

# The maṇḍalas of Touen-Huang

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The word maṇḍala is composed of maṇḍa, the essence and la “to obtain”. Śākyamitra, a Tibetan scholar, explains that “the maṇḍala is the essence of the highest enlightenment realized as it is” in a commentary on the Sūtra “the Tattvasaṃgraha”.

The highest enlightenment (anuttarasambodhi) denotes the domain of the enlightenment. It urges the self-realization of the life, and indicates the eternal return to the life. The life does not mean the animism, but it realizes the self including not only the mountains and rivers, but also every tree and grass. Everything, that is, there is a representation of the power of life. The worship of the pair of maṇḍalas as the object of the central divinity means the respect of the life. The realization of life means the vivid movement of the wisdom as the compassion (mahākaruṇa). The great compassion is the origin of the social activity of men in the world. Kobōdaishi, Kūkai, teaches in his “Hizō-hōyaku”: If there is no compassion, the expedients are deficient. As it is the case in the world at any time, it is based on the great mercy to remove the violence and obstacles and to keep the social benefice and to defend the war.

The prayer of the Heike family for the birth of royal son can be agreed just as the making of the two maṇḍala in the east and the west. Kiyomori found out the mercy that is explained in the Vairocana-sūtra and it was alive in his mind. But the end of the Heikes was miserable indeed.

The maṇḍala was made first in India and the method was transmitted to Japan through China. It was because the esoteric buddhism entered through the same route. Looking at the process of the development of the maṇḍala, we can notice that the esthetic consciousness in India that can be easily composed theoretically as the maṇḍala is in fact supported by the great cosmogony. (J. Auboyer, the Art in East Asia, translated by myself, p. 11)

The following story is handed down in India: “The cosmos is rectangular,

limited with mountains and is surrounded by some oceans. The axis stands in the center up to the sun, and enters deep into the earth traversing the atmosphere. The cosmos is like the human body. The rock is the bone, the rivers are blood, and the wind is the breath. India accomplished the architectonic and decorative theme, aesthetic norm and the technical rules on the basis of the cosmogony. The theoretical elements of the maṇḍala is here. If the world of the maṇḍala is compared to the chapel (*devatāghara*, the divine house), it is a copy of the celestial world. The celestial world is a copy of the mundane world. Therefore a temple should be built imitating the celestial world. The sacred temple, "the seat of god" "the sacred mountain" the axis of the world stands in the center. One or many enclosures around the sacred temple denote some mountains that separate the mundane world by huge quadrangles. "The pond" around the mountain is similar to the great ocean that encloses the earth on every direction. The contact of man with the Buddha or the god can be established by it. If the temple is a micro-cosmos, the object of the cult is another cosmos. The donor of the statue tries to identify himself with the statue by comparing his name with the name of the Buddha, and to make a statue of cult of the same length and weight as his own body, or to show distinctly some association with the statue. In consequence strict rules were needed for the manufacture, painting and installment, and opening the eye of the cult image. And the content has been preserved exactly. This aroused naturally the feeling (*bhava*) and sentiment (*rasa*) for meditating and worshipping in the mind of the devotees and priests.

According to the myth, both the gods and the demons made the churning of the milky sea by means of the *nāga Vāsuki* as a rope and the Mt. Maṇḍala in search of *amṛta* (nectar) that was lost on the occasion of the destruction of the world. Then Viṣṇu transformed himself into a tortoise, became the axis of the rotation at the bottom of the ocean. God Viṣṇu supported the earth that was going to sink by the weight of the huge mountains. He came to create the unique treasure. That world is nothing but this world. The mythical explanation of the creation of the world is found in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*. (*Mahābhārata* I-18, XII-46, XII-348. *Kūrma* p. 1. *Bhāgavata* p. I-3, 16, II-7, 13, XIII-5, 7, X-

40, 18).

