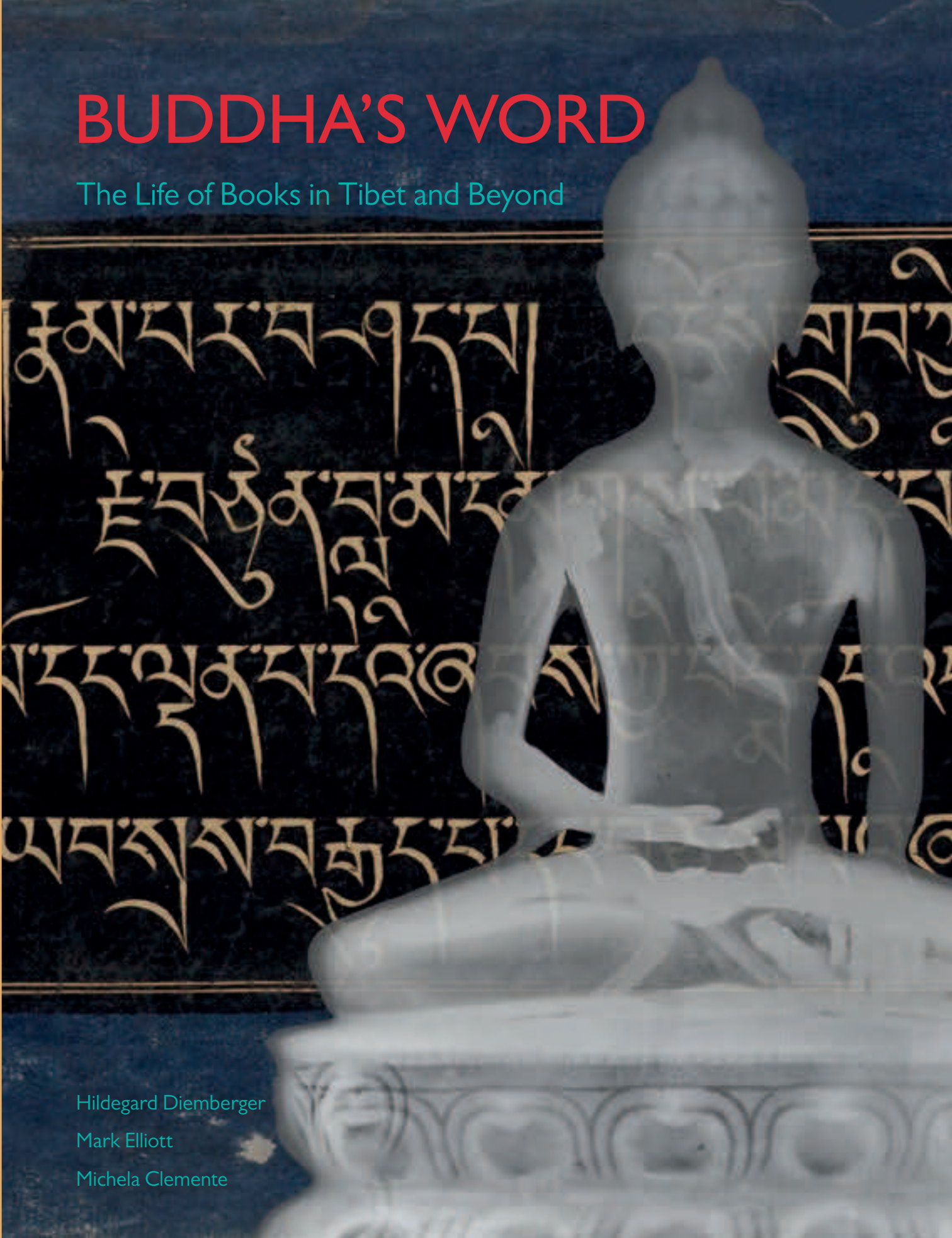


BUDDHA'S WORD

The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond



Hildegard Diemberger

Mark Elliott

Michela Clemente



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Mark Elliott, Hildegard Diemberger & Michela Clemente

With contributions by Alessandro Boesi, James Canary, Daniele Cuneo, Camillo Formigatti, Imre Galamboš, Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, Stephen Hugh-Jones, Craig Jamieson, Peter Kornicki, Filippo Lunardo, Sujit Sivasundaram, Anuradha Pallipurath, Karma Phuntsho, Paola Ricciardi, Aleix Ruiz-Falqués and Tomasz Ważny

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of Cambridge



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The exhibition also reflects many years of research collaboration between Cambridge and the British Library, the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, the National Library of Mongolia, the National Library of Bhutan, the Paltseg Research Institute, the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center and other research institutions across the world. By studying Buddhist scriptures in their wider social and cultural context it was possible to reconnect them to their place of origin and in some cases provide the basis for digital repatriation of the materials to monastic communities and scholarly institutions in Tibet and Nepal. Thanks to scholarly exchange schemes run by the Mongolia & Inner Asia Studies Unit, Tibetan scholars have been able to engage directly with these materials providing new insights and understandings of their cultural significance.

The exhibition, catalogue and events that surround it are the result of years of hard work and commitment from an extraordinary team of museum staff, researchers, authors, volunteers

and experts from around the world who have generously contributed their time and expertise. We are enormously grateful to everyone who made it possible, including:

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Scattered fragments of rare twelfth-century illuminated Tibetan texts from Keru Lhakang Temple, Central Tibet – before being digitised, restored and re-ordered.

Photograph by Pasang Wangdu, 2002



Preface

Buddha's Word is a landmark exhibition for the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. In the past, visitors may well have assumed that the strengths of the Museum's ethnographic collections were above all in materials from Africa, the Pacific and from native America. In fact, collections from many parts of Asia, from Siberia to island Southeast Asia, from the Himalayas, India, Sri Lanka and Burma are of exceptional importance in cultural, artistic and historical terms. Much of the material was gathered by fieldworkers and is precisely provenanced and complemented by evocative archives and images that help us understand the local values of the extraordinary range of things we now care for. What is distinctive about MAA's collections is this richness of context and information, that animates this very special exhibition.

In 2012, Dr Mark Elliott was appointed Senior Curator in Anthropology – the first time in decades that any member of the Museum's permanent curatorial staff possessed expertise in Asia. The Museum is now in a position to explore, analyse, research and exhibit collections from Asia. *Buddha's Word* arises from his collaboration with

Dr Hildegard Diemberger and others in Social Anthropology and the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit of the University of Cambridge.

The exhibition offers not only a fresh view of the place of books in a great world religion, a remarkable world of travel and trade, it has much to offer anthropological and other theories of material culture, issues that have been imaginatively reconceived in recent years. Books are not just texts but objects, indeed works of art, of an especially potent kind. At a moment when some believe that the physical book is nearing the end of its life, this exhibition, focussed on very spiritual and very physical books illuminates our understanding of the lives and power that books have had and still do have. Such books – and this book – may turn out to have much to offer, for generations to come.

Nicholas Thomas
Director
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



Introduction | TEXT AS RELIC IN TIBET

At the dawn of civilisation, as many Tibetan histories tell us, a text fell from heaven onto the royal palace of Yumbu Lakhang (Yum bu lha khang) in Central Tibet. According to some versions of the story it was the book of a Buddhist *sūtra* while for others it was the set of syllables of the mantra *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, the protector of Tibet. In either case, the piece of writing that fell was received by the illiterate Buddhist king of the time. Not knowing what to do with it, the king placed the text in a casket and worshipped it. The sacred scripture duly dispensed its blessing and he became strong and youthful. It was his descendant, the Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgampo, d. 649) who would eventually gain access to the content, sending a minister to northern India to order the creation of the Tibetan script, thus enabling the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan.

This legendary account of the initial contact between Tibetans and the Buddhist civilisations that surrounded Tibet draws attention to the power of the written word. It highlights the way in which anything with writing upon it can have a ritual efficacy that goes beyond what the writing has to say. It also tells us that medium and message are tightly intertwined, since it is this initial legendary encounter that is said to have provided the stimulus for the creation of Tibetan writing and, with it, Tibetan Buddhist civilisation. Since then, Buddhist scriptures have become central to Tibetan culture, not only as the medium for the transmission of Buddhist teachings but also as artefacts and ritual objects. As

such they were also much sought after by western travellers and explorers in their hunt for traces of the lost Buddhist civilisation of India.

In the eyes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans, Tibet was an isolated and magic place, a repository of secret knowledge, at the northern edge of the British Empire. This was especially so after the archaeological discoveries of ancient Buddhist sites in India, where Buddhism had disappeared after the twelfth century. The roof of the world thus exercised an irresistible attraction to western travellers, imperial officials and explorers. Spiritual curiosity was often combined with commercial aspirations and military ambitions. It is therefore not surprising that Cambridge, as one of the hubs for the training of British civil servants and scholars, ended up accumulating collections of a wide range of objects coming from Tibet and the Himalayas, adding significantly to those coming from other parts of Asia. Buddhist scriptures were strongly represented in these holdings, since scholars and explorers seeking the vestiges of the ancient Indian Buddhist civilisation were convinced that some of the textual heritage that had disappeared in India was still preserved in Tibet.

Despite western perceptions of Tibet as an isolated, impenetrable stronghold, the roof of the world was actually at the crossroads of Buddhist countries. It was part of a wider Buddhist ecumene and, relatively, a latecomer in embracing Buddhist religion, which it absorbed from different directions. At the same time Tibet became a centre for the later expansion of Buddhism into Inner Asia, especially Mongolia, and thanks to the accuracy of Tibetan translations, it was also an important point of spiritual reference for areas that had come under Buddhist influence at an earlier stage. Although

Book cover

(detail, also see page 118)

Gilt wood carving, red and black pigment.

Tibet. 15th century.

Tibetans created their own blend of Buddhism, India remained the point of spiritual orientation as the cradle of Buddhism even after this had disappeared from its land of origin. It was the place from where the masters and the teachings written on palm leaves had originally come.

Since the dawn of Buddhism in India, books have been the repositories of Buddha’s word. Books embodied the teacher after he himself had passed away, as proclaimed in early scriptures such as the *Mahāparinibbannasutta* (‘the *Sūtra* of the Great Nirvāṇa’) in which Buddha addresses his disciple the Venerable Ānanda:

It may be, Ānanda, that some of you will think, ‘The word of the Teacher is a thing of the past; we have no Teacher.’ The Doctrine and the Discipline, Ānanda, which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone.

Warren (1984: 107)

After his death, it was the teachings of the Buddha that remained with his followers, something they could hold onto and spread. They are said to have been collected in ‘three baskets’, which gave the name to the Buddhist Canon: the *Tripiṭaka*. Together with parts of his body and the objects he had used, the teachings were a witness to the Buddha’s presence and his legacy beyond his demise. Initially the teachings were transmitted orally but as they came to be written down, the support onto which they were inscribed progressively acquired importance in itself. Copying texts and spreading the message to an increasing number of followers became an important way of acquiring merits. By the first century of the current era, the cult that surrounded Buddha’s corporeal relics had been conflated with the cult of the books that enshrined his words. This is reflected in the so-called ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ literature, or *Prajñāpāramitā*, at the core of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, which became dominant across East and Inner Asia.

The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas explicitly conveys the idea that the teachings are the teacher, emphasising the merit accumulated by reproducing and distributing the text.

‘The Tathāgata [Buddha] is your teacher, Ānanda. You have ministered to me, Ānanda, with friendly acts of body, acts of speech, acts of mind. Therefore then, Ānanda, just as you have given affection, faith and respect to me as I am at present in this incarnation, just so, Ānanda, should you act after my decease towards this perfection of wisdom As long as this perfection of wisdom shall be observed in the world, one can be sure that ‘for so long does the Tathāgata abide in it’ that ‘for so long does the Tathāgata demonstrate dharma’ and that ‘the beings in it are not lacking in the vision of the Buddha, the hearing of the dharma, the attendance of the Saṅgha [community]’. One should know that those beings are living in the presence of the Tathāgata who will hear this perfection of wisdom, take it up, study, spread, repeat and write it, and who will honour, revere, adore and worship it’ (Conze 1973: 299-300).

In Tibet, and throughout the Buddhist world, books are addressed with the same language that is used for icons and relics. They are handled in a similar way in ritual practice. In fact, icons, books and relics or reliquaries are respectively symbols or receptacles of the ‘body’, ‘speech’ and ‘mind’ of the Buddha, or of a later personality who continued the deeds of the Buddha. The idea of scriptures as ‘receptacles of speech’ captures the fact that, when read and recited by a human actor, the written text creates the audible presence of a person across space and time, just as effigies evoke the visual impact of the body and relics the spiritual power of the mind.

If this approach to books can be found in different forms and variants across the Buddhist world, so too can a range of relationships between people, and between people and objects, that



Karma Phuntscho wrapping a large illuminated manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in its ‘robes’ (*namsa*)
Ganteng Monastery, Bhutan. 2007
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

perpetuate the reproduction and circulation of texts. This can also be seen as related to the cult of relics and amulets encapsulating the memory of deceased Buddhist masters, described by Stanley Tambiah (1984) in the Thai context. Buddhist patronage, which hinges on the crucial relationship between master and disciple established by the Buddha himself and on the accumulation of merit through giving, ensured that followers and supporters provided funding and materials for the survival of the monastic community and for the realisation of Buddhist deeds. Included amongst these meritorious deeds was the production of books.

Across Asia devout patrons made it possible to create books that were artistic masterpieces, with the use of precious materials and great craftsmanship for the glorification of Buddhism. Rulers in particular have sought to establish themselves as righteous and legitimate sovereigns, accumulating merits by sponsoring the translation of scriptures and the production of magnificent literary artefacts. Long lists of patrons are recorded in the colophons of different texts, which give information about the circumstances in which an edition was produced. These lists remind us that patrons supporting Buddhist deeds came from all walks of life. Over the centuries these patrons also enabled advances in book technology, from the production of paper to the carving of blocks for printing and, more recently, the adoption and customisation of digital technologies. From this point of view, the



The current Samding Dorje Phagmo blessing a faithful with a sacred text

Samding Monastery, Tibet. 1997
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

global circulation of Digital Dharma follows in the footsteps of the pilgrims and scholars who long ago made Buddhism into a transnational religion: as they crossed the Himalaya, the sea or the desert, they carried their scriptures with them.

This exhibition draws on the holdings of the University of Cambridge to explore the performance, production and circulation of books across different Buddhist contexts and through multiple disciplinary perspectives. In the gallery, it is formed of three sections, each of which approaches books from a particular angle. These sections are broadly followed in this catalogue, although as we all know the structure of a book, and the ways we engage with it, are fundamentally different from that of an exhibition.

In the first section, *Travelling Buddhist Books*, the setting is the library. Here, the exhibits include

priceless ancient Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts from India as well as literary artefacts of various forms and shapes from across the Buddhist world and from both the Mahāyāna and Theravada traditions. Here, we highlight the book as an artefact that travels: that is carried by people, and that carries people and ideas with it. The geographical and temporal range is vast, embracing most of Asia and spanning more than two millennia. We pay special attention to the ideas of texts as relics and of the accumulation of merits through multiplication and distribution. These linked ideas have had a profound impact on book technologies – from manuscripts to printing and on to Digital Dharma.



Monk reading a ritual text

Northeastern Nepal, 1987
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

The second section focuses on *Tibetan Book Culture*. The emphasis here is on texts as the supports of the Buddha's speech – the Tibetan concept of *sungten* (*gsung rten*) – and on the multiple interconnectedness and interdependence of texts with images and relics in day-to-day practice. Again, our attention is on books as texts and texts as artefacts: not only as things that are meant to be read, but on the other forms of efficacy they may have. We explore some of the ways that people who may not be able to read can still make texts speak and act. The exhibits range from ancient reliquaries containing hidden texts, through sumptuous printed books and through to the latest solar-powered prayer-wheels.

The third section shows *How Tibetan Books Are Made*. Here the attention is on the diverse processes involved in the production of books and

on the analysis of the materials from which books are made. This is the section that engages most closely with the book as an artefact – a 'made thing' – and perhaps best exemplifies the appropriateness of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology as a venue for this, the first exhibition on Buddhist material culture in Cambridge in recent decades. Artefacts, specimens, photographs and film offer insights into the tools and processes involved in paper production, block-printing and illustration. Research by historians, anthropologists, linguists, art historians, chemists and material scientists provide an extraordinary view into the complex world of the book in Buddhism.



A Former Queen's *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*

This palm-leaf manuscript belongs to the Pāla tradition of illuminated manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in the ornamental Pāla script. The manuscript originally had six illuminated folios, each with three miniatures, but unfortunately the original first folio is missing. It has been replaced with a later palm-leaf folio without miniatures and in a different script. The date of the manuscript is controversial since in the colophon it is stated that it was copied in the fifth regnal year of the Pāla king Mahīpāla, but without specifying which of the two Pāla kings named Mahīpāla is meant (the fifth year of either is equivalent to c. 1000 or 1080). A hint in favour of the later date is provided by the mention of the donor in the colophon, Lāḍākā. In his catalogue C. Bendall already identifies her with queen Ḍaddākā, the donor of Add. 1688, 'which is firmly dated in the 14th year of Nayapāla, c.1057, where she is described as *paramopāsikarajñī*, the "devoutly Buddhist Queen". If she is the same woman, then her description as Bahubhūti's daughter necessarily must precede chronologically her

description as Nayapāla's queen, so that there can be no question of her donating a Ms. in the reign of Mahīpāla II which occurred after the reign of Nayapāla' (Losty 1992: 30). The manuscript is protected by two extremely beautiful painted wooden covers, which however were added later in Nepal in the twelfth century, both bearing traces of materials smeared during worship rites. On one cover is the Buddha and attendant *Bodhisattvas*, on the other the goddess Prajñāpāramitā herself with attendants (Losty 1992: 30).

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā

Palm-leaf manuscript. 227 folios, 5 cm x 53 cm.
Bengal, ca. 1000 CE or second half of the 11th century
(after 1057 CE and before 1080 CE).
Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873-76.
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1464

The Illuminated Perfection of Wisdom

Camillo A. Formigatti

The 'Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas' (Skt. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, Tib. *Sherchin gyetongpa*, *Sher phyin brgyad stong pa*; Chin. *Xiaopin bore jing*; Jap. *Shōbon hannyakyō*; Kor. *Sop'um panya kyōng*) is one of the earliest Mahāyāna scriptures. This foundational *sūtra* of Mahāyāna Buddhism developed gradually over a period of about two hundred years, from the first century BCE to the first century CE (some of its earliest recensions were translated into Chinese during the Han dynasty, 206 BCE - 220 CE). There is still no scholarly consensus as to the provenance of the text, but the most widespread view is that it was probably written in central or southern India. The 'Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas' presents its doctrine in the form of a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his disciples, the *arhat* ('saint') Subhūti. In this dialogue 'the principal ontological message (message concerning what ultimately exists) ... is an extension of the Buddhist teaching of not-Self to equal no essential unchanging core, therefore no fundamentally real existence, as applied to all things without exception' (Williams 2009: 52). This *sūtra* belongs to the early stratum of the so-called 'Perfection of Wisdom' literature, subsequently expanded between the second and fourth centuries CE into other huge scriptures, for instance the 'Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Stanzas' (the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*).

The 'Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas' enjoyed a central role in the Buddhist cult of the book, and particularly in Newar Buddhism of Nepal. The two manuscripts displayed in the exhibition are good representatives of this tradition, and at the same time are also important witnesses of the Buddhist art of book illumination.

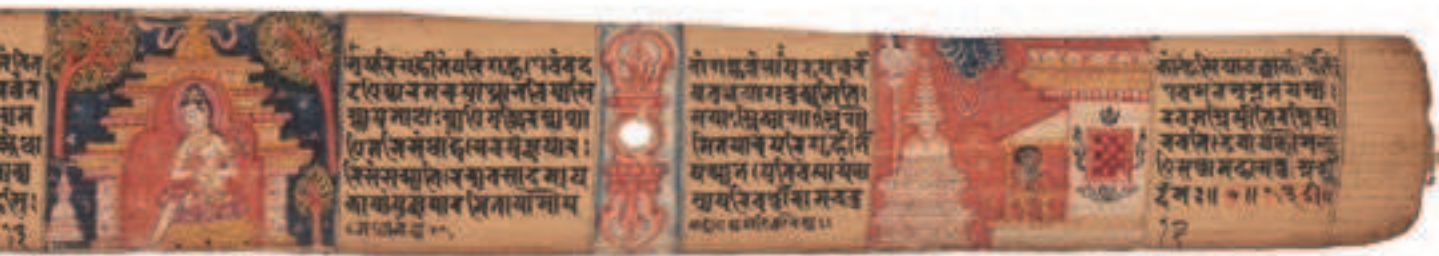
Illuminations in the Nepalese manuscript

Craig Jamieson

The two leaves from the Nepalese *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* illustrated in this volume contain four of the 85 miniature paintings that illuminate this extraordinary scripture. Most of these images depict sites and scenes in known places, across the eleventh-century Buddhist world from India to China.

On the verso side of leaf 218 (below and p.78) two panels depict scenes with monumental stūpas, or reliquary monuments. The left panel is clearly set in the land of Konkan (now Maharashtra), a well-known centre for the production of palm-leaves for book production. A white Avalokiteśvara stands inside a golden cell. His right hand makes the gesture of gift-giving, *varadamudrā*, while his left hand holds a pink lotus flower.

To the left is a *stūpa* enclosed by a balustrade with no visible doorways. All this is amongst palm trees. Another white *stūpa* dominates the right-hand panel, the setting of which is not known. This one is crowned with a heavy parasol on the top. The balustrade that surrounds it has four doorways, inside which four figures stand: two blue skinned, one red, and a fourth unseen, hidden by the *stūpa*'s parasol. In addition to the main illuminations, two *vajras* are painted around the holes through which the leaves were bound together.



An Avant-gardist *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*

This Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* is a unique item in many aspects. It is an important historical document that provides valuable information about the dynastic history of medieval Nepal. According to the colophon, it was written by a scribe named Sujātabhadra in 1015 CE during the joint reign of three kings, Bhojadeva, Rudradeva and Lakṣmīkāmadeva in the Hlām *vihāra* (Buddhist monastery). The identification of this monastery is still open: according to L. Petech it might be a misreading for Hlom, and is ‘perhaps connected with present-day Lhom Hit in Tangal Tol, Patan’ (Petech 1984: 36-7); on the other hand, J. Locke identifies it with the Lām Bāhā in Kathmandu (Locke 1985: 421). Moreover, it is decorated with 85 miniatures occurring at chapter ends and at the beginning of the entire manuscript (probably there were originally 88 miniatures, since the first palm-leaf folio is missing and has been replaced with a paper supplement). The subjects of these miniatures ‘are in general different from their Indian Pāla counterparts. Apart from the last eight on the colophon folio ... they are all of specific iconographic representations of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas or other divinities, or of important stūpas or caityas. The majority of places designated are in eastern India, but there

are some from far off places – China, Java, Ceylon, Gujarat, southern India’ (Losty 1992: 31). Moreover, the manuscript contains notes to the illuminator added by the first scribe, each of which describes the Buddha or the Bodhisattva and the location to be depicted in the miniature. The importance of this manuscript is furthermore confirmed by an additional colophon in verses, added in 1139 by a certain Karuṇavajra, who states that he rescued the *Prajñāpāramitā* from falling in the hands of unbelievers (most probably, people of Brahmanical affiliation). Last but not least, the last folio of this manuscript is the only surviving witness of the Sanskrit original of the *Vajradhvajapariṇāmanā*, a short hymn hitherto considered to have survived only in its Tibetan translation, the (‘Phags pa) *Rdo rje rgyal mtshan gyi yongs su bsngo ba* (*Phagpa dorje gyaltshe gyi yongsungowa*).

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā

Palm-leaf manuscript. 223 folios, 5.25 cm x 54 cm.

Nepal, 1015 CE.

Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873–76.

Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643

Maṇi Stones:
Buddhist Letters on Landscapes

Stones and rocks bearing mantras – either carved by human hand or ‘self originated’ – are a ubiquitous presence in Tibetan landscapes. Most bear the inscription *Oṃ ma ṇi padme hūṃ*, the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, the *Bodhisattva* of compassion. This is the same mantra that is said to have fallen from heaven at the dawn of Buddhist civilisation in Tibet.

Along pathways throughout the region, pilgrims, traders and now tourists encounter heaps of stones, assembled to make merit for deceased relatives, to improve one’s own karma, or for protection while travelling. Some of these mantras inscribed on stone were left by great spiritual masters during their travels across the Himalaya and the Tibetan plateau. They elicit narratives reminding the traveller of their deeds. Some mantras are miraculously self-originated, in holy sites, and can bestow a special blessing on the faithful. Some letters, texts and even entire collections of books are still hidden in rocky formations, to be revealed when their time comes.



Buddhist Canon in the rocks, waiting to be revealed
Pilgrims visit this holy site and offer ceremonial scarfs (*khatags*, *kha btags*) to the holy books hidden in the rock formation.
Kyirong (sKyid grong), Southwestern Tibet, 2009.
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger



Maṇi stone
Inscribed with the ‘maṇi mantra’, *Oṃ ma ṇi padme hūṃ*.
Width 22.1cm. Lower Ladakh, India.
Probably late 19th century
Collected by Rev. Augustus H. Francke
Donated by Sir Richard Carnac Temple
E 1904.235



Stone inscribed with the seed syllable hūṃ
This syllable is said to embody all the principles of the scriptures.
Width 17 cm. Kashmir. 19th/20th century
Collected by Frederick O. Lechmere-Oertel
1930.1617 B



Large Maṇi stone in Ladakh, 1930s
Near Panamik, Nubra Valley, Ladakh, Tibetan Plateau.
Photograph by Owen Lattimore, 1928-1938
DG.122783.OLT



Maṇi stone with mantra in shallow relief
Inscribed with *Oṃ ma ṇi padme hūṃ*.
Width 24 cm. North India. 19th century.
Collected by Cecil Bendall, 1884 or 1898
E 1916.142.2



Maṇi stone from ‘the Leh Road from Kashmir’
Width 15.5 cm. Kashmir. 19th/20th century
Collected by Frederick O. Lechmere-Oertel
1930.1617 A



Stone inscribed with mantras of Vajrasattva
Mantras associated with Vajrasattva (*oṃ badzra satwa a oṃ badrza satwa a e waṃ ma ya*) scratched roughly onto a stone, perhaps with another stone.
Width 17.2 cm
Pe, on the bank of the Tsangpo (gTsang po) River, Southern Tibet.
Collected by Jack Cawdor and Frank Kingdom Ward, June 1924
Donated by the fifth Earl of Cawdor. 1925.590



02 | TRAVELLING BOOKS

Camillo A. Formigatti

Jagaddala Monastery, Varendra (present day Bangladesh), a day in early autumn in the last decade of the twelfth century, at sunrise. 'We have to move again. When we left the monastery in Vikramaśīla, I thought we would have been safe in Jagaddala, that this would have been a haven where we would stay for the rest of our lives and continue to study the Dharma. But now the Master says that we have to move again, he fears that the Yavanas might arrive here soon, and he wants us to travel to the mountains.'

Vibhūticandra puts the wooden plank covers on the book, grabs hastily the string, inserts it through the string hole and finally ties a tight knot. He puts the book in a bag, together with all his other books. He casts a last glance round the cell where he has meditated, read, written and slept during the last few years, then he turns and walks towards the main gate of the monastery.

Sa skya Monastery, Central Tibet (present day Tibetan Autonomous Region), an autumnal day of an unknown year between 1260 and 1280 CE, at sunrise. The two translators have a long day before them. They are a good team, and this is not the first text they have translated together. Moreover, they know many of the stories about the former lives of *Bodhisattvas* and of the Buddha Śākyamuni included in the work they are translating, the *Wish-Fulfilling Vine*, but still sometimes they are baffled by the style of the text, they feel they are missing the point of a simile, or of a metaphor. And they do not want to disappoint the Imperial Preceptor; after all, they began this translation at his request.

Hand of a Chinese bodhisattva holding a sacred text in the typical Chinese format
1960.400 (see p.37)

City-State of Kucha (Gāochāng, present-day Xinjiang, China), a day in the early autumn of an unknown year in the fourteenth century, at sunrise. Sand: when he wakes up, he feels sand in his teeth. Every single day he spends in the oasis. He knows this is just an impression, the desert is far distant, but still he doesn't like to live in this place, he feels as if he were in the middle of nowhere. True, caravans arrive almost every day, and you can find almost everything in the market stalls. And there are people, lots of different people, often he cannot even tell the places where they come from – for instance, at the very beginning he didn't understand the language of the scribe, and when he asked him about his birthplace, it was only thanks to the help of a merchant that he managed to understand that he was born in some place in a valley in the Himalaya. Yet he had to work with him, and luckily they can now understand each other; when he has doubts about the shape of a character to carve, he can ask for help. Anyway, he has to start to work soon: the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Stanzas* is a very long text, and there are still many blocks to carve.

Erdene Zuu Monastery, Orkhon Valley (present-day Mongolia), a day in the early autumn of an unknown year towards the end of the sixteenth century, at sunrise. The abbot has received a very precious gift, a wonderful book of the sacred *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas*. The palm leaves are brittle, paper is better and far more resistant – this is the first thought of the librarian. Yet this is a very old book, and the miniatures are wonderful. The book is the *Perfection of Wisdom*, it is not meant for the shelves, it should be installed on an altar.

Kathmandu, Nepal, a day in the early autumn of 1875, early in the morning. 'They are here again,

the British doctor and his Pandit friend. They want to take the family manuscript, I know that it has protected our home for generations, but they were so insistent, they said that it will be in good hands, it will be read and studied in Europe, and that in this way I will contribute to spread the Dharma. (And besides, I managed to get good money for it.)'

Although imaginary, these brief sketches are probably not so far from reality. They have a modest aim, namely to provide a more colourful idea of the effects of a phenomenon that had a deep impact on many aspects of different Asian cultures: books travelled long distances. Even though the statement that the diffusion of Buddhism in Asia is closely linked to the diffusion of Buddhist scriptures might sound rather obvious, it is worth highlighting again. If it is true that books are carried by men, the opposite is also true: books carry men. Not only do books carry words and messages in the form of texts, they carry an entire culture as well. If we take a closer look at the five sketches presented above and try to reconstruct the stories behind them, we might be able to understand better both the reasons and the effects of travelling books.

The first scene is set in Jagaddala, a monastery where the Buddhist monk Vibhūticandra was active. Born in the later half of the twelfth century in the region of Varendra in northern Bengal, after receiving a full monastic ordination Vibhūticandra studied at the famous Buddhist university of Vikramaśīla in the region of Magadha (present-day Bihar) (Stearns 1996: 129). The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of great political turmoil in North India owing to Muslim raids and invasions, and

the great centres of Buddhist learning as for example in the Pāla realm, were destroyed near the turn to the thirteenth century, and with them their libraries: Odantapura, Vikramaśīla, Somapura, and Jagaddala. [...] Now we have to imagine Indian refugees who went with their

most precious treasures, consisting again, I would assume, mainly of manuscripts, to Nepal and even further to Tibet for safety. (Steinkellner 2004: 9)

One of these refugees was Vibhūticandra, described while he is closing one of his palm-leaf manuscripts – loose bundles of leaves tied together by a string passed through a hole punched in the middle of each leaf and of two wooden planks used as covers. It is possible to reconstruct Vibhūticandra's journey from the north Indian plains and the Pāla kingdom to the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and further to Tibet, and back again to Nepal, with a certain degree of certainty: after

having fled to Jagaddala monastery in East-Bengal, he escaped from another Muslim invasion to Bihar and Bengal under Muhammad Khiljī and in the 1190's, together with his teacher Śākyaśrībhadrā, went to Nepal, and in 1204 to Tibet. [...] In 1209 [he] accompanied Śākyaśrī to Sa-skyā where Śākyaśrī cooperated with the Sa skyā paṇḍita in translating and correcting older translations. [...] In 1214, Śākyaśrī returned to Kashmir and Vibhūticandra to Nepal. In the Kathmandu valley Vibhūti found new teachers and finally became abbot of the Stham Bihar in the Thamel district of modern Kathmandu. (Steinkellner 2004: 10-11)

In his peregrination, Vibhūticandra also reached the place where the second scene is set, the monastery of Sakya (Sa skyā), an important religious, cultural and political centre in the Tsang (gTsang) region in Central Tibet. It is here that his teacher Śākyaśrībhadrā worked on translations of Sanskrit texts into Tibetan together with Kunga Gyaltshe (Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan), better known as Sakya Paṇḍita, 'a savant who is counted among the very greatest Tibetan scholars of all time' (Jackson 1987: 1). Among Sakya Paṇḍita's literary endeavours and works is the first study and partial translation of

an important Indian work on poetics, the 'Mirror of Poetry' (Skt. *Kāvyaḍarśa*) by Daṇḍin, a text that had a huge influence on classical Tibetan literary culture (van der Kuijp 1996; see also Dimitrov 2002). Translations of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan were usually prepared by a team consisting of an Indian Paṇḍit and a Tibetan translator (*lotsawa*, *lo tsā ba*), and indeed the first complete translation of the 'Mirror of Poetry' was prepared in the second half of the thirteenth century by two translators, the Tibetan *lotsawa* Shongton Dorje Gyaltshe (Shong ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan) and the Paṇḍit Lakṣmīkara. They are depicted in the second scene, while working on the translation of yet another Sanskrit text on behalf of Lamaampa Chokyi Gyalpo (Bla ma dam pa Chos kyi rgyal po), better known as Phagpa Lodro Gyaltshe ('Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan), Imperial Preceptor of Kublai Khan. They are translating the 'Wish-Fulfilling Vine of the Deeds of the Bodhisattvas' (*Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*), a collection of Buddhist legends composed in the eleventh century in the style of *kāvya* (ornate poetry) by the Kashmirian poet Kṣemendra. This work enjoyed great popularity in Tibet and became a milestone of literary style as well as a source of inspiration for visual artists (Tucci 1949; van der Kuijp 1996).

From north India, Nepal and Tibet we now move to Central Asia, to the City-State of Kucha, located in an oasis along the northern route of the Silk Road. In the fourth and fifth centuries CE Buddhism was already well spread in central Asia and China along the Silk Road, and cities like Dunhuang, Turfan, and Kucha in the oases in the Taklamakan desert were not only thriving commercial outposts, they were also places that enabled the encounter of people belonging to different cultures and religious traditions – from Manicheans and Nestorian Christians to Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists. Numerous expeditions to the Turfan oasis were undertaken at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth

centuries, mainly by Russian, German and Japanese explorers and scholars. The four German expeditions conducted between 1902 and 1914 were particularly successful, and the archaeological excavations not only unearthed important monuments and art objects (Buddhist statues and sculptural fragments, fresco paintings, wall inscriptions, coins), but also huge collections of manuscript fragments in many different languages (for instance Syriac, Old Turkish, Middle and New Persian texts and Christian Sogdian fragments were discovered). Among these are also many Sanskrit manuscripts and a few Sanskrit xylographs. The last are particularly interesting as witnesses of a 'syncretic book culture', for they show features belonging to distinct book cultures (central Asian, particularly Chinese, and south Asian). The character in the third scene is an imaginary Chinese carver who might have worked on the preparation of printing blocks for a Buddhist *sūtra*, the 'Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Stanzas' (*Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāparāmitā*), five folios of which have been recovered in the city of Kucha (Waldschmidt 1965; Sander 1968). Fragmentary as they are, these five folios still tell us a fascinating story of transmission of ideas, technologies and artistic skills. The most common writing material for the production of manuscripts (i.e. handwritten books) employed in ancient and medieval south Asia was palm leaf, and the oblong format of palm-leaf manuscripts (with the width greater than the height) was determined by nature, not by man. On the other hand, in China and central Asia a widespread writing material was paper, which could be cut into any desired dimension and used to bind books in many different formats (for instance scrolls, accordion books, butterfly books etc.) The five fragments of the 'Perfection of Wisdom' recovered at Kucha contain a Buddhist text in Sanskrit (an Indo-Aryan language from South Asia), and even though they are printed on paper with xylography, a technique that originated in China during the Tang dynasty (618-907), they are in the so-called *pothī* format, imitating the



oblong shape of palm-leaf manuscripts. Moreover, they are printed in a calligraphic, ornamental script whose origins can be traced in inscriptions and manuscripts from the Pāla kingdom in Bengal, and was later adopted in Nepal – a script that might have caused some difficulties to a Chinese carver.

The need to decorate and embellish books with calligraphic scripts and/or miniatures developed very soon in the Buddhist tradition. This was probably the effect of a profound change in the concept and attitude towards the written word, according to which books

Map showing the main trajectories in the historical spread of Buddhism throughout Asia.

were not seen merely as a media (sic) for the conveyance of information but, for some reason or reasons yet unclear, began to be conceived of as objects worthy of beautification. As we shall see, one possibility, which needs further consideration, is that this development was affected by the evolution of certain texts into cult objects. (Klimburg-Salter 1990: 817)

Early witnesses of this change are for instance beautifully decorated covers of manuscripts found in the 1930s in Gilgit, another important city along the Silk route (Klimburg-Salter 1990; 1992).

