

TWO DHĀRANĪ -INSCRIPTIONS FROM TOMBS AT DALI (YÜNNAN)

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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 *Yünnān* 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 *Yünnān* 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 Hindī today,¹ 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*. Śata-Piṭaka 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 Yünnan, 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 Yunnan I (and Dates of the Foundation of the Main Pagodas in That Province)*, *Monumenta Serica* 12, 1947, 1-40.

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

3. *An Early Buddha Statue from Yünnan*, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 32.1956.352. foll.

4. *Sanskrit Inscriptions from Yünnan II*, *Sino-Indian Studies V part 1*. Santiniketan 1955. 46-68.

In the last of these four contributions, Liebenthal indentified the *siddham* inscriptions on the mushroom tombs as the *uṣṇīṣaviṣaya-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 *uṣṇīṣaviṣaya-dhāraṇī* he saw in Yünnan contain the typical phrase *tathāgatamāte dasabhūmipraṭiṣṭhite*, 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 Tripiṭaka, both containing the *uṣṇīṣaviṣaya-dhāraṇī*². 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 Yünnan. 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 Yünnan version of the *uṣṇīṣaviṣaya-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 Yünnan.

The text of both versions of the *uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* 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.¹ 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 Liebenenthal (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. *satā-palamitā*, no. 1 line 9 foll.: *ṣaṭpāramitā*; *sahāsaralaṣimi*, no. 3 line 13 foll.: *sahasraraṣmi*, partly due to a seemingly somewhat imperfect knowledge of the *siddham* script, especially on the part of the scribe of inscription no. 3: *hṛ* stands for *ṣṭā* in line 3, for *ṣṭhi* in line 17 and for *ṣṇī* 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 *param(ṛ)tā* for *parāmitā*, which if interpreted correctly, would agree with other epigraphical evidence such as *amṛtābha* for *amīthāha*.³ A series of dots (...) indicates a divergence from the wording of the *dhāraṇī* published by Liebenenthal.

Both *dhāraṇīs* begin with the *siddham* mark,⁶ in no. 3 the initial *nama*: *namo* has been written vertically in lines 1 and 2. The Chinese headline is the same for both inscriptions:⁷ "*uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*, 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 (Avalokiteśvara)... 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' AI.

Only this last tombstone of TS' AI shows the series of the *aṣṭamaṅgala*, the "eight auspicious symbols," to the right and to the left of the Chinese text: *svastika*, *kūrma* "tortoise," *mūna* or *matsya* "fish," *kalaśa* "pitcher," *vajra*, *śaṅkha* "shell," *pūrṇaḡhaṭa* "vase of plenty," *chattrā* "umbrella."⁸

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

Inscription no. 1 (Plate 1)

1. [Chinese text: fo-ting-tsun-shêng l' o-lo-ni shen-chou]
2. (siddham) namo bhagavata sarvatrailākyaprativī-namo bhagavate sarvatrailokyaprativi-
2. + ṣṭaya vuddhāya ta namḥ tadyathā oṃ bhrūṃ śuddhaya ṣiṣṭāya buddhāya te namḥ tadyathā oṃ bhrūṃ śodhaya



Plate 1: Inscription no. 1 Dali, Yünnan. Presumably 1431 AD, since it comes from the same tomb as Inscription no. 2. Rubbing of a tomb inscription. Photo by Hans Penth, 1985.

3. 3 viśuddhaya 3 mucaya 3 vimuca 3 asama(sa)
3 viśodhaya 3 mocaya 3 vimocaya 3 asamasa-
4. masamasamatāvabh(u)saspharanāṅgati svabhava-masamantāvabhāsaspharaṅagati gaganasvabhāva-
5. viśuddha abhiś(u)tu māṃ sarvatathāgatā sagatāḥ
viśuddha abhiṣiṅcantu māṃ sarvatathāgatā sugatā
6. valavacanāṃmṛtābhiṣ(e)kai mahāmutramantrapā-
varavacanāṃmṛtābhiṣekair mahāmudrāmantrapā-
7. dai āhala 3 āy(ā)samdhalaṅi śuddhaya 3 gaganāṃ
daiḥ āhara 3 āyusamdharaṅi śodhaya 3 gagana-
8. viśuddha uṣṇīṣavijayapariśuddhe sahasra-
viśuddhe uṣṇīṣavijayapariśuddhaḥ sahasra-
9. laśmisaṃca(d)ite sarvatathāgatāpāl(o)kani sa-
raśmisaṃcodite sarvatathāgatāvalokani ṣaṭ-



Plate 2: Inscription no. 2, Dali, Yünnan. 1431 AD. Rubbing of a tomb inscription.

