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THE MONGOLIAN BIG DIPPER SŪTRA

JOHAN ELVERSKOG

Introduction

Ever since the European discovery of Buddhism and the subsequent development of Buddhist Studies, there has been an intense focus on “the text” and its implied notions of authority. The origins of this methodological propensity and its ramifications are now rather well-known, and many scholars have begun to re-evaluate previous categories that shaped the trajectory of this textual criticism. One such category is the entire concept of the “canon” and its tandem concepts of “apocryphal,” “authentic” and ultimately “true/pure” – elements that have shaped both Buddhist and academic discourse.¹ In much the same way as East Asian Buddhists produced graded hierarchies of the Buddha’s Dharma, scholars have produced graded scales of value towards the “canons” that allow them access to the Dharma. The Pali and Chinese canons (as well as the Tibetan, depending on the topic) are recognized as essential and authoritative, while the Tangut, Mongol and Manchu canons are relegated to the category of secondary or tertiary importance. It also needs to be recognized, however, that any intellectual mapping has an agenda and that it produces aporias with inevitable implications. In the case of Zhiyi 智顓 and his Tiantai 天台 tradition, the result of this “theological”/intellectual engagement with the Dharma was the elevation of the *Lotus Sūtra* to the pinnacle of the Buddha’s teachings, a development with profound consequences for the history of the Buddhist tradition. While it is unlikely that the contemporary scholarly evaluation of the Buddhist canon will have as much impact as did Zhiyi, it is still necessary for scholars of Buddhist history to continually interrogate

¹ For a valuable introduction to issues surrounding the problem of Buddhist “canon(s)” see Buswell, and more recently Freiburger.

our own canonical categorizations, in particular how they potentially repress or distort the historical development of the Buddhist tradition. It is with this aim in mind that I present the following translation of the Mongolian *Big Dipper Sūtra* with a discussion of its theoretical and historical implications.

Overview of scholarship and translation history

This translation is based on the text of the *Big Dipper Sūtra* as found in the *Kanjur*, the Mongolian translation of the Tibetan *bKa'-gyur* (the collected teachings of the Buddha), with reference to two manuscript copies housed in the Inner Mongolian Academy of Social Sciences.² This is not the first translation of this Buddhist *sūtra*. Scholars have paid close attention to this work for nearly a century. The first, Berthold Laufer, noted in 1907 that according to the colophon of the Tibetan version of the *sūtra* it had been translated into Uygur, the Turkic language of northwest China. This claim was corroborated when German expeditions in the Tarim Basin discovered thousands of fragments of Uygur Buddhist texts, several of which were in fact translations of the *Big Dipper Sūtra*. These fragments were subsequently published by the Turkologist G.R. Rachmati with the sinological commentary of Wolfram Eberhard (1937). Subsequently, these fragments, their history, relation to other translations, cultural implications, etc. have been the focus of numerous scholarly endeavors,³ culminating in the magisterial study of Herbert Franke, who

² This translation is based on Ligeti's transcription (1963: 103–114) of the Mongolian *Doluγan ebügen nereti odun-u sudur* found in the Beijing *Kanjur* (vol. 92 No. 1123 [Ligeti 1942–44: 303]), in addition to two manuscripts housed in the Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences, Hohhot, China (CMC #588 and 589 – 49.328 1403:1 and 49.328 1403:2). The two manuscripts do not differ in any substantial way from the *Kanjur* version, except that both lack the important colophon. There are no early extant Mongolian fragments from the Yuan period that would provide evidence of its translation history (Cerenodnam and Taube 1993), particularly the relation of the Mongol text to the Uygur fragments. Aside from the two manuscripts used in the preparation of this edition there are extant manuscript copies in the Mongolian collections in Copenhagen (Heissig 1971: 221), Germany (MHL #287) and the library at the University of Inner Mongolia (CMC #590).

³ For a bibliography of studies on the Uygur fragments and related works, see Elverskog (1997: 93–95).

compared the Chinese, Tibetan, Uygur and Mongolian Buddhist versions and showed their Daoist origins (1990). In the wake of his work, Jampa Panglung prepared an edition and translation of the Tibetan version (1991).⁴ Henrik Sørensen translated a Korean ritual text for the worship of the Big Dipper and investigated the tradition in Korea (1995). And most recently Charles Orzech and James Sanford published three texts from the Chinese canon involved with the worship of the Big Dipper (2000).

Value of new translations to scholarship

Invariably, one may wonder what is the value of translating a secondary, or perhaps even tertiary, Mongolian text. Indeed, what is the point of exploring the Mongolian version of a work that was clearly produced in a Chinese cultural context and is found in the Chinese canon?

A valid point. However, our own theoretical suppositions make such a conjecture valid. The primary such supposition is that the Chinese canon is of paramount historical importance (a claim amplified in this case with reference to the Daoist borrowings of the work). As a result, it is generally taken for granted that the Chinese version contained in the *Taishō* canon is the “ur-text” and thus it is the reference point for all others.⁵ This may be true, but such an assumption is not without problems. Much may be lost in selecting a text produced in Japan,⁶ and found in a canon compiled in Japan during the 1920s over a text clearly produced in China and dated to the early 14th century. While this is a philological problem beyond the bounds of this paper, for our present concern, the modern focus on the Chinese canon and its perceived authority has had two ramifica-

⁴ The Tibetan text *Sme-bdun zhes-bya-ba'i skar-ma'i mdo* is found in the Peking *bKa'-gyur* (Suzuki 1955–61: vol. 40, p. 370–372, P286b6–290a8).

⁵ This text (*Fo shuo beidou qi xing yan ming jing* 佛說北斗七星延命經) is found in volume 21 of the *Taishō shinshū daizō-kyō*, T 1307: 425b–426b.

⁶ The canonical version in the *Taishō* includes a picture of the Big Dipper, the “Ladies of the Dipper” and the amulets corresponding to each star are labelled with a Japanese *kana* symbol (Orzech and Sanford 2000: 387).

tions. First, it has obscured the simple fact that the Taishō text and the Mongolian *sūtra* are not the same, thus affecting our understanding of the development of this tradition. Second, the fixation on the “Chineseness” of Big Dipper worship has obviated the fact that this work was important among the Mongols, and thus has led us to neglect what this worship among the Mongols tells us about Mongolian Buddhism and the process by which new ideas and practices cross both religious and cultural boundaries.

Regarding the first issue, the importance of the Mongolian text and its history lies in the fact that it preserves a Chinese Buddhist text for the worship of the seven stars/Buddhas of the Big Dipper that is not found in the Chinese canon. The opening passage of the Mongolian text provides a history of its translation: it was translated from Chinese into Mongolian, which in turn was used as the basis for the Tibetan translation. The colophon also notes that an Uygur translation was prepared and printed, but it never states explicitly whether it was used as an intermediary in the translation from Chinese into Mongolian. This fact, coupled with the fragmentary nature of the Uygur pieces, has led to as yet unresolved speculation as to its possible role in the translation process. Regardless, it is clear that both the Uygur and the Mongolian texts are based on some Chinese original, and the text always referenced in this regard is the Chinese text found in the *Taishō* canon. If one compares the Chinese and Mongolian versions, however, it becomes clear that there are prominent differences between the two.

The Mongolian version is, first of all, twice as long. The narrative of the Mongolian text can be broken down into six major sections:⁷

1. List of the seven Buddhas, their food offerings, relations to cyclical birth signs and amulets.
2. Invocation of the Buddhas affiliated with each star and their respective *dhāraṇīs*.

⁷ This division is based on Franke’s discussion of the text; however, he notes eight sections instead of six (1990: 86). For my analysis, the other two sections, the introductory passage with the text’s translation history and the colophon, are not relevant in terms of the Chinese text.

3. Buddha's sermon to Mañjuśrī on the benefits of this *sūtra*.
4. List of the relation between the color of a person and the element to which he belongs.
5. Hymn of praise to the seven Buddhas.
6. A list of days when lamps for worshipping the seven stars should be lit.

Of these six sections, the canonical Chinese version (T 1307) contains only the first three. The Mongolian version of these three sections is a nearly verbatim translation of the Chinese text, but the Mongolian continues where the Chinese ends. Indeed, the Mongolian text proclaims after section three, the end of the Chinese text, "One chapter of the scripture of the God of Gods, Buddha's preaching of *The Sūtra on Prolonging One's Life Through the Big Dipper* is finished." The final three sections also reflect a Chinese origin, most strikingly the explanation found in section four of the connection between people's birth colors and their natural element. As a result, it is clear that the canonical Chinese text (T 1307) is a truncated version of what is preserved in the Mongolian translation.⁸ Exactly how this came to be is rather unclear, but, the popularity of the work, its complicated development in China, and its translation history provide some avenues for investigation.