The fourth scene refers precisely to this aspect of Buddhist book culture, the cult of the book. It presents another fictional character, a librarian monk in a Mongolian monastery who has just received instructions by his abbot to provide a very sacred palm-leaf manuscript with a worthy place in the library. It is a manuscript of the 'Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas', a central text of Mahāyāna Buddhism, with skillfully decorated wooden covers and beautiful miniatures. Although the librarian is fictional, the manuscript is real: two such palm-leaf manuscripts are preserved in the Mongolian National Library in Ulaanbaatar. They are both written in the same ornamental script as the fragments of xylographs from Kucha, and according to the colophon, one of them was written in the Pāla kingdom during the seventeenth year of the reign of king Vīrahapāla (probably Vīrāhapāla III, who reigned from 1054 to 1072 CE). It is presently not possible to trace in detail the long journey of these two manuscripts from Bengal to Mongolia. However, a hypothesis not far from reality is that a monk who fled from a monastery in the Pāla kingdom because of the Muslim raids took one of the manuscripts to Nepal, whence he then headed to Tibet (like Vibhūticandra). Once arrived there, as a token of gratitude he donated the manuscript to the monastery that gave him hospitality. Possibly the manuscript was then brought from Tibet to

Mongolia by a Tibetan monk who was sent on a mission to the Erdene Zuu Monastery, where he donated it to the abbot.

The 'Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas' belongs to the *navadharmā*, 'nine dharmas', or *navagrantha*, 'nine books', a set of Mahāyāna sūtras that are

the object of particular devotion in the Newar Buddhist tradition of Nepal. [...] These sūtras of the nine dharmas are used in the creation of the *dharmamaṇḍala*, a powerful ritual symbol in Newar Buddhism. (*Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. *navadharmā*)

Although the list of the nine *dharmas* underwent changes over time, the central space of the *maṇḍala* is always occupied by the Perfection of Wisdom. The ritual veneration of books played – and still plays – a central role in Nepalese Buddhism, and the concluding scene in our fictional documentary movie on the journey of Buddhist books takes us back to Nepal. The character whose thoughts are presented is a fictional descendant of the Buddhist monk Trailokara and of his wife Pūrṇāvatī, who both commissioned in 1719 the manuscript of the 'Collection of Magical Spells' (*Dhāraṇīsāṅgraha*, Add. 1326) displayed in the exhibition. He is about to welcome the Surgeon to the British Residency in Kathmandu, Dr Daniel Wright, and Guṇānand, a local Paṇḍit. The last two are real characters, and between 1873 and 1876 they were responsible for collecting manuscripts in the Kathmandu Valley on behalf of Cambridge University Library. The 'Collection of Magical Spells' is among the manuscripts collected by them in 1875, and in the colophon of the manuscript it is stated that Trailokara installed it in his home as a sacred object, probably to protect his house and family. From the shrine in Trailokara's house this manuscript made a long journey to Europe, and reached Cambridge University Library – but this was not its last stop. The manuscript is now displayed in a virtual



Palm-leaf manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* that travelled to Mongolia

Courtesy of National Library of Mongolia, Ulaanbataar, and ACIP.

shrine in the Cambridge Digital Library, and can be seen and read anywhere in the world where there is a connection on the World Wide Web: the Dharma gone digital.

Books are carried by men: for instance, we have seen Vibhūticandra travelling from Bengal to Nepal, from Nepal to Tibet and back. But how can books carry men, let alone entire cultures? The imaginary story, reconstructed starting from the five folios of a xylograph of the 'Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines' recovered at Kucha in Central Asia, is a good example of how a book is not just a simple object, but rather a 'place' where different cultural traditions meet: the Chinese culture provided the writing material (paper) and the printing technique (xylograph), while the south Asian culture provided the script (the ornamental Pāla/Kuṭiḷa script) and the book format (*pothī*). Moreover, many different craftsmen were needed to produce such a complex object: for instance, paper manufacturers, a scribe for the master copy to be rubbed on the wooden blocks, a carver for the blocks, in some cases artists for the miniatures. Last, but not least, we should not forget that a book is primarily a means to convey messages and ideas: we have also seen teams of translators at work, some of whom travelled long distances not only to work on the translations, but in the first place to learn the languages and to study the texts.

The men and books described above travelled through forests and high mountains to reach the vast steppes and deserts of central Asia, while other men and books were covering equally long distances by crossing seas to spread the *Dharma* to Southeast Asia – but this is yet another journey.



Stylus for writing on palm leaves

The spatula-like end of the stylus was used for erasing mistakes by scraping off a thin layer of the palm leaf. Steel. Length 21 cm. India. 19th century. Collected by Professor Cecil Bendall, 1884. Donated by Mrs Georgette Bendall. E 1907.492



The Buddha's first sermon

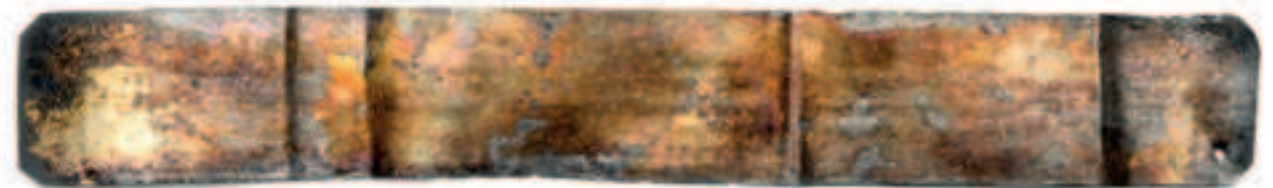
The *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta* (the Sūtra of the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma), a record of the Buddha Śākyamuni's first sermon at Sarnath, in Varanasi (India). The text of the Buddha's sermon is in Pali, written in Sinhala script, alongside which is a commentary written in Sinhalese. This sermon is still today memorised by many Buddhists and it is charged with an enormous symbolic power, for it contains the teachings of the Buddha in a nutshell: the four noble truths, the interdependent origination of phenomena and the middle way as the path to *nirvāṇa*. It was on palm-leaf manuscripts like this that the Buddha's words travelled from India and across Asia.

Palm leaf. 18 folios. Length 41.5 cm
Sri Lanka. 19th century
Purchased by Baron Anatole von Hügel
from William D. Webster, London
E 1909.50 (Z 2493)

Brass scripture from a shrine

This strip of metal, in the shape of a palm leaf, was incised and probably rolled to be used as a votive offering. The inscription is difficult to read – it appears not to be in Sinhala script, but could be in Pali. It was purchased from W.H. Bidell, a European dealer of coins and antiques in Colombo, who said it had been 'dug up' from a *dagoba* in the ancient Sinhala capital of Anuradhapura.

Copper alloy. Length 21.7 cm
Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.
Purchased from W.H. Bidell by Dr G.F. Rogers, 1935
1936.272





Pali Literature: From Orality to Written Text

Aleix Ruiz-Falqués

Pali is the language of Buddhist literature as transmitted in the Theravada tradition that still flourishes in Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia. The story of this Pali literature, and of the manuscripts in which it was transmitted, is one of travel, from India to Sri Lanka and on to mainland Southeast Asia, and the transformations it underwent on these journeys, in the course of which it underwent a twofold change: it settled in linguistically ‘foreign’ lands, and it was written down for the first time.

Scholars regard Pali as a culture language, based on north-western Indian dialects, and closely related to Sanskrit and modern north Indian languages. We do not know whether the Buddha himself spoke Pali, but it is very likely that he spoke a north Indian dialect very close to it. Crucially, the teachings of the Buddha were handed down orally after the death of the master. This flourishing oral tradition was not written down in Sri Lanka until the second century BCE, for reasons that seem to be related to the many dangers of recurrent periods of war and famine. Because monks relied on lay support, during these periods the transmission of oral lore was virtually impossible. If the texts were written down, however, the teachings would be preserved (von Hinüber 1996: 4-6).

Pali literature, as we know it today, is the product of two important editorial events, both of which occurred on the island of Sri Lanka. The first was the writing of the commentaries on the *suttas* (Buddha’s discourses), during the fifth century CE. The second was the production of a further series of sub-commentaries, in the twelfth century, and the simultaneous unification of the Buddhist

sects of the island in the Mahāvihāra community. This community exported a complete set of text-commentary-subcommentary, plus non-canonical treatises, to Southeast Asia, and most of the Pali manuscripts we find in this region today belong to this tradition. Pali language is usually restricted to Buddhist subjects, whereas other types of texts (astrological, horoscopes, legal, etc.) are commonly written in vernaculars or in Sanskrit. They arrived in Southeast Asia by land, via Bengal, and by sea, via South India and Sri Lanka, and they were preserved not by Buddhist, but by Brahmin families.

It is difficult to date the first arrival of Pali texts in mainland Southeast Asia, but they are known there from at least the fifth century CE, or the period of the writing of the first commentaries. They allegedly came from the Cola Kingdom (present Tamil Nadu in south India) or from Sri Lanka, and probably first arrived in the Mon country (in *Pali Suvaṇṇabhūmi*, ‘Golden land’), now southern Burma, during the time of emperor Ashoka.

A range of materials are known to have been used in Theravada countries since early in the first millennium CE as supports and embellishments for writing. As well as stone, which is obviously less portable, these include paper, gold leaf, slate and palm-leaf (either palmyra or *Corypha*). The last of these, *Corypha* (known as *talipot* in Sri Lanka and elsewhere) is the most common. The text itself is usually inscribed upon the prepared palm-leaf: ink was not used in palm-leaf books of this tradition, as far as we know. These materials were used not only in orthodox religious texts, but also for administrative and juridical records (Lammerts 2010: 232).



Head of Śākyamuni Buddha

This head of a statue seems to follow the Pala style from Bengal more than the local Chiengsaen style, which is closer to that of southern Thailand. Damaged during an air raid in World War II, it shows the stretched but unadorned earlobes of the prince who renounced his wealth and the high peak of the *uṣṇṣa* rising from the top of the head, indicating his transcendence.

Bronze. Height 22.7 cm
Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. 11th century or later
Collected by Ivor H.N. Evans
1948.1849

For *kammavācā* manuscripts such as those from Burma exhibited here, there is a variety of materials and styles, the most common being inscribed on unadorned palm-leaf. But decorated editions could be extraordinarily elaborate: tamarind-seed script in ink, on lacquered and gilded palm-leaf, ivory, lacquered hardened cloth, or metal such as copper and aluminium, ornamented in gold leaf, cinnabar, ink, or mother-of-pearl, with illustrations of the Buddha, Buddhist saints, divine or mythological beings, etc. (Lammerts 2010: 236–7).

Of course, the journeys taken by Pali literature were not confined to Asia. Contrary to what post-colonial narratives may suggest, the first Pali manuscripts to arrive in Europe were sent in friendship by Buddhist kings, in particular the king of Siam (now Thailand), who wanted to exchange presents with the French king through French diplomats and Catholic missionaries in the late seventeenth century (Pruitt 1994: 33).

The first steps in the study of Pali in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia were taken by Christian missionaries and also freelance adventurers. The role of European colonialism in the area (Portuguese, French, Dutch and British) was ambivalent. On the one hand, foreign powers were interested in the suppression of local culture. On the other, they (especially the British) believed that the most effective method of ruling the conquered peoples was to let them follow their own customary law. The result was a massive looting of manuscripts to European libraries, some public and some private collections, as well as the destruction of local libraries. Perhaps the most important event was the dismantling of local monarchies that had a determining role in sponsoring and preserving local literary practices.

With the destructive Portuguese influence in Sri Lanka from the sixteenth century, Burma became the centre of Pali literature. In 1885, with the annexation of Upper Burma to the British Empire, the large collections of the Mandalay Palace



Points of controversy

This is a manuscript on palm leaf of the *Kathāvatthu*, or 'Points of controversy', a canonical Buddhist treatise belonging to the Abhidhamma collection, which provided a systematic and schematic reworking of the sūtras. This document carefully refutes each of the 500 criticisms that had been levelled at Theravada Buddhism by dissident monks and members of other sects and religions. It was said to have been written by a monk named Mogaliputta Tissa, in the city of Pataliputra (now Patna) in India, during the reign of the Emperor Ashoka (269-232 BCE). This rare eighteenth-century palm leaf, dated 1119 of the Sakkarāj era or 1757 CE, is exceptionally well preserved. The red lacquer strip breaking up a field of gold on the edge of the leaves marks it as a text of the second highest quality.

Stylus for writing on palm leaves

Metal. Length 27.2 cm
Burma
Collected and donated by Frederick O. Lechmere-Oertel
1930.1302

Palm leaf and wooden cover. Length 51 cm
Burma. 1757.
Collected by Harold Clayton
Given by Professor Ellis Minns
Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology





were appropriated by the British Raj. The origins of European collections, however, are diverse. Some private collectors could simply buy large amounts of palm-leaf manuscripts without difficulty.

The devastation wrought by the Second World War was especially severe in Burma and many libraries in the Mandalay region were razed to the ground. Further upheaval throughout the region in the twentieth century has increasingly threatened the safety of the Pali manuscripts that remain, as well as the communities who hold them as spiritually significant texts and objects. Recently some projects of digitisation are helping in the preservation of Pali manuscript culture and in facilitating access, the best instances being the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (www.laomanuscripts.net) and the Fragile Palm Leaves Project (<http://fpl.tusita.org/>).

A Royal service of ordination

The *Kammavācā*, or ‘Words for the Ritual [of Ordination]’ is the liturgy for a ritual that every Burmese Buddhist experiences at some point in their lives: that of ordination as a monk. This kind of manuscript is therefore very common, and a great deal of money would have been spent on their production because they were constantly re-used and therefore needed to last. The text is written in both Pali and Burmese languages, in a script known as Tamarind Seed. This medieval script was used widely in Burmese stone inscriptions from the eleventh century onwards, but is now only found in copies of the *Kammavācā*. The sense of antiquity that is conveyed by the script is particularly appropriate to the gravity of the ritual of ordination. This edition is particularly grand, and the peacocks depicted on the cover and in the illustrations throughout suggest that this was a Royal text – the peacocks being royal symbols. It was probably taken from the Royal Palace in Mandalay when it was sacked by the British in 1885.

Gilt lacquered palm leaf. 54.5 x 9.5 cm
Royal Palace, Mandalay, Burma. 19th century
Probably collected 1885
Purchased by Louis C.G. Clarke
1922.1229

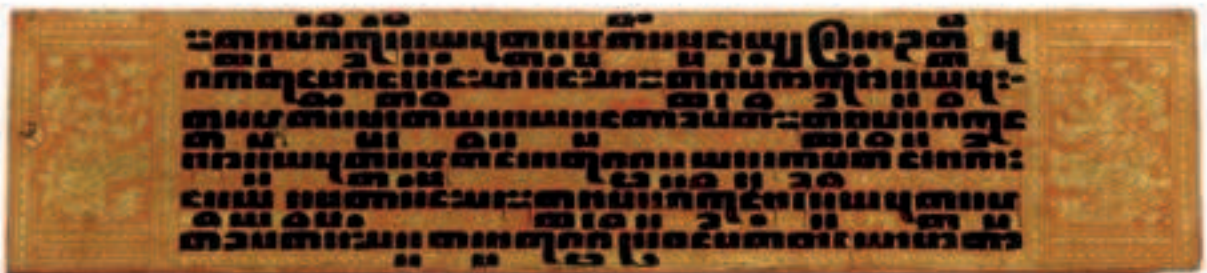
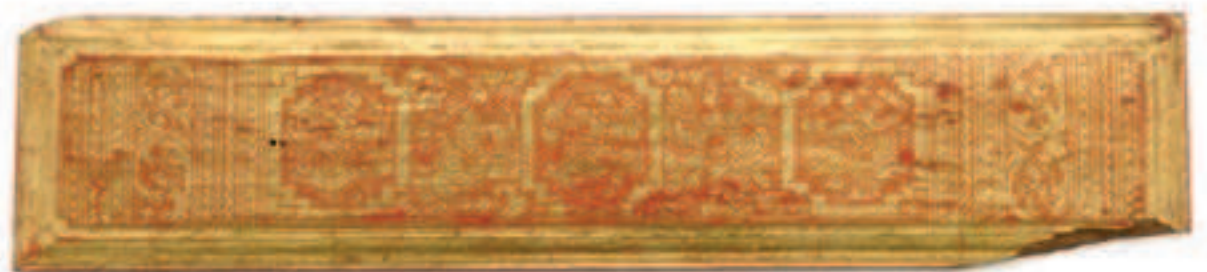


Pali Paritta in Khmer

This book travelled a long way in several senses. A Pali text written in Khmer script, it was probably written in Cambodia in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but was collected on the island of Taiwan, some 2000 nautical miles away, in 1886. It is a collection of well-known *paritta* – protective spells or formulae – from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, written by a single person, whose identity is unknown. The edges are coated with red lacquer, with two broad strips of

gold, suggesting it may have been part of a monastic library. We do not know how it travelled to Taiwan, or when, but its journey shows the popularity of these texts across Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century.

Palm leaf, gold and lac. Length 32.7 cm
Cambodia. 18th-19th century
Found in Tamsui, Taiwan by Professor Herbert A. Giles.
Donated by Mrs Catherine Giles
E 1901.206 (Z 2492)



An Arhat

The *arahat* (Sanskrit *arhat*) or 'worthy one' is the saint of Buddhism, a human being that has attained *nirvāṇa* and will not be reborn again. This figure represents an archetypal *arhat*. It is very likely that this particular figure represents one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, either Sāriputta or Moggallāna, for they are commonly at the flanks of Buddha statues. The piece was allegedly obtained 'from the sack of Theebaw's palace at Mandalay, given to the donor by maiden whose father was present at the sack'.

Bronze. Height 12 cm
Mandalay, Burma.
Collected by Dr G.F. Rogers
1937.577

Venerating the book

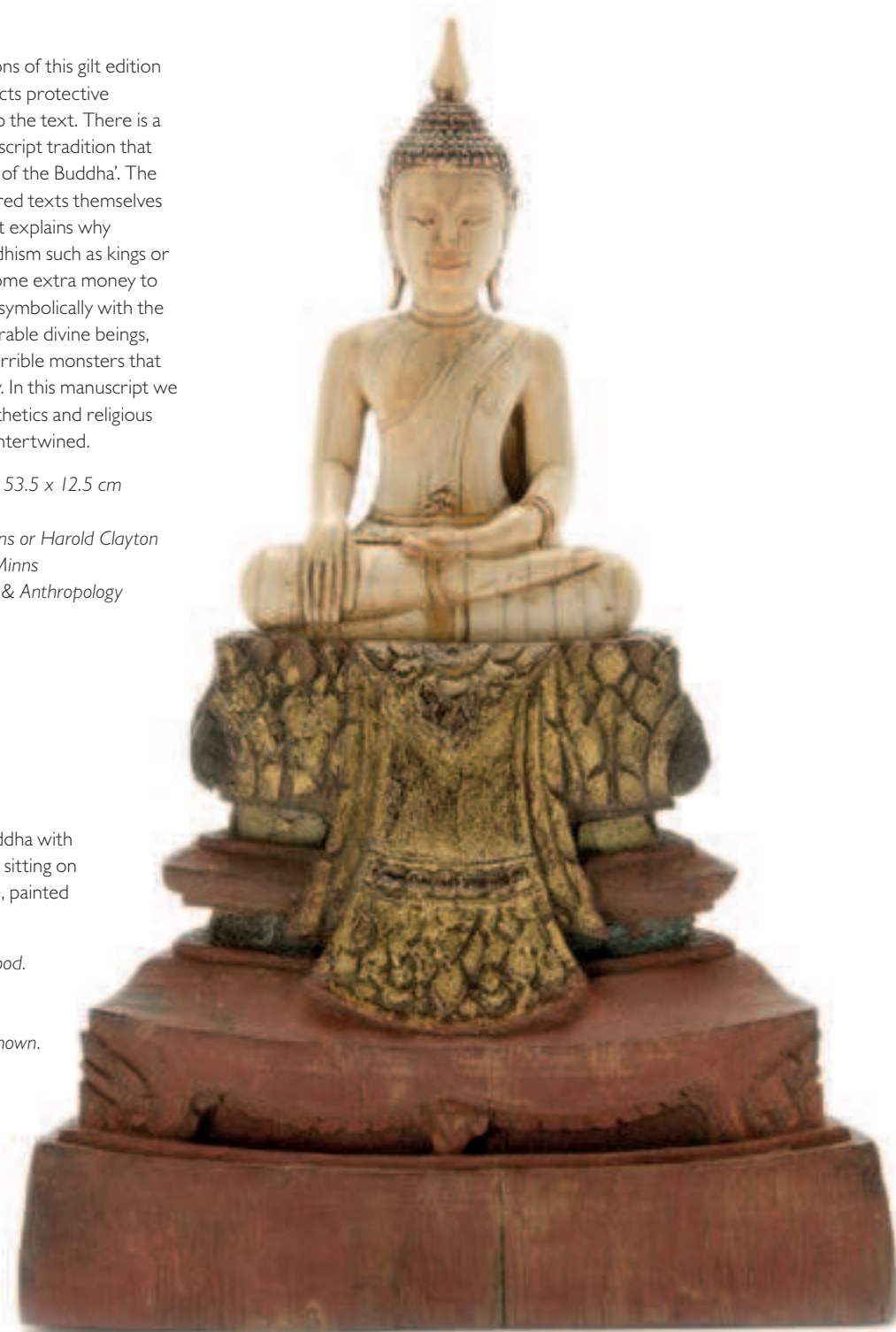
The cover and illustrations of this gilt edition of the *Kammavācā* depicts protective deities paying homage to the text. There is a saying in Buddhist manuscript tradition that 'every letter is an image of the Buddha'. The materials containing sacred texts themselves become sacred, and that explains why affluent patrons of Buddhism such as kings or noblemen may spend some extra money to protect the manuscript symbolically with the representation of favourable divine beings, bodhisattvas, or even terrible monsters that will keep enemies at bay. In this manuscript we can appreciate how aesthetics and religious significance are deeply intertwined.

Gilt lacquered palm leaf. 53.5 x 12.5 cm
Burma. 19th century
Collected by Walter Minns or Harold Clayton
Given by Professor Ellis Minns
Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology

Ivory Buddha

A small (9 cm) ivory Buddha with traces of gilt on the hair, sitting on a wooden tiered throne, painted and gilded.

Ivory and gilt, painted wood.
Height 18.4 cm
Burma or Thailand.
Collector and donor unknown.
Z 19104



Palm-leaf books of Sri Lanka

Sujit Sivasundaram

Palm-leaf texts have served a vital function in the Sinhalese Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka for centuries; and yet many of those which have survived come from the late early modern period. The spread of palm-leaf writing in Sri Lanka is usually connected with the spread of Buddhism into the island from India. In turn, texts from the island travelled to present-day Thailand and Burma. The passage of the art of writing on palm-leaf therefore tracks the diffusion of the *dharma* and also the attempt to share and preserve religious practice. Given that reading and writing on palm-leaf was dominated by monks, the dispersal of palm leaves, allowing some very early Sri Lankan manuscripts to be found in Southeast Asia, for instance, gestures to what may usefully be seen as a Buddhist ecumene or even a scholarly and pious network of letters.

The reason for the low survival rate of palm-leaf texts of Sri Lanka which antedate the seventeenth or eighteenth century reveals something about how these texts were used by scholar monks, pilgrims and village elders. They were copied and recopied, and it was not uncommon to extract leaves out of manuscripts. As the centuries passed, additions were made, for instance to historical chronicles or *vaṃśās*, and new translations were undertaken into vernacular languages. The language of the palm leaves of Sri Lanka is heterodox; Pali combines with Sanskrit, while Sinhala texts also combine Tamil, and sometimes Arabic or even Southeast Asian languages. The value of the palm-leaf text lay in its use especially for religious purposes and also for the consolidation of kingly piety. For this reason, the palm-leaf manuscripts gesture to an associational culture of merit-making, historicism and courtly glorification which is profoundly oral.

Arguably the plurality and malleability of the palm-leaf texts of Sri Lanka has not yet given way wholesale to the uniformity of print. Even when print first took off in Ceylon/Sri Lanka, it did not displace the palm leaf; there were rather interesting instances where printed books took on the style of palm-leaf texts or where bureaucratised British governors resorted to palm-leaf texts to glorify colonial rule.

The persistent cultural importance of the palm-leaf texts arises partly from the great skill that is required to create an *ola*, another way of referring to these texts. Traditionally, this was a ritual practice where talipot or palmyra palm leaves were rolled, boiled and oiled so as to prepare them for writing. As one early twentieth-century commentator writes: 'The material aimed at is one that is light in weight, even in colour, strong in texture and durable in quality' (De Silva 1938: xiii). The writing was undertaken by a metal stylus. No ink was involved in the process: rather the sharp tip of the stylus incised the surface of the leaf to create the script. This required strength and care on the part of the writer, who might place the leaf on a piece of wood or in his own hand to write on it. Once this was done, the writing was blackened by a resin to which charcoal is added. The leaf was cut into long, thin strips, and once the writing was complete, the leaves were punched by a hot iron rod and strung together by a cord. The covers that protected these texts were usually of wood, often decorated with traditional floral patterns. Very rarely, they included precious materials, such as ivory, silver or gold, to indicate elite ownership and use.

Contemporary fascination with palm-leaf texts in Sri Lanka picks up on the skill embodied in these

artefacts. They are commonly seen as antiquarian objects owned by aristocratic Sinhala families and passed down across generations, as Buddhist texts which rightfully belong in temple libraries, or simply as objects of art to be collected by connoisseurs, who may even damage the manuscripts greatly by collecting their covers but not their leaves. With the emergence of new collections of palm-leaf books from temples, and even in the West, such as a recent find in Arizona State University Library of 500 manuscripts, it is certain that the palm-leaf texts of Sri Lanka have not given up their power to surprise or to destabilise hegemonic readings, a power inherently linked to their flexible and skilful materiality.

Rolled scripture

A single leaf of script from the *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta*, probably rolled to be used as an amulet. Rolled manuscripts generally contain collections of *paritta* (protective spells) or important sermons of the Buddha, such as the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*. The size of the manuscript indicates that it is definitely meant to be portable.

*Palm leaf. Height 6.4 cm
Sri Lanka. 19th century
Purchased from W.H. Bidell by Dr G.F Rogers, 1935
1936.275*



Stylus for writing on palm leaves

*Steel. Length 33.4 cm
Sri Lanka. 19th century
Collected by Lord Stanmore, Arthur Hamilton-Gordon,
1883-90
1918.215.24*





Translations and Consecrations: Inside a Chinese Statue

Mark Elliott

This gilt wooden statue is of Guanyin, the Chinese version of the *Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*. In the Chinese tradition the figure of Guanyin gradually lost its masculine features and became androgynous, as is the case here, and in some instances feminine. The statue was acquired by John Williams on 10 June 1862, from a dealer in London who had himself acquired it in a sale of non-military material from the collection of the Royal United Services Institute Museum the previous year, but it is not known who collected it, or from where it originated in China. Soon after acquiring it, Williams opened up the statue to examine its deposit. His own hand-written account of this investigation was subsequently placed in the void where the deposit had once been:

Upon tapping upon the under surface of this figure I found evidence of the interior being hollow ... Upon boring a hole where I suspected a cavity to exist I found that there actually was a hollow there and that the wood closing it was about an inch in thickness. Upon introducing a long pointed wire into the hole thus made I found that there was a yielding mass within thus proving that a deposit of some kind was there. I had considerable difficulty in breaking through the covering with the cavity but when that was effected the end of an irregular kind of bundle which filled up the hollow became visible. This

was so tightly wedged into the cavity that I found it quite hopeless to attempt to remove it whole, which I was anxious to do as I much wished to ascertain the exact mode of placing the several objects that constituted the deposit. I was consequently obliged to extract them the best way I could and the result was the collection of objects recorded in the succeeding pages. I may also add that so accurately was the aperture closed that not a particle of dust had penetrated so that everything was as nearly as possible in the same state as when deposited in the statue about 230 years ago.

The deposit comprised more than 300 coins minted at various dates between the second century BCE and the seventeenth century CE, a silk bag containing beads, silver ornaments, a button and flower carved from agate, pieces of wood, seeds, pieces of coral, a small square mirror, several fragments of patterned silk and eight handwritten *sūtras* in Chinese script, two of which were dated to 1634, the presumed year in which this statue was consecrated (see Galamboś, below). In addition, two coins were wrapped in paper bearing a Sanskrit formula, written in Tibetan *ucen (dbu can)* script, never interpreted until now. The presence of these Tibetan materials in a statue from China suggests and emphasises the degree to which Buddhist texts moved across borders and between states.

The statue appears to have been made in several stages, with six of the twelve arms perhaps having been attached to the shoulders at a later date, although Williams referred to certain repairs that he had made himself. The goddess holds in her hands attributes including a stylus or pen and a book.

Guanyin

Gilt wood, black and red pigment. Height 58 cm
Northeast China. Consecrated in or soon after 1634
Collector unknown.

Purchased by John Williams, FSA, 10 June 1862
Donated by Rev. John F. Williams, 1959
1960.400

The Heart sūtra and dhāraṇī to Guanyin

Ink on paper. 23.7 cm x 53.7 cm
China. 1634
1960.416 C



The Heart sūtra

Ink on paper. 23.4 cm x 15.2 cm
China. 1634
1960.416 F



Verses from the Avataṃsaka sūtra

Ink on paper. 42 cm x 65.5 cm
China, c. 1634
1960.416 B

The ye dharma, or 'Buddhist credo':

'The Tathāgata has declared the cause and also the cessation of the things (dhammā) that arise from causes. Such is the teaching of the Great Samaṇa'
Ink on paper. 23.5 cm x 17 cm
China, c. 1634
1960.415 A

Votive manuscripts inside the Guanyin statue

Imre Galambos

In East Asia, Buddhist *sūtras* deposited inside statues or *stūpas* functioned as a means of consecrating the objects, as they were thought to represent the words of the Buddha and thus embodied the *dharma*. Even a tiny fragment of a *sūtra* was believed to represent the *dharma* in its totality.

The *Heart sūtra*, despite not really being a *sūtra* in terms of its formal characteristics, was among the most popular Buddhist texts, not only in China but also in other regions of East Asia. It has a long and a short version but it is the short one, merely a few lines in length, that enjoyed the widest popularity. The *sūtra* was supposedly translated from Sanskrit by the eminent monk Xuanzang (c. 602-664) who had made a 16-year pilgrimage to India during the early Tang dynasty, visiting on his way the various Buddhist kingdoms of Central Asia and bringing back several hundred palm-leaf scriptures, many of which he subsequently translated into Chinese. Xuanzang exemplified the image of a pilgrim monk travelling to the holy land of Buddhism along the oasis cities of the Silk Road.

The Guanyin statue exhibited here contained eight *sūtras* (1960.416 A-H), including several copies of the *Heart sūtra* written on yellow paper. A line that precedes the text at the beginning of manuscript 1960.416 C says, 'Reverently copied on the 1st day of the 8th intercalary month of the 7th year of the Chongzhen reign period,' in which the year corresponds to 1634 of the Western calendar. At its onset, the *Heart sūtra* evokes the figure of Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin), which fits well with its being deposited inside the statue of the same deity. Along similar lines, the second text on the manuscript is a *dhāraṇī* dedicated to the merciful and compassionate Guanyin. Manuscript 1960.416 F has the same date but contains only the *Heart sūtra*.

Among the other manuscripts found in the Guanyin statue are two large white sheets with portions of the *Flower adornment sūtra* (Skt: *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, Ch: *Huayan jing*). They are written in good, confident calligraphy with ink that has partially faded.

Manuscript 1960.416 B is one of these sheets with some *gāthās* (verses) from Chapter 30, volume 16 of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, entitled 'Ascending to the top of Mount Sumeru'. The *sūtra* itself is extremely long and what we have here is merely a short section that fitted on to this paper. Although the Guanyin statue only contained two white sheets with the text of the *Flower adornment sūtra*, both from the same chapter, it is quite likely that an entire chapter or perhaps even the whole *sūtra* would have been copied on the same occasion and more manuscripts were deposited inside other objects or buildings. This particular version of the *sūtra* was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda (652-710) sometime during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-710), China's only female ruler. A less complete translation had been made nearly three centuries earlier by the Indian monk Buddhābhadda (359-429), but Śikṣānanda's version proved more popular. Yet the fact that the two translators were Indian and central Asian illustrates the complicated journey of the *sūtra* from India to China, both in terms of its geographic movements and linguistic adaptations. Certainly the *sūtra's* journey did not stop in China, since the Chinese version, especially the one made by Śikṣānanda, became extremely influential throughout East Asia, reaching Korea, Japan, Vietnam and even the Western Xia state.

A multi-lingual *thangkha* from Mongolia

This Mongolian printed *thangkha* (*thang kha*) illustrates the importance of translation: a process that has been crucial to the spread of Buddhism across Asia over the centuries. It also clearly proclaims the Indian roots of Buddhist teaching and practices. The hand-coloured image is a syllable representing the Mantra of the *Kālacakratāntra*, known as *namcu wangden* (*rnam bcu dbang ldan*, ‘the powerful ten aspects’). The actual mantra, *oṃ haṃ kṣa ma la wa ra ya sva ha*, is given in Sanskrit, Sanskrit transliterated in Tibetan characters, Tibetan, and Mongolian. A short passage indicates that the scroll was written by a person called Wang bodo (dBang bo rdo) who copied the mantra from a compilation of 11 mantras by Kelzang Thubten (sKal bzang thub bstan). The scroll was prepared on the occasion of the celebration of a big *Kālacakra* initiation.

Mongolians translated Buddhist teachings into Mongolian from Tibetan as well as Sanskrit and Chinese. Despite a number of translations and texts composed in Mongolian (such as Mergen Gegeen’s works: see Humphrey & Hüreibaatar 2013), Tibetan remained the dominant religious language for Mongols who embraced Tibetan Buddhism. Many Mongolian scholars authored important works in Tibetan and many Mongolians of different standing became patrons in the production of Buddhist scriptures. The Mongolian emperor Khublai Khan and his family sponsored some of the earliest Tibetan printed texts in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, which included texts of the *Kālacakratāntra* (Sherab Sangpo 2013).

The name of this work means ‘The *tantra* of the Wheel of Time’ (*Dus kyi ‘khor lo’i rgyud*) and dates back to the beginning of the eleventh century. According to legend, it was preached to a king of Śambhala by Buddha Śākyamuni after his enlightenment and was written down a year later. It draws on a pre-existing account reported in Hindu sources, according to which at the end of this degenerate age Viṣṇu will be reborn as a *brahmin* warrior in a village of Śambhala and liberate the world from barbarians. According to the Buddhist prophecy mentioned in the *Kālacakratāntra*, at the end of this era, an army led by a descendant of the royal dynasty of Śambhala would defeat the barbarians (at that time identified with Muslims). This is a syncretistic

religious work that probably reflects an attempted alliance between Buddhism and Hinduism against Islamic expansion in north India in the eleventh century. Despite this historical background, the prophesied war is generally understood to be symbolic, since it represents the internal conflict between human vices (the barbarians) and virtues (the Buddhist precepts) (see Newman 1996).

The practice of the *Kālacakratāntra* was widespread among both Tibetans and Mongols and remains one of the most popular ritual practices up to the present day. Since the celebration of the *Kālacakra* initiation by the fourteenth Dalai Lama in various sites across the world, this ritual practice has acquired global popularity.

Printed and painted on cotton, length 68cm.
Central Mongolia.
Collected by Caroline Humphrey, 1974
with support from the Crowther-Beynon Fund.
1975.81





Lotus Sūtra (*Myōhō rengekyō*)

The *Lotus Sūtra*, called *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* in Sanskrit and *Myōhō rengekyō* in Japanese, is one of the best-known scriptures of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. It had enormous impact on East Asian Buddhism in the translation completed in 406 by Kumārajīva (334-413), who came from the Buddhist kingdom of Kucha in what is now the far western part of China and later settled in the Chinese city of Chang'an. This luxury manuscript in roll form, written in gold ink on indigo-dyed paper, was produced in Japan towards the end of the Heian period (795-1185) and is incomplete. According to an inscription written on the manuscript by Ninagawa Noritane

(1835-1882), it had long been kept in the Itsukushima shrine near Hiroshima but, in 1874, was donated to a museum in the Grand Duchy of Baden (southwest Germany). However, as this manuscript was acquired as part of the Siebold Collection and since Ninagawa was acquainted with Heinrich von Siebold, it seems most likely that Ninagawa entrusted it to Siebold, who then kept it for himself, instead of donating it to a museum as intended.

Scroll. Gold ink on indigo paper.

Itsukushima, Japan. 12th century.

Given by Ninagawa Noritane to Heinrich von Siebold.

Siebold Collection. Cambridge University Library. FJ.1000.3

East Asian Trajectories and Transformations

Peter Kornicki

The sermons of the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, were given orally in a Middle Indo-Aryan language and so must have undergone translation once they reached other language communities, several centuries before they were first committed to writing. The transformation of Buddhist teachings into written texts in various languages and scripts had definitely begun before Buddhism began to attract attention in China, as is shown by recent finds of birch-bark scrolls in Afghanistan which were written in the first century in a Gāndhārī language using the Kharoṣṭhī script.

Buddhism was probably first introduced to China in the first century by missionaries and traders on the Silk Road. By the second century there was a Buddhist community in Luoyang and from the late third century onwards Buddhism began to make an impact on gentry society in China, once a few texts had been translated into Chinese. Not long afterwards the first Chinese pilgrims began making their way to India in search of instruction and texts.

