TWO DHĀRANĪ-INSRIPTIONS FROM TOMBSS AT DALI (YÜN NAN)

OSKAR VON HINÜBER

ORIENTALISCHES SEMINAR
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG/BRSG.

Invited by the Government of Yünnan, Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana paid an official visit to that part of China late in 1985, the events of which have been described in great detail in a beautifully produced book entitled Yün nan printed in Bangkok 2529/1986.

In the afternoon of the 12th December 1985, Her Royal Highness and her entourage met the members of the "Historical Circle of Dali." During the ensuing discussion some rubbings of inscriptions on old tombstones were shown to the Thai visitors, among them Dr. Hans Penth from the Social Research Institute of Chiang Mai University as one of the four scholars accompanying Her Royal Highness. Dr. Penth was able to photograph altogether five of these rubbings, among them two which are written almost entirely in an Indian script; that is, nos. 1 and 3 according to his numbering. Both photographs were shown to me during my visit to Chiang Mai early in 1986, and I am very much obliged to Dr. Penth for his suggestion and kind permission to publish them.

These inscriptions are mentioned briefly on p. 166 of the book Yün nān referred to above, where it is said that their language is Sanskrit, their script devanāgarī, and their contents gāthā, i.e. magic formulas. Further it is stated there that they are found on tombstones, that the names of the deceased persons are given in Chinese, and that nobody has ever attempted to read the Sanskrit inscriptions.

This is not entirely correct. First of all, as a glance at the plates shows, the script is clearly not devanāgarī, a name used since the 18th century for a variety of the Northern Indian scripts and e.g. for Hindi today, but the well known siddham script, widespread among Chinese Buddhists and described by R.H. van Gulik: Siddham. An Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and Japan. Šāta-Pijaka series 247. Delhi 1980 (reprint of the 1953 edition).

Secondly, these inscriptions from the so-called "mushroom tombs" are well known and were read long ago, for as early as 1946 the German sinologist Walter Liebenthal (1886 - 1982), who also was deeply interested in Buddhism, visited Yün nan, and particularly Dali and Likiang, to do research on that religion there.

The results of his investigations have been published in a series of four articles:

1. Sanskrit Inscriptions from Yün nan I (and Dates of the Foundation of the Main Pagodas in That Province), Monumenta Serica 12, 1947, 1-40.

2. A Sanskrit Inscription from Yün nan, Sino-Indian Studies III parts 1,2. Calcutta 1947.10.-12

3. An Early Buddha Statue from Yün nan, Indian Historical Quarterly 32.1956.352. foll.


In the last of these four contributions, Liebenthal identified the siddham inscriptions on the mushroom tombs as the uṣṇīṣadvijaya-dhāraṇī, which, according to his findings, was extremely popular from the Sung (960 - 1279 AD) to the Ming (1368 - 1644) dynasties. Further, Liebenthal points out that all copies of the uṣṇīṣadvijaya-dhāraṇī he saw in Yün nan contain the typical phrase tathāgatamāte dasabhūmipratīṣṭhitā, which occurs in the literary tradition of this dhāraṇī only in the Sung text revised by Dharmadeva, a monk from Nālandā, who died in China in 1001 AD, and who translated into Chinese nos. 974 (a) and 978 Taishō Tripitaka, both containing the uṣṇīṣadvijaya-dhāraṇī. Because other versions found elsewhere in China, as e.g. the one published later by D.C. Sircar: Some Epigraphic and Manuscript Records, in: Journal of Ancient Indian History 3. Calcutta 1969/70. 30 - 49: II. An Inscription in siddham script, 39 - 41, do not include this particular phrase, Liebenthal cautiously suggests that Dharmadeva might have brought this dhāraṇī to Yün nan. Consequently, the date of the introduction of this text to that part of China would be the 10th century AD.

Now, this conclusion can be shown to have been somewhat premature by Dr. Penth's inscription no. 3, for this inscription does not have the typical Yün nan version of the uṣṇīṣadvijaya-dhāraṇī, in contradistinction to inscription no. 1, which confirms Liebenthal's evidence. Therefore it may not be totally useless to reproduce this new textual evidence here as read from Dr. Penth's photographs. At the same time this may be helpful in making Liebenthal's researches known, which so far seem to have escaped even the attention of scholars on the spot in Yün nan.
The text of both versions of the उष्णविजयाधरणि is extremely faulty, and both are incomplete, breaking off in the middle of the text, probably due to the lack of space on the stone. In order not to destroy any philological evidence, the mistakes committed by the scribes have not been corrected, but the text from the tomb inscription published by Liebenthal (1955), p. 60 note 2, which is far better, has been printed here as an interlinear version1 to facilitate understanding.