Aside from the Mongolian version studied here, there are also extant other texts and fragments of the Buddhist worship of the Big Dipper that provide evidence of the existence and persistence of ritual texts outside the canonical matrix. The 1651 Korean work, the *Pukdu ch'ilsong chong uimun* 北斗七星請儀文,⁹ includes sections two and three of T 1307, as well as a lengthy introduction and sec-

⁸ Taking into account the differences between the texts it is important to re-evaluate Sørensen's critique of Franke's dating of "the text" to the Yuan dynasty (1995: 74–79). While it is clear there was an earlier version of the text produced during the Tang dynasty, the time and place of the origin of the Sino-Mongolian text from the Yuan is far from clear. Perhaps it was produced during the Yuan using the earlier text as a model? Nevertheless, by ignoring the differences between the two works the complexity of its transmission and historical development is overlooked.

⁹ This text is translated in Sørensen 1995: 97–100.

tion six of the “Mongolian” text. Uygur fragments from the Yuan period and a text produced in Singapore in the 1960s also differ from T 1307. What is distinctive about these two texts is that both of them contain the worship of nine stars of the Dipper, as opposed to the seven of T 1307 and other Buddhist works (Franke 1990: 96). This variety points to the clear fact that multiple versions, or texts, of the Buddhist worship of the Big Dipper were being produced and used in China and Inner Asia. Which is more “authoritative”? In traditional philological analysis and the production of textual lineages, it is valid to highlight the importance of the Chinese version since it appears to be the “original” core of later texts. Yet, might not this Chinese version only be a later Japanese redaction from a/the fuller, and certainly more Daoist influenced text, as found in the Mongolian version? Where do the Uygur fragments and the Singapore text fit into the genealogy? Are they a different tradition entirely? Perhaps.

However, while these questions are important and worthwhile, it is also important to understand how this sort of textual criticism, focusing on textual transmission and perceived categories of authority, operates in the same manner as Buddhist lineage production to obviate the most obvious question: how and why do Daoist concepts and ritual practices become Buddhist? In the same way as modern scholarship has focused on the Chinese text in lieu of the Mongolian text because of constructed notions of authority, it is important to investigate how and why medieval Chinese Buddhists appropriated Daoist concepts and the process of legitimation that made them Buddhist.

Chinese background of *sūtra*

Of course, the cultural conflict that ensued upon the introduction of Buddhism to China is well known.¹⁰ Likewise it has been amply illustrated that the Buddhist and Daoist traditions developed within an interface of mutual borrowing. Just as the Daoist Lingbao 靈寶 tradi-

¹⁰ See for example Zürcher 1959, Gregory 1991, Teiser 1988, Sharf 2002, and Kieschnick 2003.

tion adopted and transformed Buddhist concepts within a Chinese sensibility (Bokenkamp 1990, 1997: 373–392), it is not surprising that Buddhists incorporated Chinese concepts into their own religious framework.¹¹ And one of the most prominent features of Chinese religion that has continued from the earliest dynasties until the present day is the worship of the Big Dipper.¹² Already during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the Dipper was painted on the ceiling of many tombs and its recognized power had reached such levels that it was incorporated into the rituals of emperorship. In his attempt to seize the throne, the usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23 CE) adopted the Dipper as a symbol of power and a protective talisman against his enemies (Sørensen 1995: 72). At the same time a cosmogonic dance attributed to the legendary hero Yü the Great of the Xia dynasty also developed, intended to increase the life-span of the practitioner and also help the state relieve the suffering of the empire's people from various disasters.¹³ In accord with these conceptions Emperor Huan 桓帝 of the Han 漢 (140–187 CE), paralleling Constantine on the Milvia Bridge, was advised by his court ritual specialists (*fangshi* 方士) to carry a standard bearing an image of the Big Dipper (Robinet 1997: 43).

The imperial appropriation of the Dipper was grounded in pre-Daoist cosmology, which saw the Pole Star as the abode of the Supreme One, Tai Yi 太一. Thus as the Dipper circumambulates the divine abode the rhythms of the universe are enacted. This concentrated visual representation shaped the subsequent Daoist concept-

¹¹ On the early interface between Buddhism and Daoism, see Strickmann 2002.

¹² The Big Dipper was venerated as a deity as early as the late Shang 商 dynasty (13–11th century BCE) (Little 2000: 128). In regards to its continuing worship, Schipper notes in his study of contemporary Daoist practice in Taiwan that the most important ritual the priest performs is the worship of the Big Dipper (1993: 72–75). Franke (1990: 96) also notes that the worship of the Big Dipper continues among the Chinese Buddhist community, as evidenced in the recent publishing of the *Miraculous Sūtra of the Great Bear that Dispels Calamities and Prolongs Life* in Singapore.

¹³ For a representation of this dance as found in the *Taishang zhuguo jiumin zongzhen biyao* 太上助國救民總真祕要 TT 987, see Robinet (1993: 223). On this practice see Robinet (1993: 221–225), and for its origins and development see Andersen (1989–90) and Schafer (1977).

alization of the Big Dipper as the center of the Celestial Bureaucracy, where the cosmic order is put into place. This is an idea that is echoed in Ge Hong's 葛洪 (ca. 284–363) *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, one of the earliest collections of Daoist practices, where worship of the Dipper is understood to protect against plague, avoid calamities, and bestow blessings (Sørensen 1995: 73). Also in the 4th century Daoist practice known as “Method of Holding the Three Ones” (*shou sanyi* 守三一), the worship and meditation upon the Dipper played a pivotal role (Sørensen 1995: 73; Andersen 1980). By the 3rd–4th century the basic shape of future Daoist understandings of the Dipper was in place. The Dipper regulated the fate of one's life – not only the nature of one's life, through its arbitrary fluxes, but more importantly, the length of one's life. Many of the Daoist texts that involve the Dipper are concerned with the issue of asking for pardon of one's sins and having one's name erased from the register of the dead. Both of these areas are under the authority of gods resident in the Big Dipper. Paralleling these related duties, in an early Daoist text of the Shangqing 上清 revelations (364–370 CE), the *Text of the Three Diagrams That Open the Sky*,¹⁴ the Big Dipper is affiliated with death and the hell realms. And yet, through proper practice and meditation on the Dipper one can achieve the ultimate goal of immortality (Robinet 1997: 146).

With this understanding of the historical importance of the Big Dipper in China and the early Daoist textual explication of its worship in place, the question arises, why in the process of cross-fertilization did the Buddhist tradition not engage with these ideas until several centuries later? Only at the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th century were Buddhist texts explicating the worship of the Big Dipper produced.¹⁵ The answer lies in the important linkage be-

¹⁴ *Kaitian santu jing* 開天三圖經 TT 1027.

¹⁵ Vajrabodhi's (669–741 CE) *Ritual Procedures for Invoking the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper* (*Beidou qi xing niansong yigui* 北斗七星念誦儀軌 T 1305, translated in Orzech and Sanford 2000: 392–393), Yixing's (673–727 CE) *The Method of Making a Homa Offering to the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper* (*Beidou qixing humo fa* 北斗七星護摩法 T 1310), and Guiding's (d.u.) *The Secret Essentials for Performing a Homa Offering to the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper* (*Beidou qixing humo mimi yao yigui* 北斗七星護摩秘密要儀

tween the Big Dipper and state power noted above, and its relation to the political climate in China. Although Buddhism had a certain political influence during the post-Han period, it was a time of great political and social instability and Buddhism never became a fundamental element in the production of legitimate emperorship. This continued up through the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907), during which the court held Daoism above Buddhism in all religious matters (Weinstein 1987). In 684, however, Empress Wu 武后 seized power and set about creating a Buddhist empire (Forte 1976), and it is then that the earliest Buddhist ritual texts for the worship of the Big Dipper appear. This is likely not a simple coincidence. Instead, the importance of the Big Dipper in Chinese statecraft mandated, or allowed for, its incorporation into the Buddhist tradition at a time when a Buddhist held the throne.¹⁶

The Big Dipper and the Medicine Buddha

Another element that lends credence to this hypothesis is the identification of the stars of the Big Dipper with the Seven Healing Buddhas. This connection is not made in the three earliest Buddhist texts for the ritual worship of the Big Dipper. However, in the later canonical Chinese text (T 1307), produced in the second half of the Tang dynasty, the connection is made (Sørensen 1995: 77). As a result, what factors can explain the appearance of the Seven Healing

軌 T 1306, translated in Orzech and Sanford 2000: 393–395).

¹⁶ A similar example of the Big Dipper continuing its relevancy in statecraft in the face of a radical political shift is found in a tourist guide to Beijing prepared in 1957. This guide was prepared shortly after the 1949 communist victory over Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government while Tiananmen Square was being created as the sacred center of the new China.

