

Making Four Buddhist Worlds: A Reading of the Liturgies for Creating Ritual Spaces in Dunhuang Manuscripts

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Abstract: This paper examines a group of liturgical manuscripts from Dunhuang for understanding Buddhist rituals of creating four ritual spaces. These rituals consist of a series of programs of ritual performance such as consecrating the ritual space, invoking deities, honouring the Bodhisattvas, feeding the beings in the underworld, and praying for the sentient beings, under the leadership of monastic members with the sponsorship of lay followers of local community. By analyzing these procedures and programs, this paper aims to reveal four worlds that these rituals manifested: the Buddhist cosmological world in the ritual constructed by the consecration and invocation of Buddhist clergies, the textual world that materially and verbally produced, introduced, and interpreted texts, the political and social world that political agents from both central and peripheral regions played different roles, and the Buddhist material world that was constructed for the material foundation for these rituals in the Dunhuang area. This study will shed new light on the ritual spaces serving as multi-layer compounds that brought cosmic figures, monastic members, lay community, and material objects together.

Keywords: ritual space, liturgy, Buddhist cosmology, *dhāraṇī*

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Introduction

Several manuscripts discovered at the library cave in Dunhuang contain numerous liturgical prayers (*yuanwen* 願文) that deserve comprehensive examination. Many of these liturgical prayers are intended as templates and often appear as groups and other practical manuals of Buddhist rituals. Some of these liturgical prayers bear titles, but some fragments without titles must be identified based on their content. Even those manuscripts with titles might not reflect the real nature and function of the texts themselves, given that the original owners of the texts sometimes casually wrote down the titles themselves. In short, while reading these fragments, we need to carefully examine their style, content, and function to understand better the texts they represent.¹

From the perspective of physical material, it is clear that many liturgical prayers did not come from a single paper scroll with several continuous sheets but are instead written along with the various miscellanea. Therefore, sometimes it is difficult to determine if these liturgical prayers served as ritual manuals in the authentic setting of ritual performance or merely appeared as templates for ritual texts. Thus, an approach that combines textual and visual materials can shed new light on the sophisticated worlds in these rituals.

This paper focuses on the following manuscripts from Dunhuang: P. 2058, P. 2838, P. 2915, P. 3149, P. 3765 in the Pelliot collection

¹ Huang, Zeng, & Hong, 'Dunhuang yuanwen yanjiu', 371–87; Huang & Li, 'Dunhuang bianwen zhong de yuanwen', 363–70; Zhang, 'Tanfo yu tanzhai', 60–73; Hao, 'Guanyu Dunhuang xieben zhaiwen de jige wenti', 64–71; Wang, 'Cong Dunhuang zhaiyuan wenxian kan Fojiao de zaidihua yinying', 1–40; Teiser, 'Ornamenting the Departed', 201–37; Teiser, 'Shilun zhaiwen de biaoyanxing', 295–308; Teiser, 'Wei wangzhe yuan', 284–307; Chen, 'Dunhuang P. 2058v wenshu', 167–85; Ding, 'Divine Transactions'.

and S. 663, S. 1137, S. 3914, S. 4537 in the Stein collection. This group of texts, to my understanding, represent a distinctive genre of ritual manuals for creating several types of ritual spaces by local patrons in Dunhuang. Namely, they illustrate at least the rituals of creating four ritual spaces centering on four main icons as follows: the Buddha's Crown (Foding 佛頂),² the Great Compassion (Dabei 大悲) Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāpratisarā (Suiqiu 隨求) Bodhisattva,³ and the Golden Light (Jinguangming 金光明).⁴ In addition, many paintings from Dunhuang could be identified as images associated with these rituals, such as Ch. 00151 and Ch. 00249 in the Stein Collection of the British library and EO 1232, EO 3639, MG 17688

² Michelle C. Wang traces the process of maṇḍalalation of the *dhāraṇī* and the use of Chinese terms including 'tan' and 'chang', as *maṇḍalas* in the Chinese Buddhist ritual context; see her *Maṇḍalas in the Making*, 23–50. Koichi Shinohara studies the method of creating the Buddha's Crown *Maṇḍala* based on the canonical sources *T* no. 972 and *T* no. 973 translated by Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空 [704–774]) and Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏, 637–735); see Shinohara, 'The Ritual of the Buddhōṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Maṇḍala'. As my paper shows, there is a gap between the canonical ritual and local ritual practiced in medieval Dunhuang.

³ For a detailed description on setting up this ritual space, see *Foshuo suiqiu jide dazizai tuoluoni Shenzhou jing*, *T* no. 1154, 20: 641c. Many scholars have discussed this Bodhisattva and associated spells. See Drège, 'Les premières impressions des dhāraṇī de Mahāpratisarā'; Furuseka, 'Daizuigu darani o megutte'; Asai, 'Daizuigu daranikyō bonzokan taisho kenkyū'; Ma, 'Da Suiqiu tuoluoni mantuluo tuxiang de kaocha'; Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 59–140; Wang, 'Ritual Practice without Practitioner?'.

⁴ Interestingly, one of Amoghavajra's translations of ritual proceedings, *Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi qijiao Anantuo yuanyou* (*T* no. 1319), tells us that a ritual space is consecrated and four fire pearls are set up at four corners. In each pearl there are images of four figures: Foding 佛頂 in northeast, Dabei 大悲 in southeast, Suiqiu 隨求 in southwest, and Zunsheng 尊勝 in northwest. However, this is suspicious since Foding seems to be the same as Zunsheng. See its associated scriptures including *Foshuo Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* (*T* no. 971) and *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yiguifa* (*T* no. 972), translated by Amoghavajra.

at Guimet Museum, etc.⁵ Most of these sources could be dated back to the ninth-tenth century when Dunhuang was ruled under the regime of Guiyi jun 歸義軍 (Return to Righteousness Army).

The rituals for creating the four ritual spaces share some similar structures, such as praising Buddhist saints, invoking Buddhist deities, reciting Buddhist scriptures, listing the beneficiaries of the ritual, praying for blessings, etc. By closely reading these fragments, we can understand the Buddhist cosmology, the social and political situation, and the religious goal. In this paper, I conceptualize them into four worlds created by the writing of these prayers and the performance of associated rituals: (1) cosmological world; (2) textual world; (3) socio-political world; and (4) material world. The Buddhist cosmological world is an imaginary in which the sacred dimension centered on the main icon was entangled with the mundane dimension that surrounds the ritual hosts. There are several relations worth discussing, such as the celestial and terrestrial realms, between the Buddhist saints and the invokers, and between the ritual hosts and the demons. The textual world refers to the texts that lay the foundation for the Buddhist rituals as reflected in the manuscripts. Sometimes the titles of the Buddhist scriptures are explicitly mentioned in the liturgies; other times, we have to figure out these texts by analyzing the content of the ritual itself. Moreover, given that the ritual hosts lived in a specific time and space, the socio-political world should also be explored. Finally, the ritual cannot be performed without the material foundation, necessitating a close examination of the material world.