The conception of the Chinese<sup>1)</sup> on the cosmos is expressed by the architecture. I have explained that the mundane world is a copy of the celestial world. Since a temple is a copy of the cosmos, it has naturally a symbolic sign<sup>2)</sup>. "The basis imitates the earth and the roof imitates the heaven. The structure of the human body represents these worlds. The human breath is its life, and it corresponds properly to the breath of the cosmos." The most favorite conception based on the idea is expressed: "The heaven is the roof of the world that is supported with four or eight pillars that are symbolized with the mountains<sup>3)</sup>. There is a mountain at the north-western corner of the earth. It is shown by the nine-storied building surrounded with an enclosure. The splendid garden contains some wells and numerous gates, and it is said that one who can climb the building can ascend the heaven. Aurel Stein (1862-1943) brought some maṇḍalas from Tun-huang of which the iconography are clear.

(1) The Buddha-uṣṇīṣa maṇḍala painted with faint color on paper. A dhāraṇī is written with minute letters around the picture. It is dated from the end of T'ang. There is an inscription of the title of "Mahābuddhoṣṇīṣa-tathāgata-sitātapatra-dhāraṇī-mantra-sūtra" in 60 lines. Four legs are drawn in the four outside corners, and are surrounded with hanging curtains.

(2) The caturmudrā-maṇḍala drawn with black lines without colours, representing the catur-mudrā maṇḍala of the Genzu-maṇḍala of the Vajra-dhātu. The figure of Mahāvairocana-Buddha corresponds to the central divinity of the catur-mudrā-maṇḍala of Vajra-dhātu in the Gobi-shin-kan.

(3) The Samaya-maṇḍala drawn with faint colours on paper composed of threefold organization representing an eight-spoked wheel in the center.

(4) Avalokiteśvara-dhāraṇī maṇḍala drawn with lines on silk composed of threefold enclosures. The central divinity is Avalokiteśvara-Bodhisattva according to the fascicle no. 9 of the Amoghapāśa-mantra-sūtra (translated by Bodhiruci).

(5) Anusāra maṇḍala drawn on paper with the composition of threefold enclosures.

(6) A maṇḍala of an altar represents the altar of the cessation of calamity drawn on paper<sup>1)</sup>.

(7) The Amitābha-maṇḍala painted on silk represents the Bodhisattva who is on the central altar with Dhyāna-mudrā. The no. 7 has a close connection with the remnant works of Amitābha-Buddha coming down to receive the devotee.

The remaining pieces of the same type are classified into two kinds. They are the Buddha of nine categories who comes down to receive the devotee that belongs to the T'ang painting and the Buddha with two acolytes that belong to the Sung painting. The Mongolia-Sutzen expedition directed by P. K. Kozlov (1803-1935) a Russian traveler in 1908 found out several thousand books, manuscripts, Buddha statues and Buddhist paintings on linen, silk and paper at Buddhist stūpas in the ruins of Kara-khoto (black capital).

The painting of Amitābha is kept now in the Ermitage Museum in Soviet Russia. An interesting point is that a great light is emanated from the ūṛṇā of Amitābha Buddha. It expressed the meaning of delivery of the devotee in the light of the Buddha.

Kara-Khoto means Ethina, the capital of the Tagoot, Hsihia. Expansion of creed of Amitābha among the inhabitants of the city is proved by many paintings of Amitābha, whose composition is definite and the type completed.

No specimen of the figure of the reception in 9 categories has been found. The mission of Kōzui Ōtani found out fragments of many wall-paintings of the pure-land in some Buddhist topes at Hocchō in East Turkistan<sup>4</sup>). They are paintings of pure-land in 9 categories just as those that were found by Stein and Pelliot at Touen-huang, but no painting of reception in 9 categories has been found out. I saw, however, many paintings of Amitābha pure-land and of Amitāyus-sūtra in the cave temples of Touen-huang. It is hard to choose any painting of Amitābha pure-land other than the painting of Amitāyus-sūtra. The painting of the introductory chapter and 16 meditations drawn in the margin and in the bottom of the painting of Amitāyus-sūtra are the origin of the pure land painting in Japan, for example, the so-called Taima-maṇḍala, and the wall-painting of the Phoenix temple of Byōdōin monastery.