T'ien-an-men is known to us all. Its beautiful features form an important part of our state emblem. People turn to T'ien-an-men and see it as the people's Great Dipper. The people of the entire world are very familiar with T'ien-an-men; T'ien-an-men symbolizes magnificent new China (quoted in Wagner 1992: 392).

Although this was at the apogee of Marxist-Leninist thought in China the cultural mapping of the new ideology and its attendant nation building enterprise drew upon a well recognized cultural symbol. Paralleling the phenomenon that occurred in the Buddhist tradition during the reign of Empress Wu.

Buddhas and their respective *dhāraṇīs* (section 2) in T 1307? Again, the political changes at the Tang court provide some clues. Empress Wu died in 705 and the son whom she had sent into exile when she seized the throne in 684 returned to rule as the Zhongzong 中宗 emperor (r. 684/705–710). During his period of banishment he had prayed to Bhaiṣajya-guru, the medicine Buddha. Feeling indebted to this Buddha upon his return, he requested the learned monk Yijing to translate a new version of the *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra* into Chinese. The monk completed the translation in 707, with the emperor acting as recording scribe.¹⁷ Two important developments in this text from the earlier versions of the *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra* were the expansion of the Medicine Buddha into seven manifestations, and the inclusion of protective *dhāraṇīs* given by the Seven Buddhas (Birnbau 1979: 70). These are exactly the two elements that appear in the new Buddhist ritual text for the worship of the Big Dipper.¹⁸

The appropriation of the Seven Medicine Buddhas as the stars of the Big Dipper fused the earlier Daoist concepts of the Big Dipper with Buddhist ideas about Bhaiṣajya-guru. As noted above, in the Daoist tradition, the Big Dipper was the controller of one's fate, and the ritual aim of these practices tried to erase one's name from the registry of the dead thereby prolonging one's life. In the early *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra*, one can pray to the Medicine Buddha for exactly the same thing. In this work it is described that at death, Yama, the king of the dead, sends out emissaries to collect the two inner spirits

¹⁷ *Sūtra on the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Seven Buddhas of Lapis Lazuli Radiance, the Masters of Healing* (*Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師光七佛本願功德經 T 451, vol. 14). Translated in Birnbau (1979: 173–216).

¹⁸ Franke (1990: 95) has identified the names of the Buddhas affiliated with stars 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 as the names of the Medicine Buddhas found in Yijing's 義淨 707 translation of the *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra* (*Sūtra on the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Seven Buddhas of Lapis Lazuli Radiance, the Masters of Healing* [*Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師光七佛本願功德經 T 451, vol. 14]). Translated in Birnbau [1979: 173–216]). Why the names of the first and fifth Buddhas in the *Big Dipper Sūtra* do not correspond to the Medicine Buddhas "Auspicious King" and "Thundering Sound of the Dharma Sea" is unclear. Does the *Big Dipper Sūtra* reflect an earlier or different tradition of the Seven Medicine Buddhas now lost? Did the difference arise in an attempt to produce a modicum of differentiation? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered with the available sources.

of the deceased. These two spirits are brought to his tribunal and on the basis of their deposition of all the person's deeds Yama decides their destiny. If one prays to Bhaiṣajya-guru, however, one can change one's destiny and even overcome death (Strickmann 1990: 83). Similarly, the Big Dipper texts allow one to alter one's karmic registry, which is controlled by the Big Dipper, thereby prolonging one's life. Guiding's *The Secret Essentials for Performing a Homa Offering to the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper* (T 1306) proclaims, "On behalf of those who make the offerings, these deities will order the appropriate natal star to remove them from the death records and restore them to the life records" (Orzech and Sanford 2000: 394). Vajrabodhi's text (T 1305) presents a parallel passage, "If you want long life [they will] scratch out your karmic register and restore your life register" (Orzech and Sanford 2000: 392–393). This represents a clear parallel to the Daoist image of the Big Dipper and its worship, and thus the linkage of the Seven Medicine Buddhas with the Big Dipper fully coalesces these traditions – a development eloquently captured in a visual representation from the important *Scripture of the Ten Kings* that developed in the 7th–9th centuries. In this work, which ushered Chinese visions of hell and purgatory into the Buddhist tradition, Yama is portrayed as wearing the *mian* 冕, an emperor's hat decorated with the Big Dipper (Teiser 1994: 175).¹⁹ Buddhist worship of the Big Dipper may have developed in a particular context, but, it continued in a multiplicity of ways.

Politics also served to fuse the worship of the Big Dipper with the Medicine Buddha tradition and perpetuate its practice. As noted above, the Dipper was not only linked to long life in the Chinese tradition but also to imperial rule and the maintenance of harmony

¹⁹ Sørensen (1995: 73) argues that the most important Daoist text for the worship of the Big Dipper probably dates to the second half of the Tang dynasty (*The Perfect Scripture of the Highest Arcane Marvel, the Great Dipper Fundamental Extension of the Length of Life, Taishang xuanling beidou ben mingyan sheng zhen jing* 太上玄零北斗本命延生真經 TT 622). In light of the growing Buddhist appropriation of Big Dipper worship in the beginning of the 8th century, it is possible to conjecture that this Daoist text may have been produced in reaction to these Buddhist texts.

within the empire.²⁰ Both the oldest version of the *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra* and the version of the text found in the fifth century *Consecration Sūtra* (*Guanding jing* 灌頂經 T 1331), articulate one idea regarding the worship of the Medicine Buddha: “By doing homage to Bhaiṣajyaguru a consecrated king can resolve all problems in his dominions: eclipses, drought, disease, demonic attacks, and the like.” (Strickmann 1990: 83) While this factor certainly played a role in the development of this Buddhist ritual practice during the Tang, it was the multivalency of Dipper worship that enabled its continued appropriation especially during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (元 1271–1368).

Big Dipper rites during the Yuan

As was the case with the later Manchu Qing dynasty (清 1644–1911), the Mongols were a foreign people ruling the predominantly Han, though also multi-ethnic, Chinese empire. As a result, their systems of rule entailed a multiplicity of rhetorics for political legitimacy.²¹ In both of these dynasties the notions of imperial identity explicated in the Confucian-Daoist and Tantric Buddhist traditions were employed simultaneously, a policy which at times created tensions with political and social implications. In such a climate, a practice which fused both of these traditions, or at least the Chinese and Buddhist conceptualizations, offered unique possibilities for ritual and ideo-

²⁰ A fine example of the continued importance of worshipping the Big Dipper as a part of Chinese imperial rule is found in the 1568 *Marvelous Scripture of Salvation that Prolongs Life*. This superbly illuminated manuscript written in gold is a collection of Daoist texts for the worship of the Big Dipper and the gods of the Southern, Eastern, Western, and Central Dippers for the benefit of the emperor and the nation. The colophon reads, “Respectfully manifesting a sincere heart, [I] have inscribed in gold characters [these] various Dipper Scriptures. [I] look up and pray that the great perfected on high bless [this] august nation, and guard the path of the emperor so that it is enduring and prosperous, so that all households and the nation enjoy prosperity, that the people be at peace, that all things be abundant, and that all dwellings be in order, forever abiding in good fortune and extended years” (Little 2000: 246–247).

²¹ The multiple identities of the Manchu emperors and the process of creating the Qing emperorship has recently been the focus of extensive scholarship (e.g. Farquhar 1978, Rawski 1998, Crossley 1999, Di Cosmo 1999 and Elliott 2001). However, it is important to recognize that the Mongol rulers of the Yuan were engaged in a similar enterprise (e.g. Franke 1978, Langlois 1981, Chan and de Bary 1982, Rossabi 1983).

logical innovation, especially since worship of the Big Dipper had always been an element of Chinese imperial rule.

During the reign of Khubilai Khan, the founder of the Yuan dynasty, Daoist masters of the Taiyi 太一 sect were commissioned to perform the Big Dipper rituals. Franke writes:

Like other rituals for deities, those for the Great Bear stars were regarded as a duty of the state. On the first day of the new moon in the eighth lunar month of 1285 (September 1, 1285) the responsible officials were ordered to worship the Great Bear for three full days. A similar edict was issued at the end of the lunar year (January 25, 1286), presumably to pray for upcoming good luck and prosperity (1990: 107).

Worship of the Big Dipper drew upon both Daoist and Buddhist precedents, but it also allowed for the incorporation of Mongolian religio-cultural concepts. This amalgam was of crucial political importance as one of the perpetual divisions within the Yuan ruling elite was between Confucian and Mongolian steppe theories of rule.²² And just as Big Dipper worship could mobilize Chinese and Buddhist symbols and ideas, it also coalesced with Mongolian cosmology and soteriology, for they too believed that the stars of the Dipper were gods who controlled one's fate and therefore needed to be offered animal sacrifices (Banzarov 1981–2: 55). The worship of the Big Dipper therefore operated as a perfect medium in the creation of a multi-ethnic emperorsip, incorporating disparate conceptualizations in forms recognizable across cultural, linguistic and religious boundaries.