1. The Cosmological World

One of the most critical issues in reading this group of manuscripts is the Buddhist cosmological world in creating the ritual spaces for receiving blessings and merits. From the perspective of religious studies, all rituals construct relations between the sacred and mundane

⁵ Tai, 'Dunhuang banhua xulu'. Ch. 00151 and Ch. 00152 have been studied by Hidas in his 'Two dhāraṇī prints'.

worlds, between the gods and human beings, and between ritual hosts and the beneficiaries. In other words, there are both holy beings in the air as the ritual specialists invoked and the ritual hosts perceived, and the wandering ghosts who transformed from the unrest decreased in the Chinese tradition.⁶ The hosts must offer the gods and guardians to please them and feed the ghosts to appease them. The ritual performance is designed to bring the holy beings, the living, and the dead together for a peaceful and harmonious relationship. Therefore, in general, the rituals as reflected in these Dunhuang liturgical prayers also construct these relations. Nevertheless, every ritual has its center and periphery. For example, in these liturgical prayers, we can see that there are four types of rituals literarily, and each ritual has its central icon, which is the worshipping center of the ritual space (*tanchang* 壇場).

Although these manuscripts have different titles, each often references a central icon of the ritual. They might be associated with some other liturgical prayers that are designed for particular ritual performances. There is as the liturgy for invocation (*qiqingwen* 啟請文), lighting lamps (*randengwen* 燃燈文),⁷ turning scriptures (*zhuanjingwen* 轉經文), and distributing food (to feed demons) (*sanshiwen* 散食文). These liturgies serve different parts of the rituals in a grand feast and ceremony. All these liturgies construct their Buddhist cosmologies, but they share some similar elements. These elements refer to general Buddhist cosmology that consists of sacred beings beyond the realms of life and death (*samsāra*) and sentient beings within the realms of life and death. In terms of social structure, these elements also refer to three components of Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha. However, both the monastic order and the lay community are involved in all these rituals. As the manuscript S. 3914 shows, the ritual functions to make offerings to the Buddhas (*gongfo* 供佛), invite monks (*yanseng* 延僧), and invoke saints (*qingsheng* 請聖).⁸ A host is

⁶ For the definition of the ghost in the Chinese tradition, see Wolf, 'Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors'.

⁷ For a detailed study on this genre, see Chen, 'Multiple Traditions in one Ritual'.

a layperson in a local community who has family obligations, social status, political positions, and financial resources. With his support, the monks come to the ritual space to consecrate the holy realm, invoke Buddhist saints, perform rituals, and benefit the host and his associated beneficiaries. The literary description in the manuscript S. 3194 also indicates that during the ritual performance, the scripture 經, spells 咒, and true words (mantra [*zhenyan* 真言]) are expounded.⁹ They represent the second component of the three jewels of Buddhism—the Dharma.

According to this manuscript, the superlative ritual ceremony was hosted in Shouchang 壽昌 County in the fall season, and the vegetarian feast (*qingzhai* 清齋) lasted for seven days. In addition, the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva as the main icon was set up in the western corner. It had banners and flowers to decorate the mat of the feast, which was used when performing music (thrice a day). The main streets were sprayed with perfume. Money and wealth were offered to the earth gods. The Buddha, Buddhist saints, and monks received offerings of jade-and-gold-like food. During the ceremony, nobles and ordinary people, laypeople and lads, and villagers from rural areas all requested merits. This ceremony was hosted by the military-governor of the Hexi region 河西節度使, who visualized the sacred landscape of the golden mountain in this area. He wished to appease the neighboring enemies so his regime could be maintained. However, this manuscript does not specify the names of Buddhist saints besides the Buddha and the titles of the Buddhist scriptures, spells, and true words. We can speculate that they might be associated with the main icon, the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva.

Other liturgies offer more specific information about the Buddhist saints that would be invoked to be at present during the ceremony. A manuscript fragment from Dunhuang provides information on the ritual dedicated to the Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) Bodhisattva as the central icon. It is a fragment tentatively labeled as the text of

⁸ Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 594.

⁹ For mantra and mandala, see Orzech & Sørensen, 'Mudrā, Mantra and Mandala'.

impressing stamps onto clay to form Buddha-images (*yinshafo* 印沙佛) by the compiler of the *Taishō* canon.¹⁰ This fragment describes the process of the ritual ceremony for the Guanyin Bodhisattva. It first lists the Buddhist saints that were invoked to descend to the ritual space for witnessing the merits and virtues of the ritual host. These saints include the Buddhas' clear and pure Dharma bodies in the realm of lotus flower treasury, and ten billion Tathāgatas, immeasurable transformation Buddhas as the sands of the Ganges River. The Great Sage Mañjuśrī Bodhisattvas 大聖文殊菩薩 from the roof of Clear and Cool Mountain,¹¹ and the arhats who achieved enlightenment from Mount Jizu. Besides these enlightened beings who were endowed with divine feet 神足 and compassionate minds 悲心, the Dharma was also invoked in terms of so-called 'secret classics of Nāga palace' (龍宮祕典) and 'the subtle words of Mount Gṛdhra-kūṭa' (鷲嶺微言).¹² These phrases refer to the Mahāyāna teachings. Later on, the text tells that the Guanyin Bodhisattva was honored in the center of the ritual space and the Buddhist monks turned the scriptures of golden words.¹³ The fragrant feast was offered to all Buddhas of three time periods. Pure food was distributed to sentient beings of both land and water.

Most liturgical prayers such as P. 2058 (15), S. 1137, S. 4505, S. 5957 also list guardians and deities who protected the ritual space. They include eight groups of Nāgas and Devas (Longtian babu 龍天八部), four heavenly kings (Sida tianwang 四大天王), Pāñcika (Sanzhi dajiang 散脂大將), and Kind Deities of Protecting Boundaries (Hujie shanshen 護界善神).¹⁴ These gods and deities often are typical guardians in Buddhist cosmology. Some colophon notes on

¹⁰ For the practice of making Buddha-images, see Teiser, 'Terms of Friendship', 166.

¹¹ For a study of poems on Mount Wutai from Dunhuang, See Cartelli, *The Five-Colored Clouds of Mount Wutai*.

¹² T no. 2842, 85: 1295a.

¹³ According to other liturgies, the golden words might refer to the *Jinguang-ming jing*.