The Buddhist texts that reached China from India were translated into Chinese in a team-translation process – a continuation of the pattern of translating Buddhist teachings into new languages as they spread to new language communities. In 730 a Chinese monk named Zhisheng compiled a catalogue of Buddhist texts that were by that time available in Chinese, listing as many as 1,076 titles. Some of these were in fact not translations, but texts created in China. Nevertheless it is clear that there was by the eighth century a huge corpus of Buddhist texts available in Chinese.

The process of translating Buddhist texts in East Asia did not, however, reach much beyond China. The vast corpus of Buddhist texts spread throughout East Asia almost exclusively in the form

of the Chinese translations: vernacular translation is mostly a phenomenon of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is similar to the dominance of St Jerome's Latin Vulgate in Europe for centuries up to the Reformation.

Chinese Buddhist texts therefore circulated throughout East Asia, initially in the form of manuscripts. In the years 971-983 the entire Chinese Buddhist canon of 1,081 separate works was carved on 130,000 wooden blocks, known as the Kaibao edition. The Kaibao edition of the canon reached Japan and Korea within 10 years of its completion, followed by Vietnam in 1018, and the Tangut empire in 1035.

The Tangut empire was founded in 1032 in what is now western China and the complex Tangut script, which was clearly inspired by the Chinese script, appears to have been created at least partly in order to facilitate the vernacular translation of Buddhist texts. The Tanguts subsequently undertook to print Buddhist texts both in Chinese and in Tangut, mostly using woodblocks but sometimes using typography. Recently discovered texts in Tangut printed in the twelfth century are now recognised as the oldest typographic books in the world.

In some respects the Tangut response to Chinese Buddhist texts mirrors that of Tibet, for the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet in the early seventh century was followed within a short space of time by the invention of the Tibetan script, a move that was in part a response to the need for a means with which to translate Buddhist texts. In the case of Tibet, however, Buddhism was introduced not only in the form of Buddhist texts in Chinese but also of texts in Indian languages and scripts. Nevertheless, it remains true that in the whole of East Asia it was only the Tanguts and Tibetans that produced

vernacular versions of substantial quantities of Buddhist texts.

Elsewhere in East Asia the Chinese Buddhist canon was unchallenged. In north China the Khitans printed the entire canon in the eleventh century, and so too in the following century did the Jurchens, who overwhelmed the Khitans: they both had their own scripts for their languages but it was the Chinese Buddhist canon that they chose to print, and the same was true of the two Korean printings of the canon in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and of the two Japanese printings of the canon in the seventeenth century. There are records indicating that the canon was also printed in Vietnam in the late thirteenth century: no copies survive, however, so some doubt remains, but if there was a Vietnamese edition it would undoubtedly have been a version of the Chinese Buddhist canon rather than a vernacular translation.

Buddhist texts in Chinese first reached what is now Vietnam in the third century and, as in Japan and Korea, circulated in the form of manuscripts for centuries. Even after the development of the Nôm script for writing Vietnamese in the eleventh century, Buddhist texts with any vernacular elements were rare. One exception is the *Sūtra on requiting parental kindness*, an apocryphal sūtra composed in China which was evidently drawn up to make Buddhism conform better to Chinese notions of filial piety: this appeared in vernacular editions in Japan and Korea and there is also an eighteenth-century Vietnamese edition containing the original in large Chinese script and interpolated lines of smaller Nôm script giving a Vietnamese translation.

Buddhism reached the three kingdoms on the Korean peninsula in the fourteenth century. The subsequent development of Buddhism in Korea owed a great deal not only to the continuous arrival of texts from China but also to the travel of Korean monks to China for study, and sometimes even as far as India. However, not one of the eight monks from the kingdom of Silla who are known to have set out

for India ever set foot in Korea again, most choosing to remain in China after their return. Monks from the Korean state of Silla in particular produced large quantities of commentarial and doctrinal literature in Chinese and made their mark well beyond the confines of Korea. In this they were more successful than their Vietnamese and Japanese counterparts. Wōnch'ūk (613-696), for example, was one of the two leading disciples of Xuanzang (c.602-664), the eminent traveller and translator. Although most of Wōnch'ūk's writings are now lost, they appear in ancient Chinese and Japanese catalogues and clearly circulated well beyond Korea.

The creation of the *han'gŭl* script in 1443 made writing in Korean no longer difficult. Thus in 1447 a vernacular biography of the Buddha was published, consisting of translated extracts from the Lotus sūtra and other texts. This was followed by the publication of bilingual vernacular editions of various Buddhist texts combining the Chinese text with a vernacular Korean translation. In 1461 a Sūtra Printing Office was established in the capital, where a large number of bilingual editions of Buddhist texts was produced including more than 30 editions of the *Sūtra on requiting parental kindness*.

The introduction of Buddhism to Japan came initially from Korea, perhaps in the fifth century, but it was only in the seventh century that appreciable quantities of Buddhist texts reached Japan. A succession of monks travelled to China and returned with sometimes huge quantities of texts. An entry in the *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*) for 673 records that scribes were assembled in the Kawaradera temple to the south of Nara to copy out *All the scriptures*, a term for the Buddhist canon. This suggests that all the major Buddhist texts had reached Japan by this time. In 987 Chōnen (938-1016) brought a printed copy of the Buddhist canon back to Japan and, in 1072, Jōjin (1011-1081) went to China not only in search of texts but also to take a large quantity of Buddhist exegetical works written by Japanese monks to China. By the tenth century

a vernacular version of the *Lotus sūtra* had been produced in Japan and this was followed by Genshin's *Essentials of rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjō yōshū*) and other vernacular Buddhist writings.



The Hyakumantō Darani

Hyakumantō darani means 'One million *dhāraṇī* in pagodas' and refers to the supposed printing of a million Buddhist invocations (*dhāraṇī*) in Nara in the years 764-770. It is uncertain whether the figure of one million is reliable, but there can be no doubt that at least several hundred thousand were produced in those years. The *dhāraṇī* were excerpts from a scripture translated into Chinese in the last years of the empress Wu (r. 690-705) under the title *Wugou jingguang ta tuoluoni jing* (J. *Muku jōkō dai darani kyō*) meaning 'sūtra of the *dhāraṇī* of pure unsullied light'. They were printed on slips of paper that in size and orientation resemble the palm-leaf manuscripts common in South and Southeast Asia, and were probably printed using woodblocks. The text is composed of Chinese characters used phonographically to represent the sounds of Sanskrit, for the effectiveness of the invocations was thought to depend upon the sounds uttered.

The *dhāraṇīs* were not produced for reading: rather it was the act of production that was considered meritorious, so they were each placed inside a wooden miniature pagoda turned on a lathe. Cambridge University Library possesses four of the *dhāraṇīs* together with their pagodas. The bases of some of the pagodas are marked with the names of the artisans responsible, and one is dated in accordance with the year 767. These invocations are considered to be amongst the oldest surviving printed artefacts on paper; the only rival being a copy of the *Wugou jingguang ta tuoluoni jing* found in Korea in 1966 and thought to have been printed before 751.

Print on paper and wooden pagoda.
Nara, Japan. 8th century
Cambridge University Library FG.870 D



03 | TIBETAN BOOK CULTURE

Books, and the written word more generally, have exercised a strong moral power on Tibetans; producing and restoring them has been a source of merit throughout Tibetan history, neglecting or destroying them has meant an accumulation of negative karma. This is vividly illustrated in a passage from the biography of the fifteenth-century princess Chokyi Dronma (Chos kyi sgron ma), who was confronted with a heap of sacred scriptures in disarray in the Shelkar (Shel dkar) palace where she had just arrived as a young bride:

At Shelkar there was a set of canonical commentaries (*Tenjur*, *bsTan 'gyur*) written in gold that had been made by her Gungthang (Gung thang) ancestor Bumdegong Nagpo ('Bum lde mgon nag po), which ... had been transferred (*cendrang*, *spyang drangs*) to Southern Lato (La stod lHo). One day she said that she wanted to see (*jal*, *mjal*) it She saw that the set of commentaries was covered with dust. She cleaned it up and later added the parts that were missing. She provided for cloth (*nasa*, *na bza'*) and strings (*kurag*, *sku rags*) to wrap the books, established the custom of celebrating offerings to them and appointed a custodian. By offering all this she looked after the books (*shabtog ze*, *zhabs tog mdzad*). (Biography of Chokyi Dronma, folio 22)

The neglected state of the scriptures had prompted her to act and to look after them; they were far from passive objects. A more literal

translation of this passage reveals that the books made by Chokyi Dronma's ancestor had in fact been 'invited' (*spyang drangs*) from her homeland, Lower Ngari (mNga' ris) in western Tibet; Chokyi Dronma wanted to 'see' (*mjal*) them and eventually 'offered' (*phul*) robe (*na bza'*) and belt (*sku rags*) to clothe them. This vocabulary shows that the books were in fact addressed as honorific persons and not as simple things. The holy books, by their sheer presence, prompted Chokyi Dronma to look after them, thereby fulfilling a moral obligation that had been neglected by the family she had married into. This attitude can be encountered nowadays all over Tibet and the Himalayas, where books clothed in their robes can be 'invited' from one place to another and are periodically carried around the fields to bless them and protect them from hail, drought and flood. Great respect and consideration for books motivated Tibetans to rescue them during the Cultural Revolution, hiding them often at high personal risk, and now inspire people from all walks of life to re-discover them in caves, chapels, monastic libraries and private houses and restore and reproduce them. Tibetan attitudes towards books as embodiment of the Buddha, and of spiritual masters who have carried on his legacy, go back to the conflation of the cult of the book and the cult of relics developed in early Mahāyāna Buddhism, described by Gregory Schopen (1975), and cultivated in different ways across Asia. Respected both for their content and their efficacy as ritual objects, Tibetan books are the *sungten* (*gsung rten*), the 'repository of speech'. As such they can be listed among the traditional symbols of 'body, speech and mind' (*ku sung thug*, *sku gsung thugs*) of the Buddha in the description of the sacred holdings of a monastery or in the ritual presentation of gifts to a lama.

A village Lama copying a manuscript using a bamboo pen and ink made from old batteries – a common replacement for traditional ink made with soot.

Upper Arun Valley, Nepal, 1983.

Photograph by Christian Schicklgruber.

Body, Speech and Mind

(*kusungthug ten, sku gsung thugs rten*)

in the Tibetan context

The culture of the book in Tibet is enmeshed in distinctive beliefs and practices regarding the materiality of Buddha and his legacy in this world (*Saṃsāra* or '*khor ba*'). How books are engaged with, and how they are positioned in an exhibition like this, alongside statues, *thangkas* and ritual accessories, is informed by the pervasive notion of 'supports' (*rten*) of Buddha's body, mind and speech.

According to the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition, when Buddha entered the *Parinirvāṇa* he left behind both his physical remains and his teachings. These reminded his followers of his person and allowed them to access him after his departure from this world. Buddhist books, representing his teachings, increasingly came to be regarded as relics in the same way as his corporeal remains. Throughout Buddhist history, the act of promoting the dharma through spreading Buddha's legacy in all its forms has been considered to be meritorious and to benefit all sentient beings.

In Tibet works of art (as they might be understood in Western museums and galleries) are mostly linked to Buddhist worship and ritual. They are classified in terms of their function as 'supports' (or in some interpretations receptacles) of body (*kuten, sku rten*), speech (*sungten, gsung rten*) and mind of Buddha (*thugten, thugs rten*).

The body (*sku*) of the Buddha – and of other important religious figures – is generally manifest in images such as statues and paintings.

The speech (*gsung*) of the Buddha is contained within his teachings, therefore by books and formulas.

The mind (*thugs*) of the Buddha is supported by *stūpas* – reliquaries which are said to be modelled on the great reliquary mounds of Buddhist India – which contain his physical remains.

As rigid as this tripartite classification may appear, however, there is a great deal of mutability between categories, both theologically and in practice. The three supports are not only permeable in this sense, but fundamentally interdependent. In some cases, supports for the body may include relics: both bodily remains and objects that have acquired potency through contact or association with a spiritual master during life. These could be personal possessions or gifts, and may include *maṇi* wheels, *vajras*, *phur bas*, clothing, shoes, begging bowls etc. These however are sometimes reckoned among relics as the repositories of the mind. Books may be written with ink containing blood and ashes; illuminations in printed texts and manuscripts constitute an intertwining of image (*sku*) and speech (*gsung*). *Stūpas* may, and frequently do, also contain fragments of Buddha's teachings in the form of scriptures. They can also contain *tsha tsha* and even, as is the case with the *stūpa* displayed in this exhibition, statues. Indeed, the *stūpa* itself is a symbolic depiction of Buddha's body as well, and *tsha tsha*.

The relationship between body, speech and mind has always been complex and frequently contested. At its heart, it questions the materiality of the Buddha and his legacy, and indeed the very nature of his enlightenment. In some interpretations, Buddha left behind no corpse or bodily remains when he departed the samsaric world and entered

Parinirvāṇa: the text was the only 'relic'. This conforms with the aversion of iconic representations of the Buddha in early Buddhist art. However, other authorities referred to physical relics of the Buddha's body, and numerous engagements within the fields of art, theology and literature have struggled to address these tensions.

According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, Buddha's relics were divided and enshrined in eight *stūpas*. Over centuries the *stūpa* came to symbolise many things: the teachings, the enlightenment, the path to enlightenment, the qualities of the Enlightened One, the Buddha, and reality as it is, that is to say the 'dharma body'. Inside were deposited relics of the physical manifestation of the Buddha and other Buddhist masters. Hence, both physical and abstract aspects of the Buddha are found in the *stūpa* and it therefore represents his Mind (*thug, thugs*). A *stūpa* enshrining the relics of the Buddha or other Buddhist personages is found at the centre of a significant number of Buddhist monasteries, serving as the main focus of worship (see Bendor 1995: 249-250).

To begin with, the cult of the book had to contend at every step with the historical priority and the dominance of the *stūpa*/relic cult of early Buddhism. However, it was also closely modelled on its rival, and eventually the two forms of worship merged, promoting the production of literary artefacts in great quantities and of great artistic quality (see Bendor 1995: 251, 258; Drewes 2007; Harrison 1992; Salomon 2009; Schopen 1975: 168). The cult of images was another solution to the problem of the presence or the representation of the Buddha in the samsaric world (see Collins 1992: 235-36). As receptacles of Buddha's body, images not only embellished books from an artistic viewpoint, but also increased the power and protective virtue of the text, as a receptacle of Buddha's speech. The various solutions to the presence or representation of the Buddha were often conjoined. Relics were deposited not only in *stūpas* but also in images. In

fact, according to some of the Pali commentaries, 'An image was considered important only if relics were enshrined in it' (Bendor 1995: 250). This view is still dominant in Tibetan living traditions where the artistic and the sacred are tightly interlinked. Although craftsmanship can be appreciated in terms of skills and aesthetics, the works of art have spiritual value only if they are consecrated through the appropriate rite (*rabne, rab gnas*).

The production and distribution of all three categories is considered to be a sacred activity that accumulates merit. Painting or carving is like performing a rite or praying and so is the work of writing, editing, proofreading or copying a religious text. The omnipresence of the written word led the anthropologist Jack Goody to define Tibetans as 'grapholatrists', in a thought-provoking but not unproblematic expression. Ultimately different approaches to text, as ritual item and as medium for the transmission of content, have coexisted throughout Tibetan history. Illiterate carvers of *maṇi* stones or printing blocks (still to be found in Himalayan valleys) or the performance of ritual reading of texts for their activation without engagement with their content are expressions of Tibetan book culture as much as the highly skilled scholars studying, editing and teaching Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist masters may have easily used ritual funerary customs of merit-making to promote the production of books with scholarly aims not fully appreciated and understood by the commissioning sponsors and the grieving community. The many forms of 'Buddha's speech' in Tibet are therefore to be understood not only in connection with the other manifestations of Buddha's legacy but also in light of multiple interpretative communities.

The altar (*choshom, mchod shom*)

In the Buddhist world, scriptures are often placed on altars in front of or next to images of deities and spiritual masters, *stūpas*, special stones or indeed anything that is considered to have a particular blessing. This assemblage of potent artefacts is referred to with the short-hand *kusungthug ten* (*sku gsung thugs rten*) and, as a bringing together of body, speech and mind, is considered the most important part of a shrine. In front of it are placed the offerings. Ritual texts such as the commonly used one for the Tārā *pūja* prescribe five offerings in the following order: Flowers, Incense, Lamp for light, Water and Food. In the more detailed version, this series is preceded by two bowls filled with water: representing choyon (*mchod yon*), or ‘water to wash mouth’ and *shabsil* (*zhabs bsil*), ‘water to wash feet’. The total offering comprises seven items. That is why the offering bowls come in sevens, namely *tingdun tshar* (*gting bdun tshar*).

This altar was assembled by drawing together different pieces from the existing MAA collection following the advice of Tibetan colleagues and friends, and keeping in mind that often in Tibetan houses and temples there is a real sense of bricolage. Many different arrangements are possible, provided that a few indispensable elements are present, some guidelines of spatial organisation followed and religious affiliation respected. One frequently finds combinations of valuable and finely crafted statues with images that are more basic; highly sought-after items with special qualities or associations and other vessels or accessories that one has readily at hand. The altar in the gallery at MAA is the one that could, and should, be created for this Museum and this exhibition.

Thangka of Mahāvairocana

Mark Elliott and Filippo Lunardo

The Cambridge altar is dominated by three *thangka* (*thang ka*), or scroll paintings, collected by Waddell on Younghusband's Mission to Tibet in 1904. This *thangka* depicts the celestial Buddha Mahāvairocana, a form of Vairocana. This representation is typical of Śākyamuni. He wears the patchwork saffron robe of the monk, suggesting poverty and humility. He sits in the *vajrāsana*, or diamond posture, beneath a richly decorated canopy and on a rich throne decorated with jewels and lions that link him to the Lion of the Śākya people, Śākyamuni. The throne is in turn supported by a multi-coloured lotus and a moon disc.

Mahāvairocana has a white complexion and his hands are in *dharmacakramudrā*, the gesture of the turning of the wheel of the Dharma, or preaching. A rounded halo surrounds the body and a rounded nimbus surrounds the head; inside the two circles are flower and leaf decorative motifs in blue and green hue. Halo and nimbus are edged with golden flames. On the sides of Vairocana stand two bodhisattvas, probably Nīvaraṇa-viṣkambhin on the left and Ākāśagarbha on the right, both with white complexion, seated on a lotus in the posture known as *līlāsana*; above the two bodhisattvas are two arhats, or elders: Bakula on the left, with the mongoose, and Jnaputra Rāhula with the crown in his hands. Above these two figures are a group of four teachers, probably linked to the Sakyapa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism (two of which are named Je Rigangpa and Shulden). At the sides of the throne are two of the eight deities linked to the god Jambhala: Badidara and Saṃjñeya and, below, two other gods: a white one, probably Īśāna, one of the protectors of the ten directions, on a bull with a trident in the right hand, and a yellow-brownish one, probably the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, on an elephant with a flask in the left hand.

Painting on textile. Length 119 cm

Tibet. 16th-17th century.

Collected by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.

Donated by the Government of India, 1905.

B 1905.301





An inscription at the bottom reads:

Oṃ svasti siddham

The five classes of great dhāraṇi spell with an assembly of deities who were created by Gonpo Tshetan (mGon po tshe brtan) in order to cleanse the spiritual obscurations. Oṃ ma ṇi

May Namse Wangyel (rNam sras dbang rgyal) live long and the sentient beings, limitless like the space, attain Buddhahood.

Painting on textile. Length 140 cm

Western Tibet. 19th century.

Collected by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904. Donated by the Government of India, 1905. B 1905.303

Thangka of the five deities of protection

This richly detailed and complex thangka shows the *Pañcarakṣā*, a group of five goddesses personifying Mahāyāna Buddhist sūtras and dhāraṇi (spells). The main figure in the centre is the white eight-armed Mahā-Pratisarā, sitting in the diamond posture. Her first two hands, at her chest, form *dharmacakramudrā*, the gesture of teaching; the left hands hold a sword, an arrow and a vajra, while the right hands hold a *paraṣu* (axe), bow and trident. She has four faces: white at the front, red to our right, blue to the left; a fourth, yellow face is seen on the left side, but it has to be understood as a back face. Around the goddess are yellow Mahā-Sāhasrapramardinī, associated with the south, green Mahā-Māyūrī, associated with the north, red Sītāvati, associated with the west, and blue Mantramanudhāraṇi, associated with the east. These deities, especially venerated in Nepal, are invoked as protectors for worldly accomplishments, welfare, and to avoid illnesses and natural disasters.

In the tradition of Tibetan painting the space is divided into areas: the main area is the central one, where the principal figure, or figures, is depicted. The second area is the space atop the main figure, like the sky. Here are represented other important figures, like teachers, root-gurus, Buddha and *yidam*. In the sky above the main goddess nine lamas of different lineages are depicted; two other lamas are represented at the sides of Mahā-Pratisarā and all figures bear their names inscribed in gold Tibetan letters. Most of the lamas appear to be monks of the Sakyapa school. The larger central figure on the top row is the Jonangpa (Jo nang pa) lama Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292-1361). On the left are lama Jampa Chokyi Gyatso (Byams pa Chos kyi rgya mtsho), an unidentified master and lama Khanchen Lungrig Gyatso (mKhan chen Lung rig rgya mtsho). On the right side sit Drincen Sherab Tshanchen (Drin can Shes rab mtshan can) and Jetsun (*rje btsun*) Kunga Nyinpo (Kun dga' snying po, 1092-1158, the first of five originating masters of the Sakyapa tradition). The lama wearing the yellow hat is probably the famous Gelugpa teacher Khedrub Sangye Yeshe (mKhas grub Sangs rgyas ye shes, 1525-1590, root guru of the first Panchen lama Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen [Blo bzang Chos kyi rgyal mtshan], 1570-1662). Directly above the head of the Mahā-Pratisarā the four-armed Avalokiteśvara is flanked by, to his left, a lama named Ngadag Chenpo (mNga' bdag chen po), dressed as a Nyingmapa practitioner, and to his right by another very famous Jonangpa lama, Tāranātha (1575-1634). To either side of Mahā-Pratisarā are two other lamas of the Sakyapa tradition, on the right the 'great' NgagChang and on the left, TriDrung.

In the bottom left corner appears a group of humans in two rows; three larger figures with a nimbus behind their heads and clothes indicating high social rank are probably the

patron of the work and his family. Below, other figures exhibit symbols of richness, abundance and health. In the centre, below the goddess, there are different kinds of offerings and in the bottom right corner are two other deities related to wealth and abundance: Sita Mahākāla, a white form of Mahākāla with six arms, and Vaiśravaṇa, the god with the gem-spitting mongoose. This *thangka's* mixture of *Jo nang pa* and *Sa skya* hierarchs reflects an interesting origin. The lamas and patrons represented in it, and the colour and style employed suggest that it was painted in Western Tibet. An intriguing feature is the trace of two painters in the central figure of Mahā-Pratisarā, whose left side is outlined in blue and the right side in red. The face and body of the goddess have been splashed with butter from an altar lamp, indexing its previous ritual use, and it still bears the paper 'Cambridge' label, written by David MacDonald when he catalogued the Younghusband material in the Indian Museum, Calcutta in 1904.

Thangka of Avalokiteśvara Ṣaḍakṣari

In this *thangka* is represented the four-armed form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, emanation of the universal compassion of a Buddha. This particular form of the bodhisattva is known as *Ṣaḍakṣari*, the Lord of the Six Syllables: this particular name is related to the six-syllable mantra *Oṃ ma ṇi padme hūṃ*.

In an ethereal and delicately bright landscape, Avalokiteśvara rests on a throne made of a lotus and a moon disk. He seats in the diamond posture, the *vajrāsana*, his skin is white and he has one smiling face and four arms: the first two arms, at the chest, hold the wish-granting gem in the gesture known as *maṇidharamudrā*; the raised left hand holds a *mālā*, or rosary, a connection with the mantra, and the raised right hand holds a lotus (one of the names of Avalokiteśvara is Padmapāṇi, the lotus bearer). Tibetan people think that the Dalai Lamas are manifestations of this particular form of the bodhisattva of compassion. A nimbus and a halo surround the bodhisattva and, forming an arch, clouds gather around the halo. Below the lotus throne is a bowl with three gem offerings: possibly the refuge gems of Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. At the bottom of the image, rocks and trees are depicted with hues of green and blue, to confer a refined mystic atmosphere to the vision of the figure.

This unusual example of a painting directly onto silk seems to be particularly special in that the painted surface and the veil are formed of a single piece of patterned woven white silk. This was probably a *khata* (*kha btags*), which may have been presented by a spiritual master or notable patron, and as such it bears properties of the relic as well as being a support for the body (*sku rten*).

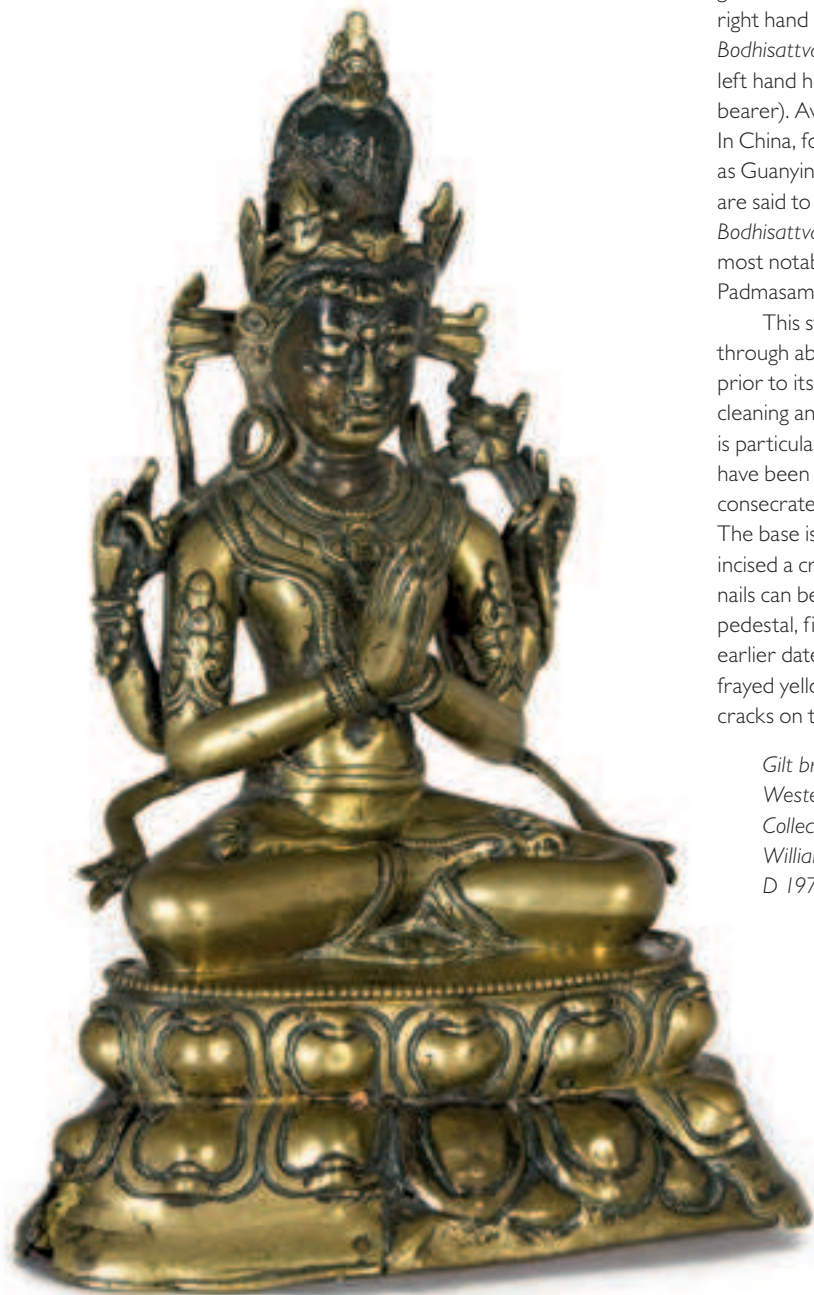


Painting on silk khata. Length 112 cm

Eastern Tibet. 19th century

Collected by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.

Donated by the Government of India, 1905. B 1905.300



Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara

The four-armed Avalokiteśvara, Lord of the Six Syllables, is here presented in the same form and posture as in the silk *thangka* above. He sits in *vajrāsana* on a throne made of a double-petal lotus and a fringed moon disc, holds the wish-granting gem to his chest in *maṇidharamudrā*. In the raised right hand is held a *mālā* (rosary), to invoke the *Bodhisattva* through his mantra, while the raised left hand holds the lotus of Padmapāṇi (the lotus bearer). Avalokiteśvara is revered in many guises. In China, for example, the *Bodhisattva* is manifest as Guanyin. For Tibetan Buddhists, several teachers are said to have appeared as emanations of the *Bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara over the centuries: most notably the founder of Buddhism in Tibet, Padmasambhava and each of the 14 Dalai Lamas.

This statue has been heavily worn, perhaps through ablution in a ritual context and certainly, prior to its entry into the Museum, through cleaning and polishing as a collector's piece. This is particularly evident in the facial features, which have been rubbed smooth. The figure has been consecrated, and has been repaired several times. The base is sealed with copper sheet on which is incised a crossed double *vajra*. The ends of copper nails can be seen at the front of the double lotus pedestal, fixing in place a panel which has at an earlier date been violently opened. Patches of frayed yellow fabric can be seen through open cracks on the right hand side of the pedestal.

Gilt bronze. Height 22.5 cm
Western Tibet. 14th-15th century
Collected by Frederick and Margaret
Williamson
D 1976.84

Sahasrabhuja Avalokiteśvara

The *Bodhisattva*, emanation of the universal compassion of all the Buddhas, is here represented with 1000 arms and 11 heads. The number of heads and especially the number of arms symbolise the limitless compassionate awareness that can manifest everywhere, and in particular the limitless power of compassion to manifest and help whomsoever from the suffering of *saṃsāra*. The heads are arranged in three main groups of three, above which is a Mahākāla, or the wrathful emanation of Avalokiteśvara, and at the very top the head of the Buddha Amitābha, spiritual father of the Lotus family, the mystical family to which Avalokiteśvara is related.

Avalokiteśvara stands with two hands raised to his chest, holding between them the wish-granting gem. Three other hands to his right hold the *mālā* (rosary) of real pearls, a prayer wheel and form the gesture of the gift, *varadamudrā*. On his left, the main hand holds a lotus, evoking the *Bodhisattva*'s identity as Padmapāṇi 'the lotus bearer'. The other hands hold a bow and arrow and a *kamaṇḍalu*, a vase containing the nectar of immortality.

The statue rests on a double-lotus pedestal of heavy bronze and is backed by a nimbus of thin copper embossed with flower motifs. The heavy bronze base does not appear to be the original, as it fits poorly. The statue itself is gilded and is inlaid with turquoise at the centre of the lotus, in the crowns of each head and as the *ūrṇā* (curl) in the forehead of the main face. The main face is also inlaid with pearls and the figure wears a necklace of pearls around his neck in addition to the rosary in one of its right hands. Traces of red pigment are visible in the crowns of the main face and the one just above. There are signs of numerous consecration deposits, although the contents were not visible under x-ray. Several rolls of text are placed in the pedestal, and there are two sealed square hatches on the reverse of the statue, between the shoulder blades and on the legs.

Gilt bronze, copper, turquoise and pearls. Height 39 cm
Tibet. 18th century
Collected by Frederick and Margaret Williamson
On deposit from Emmanuel College
D 1976.83



Statue of Padmasambhava

Filippo Lunardo and Mark Elliott

Padmasambhava, the ‘Lotus Born’ also known as Guru Rinpoche (Gu ru Rin po che) or the Precious Master, sits on a lotus throne in the *vajrāsana*, the diamond posture; the right hand is raised showing the *tarjanīmudrā*, or the gesture of warning, and holds a *vajra*. The left hand rests on the heel of the right foot and holding a skull bowl, within which is a flask of the elixir of immortality. In the crook of the left arm is a *khaṭvāṅga*, a tantric staff, the end of which is inserted into a hole in the statue itself. On the *khaṭvāṅga* are traces of pigment, red on the lower head and on the eyes of the skull, blue on the middle head.

This statue, the largest in the Museum’s collection, was a wedding present to Frederick and Margaret Williamson from the King and Queen of Sikkim in May 1933. It is something of an enigma, with obvious repair and replacement of certain elements offering clear traces of a previous life, and as a piece of sculpture there are aspects which appear out of place. The head is painted gold with blue pigment – probably azurite – for the hair. There are cracks in the face, which seem to have been painted over. The large five-petalled lotus hat does not fit perfectly and sits loosely upon the head. It is crowned with a half *vajra*, onto which has been attached (in another ungilded metal) an eagle feather. On the front, is an emblem with a sun in a crescent moon. The very large earrings are inlaid with turquoise ornament, one piece of which is missing, showing the lac resin that once held it in place. When the hat is removed it shows a tonsure-like hole in the top of the head, revealing an outer layer of clay several millimetres thick, beneath which is another layer of azurite on a convex metal surface, suggesting that the head we see is over-modelled upon another, which was perhaps damaged.

The body was not cast as a single piece: a mechanical join can be seen running up both sides. This section seems to be constructed from very thin metal and riveted to the double lotus pedestal on which it sits. The base of the pedestal is sealed, and the figure appears to have been consecrated. The *khaṭvāṅga* can be removed and during conservation its extraction brought with it a small piece of plant matter, which could be part of the consecration deposit. It is not known where the figure came from, or its original use. The foreshortening of the legs suggests that it was only ever meant to be seen from the front, which is supported by the absence of gilding on the back.



Padmasambhava’s Chronicles

Michela Clemente

Padmasambhava (Tib. Pema Jungne, Padma ‘byung gnas) is one of the most popular spiritual masters of Tibet. His name means ‘born from a lotus’ because, according to legend, he was born from a lotus flower in the middle of a lake in Uḍḍiyāna (Swat, in present-day Pakistan). Here he was found by Indrabhūti, the king of Uḍḍiyāna. The king adopted him and raised him as his heir, but one day Padmasambhava abandoned his palace and became a monk, then a wandering *yogin*. He is said to have had two consorts, an Indian woman named Mandarava and Yeshe Tsogyal (Ye shes mtsho rgyal), queen of Tibetan king Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan), who was turned into a *yoginī* by Padmasambhava himself. The Guru had 25 principal disciples, who carried on the *Nyingmapa* (*rNying ma pa*) tradition: together with King Trisong Detsen and the great master Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava is considered the father of this lineage.

Padmasambhava is traditionally linked to the introduction of Buddhism as the state religion into Tibet in the eighth century. Historical records concerning him are scanty and contradictory, and most accounts consist of relatively late legendary narratives and hagiographies. According to a popular Buddhist tradition, he was invited to Tibet by King Thrisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan, r. 754/5-797), who had proclaimed Buddhism as the religion of the Tibetan Empire and had ordered the building of the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. The monastery was built during the day and destroyed during the night by local deities, who were furiously opposed to the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. The king, aware of the ability and power of Padmasambhava as a thaumaturgist, invited him to sort out the problem. Padmasambhava subjugated the local divinities, allowing completion of the monastery, which was

given the name Samye (bSam yas, ‘Inconceivable’).

Padmasambhava is particularly important for the *Nyingmapa* (*rNying ma pa*, ‘The Ancient’) school of Tibetan Buddhism. According to Buddhist tradition, during his stay in Tibet, he and his consort Yeshe Tsogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal) concealed some treasures – texts and objects – in caves and other secret places. These ‘treasure-texts’ (*terma*, *gter ma*) were to be discovered at a later, more favourable time for the Buddhist Doctrine, when people had become more mature and prepared to receive them. Padmasambhava also concealed some places, called ‘hidden countries’ (*beyul*, *sbas yul*). These places became inaccessible, thanks to Padmasambhava’s magical power, and, like the treasure-texts, can only be discovered by predestined people called ‘treasure revealers’ (*terton*, *gter ston*). In order to find these places and enter them, it is necessary to have faith in them. It is also necessary to accumulate much merit: not to be attached to food, wealth and family; to have defeated ignorance; to be generous, compassionate etc. Reading guides to these places and following their instructions is also another requirement. The revelation of the right time for the opening is transmitted from master to disciple through secret oral instructions, but it could also be written in a treasure-text. The path that leads to these sacred places is very difficult and is formed by a series of tests that must be passed. In addition to this spiritual interpretation, hidden valleys were also places of refuge at time of political and economic hardship. They are to be found along the Himalayas and are often connected to the migration histories of Tibetan people.

According to one of the most popular legendary accounts, after leaving Tibet, Padmasambhava went

to an island in the south called Chamara (Ngayab, rNga yab) where he still dwells. Despite the fact that it is difficult to ascertain the historicity of the events narrated in the numerous hagiographies of Padmasambhava, he is certainly a very strong presence for many Tibetan people who inhabit the places where he carried out his deeds. In Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan there are hundreds of sacred sites considered to have been visited and blessed by him and that show imprints of his hands or feet. To this day, Tibetan people have for Padmasambhava the same devotion as they have for the Buddha. They call him Guru Rinpoche ('Precious Master').