The rather many errors seem to be due partly to the fact that the scribes wrote down their texts “phonetically” — that is, as they heard them recited, which might account for e.g. सत्य-पलामित, no. 1 line 9 foll.: सत्यपलामित; सहसारालासिनि, no. 3 line 13 foll.: सहसारालासिनि, partly to a seemingly somewhat imperfect knowledge of the शिल्ध्रि script, especially on the part of the scribe of inscription no. 3: लि stands for शिल in line 3, for शि in line 17 and for शिल in line 13 as a kind of substitute for any difficult ligature the scribe was unable to remember.

Instances where the script is not entirely clear have been put into parentheses, as e.g. no. 3 line 15 parāniḥḥita for parāmih, which if interpreted correctly, would agree with other epigraphical evidence such as अनिधिविभा for अनिधिविभाः. A series of dots (…) indicates a divergence from the wording of the द्धिध्रि published by Liebenthal.

Both द्धिध्रि begin with the शिल्ध्रि mark; in no. 3 the initial name: नाम has been written vertically in lines 1 and 2. The Chinese headline is the same for both inscriptions: उष्णविजयाधरणि, the sacred mantra.” Strangely enough, no. 3 does not contain any name, in contrast to no. 1 line 19 foll.: “for the dead CHANG; may Kuan-yin (Avalokitesvara)… the way leading to his tomb (?).” As Dr. Penth kindly informed me, his inscription no. 2, which is written in Chinese and dates to 1431 AD, is said to stem from the same tomb as no. 1, but not from the same stone. The name of the person buried here is TS’Al.

Only this last tombstone of TS’Al shows the series of the अष्टमंगल, the “eight auspicious symbols,” to the right and to the left of the Chinese text: स्वस्तिका, कीर्तिन “tortoise,” मिना or मल्लय “fish,” कात्सा “pitcher,” वोजा, साप्त्तिका “shell,” पुष्पगढ़ा “vase of plenty,” चातरा “umbrella.”

In the middle of the semicircle above the inscriptions a seated Buddha is shown in different attitudes, which has been identified tentatively by Liebenthal as Amitābha. No reading of the complicated mystical syllables surrounding these Buddhas has been attempted here, nor have the द्धिध्रि been translated, as these magic formulas do not normally give any coherent text.

### Inscription no. 1 (Plate 1)

1. [Chinese text: fo-ting-tsun-sheng t'o-lo-ni shen-chou]
2. (सिद्धां) नामभगवतसर्वत्रलक्ष्यप्रपतिनमोभगवतसर्वत्रलक्ष्यप्रपतिन
2. + शित्या बुद्धाया नामेत्र तद्यथा श्रोतामो ह्रं शुद्धाया शित्या बुद्धाया नेनामेत्र तद्यथा श्रोतामो ह्रं शुद्धाया
Inscription no. 3 (Plate 2):

1. na om (siddham) [Chinese text: fo-ting-tsun-sheng t'o-lo-ni shen-chou]
2. ma bhagav(ato) sarvarabhakapratovi-namo bhagavate sarvaratrikalyaprativi-
3. sīhḍa(lya) vuddhāya ti namu tadyathā sīhḍa(lya) buddhāya te namaḥ tadyathā
4. om bhrum 3 suddhāya 3 viśuddhāya om bhrum 3 viśuddhāya 3 viśuddhāya 3
5. viśuddhāya mucaya mucaya viṃuca-
mocaya 3 viṃocaya 3
6. ya viṃucaya asamasamasamāta-
asamasamasamantā-
7. vabhasasphāraṇagatagaganasava-
vabhasasphāraṇagati gaganasava-
8. bhāvāvīśuddh(ā) adhiṣṭhuti māṁ sarvata-
bhāvāvīśuddha abhisicantu māṁ sarvata-
thāgatasugatavalavacanam(t)大型多人
9. (ddho)ṣi(kaiḥ)ra mahāmudramatapatai
bhisekarir
mahāmudramantarapadiḥ
10. (h) āhara āhara ayīsandhalani
āhara 3 āyūḥandhariṇi
11. āhara āhara gaganaviśuddha u-
sādhaya 3 gaganaviśuddha u-