¹⁴ Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 338–339; Chen, 'Dunhuang P. 2058v wenshu'.

the Mahāpratisarā *dhāraṇī* paintings such as MG 17688 at Guimet Museum in Paris and Ch. 00249 at British Museum indicate the similar protection by heavenly kings and Nāga kings. These kings would bring up their attendants and command their troops against any disturbances and troubles made by demons. If comparing the list of these guardians and deities with the list in the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the primary scripture for reciting in these liturgical prayers, they seem similar, if not identical. Therefore, it seems that the *Golden Light Sūtra* might be the significant scriptural foundation for the cosmological order in these liturgical prayers.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that many ritual texts were already available at that time. For example, *The Mantra for the Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā Dhāraṇī* (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhenyan* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼真言, T no. 974) describes the detailed procedure of creating such a *Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā Dhāraṇī* ritual.¹⁵ It begins with learning to chant Sanskrit syllables. The second step is to draw the Buddhist images of four heavenly kings and their attendants and the eight groups of Nāgas and Devas to visualize the Buddhas. The painting artists must receive three refugees, wearing new pure clothes, bathing frequently, fasting before drawing, and observing chastity. Even after the images have been finished, a vegetarian feast for forty-nine monks should be held. The third step is to create a platform of ritual. Buddhist saints such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and guardians would be invoked to the platform for receiving offerings and liberating sentient beings. The platform seems to share some similar features with the ritual space in the liturgical prayers from Dunhuang. For example, the platform would be consecrated for performing invocation rituals to welcome all Buddhist saints to descend. Banners and incenses would be used to ornament the platform. The platform would have four gates. They placed an incense stove in front of each gate, which cannot be found in

¹⁵ Shinohara noted that this text offers the instructions for painting the images of deities, see his ‘The Ritual of the Buddhōṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Maṇḍala’, 165–166n68. There are many murals depicting the transformation tableaux on the *Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā Dhāraṇī*, which has been studied by Shimono in her *Tonkō bucchō sonsbō daranikyō hensōzu no kenkyū*.

the Dunhuang liturgies. Only the last step would involve the recitation of true words (Mantra). The reciters would sit on the east side and face the west, reciting the true words four times each day, counted 108 times. They also would make great vows for never returning to the samsara. Detailed gestures and sitting positions are also described, which cannot be found in the Dunhuang liturgies either.

Furthermore, these guardians protected the ritual space and offered help for saving human beings and protecting the hosts' regimes on the ground. As some liturgies such as P. 2058 (15) and P. 2058 (12) said, the hosts would ornament these heavenly kings and Nāga kings so their lights would become brighter,¹⁶ and their divine power would increase so that they could save the people and protect the state (*jiuren huguo* 救人護國). In other words, these guardians could benefit the worldly realm and help rulers to maintain their political order, not just appear as the ritual guards. In the daily life of the hosts of these rituals, as they often held political positions and bore political and social obligations, they faced challenges from both neighboring invasion and internal unrest and natural disasters and epidemic threats.¹⁷ Therefore, mobilizing all available resources, including religious rituals by praying to the celestial guardians, became imminent and necessary.

Interestingly, one fragment S. 4505 uses some unusual vocabulary to refer to these guardians. It does mention the ordinary protectors such as eight groups of Nāgas and Devas and four heavenly kings. Still, it also says that the host would ornament celestial transcendents (*tianxian*) of the upper realm (上界天仙) and Nāga demons of lower direction (下方龍鬼).¹⁸ Here the so-called 'celestial transcendents (*tianxian*) of the upper realm' did not appear in any canonical text, which could be regarded as a local term invented in medieval China. It appeared in the liturgical prayer by Sui Emperor Wendi (Yang Jian)

¹⁶ For the detailed discussion on the word '*zhuangyan* 莊嚴 (ornament)' in the Dunhuang liturgies, see Teiser, 'Ornamenting the Departed'.

¹⁷ C. Pierce Salguero particularly notes the function of one chapter in the *Golden Light Sūtra* for eliminating diseases, see Salguero, 'On Eliminating Disease'.

¹⁸ Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 598–599.

in 598 when he dispatched messengers to Mount Tiantai for making merits. Yang Jian claimed that as a Buddhist disciple ordained with Bodhisattva precepts. He paid homage to all Buddhas of three time periods and ten directions, all virtuous Dharmas, and holy assemblies of three vehicles, as well as ‘celestial transcendentals (*tianxian*) of the upper realm’, Nāgas, and gods.¹⁹ It might suggest that the guardian list was expanded by introducing indigenous Chinese deities because the host hoped to enhance the protection. According to the manuscript S. 4505, this expanded group of guardians were expected to wipe out a disastrous epidemic from Jade Pass 玉關 and to expel deviant demons away from the realm of the lotus flower.

To summarize the brief discussion above, it is clear that the cosmological world reflected in this group of liturgies came from the Mahāyāna tradition, which means the list of Buddhist saints was expandable and flexible. The three-body doctrine in the Mahāyāna tradition allows the local Buddhist community to invoke all Buddhas appearing in their Dharma bodies and transforming bodies to the ritual space. As manuscripts, P. 2058 (15) and S. 4505 state, the mighty spirits of these saints were being themselves 威神自在, and they could manifest themselves without the limit of directions and places 示現無方. Secondly, the guardians such as heavenly kings and eight groups of Nāgas served to protect both ritual space and the human realm, which illustrate the engaging worldly spirit of the Mahāyāna tradition, or in other words, transforming this world into the Buddha’s land. Thirdly, the cosmological world in this group of liturgies also included local earth gods and so-called celestial transcendentals. Essentially, it means that this Mahāyāna concept of the cosmological world could incorporate non-Buddhist elements into its tradition. This trend can also be found in the discussion on the textual world in the following section.

¹⁹ *Guoqing bailu*, T no. 1934, 46: 3.811b16–17. In the ninth-century Daoist text *Xuanzhu xinjing zhu*, the ‘shangjie tianxian’ 上界天仙 is listed along with ‘xiajie dixian’ 下界地仙 (terrestrial transcendentals of the lower realm) together; see *DZ* 574, 27b.

2. The Textual World

While beginning a new ritual ceremony, both three jewels of Buddhism would be brought into the ritual space for creating a great community. The second jewel, or the Dharma, would be represented by the ‘secret classics of Nāga palace’ and ‘the subtle words of Mount Gṛdhra-kūṭa’, as the manuscript states, which indicates the presence of the Mahāyāna texts. However, I would argue that there were both generic and specific texts in the process of creating at least four types of ritual spaces. The generic texts refer to the Mahāyāna texts without specific titles that were invoked during the ritual. Still, the specific texts refer to titles appearing in the liturgies and the right words, spells, *dhāraṇī* texts associated with specific icons as they were honored in the center of each ritual space.

P. 2058 (15) mentions, in particular, the title of the *Golden Light Sūtra*. It said that with the setting up of the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva in the center, the monastic members with black robes turned the text of the *Golden Light Sūtra*. The recitation of this scripture would last for five days.²⁰ The exact text was also recited in the ritual space to honour the Great Compassionate Guanyin Bodhisattva in the liturgy P. 2058 (12), which lasted for five days.