The importance of the connection between the Big Dipper and forging the emperorsip through modes of cultural continuity is also reflected in the appearance of these new and multiple translations during the early 14th century. The only dated Uygur colophon is from a text prepared in 1313 and then published in a thousand copies (Zieme 1985: 161). The merit for this scriptural production is presented to the emperor, the empress-dowager and the empress. This may be considered a standard supplication. But it is important to

²² The following discussion of the debate between Confucian and "Mongolia-oriented" politics during the Yuan is based on the work of Dardess (1973).

keep in mind that the Renzong emperor (仁宗 r. 1313–1321) had only taken the throne the year before and that his succession had been marred by the escalating violence between the “Mongolia-centred” and “China-centred” factions within the Yuan ruling elite. The Renzong emperor, well-known for his filial devotion to his mother, Confucian learning, and Chinese orientation, took the throne after the death of his brother, an ardent anti-Chinese ruler and supporter of “Mongolia-centred” policies. As a result, the course of Yuan rule was radically shifted towards a “China-centred” focus. Notably, in 1315 the Renzong emperor re-instituted the Confucian-based civil service examination. In this volatile religio-cultural and political context, the Uygur *Big Dipper Sūtra*, with its embedded multi-vocality, was produced in honor of the Renzong emperor.

After his death, however, the over-arching feud between these factions continued to shape the course of Yuan political culture. His successor, the Yingzong emperor (英宗 r. 1320–1323), continued with his predecessor’s policies and advocated a Confucian-oriented style instead of supporting the Turko-Mongol elite. Because of this policy he was assassinated and replaced by the Taiding emperor (泰定 r. 1323–1328) who repudiated the coup, yet he made no attempt to purge his administration of anti-Confucian elements. Rather he attempted to force a reconciliation between the two factions, which, instead of producing equanimity, culminated in the coup d’état of the “restoration” forces of 1328. The “restoration” consisted in the return to Mongolia-oriented policies by a powerful clique of Mongol and Turkic elites who put the Mingzong emperor (明宗 r. 1328) on the throne. Shortly thereafter he was killed by his younger brother, the Wenzong emperor (文宗 r. 1328–1332), and the restoration continued. It is again in this chaotic period of shifting political winds and the attendant vision of the emperorship that a high-ranking Uygur official in the Wenzong court, Urug Böke, had the *Big Dipper Sūtra* produced in Mongolian in 1328 and two thousand copies printed. At the same time, Alin Tämür, another Uygur official at the Wenzong court, had a thousand copies of an Uygur version of the *sūtra* printed. That these texts appeared at two separate times in the service of competing political wills, again underscores the power of

the worship of the Big Dipper to function as a medium of imperial multi-vocality.

The Big Dipper and the Post-Yuan Mongols

The connection of Big Dipper worship to political power is further re-confirmed in the example of the Tibetan translation and in the production of the text among the post-Yuan Mongols.²³ In 1337 a Tibetan translation of the Mongolian text sponsored by Urug Böke was prepared at Gung-thang monastery outside of Lhasa. The circumstances surrounding the translation are unclear. We do know, however, that in 1330 the Wenzong emperor ordered Tibetan monks to worship the stars, thus this practice was not entirely foreign to the Tibetans prior to the translation (Franke 1990: 107). In addition on December 18, 1336 in a purge of the Wenzong clique at court under the Shundi emperor (順帝 r. 1333–1368), Urug Böke, the sponsor of the 1328 Mongolian text was “sent to Tibet to become a Buddhist monk” (Franke 1990: 83). It is unlikely that he had anything to do with the translation as this phrase was simply a euphemism for exile. Rather, Urug Böke was purged because of his support of the Wenzong emperor at a time when Bayan held supreme power during the early years of the Shundi emperor’s reign. Bayan was a strident anti-Confucianist and once again the Yuan was seized in spasm of political orthodoxy. Possibly, the multiplicity of the *Big Dipper Sūtra* offered an alternative to this rigidity, which was invariably doomed to failure in the multi-ethnic Yuan, and thus it was translated in Tibet in 1337. This seems even more likely since the monastery where it was prepared had strong connections with the Mongol court. Nevertheless, the text made no lasting impact upon the Tibetans (Panglung 1991: 400). Shorn of its religio-cultural and, most importantly, its political implications the *Big Dipper Sūtra* survived in the Tibetan milieu only as cultural relic of the past, though its

²³ Nor was its importance solely limited to the Mongols as evidenced in the Hongwu 洪武 emperor’s tomb in Nanjing 南京, which was layed out according to the shape of the Big Dipper.

preservation in Tibetan allowed it to be mobilized again in the multi-ethnic rhetoric of a new Inner Asian empire.

In 1572, in accordance with their peace treaty with Altan Khan, the Ming court sent Buddhist monks, texts, statues, artisans etc. to the Mongol ruler. In addition, Altan Khan's envoys were allowed to cross Ming territory in order to go to Tibet to obtain Tibetan *sūtras* and bring them back to Mongolia. A letter by the Ming statesman Wang Chonggu 王崇古 records that the *Big Dipper Sūtra* was among these texts (Coyiji 1996: 15). As evidenced in the 1607 Mongolian history of Altan Khan, the *Jewel Translucent Sūtra*,²⁴ Altan Khan envisioned himself as a new Chinggis or Khubilai Khan, a universal ruler of a multi-ethnic empire.²⁵

The religio-cultural multiplicity of the *Big Dipper Sūtra* was again mobilized in creating an emperorship that incorporated Mongols, Tibetans and Chinese. A mode of rule that was emulated for the last time in the failed attempt of Ligdan Khan to once again revive the Yuan or Mongol empire. Before he was defeated by the Manchus and the Mongols were brought into the Qing dynasty, Ligdan Khan tried to recreate himself in the mold of the great Yuan emperors. He even rejected the Dalai Lama's Dge-lug-pa lineage in favor of the Sa-skya as the Yuan had done. He built stupas, received tantric initiations, and most importantly, he had the entire Kanjur

²⁴ This important Mongolian history is available in Mongolian (Jürungga 1984), Chinese (Zhu-rong-ga 1990), Japanese (Yoshida et al. 1998: 111–207), German (Kollmar-Paulenz 2001) and English (Elverskog 2003).

²⁵ In this work Altan Khan is presented as not only ruling over the Mongols, but also the Chinese and Tibetans, thus he was in fact re-creating the Yuan. As an example, in the text when Altan Khan met the Dalai Lama in 1578, he “gave” Tibet back to the leader of the Dge-lugs-pa, much as in Buddhist historiography it is imagined that Khubilai Khan presented Tibet as an appanage to 'Phags-pa Lama of the Sa-skya school. In addition, the work includes multiple references to Chinese and Altan Khan's relations with them in his role as emperor. This representation was not purely fanciful grandiosity on the part of Mongol historians. Chinese sources, most notably Qu Jiusi's 瞿九思 *Wanli Wugong Lu* 萬曆武功錄, record that 50,000 Chinese, either Ming rebels, White Lotus practitioners or economic refugees had re-settled in Altan Khan's territory. Thus Altan Khan's empire was in fact multi-ethnic, and this reality is reflected in the *Jewel Translucent Sūtra* and its presentation of Mongol emperorship.

(re)translated into Mongolian.²⁶ The director of this multi-volume project was the monk Kun-dga' 'od-zer who is also identified as the translator of thirteen *sūtras*, including the 1624 Mongolian re-translation of the 1337 Tibetan *Big Dipper Sūtra*. That this translation was done before the Kanjur project began in 1628 reflects its distinctiveness relative to the canonical *sūtras* of the Tibetan *bKa'-'gyur*. Its earlier translation at a time when Ligdan Khan was frantically attempting to re-unite the fractious Mongols, and possibly requesting support from the Ming in the face of Manchu expansion, underscores its ritual and symbolic importance for multi-ethnic emperors. In addition, that Kun-dga' 'od-zer, the most illustrious translator at the court, prepared the translation, reinforces the influence of this text and the power of Big Dipper worship in echoing multiple cultural voices.