10. tāpalamitāparip(ū)raṇi sarvatathāgatasapāramitāparipūraṇi sarvatathāgata-
11. mayadhiṣṭhānāṃdhiṣṭhita mutre 3 mahāmudra vajrahṛdayādhiṣṭhinādhiṣṭhite mudre 3 mudre 3 mahāmudre vajra-
12. kayasaṃghatanāṃ pariśuddhani oma sarvakāyasaṃghatanāpariśuddhe sarva-
13. tathāgatasamayadhiṣṭhita muni 3 mahāmuni vitathāgatasamayādhiṣṭhite muni 3 mahāmuni vi-
14. muni 3 mahāmunivimuni 3 mahāvimuṇi mamuni 3 mahāvimuni ma-
15. ti 3 mamāti mahāmamāti sumāti tathāta(sva)-ti 3 mamāci mahāmāti sumāti tadyathā bhū-

16. to(ko)ṭipariśuddhe visphu(va)thā viśuddhe hi (hve) jaya takoṭipariśuddha visphuṭaśuddhi śuddhe he he jaya
17. 3 vijaya 3 samla 3 sphara 3 sarvavuddhādhiṣṭhānam-jaya vijaya 3 smara 3 sphara 3 sarvabuddhādhiṣṭhāna-
18. dhiṣṭhite śuddhe 3 vajri 3 mahāvajra suvajri vajragradhiṣṭhite śuddhe 3 vajre vajre mahāvajre suvajre vajraga-
19. bhi jayaga(r)bh(e) jayagarbha vajravajraṃ bahavatu + [Chinese text: Chui] rbhe jayagarbha vijayagarbhe vajre vajraṃ bhavatu mama [open gap for a name]
20. wei wang jên CHANG kuan-yin pao shen-tao] śarīraṃ sarva(sa) + śa-śarīraṃ sarvasatvānā
21. ñ ca kāyapariśuddhani bahavatu me (siddhi) sarvaga tipa- ñ ca kayapariśuddhiś ca bhavantu me sadā sarvagatipa-
22. riśuddhaś ca (sarvatathā)gatāś ca mām (āśvā)sayaṃtu + riśuddheś ca sarvasatvā samāśvasādhiṣṭhite sarvatathā-gatāś ca mām samāśvasayantu

Inscription no. 3 (Plate 2):

1. na om (siddhaṃ) [Chinese text: fo-ting-tsun-shêng f'olo-ni shen-chou)
2. ma bhagav(to) sarvatrabhakapratovīnamo bhagavate sarvatrailokyaprativī-
3. śihṛ(da)ya vuddhāya ti namu tadyathā śiṣṭāya buddhāya te namaḥ tadyathā
4. om bhrūṃ 3 śuddhāya śudhaya viśuddhāya om bhrūṃ śodhaya 3 viśodhaya 3
5. viśudhaya mucaya mucaya vimucamocaya 3 vimocaya 3
6. ya vimucaya asamasamasamātasamasamasamantā -
7. vabhasasphāranagatagaganasavavabhāsasphāranagati gaganāsava-
8. bhāvaviśuddh(e) adhiṣutu maṃ sarvatābhāvaviśuddha abhiśiñcantu mām sarvata-
9. thāgatasugatavalavacanam(r)ṭ(o)-tathāgatasugatavaravacanāmṛtā -
10. (ddho)śi(kaiḥ)ra mahāmudramatapatai bhīṣekarir mahāmudramantrapadaiḥ
11. (ḥ) āhara āhara āyisaṃdhalani āhara 3 āyuḥsandhariṇi
12. śuddhāya śudhāya gaganaviśuddha u-sādhaya 3 gaganaviśuddha u-



Plate 3: Inscription no. 3 Dali, Yünnan. Rubbing of a tomb inscription. Photo by Hans Penth, 1985.