The most popular hagiographies of Padmasambhava are known as *bKa' thang sde lnga* ('The Five Chronicles') or *Padma thang yig* ('Padmasambhava's Chronicles'). They recount the various versions of the legends of Padmasambhava and are considered treasure-texts. The most ancient version of these works was discovered by Nyangrel Nyima ozer (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1136-1204), but the two best-known versions are one discovered by Urgyen Lingpa (U rgyan gling pa, 1329-1367) at Samye and Sheldrag (Shel brag), and another revealed by Sangye Lingpa (Sangs rgyas gling pa, 1340-1367).

A xylograph of the version discovered by Urgyen Lingpa is preserved in the Cambridge University Library (Tibetan 160). It was acquired by Waddell in 1904. The xylograph carries more than 60 illustrated folios, most of them coloured. Tibetans used to embellish xylographs in the same way as they enriched their manuscripts. Images are not only ornamental, they also have a protective function and make a text even more powerful. There are representations of Buddhas, tutelary deities, treasure finders, lamas belonging to different schools of the Tibetan Buddhism and other religious masters with an unusual headcloth. See, for example, the folios illustrated here: on the right is a master of princely status who has the secret name of Chogdrub Gyel

(mChog grub rgyal) and on the left Urgyen Lingpa, the treasure-revealer who discovered the text. The fact that lamas from several religious traditions are depicted in this xylograph is consistent with the place where it was printed, Barkhyim Chojung Ling (Bar khyim Chos 'byung gling), which is associated to Katog (Kaḥ thog) and the non-sectarian *rime* (*ris med*) tradition that flourished in eastern Tibet in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries.

The Library also preserves the version discovered by Sangye Lingpa (Or. 621.1). This is an illuminated manuscript acquired in 1905. It is written in *ume* (*dbu med*) script. The depiction in the middle of the first folio shows Padmasambhava in the centre with his consorts Mandarava and Yeshe Tshogyal. The other images are of the *Dharmakāya* Buddha Samantabhadra, Amitābha, Buddha Śākyamuni and the *Bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara with retinues.



U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar rgyas pa gser gyi phreng ba zhes bya ba bka' thang (Folios 1v-2r)

Manuscript on paper. 378 folios, 8 cm x 50 cm
Tibet
Acquired in 1905
Cambridge University Library Or. 621.1

U rgyan ghu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa padma bka'i thang yig (Folios 167v & 168v)

Block print on paper. 320 folios, 10 cm x 48 cm
Tibet.
Acquired by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.
Cambridge University Library Tibetan 160





Mālā (Rosary)

Usually made up of 108 beads, the *mālā* (*threngwa*, 'phreng ba) often described as similar to the Christian rosary or the Islamic *subha*, are also common to Hinduism and Sikhism. In Tibetan Buddhism, the *mālā* is used to count the number of mantras one recites. 108 is a particularly auspicious number. In Tibet, one *mālā* counts as 100 mantras, with eight extra to be dedicated to all sentient beings. Smaller numbers of beads are common, usually in divisors of 108 - 27 beads, for example, or as in this case 54 – exactly half of the standard number. Chains with smaller numbers of beads are often associated with prostration, because being smaller they are easier to hold when enacting repeated prostrations.

Glass, bronze, turquoise and textile. Length 30 cm
Collector and donor unknown
Z 20696 C



Chank trumpet

The chank or conch (*śaṅkha* in Sanskrit, *dung dkar* in Tibetan) is sacred in Buddhist and Hindu traditions. Blown at the beginning of rituals, its sound is said to symbolise the sacred syllable *Om*, which is the sound of the beginning of creation.

Turbinella pyrum shell, gold and bronze. Length 27 cm
Nepal. Donated by Lady Schuster
1947.792



Bell

Bronze. Height 17.3 cm
Samye Gompa (bSam yas dGon pa), Tibet
Collected by Frederick and Margaret Williamson
D 1976.92

Vajra dorje

Bronze. Height 14.3 cm
Provenance unknown
Collector and donor unknown
Z 20353

Pair of butter lamps

Surmounted with a Chinese guardian lion (*shī*) and decorated with medallions of Buddhas and deities, gems, animals and the eight auspicious symbols, *aṣṭamaṅgala*.
Brass. Height 59 cm
Collected by George H. Tipper
1937.467 A-B



Prayer wheel with its stand

White metal and wood. Height 33.5 cm
Sikkim
Collected by Frederick and Margaret Williamson
D 1976.81

Incense Burner

Cloisonné. Height 48 cm
Collected by Frederick and Margaret Williamson
D 1976.120





Buddha Śākyamuni

Buddha Śākyamuni here sits on a pedestal with multiple tiers, at the top of which is a double-petal lotus and, above this, a fringed moon disc. The historical Buddha is seated in the adamantine posture, *vajrāsana*, touching the earth with the right hand, the *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, as a witness of his Enlightenment. The left hand rests on his lap in *dhyānamudrā*, the gesture of meditation. The face is gilded and blue pigment has been used for decorating the hair. A disc of white metal has been inlaid into the forehead to mark the *ūrṇā*.

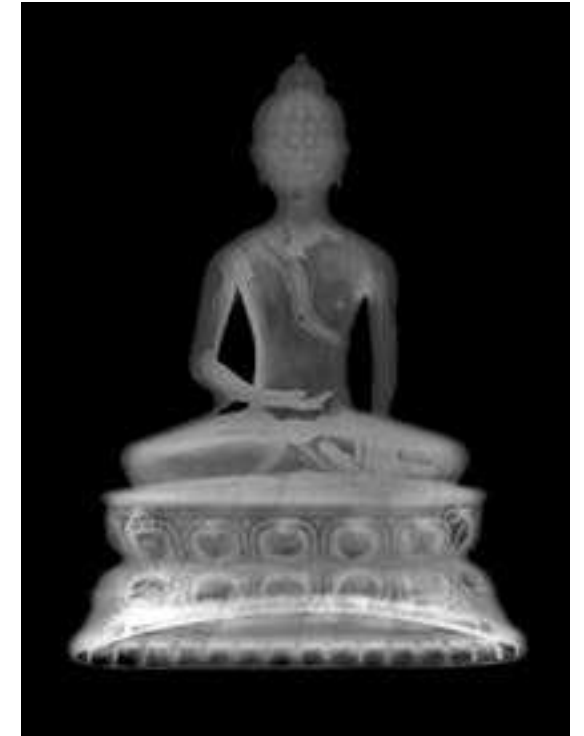
This bronze figure has been cast separately from its base and the head also appears to have been a different casting that was subsequently attached to the torso. The metal of the figure and base are very dense. X-ray imaging did not show any evidence of a consecration deposit although the base is sealed. Unusually, a frayed sash of woven cloth has been wrapped around the top of the left shoulder and under the right arm, and fixed with a wax seal stamped in the square Phagpa ('Phags pa) script. This square script was developed by the Tibetan scholar Phagpa Lodro Gyaltsen ('Phagspa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280) at the request of Kublai Khan, for the writing of Mongol, Chinese and Tibetan, the languages of his empire. It was used only during the Yuan dynasty (c. 1269-1368) but continued to be used on Tibetan seal inscriptions, from the Middle Ages up to the 20th century, and on currency in the 20th century. The purpose or significance of the seal on this statue is not known. It may be related to consecration or record the donation of a patron to a monastery.

Bronze, cotton and wax. Height 18.7 cm.
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown.
Z 11426

Buddha Śākyamuni

Buddha Śākyamuni is the historical Buddha, Prince Gautama or Siddhārtha of the Śākyas, who renounced his kingdom in India and first preached (or turned the wheel of law – the *dharmacakra*). This bronze figure depicts Śākyamuni at the moment of his enlightenment. Dressed in simple robes, with elongated earlobes heavy from the ornaments he has forsaken, the Buddha sits in the diamond posture, *vajrāsana*. He touches the earth with the tip of the middle finger of his right hand, or *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, calling on the earth to bear witness to his right to *Nirvāṇa*. His left hand rests on his lap, palm facing upwards in *dhyānamudrā*, the gesture of meditation.

Śākyamuni sits on a moon disc, which in turn is supported by a double lotus throne. The tightly curled hair is coloured blue with an azurite-based pigment, and from it rises the *uṣṇīṣa*, which represents Buddha's attainment of an advanced spiritual state. The face, once painted gold in typical Tibetan fashion, has been over-painted at a later date, perhaps by a non-Tibetan collector who had different



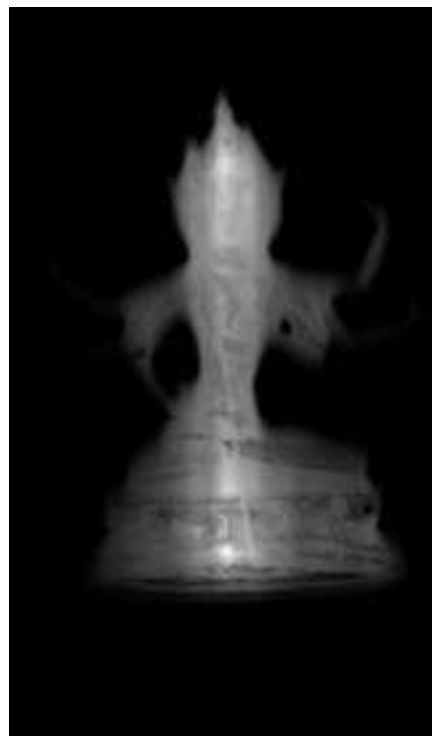
X-ray of Buddha Śākyamuni

Courtesy of the Hamilton Kerr Institute and the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.
25 February 2014

tastes. The eyes, red lips and the silver spot that represents the curl of hair (*ūrṇā*) between his eyebrows have been left uncovered, and patches of gilt are visible where the paint has flaked away. The three folds in the neck were a mark of physical beauty. The palms of the hands and soles of the feet are marked with the *cakra*.

The base of the figure is sealed, and x-ray imaging was carried out in 2014 in search of evidence of a votive deposit. The x-ray reproduced here shows no evidence of deposit inside, probably because the deposited materials are not sufficiently dense to register. However, the imaging does reveal how the statue was constructed. The figure and pedestal are a single hollow-cast piece, but we see signs of welding where the arms and neck, cast in separate moulds, were attached. The base is sealed with (*rtsam pa*) or clay and covered with a piece of red or saffron cloth.

Statue of Buddha Śākyamuni
Bronze. Height 25 cm.
Tibet. 14th century
Purchased by Louis C.G. Clarke
1935.346



X-ray of Vajrasattva showing rolled scriptures deposited in the base

Courtesy of the Hamilton Kerr Institute and the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. 25 February 2014

This statue is of Vajrasattva ('essence of the thunderbolt'), a form of the *Bodhisattva* Vajrapāṇi 'bearer of the thunderbolt', who plays an important role in the *Sarvathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*. Today Vajrasattva is particularly important for purification practices, above all in the preliminary stages of tantric practice. His long mantra is associated with a particular visualisation, and is believed to purify and cleanse broken commitments as well as obscurations and negativities.

The statue shows a particular form of Vajrasattva, with three heads and six arms. No objects are held in his hands except for the *vajra* and the bell, typical attributes of Vajrasattva (as for the Ādi Buddha Vajradhāra) in the main

right and left hands. The statue is made of gilt brass with turquoise ornaments in hair, earrings and on the neck. Blue pigment on hair. The base is sealed with a sheet of copper and textile is visible through gaps around the edge. X-ray imaging revealed what appear to be three small tubes or rolls of scripture, sealed inside the base. The rest of the deposit which makes this statue a consecrated object could not be seen.

Statue of Vajrasattva
Gilt bronze, copper and turquoise. Height 19 cm
Tibet. 15th-16th century
Purchased by Louis C.G. Clarke
1935.349

Hevajra Kapāladhara

This figure is an aid to visualising and understanding one of the most important Tantric mysteries and therefore should only be viewed by devotees who have studied to attain the higher levels of initiation.

Hevajra is one of the principal *yiḍam* (*yi dam*, archetypal tutelary deity) in Vajrayāna Buddhism, the wrathful form of the Buddha Akṣobhya. He is depicted here in his form as the skull-cup bearing one (*kapāladhara*), in union with his consort Nairātmyā (Dagmema, bDag med ma). The union of Hevajra and Nairātmyā means the experience of non-duality. It also manifests the union of emptiness (the nature of all things) and great bliss (a special form of wisdom qualified by great bliss that directly perceives the empty, non-dual, nature of everything).

Hevajra has sixteen arms, eight heads and four legs: in the skull-cups to the left he holds earth, water, air, fire, moon, sun, the god Vaiśravaṇa and the god Yama. In the skull-cups in the right hands he holds an elephant, horse, donkey, ox, camel, man, lion and a cat. The 16 arms symbolise the purification of the 16 perceptions of the emptiness. With the four legs he crushes four demons, or the four *māras* (the aggregates of the samsaric psychophysical being, the addiction to habitual patterns of negative emotion, the craving for pleasures, and death).



The statue is made of gilt bronze. Traces of red pigment remain on the hair of both main figures, as is common with wrathful deities. Many of the turquoise ornaments are intact, on the crown and ear rings of Hevajra, and in the arms and dress of both figures. The base of the statue is roughly sealed with copper, leaving gaps through which can be seen the textile in which the consecrated materials have been wrapped.

Gilt bronze, turquoise and cinnabar. Height 23 cm.
Tibet. Date unknown
Donated by Lady Schuster
1947.773



Six-armed Vasudhārā

Originally catalogued upon entry into the museum as a figure of Guanyin, this figure – similar in many aspects to Green Tārā – in fact depicts the Bodhisattva Vasudhārā or ‘bearer of treasures’, the goddess of wealth, prosperity and abundance. Although revered in Tibet, Vasudhārā has had a higher status for Buddhists in Nepal. This six-armed form of the goddess is particular to Nepal. Vasudhārā sits in *lalitāsana*, or the pose of royal ease, with the left leg folded

close to the body and the right foot outstretched. The right foot would have rested on a smaller lotus that protruded from the main lotus throne pedestal. Both bases are now lost. The top right hand is in *tathāgatavandanamudrā*, the gesture of paying homage to those who have transcended, such as the Buddha. The hand beneath holds a cluster of jewels – possibly a *mālā*, or rosary – and the hand resting on the right knee is in *varadamudrā*, the gesture of gift-giving. The left hands hold a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā* and a sheaf of corn. The bottom hand would have held a vase, which is now lost. This beautiful statue is much worn. Aside from the loss of the pedestal on which she sat and the vase in her left hand, most of the gilt has been removed, as have all of the inlays in the ornaments, which would probably have been turquoise or jewels. Gilding was often removed from book covers and statues to be reused or sold.

Bronze. Height 19 cm.
Nepal. 18th century.
Donated by Lady Schuster
1947.775

Kadam chorten

The *stūpa* (*mchod rten*, *chorten*) was originally intended as a funeral mound for the relics of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Later it became the most famous of Buddhist monuments, widespread in all Buddhist countries, intended to contain relics of teachers, sacred images or sacred texts. In later philosophic thought the *stūpa* was considered as the representation of the elements of the body of a Buddha or the representation of the Buddha mind itself.

The *stūpa* here shown has a particular shape that links it to the *Kadampa* (*bKa' gdams pa*) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, created by the disciples of the Bengali master Atiśa (982-1054) invited into western Tibet to re-establish the Buddhadharma after the degeneration related to the collapse of the Tibetan empire. Traditionally, this particular type of *stūpa* was introduced into Tibet by Atiśa himself. The *stūpa* is made of a base with pearls and a double line of lotus petals; above, a dome rises with a sort of bell-like shape, typical of the *Kadampa* tradition, decorated with two narrow bands. Above the dome is a square section, a *pañcaratha*-form or stepped *harmikā*, decorated with the motif of the three gems, on which is a structure made of 13 umbrellas. Above this is a lotus canopy with a bud terminal and hanging jewels, one of which is loose. This top section is removable, and rests on an insert of wood. The base of the *stūpa* is sealed with a copper plate, bearing a Tibetan inscription:

‘This *stūpa* contains a glass rosary, and the Lady who is the tutelary deity of Naljorpa Chenpo (rNal ‘byor pa chen po ‘the great *yogin*’), and Lord Mañjuśrī, that is the tutelary deity of the monastery.’

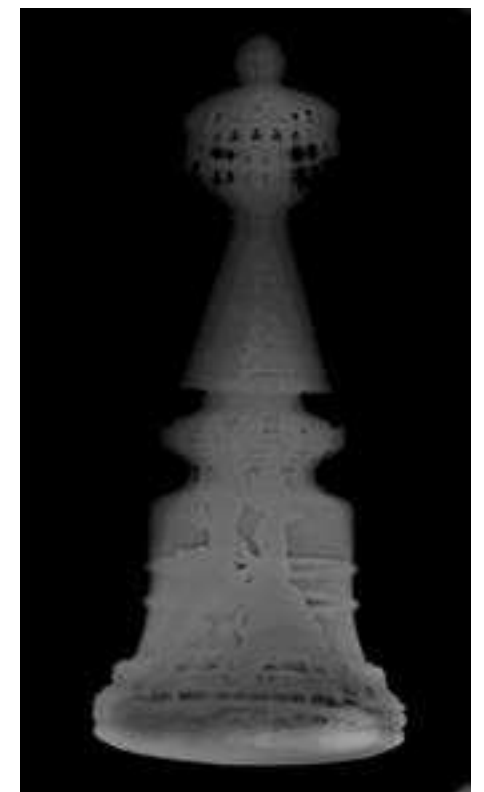
In effect, the contents of the *stūpa* are the personal possessions of Jangchub Rinchen (Byang chub rin chen, 1015-1077) known as the Great *Yogin*, the second Abbot of Reting (Rwa sgreng), a *Kadampa* monastery northeast of Lhasa. Inside the *stūpa* are two statues, a goddess, possibly Green Tārā, personal deity of the abbot, and Mañjuśrī, tutelary deity of Reting. A rosary was not identified in the x-ray image but there is no evidence that the seal of the *stūpa* has been broken.

Chorten for Janchub Rinchen

Brass, copper and wood. Height 32.5 cm
Reting Monastery, central Tibet. 12th-13th century
Collected by Frederick and Margaret Williamson
D 1976.26

X-ray of chorten showing statues of Tārā and Manjuśrī

Courtesy of the Hamilton Kerr Institute and the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. 25 February 2014





Mañjuśrī

The Perfection of Wisdom literature at the heart of Mahāyāna philosophy, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, is frequently embodied in two forms: the female form is the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*. The male form is the *Bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. This small gilt figure is the standard representation of Mañjuśrī, also known as Arapatsana Mañjuśrī, from the mantra associated with him. In his right hand he raises the flaming sword of wisdom. His left hand, held to his chest, clutches the stem of a lotus, on top of which sits a *Prajñāpāramitā* text. He is dressed in rich garments: a long, flowing scarf on his upper half and an elaborately folded dhoti on his lower half. The crown and the earrings are particularly elaborate and defined. The base is sealed with a sheet of copper. A Newari inscription on the reverse, written in Nepālākṣarā script, seems to give the date of the figure's consecration. It is dated the third day of the fifth month of the Newar year 946, or in the European calendar 1825.

Fire-gilded copper. Height 11 cm
Nepal. Early 19th century.
Donated by Lady Schuster
1947.776



Vajravārāhī

The statue depicts a wrathful goddess, probably Vajravārāhī. Usually depicted with a boar's head emerging from the side of a human face, Vajravārāhī, the 'Adamantine Sow', represents the joining in an ultimate experience of emptiness and great bliss. She also represents the experience related to the tantric yogic and mystic practice of the ignition of the inner heat, the *tummo* (*gtum mo*). Here she stands in a pose known as *capastanāsana*. The form of the goddess is made of pieces of turquoise, set into gilt bronze. Her right foot is raised up and her left leg, now missing, would have been planted on the corpse lying beneath her. Raised above her head, her right hand holds a curved knife, while the left hand, also now lost, would have held a skull-cup.

In the fold of her left arm would have rested a *khaṭvāṅga*, a mystical staff symbolising the union with her *yidam* and consort Cakrasaṃvara (similar to that held by Padmasambhava on p. 56). The staff also symbolises the union with Cakrasaṃvara through the entire maṇḍala of 62 deities. She wears a necklace made of skulls and jewellery made of bones. Her crown, which conventionally would bear five skulls, is here adorned with five rubies. While rubies were mined in Tibet, the turquoise would have been imported. Nonetheless it features extensively in the artefacts in this exhibition.

The goddess stands on a single lotus throne topped with a fringed [or bearded] sun disc, and is surrounded by a halo or nimbus made of skulls and flames. This is in turn



Unidentified Lama, possibly related to the Gelugpa tradition.

This statue represents a Lama seated on a pedestal resembling two square cushions. He wears a yellow hat and a robe typical of a Tibetan monk, with his right hand resting on his right knee and his left holding a text. The characters on the text are illegible, but may have given a clue as to the identity of the lama. The iconography suggests that he was a member of the 'yellow hat' school, the Gelugpa (dGe lugs pa, the lineage of Tsongkhapa and the Dalai Lama). The moustache is a typical iconographic element in portraits of the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682).

The statue was opened up prior to its donation to the museum, probably by its collector or a previous owner. The consecrated contents consisted of two rolls of printed text, two packets of seeds wrapped in paper, and five *tsha tsha*, or votive plaques, three of which were stamped with the image of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the others with the image of Padmasambhava (the founder of the Nyingma, rNying ma, or red hat school) and the protector deity Shinje (gShin rje) or Yama. The base had been sealed with papier-maché and covered in a piece of blue brocade, now much degraded.

Papier-maché. Height 17.5 cm
Tibet. Probably 18th century
Collected by George Howlett Tipper (1902-28)
Donated by Dr Constance F. Elam Tipper
1967.203

surrounded by a second, larger halo and supported by a larger pedestal. This second pedestal is of a different style to the smaller one, with a double lotus motif. The halo, too, is distinctive, resembling a *torana* (throne) from the Nepalese tradition, with decoration more common to Nepal: two beams support two *makaras*, the mythical chimera, and at the apex a *gomukha* (an auspicious symbol). The base of the larger pedestal is sealed with a firm resin, confirming that it has been consecrated.

It is possible that the larger pedestal and torana were once associated with another, larger figure, and combined with this image of Vajravārāhī at a later date, suggesting that image, like words and the books that contain them, have taken journeys of travel and transformation.

Gilt bronze, turquoise. Height 19.5 cm
Tibet or Nepal. Date unknown
Donated by Lady Schuster
1947.778

The Protective Power of Words

Gau (ga'u), meaning reliquaries or charm boxes, are amulets that have traditionally been worn by Tibetan people on their bodies, to bring good fortune and provide protection from harm. *Gau* can contain relics of religious masters or rolled up Buddhist texts, the blessings of which confer power upon the amulet.

Smaller *gau* are usually worn around the neck. Larger containers can be tied to the waist on belts or carried as a sort of portable shrine or reliquary. They are considered to be supports of the mind (*thugten*, *thugs rten*) because of the power of their relics. However, they are also supports of the speech (*sungten*, *gsung rten*) because of the sacred texts they contain and in some cases also as supports of the body (*kuten*, *sku rten*) when they contain statues or *tsha tsha*.

In the past, *gau* were sometimes worn during battles, as they were considered to have the power to render their wearer invulnerable. Waddell and other chroniclers of Younghusband's Mission described the charms worn by soldiers who faced them in battle. More recently, *gau* were widely reported to have been worn by Tibetan guerilla soldiers fighting the Chinese army.



A woman wearing a *gau* or amulet box around her neck.

Studio photograph incorporating an eclectic assemblage of ornaments from different parts of Tibet Nepal. Late 19th century. Anatole von Hügel collection P.6172.ACHI

A woman's turquoise-studded *gau*

Worn on the chest, this box is supported by a string of dzi (*gzi*) beads, themselves credited with protective powers. Tibet. Width 10.8 cm Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection. 1988.509



Small woman's *gau*

Studded with turquoise, this ornamental amulet box would have been worn on the neck. Tibet. Height 6.5 cm Collected by Major Alexander Mullaly British Expedition to Tibet, 1904. 1981.42



Silver filigree *gau* with glass bead and coral

Most of the stones inlaid on the front of this neck *gau* are lost, leaving only a single blue glass bead in the centre and a small piece of red coral (*juru*, *byu ru*). Tibet. Width 9.5 cm. Professor William Ridgeway bequest. 1927.870

The protection of the Text

This elaborate square container, probably worn on the chest, contains pages 24 to 31 of a *Prajñāpāramitā* text, in manuscript on thick paper. Tibet. Height 14 cm Donated by A.F. Schofield, University Librarian. 1937.459



Containing the power of foreign things

This *gau*, worn around the neck, has had fragments of blue glass bead jammed into the settings where presumably coral, turquoise or precious stones were once inlaid. On the leather necklace has been strung a British Indian quarter anna coin, minted in 1905, which has been pierced through the centre. Tibet or Ladakh. Width 10.6 cm. Collected by Frederick O. Lechmere-Oertel 1930.1627



A portable shrine containing mantras

This large and elaborate *gau* has brackets on either side through which it was strapped to the waist of a wearer or perhaps tied to a pack animal when travelling. It contains printed mantras on thin paper and its exceptionally elaborate repoussé brass front depicts a seated Akṣobhya surrounded by deities including Vairocana, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and Palden Lhamo (dPal Idan Lha mo). Tibet or Nepal. Height 26 cm Donated by Lady Schuster 1947.772 A





Gau with Turquoise and coral Kālacakra

This box is inlaid with a powerful Kālacakra seed syllable, made of turquoise (*yu, gyu*), found all over Tibet and said to change colour according to the health of the wearer; and imported coral (*ju ru*), thought to be effective against poisons and ailments of the blood. Tibet. Height 12 cm

Frederick & Margaret Williamson Collection. D 1976.35



Amulet box containing a tshatsha and maṇḍala

With a glass window designed to reveal its contents, this *gau* holds a painted *tsha tsha* of a wrathful goddess and, glued to the inside, a mandala printed on paper.

Tibet or Nepal. Height 13.5 cm

Donated by Lady Schuster. 1947.772 B

Gilt gau with Kālacakra mantra and auspicious symbols

Richly decorated with embossed symbols surrounding an enthroned Kālacakra symbol, this *gau* retains part of the leather thong that was used to secure it to the body of its owner.

Tibet. Height 14.6 cm

Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection. D 1976.114



Portable shrine to Amitābha Buddha

Large charm box (*ga'u*) for use as a portable shrine. The sides of the box are in copper, covered in a case of leather, dyed red and green, with slots at the side through which a strap of leather or yak rope would have been strung so that it could be carried. The front is of chased brass, with emblems in bronze, and with a glazed window surrounded by a canopy in bronze. Above the window are emblems of a peacock flanked by two *garuḍa* birds. Below is a single *garuḍa* yantra charm, flanked by horse dragons. On either side of the window the four emblems each consist of two of the eight auspicious symbols, the *aṣṭamaṅgala*: clockwise from top right, they are the chank and the wheel, the lotus and the vase/urn, the knot and the victory banner, and the fish and the parasol. Inside the box and visible through the window is a statue of the Buddha Amitābha, with gilt face and blue hair. The face is well preserved and the eyes, lips, *ūrṇā* and eyebrows remain distinct but the pigment on the hair has chipped away in places, perhaps where it has fallen against the sides of the box during transit. The case would have been opened by untying the leather thong lowering the leather back panel and sliding the copper panel upwards.



Height 28.5 cm

Tibet. Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection. D 1976.82

Tsha tsha

Walking on pathways across the Himalayas and on the Tibetan plateau, one often comes across heaps of innumerable relief images of deities, or miniature *stūpas* made of clay and generally known as *tsha tsha*. The recreation of identical sacred shapes by pressing clay into a mould is a widespread ritual practice: by producing and distributing them, people can accumulate merits, perform preliminary practices of purification and remove obstacles to enlightenment. When the clay has hardened, the figures can be placed in shrines, offered as blessed gifts or piled up in sacred caves.

Tsha tsha can have a wide range of sizes and shapes: small plaques with bas-relief images or three-dimensional objects such as *stūpas* or statues. Their subjects vary, including Buddhas, tutelary deities, 'root gurus' and teachers, as well as *stūpas*, *maṇḍalas* and the text of mantras. *Tsha tsha* may also be placed in charm boxes instead of metal images.

The clay is often mixed with other substances, such as ashes and medicinal ingredients. Combining the ashes of teachers and that of common people in a *tsha tsha* can assure the removal of sin and thus the clearing of obstacles to that person's good rebirth. Sometimes the ashes of the deceased person for whom a *tsha tsha* is created can be mixed with the clay, incorporating their substance with the image impressed by the mould. If the person deceased was a great lama, for example, these clay objects become endowed with particular powers to convey blessing.

After the passing of Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal), the fifteenth-century Tibetan princess Chokyi Dronma (Chos kyi sgron ma) looked after his cremation and the relevant rituals. Concerned that people would fight over his relics, she divided the splinters of his bones among members of the monastic community and



Ten Buddhas in bhūmisparśamudrā

The multiple identical images here probably evokes the thirty-five Buddhas of Confession, or the thousand Buddhas of our age.

Clay. Height 8.7 cm

Tibet. Collector and donor unknown.

Z 21080 C

Three stūpas

Clay. Height 4.7 cm

Tibet. Collector and donor unknown.

Z 21080 B.1



mixed his ashes with clay which she formed into *tsha tsha* and distributed among his lay disciples and patrons. Following the example of the ancient Indian emperor Aśoka who distributed Buddha's relics in all directions, she ensured that her master's blessing and his spiritual legacy was shared among all his innumerable followers.



Śākyamuni's Enlightenment

Buddha Śākyamuni sits in the diamond posture, with his right hand touching the earth in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and his left resting palm-upwards on his lap in *dhyanamudrā*, the gesture of meditation.

Clay mixed with ash. Height 3.8 cm
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown
Z 21080 B.2



Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī

The emanation of the wisdom of all Buddhas sits in the diamond posture upon a lotus, with hands in *dharmacakramudrā*, the gesture of turning the wheel of law. Two lotus stems support Mañjuśrī's emblems: the sword and a *Prajñāpāramitā* text.

Clay mixed with ash. Height 4.8 cm
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown
Z 21080 B.3



Sitatārā

A much-worn image of White Tārā, making the gesture of the gift, *varadamudrā*, with her right hand. The left hand should make the gesture of refuge: index, middle and little fingers raised up, with ring finger and thumb touching to form a circle.

Clay. Height 3.3 cm
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown
Z 21080 B.4



Three deities of long life

This triad of deities is associated with rituals to prolong life. The highest figure, Buddha Amitāyus, holds a vase of the nectar of immortality. Below him, flanking a *stūpa*, sit the goddesses White Tārā on the right and Uṣṇisavijayā on the left, with three faces and eight arms holding a double *vajra*, an image of Buddha Amitābha, an arrow, a *vajra* lasso, a bow, and the vase.

Clay. Height 4.7 cm
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown
Z 21080 B.5

Five model stūpas

These five small *stūpas* were probably part of a collection of hundreds or thousands that were placed in a *stūpa* or a cave: one of the ritual practices that most strikingly illustrate the emphasis given to multiplication of identical images or letters.

Clay. Height 4.5 cm
Tibet. Collector and donor unknown
Z 21080 A



Votives to Bodong Chogle Namgyal and Tsongkhapa

Bodong Chogle Namgyal and Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa) were both great masters who placed great emphasis on the multiplication of texts. Their works are among Tibet's earliest extant printed books.

Samding (bSam sdings), Gungthang, Bodong E and Shelkar (Shel dkar), Tibet. Votives: 20th century.

Private Collection.

Photograph by Charlie Lumby, 2014



Thousands of identical images of Bodong Chogle Namgyal

Reproduction of images from a mould was part of a series of practices emphasising multiplication, that may have inspired the development of printing technologies in the Buddhist context.

Porong Pemo Choding (sPo rong dPal mo Chos sdings) monastery, Tibet, 2011.

Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger



Thangka of Tsongkhapa

This thangka shows one of a series of images related to the life of Tsongkhapa. It is numbered in Tibetan script on the back, identifying it as the seventh of the right side of a fifteen-painting series, standardised by the Gelugpa Jamyang Shepa ('Jam dbyangs shes pa, 1648-1721). The production of these images started in the early eighteenth century.

Tsongkhapa sits at the centre of the image on a lotus throne topped with a moon disc. The petals of the flower in this case look more like a peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) than a lotus, showing strong Chinese stylistic influences. He sits in the posture of the *vajra* and wears the triple robes of the monk with the typical yellow hat of *paṇḍitas*. The left hand, on his lap in the meditation gesture, *dhyānamudrā*, holds a bowl, while with the right hand he shows the *vitarkamudrā*, the gesture of the explanation of the doctrine. From both hands two lotus stems rise up to his shoulders; on the lotuses rests a sword and a *Prajñāpāramitā* text, emblems that assert Tsongkhapa as an emanation of the bodhisattva of knowledge, Mañjuśrī. Behind Tsongkhapa are a nimbus and a multicoloured halo. Scenes of the life of Tsongkhapa are represented around the main figure; among these scenes, on the top, in the sky, at the centre is the small figure of the Buddha Maitreya; on the left top corner are two wrathful figures of Vajrapāṇi, the usual one with two arms and the Mahācakra form; above the head of Tsongkhapa, on the right border of the *thangka*, are the two standing bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, yellow, and Vajrapāṇi, blue, and below these two figures is noteworthy the presence of a group of Buddhas inside a rainbow halo: the group should represent the 35 Buddhas of confession. On the back of the *thangka* is an inscription by the third Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe (Blo bzang dPal Idan ye shes, 1738-1780):

Homage to the guru! May Mañjughoṣa, the guru of gods whose body is adorned with hundred thousand majesties of glory, glows with the hue of orange, bestow upon us today the host of auspicious blessings. Through the accumulation of merit from creating this painting of the ten virtuous marvelous activities of Tsongkhapa, who is you (Mañjuśrī) dressed in monastic robes and living in a human guise in the Land of Snows, may I be cherished by the guru Mañjughoṣa in all lifetimes, swiftly reach the state of non-dual Vajradhāra and become the excellent one to lead all beings. In particular, may the source of Tibet's happiness and well being, the protectors Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha who have taken the body of human teachers, and their spiritual sons live long and turn the wheel of dharma. Wherever this painting, an art created by finger-work, is kept, may all those places be filled with good fortune and shine forth in a hundred directions with peace and happiness. For having created this painting of the second Buddha Tsongkhapa, may the assembly of deities, who support the Buddha's teachings, and the sea of dharma-protectors be my supporter and may I achieve all wishes without obstruction. This is written by Sakya monk Blo bzang dPal Idan Ye shes. Maṅgalaṃ.

*Painting on textile, with silk brocade. Length 128 cm
Tashi Lhunpo (bKra shis lhun po), Shigatse, Tibet.
Mid-18th Century
Consecrated by Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738-80)
Collected by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.
Donated by the Government of India, 1905.
B 1905.302*

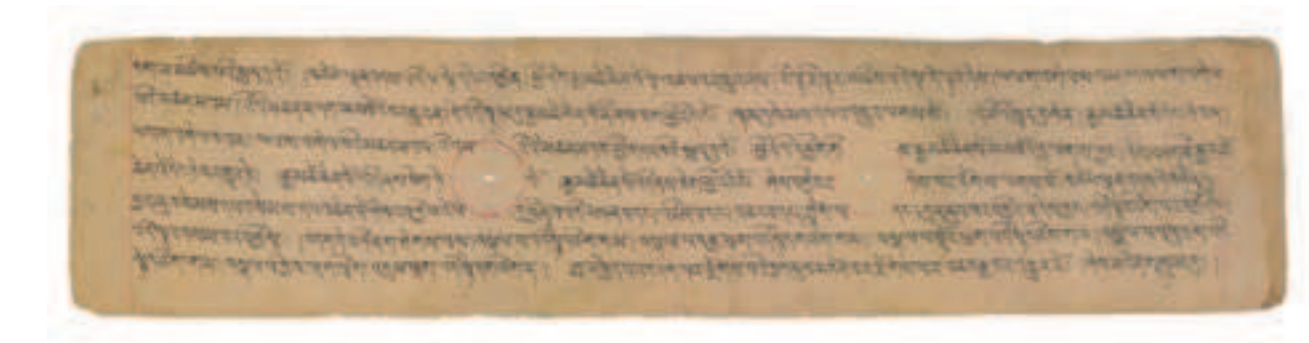




Palm-leaf manuscript of a *Prajñāpāramitā* with an illumination showing palm trees (detail)
Folio 218 verso. Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643

Paper manuscript of a *Prajñāpāramitā* text with 'vestigial' holes
Tibet. 13th-14th century. Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger.

The earliest known extant print from Tibet, with two circles evoking the holes in palm leaf books
Shelkar (Shel dkar), Tibet. 1407. Photograph courtesy of Porong Dawa, Paltseg Research Insitute, Lhasa.



04 | TRANSFORMING TECHNOLOGIES: From Manuscript to Print to Digital Dharma

The writing down of orally transmitted texts was probably inspired by the practice of reciting Buddha's teachings and the need to create a support that facilitated their accurate transmission. Recitation as ritual activation of the written text is still an important practice among Buddhist communities of today. One of the texts most commonly read for ritual purposes is, unsurprisingly, the *prajñāpāramitā* in its various forms, with monks sharing a number of folios and reading them at the same time (see, for example, Gellner 1996 describing this practice among Newars).