By the time these liturgical prayers were written, two significant translations of the *Golden Light Sūtra* were circulating in the Dunhuang area, as many Chinese manuscripts from the Cave Library show.²¹ One was done by Dharmakṣema (385–433), and the other was translated by Yijing (635–713) from the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtreन्द्रarājāḥ*. Both versions were in circulation during the Tang Dynasty. However, in the reign era of Wu Zetian, Yijing’s translation was promoted by the court, and even some temples were renamed the Golden Light Temples. Furthermore, this scripture was a dominant text in the central part of the Tang Empire and Dunhuang, as numerous manuscripts

²⁰ Yuan, ‘Guiyi jun shiqi Dunhuang fojiao de zhuanjing huodong’.

²¹ Gummer, ‘Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra’. For earlier comprehensive studies on various versions of this text, see Nobel, *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 1937, 1944, 1950, 1958.

from Dunhuang have demonstrated; it was also prevalent in Khotan. Some manuscripts written in Sanskrit, Khotanese, and Turkic-Uighur languages are also found in Central Asia.²² One of the possible reasons the court promoted this text is that it played a tremendous role in advocating a political-religious ideology of protecting the state. The *Golden Light Sūtra* certainly provides the doctrinal foundation for the ritual of creating mandalas in Dunhuang. The ‘Four Heavenly Kings’ chapter of the *Golden Light Sūtra* clearly states that four heavenly kings praised the virtue of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, and they would protect and guard the monks and nuns as well as laypeople who recited this scripture. It also says that four heavenly kings would protect all rulers in the human realm, their concubines, servants, attendants, and other family members within the court. All disasters, evils, and delusions would be dispelled by reciting this scripture. In the liturgical prayers I discuss in this paper, the recitation of the *Golden Light Sūtra* protected the Tang Empire, and the military governor of the Guiyi jun regime, his family, and all residents were devastated by long-term wars. In other words, both the court and the local regime in Dunhuang shared the same political sentiments and adopted the same Buddhist ideology for their political interests.

Although the *Golden Light Sūtra* was the most famous scripture recited in this group of liturgies, manuscript S. 5957 (P. 2838 and P. 3765), the title of the text of turning scriptures at four gates (*Simen zhuanjing wen* 四門轉經文) claimed that the *Lotus Sūtra* was recited while the Buddha’s Crown ritual space was set up in the center.²³ This ritual was hosted in the spring season, which indicated the beginning of a new year in the lunar calendar. Therefore, the ritual protected

²² For the Sanskrit fragments, see Emmerick, *The Sūtra of Golden Light*; for the study on the Khotanese fragments, see Skjærvø, *This Most Excellent Shine of Gold, King of Kings of Sūtras*; for the study on the Turkic-Uighur fragments, see Zieme, *Altun Yaruq Sudur*.

²³ Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 492; There are three manuscripts: S. 5957, P. 2838, P. 3765. It should be noted that several canonical scriptures on Esoteric Buddhist rituals indicated that there were four gates for many Esoteric ritual platforms.

the agricultural harvest that was essential for maintaining local social and economic order. Only if the political and economic order was stable, the Guiyi jun regime in Dunhuang could survive against the challenges of political, economic, and environmental crises.

Many liturgies mentioned using the right words, spells, and *dhāraṇī* texts in generic vocabulary. Still, we can trace some titles of these texts associated with the main icons as they were honored in each ritual. Given the historical context, many texts associated with the Buddha's Crown, the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva, and the Guanyin Bodhisattva were available. Still, none of the specific titles appeared in these liturgical prayers. One of the most popular chants could be the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhou* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼咒 (Skt. *Sarva-durgati-parisodhana-uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*) translated by Buddhapālita 佛陀波利 in 683.²⁴ The *Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa dabeixin tuoluoni* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩大悲心陀羅尼 (*Mahā Karuṇa Dhāraṇī*; *Nilakanṭha Dhāraṇī*) translated by Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra [705–774]) was associated with the Guanyin Bodhisattva. And the *Suiqiu jide dazizai tuoluoni shenzhoujing* 隨求即得大自在陀羅尼神呪經) Translated by Baosiwei 寶思惟 (Manicintana [?–721]) in 693 was associated with Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva.²⁵ Amoghavajra also translated a spell text titled the *Pubian Guangming qingjing Zhisheng ruyi baoyin xinwu nengsheng damingwang da suiqiu tuoluoni* 普遍光明清淨熾盛如意寶印心無能勝大明王大隨求陀羅尼. Some manuscripts of these incantation texts are found from the cave library in Dunhuang, which demonstrates that they were practiced with many other liturgies together. Several *dhāraṇī* paintings associated with these chants and Bodhisattvas are also preserved in the cave library of Dunhuang.

Many *dhāraṇī* survived in both textual and visual forms in

²⁴ For detailed study on this text and its associated ritual, see Liu Shufen, *Miezui yu duwang*. Liu's study shows that the scriptural pillars mainly served the rituals for deceased, yet the liturgies from Dunhuang serve both the living and the deceased. Kuo, 'Bucchō sonshō darani no dempa to gishiki'.

²⁵ Chen Jinhua examines its relationship with Fazang, see his *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 272–273. For the comprehensive study on the Mahāpratisarā cult in medieval China, see Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 59–140.

Dunhuang. One of the more interesting *dhāraṇī* texts from Dunhuang is fragment Ch. 00151, preserved at British Museum. This fragment has a colophon note claiming the title of the *dhāraṇī* as the *Sheng Guangzizai pusa qianzhuan miezui tuoluoni* 聖觀自在菩薩千轉滅罪陀羅尼 [*Dhāraṇī* for Destroying Sins by a thousand Actions (Sāhasra-Pravartana) of Holy Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva], which should be a variant title for the text *Qianzhuan tuoluoni Guanshiyin pusa zhou* 千轉陀羅尼觀世音菩薩咒 [The Spell of the a-thousand-Action *Dhāraṇī* of Holy Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva] (*T* no. 1035) translated by Zhitong 智通 (d.u.) from Zongchi Temple 總持寺 in the Tang Dynasty. The colophon on the manuscript Ch. 00151 states that this *dhāraṇī* has mighty power that could destroy the sins of all sentient beings and transform their six roots, helping them achieve the body of virtue. If one carried this *dhāraṇī*, one would destroy their sins, bring up blessings, and achieve Buddhahood. The function of the *dhāraṇī* in manuscript Ch. 00151 for destroying sins is consistent with that in Zhitong's translation. Although this colophon in manuscript Ch. 00151 is brief, Zhitong's translation offers more detailed information about the spell associated with the Guanyin Bodhisattva.