Conclusion

Of course, while it is vital to recognize the political dimension in the transmission of the *Big Dipper Sūtra* from the Tang dynasty up through the Qing, other cultural or religious factors cannot be dismissed. After the fall of Ligdan Khan and any possible linkage of the

²⁶ The oldest redaction of the Mongolian Kanjur is from the time of Ligdan Khan, who commissioned its translation in 1628–1629. At that time six manuscript copies were supposedly prepared, one written in gold (now housed in the Library of the Academy of Social Sciences in Hohhot, which, however, may actually be older [Heissig 1998: 158]), and five in black ink (one of which is housed at St. Petersburg University [Kasyanenko 1993]; Kollmar-Paulenz has recently argued this may be a draft of the final version [2002]). However, as evidenced in this work and in several colophons (including one which confirms the translation of the Kanjur in 1602–1607 as claimed in the *Jewel Translucent Sūtra* [Kasyanenko 1993: 158; Kollmar-Paulenz 2001: n. 771]) it is clear that the idea, and possibly even the work of translating the entire Kanjur, was begun and completed at the time of Altan Khan and his descendants (Heissig 1998; Uspensky 1997: 113). It is possible that when Ligdan Khan was engaged in his failed campaign against the Ordos in 1627 he acquired a copy while residing in Hohhot (Altan'orgil, Narancogtu, Altanjiya-a 1999: 22), after which he returned east and began the re-translation project of 1628–29; which included the altering of colophons to erase the evidence of Altan Khan's initial work and the reorganization of the contents. A similar phenomenon occurred when the Kangxi emperor ordered a Mongolian Kanjur to be prepared in Beijing in 1718–20 (Heissig 1954: 110).

Big Dipper Sūtra with Mongolian imperial aspirations, the *sūtra* was included in a collection of important Buddhist *dhāraṇī* texts printed in Beijing by the Qing court in 1707 (Matsukawa 1994:185). Only ten years later it was incorporated into the imperial Kanjur prepared during the reign of the Kangxi emperor (康熙 r. 1662–1723). Thus, it began, in a sense, to have a life of its own. Though its connection with polyvalency was not lost on the Manchus,²⁷ who, for example, incorporated its power and imagery into one of the central incense burners in Yonghegong, the imperial center of Qing Buddhism.

The *Big Dipper Sūtra*, however, also had resonances and influences among the Mongols far beyond the rarefied realm of emperorship and political discourse. The Mongols called upon the Big Dipper in hunting rituals, rituals to make one shoot straight, and most Buddhist and “shamanist” rituals in general.²⁸ An important measure of the *sūtra*’s influence in Mongol culture generally is its name: By the Qing, the Big Dipper is no longer called by its traditional name the “Seven Old Men” in Khalkha (the main Mongolian dialect), but the Seven Buddhas. Of course, it is through such a broad and deep cultural penetration that the *Big Dipper Sūtra* became such a pivotal element in the production of emperorship. It was this breadth and depth that produced and preserved the Mongolian text in a static form over the centuries, but this should not blind us to the multiple versions of the text and different visions of Big Dipper worship that existed at various times and in different cultural areas. What began within the narrow confines of a Tang dynasty Buddhist-Daoist discourse spread over all East Asia with extraordinary, diverse religio-cultural and political implications. It is important that we recognize that, in the same way that the *Big Dipper Sūtra* was used to create emperorship by concealing difference, our own focus on the Chinese canon and its implied representation limits our vision of the multiple narratives of the Buddhist tradition. Only by moving beyond its confines can we begin to understand and appreciate the

²⁷ On the polyvalency of Qing imperial ritual see Waley-Cohen 2002.

²⁸ See Bawden (1963), the “shamanist” texts collected by Rintchen (1959), and the “folk religion” texts in Heissig (1966).

rich complexity of the Buddhist life and its spread over the vast cultural landscape of Asia.

Translation

Namowa buddhay-a :: Namowa dharmay-a :: Namowa sangghay-a
 ..²⁹

In Chinese [this text is called]: *Bei deuči sing ging*.³⁰

In Mongolian [this text is called]: The Constellation of the Seven Old Men Sūtra.³¹

In Tibetan [this text is called]: *Smi dun zis byau-a skarmai mdowa*.³²

²⁹ This opening homage praising the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is a standard introductory formula found in almost all Mongolian Buddhist texts. It is a formula that was borrowed from Uygur Buddhist texts which may have derived from a Sogdian convention (Nattier 1986).

³⁰ The Mongolian transcription *Bei deuči sing ging*, and the corresponding Tibetan transcription *Bea du ched zing ging* are both transcriptions of the Chinese *Bei dou qi xing jing* 北斗七星經, *Sūtra of the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper*. The full title of work, however, is *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha that Prolongs Life through the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper* (*Fo shuo bei dou qi xing yan ming jing* 佛說北斗七星延命經) which is corroborated by the Uygur fragment U 4829a (Zieme 1985: 160).

³¹ The Mongolian name for the Big Dipper, *doloyan ebügen* “seven old men,” is found in the oldest Sino-Mongolian glossary, the *Zhi yuan Yi yu* 至元譯語, prepared during the reign of Kubilai Khan (Ligeti 1990: 259–277). However, in the *Hua yi Yi yu* 華夷譯語, a Sino-Mongol glossary from 1389, the Big Dipper is called simply *doloyan odun* “seven stars” (Mostaert 1977). This variety is also reflected in modern Mongolian languages e.g. Daur *dolō xod* “seven stars”; Santa *doloṅ xoduṅ* “seven stars;” though it is interesting to note the influence of this text on Khalkha where the Dipper is indeed called the “Seven Buddhas,” *doloon burxan* (Kara 1990: 279–344; see also Birtalan 2001: 970–971).

³² This is the Mongolian transcription of the Tibetan title of this work, *Sme-bdun zhes-bya-ba'i skar-ma'i mdo*. The term *Sme-bdun* is a common literary term for the Big Dipper; however, the more common term is *byang-skar spun-bdun*, “the seven star brothers of the north” (Panglung 1991: 400). This difference certainly does not explain the Tibetans’ disregard for this ritual text, though it does reflect some of the disconnect between this ritual text and its cultural connections in Tibet. Unlike in China and among the Mongols the Big Dipper did not play a prominent role in Tibetan religion and culture and therefore even though it was translated within a particular context it had no lasting influence. Among the Mongols this was obviously not the case and thus in 1624 Kun-dga’ ’od-zer prepared a new Mongolian translation of the work based on the 1337 Tibetan translation.

Homage to the Seven Tathāgathas.

Thence the Blessed One, the God of Gods, Buddha said to the youthful Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, “In the constellation of the Big Dipper the first star is named Tan-lang.³³ Its amulet is this.³⁴

As a result this opening passage, with its chronological presentation of the text’s history, is a direct copy of the Tibetan text. Indeed, the 1624 Mongolian text is a near verbatim copy of the 1337 Tibetan version, attesting to Kun-dga’ ’od-zer’s translation skill. He did, however, make one mistake. In Kun-dga’ ’od-zer’s colophon the sponsor of the 1328 Mongolian text is identified with the title *yeke sikürtü* (“great parasol holder”), though in the Yuan period there was actually only the title “*sikürtü*.” And indeed the 1337 Tibetan text transcribes his title as *zu-gur-che*. Kun-dga’ ’od-zer mistook the *che* as an adjective (Tib. *chen*=great) and over-translated it with *yeke*, “great” (Matsukawa 1994: 184).

³³ The Mongolian *Tan-lang*, Tibetan *Ta-lang* (P 286b8), and Uygur [*t]amlang* are transcriptions of the Chinese name for the first star (*α*) in the dipper’s bowl: *Tan lang* 貪狼, “greedy wolf.” The fact that the Uygur and Tibetan transcriptions retain the Old Mandarin final *-m*, while Mongolian has the more recent final *-n* points to Mongolian version being a more recent revision (Franke 1990: 87).

The names in this text correspond to the following stars:

Wu-qu 武曲	Lian-zhen 廉貞	Tan lang 貪狼
○	○	○
Po-jun 破軍	Wen-qu 文曲	
	Lu-cun 祿存 ○	○ Ju-men 巨門

Previously, the names for the stars comprising the Big Dipper in this work were considered “bizarre” (Lévi 1908: 453); however, Franke (1990: 103–107) has shown that the names can be traced back to the fifth century astrological and chromantic treatise of Xiao Ji 蕭吉 (d. 614) the *Compendium of the Five Agents* (*Wu xing da yi* 五行大義), which in turn is based on the the *Dipper Chart of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huang di dou tu* 黃帝斗圖) (Kalinowski 1991: 339). In other astronomical works and in the most important Daoist text on Beidou 北斗 worship, e.g the *Tai shang xuan ling bei dou ben ming yan sheng zhen jing* 太上玄零北斗本命延生真經 (TT 622, vol. 341), the stars have other names, 1) Yang-ming 陽明; 2) Yin-jing 陰精; 3) Zhen-ren 真人; 4) Xuan-ming 玄冥; 5) Dan-yuan 丹元; 6) Bei-ji 北極; 7) Tian-guan 天關. For a comprehensive list of other names used for these stars see Kalinowski (1991: 102–103)

³⁴ Neither the canonical Mongolian nor Tibetan version of this work contains the amulets which are found in the canonical Chinese text (see T 1307 or Orzech and Sanford 2000: 390). The early Uygur fragments do have these amulets and they are similar to the ones found in the Chinese text (Rachmati 1937: Plate 5). Why the Tibetan and Mongolian *Kanjur* versions do not have these amulets is not certain. Nevertheless, the amulets contained in the Chinese and Uygur Buddhist texts both graphically and ideologically seem to be premised on the Daoist concepts of amulets (*fu* 符). This system is premised on the idea that amulets are bipartite, one piece existing in heaven and the other on earth, and through possessing the earthly amulet one receives protection from the deities in heaven (see

A person [born in the] year of the Rat is born under the jurisdiction of this star.³⁵ Its food offering is large-grained millet. If there are evil spirits and obstacles,³⁶ this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The second star is named Giyu-men.³⁷ Its amulet is this:

A person [born in the] years of the Ox and the Pig is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is pearl millet. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The third star is named Lu-cun.³⁸ It's amulet is this:

A person [born in the] years of the Tiger and the Dog is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is rice. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The fourth star is named Uen-kiuu.³⁹ Its amulet is this:

Kaltenmark 1960, Legeza 1975, Seidel 1983).

