noticed that Thai *vipassanā* traditions both deny traditional cosmology and point to the possibility of a non-supernaturalistic *nibbāna* realized in democratic modes of thinking and behaviour.

bodia is now well-patronized by a non-democratic kleptocracy fascinated and charged through their contact with these skilled magical manipulators of power. Their reformed counterparts, on the other hand, rely on the support of modernizing forces both within the country and further afield, reinforced by adherence to forms of mental culture that sustain liberal political norms.

4. Conclusions

This preliminary survey of the forms of Buddhism that have emerged in Cambodia since the 1980s will be superseded as more information becomes available. To a certain extent, the boundaries between the five groupings outlined above are rather fluid and specific individuals may move from one to the other with considerable ease. Having said that, I hope that I have been able to demonstrate the way in which certain constellations of belief and practice arrange themselves around specific political outlooks. Clearly the reverse is also the case.

Evans' (1993, 133) study of the forms of Buddhism that have developed in the two very different economies of Thailand and Laos is instructive in this regard. In the former instance rationalist forms that place an emphasis on individual salvation have emerged in large numbers. In Laos on the other hand, economic stagnation and socialist control of the Saṅgha has signally failed to produce any significant forms of Buddhist modernism. The situation in Cambodia is probably mid-way between those in Laos and Thailand. Over a relatively short space of time the country has shifted from a uniquely extreme and nationalistic communism to a strange amalgam of authoritarianism and the free-market influences. As a result religious groupings covering the entire of the spectrum from modernism to traditionalism have become well-established. They may be differentially arranged across a series of parallel continua, each reflecting some dimension of this basic polarity. Table 1 (p. 102) illustrates the situation.

By and large, the groups on the left of the diagram are associated with leading figures who were out of the country during the DK and PRK periods. On the right we find individuals who either survived

MODERNIST

TRADITIONALIST

| | Reformed Mohanikay | Thommayut | Young Monks | Mohanikay Hierarchy | Unreformed Mohanikay |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Political connections</i> | Non party-political | FUNGINPEC | Sam Rainsy Party. FUNGINPEC | Doctrinaire CPP | Non-doctrinaire CPP |
| <i>Outside Links</i> | Cosmopolitan Various NGOs | Thailand | Minimal. US-based exiles. NGOs [?] | Vietnam | None |

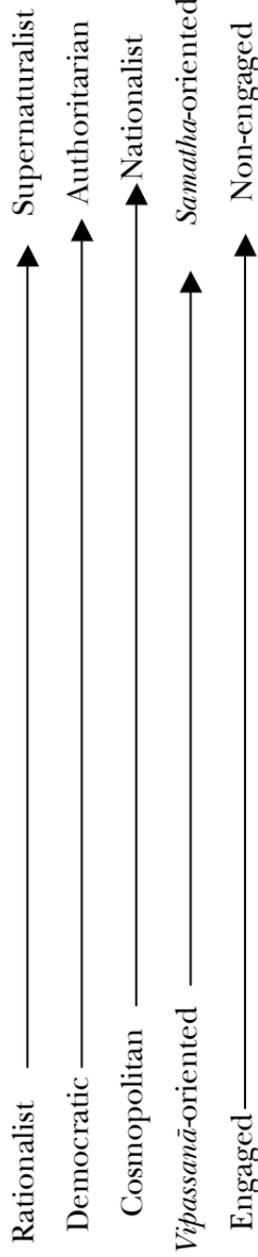


TABLE I

DK in a disrobed state in Cambodia, or escaped to Vietnam, subsequently rising to positions of influence during the PRK. The young monks are anomalous, in the sense that they tend only to have been born around the DK period.