We can also compare manuscript P. 2058 (12) that honored the Guanyin Bodhisattva with Zhitong's translation regarding the structure and function of the ritual. According to Zhitong's version, by reciting this spell once, the evil karma could be destroyed. If one recited this spell seven times, five heinous sins²⁶ could be destroyed. If recited ten times, all sins could be destroyed. This text even claims that reciting this spell could transform a female body into a male one if a ritual space (*maṇḍala*) was set up and the offering was made. The ritual space should have eight circles and four gates. Various offerings such as rice, butter, honey, incense, fruits should be set up. Sixteen lamps should be lighted up. A white portrait of Guanyin Bodhisattva should be honoured. This text claimed that reciting this text could

²⁶ These five sins include patricide, matricide, murder of an *arhat*, causing disharmony in a Buddhist community, and striking a Buddha so as to cause him or her to bleed; also see Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 72; Hughes, *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval China*, 40.

destroy all sins from the past thousand *kalpas*. One thousand Buddhas could gather.

Eventually, the reciter could abandon their body and encounter the holy king of turning wheels a thousand times. And if the recitation is made twenty-one times, one could be reborn in the pure land of the Buddhas. Although it does not explicitly mention that one could achieve Buddhahood, it shows that one could be reborn in Buddha's land. The ritual space was very similar to what we see in manuscript P. 2058 (12), which also has four gates, and various offerings were made to honour Guanyin Bodhisattva. The manuscript P. 2058 (12) does mention the spell and eulogy. It also states that the ritual was created for building blessings and destroying disasters (*jianfu rangzai* 建福禳災), which is consistent with Zhitong's version. However, as a liturgical prayer from a local area, manuscript P. 2058 (12) particularly benefited the worldly interests of the ritual host, the military-governor of the Guiyi jun regime, for himself and his immediate family.

It should be noted that these liturgical manuscripts were not incorporated into the first printed edition of the state-sponsored Buddhist canon in the tenth century. They were texts produced in the local area of Dunhuang, which was viewed as the frontier in the court's eyes in the Central Plain. These liturgical texts left no names of any authors, although the hosts were often the military-governors of the Hexi region or the ruler of the Guiyi jun regime. However, similar to other inscriptional prayers as we can find on the Buddhist sculptures in the northern dynasties, these liturgical texts produced in Dunhuang were the products of the concrete rituals rather than the canonical tradition. Therefore, they represent a distinctive genre of Buddhist texts that were associated with certain rituals. In the case of this study, they are connected with some translations of the Buddhist texts in the Tang Dynasty but appear as new practical ritual liturgies for the daily life of a Buddhist community in northwestern China. Since the canon in the Mahāyāna tradition is expandable, these liturgies could be incorporated into the Buddhist canon.

3. The Socio-Political World

Most manuscripts from the group of liturgical texts studied in this paper were from the military-governor of the Guiyi jun regime, for praying merits and blessings for the governor family and the worldly realm in their understanding. It is worth exploring what socio-political world in which these beneficiaries were living. During the late eighth century, the Tibetan Empire ruled the Dunhuang area due to the An-Shi Rebellion and the weakening of the Tang Empire. Yet in 848, Zhang Yichao 張議潮 (799–872) led a rebellion against the Tibetan rule in this area. He quickly restored order after the Tibetans withdrew from Dunhuang. He also captured the Hexi Corridor and assumed the military governor of the Guiyi Circuit, offering fealty to the Tang court.²⁷ However, the local Guiyi jun regime constantly faced threats of military invasion from the Tibetans, the Uighurs, and other groups, economic challenges, and epidemic and environmental distresses. The liturgical prayers more or less reflect all of these political, military, economic, and environmental challenges.

Looking into a broad political context in which these liturgical prayers were produced will help us understand what these prayers meant to the hosts. The Guiyi jun regime was founded by a rebellion of the Han Chinese residents in the Dunhuang area against the rule of the Tibetans. However, though it claimed that it was part of the Tang Empire, the Latter could barely support this new local regime's strong political and military support. By that time, the Tang Empire was in turbulent political turmoil. The Guiyi jun regime was surrounded by several other powers, such as the Tibetan Empire, the Uighur Empire, and the nomadic tribes. The only reliable ally and frequent contact of the Guiyi jun regime were the Khotan Kingdom. They were tied together by a political marriage and also cultural and religious exchanges. It can be imagined that the Guiyi jun rulers always lived in an intense conflict between their regime and the surrounding powers.

²⁷ Yang, 'Zhang Yichao and Dunhuang in the 9th Century'; Rong, *Guiyi jun shi yanjiu*.

One of the manuscripts among these liturgical prayers, S. 3914, has a unique description of the position of the mandala that was created, which recorded a personalized ritual of creating a mandala. It says that the mandala of the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva was set up in the west corner. Later on, the text reveals that the mandala was created in Shouchang 壽昌, the western part of the Guiyi jun regime, and it was near Mount Jin (Jinshan 金山) for pacifying Tibetans. According to *Dunhuang lu* 敦煌錄 [the Record of Dunhuang] in manuscript S. 5448, Mount Jin is southwest of the Dunhuang area, bordered by the Tibetan Empire. The prayer in manuscript S. 3914 particularly states that the Chancellor of the Guiyi jun regime hosted the ritual, and it served those who were killed in the war and whose souls were not resting in peace. It indicates that a very devastating war had occurred earlier. Numerous soldiers left their homeland and lost their lives in the war with the Tibetans. The prayer said that some deceased left their bones on a strange land without being buried. So, they became guest ghosts who wandered around. The mandala was created to pacify these unrest souls.

It begins with listing beneficiaries of the ritual, with the emperor of the Tang Empire appearing first. These liturgical prayers praised the Tang Empire's emperor, reflecting a local regime's political loyalty to the central court. For example, manuscript P. 2058 (15) says that 'nowadays the emperor lord often sits on the lotus leaf and ten circuits competed for offering their loyalty by swearing their hearts' (當今帝主, 常坐蓮葉; 十道爭馳, 誓心獻款). This sentence indicates that the ritual host hoped the empire maintained its political order for ruling ten circuits. It was a natural response for a local governor loyal to the central court after the An Lushan rebellion was raised initially from at least three circuits governing the northern frontiers.²⁸ The Manuscript S. 4505, a liturgical prayer for worshipping the Buddha's Crown, also listed the emperor as the first beneficiary. Following the emperor, the blessings go to the military-governor of the Hexi region, who appeared in second place on the long list. Then the governor's family members, including wives, sons, and daughters, followed. Given that there are

²⁸ Pulleyblank, *An Lu-shan*; Rong, 'The Religious Background'.

many different titles for various *maṇḍala* rituals, different hosts might have political and social concerns.