³⁵ In Daoist texts it is understood that depending upon the time of one's birth, a particular star/god of the Big Dipper governs the course of one's life, or "root destiny" (*benming* 本命). "Six times each year, on the cyclical day of one's 'root destiny,' the 'Root Destiny Realized Officer' of that cyclical day would descend to the human world, at which time people born under the influence of that officer were to fast and make offerings" (Little 2000: 248).

³⁶ "Evil spirits and obstacles" is a translation of *ada todqar*, an Uygur (*ada tuda*) hendiadys loanword originally meaning "danger, obstacle, hindrance" (Clauson 1972: 40; Röhrborn 1977: 43–45). After it was borrowed into Mongolian, *ada* quickly became personified as a demon or evil spirit, while *todqar* kept the original meaning of "obstacle" (Lessing 1995: 9, 813).

³⁷ Mongolian *Giyu-min*, Tibetan *Ku-men* (P 287a1), and Uygur *Kumun* are transliterations of Chinese *Jumen* 巨門, "Great gate."

³⁸ Mongolian *Lu-cun*, Tibetan *Lu-sun* (P 287a3), and Uygur *Liusun* are transliterations of the Chinese *Lucun* 祿存, "Happiness retained."

³⁹ Mongolian *Uen-kiuu*, Tibetan *'Un-khu* (P 287a4), and Uygur *Yunkiu* are transliterations of the Chinese *Wenqu* 文曲, "Literary song."

A person [born in the] years of the Hare and the Chicken is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is wheat. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The fifth star is named *Liyan-cim*.⁴⁰ Its amulet is this:

A person [born in the] years of the Dragon and the Monkey is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is hemp seeds. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The sixth star is named *Vuu-kiuu*.⁴¹ Its amulet is this:

A person [born in the] years of the Sheep and the Snake is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is black beans. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will become very joyful.

The seventh star is named *Bo-jiyün*.⁴² Its amulet is this:

A person [born in the] year of the Horse is born under the jurisdiction of this star. Its food offering is green beans. If there are evil spirits and obstacles, this scripture is to be worshipped and this amulet should be worn on one's own body, and thus the evil spirits and obstacles will be annihilated, and one will be very joyful.

⁴⁰ Mongolian *Liyan-cim*, Tibetan *Lim-chim* (P 287a5–6) and Uygur *Limcin* are transliterations of the Chinese *Lianzhen* 廉貞, "Pure virtue."

⁴¹ Mongolian *Vuu-kiuu*, Tibetan *Vu-khu* (P 287a7), and Uygur *Vukuu* are transliterations of the Chinese *Wuqu* 武曲, "Military song."

⁴² Mongolian *Bo-jiyün*, Tibetan *Bu-gum* (P 287b1 and *pu-gun* in the Berlin manuscript *bKa'-gyur* [Panglung 1991: 446]), and Uygur *Pakun* are transliterations of the Chinese *Pojun* 破軍, "Destroyer of armies."

Now we do homage: To the sanctity of the star Tan-lang. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Who Has Penetrated the Wisdom of the Mind’s Will,” of the Most-Surpassing-World of the East.⁴³ His *dhāraṇī* is *namah samanta budda nan om amidhayayi suva-ha*.⁴⁴

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Giyu-men. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Powerful in Scintillating Voice,” of the Sublime-Bejeweled-World in the East. His *dhāraṇī* is, *namah samanta budda nan om cinda hūm ni suva-hā*.

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Lu-cun. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Completely Gone Beyond Gold-Colored,” of the world like a perfect full moon in the East. His *dhāraṇī* is *nam-ah samanta budda nan om ni mirini angata-n*⁴⁵ *bar-a marutu-sū suva-hā*.

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Uen-kiuu. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Most Supremely Holy Bliss,” of the Sinless World in the East. Your *dhāraṇī* is *nam-ah samanta budda nan om vi-ha suva-hā*.

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Liyan-cim. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Effortlessly Breaking Through All Obstacles with Intellect and Wisdom,” of the Completely-Pure-Land in the East. His *dhāraṇī* is *nam-ah samanta budda nan om prati cer-a maran-a suva-hā*.

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Vuu-kiuu. You are an emanation of the Tathāgatha Śākyamuni, “Who delights in the Ocean of Dharma,” of the Dharma-Worshipping-World in the East. His *dhāraṇī* is *nam-ah samanta budda nan om sarva dhar-a samay-a suva-hā*.

⁴³ On the names of the Buddhas see note 18.

⁴⁴ These *dhāraṇīs* seem to be in Sanskrit; however, they do not correspond to any recognizable Sanskrit text or those found in Yijing’s *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra* T 451. Instead it is more likely that these are “artificial” Sanskrit *dhāraṇīs* that lend a tone of authority to Chinese texts.

⁴⁵ Ms I (5r) has this term as *laka-ha*, with a Tibetan interlinear gloss *la-ga-ha-na*.

We do homage to the sanctity of the star Bo-jiyün. You are an emanation of the Buddha, “Who is the Emperor of Herbalists with Lapis Lazuli Splendor,” of the World made of Lapis Lazuli and jewels in the East. His *dhāraṇī* is *nam-ah samanta budda nan: om sapita par-a manica suva-hā*.

If anyone is confronted with an evil spirit in one’s [birth/animal] year, then that person should pray to this Dharma Jewel seven times. And thus all evil spirits and obstacles will be pacified and one will become happy.

The God of Gods, Buddha said to the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, “Oh Mañjuśrī, this *sūtra* which I have preached is the most supreme, majestic, scintillating, great and powerful of Dharmas. It is a protector and hedge against all the tortures and afflictions for beings who have gone astray. It is the pacifier and disperser of the demons’ calamities and misfortunes, characterized by sins and obstacles. Monks, nuns, princes and princesses, townsmen and women, famous people, men and women of high stature, the respectable and the unrespectable; whoever, great or small, hears, learns, memorizes and personally worships this Dharma, and even more, if you enlighten, teach and establish it for your friends, retinue and family, you will in this life obtain the good rewards of this merit.

Whatever gentleman or lady, [whose ancestors] have passed away and been born in hell and made to suffer various bitter sufferings, if they revere and worship this scripture with devout minds, their majestic souls will be liberated and saved from the sufferings of hell, and they will be born in the Very Blissful World, the realm of Amī-tābha Buddha.

If whatever gentleman or lady who is held in contempt by zombie ghosts,⁴⁶ or tormented by evil demons, or if they dream evil dreams,

⁴⁶ For the Mongolian term “zombie ghosts,” *eliy-e čidkür*, the Tibetan text has *gdon* (Panglung 1991: 412), meaning “an evil spirit, a demon causing disease” (Das 1985: 663), and the Chinese is translated as “imp” by Orzech and Sanford (2000: 391); nevertheless, the exact form of this malevolent spirit is unclear. However, based on Bawden’s study of the various types of disease causing entities referred to as *eliye* it seems likely that, in particular on account of its connection with *čidkür*, *eliye* in this case should be “that of a

and if they are frightened and terrified after having seen wicked and bad omens; if they hear, learn, memorize and worship this scripture, they will be liberated and relieved from these evil spirits so that their mind will become firm and pacified, and all their fears will be completely dispersed.

Whatever gentleman or lady, or whoever, if they personally meet a prince and princess and wish, ‘I want to become their confidante and a member of their retinue;’ if that person, especially if s/he is a servant, comes across this scripture and worships and reveres it with a devout mind; then s/he will become an intimate favorite of the prince and princess, and as a result his/her fame will increase and s/he will become famous, and there will be vast, great rejoicing.