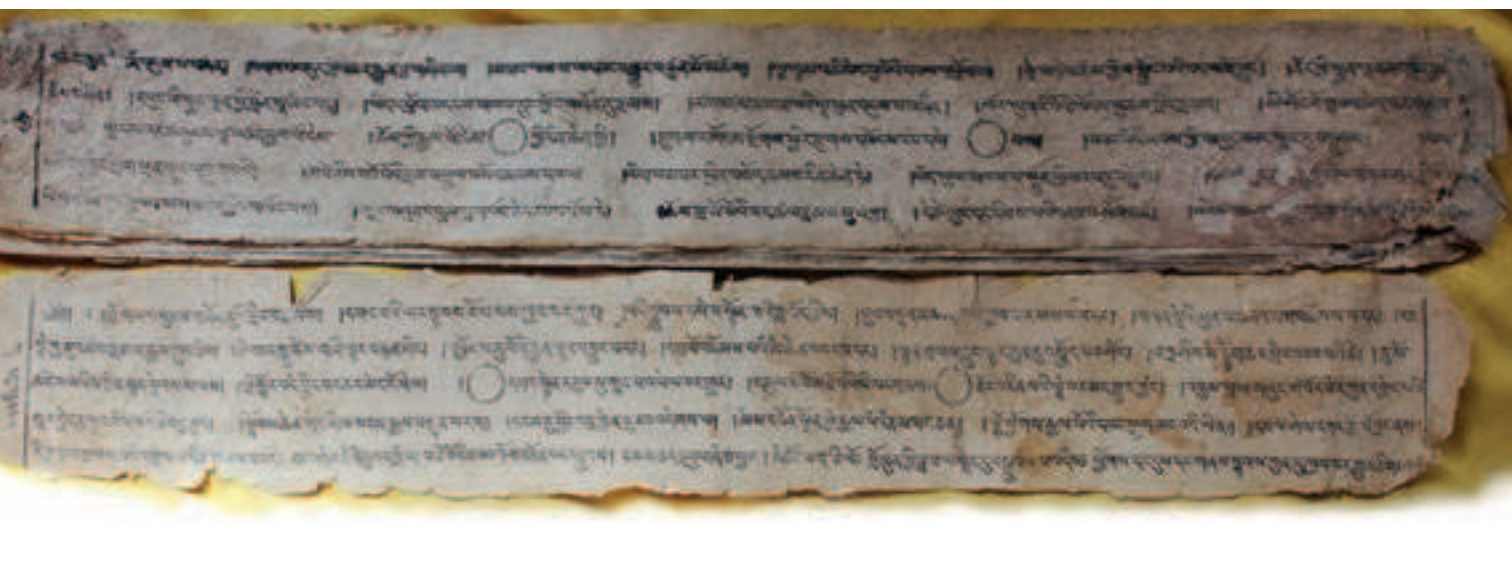
Multiplication and diffusion of texts was very much promoted within the Mahāyāna milieu, conflating the cult of relics with the cult of the book and advocating accumulation of merits through distribution. The development of printing has to be seen in connection with the reproduction of millions of images and mantras for ritual purposes: scholars suggest that some of the earliest forms of printing in Asia were not necessarily, and certainly not only, dedicated to a human readership. They were ritual formulas and magic spells addressing spiritual interconnectedness and invisible forces.

The passage from manuscript to print is difficult to map since in many cases it might not even be flagged as a novelty. At times, printing may have been seen as a slight innovation in achieving traditional aims, so that a print edition could be commissioned to make merits for a deceased ruler or a spiritual master, alongside the production of lavishly decorated manuscripts. This is often the case in the Tibetan milieu.

As book technology adapted and changed some elements were retained even if they were no longer functional as an indication of textual authority and

originality. A striking example of both continuity and change is the 1407 print of the *Drelwa donsal* ('*Grel ba don gsal*'), which was produced at Shelkar (Shel dkar). This print of Haribhadra's commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Ornament of Clear Realisation) was sponsored by the ruler of southern Lato (La stod), Lhatsen kyab (lHa btsan skyabs), to commemorate the death of his father Situ Chokyi Rinchen (Si tu Chos kyi rin chen) in 1402. The book is in *pothi* format, imitating the shape of the palm-leaf Buddhist manuscripts originally brought from India to Tibet. It has 90 folios and shares many of the physical features of a manuscript. In the centre of the text there are two circles, modelled on older paper manuscripts, which themselves imitated the palm-leaf Buddhist manuscripts that were tied together with strings passing through two decoratively encircled holes. On the same occasion that this extremely early print edition was commissioned, lavishly decorated manuscript copies of canonical scriptures were also produced. The setting up of new statues, maṇi walls or maṇi chapels could and can still fulfil the same purpose.

The reproduction of texts for ritual purposes is also powerfully reflected in twenty-first century Digital Dharma. Digital technologies have been readily taken up, not only to catalogue, scan and disseminate Buddhist scriptures, but also to reproduce millions of mantras to be placed in conventional prayer-wheels or to create digital prayer-wheels on line, to be downloaded onto one's own computer. Solar-powered prayer-wheels have also joined a host of ritual items that reflect the enchantment of secular technologies brought to bear to fulfil and reshape age-old ritual aims in the modern era of globalisation.



Printing: The Wider Perspective

Michela Clemente

Long before the very influential studies by M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), and E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) as well as *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (1983), in 1620 Francis Bacon had already pointed out the revolutionary influence of the printing press on society (see Bacon 1620).

Research on the effects that printing technologies had – and still have – on different cultural traditions has been developing in a variety of directions since the seminal works on the ‘printing revolution’. Whether we talk about xylographic technique, movable type or digital technologies, printing seems to have been significant as an agent of change for human societies; whether its impact was sudden or gradual, whether it started very early or only in the modern era.

As underlined by Brokaw and Kornicki, the ‘history of the book in East Asia is inextricably entwined with problems of language and script, and these had a profound effect on the technology of printing and the social and intellectual impact of print’ (2013: xiii).

When we talk about printing in Asia, we refer particularly to the xylographic technique which has been relatively marginal in the studies on European printing history. The xylograph (from the Greek *xýlon*, ‘wood’ and *-graphía*, ‘writing’) is the carving technique where the parts that do not form the drawing are carved out of a wooden plank. The printings obtained with this technique are called by the same name, xylographs.

The origins of woodblock printing in East Asia are controversial, but most agree that printing of texts was first undertaken in China, probably in the eighth century under the Tang dynasty (618-907).

There are some suggestions that it might go back to Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-705) (see Barrett 2008). The oldest extant printed text is a *Dhāraṇī sūtra* found inside a pagoda in Kyōngju (South Korea) in 1966. It is probably safe to suppose that this was printed before 751, but whether it occurred in Korea or in China is still under discussion. Several thousand printed texts taken from the same *Dhāraṇī sūtra* survive in Japan and there is documentary evidence that they were printed between 764 and 770 and that there were originally a million such texts printed in those years, which were all encased in miniature wooden pagodas. It seems that in Korea and Japan printing was undertaken in the eighth century not in order to produce texts for people to read but for ritual purposes associated with the reproduction of texts to gain religious benefits. The first clearly dated evidence that printing was used for the production of texts to be read is a beautifully printed scroll of the *Diamond Sūtra* that formed part of a monastic library in Dunhuang and is now preserved at the British Museum in London. The high quality of this illustrated work, the earliest extant dated book, supports the conclusion that woodblock printing had been practised for quite some time before its publication in 868.

Thanks to its relative simplicity and portability, the xylographic technique spread rather quickly not only in China but also in Korea, Japan, Mongolia and Tibet. The technology of xylography in these countries was remarkably stable. The basic method remained more or less unchanged from the time of its invention through the early 20th century (see Brokaw & Kornicki 2013: xvii-xviii).

Tibetan people started to make extensive use of this technique in the fifteenth century, but the printing of Tibetan works had already begun in the

twelfth–thirteenth centuries in the Xi xia/Tangut Empire and at the Mongolian imperial court of the Yuan dynasty. Some copies of these early prints were recently retrieved from monastic libraries in Tibet and demonstrate their wide circulation. Despite sporadic mention of printing as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century, it is only with the fifteenth century that this technology spread in Tibet. So far, the earliest extant xylograph produced in Tibet is a 1407 print from Shelkar (Lato lho, Southwestern Tibet). This text was discovered by the Paltseg Research Institute in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the British Library (see Diemberger 2012; Diemberger [forthcoming]). A few years later the first print of Tsongkhapa’s works was carried out in Ganden (dGa’ ldan) monastery in the vicinity of Lhasa and became famous as a pioneering edition.

Most of the earliest Tibetan printing houses we know of were set up in Gungthang (Gung thang), probably because this area had developed into an important gateway between the north and the south of the Himalayas over the centuries. It was located on the main route between Tibet and Nepal, which passed through the Kyirong (sKyid grong) valley leading to Kathmandu, and connected different ecological niches that could provide for paper and wood. The fifteenth century was a flourishing period for arts and culture throughout Tibet. The rise and fall of the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368) had brought about a great economic expansion, an increase in communication and a model of patronage that was emulated by local noble families competing for power and prestige. These families became the patrons of the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism and also sponsored printings of the most relevant religious works. By supporting monasteries and their printing activities these local rulers accumulated merits while strengthening their position against rivals.

As for the xylographic procedure, the two sides of a page are written out on separate sheets. The original sheets (*par yig*, *par yig*) are stuck face



Carving a woodblock

Nyemo (sNye mo), Central Tibet, 2013.
Photograph by Bruce Huett

downwards onto the woodblock with thin glue made from boiled flour. The glue is left to dry, then the woodblock is wrapped for about 10 minutes in a moistened cloth. Afterwards, the paper pattern is scraped off and the imprint of the letters which remains on the woodblock can be carved out. The result is a woodblock with reversed letters raised in relief. Then, the woodblock is covered with ink and the blank sheet is put on it, thereby leaving the ink imprint on the paper.

Usually, the first and last pages of a xylograph have images of renowned religious masters and deities (*lelhe rimo*, *le lha'i ri mo*), coloured or black and white. There could be a single image in the centre of the page; two on the left and right areas of the page; or three, with an image in the centre and two on both sides of the page. Illustrations scattered within the written text were rare.

The beauty and the richness of Tibetan xylographs reflect pre-existing artistic conceptions driving the production of manuscripts. Embellished with calligraphy, miniatures and book covers, these handwritten scriptures were the models that were followed when producing print editions – especially



Applying paper to the inked block

Sera (Se ra) Monastery, Tibet, 2007
 Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

in the early days. For this reason many ornamental features of prints are identical to or derived from those of manuscripts.

The xylographic technique had a great success in Tibet, and in most areas it has only very recently been superseded by movable type and digital technology. In fact, there was often a direct transfer from xylography to digital technologies, sometimes preceded by the transfer from xylography to photocopy. At the time of its introduction xylography offered great advantages for several reasons. Tibetans were able to make as many copies of a text as they wished, thereby assuring a wide distribution of standardised works within a practising community and all over the country, at the same time reducing the risk of their loss. Printing also

fulfilled the ideal of a potentially endless spread of Buddha's teachings among sentient beings and an equally endless accumulation of merit, which was particularly important when celebrating the funerals of important religious or political figures.

Moreover, Tibetan scholars consider prints the most reliable and authoritative edition of a work because of its production process. Before printing a text, they have edited and proofread it many times. Finally the abbot of the monastery or the lama in charge of the printing operation had to approve it. Nevertheless, this practice did not prevent mistakes; on the contrary, xylography sometimes contributed to the spread of texts with plenty of scribal errors (see Van der Kuijp 2010).

Woodblock printing remained the most commonly used technology across Inner and East Asia until the twentieth century, but it was not the only available print technology. Movable type printing, in a variety of different media, was also first developed in East Asia. In the 1040s, a commoner named Bi Sheng (990-1051) devised a means of printing using movable earthenware type set in a mixture of pine resin, wax and ash within an iron case, but it seems not to have been widely employed after the eleventh century. Bi Sheng had apparently experimented with the use of wooden type as well, but the first solid evidence we have of the successful use of the wooden movable type printing comes from the Xi Xia. A Tibetan Buddhist *sūtra* printed during the reign of Emperor Renzong (r. 1139-93) is the earliest extant book printed in wooden type (see Brokaw & Kornicki 2013: xviii).

Metal movable type was invented in Korea probably sometime in the twelfth century. It is likely that Korean craftsmen adapted the method used to cast coins – which had been introduced from China in 1102 – to make type. The first known use of metal movable type was recorded in 1234. Within a century this technology was embraced by the Chosŏn dynasty, which dominated the world of Korean publishing until the twentieth century.

This government had indeed the capital to invest in this relatively expensive technology. At roughly the same time – the late fifteenth century – a few wealthy Chinese printers began experimenting with the use of bronze movable type and the late Qing government used the technology in the production of some of its larger printing projects. By the late sixteenth century, movable type printing, both wooden and bronze, had also been introduced via Korea to Japan.

Thus movable type printing was invented in East Asia as early as the eleventh century and was known throughout the entire region within five centuries. Woodblock printing remained, nonetheless, the dominant print technology. The languages of print made woodblock printing more efficient and cost-effective: for example it was cheaper to have blocks cut for a text than to invest in the preparation of the very large font (often numbering over 200,000 sorts) necessary for texts to be printed in Chinese characters. The technology of xylography required only a few years of training and a small set of tools. Block printing allowed for more flexible adjustment to shifts in market demand: there was no need to guess what the demand for a text might be, for a publisher could order a rather small initial print run and, once his stock ran out, easily pull out the stored blocks and reprint the text without having to waste labour and time on re-composition. Also, if errors were discovered in a text, woodblocks were relatively easy to change. The character or portion of the text to be corrected or amended could simply be scooped out and replaced with characters cut on a separate strip of wood (see Brokaw & Kornicki 2013: xviii-xix). Finally, in places like Tibet where the text was sacred and considered as a kind of relic the act of block-printing from matrices that were themselves considered to be holy objects was better suited to the transfer of blessing than movable type (which started to be employed in Tibet in the eighteenth century but had limited circulation).

As for South Asia, perhaps 'nothing exemplifies



Applying ink to printing blocks

Labrang Monastery, Qinghai, 2007
 Photograph by Michela Clemente

better than the case of the Indian subcontinent the fact that technologies need to be socialized before they actually spread and make an impact. As all historical accounts show, printing presses and type fonts for some Indian languages and scripts were prepared in South India barely a century after Gutenberg, but it was only in the late eighteenth century in Madras (now Chennai) and Calcutta, and in the nineteenth century in all other regions, that print was effectively socialised and engendered a publishing industry and print culture' (Orsini 2013: XVII). Missionaries played everywhere in India a crucial role in the establishment of printing presses and the creation of fonts for Indian languages and scripts in early prose writing, Bible translations and textbooks, and in fostering a religious print culture through their large production and distribution of polemical tracts (see Jones 1992; Ghosh 2006).

Apart from the vitality of manuscript culture, the other big challenge to the expansion and socialization of print culture in the subcontinent was low literacy and the fact that other forms of entertainment were traditionally embodied in storytellers, singers, mimes, dancers, actors and so on.



Prayer flags flying above the printing house
at Trakar Taso

Trakar Taso (Brag dkar rta so), Tibet, 2007
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger.

While lithography, invented in 1798 by the German Aloys Senefelder, remained marginal to the history of printing in Europe and was used mainly for reproducing music and art, it was the technology that allowed the spread of printing and publishing in North India (see Orsini 2013: xvii–xix).

Lithography (from Greek, *lithos*, 'stone' and *graphein*, 'to write') used an image drawn with oil, fat, or wax onto the surface of a smooth, level lithographic limestone plate. The stone was treated with a mixture of acid and gum arabic, etching the portions of the stone which were not protected by the grease-based image. When the stone was moistened, the etched areas retained water. An oil-based ink could then be applied and would be repelled by the water, sticking only to the original drawing. The ink would finally be transferred to a blank paper sheet.

According to Orsini (2009: 10ff; 2013: xviii), the success of lithography can be attributed to three factors: it was cheap in comparison to printing with

movable type, and required low initial investment and low running costs; it was flexible and easily accommodated local needs for printing in multiple languages and scripts; it made printed books look familiar to Indian audiences, even when the material shape of the book was that of a codex and not a palm-leaf manuscript. In the case of some religious texts, printed books have maintained the shape of traditional manuscripts and some of their aesthetic value with their ornamental frames and woodblock illustrations up to the present day (see Sanyal 2011: ch. 4).

The many book cultures that developed across Asia over time, of which the Tibetan one is a formidable example, developed very different approaches to technologies, materials and patronage. Looking at European printing history against this kaleidoscope of human ingenuity may thus open new ways of asking ourselves the question 'what is a book?'.



Printing block for prayer flag (*lungta*, *rlung rta*)

Used to print the ubiquitous prayer flag with an image of a wind horse in the centre surrounded by mantras including *om ma ṇi padme hūṃ*. In the four corners (clockwise from top left) are the names of powerful animals: tiger (*stag*), snow lion (*seng*), dragon ('*brug*) and *garuḍa* (*khyung*). The text also includes the blessing words: 'May [these] prayer flags increase merits, glory, richness and power [in your] life thanks to the lord! Fortune and Happiness!'

Wood. Height 19.6 cm
Tibet. Date unknown.
Donated by A.F. Schofield, University Librarian
1937.458



Printing block for a prayer flag

With no images, the 10-line text in *ucen* (*dbu can*) script contains mantras and auspicious sentences. In the four corners (clockwise from top left) are the names of powerful animals: tiger (*stag*), snow lion (*seng*), unreadable, *garuḍa* (*khyung*).

Wood. Height 24 cm
Collected by Cecil Bendall
Transferred from the Oriental Library. E 1916.13

Printing block for the *Sūtra of Golden Light*
(*Suvarṇaprabhasottamasūtra*)

This very popular *sūtra* was already being printed at the Mongolian-Yuan court at Dadu (Beijing) in 1314.

Wood. Length 64.6 cm
Sakya monastery, Central Tibet. Private collection.





The royal palace where the *Maṇi bka’ ‘bum* was printed in 1521
Mangyul Gungthang (Mang yul Gung thang), Tibet, 1993.
Photograph by Carlo Meazza

Printing and Patronage in Tibetan Buddhism

Hildegard Diemberger & Michela Clemente

In the fifteenth century, a flourishing period for arts and culture throughout the country, the xylographic technique began to be widely used in Tibet. The fall of the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368) enabled some noble families to expand locally. In order to gain and assert their power, these local rulers started to sponsor printings of the most relevant religious works of the various Tibetan Buddhist schools. Sponsorship was indeed not only a meritorious act, but also a means of asserting political power. The support of Buddhism enabled rulers such as the kings of Mangyul Gungthang to increase their majesty and bolster their claim of legitimacy by fulfilling the role of *dharmarāja*, that is to say 'kings of the Doctrine'.

With the collapse of the Sakya-Yuan rule in 1368, as polities fragmented in Tibet, local rulers emulated the Mongolian *dharmarājas* of the erstwhile imperial period, competing with one another in merit-making and cultural and artistic innovation. The proliferation of printing was further supported by the memory of the archetypal Righteous King, Kubilai Khan (r. 1260-1294), who was a great promoter of printing. This innovation in book technology was carried further forward by a period of economic prosperity following the opening of new trading routes and the communications infrastructure established by the Yuan Empire. There was more wealth and more potential patrons and readers. Printing not only remained the prerogative of devout and ambitious rulers, but also quickly became the pursuit of informal lay and monastic networks. The patronage offered by rulers and sponsorship by ordinary

people were different manifestations of the same principle – merit-making through donation.

Printing projects required extensive support and had to rely on wide networks of patronage. In order to gain the support of local rulers for their activities, outstanding religious masters such as Tsangnyon Heruka (gTsang smyon Heruka), Tsunpa Choleg (bTsun pa Chos legs), Chowang Gyaltsen (Chos dbang rgyal mtshan), Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal (lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal) and so on, started to develop close, personal ties with the ruling elite of the time. The patronage networks of these masters included not only local rulers, however, but also a wide range of people of different social standing, including disciples, local officers and authorities, craftsmen, and simple people who donated very small objects, ranging from butter to tea, cups, ritual items, boots etc. (Diemberger & Clemente 2013). Their names can be found in the long lists of patrons mentioned in the colophons at the end of a printed text.



Female lupon (slob dpon) master nun holding printing block in Bhutan – one of the hubs of Tibetan printing

Kunsangdrag Monastery, 2011.
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

The *Maṇi bka' 'bum*

Michela Clemente

The ‘Hundred Thousand Proclamations of the Mantra’ (*Maṇi bka' 'bum*, *Mani Kabum*) is a collection of various mythico-historical, ritual and doctrinal texts attributed to the first Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po), who lived in the seventh century. This relates the text to the sacral kingship of the Tibetan dynasty, which continues to be seen as a golden age of Tibetan Buddhism before the period of fragmentation began in the ninth century.

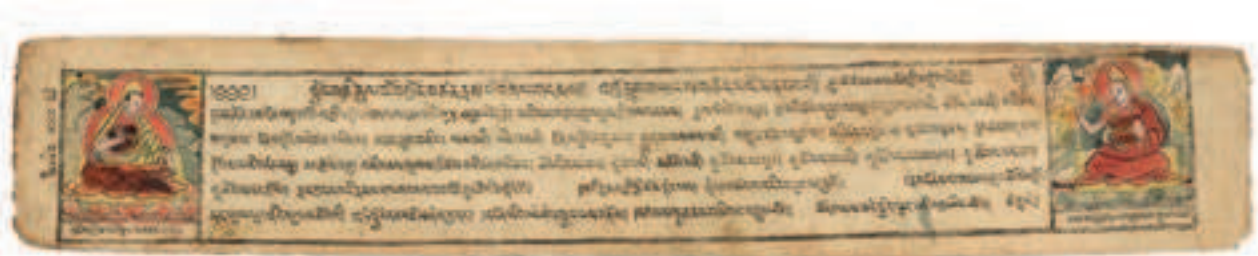
The collection is considered a treasure-text (*terma*, *gter ma*), specific portions of which were consecutively discovered by three treasure revealers (*terton*, *gter ston*) from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century. The place of concealment and later revelation of the different texts is said to have been the famous temple of the Jokhang (Jo khang) in Lhasa.

This work centres around the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. It provides a number of variant legendary biographies of Songtsen Gampo and Avalokiteśvara, especially regarding the king as an emanation of the *bodhisattva*. The *Maṇi bka' 'bum* played a central role in promoting the cult of Avalokiteśvara, who is considered the protector of Tibet, whereas Songtsen Gampo as well as the Dalai Lama are regarded as emanations of this *Bodhisattva*. This text became particularly significant

in the political context of the fourteenth century and may have contributed to creating a national identity for Tibetan people (Dreyfus 1994: 205). It is likely that the xylograph of this work printed in the Mangyul Gungthang (Mang yul Gung thang) Kingdom (southwestern Tibet) consolidated this feeling. The Gungthang edition was used to print copies in Bhutan, and in the seventeenth century the Fifth Dalai Lama used it to produce other copies of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* (Diemberger 2012: 32; Ehrhard 2000: 15; Kapstein 2000: 260, n. 9).

An original xylograph of the Gungthang edition is preserved in the Tibetan Collection of the Cambridge University Library (Tibetan 149). It was acquired in 1904. The first five pages are hand-written, probably to replace missing pages. It was produced towards the end of King Kundga Namgyal De's reign (1521) at the royal court of Dzonkar (rDzong dkar) in Gungthang, and is therefore called ‘the royal edition’. According to the lineage as contained in this xylograph, the transmission of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* was passed on to a series of teachers

Maṇi bka' 'bum, folio 319 (recto)
block print. 8.2 cm x 47 cm.. Tibet. 1521
Collected by Lt.-Col. Laurence A. Waddell
on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.
Cambridge University Library, Tibetan 149



and ends with King Kunga Namgyal De (Kun dga' rNam rgyal lde). This is the first printed text of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* (Ehrhard 2013: 144).

This print presents beautiful coloured illustrations. The miniatures have been neatly painted after the reproduction. The illustrations were executed by the famous Gungthang artist Drime (Dri med) (Ehrhard 2000: 71, 73-6; Jackson 1996: 122-5). The specialised carvers of the illustrations were Chokyab Pelzang, Sonam Namgyel and Khepa Kyabpa (Chos skyab dPal bzang, bSod nams rgyal, mKhas pa sKyab pa). The project involved seven other carvers in addition.

The masters represented in the first two illuminated folios received the transmission lineage of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*. They all belong to the *Bodongpa* (*Bo dong pa*) school that was very active in the Mangyul Gungthang kingdom. The first two figures (f. 319r) are Zangpo Gyeltshen and Pelden Sangye (bZang po rGyal mtshan and dPal ldan sangs rgyas), whereas we find Samdrub Pel (bSam grub dpal) and Tsunpa Choleg (bTsun pa Chos legs, 1437-1521) in the second folio (f. 320r). The latter is the master after whose death the ‘royal edition’ of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* was printed.

Four illustrations can be found on the last two folios of this xylograph (ff. 369v and 370r): two portraits of Buddhist masters associated with the Mangyul Gungthang court, followed by the religious protector Mahākāla, in his form as Pañjaranātha, and the guardian Vaiśravaṇa. The captions below the two portraits identify the teachers as Rabjampa Norbu Phuntshog (Rab 'byams pa Nor bu Phun tshogs, 1450-1521) and Kunga Gyeltshen (Kun dga' rgyal mtshan). The former belongs to the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa) school and was the teacher of both the Gungthang kings Namgyal De (rNam rgyal lde, 1426/7-1502) and Kunga Namgyel De. Gangkarwa Kunga Gyeltshen is a direct disciple of the outstanding religious master Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1376-1451) and one of the teachers of Tsunpa Choleg (Ehrhard 2013: 155).

Maṇi bka' 'bum, folio 320 (recto)
block print. 8.2 cm x 47 cm. Tibet. 1521
Collected by Lt.-Col. Laurence A. Waddell
on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904
Cambridge University Library, Tibetan 149



Women as Patrons of Printing and Innovation

Hildegard Diemberger

Women played an important and often not fully recognised part in the production of books and the introduction of printing as a technological innovation: from Chinese Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-705), ‘the woman who discovered printing’ (Barrett 2008), to the Mongolian Empresses of the Yuan court who patronised the printing of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures (Sherab Sangpo 2013). Indeed, beyond such noted figures, innumerable Tibetan women contributed in various capacities to the production of literary masterpieces.

Chokyi Dronma (Chos kyi sgron ma, 1422-55) and Kuntu Sangmo (Kun tu bzang mo, 1464-1549) are two of the most prominent examples of Tibetan women who promoted cultural innovation in the Tibetan society of their time. Among many religious and artistic accomplishments they promoted printing when this technology was still new on the Tibetan plateau, promoting access to the written word to a larger number of people, including women. Both challenged the social conventions of their times, became disciples and partners of great spiritual masters – Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las nram rgyal, 1376-1451) and Tsangnyon Heruka (gTsang smyon Heruka, 1452-1507) respectively – and eventually became leading spiritual figures in their own right. Their lives were described in their biographies (see Biography of Chokyi Dronma; Biography of Kuntu Sangmo) written by direct disciples and give us a unique insight into their world and the way in which they enacted Buddhist ideals with particular attention to the predicaments of other women.

Utilising her royal kinship and her ability as a fundraiser, Chokyi Dronma was a great patron of the arts. Editing the teachings of her spiritual master Bodong Chogle Namgyal, she supported the

production of print editions when this technology was still in its infancy in Tibet. She was particularly dedicated to the education of nuns, whom she taught to read and engage in a wide range of activities. Together with the famous *yogin* Thangtong Gyalpo (Thang stong rgyal po, 1385-1464) she supported the construction of iron-chain bridges over the Tsangpo (gTsang po) River and architectural masterpieces such as the *stūpa* of Cung Riwoche (gCung Ri bo che). She was also one of the rare examples of a fully ordained woman in the Tibetan Buddhist context.

A few decades later, Porong Pelmo Choding (sPo rong dPal mo Chos sdings), the monastery where she had taken her vows, saw the arrival of another woman of high rank who was born in southwestern Tibet, Kuntu Sangmo. Like Chokyi Dronma, she had fought against her family to pursue her aspirations. She would eventually become the consort of Tsangnyon Heruka, the great Buddhist master who compiled and carved the printing blocks for the Life and Songs of the famous Buddhist *yogin* Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1040-1123). Providing support and expertise, she substantially contributed to this version of the narrative becoming a classic of Tibetan literature.

Some of the women who followed these female masters became influential spiritual figures, even if their deeds can so far be gleaned only from the narratives of others, where they are only marginal figures – as was the case with Chokyi Dronma and Kuntu Sangmo, until their biographies came to light. The history of cultural achievement in Tibet, and elsewhere, is full of women who contributed substantially, often struggling against all kinds of odds. A few we know, some we are gradually discovering and some we will never know.



Chokyi Dronma, in the biography of Bodong Chogle Namgyal
Bodong E, Central Tibet.
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

Kuntu Sangmo depicted in her own biography
Central Tibet.
Photograph: courtesy of Porong Dawa, Paltseg Research Institute, Lhasa.



When Chokyi Dronma was battling to be allowed to abandon worldly life, it was suggested that she should instead become a royal patron, as a better way to fulfil her spiritual aspirations. This was not enough for her; she was not prepared to compromise, and she had the good fortune to be surrounded by enough people of authority (largely men) who either gave in or supported her. However, for many other women, patronage provided a rewarding and less problematic way of taking part in Buddhist deeds, often contributing substantially to their realisation, for instance: providing the opportunity to compose new spiritual works; providing food for scribes and carvers, along with arrangements for the materials necessary for constructing religious objects or the resources to establish a workshop. We often only know of their contribution from just a brief mention of their names as sponsors at the end of documents. From fragments and traces in sources that were not dedicated to them, it is difficult to glean what motivated them and how they pursued their aspirations. Their legacy, however, lives on in the traditions and achievements to which they contributed as women in a men's world.



05 | WHAT ARE BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES MADE OF?

According to the teachings of the Buddha, attachment to the material world is the cause of suffering and should be uprooted in order to achieve liberation. Despite this anti-materialistic attitude, physical assets and precious materials have played an important part in the development of Buddhist cultures, from the sustenance of monastic communities to the production of Buddhist art.

The production of Buddhist scriptures involved a wide range of resources and materials as well as sophisticated craftsmanship. These could be obtained thanks to patronage, since the production, reproduction, commissioning and even restoration of scriptures were important merit-making activities for a whole host of purposes: to secure a better rebirth for a deceased relative; to fulfil the role of a good Buddhist ruler; to secure an obstacle-free trading venture; or to express thankfulness for past successes. Books were also one of the preferred ways to remember deceased spiritual masters and could embody their legacy, not only through their teachings but also through the materials used in the writing, such as blood, ashes from cremation and other bodily substances. In this sense, these books were relics not only symbolically, but also in a very corporeal way, and had a heightened power of bestowing blessing.

While wood, birch bark, bamboo, stone, metal and clay have all provided usable surfaces for writing, historically the most widespread physical support for scriptures was palm leaves in India and paper in Inner and East Asia (the world's earliest extant example of a complete book on paper was a Buddhist text written in 256 CE and found in Dunhuang, China). These surfaces not only provided a medium on which a message could be inscribed: with the emergence of the cult of the book, they increasingly offered opportunities for the creation of works of art that could be lavishly decorated for the glorification of Buddhism. The production of books, therefore, was dependent on the availability of materials: palm leaves; plants or rags for paper; wood for book covers and printing blocks, as well as for the production of ink from soot when burnt; pigments, dyes and precious metals for the colouring of the images; precious stones for lavishly decorated book covers; cloth for image protection and book wrapping.

The necessary materials could be sourced locally or obtained through trade. Looking at the material composition of a literary artefact, it is possible to gain precious information, not only on the technical processes but also on the economic context and the cultural setting within which they were produced and circulated. New forms of analysis of paper, wood and colourants can therefore add to the information that can be obtained from textual interpretation and art-historical analysis, revealing new stories that connect the books to the environment in which they were produced and used. In some cases they can also help with the assessment of dating and

Former papermaker from Dobe Township
showing the root of *Stellera chamaejasme*
used in Central and Western Tibet for the
production of paper.

Dobe Township, Ngamring Prefecture, 2013.
Photograph by A. Helman-Ważny



provenance. Some of the skills that were historically used for the production of Buddhist scriptures have been lost, some are still practised and some have been recently revived. Knowing the stuff books are made of makes it possible in some cases to reconnect literary artefacts to the living traditions of craftsmanship.

While a considerable amount of research has been carried out on paper and printing in East Asia, very little has so far been done in relation to Tibetan book culture. Most essays in the following section focus, therefore, on the materials and technologies of book production in Tibetan and Himalayan contexts against the background of wider Asian traditions.



Edgeworthia gardneri growing in the Khumbu region, Nepal

Photograph A. Helman-Ważny.

Stellera chamaejasme growing at an elevation of 4150m

Lithang County, Sichuan, China.

Photograph by A. Boesi, 2000.

Plants used for Tibetan paper-making

Alessandro Boesi

Tibetan texts, notably religious ones (*pecha*, *dpe cha*), were inspired by Indian Buddhist manuscripts, which were produced from palm leaves (see Sivasundaram, Ruiz-Falqués and Formigatti this volume) and represented one of the oldest supports for writing in India and several other Asian countries, such as Thailand, Burma Nepal and Sri Lanka. Called *grantha* or later *pustaka*, they were manufactured in the so-called *pothī* format – loose long rectangular leaves held together by a string that runs through holes in the middle and then bound around with two covers, usually made of wood. Tibetan manuscripts and printed texts mostly conserve the Indian *pothī* format.

In the seventh century, when Tibet became a powerful empire in Asia and the bases of Tibetan civilisation were laid, the recording of information became a crucial undertaking, primarily for administrative purposes. A new script based on a Sanskrit alphabet was devised; stone inscriptions were carved and wood was often used as writing surface, but had significant limitations. As paper, and techniques for making it, were imported from neighbouring countries, much more extensive writing became possible. It was most likely during this period that Tibetans selected the local plants that could be used to produce paper, and began this activity in their own country.

Codicological studies, examination of paper fibres from ancient manuscripts and books, information available on Tibetan written sources, accounts from travellers, explorers and missionaries, data from botanical studies, and recent research in the field, indicate that a few species belonging to the Thymelaeaceae botanical family have represented the most important source material for paper-making in Tibet.

So far the following species have been identified: *Edgeworthia gardneri*, *Daphne aurantiaca*, *D. sureil*, *D. papyracea*, *D. bholua*, *D. retusa*, *Wikstroemia canescens*, and *Stellera chamaejasme*. These plants grow over most of the areas inhabited by Tibetan peoples, and can be easily collected. Thymelaeaceae is a dicotyledonous family including 52 genera and more than 750 species, among them small trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. Some of these species share a particular feature: their phloem or bast, the plant nutrient conductive tissue, includes very strong fibres. These fibres are long, narrow, and supportive cells, which provide tension strength without limiting flexibility, and render the bark of these plants a valuable material for the manufacture of high-quality paper. In fact their stems (and roots) are supple and difficult to break and may be used as a substitute for string. Many of these plants share another significant feature: being poisonous, they are not attacked by insects, worms or small animals, an additional quality that makes them an excellent source material for paper-making.

Other plants have also been used for this purpose in Tibet; among them is paper mulberry, *Broussonetia*, possibly *papyrifera* (Moraceae), which thrives in southeastern Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces, and since ancient times has been cultivated in China for paper manufacture. Birch bark, mainly from *Betula utilis* (*stag pa shing*, *tagpa shing*, *gro ga*, *droga*), and *Betula alnoides* (*tagpa shing*), was also used in Tibet as writing material, but only occasionally and mainly for short texts and mantras.

Examining the distribution over the Tibetan plateau of the Thymelaeaceae species mentioned above, one notices that the majority thrive in southern and eastern regions in the so-called

‘rong’ areas, which Tibetans see as deep valleys cut by strong rivers, hosting lush forests, where the temperature is milder and land is suitable for agriculture. These areas roughly correspond to south and east TAR, northwest Yunnan and western Sichuan Provinces. A few of these species are also distributed in other parts of China and/or on the southern side of the Himalaya. *Daphne aurantiaca*, only growing in southwest Sichuan and in northwest Yunnan Chinese Provinces, is nearly endemic to Tibetan cultural regions. It should be noted that only *Stellera chamaejasme* thrives at high altitude, and that in some regions of the Tibetan plateau it has been used as the main source material for paper-making. *Stellera chamaejasme* is a pest plant that successfully competes with other species and quickly colonises degraded pasturelands. From the 1960s onwards, pasture over-exploitation has been a widespread phenomenon all over the Tibetan plateau and *Stellera chamaejasme* has been increasing significantly. This implies that, when considering the amount of source material for paper-making that was available in the past, we cannot rely on the present abundance and distribution figures for this species.