It was not always the case that listed the emperor of the central court as the first beneficiary. The manuscript P. 2058 (12) does not mention the contemporary emperor. As I discussed above, this manuscript is a liturgical prayer for creating the Guanyin *maṇḍala*. Local monks honored the Guanyin Bodhisattva and recited the *Golden Light Sūtra* for transferring merits and blessings to the beneficiaries. But the first beneficiary was the military-governor Cao Yijin 曹議金 (?-935). The liturgy mentioned that he had two wives, including one called the Heavenly Princess and another one with the surname Song. The Heavenly Princess was the daughter of the Uighur Khagan (Tigin, Tianmu Khagan 天睦可汗). In 931, Cao Yijin claimed the title of ‘Linggong’ 令公 (Lord of Command) and ‘Tuoxi dawang’ 拓西大王 (Great King of Expanding the West).²⁹ This liturgy does not mention the emperor of the Tang court but spent much space praising Cao Yijin. He was praised for protecting the regions around the Yellow River and Huang River 滎河 and even restoring the cosmic order. He was also praised for being endowed with brevity and divine numinous wisdom by heaven so he could mobilize strategies to control five Liang regions (Wuliang 五涼) along the Hexi Corridor. He was even praised to everlastingly become a Bodhisattva-like benevolent king (長為菩薩之人 [仁] 王) and to permanently be entrusted by Tathāgata (永應如來之付囑), which seems to be too ambitious and confident for a local regime ruler, given that this liturgical text does not mention the emperor.³⁰

By reading these liturgical prayers, we understand the rituals of creating mandalas and invoking saints, gods, deities, and demons. We find both Buddhist virtues and traditional Confucian virtues emphasizing the local lay people who hosted the feast. For instance,

²⁹ Rong, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunbuang*, 44; Galambos translated ‘linggong’ as lord and ‘tuoxi dawang’ as ‘Great prince, the reclamer of the west’.

³⁰ Cao also sponsored several caves that might be associated with the ritual of the *Golden Light Sūtra*; see Xu, ‘Cong Dawangku kan Cao Yijin huguo tanchang de yiyi’.

the local military governor was always praised for his sincere devotion to Buddhism, his civil engagement with loyalty and filial piety toward the Tang Emperor and his family, and his military talent and accomplishment. In addition, the peaceful life that the host prayed should be regarded as the consequence of the Buddhist blessings and good deeds and as the natural consequence of the talents and wisdom of the local officials. Buddhist and Confucian virtues are emphasized and manifested together. In other words, these liturgical prayers indicate that the rituals serve the beneficiaries with both spiritual enlightenment and salvation and worldly needs, primarily political, economic, and social interests, such as stable political order of the state and local region, good harvest, family business, and personal health and welfare.

The prayers' various contents reflect the political, economic, and social concerns. Politically, the military-governors faced the weakening of the authority of the central court. Given that the An Lushan rebellion was a massive attack on the political authority of the Tang Empire, this was to be expected. The imperial control over the circuits in many regions became questionable after the crackdown of the An Lushan rebellion. Although Zhang Yichao reclaimed the loyalty of the Guiyi circuit to the central court, many of his successors, such as Cao Yijin, became more politically autonomous. In the meantime, the Dunhuang region faced military threats from neighboring states, such as the Tibetan Empire, the Uyghurs, and other groups and regimes.³¹ As manuscript S. 4504 states, the ritual host prayed for the peace of the borders (安邊靜塞) so the government could supply poor people and support weak citizens. He also prayed for the barbarians (neighboring ethnic groups, such as Tibetans and Uighurs) to submit their minds to the Guiyi jun regime. Economically, agricultural production provided the material foundation for the survival of the Guiyi jun autonomous regime. Thus, the host often prayed for the locust disaster not to disturb local agriculture.

Many liturgical prayers such as those in the manuscripts P. 2058

³¹ On the conflicts between the Tang and other Central Asian powers, see Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*.

(15), P. 2838, and S. 5957 indicated that the ritual was hosted in the spring season or the beginning of a lunar year, which was necessary for planting seeds of crops and vegetables. Manuscript S. 3914 states that the ritual was held in the fall season, harvesting agricultural products. The manuscripts S. 1137 and P. 2915 have a similar structure and function to the liturgies discussed throughout this paper. However, it was entitled as the text about celestial soldiers (Tianbing wen 天兵文).³² The text also begins with praising Buddhist teachings and the Buddhas. Then it states that the ritual space of the *Golden Light Sūtra* was created, and the teaching of Tathāgata was turned. The incense and lamps were burnt. And the pure food was distributed to sentient beings. The monks were offered a wondrous feast. In terms of the socio-economic concerns, it claims that the ritual would protect the Guiyi jun governor. And importantly, the flood would be controlled without harming the people. The locusts would fly away, going to other states. There would be no extreme storms or other weather-related problems so that the four seasons would be friendly to the local agriculture. Although these prayers mainly focus on Buddhist teachings, the ritual hosts believed that local earth gods played their roles in protecting local communities, as manuscript S. 3914 shows.³³

Besides these political and economic issues, environmental crises such as epidemics (*liyi* 癘疫) were always a concern for the ritual hosts, as demonstrated in manuscripts P. 2058 (15) and S. 4505. The prayers reveal that the reasons for these epidemics might be due to deviant and evil demons (*yaoxie* 妖邪). Therefore, the Buddhist ritual served as an exorcism for dealing with these demons, consistent with understanding illness and demons in the Central Plain. In terms of preventing the epidemics and illnesses, the *maṇḍala* rituals in these liturgies are similar to the Buddhist *dhāraṇī* texts. As the colophon of manuscript MG 17688 indicates, the Mahāpratisarā *dhāraṇī* could also help prevent the disturbance of cold and fever illnesses, as well as other poisonous magic.

³² Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 604.

³³ Huang & Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwen ji*, 594.

4. The Material World

As John Kieschnick points out, Chinese Buddhism had a tremendous impact on Chinese material culture.³⁴ While studying this group of liturgical texts, I have discussed the multi-dimensional worlds centered on the main icons. The material world in these liturgical texts is rich, yet most materials appearing could be categorized into two groups. The first is materials for performing rituals and materials for making offerings. The former refers to Buddhist images, paintings, scriptures, and *dhāraṇīs*. The latter refers to food, incense, flowers, banners, music, money, wealth, etc. The second group of materials includes sacred pilgrimage sites, for example. Almost every liturgy began its narrative by talking about the Buddha's image and the ritual space. As these texts said, many pure ritual platforms (*jingtān* 淨壇) were set up in eight directions, and the Buddha's images were hung up at each of the four gates of the ritual platform. Then the main icon would be honored in the center of the ritual platform. Buddhist scriptures would be recited. Many manuscripts from the cave library of Dunhuang might be used in these rituals since many copies of the *Golden Light Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* have colophons that indicated they were copied and recited locally.