If a gentleman or lady contracts some [disease] and chronically suffers from a severe illness, and if they wish to be liberated from that illness, if they light incense in a pure house,⁴⁷ make offerings to this scripture, and have this Dharma recited, their illness will be healed.

Whatever gentleman or lady who goes on the road and travels far, [who feels] they are content doing business to gain profit, and obtaining goods and merchandise; if they wish to vastly increase the inheritance for their children and grandchildren, then worship and revere this scripture with a devout mind. Forthwith what he desires will be fulfilled according to his wishes. Whether at home or abroad, there will be vast, great rejoicing.

Also if some gentleman or lady plants grain or fruit and does not get a harvest, and if there is a plague among the animals,⁴⁸ then if

dead person who has been transformed into a ghost” (1994: 70). In this case the “zombie ghost” is thus one of a host of disease causing spirits in Mongol world. For more information on these entities see the illustrated survey in Bethlenfalvy (2002).

⁴⁷ The Mongolian *ariyun ger*, “pure house,” is a calque of the Chinese *jingzhu* 淨住, “pure abode,” a term for a Buddhist monastery.

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that translators of Buddhist *sūtras* use different culturally specific terms in their translations. For example, a translation prepared in the north of China will use the locally grown “dry rice,” while a Southern translation of the same text will speak of “wet rice.” Similarly in this work, the Mongolian and Tibetan texts describe the problems of a poor grain and fruit harvest (Tib. *zhing-la lo-tog dang* / *shing-tog-gi*

one lights incense in a pure house and worships this Dharma Jewel, the grains and earth will become good, and one's animals will greatly increase. Also there will not be any other evil spirits or obstacles.

Gentleman and lady, if there is a fetus in the womb, and if you come across an inauspicious month, if you then worship and revere this scripture with a devout mind, you will be liberated from this evil spirit and you will be healthy and safe. Your son or daughter that is born will be fortunate, blessed and have a long life.

Also, gentlemen and ladies, you should know, people who are born are all the same in that the Big Dipper rules over [your fate].⁴⁹ The Big Dipper decrees when one lifetime begins and ends, and can protect against however many evil spirits and obstacles, useless and vain debates, and those hundred evil bad omen marks. Thus, you should know and understand if you worship and revere the meaning of this Dharma with a devout mind, all the evil spirits and obstacles will not be able to harm you," preached [the Buddha].

Then the four-fold community, led by the youthful Mañjuśrī, revered and established this Dharma teaching, and led [them] in bowing down and prostrating themselves with the five skandhas. *Namo ratn-a cir-a citima-hāḍica cir-a ayabar-a ay-a suva-hā*.

One chapter of the scripture of the God of Gods, Buddha's preaching of the *Sūtra on Prolonging One's Life Through the Big Dipper* is finished.

A person with a metal⁵⁰ blessing has a white body. A person with a wood blessing has a blue body. A person with a water blessing has a black body. A person with a fire blessing has a red body. A person with an earth blessing has a yellow body.⁵¹

'bras-bu [Panglung 1991: 413]); however, the Chinese version talks of the hazards of raising silkworms, and the danger of empty cocoons (Orzech and Sanford 2000: 391).

⁴⁹ The idea that the gods resident in the Big Dipper are the protectors and deciders of one's fate is an integral element of Daoist thought, see introduction.

⁵⁰ The text reads *altan*, "gold," however, it is based on the Chinese *jin* 金 and thus here translated "metal" according to the five elements.

⁵¹ These correspondences are based on the Chinese concept of *qi* 氣 as the underlying

These are the eulogies praying for blessings from the Big Dipper:

You are the Goddess of the Earth, Supreme Mother, who dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru which is 80,000 yojanas high.

You are the Supreme Great Power over all four continents.

My God, you are the Protector of a being's four births⁵² and five fates.⁵³

You are like a rosary that is made to be worn as a diadem by the Emperor of the Gods, Indra.

You are the one who causes the sun and moon, at the head of the seven planets, the 28 lunar mansions and the 30,000 billion stars, to worship [yourself].

My God, you are the Wish Granter of all that is desired in this life.

Deign to satisfy whatsoever thought I think and desire that I desire!

My God, you are the destroyer and annihilator of a hundred types of evil spirits and obstacles.

You are the one who prolongs long life. Deign to accomplish every good deed.

I will speak of the days for lighting candles for the Big Dipper. On the seventh day of the first moon of Spring; on the second day of the third moon of Spring; on the 27th day of the first moon of Summer; on the fifth day of the second moon of Summer; on the 23rd day of the last moon of Summer; on the 20th of the first moon of Fall; on the 17th of the second moon of Fall; on the 20th of the third moon of

matter of existence. In Chinese thought, *qi* is understood as the lineaments that shape the system as a whole, which is characterized by change in a regular and cyclical pattern. It is a cycle that is mapped out according to yin and yang, the five phases and the eight trigrams, whereby *qi* is the matrix in which things on the same point of the cycle influence one another (Bokenkamp 1997: 15–16). In the passage here, the connections are based on the five phases, of which a detailed chart can be found in Boehmer (1977: 5).

⁵² The four different births are from moisture, from an egg, from a womb and miraculously.

⁵³ The five fates refer to a person's possible reincarnation in one of the the lower five realms in the wheel of life: hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, and asura.

Fall; on the 11th of the first moon of Winter; on the 15th of the second moon of Winter; and the eighth of the last moon of Winter, candles are to be lit and [the scripture] is to be worshipped. The *Big Dipper Sūtra* is finished.

[Colophon]:

Knowing well of the benefits for whoever worships mindfully with an intent to rely on the fully enlightened Buddha Teacher's preaching of the *Big Dipper Sūtra*, Urug Böke,⁵⁴ a Great Parasol Holder,⁵⁵ continually recited [this text] with humility and a reverent and pure mind. [He prepared this text] because he prays for the intercession of his blessing, hoping for the long life of the Meritorious Lord, an incarnation of the Buddha who performs Liberation, Tug Temür,⁵⁶ and wishes that he will be the greatest Emperor of all,

⁵⁴ Urug Böke was a prominent Uyghur Buddhist official who at the end of his life was purged for his support of the Wenzong emperor (r. 1328–1332). He is first mentioned in the *Yuanshi* 元史 in 1328, when he was promoted to Deputy Censor and shortly thereafter made commissioner of the Bureau for Imperial Cults (*Taixi zongyin yuan* 太禧宗禋院). In 1330 he was promoted to Chief Censor, the title he holds in the colophon, yet shortly thereafter he requested to resign though the emperor refused until the following year. He was then stationed in the south and ordered to suppress rebellions among the inhabitants of Hainan 海南. Afterwards, the sources are silent about Urug Böke until 1336, when it is recorded that he was “sent to Tibet to become a monk,” a euphemism for exile. Between 1336 and 1340 he passed away and in a 1340 edict he is described as a “rebellious official” for his support of the Wenzong emperor (Franke 1990: 81–83).

⁵⁵ “Great Parasol Holder” is an over-translation of *sikürtü* (see note 4), meaning “parasol holder.” It was a title during the Yuan given to those, numbering 400, who were responsible for the personal accoutrements and needs of the emperor (Cleaves 1957: 438 n. 41).

⁵⁶ Tug Temür was put on the throne as the Wenzong emperor (文宗 r. 1328–1332) after his elder brother Qoshila (Mingzong 明宗, r. 1328) was assassinated in the name of the restoration of 1328. This coup d'état was engineered by the Kipchak El Temür and the Merkid Bayan in the name of Tug Temür's father, Qaishan, the Wuzong emperor (武宗 r. 1307–1311). In the eyes of the restoration forces Qaishan had been the last “steppe” ruler whose style of rule had been replaced by Confucian-oriented rulers beginning with Qaishan's successor, the Renzong emperor (仁宗 r. 1312–1321). The restoration was therefore reputedly an attempt to restore the lineage and ruling style of Qaishan; however, it in fact ushered in Confucianism as the dominant ideology of the latter Yuan. As a result, there was extensive internal political power struggles and purges within the ruling elite, however, in general the empire as a whole remained peaceful during Wenzong's reign.

he being a pure minded Bodhisattva Lord. Having learnt Wisdom and Skill and Means he will take the throne of Sechen Khan.⁵⁷

[Previously], whoever wished one's own mind to be free of attachments and doubts, had to produce faith in this Dharma in Uy-gur, since this Dharma Sūtra was not translated. Saying, "In order to have many Mongol subjects worship it with faith," I [Urug Böke], had it translated into pure Mongolian. In order to accomplish my idea, "To satisfy the wishes of a thousand people, and thus satisfy their desires," one thousand complete copies were printed and all were disseminated.