Similarly, the left-hand groupings have generally suffered some form of suspicion, sporadically developing into outright persecution, from the ruling party. In the case of the young monks, again this has been especially severe. On the right side we have two groupings with specific relations to the CPP. I have differentiated them in the diagram by designating the Mohanikay hierarchy and the unreformed Mohanikay as doctrinaire and non-doctrinaire respectively. What I mean by this is that the former group has is largely composed of older ‘revolutionary monks’ who have sought to advance the party line through the reconstruction of a carefully choreographed form of State Buddhism. The non-doctrinaire grouping, on the other hand, appears to be less interested in fighting the battles of the past and generally further removed from the paraphernalia of the State. They have, nevertheless, benefited significantly through allying themselves with wealthy ex-communists and the mushrooming business sector.

Ian Harris
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Lancaster

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OBITUARIES

HUGH RICHARDSON

(22 DECEMBER 1905 – 3 DECEMBER 2000)

Hugh Edward Richardson, well known as a leading authority on Tibetan history and traditional culture, and as a staunch supporter of Tibetan independence, died after a painful illness at his home in St. Andrews in Scotland. He was born in St. Andrews, son of Colonel Hugh Richardson, and so must be one of the last of the 'old guard' of the renowned Indian Civil Service, which came to an end with the granting of independence to India and Pakistan in 1947.

He was educated at Trinity College, Glenalmond and at Keble College, Oxford, where he read classics. At the age of 27 he joined the Indian Civil Service, thus following in the footsteps of his grandfather who had served in India at the time of the Indian Mutiny. He served first as sub-divisional officer at Tamluk (now in Bangladesh) and rapidly mastered Bengali in order to deal with the problems of the millions of Bengalis in his charge. In 1934 he joined the Indian Foreign and Political Service, the important section of the ICS which dealt with the native Indian princes and certain neighbouring states, and was posted first to Baluchistan (now part of Pakistan). Here he met Sir Basil Gould, whom he had met earlier on a visit to Sikkim, where Gould was Political Officer at Gangtok and thus responsible for India's relations with Tibet. When Gould made an official visit to Lhasa in 1936, he took Richardson with him and left him there as Trade Agent (for the trading station at Gyantse on the way to Lhasa) and as head of a 'British Mission to Lhasa'. Thus he remained as British representative in Tibet (apart from brief periods of service elsewhere during the Second World War, namely on the NW Frontier and in Chungking) up to the time of Indian independence. He was then asked to stay on as their representative by the new Indian Government. This led not only to protests from China but also to his enforced departure when the Chinese invaded Tibet and occupied Lhasa in 1950.

In all Hugh Richardson spent nine years in Lhasa. During this period he made himself an expert in the copying, collecting and editing of historical stone inscriptions in the Lhasa area, dating mainly from the eighth and ninth centuries and essential for establishing the early history of Tibet. These were published singly, mainly in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and finally as a whole collection, namely *A Corpus of Early Inscriptions*, published by the same society in 1985. This work formed the scholarly basis of all his later academic work. One of his first diplomatic tasks was to obtain permission from the Tibetan Government for a British expedition to attempt the climbing of Everest from the Tibetan side in 1938. He likewise facilitated the visit to Lhasa of the renowned Italian Professor Giuseppe Tucci, who had already carried out an expedition into Western Tibet in the early 1930s. This resulted among Tucci's many other works on Indo-Tibetan civilisation in the publication of his *Indo-Tibetica* in four volumes, 1932–41, dedicated to the British authorities in India who had thus facilitated his travels. Richardson maintained a friendly scholarly relationship with Tucci up to the death of the latter in 1984. Better known perhaps is his kindly treatment of the two prisoners of war, Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschnaiter, who escaped from a prison-camp in Dehra Dun and arrived in Lhasa in 1946. Although it was his duty to return them to confinement in India, he soon realised that they were no danger to Britain's wartime interests and so allowed them to remain.