Paper plants, usually well known by Tibetans from rural areas, are generally named *shoggu metog* (*shog gu me tog*, ‘paper flowering plant’), *shogshing* (*shog shing*, ‘paper wood’), and *shogdum* (*shog ldum*, ‘paper plant’). Yet each region may have its local vernacular name for each of them. It is interesting to note that some paper plants are used in Tibetan medicine, often under different names, and that some medical treatises mention in passing their use for paper production. To my knowledge the first Tibetan medical treatise to describe a plant used to make paper might be the *gSo dpyad rin po che'i 'khrungs dpe bstan pa* (*Soce rinpoche trungpe tenpa*), which, according to tradition, was translated under the supervision of the scholar Śāntigarbha in the eighth century (Yuthog Yonten Gonpo 2006: 109). When describing the plant named *ngonbu* (*sngon*

bu), its author wrote that ‘with its assembled bark one can get paper’. The Tibetan doctor Zurkharwa Lodro Gyalpo (Zur khar ba Blo gros rgyal po, sixteenth century) in his *rGyud bzhi'i 'grel pa mes po'i shel lung* (Gyushi drelpa mepo shelung) (Zurkharwa Lodro Gyalpo 1991: 528) reported that the real *ngonbu* is a paper wood that grows in Dagpo (Dwags po) and Kongpo (Kong po), located in present-day southeastern TAR, which were important areas for paper collection. So this designation may indicate *Daphne* species, *Edgeworthia gardneri*, or possibly *Wikstroemia canescens*.

Recent research (Helman-Ważny & van Schaik 2013: 33) has shown that the earliest extant Tibetan manuscripts were produced by using locally collected *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia* species, and also from *Broussonetia*.

According to western travel accounts from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, centres specialising in paper-plant collection and paper production were spread over Tibetan regions in the main towns, usually as part of a local monastery printing house, and in some areas where source material was available. Paper plants also appear in the lists of items that people and districts had to pay as tithes to the central Lhasa government. Waddell, who participated in the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904, reported that at Gyantse Pelkor Chode (rGyal rtse dPal 'khor chos sde) Monastery the books were written on a paper made from the bark of the Himalayan laurel (possibly *Daphne* spp., and/or *Edgeworthia gardneri*, and/or *Wikstroemia canescens*) or the root fibre from *Stellera chamaejasme* (Waddell 1905: 226). Eric Teichman, British consular officer, testified the use of the latter plant in Nangchen (in present Qinghai Province) in 1918 (Teichman 1922: 107). The missionary Marion Duncan (Duncan 1964: 64) described the use of the same plant in the 1920s at the famous Derge printing house, located in present-day northwestern Sichuan Province. Important centres for paper productions were located in southern Tibet, particularly in

Dagpo and Kongpo, where *Wikstroemia canescens*, possibly the most precious source material for paper production, was available. This species is only present in southeastern TAR. It particularly grows in the mountains near Kyemtong (sKyems stong) in Dagpo, which is why it is locally named *Kyemshing* (*skyems shing*) and the paper *Kyemshog* (*skyems shog*). A recent Tibetan publication points out that this was traditionally considered the paper of the highest quality and it was used, among other things, for the production of Tibetan money (Tsundru 2010). Huber (1999: 262) reported that ‘raw materials for papermaking were regularly carried by corvée from Chayul Dzong (Bya yul rdzong) to Chozam (Chos zam), from where the Tsariwa (Tsa ri ba) had to deliver them to Kyemdong Dzong.’ This corroborates accounts that Kyemdong Dzong was an important centre for paper collection and production.

These accounts indicate that *Daphne* species, *Edgeworthia gardneri* and *Wikstroemia canescens* were mainly used in southern and eastern Tibet, whereas *Stellera chamaejasme* was mainly collected on the higher plateau areas. In some places, such as Gyantse (rGyal rtse), both *Stellera chamaejasme* and the other species were used, and often mixed, in paper manufacture. In Lhasa the situation was similar; since, according to Jampal Dorje’s (‘Jam dpal rdo rje) (Chandra 1971, folio 150) illuminated Tibetan *materia medica* (nineteenth century), *rechagpa* (*re lcag pa*, the name for *Stellera chamaejasme* in Tibetan medicine) was used in central Tibet, and a few travel accounts indicate that other plants such as *Daphne* and *Wikstroemia* were sent to the capital from southern Tibet.

The tradition of paper making in Tibet has been preserved up to the present time. *Stellera chamaejasme* is used in a few printing houses and paper-making centres in places such as Derge (sDe dge), Lhasa and Nyemo (sNye mo) (TAR), whereas in southern TAR and in the Himalayan valleys *Daphne* species, *Edgeworthia gardneri*



The hermit Kulung Karma with a bundle of *Daphne* paper (*lokta*) he uses to copy manuscripts.
Solu District, Nepal
Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger, December 2013

and *Wikstroemia canescens* represent the main source material. As transportation has dramatically improved in the last few years, the mixing of different species has become easier and often one place may produce different types of paper with different ingredients.

Tibetan paper and other supports

Agnieszka Helman-Ważny

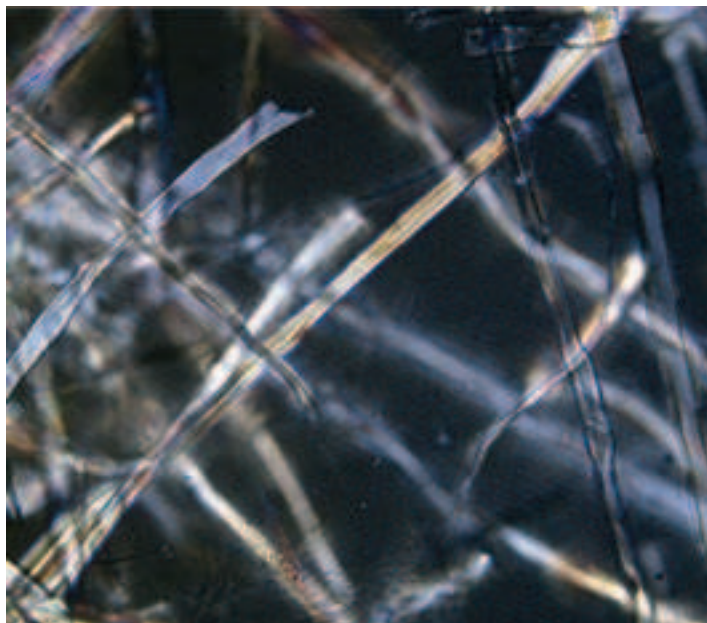


Paper-making workshop

Large type of floating mould with newly made sheet of paper during the drying process, placed in the sun outside the workshop.

Nyemo (sNye mo).

Photograph A. Helman-Ważny 2013



Macerated fibres of *Stellera chameejasme* derived from newly made paper under the microscope in 200-300 x magnification.

Photograph A. Helman-Ważny 2013

Tibetan paper-making technology has many similarities with that originally invented in China. However, it is clear that Tibetans established their own tradition of making paper suitable for writing, printing and other purposes of daily use. The specificity of Tibetan paper making lies in the properties of native plants, the living conditions of peoples dwelling on the world's highest plateau, and aspects of Tibetan culture that together create a distinctive craft.

The technology of paper making eventually reached Tibet from China, most probably around 650 C.E. Tibetan and Chinese historiography links it traditionally to the arrival of the Chinese wife of Emperor Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po). While there is a suggestion that paper was already available in the pre-existing Shangshung (Zhang zhung) kingdom and that the invitation letters to the Chinese imperial princess were already written on paper (Tsundru 2010), this claim has so far been supported only by relatively late sources. The majority of early Tibetan manuscripts found in the cave library at Dunhuang in Western China were executed on paper made of both rag and bark, components widely found in manuscripts in Chinese and other languages along the Silk Road. Rag paper was composed mostly of ramie and hemp. Bark paper was composed of paper mulberry (*Broussonetia* sp.), mulberry (*Morus alba*) and *Daphne*/*Edgeworthia* fibres. Paper mulberry and mulberry are usually associated with Chinese paper and Tibetan books produced in the eastern band of China from Inner Mongolia to Yunnan.

Identification of *Daphne*/*Edgeworthia* sp. fibres in samples of Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang supports the view that Tibetans were able to make unique paper at least by the ninth century, and that

they apparently used plants of the Thymelaeaceae family – which grow widely in the Himalayas – as raw materials (Helman-Ważny & van Schaik 2013). Thus, original Tibetan paper was made from shrubs belonging to the *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia* species (*shogshing*, *shog shing*) which usually grow in the valleys to an altitude in excess of 3600m above sea level. They still provide the basic materials for paper made in the Himalayan regions. This type of paper was traditionally rather thick, with an uneven, slightly glossy surface. In Tibet, the Thymelaeaceae family includes shrubs or small trees, evergreen or deciduous, and rarely herbs. These plants are characterised by hard, fibrous bark. The phloem contains very strong fibres, which, as the trees grow, makes the bark of many species suitable for the manufacture of high-quality paper such as that used for banknotes. Most species are poisonous; some have medicinal qualities. The presence of poison in the paper makes it resistant to damage caused by insects and, ultimately, longer lasting than other types of paper.

Also from the Thymelaeaceae family is paper made from the roots of the *Stellera chameejasme* species (*recagpa*, *re lcag pa*). It has been suggested that paper made from *recagpa* is the 'original' Tibetan paper. However, there is no evidence of these plants in the Tibetan manuscripts found in Dunhuang. The oldest samples of *Stellera* sp. in Tibetan manuscripts were identified in a manuscript from Central Tibet discovered by Pasang Wangdu that dated to the tenth century and one from Western Tibet that dated to the eleventh century. More often this plant was used in addition to *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia*, possibly adding some softness to the *Daphne* paper to make it more suitable for printing. These *recagpa* root fibres create a very

specific soft type of paper, which is considered by Tibetan papermakers to be of lower quality than bark paper (Tsundru 2010: 54).

Growing even above 5000m above sea level, *Stellera* enables production of paper in the highest places in the world, where practically nothing else grows. These plants grow in relatively dry conditions in Central Asia, Iran, parts of Tibet and along the Himalayan range, and can be used to pinpoint a manuscript's origin. *Stellera* roots are especially difficult to harvest, which places a serious limit on the quantity of paper that can be produced with them. These roots additionally require an extra step in the paper making process and take more time for processing. Thus in general they are only used in paper-making when other sources are not available, or to achieve very specific properties. *Stellera chamaejasme* fibres are distinctive in the fibre analysis of historic papers, and can be clearly differentiated from *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia*, despite all these plants belonging to the Thymelaeaceae family.

The actual method of making paper in Tibet seems to have evolved very little over the centuries, with each sheet of paper dried on an individual mould (for details of paper-making production, see Helman-Ważny 2014). This mould type is called 'floating', because it is placed on a water surface such as lake, pond, river, puddle or, later, in a wooden container. Paper pulp is prepared by beating the materials upon a stone with a wooden mallet. The pulp is then mixed with water and poured on the mould in measured quantities. The papermaker moves the frame in the water until the pulp entirely and evenly covers the surface of the mould; he then tilts the frame until the water drains off. The paper-making moulds with newly made sheets of paper are left undisturbed until the sheets are dry.

Many varieties of paper were probably used for Tibetan books, and different types required specific processing. Independent of raw materials used for the paper, to obtain a smooth surface,

Tibetans glued a few layers of paper together and sometimes finished the surface with additional substances, such as wheat or barley powder (*tsam pa*, *rtsam pa*). This involved pressing several layers of paper together using a paste made of boiled wheat flour, then possibly applying special ink, paint, or dye to its surface and smoothing it with a stone. Only this preparation of the paper surface allowed for even hand-lettering. Analysis of the binding media of Tibetan books has shown that the paper sheets (from two up to eight layers, depending on type of paper) were glued with starch paste or, less often, with animal glue, depending on type of paper used and availability of adhesive. Such characteristics of traditional Tibetan paper no doubt contributed to Tibet's lettering style.

Beyond paper, other writing supports used in the production of Tibetan books – stone, steel or rock, birch bark, metal plates, wooden tablets, wooden slips, silk or cloth – were chosen based on the maker's regional origins and on the book's status and function. They were all carefully selected as being most appropriate for the type of writing and carving tools used. Silk, cotton and linen, originally intended for clothing, also became established writing and painting materials. Some materials are more regional than others. Birch bark, in particular, was available across the Himalayas and was favoured by the Kashmiris. It was known and used by Tibetans from at least the eighth century (Reynolds 1991: 21; Chiodo & Sagaster 1995). Unlike birch-bark support, manufacture of which was confined to the areas where birch trees grow, paper can be, and probably was, produced practically anywhere, wherever plants suitable for its production grew. And in Tibet, that means growing on the top of the world.



Spoon (pekyog)
Used to pour mashed paper pulp into the forming frame.
Wood. Length 22 cm
Okhaldunga District, Nepal
Private Collection



Mallet (tangdung)
Used by a family of Tamang paper makers to beat the mashed bark of *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia* plants for making paper.
Wood. Length 31 cm
Okhaldunga District, Nepal
Private Collection



Mixer (shopshing)
Used to stir the mashed bark before pouring it into the frame.
Malingo bamboo. Length 72.5 cm
Okhaldunga District, Nepal
Private Collection

Tools for paper-making

Like Tibetans and Bhutanese, Tamang and Sherpa people inhabiting the hills of Nepal have specialised in the production and trade of a paper made from the bark of *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia*, which is famous in Nepal as *lokta* paper (see Helman-Ważny's contribution, this volume). During fieldwork in December 2013 a collection of paper-making tools were purchased from a family of Tamang paper makers. Some of the items had been used for many years. Traditionally bound bundles of *lokta* paper used to be traded locally and across the region. Their most important customers were Buddhist monasteries with their printing houses (both in Nepal and in Tibet). Photocopying machines and, more recently, digital reproduction has drastically reduced the amount of block printing and with it the demand for paper, even though a traditionally block printed version of a text is still considered as having more blessing than a photocopied one. Currently the manufacture of *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia* paper has been revived and modernised in areas that have access to the tourist market.



Shaping a sheet of paper

Across the Himalaya a similar technique is used to process paper either from bark or roots of the Thymelaeaceae family. Paper pulp, prepared by beating upon a stone with a wooden mallet, is mixed with water, then poured on the mould in measured quantity. The papermaker stirs up a quantity of the pulp by moving the frame in the water until the pulp entirely and evenly covers the surface of the mould; he then tilts the frame until the water drains off.

Nyemo (sNye mo)

Central Tibet, 2013

Photograph by A. Helman-Ważny

The frame in the exhibition comes from Okhaldunga District, Nepal and is made of wood and wire mesh (Length 122 cm, Private Collection).

Colours

Paola Ricciardi and Anuradha Pallipurath

Tibetan colour theory, as reported to us by fifteenth-century scholar Bodong Panchen Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal), considers the existence of five colours: white, red, blue, yellow and black. All other colours are thought to derive from these five. Historic and contemporary sources, however, also discuss the use of a number of green pigments.

Information on pigments and painting techniques used by artists working in Tibet and in the neighbouring regions is relatively scarce, and the vast majority of it relates to painted scrolls (*thangka*, *thang ka*) (see Laurenzi Tabasso, Polichetti & Seccaroni 2011). A few scientific studies of pigments on *thangkas* have also been published, in most of which the technical analysis had been carried out on small samples removed from the paintings. These seem to confirm the identity of the pigments used by Tibetan artists as reported by historic and contemporary sources.

Many of these pigments could be sourced from specific regions in Tibet – this was the case for blue azurite and green malachite, red cinnabar and yellow and orange arsenic-based compounds (i.e. orpiment and realgar). The most common pigments, such as red and yellow earths and ochres, yellow dyes and carbon-based blacks, could be sourced from a number of sites in the region. Other pigments were imported into Tibet from neighbouring countries such as Nepal and China, or from India. These include red vermilion, i.e. the synthetic analogue of cinnabar, as well as orange minium, red lac dye and blue indigo (Jackson & Jackson 2006).

A large number of analytical methods are currently used for the technical investigation of cultural heritage objects, including works of art on paper, such as manuscripts and prints. The most

sophisticated of these, which are also the most accurate, require taking small samples from the objects. Because of the damage, however small, that this causes to the art object, these methods are more and more often being substituted by so-called non-invasive analytical methods, which do not require sampling and can be used in situ, often without the need even to touch the object. Such is the case of reflectance spectroscopy (Aceto et al. 2014), which was used to analyse the pigments and mixtures used on four pages from a sixteenth-century print of the *Maṇi bka' bum* (Cambridge University Library Tibetan 149).

The beautifully coloured illustrations in this book were hand-painted after the xylographic print had been completed, by two different artists, Khepa (mKhas pa) Dorgon (rDor mgon) and Khepa Drime (mKhas pa Dri med), as mentioned in the colophon. The presence of more than one painter at work is reflected in the analytical results: the four pages subjected to analysis can be separated into two pairs (fols. 319r and 320r vs fols. 370v – 371r) on the basis of the pigments identified.

Both artists used cinnabar (or vermilion), possibly mixed with a small amount of a red earth, to paint red areas. Green areas were painted with mixtures of indigo with yellow pigments, probably different on the two sets of pages, which the spectroscopic analysis was unable to identify. 'True' blue areas only exist on fols. 370v and 371r, where they were obtained with azurite; the greenish-blue hues on fols. 319r and 320r were instead obtained by either mixing or, more likely, layering azurite and indigo. The identification of yellow pigments was possible by combining the spectral results with images obtained under ultraviolet illumination: the yellow areas on fols. 370v-371r show a strong luminescence emission, suggesting the presence of an organic dye. The lack of emission on the other folios, in addition to the spectral features of the yellow areas, suggests instead the use of orpiment.

These very preliminary results highlight the



Anuradha Pallipurath
 carrying out spectroscopy on Tibetan I49
 Cambridge, 2012.
 Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger

potential of non-invasive scientific analysis as a tool to further our knowledge of the materials and painting techniques of Tibetan artists. Further analysis of a greater number of pages from Tibetan I49 may well allow authorship of the decoration on each of them to be assigned to one or the other artist.

A Tibetan manuscript, preserved at the Cambridge University Library (Add. 1666), was also analysed with reflectance spectroscopy and the results of the technical investigation will be published soon (Ricciardi & Pallipurath forthcoming). Additionally, if a substantial corpus of Tibetan manuscripts and prints were to be analysed in the future, we may well be able to start generalising the results obtained so far and exploring the relationship between artists working in Tibet and in neighbouring countries, based on their use of certain painting materials and artistic techniques.



Results of pigment analysis on four pages from Tibetan I49.
 From top to bottom: fols. 319r, 320r, 370v and 371r.
 A=azurite, C=cinnabar/vermilion, D=organic dye, I=indigo, O=orpiment, Y=unidentified yellow pigment(s)



Soot from burnt Pine wood (merang or thangshing)
 Southern Solu, Nepal
 Collected and donated by Kulung Karma, December 2013
 Private Collection
 Photograph by Hildegard Diemberger, December 2013

Ink and writing

The most common ingredient for ink (*nagtsha*, *snag tsha*) is the soot of burned pine trees (*merang* or *thangshing*, *Pinus Wallichiana*). In Tibetan literature there is a description of a variety of soot types and recipes, but also numerous methods of preparing ink without the soot (see Cüppers 1989). In the Himalayas today, this soot is obtained either by burning wood and collecting the soot deposited by the smoke on the base of an upturned bowl, or simply by scraping it from the structure above a fireplace in areas where the pine tree is commonly used as firewood. The soot is then ground down and mixed with arak, the locally distilled liquor. For best quality, the mixture should rest for several months. Before use, barley is roasted black, ground and added to the mixture. Water is then added gradually, as the mixture is ground and mixed further before, finally, sieving until the correct consistency is achieved. Other ingredients may be added, to change the colour or adjust its properties such as thickness: in some recipes, rock sugar (*gyelmo kara*, *rgyal mo ka ra*) and lac are added to give greater saturation; ink soaked with pepper (*Piper longum*) or *kakola* (*Piper Kubeba*) will not freeze in wintertime; soaked with camphor or white sandalwood, it will not go bad in summertime.

Traditionally, according to one Tibetan manual titled *Craftsmanship: A Basket of Necessities*, a boiled solution of glue that was cooled and congealed was added to soot to prepare ink. This was then repeatedly pressed in a leather bag and, when free from moisture, water was gradually added to make a mixture, which was then ground to a powder, sometimes with mica mixed with the soot to add lustre (Cüppers 1989).

Soot for ink was historically traded to Tibet from the southern slopes of the Himalaya, such as Solu-Khumbu, and was sometimes collected as tithes by local rulers. The people of Ne (gNas) and Dra (Gra) villages in Kyirong (sKyid grong), for example, paid an ink-tax to the ruler of Porong (sPo rong), or the Tibetan government. Although the market has transformed dramatically with the introduction of new technologies, skilled craftsmen continue to produce and use traditional inks for discerning clients and for their own use. The sample and pens exhibited here were made by Kulung Karma, a Sherpa hermit who makes copies of the ritual texts for his own daily practice, in his retreat in southern Solu, Nepal. He donated them for the display at the Museum in December 2013.



Bamboo pens (nyugu, smyug gu)
 Length 16.5 cm
 Southern Solu, Nepal
 Made by Kulung Karma. Donated December 2013
 Private Collection



Pen case (nyugtrog, smyug khrog)
 Iron and leather. Length 33.8 cm
 Tibet or Nepal. Date unknown
 Collected by Alexander Wollaston, Mount Everest expedition, 1921.
 Donated by Mrs Mary Wollaston, 1932
 1932.74





An illuminated Tibetan manuscript on blue-black paper of works by Khedrub Geleg Pelzang and Tsongkhapa

Filippo Lunardo & Michela Clemente

CUL Add. 1666 is one of the most beautifully illuminated manuscripts of the Tibetan Collection, in gold and silver ink upon blue-black paper coloured with indigo and soot. The exquisite illuminations are painted with mineral and organic pigments obtained from throughout Tibet and further afield (Ricciardi & Pallipurath, forthcoming) and depict the Indian spiritual master Nāgabodhi on the left, the author of the first text Khedrub Geleg Pelzang (mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang) on the right (first folio), the Indian scholars Guṇaprabha on the left and Śākyaprabha on the right (second folio) who were particularly renowned for their study of the monastic rule (*Vinaya*).

The manuscript was acquired in 1876 on behalf of the library by Daniel Wright. From the style of the illuminations, the manuscript can be dated to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

This is one of the numerous volumes (Ca) of Tsongkhapa's writings preserved at the Cambridge University Library and contains commentaries and teachings on the *Guhyasamājantra*. According to the late Gene Smith, this work focuses on the practice of the two stages (*rimpa nyi*, *rim pa gnyis*) of the *Guhyasamāja* by Khedrub

Geleg Pelzang (1385-1438) and Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa, 1357-1419). Tsongkhapa is the outstanding religious master who inspired the foundation of *Gelugpa* (*dGe lugs pa*), the Buddhist school to which Dalai Lamas belong. Khedrub Geleg Pelzang, one of Tsongkhapa's disciples, was the holder of the Galden (dGa' ldan) throne for 8 years (1431-38). Galden is one of the monasteries founded by Tsongkhapa in 1409, who also acted as its first abbot.

The first part of this work is an explanation of the *kyerim* (*bskyed rim*, *utpattikrama*), 'the development stage' of the *Guhyasamājantra*, by Khedrub Geleg Pelzang. The second part was written by Tsongkhapa and deals with the *dzogrim* (*rdzogs rim*, *sampannakrama*), 'the completion stage'. In the *Gelugpa* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the *Guhyasamājantra* is considered the king of all tantras. The complete name for this text is the *Sarvatathāgata-kāyavākcitta-rahasya-atirahasya-guhyasamājanāma-mahāguhya-tantrarāja* – the 'Secret and Great Secret of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Tathāgatas, the Great Secret King of tantra called *Guhyasamāja*'. The meaning of this title is that in this tantra is shown the unity of all the secrets of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas

(transcendent ones, or Buddhas). The shorter form, *Guhyasamāja*, means simply 'The Secret Assembly', or the assembly of hidden elements leading to enlightenment.

The main system of this tantra that was adopted by the *Gelugpa* tradition is that of Mahāsiddha Lūyipa. This system considers a *maṇḍala*, inside which is the main deity, Akṣobhyavajra, in a semi-wrathful form, bearing all the implements of the other cosmic Tathāgatas (Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Vairocana) and surrounded by 32 deities. The *Guhyasamājantra* deals with the experience of the absorption of the winds (life and consciousness energy, subtle and coarse) from two main lateral channels into the main central channel (*avadhūti*). It gives details of how to work with energy-winds within channels and *cakras* in order to obtain the subtlest level of those winds, levels that transform those winds in the clear light of the mind.

The Practice of the Two Stages of the *Guhyasamājantra*
Illuminated manuscript. Gold and silver ink on black-indigo paper
362 folios; 58 cm x 22 cm
Tibet. 18th-19th centuries
Purchased in Kathmandu by Dr Daniel Wright, 1876
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1666



Newari gold
in tiny droplets used in preparing the gold ink
Photograph by James Canary 2013

Brain, lampblack and yak hide glue
used for creating *thingshog* surface
Photograph by James Canary 2013



Thingshog (*mthing shog*): Luxury illuminated manuscripts on blue-black paper

James Canary

Chrysography, the writing in gold on richly coloured backgrounds, can be found in the sacred writings of many traditions: Syriac Bibles, Kufic Blue Korans and the Godescalc Gospels.

Some of the most beautiful manuscripts in the Tibetan Buddhist world are written on *thing shog* (*mthing shog*); *thing* referring to the dark black colour and *shog* for *shogbu* paper. These luxurious productions would often be commissioned by a patron for a family shrine or as a gift to a monastery. Some of the most common texts chosen for this are *Prāṇāpāramitā sūtras*, although entire *Kanjur* (*bKa'* 'gyur) sets have been produced.

The production of the blue-black paper manuscripts involved an interesting array of materials, notably paper (*shogbu*), brains (*lepa*, *glad pa*), yak-hide glue (*phing*) and soot (*senag*, *sre nag*) or lamp-black made from burning oil (*num*, *snum*) or a resinous pine wood called *dronme shing* (*sgron me shing*).

The paper must be sufficiently strong and firm to hold up to repeated applications of the wet colouring material and the subsequent burnishing of the surface. Several layers of *Daphne* paper would be laminated, using a wheat paste to achieve this end. Initial leaves were often composed of many layers pasted together and secured with small leather tackets called *gyunbu* (*rgyun bu*).

There are *thingshog* manuscripts that are black over their entire surface and burnished like lacquer sheets as well as those that are black in the area that will be the foundation for the text, with the borders dyed with indigo (*ram*, *rams*).

To prepare the black mixture, a paste is

kneaded in the palm of one's hand of fresh brains of a yak, sheep or goat combined with very fine black powdered soot and a small amount of cooked hide glue. If there is too much brain material, the paper will have an oiliness that will resist the later writing and can also develop saponification problems resulting in a white soapy bloom on the surface. This mixture is painted on the surface of the paper and allowed to dry.

The next step is burnishing (*urwa*, *dbur ba*), done with a smooth piece of conch shell or most often with a *dzi* (*gzi*) bead. The burnishing turns the matte finish into a lustrous black surface that is very smooth and a beautiful foundation for calligraphy.

The calligraphy is done using a bamboo pen, just as in ordinary manuscripts written in Tibet, but a variety of special inks are prepared for writing on the *thingshog*. The most highly prized and frequently used is gold (*ser*, *gser*). For this purpose a kind of powdered gold is used. This typically comes from Newar craftsmen, who carefully guard their method of processing gold to get it to this stage. It is a very fine powder that is then mixed with a binder and sold in lentil-like droplets. It only requires a further binder to make it ready for use. The calligrapher would soak flax seeds in hot water and the resultant extract would serve as a binder for the gold. Another binder mentioned is made from a solution of roasted wheat (*drotshig*, *gro tshig*). Analysis reveals that sometimes the gold colour is actually a brass alloy.

One can often see lightly scored lines for the spacing of the script. The borders around the text can be simple gold lines, resembling the borders

around standard manuscripts and blockprints, but they can also be highly decorated with patternwork. Sometimes the borders are made with vermilion (*tshel, mtshal*) which is locally available in the southeastern area of Lhodrag (Lho brag), but much of this pigment comes from China and India. For the most part the *thingshog* texts are written in the učen (*dbu can*) script.

The outer covers and often title pages can be very thick with recessed areas to accommodate raised letters and illuminations. The illuminations were often done separately from the book and then attached after the preparatory work was complete. The outer covers are often wrapped in silk brocade. The recessed areas are often protected with coloured silk veils (*shelkheb, zhal khebs*). The raised letters are made by mixing an earth pigment such as yellow ochre (*ngangwa, ngang ba*) with wheat paste. This gesso-like mix would be extruded through a bag with a narrow tip, much like decorating a cake, or it could also be painted on and continuously built up to the desired thickness. When dry, the raised letters were also coloured with gold. These letters were burnished and sometimes delicate prickwork was done on the letters to create a design.

Some of the *thingshog* manuscripts have other coloured inks. It is common to see gold and silver inks alternating line by line or verse by verse. Other colours used include crushed and finely ground mineral pigments, such as copper pigments (azurite and malachite), orpiment, crushed pearls and other precious materials

The Amdo (A mdo) scholar Konchog Tenzin (dKon mchog bstan 'dzin) provides a brief description of several methods for the making and burnishing of *thingshog* in the *sungten* (*gsung rten*) or speech receptacle portion of his treatise on craftsmanship (dKon mchog bstan 'dzin 1994).

Sonam Norgyal (bSod nams nor rgyal) of Lhasa was one of the few remaining Tibetans skilled in the making of *thingshog*. Both he and his brother, Tashi Dorje (bKra shis rdo rje), were scribes working in

the Norbulingka (Nor bu gling ka) Palace for the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Sonam Norgyal passed away in 2012 and it is all the more important to find other practitioners to share their knowledge. I recently returned from Lhasa and had the good fortune to meet a young man, Tashi Dondrub (bKra shis don grub), who had worked with Sonam Norgyal since he was 13 years old. He worked with him for more than 20 years and he too makes *thingshog* and will carry on this tradition.

Sonam Norgyal, a calligrapher skilled in the making of *thingshog*

Lhasa, 1997. Photograph by Jane Farmer





Woodblocks and covers

Tomasz Ważny

Printing and technology of the book has always been strongly dependent on wood. The material's range of applications extends from wooden tables to xylographic blocks as well as boards for covering books – particularly important for the traditionally un-bound Tibetan book.

Wood identification is a straightforward way to obtain basic information about materials used for production, their origin and regions supplying workshops. Analysis of the material properties of wood, and its natural durability, can also provide suggestions concerning optimal protection and conservation methods. Species suitable for dendrochronology provide a unique chance for precise dating. Thus, with a range of technological and methodological innovations at our disposal, we can ask: what are the woodblocks and covers made of?

To answer this question, let us take a closer look at materials available for artisans and the most suitable for Buddhist scriptures. Which wood species could be expected in High Asia?

In the Himalayan region, including inner Himalayan valleys, the following species are dominant: east Himalayan fir (*Abies spectabilis*), blue pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), oak species (*Quercus*) and Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), the occurrence of which is limited to western Himalayas. In the surroundings of Lhasa, the presence of fast-growing poplar (*Populus*) is distinct, but the quality of poplar wood is rather poor. Junipers (*Juniperus*) and pines

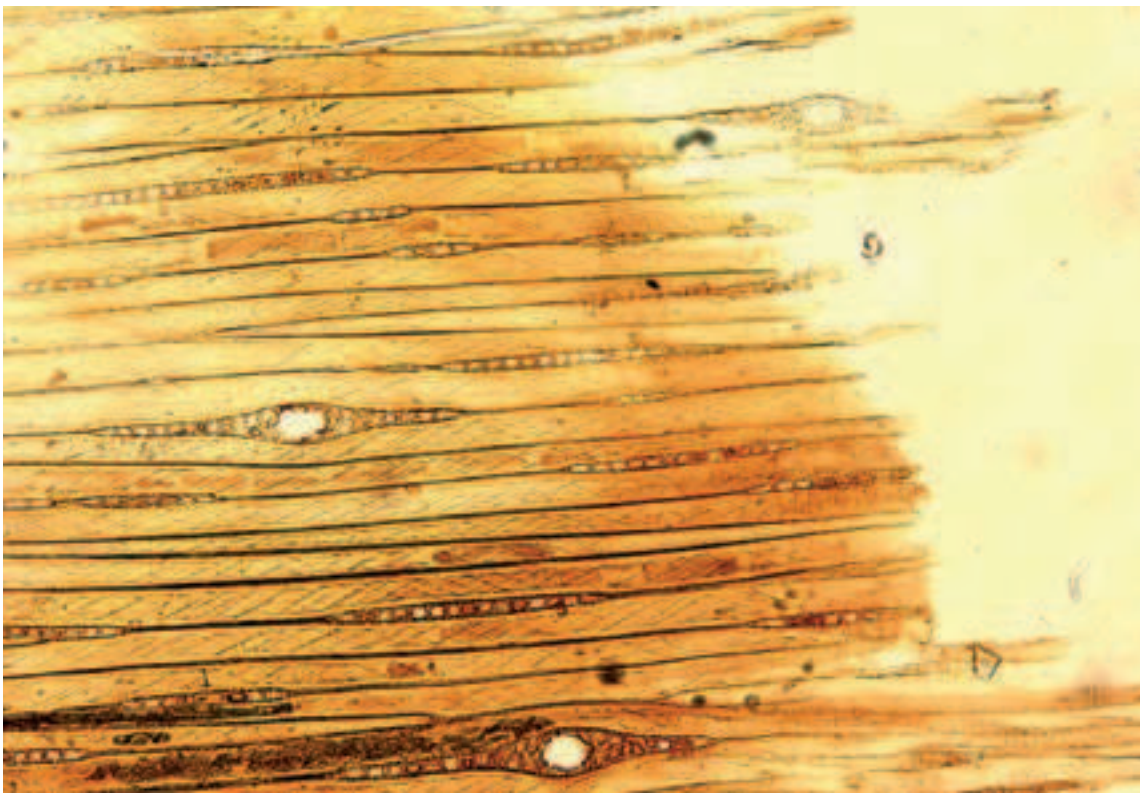
(*Pinus*) can also be found, but in lower quantities. In northeastern parts of the Tibetan plateau Quillian juniper (*Juniperus przewalskii*) is well represented. Much less arid eastern Tibet and western Sichuan are partly covered by forest, with fir (*Abies*), larch (*Larix*), spruce (*Picea*), cypress (*Cupressus*) and Himalayan hemlock (*Tsuga dumosa*) trees. Forest in Bhutan is formed by spruce (*Picea*), Himalayan hemlock (*Tsuga dumosa*), Himalayan larch (*Larix griffitiana*), chir pine (*Pinus roxburgii*) and blue pine (*Pinus wallichiana*). In addition to these indigenous woods, a wide variety of tropical and sub-tropical timbers could be imported from India, southern Nepal, Burma and southern provinces of China.

Tibetan books have a loose-leaf form. A stack of unbound pages is simply placed between a pair of wooden boards, which play a similar role to Western book-covers but are not bound to the book block. Boards may be plain, painted and/or carved and richly decorated, sometimes gilded or lacquered. The size of book-covers depends on the size of paper sheets and can even reach 'a size of a door'. The largest known book is 130x170 cm and is in the collection of Sakya (Sa skya) monastery. The upper board has metal rings and requires four monks to lift it (Grönbold 1991: 10).

Historically, the selection of wood for different uses depended in general on what was available in the region. Areas poor in wood were supplied by southern and southeastern regions of Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan or eastern India. The availability of heavy tropical timbers (the best material for stable book covers) and thickness of wood used was limited by costs of transportation over Himalayan passes (Selig Brown 2012: 16). There could thus be a notable difference between the materials that were desirable and the materials that were available.

Xylographic block made of coniferous wood prepared for engraving.

Narthang (sNar thang) Monastery, Tibet



'The Book of Death' (detail)

British Library OR15190,
upper cover, tangential section, magnification 100x.
Result of identification: spruce (*Picea* sp.).

Results of wood identification reveal which woods were actually used. For instance, an examination of 13 covers of Buddhist manuscripts from the collection of the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, Poland, revealed that at least five different varieties of wood were used. Four covers were made of blue pine (*Pinus wallichiana*) growing in the mountains more than 2000 m above sea level. One cover was cut from chir pine (*Pinus roxburgii*), distribution of which is limited to elevations of 400-2300 m above sea level, and which is common in the Kathmandu Valley, for example. Two other book covers were made of *Trema politoria*, a species characteristic of foothill forest in Nepal, northern

India, Kashmir and Pakistan. One further book was covered by boards made of *Semiliquidambar cathayensis* – a species endemic to China. Five covers were not identified. Pine wood was distinctly dominant in the sample.

Determination of wood species is possible by means of microscopic techniques. Samples in the form of small splinters of wood are usually sufficient to prepare thin sections representing the transverse, tangential and radial directions. In situations when sampling is not possible, microslides 0.01-0.02 mm thick can be done directly on the object, that leave no visible trace. These microslides are then observed under a biological microscope in transmitted

light and compared with reference materials. Identification at the level of genera and sometimes species is possible in this way by experienced wood scientists.

Wood selected for printing blocks should have properties appropriate for this application: hardness, low abrasiveness and structure allowing the carver to obtain high-precision shapes. At the same time it should have a uniform structure and reduced tendency to crack. The most sought-after timbers for printing blocks were pear, jojoba and – closer to tropical regions – shorea, sal and sandalwood (Helman-Ważny 2014: 127). In reality, however, areas with poor wood selection were much more dependent on local resources for economic reasons.