By the power of the fruit of this good merit may the Lord Emperor, the Queen, the Imperial lineage, all eternally rejoice, spread merit, and finally obtain the sanctity of the Buddha. May the agitating enemies of the Empire be pacified, and there be peace with no

Nevertheless, on account of his rise to power with the help of Bayan, who launched an anti-Confucian campaign in 1337–1340, in 1341 with the triumph of Confucian politics the Wenzong emperor was vilified and his ancestral tablet removed from the imperial temple (Dardess 1973).

⁵⁷ Sechen Khan, "Wise Khan," is the Mongolian reign title of Khubilai Khan (1215–1294, r. 1260–1294, Shizu 世祖), the second son of Tolui, Chinggis Khan's youngest son. In 1251 his elder brother Möngke was elected khan, wresting power away from the designated successors of Ögedei's lineage. Khubilai was given northern China as an appanage and given the duty of defeating the Dali 大理 kingdom in Yunnan 雲南. After this success he began consolidating his power in north China and began the building of a city north of the capital called Shangdu 上都, and acted as mediator in the fierce Buddhist-Daoist debates of the 1250s. In 1258 Möngke and Khubilai began the conquest of the Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279), though a year later Möngke died and although Khubilai was elected khan a bitter succession struggle ensued with his younger brother Arig Böke. This feud continued until Arig Böke suddenly died in 1266. Afterwards Khubilai turned his attention to conquering the Song, which was fought on both land and sea, yet did not end till the last Song emperor died at sea in 1279. During this protracted engagement, in 1271 Khubilai proclaimed the founding of the Yuan 元 dynasty (1271–1368), subjugated Korea, and launched a disastrous invasion of Japan in 1274. Yet as his power increased in the East, his right to rule was being threatened from Central Asia by steppe-oriented Mongols under Khaidu, though they were also defeated in 1279. After he had consolidated his control Khubilai turned to reforming the government, particularly in the economic and legal spheres. Yet, although he tried to foster social and economic advances, his rule was beset with financial problems, stemming from tax policies, the building of the Grand Canal extension to the capital and failed campaigns in South Asia. Nevertheless, during his rule there were improvements in other areas, including science, trade, and the arts (Rossabi 1988).

evil spirits and obstacles. May all of the various weathers and rains come at the proper time, may there be no destruction or insufficiency of the livestock, and may whatever I think and speak be accomplished. By means of this scripture may my wishes and those of my parents, relatives and children, living and deceased older and younger brothers and all living beings be satisfied in this world, and may they all reach the peaceful world of Sukhāvātī.⁵⁸

In the first year of Tianli,⁵⁹ a Dragon year, on the first day of the tenth month, wooden blocks [of this *sūtra*] were carved. This book was brought from India by an Indian paṇḍita and the wise Xuanzang,⁶⁰ and it was translated in China. When it completely spread in the Land of Supreme Customs,⁶¹ the nobles and officials of the Great Emperor gave rise to Bodhicitta and became complete in their faith, wisdom and *samādhi-dhyāna*.

When he brought these things to mind, Parasol Keeper and Chief Censor⁶² Urug Böke had the Lord of the Religion⁶³ of the Uyghurs,

⁵⁸ Sukhāvātī, the Land of Bliss in the west, is the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha.

⁵⁹ The Mongolian *teng-li* and Tibetan *then-li* are transcriptions of *Tianli* 天曆, the first reign year title (*nian hao* 年號) of the Wenzong emperor (r. 1328–1332).

⁶⁰ Xuanzang 玄奘 is identified in the Mongolian as *Tang san chang* and Tibetan as *Thang zam chang*, which are transliterations of the famous Tang 唐 dynasty pilgrim and translator Xuanzang's title "Tang Traipitika" *Tang san zang* 唐三藏. The claim that Xuanzang brought this work back from India is incorrect; however, it fits the pattern of attributing Chinese texts to Xuanzang in order to bolster their authenticity. This attribution to Xuanzang is not found in either the Chinese (T 1307) or the Uyghur fragments. The Chinese text attributes its appearance in China to an Indian monk. Orzech and Sanford translate the Chinese *bo-luo-men seng* 羅門僧 as "Brahman monk," though as pointed out by Paul Demiéville (1987: 25) this phrase means simply an "Indian monk" (Franke 1990: 81). One of the Uyghur colophon fragments also notes that the text was brought to China by an "Indian monk," *änätäkäk toyin* (Zieme 1981: 390). The connection with Xuanzang as found in the Mongolian colophon is therefore "new," or at least differs from the other two versions. This variation again only reaffirms the multiplicity of texts for the worship of the Big Dipper produced in China and Inner Asia.

⁶¹ The "Land of Supreme Customs" (Mong. *erkin yosud-un oron*) is an epithet for the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).

⁶² The Mongolian *Gin-si gong lu tai buu: giui siin tai buu* and Tibetan *Gim rce gong lu ta'i hu'i gyu'i shi tha'i hu* are transcriptions of Urug Böke's titles in Chinese, *Jin zi guang lu da fu* 金紫光祿大夫, a high court rank and *Yu shi da fu* 御史大夫, "chief censor" (Franke 1990: 81).

Prajñāśrī⁶⁴ translate it into Mongol language and script, and had two thousand copies printed. Alīn Tāmūr⁶⁵ translated it into Uygur, and a thousand woodblock prints were collected and distributed as Dharma alms among the Mongols and Uygurs. The Grand Empress Dowager,⁶⁶ who had previously held the principles of the Mongolian religion, truly entered the Buddha's Dharma and experienced the tranquility of the *gūnas* of meditation by the blessing of this scripture. Afterwards in the Ding Ox year,⁶⁷ the translator Matiphala and

⁶³ The Mongolian *Sajin-u ejen* and Tibetan *Yu-gur-gyi bstan-pa'i bdag-po* are renderings of the original Uygur title *Shazīn aīyūčī*, "speaker for the religious discipline" (Franke 1990: 85).

⁶⁴ Mongolian *Bra-dir-a-siri* and Tibetan *Bra-jñā-śrī* are transcriptions of the Sanskrit Prajñāśrī, who was an Uygur from Qamul (present day Hami 哈密 in Xinjiang 新疆). He was a multi-lingual translator and poet who was a favorite of several emperors, and under Wenzong received the title State Preceptor (*Guoshi* 國師), though in the following year, 1332, he was accused of being a conspirator with Urug Temür and was executed (Franke 1990: 84–85).

⁶⁵ Alīn Tāmūr's dates are uncertain though he was a prominent Uygur official in the Yuan administration, and this sentence notes the fact that he prepared an Uygur translation of this work. He is first mentioned in Chinese sources in 1311 on account of his role as a Hanlin 翰林 expositor, and the Renzong emperor had just read a Tang manual of statecraft (*the Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要) and being duly impressed wanted Alīn Tāmūr to translate it into Mongolian. In 1317 he was ordered to translate the *Daxue yanyi* 大學衍義 into Mongolian, and by 1326 he had become a chancellor of the Hanlin Academy. At that time he was asked to prepare a Mongolian translation of the early Yuan emperors' precepts and admonitions. In 1330, he was bestowed with the rank of Dasitu 大司徒, and began a Mongolian translation of the Yuan statutes. Later he became a prominent supporter of the Wenzong emperor (Franke 1990: 77–78).

⁶⁶ The Grand Empress-Dowager (Mong. *Tai quu*; Tib. *Ta'i hu*; Ch. *Tai hou* 太后) is not identified by name, thus who it refers to is unclear. Though since other elements point to a later date for the colophon than the year of printing 1328, e.g. Urug Böke's title of chief censor which was not received until 1330, one can wonder whether the Empress-Dowager cited herein is the Wenzong emperor's wife the Qonggirad Budashiri. After he passed away in 1332 she became a powerful figure and played a key role in bringing Togan Temür to the throne (Dardess 1973: 54–56). In the context of the affiliation of all the individuals in the colophon with the Wenzong Emperor, it is possible that the Grand Empress is here a reference to Budashiri.

⁶⁷ The Ding 丁 Ox Year was 1337, which corresponds with the Tibetan text of the Fire Ox Year, *me glang-gi lo*, 1337.

Śrī Ānandavajra, at Gung Thang monastery,⁶⁸ corrected and translated it into Tibetan language and script.

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⁶⁸ Tshal gung-thang chos-'khor gling was a bKa'-brgyud-pa monastery that was founded by bLa-ma Zhang in 1175 on the southern bank of the sKyid-chu River, a few miles east of Lhasa. For several centuries it was the fief of the Tshal-pa family, who participated in Tibet's religious and political feuds, and who were eventually protected by Khubilai Khan, who bestowed on them the area of Tshal and its tax revenue, which was used to expand extensively the monastery and its temples. Later the monastery was taken over by the dGe-lugs-pa, and was subsequently burned down in 1546, probably during the wars between the dGe-lugs-pa and the 'Bri-gung-pa (Ferrari 1958: 105 n. 105; see also Everding 2000: 334–335).

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