But Hugh Richardson could also be stern and forbidding, as in the case of the Japanese agent, Hisau Kimura, who made a journey from Kalimpong far into eastern Tibet in 1947 at the instigation of a British secret agency, interested in learning something of Chinese intentions in Tibet. Arriving in Lhasa on his return journey in a desperate condition, he called at the British Mission to ask for the means of getting back to Kalimpong. Richardson, who knew nothing of this secret journey, treated his story as a most unlikely one and refused assistance (see *Japanese Agent in Tibet*, as told by Scott Berry, London 1990, p. 134 ff.). This little known mission, apart from providing an invaluable account of political conditions in Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion in 1950, indicated that the British in India were indeed concerned about the future of Tibet, but with the

granting of independence to India, nothing came of this venture. Hugh Richardson later met Hisau Kimura on his visit to Tokyo in connection with the Rockefeller project (mentioned below) and so was able to excuse himself for his earlier forbidding attitude. He had simply not been informed in advance, perhaps a serious omission by those responsible in India for Hisau Kimura's remarkable journey.

Back in St. Andrews in retirement in 1951 he married Huldah, the widow of Major-General T. G. Rennie, thus acquiring a step-daughter Elizabeth and a stepson David. Elizabeth and her husband did much to support his later years, especially when his wife Huldah began to lose her memory, which caused him much distress. She died in 1995. Throughout his long retirement Hugh devoted himself mainly to his gardening, to his golf and especially to his scholarly writings, also giving much of his time to younger scholars who sought his guidance and advice.

His major publications, apart from *A Corpus of Early Inscriptions*, are his *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962; Boston, 1984), *A Cultural History of Tibet* (London, 1968; Boulder, 1980; Boston, 1995), *Ceremonies in the Lhasa Year* (London, 1993) and a compendious work, *High Peaks, Pure Earth*, collected works on Tibetan History and Culture, edited devotedly by Michael Aris and published by Serindia, London, 1998. To these must be added his *Tibetan Word Book* (Calcutta, 1943) and *Tibetan Language Records &c.* (Calcutta, 1945), published jointly with Basil Gould (with the co-operation of Gergen Tharchin, then editor of the Tibet Mirror Press in Kalimpong where these books were printed); and especially a number of important articles dealing with Tibetan history and civilisation, e.g. 'Early burial grounds in Tibet and Tibetan decorative art in the 8th and 9th centuries' (*Central Asiatic Journal* 8, 2, 1963), 'The Dharma that came down from Heaven' (*Buddhist Thought and Civilization*, Emeryville, 1977), 'The Jo-khang Cathedral of Lhasa' (in Ariane Macdonald, *Essais sur l'art du Tibet*, Paris, 1977), 'Ministers of the Tibetan Kingdom' (*The Tibet Journal* 2, 1, 1977), 'The Karmapa Sect: an historical note' (*JRAS* 1958/59), etc. This scholarly work was duly recognised by the honorary degree of DLitt (Doctor of Letters) which was bestowed upon him by the University

of St. Andrews in 1985, and by his election to the prestigious British Academy in 1986.

However, Hugh Richardson is also known, especially by the 14th Dalai Lama and the many thousands of Tibetans in exile, for his staunch support for the independence of Tibet from the oppressive Chinese occupation which has now lasted for 50 years. This set him openly at variance with the stance of the British Government when Ireland with Malaysian support raised at the UNO in 1959 the matter of the violation of human rights by the Chinese in Tibet. He was directly involved as adviser to the Irish delegation, and his grasp of the whole subject surpassed that of any other delegation present, except for the British delegation. The motion was passed, but the British voted against it, probably partly out of deference to the Indian delegation which was anxious not to arouse Chinese hostility unduly just at that time, and perhaps partly with the future problem of Hong Kong in mind. However, this did not save India from war with China just three years later. Meanwhile, Richardson maintained openly that the British delegation, who had all the evidence available which might have been put forward in Tibet's favour, deliberately professed uncertainty about Tibet's legal status, and would not even admit to the violation of human rights by the Chinese in Tibet. He had received the OBE in 1944 and the CIE in 1946, but no further recognition of his outstanding career as a member of the ICS came to him from the British Government.