As we can see in manuscript S. 3914, the offerings for the ritual performance are rich, including banners, flowers, music, soups, food, money, and wealth. It also mentioned the sacred site of the golden mountain (金山聖蹟). It seems to refer to the marvelous phenomenon of the monk Lezun 樂尊 who saw the golden-light thousand Buddhas 金光千佛 on Mount Sanwei 三危山 in 366 so that he began to construct Buddhist caves on the cliff of the mountain. Therefore, the so-called sacred site of the golden mountain invoked the historical memory of the Dunhuang Buddhist community. It is essential to point out that these liturgical prayers from Dunhuang seem to take local elements into account to meet the needs of a prominent local community. However, they appear to be generic liturgies in structure and vocabulary, which

³⁴ Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*.

should be regarded as a local creation.³⁵ However, in the meantime, the golden mountain might also echo a common Buddhist metaphor of the Buddha's body as the golden mountain, as the *Lotus Sūtra* claims.³⁶

Let's turn to the *dhāraṇī* paintings from Dunhuang, such as MG 17688 and Ch. 00249. We can easily find more materials used in the rituals as visual representations, which means that they might not appear as actual materials in the ritual but rather as symbolic items appearing in visual forms. While appearing in visual forms, the ritual specialists could visualize them and conceive them as if they are in presence for particular functions. One of the most visible symbolic materials is the diamond mace (Gadā Vajra), a weapon for destroying evil demons and overcoming difficulties in medieval Chinese Buddhism.³⁷ For example, on the *dhāraṇī* painting Ch. 00249, the Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva is depicted in the center of the entire painting. His multiple hands hold various dharma tools for fulfilling the wishes of worshippers. These tools include a sword, a rosary, an axe, and a pearl, etc. Surrounding this Bodhisattva as the main icon, there were nineteen circles of spells in Sanskrit. Circling these incantations, there is a circle of auspicious plant branches. Then auspicious clouds with Sanskrit mantras on the lotus flowers spread out into another circle. Two general-like guardians on the bottom side wear military armors and look up to the mantras and flowers. Then a circle of spell syllables in Chinese characters follows. The outside is a frame that is ornamented with lotus flowers and diamond maces in turns. Other

³⁵ The locally produced prayers from Dunhuang under the Tibetan rule also reflect the local tradition. In studying the Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 466/3, Lewis Doney translated a passage that listed the personal gods (sku lha) of Tibet; see Doney, 'Imperial Gods', esp. 73.

³⁶ T no. 262, 9: 4c13; it says that 'their bodies colored like a gold mountain, erect, majestic, and very fine'. See Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, 17; this metaphor is well known in Central Asia; an example can be seen in the Khotanese texts, see Bailey, *Indo-Scythian Studies*, vol. IV: 131.

³⁷ It also appears in the popular narratives from Dunhuang; see Mair, *Tunhuang Popular Narratives*, 75.

similar paintings that honored the Guanyin Bodhisattva have almost the same structure. The depiction of the diamond mace is expected in the Dunhuang materials. For example, colorful manuscript P. 4518 (25) even depicts the diamond mace as the main icon. A circle with the pink boundary circles this mace, and it sits on the lotus flower platform with the cover of a canopy of auspicious clouds and plants. In the center, there might be a wish-fulfilling pearl (Cintāmaṇi).³⁸ This mace has four branches, looking like a cross. Nevertheless, many of these materials appear in the canonical materials associated with the *dhāraṇī* rituals, though they are not explicitly mentioned in the liturgical prayers. These materials play essential roles in the performance of the *maṇḍala* rituals.

Conclusions

To sum up some discussions above, these liturgical prayers illustrate the multiple worlds in the daily life of the local Buddhist community in Dunhuang during the ninth-tenth century. When the local rulers hosted the rituals, they invited the local monastic assembly to create the ritual space, invoke Buddhist saints, recite Buddhist texts, and pray for blessings and merits. These rituals reflect strong textuality and materiality, as well as canonicity and locality. While hosting the ritual for creating significant *maṇḍala* rituals, the performers create a cosmological world for the local community. Buddhist saints were invoked to witness the rituals and protect the consecrated ritual space. Although it seems that the canonical texts such as the *Golden Light Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* are among the essential texts in these ritual performances, other texts such as spells, mantras, as well as *dhāraṇī* texts are also crucial. The rituals themselves created new liturgical texts as new Buddhist textual genres. The structure and vocabulary of these liturgical texts are similar, though they are dedicated to different main icons. As this paper shows, there are four main icons as the centers

³⁸ For the study of this pearl in Chinese Buddhism, see Chen, ‘The Cult of Cintamani’.

of the liturgical rituals. Buddhist saints and other celestial beings surrounded these icons. They all served to bestow blessings and merits to the worshippers with the help of the ritual specialists.

The canonical texts describe, such as consecrating gods, praying to Buddhist saints and guardians, feeding monks and demons, and using the images of the Buddha. They are different from the canonical rituals, with various local modifications for both doctrinal and social considerations. Moreover, though the rituals in these liturgical prayers preserve some typical procedure of medieval *maṇḍala* ritual, this big difference between canonicity and locality of liturgical rituals in Dunhuang illustrate that in medieval China, the Buddhist rituals enjoyed their flexibility in accord with the fluidity of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Doctrines, rituals, and texts were expandable and adaptable to local followers' worldly and spiritual needs where Mahāyāna Buddhism was practiced.

The prayers are designed to fulfill the hosts' political, economic, social, and spiritual wishes, particularly the rulers of the local regime in the Dunhuang and Hexi regions. Furthermore, during the ritual performance, both Buddhist saints, guardians, and local earth gods were invoked to protect the benefits of local hosts. Though primarily referring to the ritual hosts and their immediate family members, the beneficiaries also mentioned contemporary emperors in the central court and his officials. The details describing the rulers in the central court demonstrated the sophisticated and subtle emotions and mentality of local rulers in Dunhuang toward the emperors of the Central Empire. The local government in Dunhuang declared its loyalty to the central court, although it still maintained its substantial autonomy and agency.

Appendixes: Translations of Two Liturgical Prayers: P. 2058 (12) and P. 2058 (15)

Appendix A: P. 2058 (12)

Alas! Now we set up the Buddha's images at four gates and create pure platforms at eight corners. In the center, the ritual space of the Great Compassion (Guanyin Bodhisattva) is built. Buddhist assembly turns the *Scripture of the Golden Light*. [We] set up a vegetarian feast for five mornings and invite the Buddha and the monks. Who has been doing this? At that time, our military governor of Hexi, Lord Cao, first humbly offered to eight groups of *nāgas* and devas to protect the regions around the Yellow River and Huang River. The holy lord returns and again pacifies the universe.