A procession of a Tibetan king is painted in the cave no. 159, showing the costumes of the nobility in the period of Tibetan occupation.

China entered in a period of political tumult since the late T'ang to the five

dynasties. The aspect of military combat was prevalent in the main land of China. Chang-an, the metropolis lost her position as the center of the politics and culture, and the fine art became deteriorated.

Since Touen-huang is situated in the western border land, Chōgi-chō, the governor in the end of T'ang and Sō-gi-kin and their families governed the region west of the Yellow River for 130 years, maintaining the peace, and thereby contributing to the Buddhist culture at Touen-huang.

The expulsion of Buddhism by Bu-sō occurred in 845 and six years later Chōgi-chō drove away the Tibetans, recovering Chan-an. One of the contemporary wall-painting draws a nun under a tree and her attendant girl in the cave no. 17 that is derived from the traditional style of the flourishing T'ang period. Our photo H shows the painting Raudrākṣa fighting with Śāriputra on the western wall of cave no. 196. The painting takes the tale of the competition of Śāriputra with an heretic Raudrākṣa of Śrāvastī and subjugation of the heretic before the construction of Jetavana monastery.

Raudrākṣa was skilled in working magic. When he recited a mystic formula confronting Śāriputra in the assembly of many people, a tree grew up and it had many flowers at once. It soon grew up covering the place of the assembly. Śāriputra then aroused a tempest by his magical power. The tree was uprooted and the hut of Raudrākṣa was destroyed.

The heretics tried to support pillars and to tie with the ropes in embarrassment, but in vain. They competed in various ways. For example, when Raudrākṣa made a strong bull by a mystic formula, Śāriputra made a lion, who ate the bull, and when the former built a mountain, the latter gave rise to Vajrapāṇi who destroyed the mountain with his vajra. In this way Raudrākṣa was utterly defeated.

The ruling power of the land west of the river was shifted to the family of Sung. And the cave-temples of Touen-huang were maintained by the Sung family. It is remarkable that there are the appellations "the painters office" or "the one who can paint" among the inscriptions of the donors in the Yurin caves near An-hsi that were excavated by Sung family. It is supposed that they contributed to the art of the cave-temples to some extent. The cave-temples built by

Sung family have a style depicting the local colour of their native country. The king of Khotan and his queen are depicted in the painting of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra” in the cave no. 98. The queen was a daughter of Sōgikin. The king of Khotan is dressed in Chinese style<sup>5)</sup>.

The figure of Mt. Sumeru is represented in the front room of the cave no. 1 of Yunkang, and in a cave of Touen-huang dating from T'ang.

Many figures of Asura have six arms. A figure of Asura among the 8 categories of divinities owned by Kōfukuji, Nara, has six arms.

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- 1) The following books notice maṇḍalas among the paintings at Touen-huang. Eiichi Matsumoto 「Tonkōga-no-kenkyū」 1930. Shachiryū 謝稚柳 “Description of the art of Touen-huang” 1957.
  - 2) Concerning the Chinese view of the king see Yūkei Matsunaga “The view of kings in the Esoteric scriptures in Chinese translation.” 41 Shōwa, Mikkyō-Bunka vol. 77. 78, p. 79-95.
  - 3) As for the Esoteric Buddhism in the end of Tang See Ryōshū Misaki “The Esoteric Buddhism in the end of T'ang and the Susshiddhi” 40 Showa, Mikkyōshironshū. p. 237-257.
  - 4) A. Stein entered here in 1907, Pelliot in the following year and later Ōtani mission too. They took out of the cave tens of thousand old manuscripts prior to the 10th century. They had been accumulated here since the 5th century.
  - 5) The Esoteric Buddhist community of Amoghavajra led the Buddhist circle in the end of the Tang dynasty aspiring for the rites of protection of the State and praying for the rainfall, removal of calamity because the dynasty suffered from the rebellion of Anrokusan. More than 100 priests attended the temple in the royal palace reciting the Esoteric Buddhist scriptures, the Ninnō-Prajñā Pāramitā.

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