In 1959 he became one of the founder-members of the Tibet Society in London, a non-governmental organisation in support of the Tibetan cause. During 1959-60 he was involved as adviser in a project of the Rockefeller Foundation to invite qualified Tibetans as academic assistants for a three year period in several universities in Europe, as well as Seattle in the USA and Tokyo. He visited India, his last visit there, to discuss the matter with the Dalai Lama, then living in Dharamsala, and with Indian officials in New Delhi, so as to prepare the way for those of us who subsequently arranged these academic visits. He also visited the universities concerned in Europe, and also Seattle and Tokyo. I was thus from that time onwards in constant correspondence with him, last visiting him at his bedside in October 2000.

In 1966 he and I founded jointly a modest Institute of Tibetan Studies at Tring (Hertfordshire), maintained as a research centre in association with my post in the University of London. Thus he visited on several occasions the School of Oriental and African Studies to take part in seminars and in special series of public lectures. He also accepted visiting professorships, in 1961 at the University of Seattle, and thereafter at the University of Bonn. At my retirement in 1982 the Institute was renamed as Institute of Buddhist Studies in order to increase its scope of activities and, thanks to its director Dr Tadeusz Skorupski, now has a long series of publications to its credit, in which Tibetan studies continue to predominate. Correspondence with Hugh Richardson continued throughout this period over various Tibetan affairs, concerning refugees as well as literary matters, especially towards 1968 when we produced jointly *A Cultural History of Tibet*, and later when-ever there arose the matter of rewriting a suitable preface for new editions. In 1997 he set up the Richardson Foundation as an educational trust for Tibetan undergraduates at British universities.

Since he first made contact with Basil Gould in 1932, his life was primarily devoted to Tibetan studies and later also to the welfare of Tibetans in exile, thus acclaimed at his funeral in a message from the Dalai Lama as 'not only a personal friend but also a very good friend of the Tibetan nation and its people'.

David Snellgrove

NINIAN SMART
(6 MAY 1927 – 21 JANUARY 2001)

Ninian Smart, the celebrated writer and scholar has died at 73. Born in Cambridge, he was schooled there and then in Glasgow, becoming an undergraduate at Oxford. Smart took up higher education at a time when Comparative Religion was in its infancy. Unusually for his time, he made a point of learning Sanskrit and Pāli to enhance his

work as a post-graduate student at Yale. He later learned Chinese as preparation for military intelligence work.

Smart established the first Department of Religious Studies in Britain at Lancaster during the 1950s and inaugurated the University's first graduate programme in the subject. It was as a result of his pioneering work, as well as his charismatic leadership, that the Department remains one of the strongest and most prestigious in the country. During the 1960s Smart was appointed as J. F. Rowny Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of California, Santa Barbara, a post which he held concurrently with his Lancaster one, dividing his time between the USA, Britain and Italy (his widow is Italian). In 1979 he was invited to give the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh—a high honour to be bestowed on a scholar. He remained active to the end of his days, being frequently seen on the conference circuit, where he was a witty and stimulating speaker.

Smart was certainly not an abstruse ivory tower academic. Not only are his writings eminently lucid and accessible, his 1976 thirteen-part television series 'The Long Search' attracted some five million viewers throughout Britain and was accompanied by his solid yet readable *Background to the Long Search* (1977). His *The World's Religions* (1989) was aimed at the general public and continues to be promoted by book clubs as a well-illustrated coffee-table book, yet it is not superficial and remains an appropriate undergraduate introduction to the topic.

Smart's earlier writings were on the philosophy of religion, for example, *Philosophers and Religious Truth* (1964) and *The Philosophy of Religion* (1970). Unlike the majority of Western philosophers of religion, he expanded the scope of his discussions to take in the full gamut of the world's major religions. Even in the 21st century, only a very small handful of Western philosophers of religion have been prepared to undertake the necessary study to engage in the philosophy of world religions, confining themselves mainly to the Christian faith, or to the challenges of logical positivism and Western science to religion in general. Smart's interests were much more world-ecumenical, and writings such as his *Reasons and Faiths* (1958), *World Religions: A Dialogue* (1960) and *The Yogi and the*

Devotee (1968) raised philosophical questions about the relationships between different world faiths.