Furthermore, it is made for our lord of command. He has bent his body for receiving the resonance of auspicious omen and for princess and lady's constantly preserved joys and celebrations. [We] humbly wish our lord of command is bestowed by heaven with brevity and is supplied by the divinity with numinous wisdom, talent, and brightness. His virtue is magnificent as Wu Qi, mobilizing his strategy to control five Liang regions and receiving holy scepter to clear two circuits. His breaths will shape wind and clouds, and his mighty anger will destroy barbarian enemies. He establishes his tiger scepters in the groups of *nāgas* and descends twin vehicles in the purple mansion. Therefore, he can sincerely pay homage to the teaching of images, maintaining his mind in the Dharma courtyard, building blessings and destroying disasters, expounding and transmitting the sea treasury. Thus, the scriptures are open from the treasury of *nāgas*, and each verse discusses the chapter of non-dualism. The spells praise secret methods, and each sound sings the principle of non-action. The concealed traces of worthies and saints of ten directions descend to meet eight groups of *nāgas* and deities in the air.

[We] humbly wish your mighty radiance becomes effulgent and your divine power increases; you can mobilize your compassion and kindness and exhaust your solid sound to reach the harmonious realm. In total, there is numerous beauty, which cannot be limited to the excellent affinity. First, [we] make offerings to four heavenly

kings, eight groups of *nāgas* and devas, and humbly wish your mighty radiance becomes effulgent, and your divine power increases. You can mobilize your compassion and kindness to save humans and protect the state. Again, [we] carry excellent blessings and again ornament the noble position of the military-governor of Hexi, the lord of command: humbly wish the southern mountain to make longevity and the northern ultimate to mark his honor: he is always the Bodhisattva-like benevolent king, and everlastingly responds the entrust of Tathāgata. Again, [we] carry the deeds of blessings to ornament furthermore our heavenly princess's noble position: humbly wish her bright elegance to become flourishing, like the fragrance of peach and plum. [We wish] Lady Song to preserve her beauty of faithful pine tree forever. [Wish] the lad to become handsome and wise, bearing loyalty and filial piety to face the people. Therefore, all under the heaven becomes stable, and all within the seas become transparent, no hearing about the name of war and relying on the transformation of barbarians. Maha!

Appendix B: P. 2058 (15)

Alas! Since three vehicles expound on marvels, their virtues surpass the gate of the form and image. Seven enlightenments understand the cause so that the principle is beyond the boundary of the name and word. As the sun of the Buddhist suns, his giant image is hanging up on the dark street. As the deva among all devas, he leads sentient beings in the pure realm. His mighty spirit is being himself, and he can reveal and manifest himself unlimitedly. The mysterious wind covers the great-thousand realm. The boundary of reality is bright in non-dualism. How great the sharp insight of the Dharma hero is! Now [we] set up pure platforms in eight corners 八表 and set up Buddha's images at four gates 四門. In the center, a ritual space of Mahāpratisarā Bodhisattva is set up. The black assembly (monastic members) turn the *Scripture of the Golden Light*. Therefore, the fragrant flame runs with the smog, and the mist spreads to eight corners. The sound of linked-pearl-like jade sentences suddenly descends to the pure land of ten directions. The books display a hundred tastes offered to the Buddha's images and the sentient beings in water and land realms. At night the true body is invited, and the Buddhist sound reaches deep clouds. Looking

up without honesty like this, who has been doing it? Our military-governor Lord Cao 曹公 first humbly offers eight groups of *nāgas* and devas to protect battlefields, to four great heavenly kings to wipe out disasters and dangers. [We pray] current imperial lord often sits on the lotus leaf. Ten circuits rush to offer their loyalty with their wholehearted oaths. Moreover, [we pray] the military-governor of Hexi, the lord of command, is bestowed by heaven with brevity and is supplied by the divinity with numinous wisdom. He can always embrace holy strategy, and his virtue is paralleled with Sun Wu and Wu Qi. He can also pacify the barbarians of the west, and his capacity surpasses Tian Ji and Han Xin. Therefore, he can attach his emotions to the teaching of the image and look up compassion and kindness for enhancing his cultivation. He thirsts to look up [Buddhism] with sincerity, and he opens the grand gate with honesty. At that time, three winters are just over, and the first month is just coming. Monks and disciples recite their lessons at eight platforms, and the consecration ritual is performed for five days. In total, there are numerous kindnesses, which cannot be limited to good affinity. Then [we] ornament four heavenly kings, eight groups of *nāgas* and *devas*. Pāñcika, the kind god of protecting boundaries [and pray as follows]: humbly wish your mighty radiance becomes effulgent and your divine power increases; you can mobilize your compassion and kindness to save humans and protect the state. Therefore, each year nine untimely deaths will disappear, and each month three disasters will become extinct. Ten thousand surnames will enjoy the encouraging harvest, and within the entire realm, no one will mourn the tragedy of separation. [We wish] current imperial lord has holy longevity and accomplishment is flourishing. Generals, ministers, and all officials will be dedicated to their state. Again, [we carry] excellent blessings and again ornament the noble position of the military-governor of Hexi, the lord of command, humbly wish him to spread and expand the ultimate way for saving and cultivating sentient beings. His jeweled status is as stable as the *qian* image 乾象 and does not collapse, and his longevity is same as the *Kun* form 坤儀 and does not change. Again, [we carry] excellent blessings, and again ornament the noble position of the minister and the son: humbly wish him like the golden wood to become increasingly luxuriant, like the jade leaves to constantly flourish, like the huge rock to increase

height and like the city wall to solidify. [We wish] heavenly princess to assist the governance, same as the moon of the fall to be always round. [We wish] the lady responds to the auspicious omen, preserving her maiden looking and staying young forever. [We wish] the lad is handsome and wise, achieving his reputation of loyalty and filial piety. [We wish] the daughter has integrity and brightness, and her youthful appearance is pure and clean. [We wish] the peace is flourishing in all four directions, making people not impede within the pass and mountain. The crops became great in all fields, so people competed in singing the elegant rhythm of the *Southern Wind* 南風. Disasters and calamity that cover the city, as well as the obstacles and grievance, are all destroyed. [We wish] those who commit the crimes of lives and wealth all receive the merits. Officials who offer incenses all exhaust their sincerity and loyalty. [We wish] those who randomly hear and see [this ritual] can be the same to increase their upper wishes. Thus, the river will be clear, and the sea will be peaceful, without hearing about the sound of weapons. The enemies from four directions will lower their scepters and end the war forever. Three disasters will disappear, and nine untimely deaths will end in seas and mountains. Epidemics and illness will be gone, and hunger and famine will be sent to the door to hell. Maha!

Bibliography

Abbreviations

- DZ* *Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏. See Primary Sources, *Zhengtong daoze*.
- P* Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Pelliot Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Pictures of many of these manuscripts available on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (idp.bl.uk).
- S* Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, British Library, London. Pictures of many of these manuscripts available on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (idp.bl.uk).

T *Taishō shinsū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe et al., eds.

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