Plate 2: Inscription no. 3, Dali, Yunnan. 1431 AD. Rubbing of a tomb inscription.
13. hrna(s)avijaya parasudhi sahansa-
    srija(v)ayaparaisuddhaḥ sahasra-
14. rala(śīt)misaṃjuddhi to sarvatathāga-
    raśīmisaṃcūḍite sarvatathāga-
15. tavabhinā satāpāram(t)āsara-
    tāvalokani ṣāṭpātamitāpāri-
16. bhurana sarvatathāgatamāto ta-
    pūraṇa sarvatathāgatamāte da-
17. subhunapati(hṛpi)ta sarvatathāga-
    sābhūnīpratiṣṭhithe sarvatathāga-
18. tahṛdayādhopithāna + śītō mutro
tahṛdayādiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhithe mudre 3
19. (muvi) mahāmutro vajrakayasamgata-
    mahāmudre vajrakayasamghāta-
20. na paraśuddha sarvakarmavara(qa)pa-
    nāparaśuddhe sarvakarmāvaraṇaṣa-
21. (tri)suddha pṛñavītavarta(y) viśuddha
    riśuddhe pratiṇivartaya āyurviśuddhe

The text of the ussivijaya-dhāraṇī, which has been al-
ways very popular wherever Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished,
was printed for the first time by F. Max Müller and Bunji
Nanjio: The Ancient Palm-Leafs Containing the Prajñā-
Pāramitā - Hridaya-Sūtra and the Uṣṇīṣa-Vijaya-Dhāraṇī.
Anecdota Oxoniensia I, 3. Oxford 1884 (reprinted Amsterdam
1972). The manuscript used here belongs to a temple in Japan
and can be traced back to the 6th century AD. Consequently it
was by far the oldest Sanskrit manuscript known at the time of
its publication, before many older manuscripts came to light in
Central Asia, and among them again the ussivijaya-dhāraṇī
published by R.A.F. Hoernle: The "unknown languages"
of Eastern Turkestan II, in: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
1911: 447-477, especially p. 461 foll. with plate V. The same
manuscript was edited again with corrections by H.W. Bailey:
Khotanese Texts V. Cambridge 1963, p. 359 foll., nos. 728 and
729.

In spite of their importance, the study of dhāraṇīs is still a
relatively neglected field of Buddhist studies, and it is only in
the very recent past that some studies have been devoted to this
literature. Thus a kind of general survey has been given by J.W.
de Jong: A New History of Tantric Literature in India, in: Studies of Mysticism in Honor of
Kobo-Daishi’s Nirvāna. Acta Indologica VI, Nara 1984, 91-
113, on dhāraṇī p. 95 foll.16 Different aspects of the actual use
and ritual meaning have been discussed in the following impor-
tant papers by G. Schopen:

The Text on the "Dhāraṇī Stones from Abhayagiriya:" A
Minor Contribution to the Study of Mahāyāna Literature in
ceylon, in: Journal of the International Association of Buddhist

The Bodhigarbhaṅkāralakṣaṇa and Vimalosūriṇa Dhāraṇīs
in Indian Inscriptions, in: Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde
Südasiens 29,1985.119 - 149.

Burial "ad sanctos" and the Physical Presence of the Bud-

In the last article mentioned, G. Schopen draws attention to the
application of dhāraṇīs in funeral rites (p. 199 foll.). Similar
practices can be observed in present day Nepal, where certain
dhāraṇīs are recited at the moment of death, and others while the
funerary procession is moving towards the cremation ground,
as recently pointed out by S. Lienhard.11 This close connection
of certain dhāraṇīs to death is confirmed again by the tombstone
inscriptions from Yunnan.

However, it is not only in Mahāyāna that the ussivijaya
is related to death. In a recent major contribution to the study
of Thai Buddhism by L. Cabaud: Une Herméneutique Bou-
ddhique Contemporaine de Thaïlande: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
Publications de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, Volume CL. Paris 1988, p. 246 with note 6, pp. 264, 272, the place in modern Thai Buddhism of the Pali uñhassa (or: uñhissa) vijaya, which is sometimes called a sutta, sometimes a jātaka, is thoroughly discussed. Although the Pāli and the Sanskrit versions are not identical, both seem to serve the same purpose, namely protection from death. The exact relation between both these versions, which remains obscure at present, calls for further research, which might well include investigations into the interrelations between Mahāyāna dhāraṇīs and Theravāda purīta.12

ENDNOTES


3) It is not clear, however, whether the rubbings really show the complete inscriptions, which might be partly covered by earth.

4) The reading as given by Liebenthal has been checked against the photo accompanying his article. A negligible number of mistakes, such as the persistent “2” for “3,” have been corrected without further comment.


7) It is my pleasure to thank Mrs. Hu Hai-yan, M.A., University of Peking, at present University of Copenhagen, for help in understanding the Chinese texts.


12) The importance of this text in Thailand is further underlined by the fact that it is found rather frequently in Northern Thai manuscripts: Catalogue of Palm-Leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University 1978 - 1986, p. 298.