Of all the world's religions it was probably Buddhism that captured Smart's interest most. His initial encounter was remarkable: having joined the Intelligence Corps in 1945, his unit was stationed briefly in Sri Lanka, next to a Buddhist temple. Having no Christian clergy to provide religious services, Smart asked the temple's senior monk to serve as chaplain. He later described himself as an 'Episcopalian Buddhist', partly to be provocative, but also to make the serious point that no single religion possesses the monopoly of truth.

Smart was at pains to ensure a sound methodological base for the study of religion. Previous scholars tended to make liberal use of Christian vocabulary in their expositions of other faiths. Thus, A. C. Bouquet, whose *Comparative Religion* (1942) was the staple diet of many undergraduate students in the 1950s and even 1960s, describes the Sangha as the 'Buddhist church', bodhisattvas as 'benevolent saints', and the Buddha-Nature as the 'inner logos'. By contrast, Smart's approach was phenomenological: drawing on the Dutch scholar Gerardus van der Leeuw, Smart emphasised the importance of *epochē* (literally, 'drawing back', bracketing one's assumptions), empathy and 'eidetic vision'—that is to say, endeavouring to see the form of the subject matter, as it is in itself.

Smart often quoted the American Indian proverb, 'Never judge a man till you have walked a mile in his moccasins', meaning that emphatic understanding was the key to unlocking someone else's world-view, in contrast to his precursors whose exposition constantly involved looking over one's shoulder to Christianity. Smart in fact was unhappy with the terms Comparative Religion and Comparative Study of Religions: although he acknowledged the importance of knowing another religion in order to enhance the understanding of one's own, comparison could easily become misleading or result in claiming superiority for one's own faith.

Smart's empathy was 'structured empathy' and many undergraduate students will remember him for his 'six dimensional' (sometimes 'seven dimensional') scheme for the study of religions: each religion, he taught, had elements of the experiential, the mythic, the doctrinal, the ethical, the ritual, and the social-institutional.

(Sometimes he added a seventh—the ‘material’—arguing that religions typically transformed aspects of the material world into sacred time and space.) These ‘dimensions’ not only applied to religions, but to world-views more generally: Smart sometimes described himself as a ‘worldview analyst’ rather than a scholar of religions, holding that ideologies such as Marxism and nationalism bore close resemblances to religions. His interests also included political systems, and he devoted an entire book—*Mao* (1974)—to Mao Zedong.

Smart did not subscribe to the widely held view that there is an underlying unity or common essence amongst all the world’s religions—a notion inspired by Aldous Huxley’s ‘perennial philosophy’ and Ramakrishna’s dictum that ‘all paths lead to God’. Even an academic writer like John Hick places ‘God’ at the centre of the world’s religions, alleging the concept’s equivalence to the Buddhist Dharmakāya (the ‘absolute body’ shared by all the Buddhas). Buddhists have often, with good reason, been annoyed by such comparisons, and Smart’s phenomenological approach aimed to ensure that his account of Buddhism (and indeed any religion) was one that could be endorsed by its exponents.

At times this could even mean questioning the traditional Western categories that were used to analyse religion: Smart rightly argued that terms such as ‘theism’ and ‘atheism’ were inappropriately used to characterise Buddhism, and he preferred to employ his own term ‘trans-polytheism’ as a more appropriate category. His *Buddhism and Christianity: Rivals and Allies* (1993)—developed from his Martin Lectures, delivered at the University of Hong Kong—explored possible points in common between the two religions, but also points of difference. Smart took pains to portray different religions as equal partners in dialogue, unlike Paul Tillich whose brief dialogue between Christian and Buddhist (1964) gives a resounding, although extremely unfair, victory to the Christian.

Smart did much to advance the study of religions and, as a consequence, inter-religious understanding. He will be sadly missed by his colleagues worldwide and by members of all faiths.