13. hṛṇa(sa)vijaya paraśudhi sahāsa-
ṣṇīṣavijayapariśuddhaḥ sahasra-
14. rala(ṣ)i(m)isaṃśu(dh)ito sarvatathāga-
raśmisaṃcodite sarvatathāga-
15. tavabhakinā śatāparam(ṛ)tāśara-
tāvalokani śaṭpātāmitāpari-
16. bhurana sarvatathāgatamāto ta-
pūraṇi sarvatathāgatamāte da-
17. śubhunapato(hṛpi)ta sarvatathāga-
śabhūmipraṭiṣṭhite sarvatathāga-
18. tāhṛdayāddhopithāna + ṣṭito mutro
tāhṛdayādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite mudre 3
19. (muvi) mahāmuro vajrakayasamgata-
mahāmudre vajrakāyasamghāta-

20. na paraśuddha sarvakarmavara(ṇa)pa-
nāpariśuddhe sarvakarmāvaraṇapa-
21. (ri)śuddha p(r)avi(na)varta(y)i viśuddha
riśuddhe pratnivartaya āyurviśuddhe

The text of the *uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*, which has been always very popular wherever Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished, was printed for the first time by F. Max Müller and Bunjiu Nanjio: *The Ancient Palm-Leaves 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 *uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* published by R.A.F. Hoernle: *The "unkown 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 729.⁹

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 the 1150th Anniversary of Kobo-Daishi's Nirvāṇam*. *Acta Indologica* VI. Narita 1984, 91-113, on *dhāraṇīs* p. 95 foll.¹⁰ Different aspects of the actual use and ritual meaning have been discussed in the following important 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 Studies* V, 1.1982.100 - 108.

The Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa and Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs in Indian Inscriptions, in: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 29.1985.119 - 149.

Burial "ad sanctos" and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism, in: *Religion* 17.1987.193 - 225.

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 Yünnan.

However, it is not only in Mahāyāna that the *uṣṇīṣavijaya* is related to death. In a recent major contribution to the study of Thai Buddhism by L. Gabaude: *Une Herméneutique Boudhique 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 Pāli *uṅhassa* (or: *uṅhissa*) *vijaya*, which is sometimes called a *sutta*, sometimes a *jātaka*, is thoroughly discussed.¹² 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 inter-relations between Mahāyāna *dhāraṇīs* and Theravāda *paritta*.¹³

ENDNOTES

- 1) W. H. Maurer: On the Name *devanāgarī*. Journal of the American Oriental Society 96.1976. 101 - 104, cf. : J. B. Blumhardt: Catalogue of the Gujarati and Rajasthani Manuscripts in the India Office Library. London 1954, p. 6.
- 2) Thus according to: P. Demiéville; H. Durt; A. Seidel: Répertoire du Canon Buddhique Sino-Japonais, Edition de Taishō. Fascicule Annexe du Hōbōgirin. Paris - Tokyo 1978; Liebenthal only quotes Taishō no. 974(a).
- 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.
- 5) O. v. Hinüber: Dhāraṇīs aus Zentralasien. Indologica Taurinensia 14. 1987-88. Professor Colette Caillat Felicitation Volume, pp. 231-249.
- 6) G. Roth: Maṅgala-Symbols in Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts and Inscriptions, and: L. Sander: Remarks on the Openings of Buddhist Manuscripts and Inscriptions from Central Asia, both in: Deyadharma. Studies in Memory of D. C. Sircar. Calcutta 1986, p. 239 - 250 and 251 - 263 respectively.
- 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.
- 8) O. v. Hinüber: Das *andyāvarta*-Symbol, in: Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft: Supplement II. XVIII. Deutscher Orientalistentag 1972 in Lübeck. Wiesbaden 1974. 356 - 365, 9 plates.
- 9) Further: M.J. Dresden: Khotanese (Saka) Manuscripts. A Provisional Handlist, in: Acta Iranica, Textes et Mémoires V. Varia. 1976.27 - 85, p. 80 foll. on no. S 2529.
- 10) Cf. also: E. Lamotte: Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna. Tome IV. Louvain 1976, p. 1854 - 1864.
- 11) Quoted in: O. v. Hinüber: Dhāraṇīs, as above note 5, note 20.
- 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.
- 13) Literature on recent research on *paritta* has been collected in JSS 75. 1987, p. 13 foll., to which may be added: E. Guillon: A propos d'une version môme inédite de l'épisode de Vasundharā, in: Journal Asiatique 275.1987.143 - 162; Y. Ishii: Sangha, State, and Society: Thai Buddhism in History. Honolulu 1986, p. 21: Phra Parit, and R. Gombrich in: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 1984, p. 165.