In the Himalayas coniferous species are the most widely available, therefore this wood was used. At higher localities in the mountains printing blocks could be made of Himalayan birch (*Betula utilis*) in the absence of higher-quality wood. This widespread broadleaf timberline species grows between 3000 and 4200 m and is better known because of its white bark used as printing material before the introduction of paper. It is difficult to calculate the number of copies printed from a single xylographic block, but estimates would range from hundreds to thousands. The repeated references to the wearing-out of printing blocks imply that the availability of materials was of the utmost importance.

Wood has enormous informative potential, which has yet to be fully tapped in relation to Tibet. By identifying the species, we learn about the properties of the material, range of its natural distribution and thus a potential region of origin. But beyond this, timbers suitable for dendrochronology can also provide precise dating, based on the study of tree-rings. Tree-ring dating is completely independent of other chronological indicators such as iconography, composition or stylistic evaluation, for example. It is superior in precision to any other scientific method of dating and allows us to see events in real time with annual precision. Moreover,



'The Book of Death' (*Bardo Thodol, Bar do thos grol*)

British Library OR15190, probably 18th century, based on the text, loose-leaved book with wooden cover.

tree-ring structure is an important record of past environmental conditions from the life-time of the tree.

It is not just the written text that contains a message from the past.

Book Covers

Mark Elliott, Filippo Lunardo & Michela Clemente

Tibetan book covers (*legshing*, *glegs shing*) usually consist of two single blocks of wood with bevelled edges, flat inner surfaces and often convex outer surfaces. In the most elaborate examples, the outer face and the edge are ornately carved and the carved figures sometimes gilded and painted, while the inner flat surface is often painted. Carving appears to be a very rare feature on the exterior of Indian or Nepalese book covers, suggesting that the richness and variety of Tibetan covers must be typical of their own inspiration.

The materiality of the Tibetan book and book cover assemblage owes much to the availability of materials: to wealth and social status as well as to environment. *Legshings* were often made for books offered as gifts to monasteries. They were especially used to embellish illuminated manuscripts even further. Wood covers, especially the most elaborate, could only be created for patrons who were willing and able to pay for the material and the artists' work. Tibetan people probably learnt this art (*parzo*, *par bzo*) from Newars – particularly renowned for engravings – due to the frequent contact between artists from the Nepal valley and Tibetan people over the centuries, although some covers in the MAA collection are thought to be the work of Newar carvers, perhaps for Tibetan clients.

In addition to gilding, book covers were sometimes studded with precious stones, either on the face or on the shorter edges. In some instances, the artists would carve separate images in pieces of ivory, amber, turquoise, coral, shells or even apricot stones, which were then affixed along the edge of the cover or set into prepared incisions on the face. Covers could also be made entirely of ivory, though these are particularly rare and comparatively recent, the earliest dating to the eighteenth century. Rarer

still were metal covers, with embossed and gilt metal elements inlaid into covers of carved and painted wood, or indeed a cover made entirely of repoussé work over a smooth wooden surface (Dagyab 1977: 59; Grönbold 2002: 176).

The availability of wood was, of course, one of the key determinants of the art of the book cover. A wide range of woods were used from various sources (see Wążny, this volume), each with different material properties. Some covers are very heavy, while others are extremely light. Birch (*tagpa shing*, *stag pa shing*) and pine (*thangshing*, *thang shing*) were most frequently used. Some kinds of wood had to be cooked several times in liquid butter to prevent them from warping. Tibetan texts could also be preserved inside wooden boxes, but the scarcity of this material in most Tibetan areas made them rarely used (Grönbold 2002: 176; Trier 1972: 14).

Separated as many have been from the books that they once protected, book covers have generally been regarded as art objects, displayed on walls of galleries or the private homes of curators. Yet their association with the text, and with the text as a sacred object, must also guide how we engage with these often extraordinarily well-crafted artefacts. The symbols and figures of deities carved upon them can reveal details of the texts with which they were once associated, such as the four covers in the MAA collection that bear a figure of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. These images may help identify the now lost text, or indeed through their style and iconography help to associate them to a particular school or region. Moreover, they can signal the complex interdependent relationship between image and text: as with illuminations, the images on covers probably had a protective function over the text, beyond that of material protection from the

elements (Grönbold 2002: 172-5; Klimburg-Salter 1990: 819; Klimburg-Salter 1991: 116-18). It is also worth considering, as you look at the book covers in the gallery or photographed on the printed page before you, that these objects would not normally be seen, and certainly never in this way. Unwrapped, displaced and dissociated from the texts that gave them purpose and power, they are multiply transformed.

Prajñāpāramitā

Inside a frame of lotus petals and pearls, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā sits at the centre of a group of three main figures, with the Buddha Śākyamuni at her left side and the crowned Buddha Vairocana at her right side. The three main figures are surrounded by smaller figures of Buddha, devotees and, close to the Śākyamuni throne, protectors.

The throne of Prajñāpāramitā is supported by dwarfs and lions; the *torāṇa* is made of *gandharvas* (Tib. *driza*, *dri*

za, 'smell-eaters', a kind of spirits that are supposed to live in the sky and live on odours), *śarabhas*, *vāmanas* (dwarfs) and *makaras* standing on their tails, on which rest two *nāgas* (serpents) and, on the top, a *garuḍa* figure. Two of the goddess's arms form *mudrās*: the right the *dharma* teaching gesture, *vitarkamudrā* and the left the meditation gesture, *dhyānamudrā*. In her raised right hand she holds a *vajra* and in the raised left a Prajñāpāramitā text.

In contrast to the following cover (1942.2 B), the thrones of the Buddhas to left and right differ from one another. The throne of Buddha Śākyamuni is supported by lions and flowers; the *torāṇa* is composed of *śarabhas*, *makaras* and, on top, a *garuḍa*. Śākyamuni makes the earth-touching gesture, *bhūmiśparśamudrā*.

The throne of Buddha Vairocana is supported by lions and lotus leaves; the *torāṇa* is composed of elephants, *śarabhas*, *makaras* and, on top, a *kīrtimukha*. Buddha Vairocana makes the *bodhyaṅgimudrā*, the enlightenment gesture.

Both the left- and right-hand edges of the cover are carved with lotus-petal motifs.

Wooden carving. Length 73.7 cm
Nepal or Tibet. 15th century.
Purchased by Louis C.G. Clarke.
1922.1183 A





Prajñāpāramitā

This book cover shows three main figures: the goddess Prajñāpāramitā (Sherab Pharchin, Shes rab phar phyin) at the centre, the Buddha Vairocana on the left and the Buddha Śākyamuni on the right. In a frame of lotus petals, rosette motifs, auspicious symbols and pearls, the three main figures are surrounded by flowers and leaf motifs and by smaller figures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and devotees.

Prajñāpāramitā seats on a double-tiered throne, supported by dwarfs and lions as symbols of strength. The arched back of her throne, the *torāṇa*, is supported by an elephant, dwarfs and *śarabhas* (a hybrid of lion, horse and goat). At her side are two *Bodhisattvas* and above, two *makaras* (Tib. *chusin*, *chu srin*, a kind of crocodile-like monster that is supposed to inhabit large oceans) whose tails meet beneath a figure of a *garuḍa* (Tib. *jakhyung*, *bya khyung* or *khalding*, *mkha' lding*, a mythical bird inhabiting the sky). The goddess has four arms. The lower right hand forms the dharma teaching gesture, *vitarkamudrā*, and the hand above holds a *vajra*. The lower left hand forms the meditation gesture, *dhyānamudrā*, while the raised hand holds a copy of the Prajñāpāramitā text itself. This depiction emphasises the text, in the form of the book and personification as goddess, as an object of devotion and veneration.

The Buddhas to left and right of the goddess sit on thrones supported by lions, with a *torāṇa* made up of long lotus stems, geese and ornamental motifs, topped with the *kīrtimukha*. To the right, Śākyamuni Buddha sits in

bhūmiśparśamudrā, touching the earth. To the left, Vairocana makes the *bodhyaṅgimudrā*, or the gesture of enlightenment.

Between the main figures, in a row along the bottom of the panel, are figures of important deities and *Bodhisattvas*. To the left, between Vairocana and Prajñāpāramitā, stand the *Bodhisattvas* Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi. Between the goddess and Śākyamuni on the right are the goddess Green Tārā and the god Jambhala.

The gilding on this cover is particularly well preserved, with red underpainting visible in some places, and details added in red and black. The reverse side of the panel is painted red, and bears an inscription made by the collector or a previous owner: 'Book carving, 300 Rupees'. Depending on when this purchase was made, this suggests that it was acquired for a considerable sum. On the right-hand edge of the cover is a carving of lotus petals with a *stūpa* in the centre.

*Gilt wood carving, red and black pigment. Length 72.8 cm
Tibet. 15th century.
Collected by Sir Herbert and Lady Mabel Holmwood
(c. 1888-1916).
1942.2 B*



Prajñāpāramitā

In this cover made for a Prajñāpāramitā text, it is Buddha Śākyamuni who sits in the centre position, with the goddess Prajñāpāramitā on his left and the Buddha Amitābha [or Amitāyus] on his right. The panel is bordered with a frame of lotus petals and pearls.

The throne of Śākyamuni is supported by *vāmanas*, lotuses and lions. On either side of the Buddha stand two *Bodhisattvas*, upon which stand *makaras*, *gandharvas*, and the *garuḍa* making up the *torāṇa*. Śākyamuni is depicted at the moment of enlightenment, making the earth-touching position, *bhūmiśparśamudrā*.

Between the three thrones, two *makaras* stand close to the throne of Śākyamuni, their tails curling up and filling the space between the principal figures, along with ornamental flower motifs.

On the right, the throne of Prajñāpāramitā is supported by flowers and lions, while the *torāṇa* is made of elephants and *śarabhas* mounted by *vāmanas*, and two *makaras* on the top of which are two figures (which could be *nāgas*) and a *garuḍa*. In the goddess's four hands are her usual attributes: a *vajra* and a Prajñāpāramitā text in her raised hands, while her other hands form the *dhyānamudrā* and *vitarkamudrā*. On the outside edge, to the left side of the goddess, wielding swords, stand two small protectors.

The throne of Amitābha is supported by lotus flowers and lions, the *torāṇa* is made of composite animals and *vāmanas* on the top of which are two *makaras*, two figures

(probably *nāgas*) and a *garuḍa*. The hands of the Buddha are turned upwards in *dhyānamudrā*, the gesture of meditation, and hold an *amṛtakalaśa*, the flask containing the nectar of immortality. The protectors standing on the outside edge to his right hold a sword and a *vajra*.

The right-hand edge of the book cover is carved with lotus petals with a *kīrtimukha* at the centre.

*Wooden carving. Length 72.7 cm
Nepal or Tibet. 14th century.
Purchased by Louis C.G. Clarke.
1922.1183 B*



Prajñāpāramitā

This cover for a Prajñāpāramitā text is densely populated, with 18 figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, surrounding the three principal figures of Śākyamuni, Akṣobhya and in the centre the goddess Prajñāpāramitā herself. Surrounding the scene is an elaborate frame of lotus petals, rosettes, pearls and the eight auspicious symbols.

Prajñāpāramitā sits on a throne supported by lotus flowers and lions, with a *toraṇa* composed of elephants, *śarabhas* and *vāmanas* topped with two *makaras*, two further figures of *gandharvas* or *nāgas* and finally a *garuḍa*. The goddess displays the usual attributes with her four arms: two hands in the *vitarkamudrā* and *dhyaṇamudrā*, and the others holding a *vajra* and a copy of a Prajñāpāramitā text. On her right are the Buddhas Vairocana, Akṣobhya and Ratnasambhava. On her left are Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Green Tārā.

The thrones of Buddha Akṣobhya and Buddha Śākyamuni are also sustained by lotus petals and lions, with *toraṇas* composed of vases from which rise long lotus stems, supporting geese and a *kīrtimukha*. On the goddess's left, Akṣobhya makes the earth touching gesture, *bhūmisparśamudrā*. Surrounding the Akṣobhya are, on the right, the Buddhas Vairocana, a second Buddha that may be Amoghasiddhi, with a *stūpa* by his right shoulder, and Vajrapāṇi. On the left sit Mañjuśrī, the four-armed Avalokiteśvara and, for a second time, Vajrapāṇi.

The main figure on the goddess's right, Buddha

Śākyamuni, makes the gesture of the gift, *varadamudrā*, with his right hand while the left, in the gesture of meditation, holds a bowl or *pātra*. To the Buddha's right sit the Buddhas Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya and Amoghasiddhi. To his left are the Buddhas Amitābha, Vairocana and Ratnambhava again, repeated in the same way that Vajrapāṇi is on the opposite side of the scene.

The right-hand edge of the cover is decorated with lotus petals around a central *stūpa*.

Carved and painted wood. Length 45.5 cm

Tibet. 14th-15th century

Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection
1976.39 B



Cover for unknown text

Inside a frame of lotus petals and pearls, three Buddhas seated on thrones are surrounded by smaller figures of other Buddhas, framed by spirals of vegetation, and round leaf motifs.

Śākyamuni Buddha sits in the centre, on a pedestal with two levels: the first is supported by two dwarfs (*vāmanas*), symbols of strength and power, with a lotus at the centre and two other flowers at the side. The second level is supported by lions.

Buddha's hands form the *dharmacakramudrā*, or the gesture of turning the wheel of dharma. On either side the arched back of the throne, or *toraṇa*, is supported by elephants, lions, *gandharvas* and *makaras*, whose tails form an arch that culminates in a figure of a *garuḍa* at the apex.

The Buddha to the left is Ratnasambhava, making the gesture of *varadamudrā* (the gift-giving gesture). He sits on a more simple throne than Śākyamuni, supported by flowers and lions, and flanked by vases from which long stems of lotus emerge. Resting on the lotus flowers are goose feathers forming an arch, at the apex of which is the *kīrtimukha*.

The Buddha on the right is Vairocana, his hands making a variation of the *dharmacakramudrā*, sitting on a simpler throne supported by flowers and lions, beneath an arch formed by goose feathers resting on lotuses that emerge from vases, and topped with the *kīrtimukha*.

The right-hand edge of the book cover is decorated with a *stūpa* flanked by lotus petals.

Gilt and painted wood. Length 68.6 cm

Tibet. 14th or 15th century.

Collected by Sir Herbert and Lady Mabel Holmwood (c. 1888-1916).
1942.2 A



Book cover for unknown text

This is the least ancient book cover in the collection. The carving is particularly crisp but there is no gilding. Three Buddhas sit within extremely elaborately carved frames of flower and leaf motifs and auspicious symbols. Akṣobhya sits in the centre, with Amitābha on his right and Amoghasiddhi on his left. Each of the Buddhas sits on a simple throne surrounded by a three-arched halo and decorated with flower-petal motifs. The throne of Akṣobhya bears two svastikas on the pedestal.

Akṣobhya is in every detail similar to Śākyamuni. Here, he makes the earth-touching gesture, *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, and holds a bowl in his left hand. Amitābha's hands are in *dhyānamudrā*, the gesture of meditation, and hold a bowl in their upturned palms. Amoghasiddhi makes the gesture of protection, *abhayamudrā*, with his right hand and holds a vase, or *kalaśa*, in his left.

On the side of the cover, carved in Lantsha script, is a mantra of Śākyamuni Buddha: 'Om a namo guru om muni muni mahamuniye svaha'.

*Carved and painted wood. Length 65.3 cm
Nepal or Sikkim. Probably 17th century
Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection
1976.39 A*



Book cover for unknown text

This smallest book cover in the Cambridge collection, for an unknown text, has been heavily worn so that the features of the deities depicted are difficult to make out, but it has retained its rich red and gold colouring on the border and in some of the figures. Three gilded figures sit surrounded by gilded scroll designs: in the centre, Buddha Śākyamuni, to his right Green Tārā and to his left a heavily worn figure, perhaps of a teacher.

The throne of Śākyamuni is supported by lions; the *torāṇa* is made of elephants, *śarabhas*, *makaras* and a *kīrtimukha* at the top. The Buddha makes the earth-touching gesture, *bhūmiśparśamudrā*.

Green Tārā seats on a simple throne of lotus petals with a halo around her body. She sits in the *ardhaparyāṅka* posture, with left leg tucked close to the body and right leg lowered toward the earth, ready to leap to the aid of those who need it. Her right foot rests on a smaller lotus. With her right hand she makes the gift gesture, *varadamudrā*, and with her left the gesture of refuge, *śaraṇagamanamudrā*: the index, middle and little fingers raised with the thumb and ring finger touching to form a circle. Two lotus flowers rise on both sides.

The figure on the left of the panel is dressed in a cape and a small, flat hat. His gesture is difficult to identify, but is probably *dharmacakramudrā*. He sits on a lotus throne, a halo surrounding his body. His facial features, his hat and

perhaps the area surrounding him were coloured in red, with his face and body gold.

On the right-hand edge of the book cover is the Tibetan syllable 2752, surrounded by a decoration of lotus petals.

*Carved and painted wood with traces of gilt. Length 34.5 cm
Tibet. 13th or 14th century
Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection
1976.39 C*



06 | THE CAMBRIDGE COLLECTIONS

This exhibition is profoundly rooted in the city and University of Cambridge, its history and its relationship with the wider world, as much as it is in the great Buddhist traditions of Asia. In a collection of tales of travelling texts and the transmission of Buddha's words across mountains, plains, forests and seas, it seems particularly pertinent to question how and why these artefacts and the texts they contain arrived in Cambridge, and what – if anything – happened to them since. These are stories, then, not just of patrons and producers, or indeed of collectors, but of commissioners, donors, curators and cataloguers through whose hands these books and artefacts have passed, right up to today's digitisation projects that are making Buddhist texts accessible to international audiences.

The exhibits illustrated in this catalogue are almost exclusively drawn from collections within the University of Cambridge – primarily the University Library and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. These collections are much more extensive than any exhibition or book can hope to adequately encapsulate, and it is the richness of this wider context that the essays in this section evoke. Our contributors provide insights into the Sanskrit, Tibetan and Japanese materials in the Library, and the Tibetan artefact collections in the Museum. Each essay points to particular and peculiar forms of book culture, associated with local variations of Buddhist literature and belief. They also suggest rather

different forms of engagement between Europe and Asia through which these books objects made their (so far) final journey to a small town in East Anglia. Of course much of this material, or at least its presence in Britain, is the result of (perhaps in some cases a motivation for) Orientalist scholarship, Victorian adventuring and colonial era geopolitical brinkmanship. But as ever it is in the detail of individual tales that wider generalisations about imperial collecting are complicated, if not always challenged.

Reading these essays side by side, one gets an intriguing glimpse of the historic interconnections and relations between individual scholars and other actors: genealogies materialised and enacted through



Thangka of Buddha preaching the dharma (detail)

Probably Eastern Tibet. 16th or 17th century
Collected by Lt-Col. Laurence A. Waddell
on the British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.
Donated by the Government of India, 1905.
B 1905.301

Excavations at an Ashokan Buddhist site

Sarnath, India. 15 March 1905.
Photograph by F.O. Lechmere-Oertel
P.44599.RDG



Girton College, class of 1883
C.M. Ridding kneeling on the right.
Photograph courtesy of Girton College Archives

a single artefact, whether it be a family heirloom or a text pored over and reinterpreted by generations of practitioners and scholars. One finds, moreover, similar stories connecting the culture of the book and the world of the artefact in Britain with their corollaries in Tibet and the Buddhist word: tales of patronage and politics; of gender and power. This is perhaps most neatly illustrated in the journey taken by a sixteenth-century print of the *Mani bka'* 'bum, commissioned by the family of the famous female patron Chokyi Dronma, and acquired by Laurence A. Waddell, antiquarian on Younghusband's Mission to Tibet in 1904. When this book and other spoils of the Mission reached the University Library in 1905, there were few people capable of reading Tibetan, much less taking on the job of cataloguing this new collection in order for it to be a resource for scholarship that the Government of India imagined it to be. The person who took up the task was the remarkable Charlotte Mary Ridding of Girton College, the first woman employed at the University Library. Ridding had braved the restrictions on women's attendance at lectures, learned Sanskrit from Professor Edward Cowell, and taught herself Tibetan in order to qualify for the role. It is in many ways thanks to her that this exhibition and this book that you are now reading has been able to be produced at all. 100 years later, in 2005, the collections were revisited by Karma Phuntsho, giving rise to the research project from which this exhibition developed.

In these intertwining stories, then, we are confronted once again with the essential materiality and agency of books: as objects and artefacts, made by people and endowed with the power to influence human lives; as parts of numerous overlapping and contested inheritances that are meaningful in a multitude of ways today.

The South Asian Manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library

Camillo A. Formigatti

Manuscripts, manuscript collections and catalogues played a seminal role in the development of South Asian studies in nineteenth-century Europe. For scholars of Indian languages and literatures, direct access to primary sources for the study of the South Asian cultural and literary heritage was a fundamental need, and many of them travelled to the Indian subcontinent in search of manuscripts of texts in Sanskrit and Middle Indo-Aryan languages, very often working with the help of local Pandits. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a boost of interest in collecting and cataloguing South Asian manuscripts. A turning-point in this endeavour came in 1868, when the Indian Government enacted an ambitious project with the aim of collecting (when possible), and above all cataloguing the manuscripts scattered all over the Indian subcontinent.

It is thanks to the reports and catalogues written by scholars who travelled through the whole of South Asia, collecting and buying manuscripts, and to the catalogues of South Asian manuscripts kept in European libraries, that in the second half of the nineteenth century the knowledge of Sanskrit literature made a huge step forward. Many texts hitherto unknown – and others that had been deemed lost – were (re)discovered.

The history of Sanskrit studies at the University of Cambridge goes hand in hand with the history of its collections of South Asian manuscripts. As soon as the Cambridge University Library started systematically to acquire South Asian manuscripts in the second half of the nineteenth century, Sanskrit scholars based in Cambridge, like Edward Byles Cowell and Cecil Bendall, devoted most of their researches to these manuscripts. They edited

important Buddhist texts, making them available for the first time to the scholarly and intellectual community in Europe: numerous first editions (*editiones principes*) of key Sanskrit Buddhist texts are based on manuscripts belonging to the Library's collections. For instance, in 1893, E.B. Cowell edited for the first time Āśvaghoṣa's *Acts of the Buddha* (*Buddhacarita*), the oldest known Sanskrit ornate poem on the life of the Buddha (dated to the first or second century CE).

The collections of South Asian manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library comprise manuscripts written in many different languages, ranging from Old and Middle Indo-Aryan languages like Vedic, Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, to Modern Indo-Aryan languages like Sinhala, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. We speak of 'collections' rather than 'the collection', for at least seven different homogeneous groups can be identified within the Library's holdings, each from a single source, together with an eighth group comprising scattered manuscripts of various provenances. In fact, two such groupings, the Wright and Bendall collections, account for almost all of the Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts held by the Library (both including also manuscripts of two other major South Asian religions, Hinduism and Jainism).

Daniel Wright (1833-1902) was Surgeon-Major in the Indian Medical Service in 1866-76 and Surgeon to the British Residency in Kathmandu from 1873 to 1876. While posted in Nepal, he purchased 342 manuscripts between 1873 and 1876, and an additional 76 manuscripts were donated to the Library by him and his brother Professor William Wright in 1876. The biggest collection, however,

of more than 600 manuscripts, was assembled by Cecil Bendall (1856-1906), Professor for Sanskrit in Cambridge from 1903 to 1906, during two journeys to North India and Nepal in 1884-5 and 1898-9. Further Buddhist manuscripts have been acquired in the twentieth century from different sources (for instance, one manuscript displayed in this exhibition, Or. 2258, was acquired with library funds in 1982 from Sotheby's).

Until very recently, only the Buddhist manuscripts in the Wright collection (248 in total) had been catalogued, by Bendall himself (Bendall 1883). An ongoing project funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council is currently cataloguing all Sanskrit manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library's collections, and making them available to the scholarly community through a digital catalogue. An important part of the cataloguing process consists of tracing the provenance of the manuscripts and reconstructing the history behind the transfer of the manuscripts from South Asia to Cambridge. This reconstruction provides a means for a better understanding not only of the scholarly and intellectual milieu that shaped South Asian studies in nineteenth-century Europe, but also of the reception of South Asian religions and culture in the West. In this respect, the Cambridge manuscript collections played a central role in the academic study and spread of knowledge about Buddhism in the West.

Before the nineteenth century, due to the fragmentary character of available primary sources, knowledge of Buddhism in the West was full of misconceptions, to say the least. In his book *The Awakening of the West*, Stephen Batchelor analyses the history of Buddhist studies in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, providing a lively description of what, at the end of the eighteenth century, Westerners like Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins, and other members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal thought Buddhism was:

With no Buddhists to consult, no Sanskrit Buddhist texts to read, and in a climate of brahmanical anti-Buddhist prejudice, these pioneers of Indian studies gave little attention to the obscure figure they knew as Boudh. Jones believed that Buddha was the teutonic god Wotan or Odin. The clan name 'Shakya' reminded him of that of the ancient Egyptian king Shishac. In the statues of the Buddha he noted strikingly Ethiopic features. The 'mild heresy of the ancient Bauddhas', he concluded, must have been imported to India from North Africa. (Batchelor 1994: 233)

This situation started to change during the first half of the nineteenth century, when Western scholars gained access to the primary sources in Sanskrit and Pali. The two central figures of this period are Brian Houghton Hodgson and the French scholar, Eugène Burnouf. From 1820 onwards, Hodgson held different posts for the British civil service at the Nepalese capital Kathmandu (Assistant Resident, Resident Postmaster and finally, in 1833, Resident). He was also a keen collector of Sanskrit manuscripts and Tibetan block prints of Buddhist texts, which he sent to various institutions around the world (for instance the libraries of the College of Fort William and of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Royal Asiatic Society, the India Office and the Bodleian Library). In 1837 he sent a total of 147 Nepalese manuscripts of Buddhist texts to the Société asiatique in Paris and to Burnouf personally, and '[suddenly] Burnouf had before him more Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts than had been available to any previous European scholar, with the obvious exception of Brian Hodgson in Kathmandu. But unlike Hodgson, Burnouf was able to read them.' It was on these manuscripts that Burnouf based his seminal study, *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, published in 1844. The importance of this work for the understanding and the reception of Buddhism in Western culture cannot be

Ādiyogasamādhī

This illuminated manuscript on paper contains the *Ādiyogasamādhī*, or 'State of contemplation of the Primary Yoga', a Tantric Buddhist text belonging to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* cycle. Most of the text is taken from the so-called Version B of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*, the 'tantra of the elimination of all evil destinies' (see Skorupski 1983: xviii), where it replaces the 'Basic Tantra' (consisting of the description of the ritual *maṇḍala*). It describes practices aimed at procuring a better rebirth for the dead and a better life for the living: the various *mantras*, the visualisation of *maṇḍalas*, the transference of merits, the vow for the development of the supreme Enlightenment-mind (Skt. bodhicitta), etc. Evidently, particular importance is given to the hand-gestures (*mudrās*) to be performed during the ritual, which are carefully depicted in numerous polychrome illustrations throughout the book. As in the case of many other ritual texts from Nepal, this manuscript is an accordion book (or concertina), the ideal format to be read and consulted during the performance of often complex ritual practices. (Daniele Cuneo)

Illuminated manuscript on paper.
Concertina format. 41 folios, 8 x 17 cm
Nepal. 1866.
Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873-76.
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1278



overestimated, for Burnouf managed to 'construct from this fresh field of unexamined documents an intelligible scheme of ideas which would henceforth be the prototype of the European concept of Buddhism' (Batchelor 1994: 239).

Like the Hodgson collection in Paris used by Burnouf, the Wright and Bendall collections of Sanskrit manuscripts played a pivotal role in the spread of knowledge about Buddhism. However, while the manuscripts sent to Europe by Hodgson were mostly modern copies on paper written for him by Nepalese scribes, Daniel Wright was able to procure original palm-leaf manuscripts of most of the works studied by Burnouf. The palm-leaf manuscripts procured by Wright are interesting from many points of view in various disciplines (literature, palaeography, codicology, art history etc.) In the words of Cecil Bendall:

the result of his energetic and persevering negotiation and the well-timed liberality of the University has been the acquisition of a series of works which, apart from their literary interest, will be seen from the following pages to be from a merely antiquarian and palaeographical point of view, the most important collection of Indian MSS. that has come into the hands of scholars. (Bendall 1883: vii-viii)

Among other aspects, Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts are important also because of their antiquity. Two concurring factors allowed the preservation of manuscripts for centuries in Nepal. Unlike the Indian climate, the Nepalese drier climate is more conducive to a long life for manuscripts. Moreover, the isolated position of the Kathmandu Valley prevented it from being an easy target for invasions, so that during its history Nepal has never been under foreign rule. In fact, the Cambridge University Library collection of Nepalese manuscripts hosts some of the oldest Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts in the world. For instance, one manuscript of a central text of Mahāyāna Buddhism,

the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, or 'Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva [Path]' (MS Add. 1702), is most probably the oldest Nepalese manuscript, dating to the eighth century CE.

The present exhibition showcases a few treasures from the trove of Buddhist manuscripts in the University Library. Among them are two of the oldest Buddhist illuminated manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, or 'The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas' (Add. 1464 and Add. 1643), both written in the eleventh century.

Āparimitāyurdhāraṇī

Also known as the *Āparimitāyurdhāraṇīsūtra*, this text contains the spell of Aparimitāyus, the Buddha of Long Life. It was allegedly taught by the Buddha, while sojourning at the Jeta grove near Śrāvastī, to the *Bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. Those who recite this text, copy it, cause it to be copied, keep it written in their house, promulgate it, or worship it are granted longevity and will be reborn in Aparimitāyus' buddha-field, a kind of superhuman realm existing outside ordinary reality. This manuscript is written in golden ink in an ornamental Nepalese script upon multi-layered black paper. The verso of the first folio bears a polychrome illustration of a seated Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* (with clasped hands on his lap) and holding a flower with a vase (possibly a symbol of life). The Sanskrit text (see Walleser 1916) contains many scribal mistakes and was probably not meant for reading, a suggestion supported by the particularly ornamental script and illustration, and by the traces of various materials that were smeared on the wooden cover during worship. (Daniele Cuneo)

Gold ink on black paper. 21 folios, 6.7 x 15.5 cm
Nepal. 17th-18th century
Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873-76.
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1277

Illuminated *dhāraṇī* manuscripts

Daniele Cuneo

The *dhāraṇī* (Tibetan: *zung*, *gzungs*) is a Buddhist literary genre that covers a large variety of sacred sayings, protective spells and ritual speech acts, akin to mantras.

The term *dhāraṇī* derives from the Sanskrit root *√dhr*, meaning 'to sustain, hold, or maintain', probably referring to these formulas as mnemonic devices: magically condensed instances of larger sacred texts, of which they 'retain' the significance. The term has recently been reinterpreted as 'code' (Davidson 2009), incorporating the previous shades of sense plus a whole array of context-sensitive meanings ranging from magical, protective spell to mnemonic, aphoristic 'encodings' of Buddhist doctrines and scriptures. The individual formulas are often framed in narratives that explain how the spells came to be known, usually by the intercession of a Buddha or a *Bodhisattva*.

Arguably, the most common types of *dhāraṇī* are kinds of ritual charms aimed at overcoming

perils and adversities, countering negative influences and bestowing various forms of protection. The *dhāraṇīs* date back to the Indian origins of Buddhism. They permeate its whole history and numerous developments, including its Tantric forms, within the Indian subcontinent and further afield: they have travelled to southeast Asia, and through Nepal, Tibet, central Asia and China, reaching as far as east as Korea and Japan.

In Nepal and northern India, from probably the tenth up to the twentieth century, many *dhāraṇī* manuscripts – sometimes actually meant for reading, sometimes for worship, sometimes as charms to be kept at home or carried around while travelling – have been illustrated with depictions of Buddhist narratives, Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, and also with images of goddesses representing the deified *dhāraṇīs* themselves, a comparatively later development in the doctrinal and religious scenario of first-millennium Buddhism.





above

Dhāraṇīsaṅgraha

A beautifully illuminated Nepalese paper manuscript of the *Dhāraṇīsaṅgraha*, or *Dhāraṇīmantrasaṅgraha*, the ‘Dhāraṇī(-mantra) Collection’. This important Buddhist text remains unedited, and comprises hundreds of *dhāraṇīs*, ‘connected with all the chief personages of the Buddhist Pantheon, as well as with some of the chief literary works: e.g. the “Lotus” and the *Laṅkāvatāra*’ (Bendall 1883: 49). This manuscript, dated Nepāla Saṃvat 839 (1719 CE), was written by a scribe named Patideva in the Tarumūla Mahāvihāra in Kathmandu (Kāntipūr), under the reign of Jayamahendrasimha Malla (1714-1722). It was commissioned by Trailokara and his wife Pūrṇāvatī, probably represented with their whole family in the polychrome illustration on folio 223 verso, as suggested by the details mentioned in the bilingual colophon. The original wooden covers are illustrated, with depictions of Buddhist goddesses (probably deifications of single *dhāraṇīs*) seated on lotus thrones on a floral background. The manuscript bears traces of worship on the front wooden cover, although much fewer than is the case for Add. 1277 (above).

Illuminated manuscript on paper.
225 folios. 10 cm x 39.7 cm
Kathmandu, Nepal. 1719.
Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873-76.
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1326

above right

Buddha’s life on wood

Original wooden covers bearing extremely refined illuminations with episodes of Buddhist religious history. The illustrations in the inner wooden covers include episodes from the life of the Buddha, for instance, his birth; the victory over the demonic temptations of Mara, lord of Death, on the part of the Buddha calling upon the earth to witness his own enlightenment; the taming of the frenzied elephant Nālagiri; the monkeys feeding the Buddha with honey, while he is living in the forest; the Buddha surrounded and worshiped by Hindu gods; and the *parinirvāṇa* (supreme extinction/enlightenment, i.e. death of the mortal body) of the Buddha.

Currently assigned to a Pañcarakṣā manuscript, but originally belonging to a different, unknown one.
Painted wood. 6 cm x 58 cm.
Nepal. 11th-13th century.
Purchased by Professor Cecil Bendall, 1898-99.
Cambridge University Library MS Or. 130



below

A Queen’s Pañcarakṣā

The *Pañcarakṣā* corpus, or ‘Five Protections’, consists of five *dhāraṇīs*: the *Mahāpratisarā*, *Mahāmāyūrī*, *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*, *Mahāmantrānusāraṇī*, and *Mahāśītavatī* (for an edition of the first of these *dhāraṇīs* and a study of the corpus, see Hidas 2012). The earliest evidence for texts grouped together as the ‘Five Great Dhāraṇīs’ comes from Tibetan catalogues around 800 CE, but this compendium is somewhat different from the surviving Sanskrit collection, which is preserved in manuscripts dating back to the eleventh century. These scriptures include spells, enumerations of benefits and ritual instructions for use. Over time, all of them became deified and five related goddesses emerged. It is, however, important to note that the texts themselves do not have any references to these goddesses. This manuscript, written in a highly decorative script in the Pāla style, is one of the oldest examples of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection and is ornamented with 36 elegant and stylistically distinctive polychrome miniatures of the deified *dhāraṇīs*, with various attending figures, which still bear some traces of gilding (see Losty 1982: 31 and Pal 1992: 295). On f. 1v and 2r, five of the mortal Buddhas accompany the goddess Pratisarā. On f. 19v and 20r, the two remaining

mortal Buddhas, Maitreya, Vajrapāṇi, and Tārā accompany the goddess Māyūrī. On f. 45v and 46r, the goddess Sāhasrapramardanī is accompanied by four *Bodhisattvas* and a *stūpa* being worshipped by two figures. On f. 64v and 65r, Mañjuśrī, Padmapāṇi and three goddesses accompany the goddess Śītavatī. On f. 66v and 67r, the goddess Mantrānusāraṇī is accompanied by five terrifying figures of *yoginīs* (demonic representations of tantric practitioners). On f. 69v and 70r, the same five terrifying *yoginīs* accompany the *Bodhisattva* Maitreya. This important manuscript is dated to the fourteenth regnal year of king Nayapāla of Bengal. This king’s chronology has changed according to different interpretations of the various epigraphs and historical records, but the date falls between 1041 and 1057 CE. The colophon states that the manuscript was commissioned by the queen Ḍaddākā, probably for her personal use.