George Chryssides

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The article by Liz Williams in your last issue ('A Whisper in the Silence', Vol.17, 2, pp. 167–74) offers an intriguing alternative view of the origins of the female Sangha, and she's right to emphasize the rule of three. In itself Gotama's rebuff to his foster-mother has no gender relevance, and is no different from other occasions on which initial discouragement of a request was followed by its ultimate acceptance, the most obvious explanation being that this was a way of testing resolve, and a crude form of quality control.

However, I do have two problems. One is that the pessimistic forecast accompanying Ānanda's successful intervention still has to be explained (unless one dismisses it as a later interpolation). The other is that I find it unimaginable that the first ordinations of women could have taken place without the most careful consideration of the larger implications of such a development. It must have presented a major challenge to the Sangha's internal organization and external relations, and given rise to the following questions:

1. How could an open-air, footloose, organization make segregation of the sexes effective, and what would be the response of friends and enemies alike if illicit liaisons became a significant problem? A case of mother-incest within the Sangha is reported at A III, 66, and geographic dispersal of the community could only have made prevention of infringements harder.

2. Were the purely physical privations and hazards of the wanderer's life thought acceptable to women?

3. What was the attitude of lay supporters to their admission? Could there have been enough opposition to make a general threat to lay patronage possible, and what about the possibility of discrimination against women in the alms-round?

4. What was the growth-rate of the Sangha during its formative period (potentially doubled by ordaining women), and what sort of economic burden and strain on the social fabric resulted? In short, how far was the Sangha a victim of its own success? We know that the original band of six grew to thousands by the time of the Foun-

der's death and (at Sn 103/4) we find a lay follower feeding no less than 1,250 monks (and nuns?). The need for sustenance on such a scale can't have been uniformly welcome, particularly at times of shortage.

There's plenty of sympathetic and supportive comment on women in the various collections. I would instance the rebuke to a king who bemoaned the birth of a daughter rather than a son (S I 85) and the fanciful story of a lay-follower called Gopaka who roundly berates three bhikkhus born into an inferior heaven-world to her own (D II 271). But Gotama didn't present himself as a social reformer, and to that extent was obliged to operate within the general constraints of his culture. It may be therefore that the restrictions imposed on women in the Cullavagga represented a range of compromises with what the larger society would tolerate.

Whatever part misogyny played in its overall history the Sangha must have been highly vulnerable to socio-economic pressures in its early stages, partly because the families which provided it with recruits and alms-food were often likely to be one and the same, with a tricky trade-off between growth and material support the inevitable consequence. Also, disruption of families and resulting alienation could occur as in the Ratthapāla Sutta, so I'm inclined to conclude that the admission of women couldn't possibly have been viewed as a gender issue pure and simple. We're impressed by the Sangha's durability across many centuries but that's a privileged standpoint. In its beginnings it doubtless seemed an altogether more fragile enterprise.

David Evans

In her article, 'A Whisper in the Silence', Liz Williams refers to the Buddha's 'egalitarian principles' and states: 'There would appear to be a general reluctance to acknowledge that the Buddha elevated women from the socially second class roles that were thought appropriate for them. Surely one of the qualities of an enlightened being is that he can see beyond human prejudice'.

I'm not qualified to define enlightenment, but it's clear from the Vinaya material that Ānanda, who is not enlightened at the time in the specific sense that he is not an arahant, is less sexist (if sexist at all) than Gotama. He persuades the Buddha to ordain women when he doesn't want to. Gotama not merely fears but predicts that as a result of female ordination the duration of the Order will be shortened by half.

More important, Liz Williams seems unaware of Gotama's treatment of nuns. He arranges things so that they don't have full democratic rights in the passing of a 'formal act' (BD IV, p. 458). He insists that a nun should always step aside for a monk (BD IV, p.347); that a nun should not sit down in front of a monk or ask a monk a question without prior permission (BD III, p. 413); that any nun, no matter if 'ordained for a century, must rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day' (BD II, p. 268); that nuns should offer monks whatever food is in their bowls (BD IV, p. 373). When requested, he flatly refuses to allow a monk to salute a nun (BD V, p. 358). He doesn't merely restrict nuns' influence, he institutionalises female obeisance to the male.