Palm-leaf manuscript. 69 folios, 5 cm x 56 cm.
Bengal, 11th century.
Purchased by Dr Daniel Wright, 1873-76.
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1688





A Nepalese *Pañcarakṣā*

Written with golden ink in the ornamental script commonly known as Rañjanā, this *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript was completed in 815 of the Nepalese era, or 1695 CE, during the shared reign of three kings: Jitāmītra Malla (1673-1696), his brother Ugramalla, and the crown prince and future ruler, Bhūpatīndra Malla (1696-1722). Although commissioned by monks living in Bhaktapur, the manuscript was written in Kathmandu (then capital of another kingdom). The layout of the written area is well structured and carefully planned, with traces of ruling, and a triple marginal frame, in silver and golden ink. Moreover, folios 1 verso and 2 recto are title pages in Tibetan style, in which the script is similar to the Lantsha script (i.e. the Tibetan adaptation of the Rañjanā script) and has been written in a larger module (only three lines per page instead of the usual five). The manuscript is richly illuminated with five representations of the deified *dhāraṇīs* and five Buddhas (probably the five Tathāgatas) in various *mudrā* postures, two by two at the beginning of each *dhāraṇī* text. Two additional polychrome miniatures decorate the section that bears the colophon. As in the case of Add. 1277 and Add. 1326, the elaborate script and illustrations and the traces of worship materials on the wooden cover suggest that this manuscript was

made for ritual and as ornament, rather than reading.
(Daniele Cuneo & Camillo A. Formigatti)

Gold ink on multi-layered black paper.
148 folios. 10.4 cm x 39.2 cm
Nepal. 1695 CE.
Purchased from Sotheby's, London, 1982.
Cambridge University Library MS Or. 2258



The Tibetan Collection in Cambridge University Library

Karma Phuntsho

The Cambridge University Library holds a significant and interesting collection of Tibetan manuscripts and xylographic prints. The earliest known Tibetan books in the Cambridge University Library were acquired between 1873 and 1876 by Daniel Wright (1833-1902), a Surgeon-Major in the Indian Medical Service based in Kathmandu, who was asked by his brother William Wright (1830-1889), Professor of Arabic, to acquire manuscripts for Cambridge. While Wright's main contribution was the acquisition of an exceptionally rich collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, a total of some 113 titles (MSS Tibetan 115-145 and Add. 1050-1678) were sent to the University Library in the years 1875-78, some acquired for the University and others donated by the brothers. Of these, Dr Wright makes a special mention of Add. 1666 and Add. 1667, two large illuminated volumes, which must have belonged to a larger collection of the writings of Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa, 1357-1419), the inspirator of the *Gelugpa* (*dGe lugs pa*) school.

This was followed by the books presented by the Government of India, which Laurence Austine Waddell acquired during the Younghusband Mission to Tibet. The controversial Younghusband Mission, which turned out *de facto* to be a full-scale invasion of Tibet, took place during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899-1905) and Waddell, who was the only officer with some knowledge of Tibetan culture and religion, was the archaeologist to the mission. When the mission returned from Lhasa, the forbidden city, after signing a nominal treaty, the mission brought with it some '300 mule loads' of about 2000 volumes of religious books which were later distributed

between the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, the British Museum and the India Office. The books sent to Cambridge were received by the library and listed in the years 1905-1907. Among these are 239 titles including Tibetan 146-171 and Or. 609-635. Tibetan 149, for example, is a beautiful sample of early prints. It is the royal edition of a very important Buddhist work, the *Ma ṇi bka' bum* (*Mani Kabum*, see Clemente, this volume), which was printed in 1521 at Dzongkar, Gungthang (rDzong dkar, Gungthang, southwestern Tibet). Two manuscripts (Or 346-347) were obtained in 1903 as a bequest of Edward Cowell (1826-1903), Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge. In 1905, a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* (Tibetan 173) was presented by the Royal Asiatic Society and the volume Kha of the biography of Panchen Lozang Pelden Yeshe (Paṅ chen Blo bzang dPal Idan Ye shes, Or. 774) was purchased from Luzac & Co. for £110. On 3 November 1906, a set of *Kadampa* (*bKa' gdams pa*) texts (Tibetan 175) was purchased from a Mrs G.L. Crosse.

The first canonical collection to reach Cambridge was a copy of the Derge (sDe dge) edition of Kanjur (*bKa' 'gyur*) composed of 103 volumes plus a volume of fragments (Ridding 1909). This was a gift of Rev. Charles Taylor (1840-1908), President of St John's College, who gave generous financial support to the University Library. According to Andrew Dalby,

it became known to W.H.D. Rouse in Cambridge that a set of the Derge edition of the Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur (*bsTan 'gyur*) might be bought for £1400 from a Tibetan monk visiting the Sung

Chu Ssu in Peking. Taylor financed the purchase, though it turned out to be the *Kanjur* only that arrived in Cambridge in 1907 'in nine yak-skin packages. (Dalby 1988)

The copy is the common *sDe dge tshal par* edition in red ink on thin creamy Tibetan paper. The bundles have never been opened since they were bound with yak hair over a hundred years ago at the time of their production: they are now preserved with shelf marks Tibetan I-104 in the University Library.

In the years after the bulky gifts from the Government of India and Rev. Charles Taylor, a few books were presented to, or acquired by, the University Library. These include a set of books (Tibetan 172) from Colonel Lewin in 1914 and a scroll (Or. 1033) from Captain R.B. Haselden of New York on 3 July 1923. In 1949, J.A. Chapman presented a number of books (Tibetan 174). In 1951, the Faculty of Oriental Studies presented a set of Lhasa *Kanjur* (Tibetan 176-275) and in 1956 a copy of Narthang (sNar thang) *Tanjur* (Tibetan 301-526), significantly increasing the library's Tibetan holding. In addition, the University Library also acquired more books (Tibetan 276-283 and Or. 1759-1760) in 1951. Later, in 1981, it received the donation of a book on Buddhist meditation practice in the *Karma Kagyu* (*Karma bka' brgyud*) school from Ato Rinpoche of Cambridge. The books acquired after this appear to be modern publications, either printed on machine-made paper or printed in bound book format.

To summarise the provenance of the Cambridge University Tibetan collection, Tibetan I-104 make up the Derge *Kanjur*, the gift of Charles Taylor. There is no known record of provenance for Tibetan 105-114. Tibetan 115-145 were acquired by Daniel Wright in Kathmandu and Tibetan 146-171 by L.A. Waddell during the Younghusband Mission. Colonel Lewin donated Tibetan 172, the Royal Asiatic Society Tibetan 173 and J. A. Chapman Tibetan 174. Tibetan 175 was bought from Mrs. G. L. Crosse, and

Tibetan 176-275 were presented by the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Tibetan 276-283 were acquired by the University in 1951 and Tibetan 284-300 are modern publications. Tibetan 301-526 consists of the Narthang *Tanjur* donated by the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1956.

Among manuscripts, the 81 titles with the shelf mark Add. were acquired by Daniel Wright. Or. 346-347 were bequeathed by Edward Cowell, Or. 609-635 acquired by Waddell and presented by Government of India and Or. 774 purchased from Luzac & Co. Or. 830 was given to the University Library by W.H.D. Rouse, Or. 1033 was presented by Captain R.B. Haselden of New York, Or. 1759-60 was acquired by the University Library in 1951 and Or. 2254 presented by Ato Rinpoche in 1981. All these books have so far remained largely unknown and inaccessible to the general reader, their value unrecognised, an under-exploited treasure-house of Edwardian scholarship. In 2003, two great scholars of Tibetan studies, the late Gene Smith and Zenkar Rinpoche Tudeng Nima, drew attention to this collection and inspired the formulation of a dedicated project. For the first time, the books were accessed, consolidated and reproduced in both microfilm and digital surrogates through the Tibetan–Mongolian Rare Books and Manuscripts project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A digital catalogue for these books has also been created using the XML editor and templates developed for online catalogues of medieval manuscripts in Europe, with slight modifications by Burkhard Quessel of the British Library. The project has thus succeeded in enhancing the visibility and accessibility of the Tibetan books in Cambridge University Library, and in rebuilding their original integrity and purpose by consolidating them and also linking them to other related books and collections.



Tsongkhapa's commentaries on the *Yogācārabhūmi*

Filippo Lunardo

This beautifully illuminated manuscript is one of numerous volumes of Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa)'s writings, and includes his commentary on the *Bodhisattva* Vow chapter of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*Neljor cepe sa*, rNal 'byor spyod pa'i sa). Originally written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, this volume was probably produced in the eighteenth/nineteenth century, to judge from the style of its illuminations. The skills and the materials that went into the production of this lavish volume were considerable. The manuscript is written in gold and silver ink on black and indigo paper and it carries particularly fine illuminations which represent Chagna Dorje Namrgyel (Phyag na rdo rje rNam rgyal), Jampe Yang Ngo Umapa ('Jam pa'i dbyangs dNgos dbu ma pa), Yungton Dorje Pal (g.Yung ston rDo rje'i dpel, 1284-1365) and Khedrub Geleg Pel (mKhas grub dge legs dpal, 1385-1438).

The *Yogācārabhūmi* itself is one of the most important texts of the *Yogācāra* ('yoga practice', *neljor cepa*, rnal 'byor byed pa) *mahāyāna* tradition of Indian Buddhism, a sort of encyclopaedic treatise. This text is ascribed to the *Bodhisattva* Maitreya by two different traditions that consider him the first great teacher of the *Yogācāra*, together with Asaṅga (fourth century CE). However, the text is most likely the result of a complex process of

redaction of different material: a compilation, rather than the work of a single man.

Today, some scholars prefer to translate *Yogācārabhūmi* as 'Treatise on the Levels of Those Who Engage in Spiritual Training': this title would indicate concrete instructions for spiritual training, but, in some parts of the treatise, Buddhist philosophical topics as well as dogmatic and exegetical axioms are predominant. For certain aspects, this work has been regarded as a sort of *Abhidharma* work (texts in which 'the reality' is investigated through a technical and analytical method).

The treatise is divided into five parts, where the first two directly deal with the 17 '*bhūmis*': the five kinds of sensation; the intellect and subconscious thought; concentration and non-concentration of the mind; consciousness and unconsciousness; study, investigation and meditation; the three vehicles (*Śrāvakas*, the hearers; *Pratyekabuddhas*, the solitary Buddhas; and *Bodhisattvas*); and *Nirvāṇa*.

Commentaries on the *Yogācārabhūmi*
Illuminated manuscript.

Gold and silver ink on black and indigo paper.
328 folios; 58 cm x 22 cm. Tibet. 18-19th century
Probably purchased in Kathmandu by Dr Daniel Wright, 1876
Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1667



The Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra

This illuminated Tibetan manuscript is a collection of common sūtras, *dhāraṇīs* and prayers entitled 'The Sūtra of the Great Vehicle called The Noble Boundless Life and Wisdom' (*Phagpa tshe dang yeshe pagtumeṇa zhejawa thegpa chenpe do*, 'Phags pa tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, Skt. *Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra*). The manuscript is in poor condition: numerous insect holes bear witness to the vulnerability of the paper, which is probably not as poisonous as that of other books. It contains more than 20 illuminated folios, some of which are quite unusual. While illustrations representing Buddhas in different *mudrās* are easy to identify, some showing people dressed in what seem Muslim clothes are much more puzzling, and may refer to the links that the Tibetan world had with Kashmiri people at different times in history. Some illuminations represent *stūpas*, others monks that debate. Dynamic figures of monks facing each other from the opposite sides of the folio highlight the fact that ability in debating (*tsepa*, *rtsod pa*) was and still is an essential skill in monastic curriculum.

Manuscript on paper.
16 x 48.5 cm (ff. 78v; 82v).
Tibet.
Acquired on the 6th August 1878.
Cambridge University Library, Add. 1668.

The Japanese Buddhist collection in the Cambridge University Library

Peter Kornicki

The collection of Japanese Buddhist books in Cambridge University Library includes some of the oldest printed texts in the Library's holdings, and some fine examples of early printing in Japan.

The oldest items by far, and the oldest printed artefacts in the University Library, are the four *Hyakumantō darani*, short Buddhist invocations that were printed in the years 764-770 and then placed inside miniature wooden pagodas. These are, however, an exception to the usual practice of *sūtra*-copying, which in the Nara period (645-795) was a highly organised activity funded by the state and which continued to be practised as a meritorious activity by individuals.

Sūtras were usually written, like other manuscripts, in black ink on white paper, but some luxury copies were written in gold ink on paper dyed with indigo: the Library possesses two partial copies of the *Lotus sūtra* in such a luxury format, one made in the twelfth century and the other in the eighteenth. Other copies of the *Lotus sūtra* in the Library were printed in 1495, 1519, 1710 and 1861.

The oldest item in book form is the *Shakumakaenron sangensho* 釋摩訶衍論贊玄疏 (FG.710.135), which was printed in 1288 on Mount Kōya to the south of Nara, the headquarters of the Shingon school of Buddhism. This text is a sub-commentary by a Chinese monk on the *Shakumakaen ron* (Ch. *Shimoheyan lun*), which is

itself a commentary on the *Sūtra of awakening faith in the Mahāyāna* (Ch. *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論, J. *Daijō kishin ron*).

The above works, although printed or copied in Japan, consisted of nothing but texts transmitted for China. However, the Library also holds a number of works of Japanese authorship. The most notable of these is the *Sangō shiiki* 三教指歸 (FG.919.16), which was printed on Mount Kōya in 1580. This work was written in 797 by Kūkai and consists of a comparison of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, drawing the conclusion that Buddhism is the superior system of thought. The Library also possesses a commentary on this work printed a few years later on Mount Kōya. These books are both written in Chinese, but the University Library also keeps a large collection of explanatory and popularising works written in Japanese and printed in the Edo period (1600-1868). These include biographies of the celebrated monk Kūkai and other monks, guides to Buddhist imagery and illustrated vernacular versions of Buddhist scriptures.

Collecting Tibet at MAA

Mark Elliott

If the Sanskrit and Tibetan collections of the University Library are intrinsically linked to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial knowledge apparatus that focused on the east, the collections of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology tell a related, but wholly more eclectic story. The collections that came to MAA over generations, through accident and design, include some surprising and intriguing artefacts, texts and inscriptions from throughout the Buddhist world, many of which have remained unstudied for decades and have only come to light in preparing for this exhibition.

The Tibetan collections at MAA number just over 500 artefacts, from more than 50 individual collectors and donors. They are an idiosyncratic mixture of organised Imperial plunder, souvenirs of colonialism, scientific specimens, purchases, family heirlooms of uncertain provenance and acquisitions borne of prolonged and profound engagement between Europeans, Tibet and Tibetans, from wedding presents to diplomatic gifts.

In following the stories of this gradual accumulation, one can trace larger political and human stories: of decades of trade and travel across borders; the machinations of the Great Game and the British Expedition to Tibet; or of scientific and exploratory expeditions venturing further and further into the Tibetan plateau. Throughout, one is confronted by an ongoing curiosity about the mysterious culture and faith of a land that always seemed inaccessible; a curiosity that has been read as part of a wider Imperial scramble for knowledge,



phurwa (phur ba)
Painted wood. Height 38.1 cm
Tibet. Date unknown.
Collected by Colonel Herbert M. Cowie,
British Expedition to Tibet, 1904.
Donated by Enid Lenox-Conyngham, 1959
1959.410



dorje (rdo rje, vajra)
Brass. Length 12.4 cm. Tibet. Date unknown.
Reportedly collected by Capt. Richard Orr,
British Expedition to Tibet, 1904
Professor William Ridgeway Bequest. 1927.871

but which is most evocatively manifest in the evident struggle to understand the 'land of snow'.

The first Tibetan artefacts recorded in the Museum's published annual reports were two prayer wheels. One of these was placed on deposit in 1901 by George Colchester, a prominent businessman from the Cambridgeshire village of Burwell, whose family business produced the iconic Burwell White brick, from which much of the domestic architecture of Cambridge was constructed. Given to the Museum via John E. Foster, secretary of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, it was said to have been acquired in Darjeeling, but not when or by whom.

The following year, a young Charles H. Hawes, MA of Trinity College, who had completed the diploma in Anthropology at the Museum in 1899, and had just returned from an overland expedition to Sakhalin (which he had been the first Englishman to visit), presented a second prayer wheel. Recorded by the Museum as coming from 'Thibet', it was probably acquired in India or, perhaps, from Siberia, where Hawes had spent time with Buddhist Buriat nomads. Hawes recorded his first experience of a Buriat home, and a Buriat altar, in his book *In the Uttermost East*:

On entering the three-foot door the visitor finds strips of felt, or, if the owner be well-to-do, rich mats, spread on the ground and hung round the walls. A great trunk, handsomely arabesque, and containing all the holiday attire of the family, including the silver ornaments, charm boxes, etc., stands against the wall. Near by is the altar, with its burkhans, or statuettes, of Buddhist saints, prayer-wheels, alter-vases, and bell.

(Hawes 1904: 447-8)

Over a decade previously, however, William H.D. Rouse had donated a *vajra*, described as a 'thunderbolt of Indra' and apparently used by Newars in Darjeeling in their worship. Rouse, born in Calcutta, was a scholar and teacher of

Latin as well as Sanskrit, and headmaster of the Perse School in Cambridge. He was also the son of George Henry Rouse, former superintendent of the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta, which had dedicated so many years to printing in Asian scripts and had made initial attempts to print in Tibetan using movable type, producing the first Tibetan–English dictionary in 1826 (Bray 2008). A tenuous and so far under-researched missionary connection was maintained by the gift of a collection of stone tools from Lower Ladakh in 1904 through Sir Richard Carnac Temple. The collection had been made by the Moravian missionary Rev. Augustus H. Francke, one of the editors of Yoseb Gergan's first translation of the Bible into Tibetan, who sought through this assemblage of stone tools and vessels to demonstrate that 'the Stone Age was not quite a matter of the past' in that area (Francke 1903: 389).

But it was, unsurprisingly, Younghusband's British Expedition to Tibet in 1903-4 that brought the most high-profile acquisitions thus far, in 1905. Widely recognised as a turning point that saw the 'opening' of Tibet, at least in the scholarly and public imagination (Harris 2012: 52), the British Expedition brought out of Tibet over 400 mule-loads of objects, much of which was subsequently divided up among the museums and libraries of Britain. The Museum, along with the University Library, was one such recipient:

The best thanks of the [Antiquarian] Committee are due to the Government of India for the presentation of four beautifully executed picture-scrolls of religious subjects, which were obtained during the late Mission to Tibet by Lieut.-Colonel Waddell, the archaeologist to the Mission.

Annual Report, May 31, 1906, p. 5

The route that these *thangkas* (*thang ka*) took from Tibet to Cambridge is somewhat obscure, although certain points along the way are clearer than others. There is no record of where, or by which member of the Expedition, they were

acquired, although they were certainly part of the official distribution by the Government of India and were described as having been acquired (whether by purchase or by other means) by Waddell himself. There is evidence, however, that they were among the books, paintings and other artefacts gathered together in the Indian Museum in Calcutta for a brief public display (Carrington 2003: 104) and subsequently sorted through by David MacDonald, a translator on the Expedition whose Lepcha mother and Scottish father gave him the combination of fluency in Tibetan language and culture, and European connections, necessary for the position of middleman *par excellence*. MacDonald would subsequently take up the post of British Agent in Tibet and, intriguingly, pick up from Francke the task of editing the first Tibetan translation of the Bible. His hand in sending the *thangkas* to Cambridge is literally made visible in the small handwritten notes glued to the front of three of the *thangkas*. Two of these bear a single word, a destination: 'Cambridge'. The other, in the same hand, is a brief description of the painting's subject 'Four handed Avalokita' and signed 'D. MacDonald'.



'Four Handed Avalokita. D. MacDonald'
Paper label glued to *thangka* B 1905.300

In a further twist to the tale, the paintings were accessioned into the Museum in a category distinct from either Archaeology or Ethnology (as Anthropology was then described): they were recorded in a separate (and recently rediscovered) register of paintings, prints, drawings and publications, and given the prefix B, for 'Book'. The Waddell gift did not herald a wave of interest in Tibetan material in the Museum. Nor did it encourage an influx of artefacts from Tibet and the region. Material did come in through a number of sources, familiar and unfamiliar. Mrs Georgette Bendall donated several artefacts on behalf of her late husband, the Sanskritist Professor Cecil Bendall, acquired by him in 1884 and, on their honeymoon, in 1898. One of these items, another prayer wheel, was purchased from a Tibetan in Nepal in 1898, perhaps by Mrs Bendall herself. Further Bendall material came through the reorganisation of the University's Oriental Library in 1916. In 1925, the Fifth Earl Cawdor donated *mani* stones, *tshatsha* (*tsha tsha*) and other material he had collected from southern Tibet with the plant-hunter and adventurer Frank Kingdom-Ward, and in 1932 the Museum was gifted a steel pen case collected by Alexander 'Sandy' Wollaston, whose adventures had previously contributed hundreds of artefacts from West Papua as well as Africa, the Americas, Malaysia and Europe. This acquisition was made during the first Mount Everest expedition in 1921, on which he was the doctor, naturalist and photographer. Some of the individual pieces and small collections that came to the Museum up to the middle of the twentieth century laid claim to, or in other cases concealed, a Younghusband provenance, or indeed pedigree. In 1927 the bequest of Sir William Ridgeway, the late Disney Professor of Archaeology in the University, included among 2000 items from around the world a *dorje* (*rdo rje*) or *vajra* from Tibet. While there was no more detailed provenance in terms of the location in Tibet from whence it came, Ridgeway had provided an account

of how he had obtained it on a luggage label that remains tied to the object:

Thunderbolt Charm brought home by Capt. Richard Orr; one of Sir Francis Younghusband's expedition to Tibet and Beechgrove Avenue, Aberdeen. I bought it from William Young, 1 Belmont St, Aberdeen, who had a number of Capt. Orr's looted objects on sale by commission for the Captain. 12 July, 1911.

Subsequent donations shared a Younghusband provenance, but were more reticent in proclaiming it. A magnificent polychrome wooden *phurwa* (*phur ba*) came to the Museum through Miss Enid Elsie Lenox-Conyngham. It had been collected by Lieutenant-Colonel George McCally Cowie (1873-1925), Officer in Charge of the Survey on the British Expedition to Tibet in 1904 and later Director of the Geodetic Branch of the Survey of India. The donor's father, Sir Gerald Ponsonby Lenox-Conyngham, FRS, had been worked closely with Cowie and had been his predecessor in charge of the Geodetic Survey. The donation came shortly after his death in 1956. The final Younghusband relics (to date) that entered the Museum's collection came in 1981, from the family of Alexander Mullaly, a member of the Supply and Transport Corps in the Escort Staff of the British Expedition. Such journeys remind us that, as well as being objects of Tibetan and Buddhist culture and colonial history, these artefacts have also been valued heirlooms. Such tangled histories are what museums have a duty and privilege to explore and explain.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Museum's Curator Louis Clarke, a flamboyant and enigmatic character of independent means and unparalleled connections, contributed numerous small and large purchases for the collections. In addition to one of the Burmese gilt manuscripts displayed in this exhibition, he purchased two beautifully carved book covers and several Tibetan Buddha statues, probably from sales in London and elsewhere in the



Cloisonné incense burner.
Height 29 cm
Tibet. Probably 18th century.
Given by Thubten Gyatso, Thirteenth Dalai Lama, 1933-5.
Williamson Collection
D 1976.57

UK. In 1942, two more book covers and a number of statues and other artefacts came through the estate of Lady Mabel Holmwood, whose husband, Sir Herbert Holmwood, had been a Magistrate in Bengal and later High Court Justice in Calcutta, between 1879 and 1916.

Small donations in the mid twentieth century continued the flow of prayer wheels. Perhaps this reflected their ubiquity in Tibetan culture, which was frequently noted by collectors and donors, and which the display in this exhibition has itself sought to illustrate. These came from donors including Miss I.F. Grant in 1954 and, previously, Mrs J.B. Howard in 1947.

1947 saw something of a boom in South Asian acquisitions, perhaps due as much to the end of Empire in India as to the network of the Professor of Anthropology and former Census Officer for India, John Henry Hutton. In the same year Jack Driberg, an anthropologist known for his work in Africa but who had been born in Assam Province of northeast India, donated material including a prayer wheel and other objects from the Tibetan culture and northeast India, including several palm-leaf manuscripts.

One of the most enigmatic donations of 1947 was from a donor recorded simply as 'Lady Schuster'. The donation of around 30 objects is a mixture of Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan artefacts, none of which come with any provenance and most of which were recorded as simply Tibetan. Yet again, however, the prayer wheels play a key role. The handles of three prayer wheels (1947.786 A-C) each bear a label which reads 'Tibetan Prayer Wheel. Revolved clockwise. 1905.' It is possible that Lady Schuster was a relative of Sir George Schuster, financial advisor to the Viceroy of India. Schuster's position – close to the Viceroy, close to the money, particularly in the British summer capital in the hill town of Simla – could have presented him with opportunities to purchase objects that had come through the treasury and on to the market, perhaps

including artefacts obtained on the Younghusband expedition. This was certainly the case with other British officers with no connection to Tibet who acquired substantial collections (Martin 2014).

Some of the acquisitions summarised here were evidently products of long residence in Asia, just as others were made while the collector was simply passing through. In 1930, a donation of artefacts and photographs from South and Southeast Asia from Frederick Oscar Lechmere-Oertel included numerous items from Tibet or demonstrating strong Tibetan influence. In India, Oertel had been an engineer for the Public Works Department in Agra, an archaeologist conducting excavations in Sarnath in 1904-5, and had made several expeditions to Burma. Where his Tibetan acquisitions were made is uncertain, although he recorded that two incised stones were picked up 'on the Leh road to Kashmir'. Another collection which came to the museum in several stages over three decades demonstrates similar connections to colonial, scientific and scholarly networks. In 1937, George Howlett Tipper, former head of the Geological Survey of India, High Commissioner of India and President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, donated 'two brass temple lamps, prayer-wheel, brass and copper trumpet, pencase, and bronze dagger' from Tibet along with items from Rajasthan and Chitral. Tipper died in 1947, and in the same year his wife, the distinguished metallurgist and first female Reader in Engineering at Cambridge University, Dr Constance Tipper, donated ritual and household items. Evidently, there were some things that Constance was more attached to than others, for further pieces were given up in 1951 and, finally, in 1967, with the donation of the enigmatic polychrome figure of the Gelugpa lama that someone, perhaps her husband, had opened up years before (1967.203).

The last major collection to be acquired is also perhaps the most significant in terms of its profile and its impact upon the Museum. Frederick Williamson was David MacDonald's successor



as British Trade Agent in Gyantse and Yatung in southern Tibet between 1924 and 1926, and served as British Policitical Officer in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet from 1933 until his untimely death in 1935. He and his wife Margaret, whom he married in Gangtok in Sikkim in May 1933, enjoyed long and close relationships with Himalayan royalty and aristocracy – Margaret maintaining an interest in Tibetan affairs, and an intimate friendship with the Royal family of Bhutan in particular, up until her own death in 1988.

Perhaps the couple's best-known contribution is the unique collection of approximately 1700 photographs and 23 reels of 16mm film, taken by Frederick Williamson between 1930 and 1935. This material has proved to be a valuable resource of Tibetan visual history and heritage, for Tibetans and others, the films in particular made accessible by the Digital Himalaya project (www.digitalhimalaya.com). However, their collection also includes some 155 artefacts, donated by Margaret Williamson to Emmanuel College in 1972 and later deposited in the

The Drawing Room of the Residency, Gangtok

*Photograph by Margaret Williamson,
5 March 1934.
MAA N.104155.WIL*

Museum in 1976, followed by a donation of a small number of additional objects to the Museum in 1988. Like the photographs, these artefacts document the religious as well as the elite social life of Tibet and the Himalayas in the 1930s, from the rich collection of elaborate tea-serving equipment to Buddhist images and accessories from monasteries such as Samye (bSam yas) and Reting (Rwa sgreng). But perhaps the most resonant stories the collection contains are those of exchanges and intimacy across cultures, if not always across class: the incense burner given by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, for example, or the enigmatic figure of Padmasambhava, a wedding present from the *Chogyal* (*chos rgyal*, 'dharma^rrāja' or king) of Sikkim that once had pride of place in the Williamsons' drawing room.



top row

Handheld wheel with Lantsha script

Darjeeling, India. Height. 22.7 cm.

Deposited by George H. Colchester. D 1901.10

Handheld wheel with Devanagari script

India or Siberia. Height 22.5 cm.

Collected by Charles H. Hawes. E 1902.281

Brass openwork wheel

Tibet. Height 26.9 cm.

Purchased from a Tibetan in Nepal by Cecil and Georgette Bendall, 1898. E 1907.517

Handheld wheel with silver barrel

Tibet. Height 28 cm. Collected 1905.

Donated by Lady Schuster. 1947.786 A

middle row

Copper barrel with wooden finial

Tibet. Height 27.8 cm.

Collected by F.O. Lechmere Oertel. 1930.1637

Handheld wheel with copper barrel

Tibet. Height 25.9 cm. Donated by A.F. Schofield,

University Librarian. 1937.460

Handheld wheel with Lantsha script

Tibet. Height 27 cm.

Collected by George H. Tipper. 1937.468

Squat barrel with Lantsha script

Tibet. Height 24.5 cm.

Donated by Mrs J.B. Howard. 1947.616

bottom row

Copper wheel with Nepali script

Northeast India. Height 25.2 cm.

Collected by Sir Frank Engledow. 1981.9

Plain copper and brass wheel

Samye Monastery, Tibet. Height 25 cm.

Frederick and Margaret Williamson Collection. 1988.502

Repoussé hand-held prayer wheel

Tibet. Height 23.9 cm.

Donated by Miss I.F. Grant, 1954. Z 20400

White metal wheel with Lantsha script

Tibet or India. Height 31.4 cm.

Donated by Jack H. Driberg. 1947. Z 31897

Prayer wheels

maṇi 'khor lo

Commonly known as 'prayer wheels' after the rolls of mantras (not, in fact, prayers at all) that they contain, the mani khorlo (*maṇi 'khor lo*) is ubiquitous in Tibetan Buddhist culture in a number of different forms, from the small hand-held device spun on a long handle with a simple counterweight to the enormous fixed wheel in a monastery that can only be turned with great effort. Each wheel contains hundreds or thousands of mantras printed over and over again. Spinning the wheel is the same as reciting the mantra thousands of times, thus accruing merits efficiently. The larger the prayer wheel, the more mantras it can contain. It was perhaps the prayer wheel that Waddell had in mind when he dubbed Vajrayāna Buddhism a form of 'mechanised religion.' One might rather see the prayer wheel as an affirmation of the power of words, unmediated by human speech or reading: words can be set in motion by the turning of the hand, or even the elements such as wind, water or the heat and light of the sun.



Solar powered prayer wheel

Plastic. Made in China. Height 12 cm

Purchased India, 2014.

Private Collection



07 | DIGITAL PATHS TO TIBETAN LITERATURE

Hildegard Diemberger and Stephen Hugh-Jones

The use of digital technologies in the reproduction of texts has profoundly transformed peoples' attitudes toward books across the globe. It has also transformed the production and format of books themselves. It is often assumed that digital technologies will lead inexorably to a universalisation and standardisation that will override cultural differences and local identities. However, as this exhibition shows, what books are and how they are understood depends on the particular cultural and religious context in which they are made and used. This context also affects the way in which digital technologies are used in relation to books. This is clearly illustrated in the Buddhist setting by the history of two inspirational figures in Tibetan studies who have played a seminal role in a chain of projects that led to the current exhibition: Ellis Gene Smith and Zenkar Rinpoche.

When the Dalai Lama went into exile in 1959 he was followed by some 100,000 Tibetans. They brought along what they considered most precious, and many took with them their sacred books. After the exile community had established itself in India, an intense reprinting activity of ancient Tibetan texts started. Gene Smith, who was then working in India for the Library of Congress, played an important part in this process and became a legendary figure in Tibetology. He eventually established the Tibet Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), which makes an increasing wealth of Tibetan resources available online, and which he directed until his death in



Zenkar Rinpoche, Raymond Allchin and Ellis Gene Smith examining Tibetan books

Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge, 2003.

Photograph by Steve Jones

2010. In this enterprise he joined forces with Zenkar Rinpoche, an eastern Tibetan lama who, after the Cultural Revolution, took a keen interest in the recovery and restoration of the Buddhist resources that have survived the turmoil in the Tibetan and Mongolian areas of China. They both shared the same vision, reflected in the brochure: *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: Creating a Digital Path to Tibetan Literature*:

'TBRC would like to see every monastery, every Tibetan master, every scholar, every translator, and every interested reader have access to the complete range of Tibetan literature, regardless of social, political, or economic circumstances.'

Using digital technology, books and fragments of books that had been scattered through colonial history and the Cultural Revolution could thus be

Burkhard Quessel, Curator of Tibetan Collections at the British Library, repatriating digitised copies of Tibetan books to Samding Monastery

Samding (bSam sdings) Monastery, Tibet, 2007.

Photograph by Stephen Hugh-Jones



Digitising scriptures in the field
Gangteng monastery, Bhutan, 2007.
Photograph courtesy of Karma Phuntsho

reconnected as if they were part of a global jigsaw puzzle. Their very existence had the power to mobilise people both locally and globally, exercising an irresistible moral pressure, both in religious and secular cultural terms, and giving rise to a global network. The Cambridge-based *Tibetan-Mongolian Rare Books and Manuscripts Project*, the first of a series of AHRC-funded projects on this subject, was part of this network.

Beyond the planned work on the Tibetan collections at the University Library and other UK libraries, this initial project began to link what was going on at Cambridge with conservation and digitisation projects that had been developing in the Tibetan areas of China, India, and Bhutan. Encountering monks and lay scholars involved in such projects was a revelation for most members of the Cambridge team. They became progressively aware of numerous formal and informal, secular and religious, local and transnational networks centred on recovering, conserving, cataloguing, and reprinting books and aware too of the moral pressure that the very existence of these surviving books could exercise on the people involved. The initial project, which brought to light some unique Tibetan

early prints and manuscripts hidden away in UK libraries, also instigated reflections on the nature of Buddhist books and on the transformative process that was unfolding with the introduction of digital technologies in the handling of textual collections.

Digitisation opens up a new space in which to negotiate the significance of texts as objects. This is because, at the same time as it severs some of the traditional links between person and text, it also enables a reproduction that is conceptually closer to block printing than movable type. This is dramatically illustrated in the institutions that have sprung up, in Tibet, in other parts of China and in the Himalayan countries, to preserve and digitise Buddhist scriptures.

In these places, as if to undo the potential alienation introduced by a foreign technology and reappropriate the meaning of the technological process, trainee monks and nuns sitting in front of serried ranks of computer screens rock back and forth, chanting the words of ancient texts as they input these same texts and transform them into digital format. Next to them, young boys and girls, usually dropouts from the school system, learn how to read ancient Tibetan texts and type them into the computer. Although officially a purely secular cultural endeavour recognized and authorized as such, the whole operation is led by Buddhist scholars and funded by private sponsors, usually wealthy Tibetan traders who reenact ancient forms of Buddhist patronage by funding the reproduction of texts as a merit-making activity.

The output has a variety of different formats, ranging from the loose leaves of the *pothi*-format volumes that appeal more to the traditional Buddhist audiences and are better suited to ritual use, through the familiar codex-shaped books that are less sacred and more apt to modern forms of scholarship, to digital objects stored on CDs and hard disks. Digital objects have even started to acquire ritual efficacy: we have seen CDs conceived as rotating prayer wheels or holy objects wrapped in book



'robes' and placed on the altar; digitally generated mantras placed inside conventional prayer-wheels; instructions for harnessing hard disks as prayer wheels; and sacred texts digitally photographed and instantly shared by mobile phone or the internet. More generally, digital technologies, having become central to global efforts to preserve and distribute Buddhist scriptures, are now inherently part of Buddhism's ritual world of beliefs and practices. All this is clearly expressed in a few verses of praise by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, reported in the brochure *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: Creating a Digital Path to Tibetan Literature*:

*I'll be doing prostrations every morning to this computer.
Thank you so much.
You are giving all of us a huge gem, a jewel and a gem.*
(Wallman 2010)

Transforming thousand-year old texts into digital form
Lhasa, Tibet, 2005.
Photograph by Stephen Hugh-Jones

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Photograph of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama

'Of all Derrick's many photographs ... another photograph which we particularly treasured was one Derrick had taken of the Dalai Lama in the gardens of the Chense Lingka, the only informal photograph ever taken of the 13th Dalai Lama.'

Margaret Williamson 1987: 143-4

This is a unique framed individual portrait of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso (Thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876-1933) in the garden of Chense Lingka, his private residence on the outskirts of Lhasa, on Thursday 21 September 1933 [2nd day of the 8th month 2060, the Female Water Bird Year of the 16th Rabjung Calendrical Cycle]. The informal setting and the relaxed pose in which the Dalai Lama sits, facing the photographer and the viewer in the comfort of his own garden, allude to the complex tangle of relationships, biographies and agencies bound up within collections such as those of MAA. But the image also tells a story about ritual efficacy and its transformation through digital media.

Photographic images, like *thangkas* or statues, are considered supports for the body (*sku rten*) and therefore to provide access to the Buddha and, through him, to enlightenment. Photographs of high lamas are often placed on altars and can be used to confer blessings, just as books, sculptural images and other sacred artefacts might be. Recent decades have seen the efflorescence of such images in digital form, made accessible online by such initiatives as Digital Himalaya, which first put this image on the internet at the beginning of this century. Digital transformations dramatically expand the efficacy of images such as this, not just in the museum or in an altar, but globally and simultaneously.

Lhasa, Tibet. 21 September 1933.
 Photograph by Frederick Williamson
 Donated by Margaret D. Williamson, 1988. P.109918.WIL





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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 MUSEUMS
 & BOTANIC GARDEN

Buddha's Word: The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond charts the story of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, as artefacts with distinctive social lives, as sacred objects and as Buddha's relics, with their own potency and agency. It draws on research and collections from across the University of Cambridge, its Museums and the University Library and traces the multiple paths that books have taken as they have spread the words of Buddha, throughout Asia and across the world. The written words of Buddha's teaching have undergone radical transformations as travelling texts: from manuscript to printing and from palm leaves to digital dharma.