Colin Edwards

Liz Williams responds:

Both David Evans and Colin Edwards appear to have missed the point of my argument in 'A Whisper in the Silence: Nuns before Mahāpajāpati'. They merely repeat the well-worn argument that the Buddha hesitated to accept women into the early Sangha because of concerns over segregation of the sexes, the physical hardships of the monastic life and the economic burden which their admission would place on the lay community. All of these arguments can easily be refuted by reference to the Therīgāthā, which demonstrates that women were capable of overcoming all these hindrances, as well as spiritual ones, and indeed attaining the ultimate goal. Modern day nuns have also shown themselves to be capable of spiritual athleti-

cism; women such as Tenzin Palmo, who 'secluded herself in a remote cave, 13,200 feet up in the Himalayas, cut off from the world by mountains and snow. There she engaged in twelve years of intense Buddhist meditation. She faced unimaginable cold, wild animals, near-starvation and avalanches; she grew her own food and slept in a traditional wooden meditation box, three feet square—she never lay down. Her goal was to attain enlightenment as a woman' (taken from the blurb on the back cover of Vicki Mackenzie, *Cave in the Snow*, London 1998). She also at one point faced a young man with mischief in mind but, like the bhikkhunīs in the Therīgāthā, managed to deal effectively with him. Women in the Therīgāthā were often faced with would-be detractors, both physical and spiritual, but managed to overcome them, even forces as powerful as Māra!

Why would the sex of mendicants have any bearing on the burden of support on the laity? If the Sangha as a whole was growing, then whether the members were men or women is surely irrelevant. Bhikkhunīs obviously did survive until well into the eleventh century in Sri Lanka and there is evidence, for example in the Auran-gabad caves, that they survived in western India until the sixth or seventh century. The crux of my argument was that there is some evidence, with as much text validity as that which they and others cite, to question whether the Buddha hesitated at all.

Another problem which they have is that the pessimistic fore-cast of the decline of the Dhamma has still to be explained. The Buddha repeatedly stressed the need for diligence within the monastic community as a guard against its decline. He placed the responsibility for that on the community itself, on both monks and nuns. It seems unlikely then that the Buddha himself would act in a way that would hasten its decline, i.e., if the admission of women would cause the demise of the teachings, then why, after all the caution given to others, would he himself precipitate its downfall? However, this is a theme which I hope to expand on in the near future as part of my thesis.

Concerning the rebuke to a king who bemoaned the birth of a daughter cited by David Evans, this story is often quoted to illustrate that the birth of a girl should not be viewed in a negative light. What

is said here in effect is, 'Never mind, better luck next time!' A *grandson* may, in the future, be born from that daughter.

To reiterate, these are all situations which depend on the ordination story being factual. If, as I argued in my original paper, there is evidence to suggest that there may have been nuns *before* Mahāpajāpatī, then all of this reasoning is irrelevant. Clearly, there is material in the texts which validates both sides of the argument over women's ordination. I merely suggested that there were examples of situations which did not conform to the accepted story in Cullavagga 10 with its suggestion that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women in the first place; an argument which has been used as a pillar of resistance to the reinstatement of the Theravādin bhikkhunī ordination line. As Kathryn Blackstone, in her unpublished PhD dissertation, 'Standing Outside the Gates: A Study of Women's Ordination in the Pali Vinaya' (McMaster University, 1995) argues, women posed a challenge to the ideology of male dominance. Both David Evans and Colin Edwards demonstrate that this attitude is still prevalent in modern Western society and until we stop clinging to the idea that the male is the dominant, superior gender, then Buddhism will remain impoverished by the lack of a four-fold assembly, said by the Buddha to be vital for the flourishing of the Dhamma.