Daoxuan and The *Record of Miraculous Instruction*: A Sinitic Buddhist's Reimagining of the History of Writing in the Early Tang

by

Ann Vettikkal

Columbia University Senior Thesis, Department of History

Thesis Advisor: Professor Marc Van De Mieroop

Second Reader: Professor David Lurie

"It is certain, as Nietzsche proclaimed, 'on the basis of his entire philological experience … that there is no all-saving interpretation'...That said, 'wir Philologen' are obliged to proceed as if there were, with honesty and justice and in the conviction that the text is about itself at least as much as it is about the many readers including ourselves who have read it."

- Sheldon Pollock[1]

The Problem

The insect said
to the rabbit
the problem is
I know who my
heroes are and
I know who your
heroes are. You
only know who
your heroes are.
What? said rabbit.
You don't even
know what kind of
insect I am
said the insect.
What? said rabbit.

- Michael Earl Craig[2]

[1] Sheldon Pollock, "Philology in Three Dimensions," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 5, no. 4 (2014), 410.
[2] Michael Earl Craig, *Woods and Clouds Interchangeable* (Chicago: Wave Books, 2019), 21.
Cover Image: *"Daoxuan,"* Kamakura period (1185–1333), color on silk, Nara National Museum. (Nara National Museum).jpg. Public domain.

Acknowledgements

I thank the History department and my seminar thesis instructor Professor Marc Van De Mieroop and classmates for their feedback and time. I thank everyone in the EALAC department who provided an exceptional slate of lectures, seminars, and language classes. In particular, I thank Professor John Phan. I have never had more fun doing my homework than when I created my own writing system for his History of Writing class. This thesis was inspired by what I learned in his lectures, and has been sustained by the joy the history of writing continues to bring me. I thank my friends who courageously oppose the unpleasant "inevitable."[3] And I thank my family—*appa*, *amma*, *jechi,* and *chechi*—who teach me how to live on and care for myself and the world while I navigate the chaos of the 7th and 21st centuries alike.

I dedicate my thesis to Andreas Welch, a dear friend. Andreas not only helped me with my translations and edited my drafts, but also inspires me daily because of his ferocious commitment to doing the good work for its own sake. I also dedicate this thesis to my second reader Professor David Lurie, who has unwaveringly supported and guided me ever since I was his student in Lit Hum. Over the years, Professor Lurie has illuminated the complicated, profound worlds within the *Iliad*, *The Tale of Genji,* premodern dictionaries, and so on, moving me to pour intellectual care into my own scholarship. My life at Columbia and beyond is better for it.

[3] Barbara J. Fields, "Dysplacement and Southern History," Journal of Southern History 82, no. 1 (2016), 26.

Conventions

Excerpts from *Record of Miraculous Instruction Given to Vinaya Master Daoxuan* (*Daoxuan lüshi gantong lu* **道宣律師感通錄)** and the *Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya* (*Shijia fangzhi* **釋迦方志**) are my own translations, with the gracious help of Andreas Welch. Appendices A and B contain the annotated translation of the relevant selections, which were excerpted from the larger texts based on thematic connection to the thesis. When cited throughout the thesis, the original characters are included in the footnotes for shorter quotations and added in the main body for block quotes. Both texts were taken directly from the *Taishō* cannon and were generally repunctuated for clarity and coherence. Attribute any errors in translation to me alone. The translators of all other texts are attributed in each footnote as well as in the primary source bibliography. The transliteration of the titles of texts and specific terms include the pinyin alongside the Chinese characters in parentheses.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The process of translating the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit into Literary Sinitic, which lasted from the Late Han (25-220 CE) and into the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), is one of the most important interlinguistic translation projects in world history.[4] This massive transmission process had its beginnings around the 3rd and 2nd century BCE when Buddhism, which had been spreading beyond its origins in South Asia, continued further into Central Asia and eventually, along the Silk Road, into East Asia, reaching China. Especially during the Period of Disunion (220-589 CE), the prestige and influence of Buddhism grew until it began to rival that of Confucianism, the dominant system of belief and textual canon in China since the life of Confucius 孔子 himself (c. 551 – c. 479 BCE). By the time of the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), Buddhism had become a state-sponsored religion which exerted political, religious, and economic influence throughout China.[5]

The ascent of Buddhism in China and its integration with the imperial state was not inevitable and was possibly doomed by the conservative force of Literary Sinitic, its canons, and the courtly subjects which it regulated and by which it was preserved. To understand the relationship between Buddhism and Literary Sinitic in premodern China, one must look past the material and political support of particular emperors and higher officials of the state granted to Buddhism—though this development in the early Tang was indeed significant. In addition, we also see the crucial emergence of learned and innovative Buddhists who constructed distinctive visions of

[4] Daniel Boucher, 'Translation', in Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, Oxford Handbooks (2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.013.32.

[5] Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 384.

integrating the two histories and traditions, including Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667 CE), a highly influential Buddhist monk of the Early Tang. Daoxuan served as a monk in an imperial translation team as an editor of translations of Buddhist doctrine from Sanskrit into Literary Sinitic.[6] Daoxuan's grasp of and commitment to Literary Sinitic not only produced refined, literary translations of Buddhist classics, but also an original text that offers a profoundly imaginative and ambitious thesis of the integration of Buddhism into the cosmopolitan on a historiographical, philological, and cultural level. In the text *Record of Miraculous Instruction Given to Vinaya Master Daoxuan* (*Daoxuan lüshi gantong lu* 道宣律師感通錄, hereafter: *Record of Miraculous Instruction*), Daoxuan reimagines the history of both the Buddhist inheritance he is tasked to guard and the origins of the Literary Sinitic in which he was educated a courtly subject. This unified literary history which Daoxuan constructs in *Record of Miraculous Instruction* challenges long-held assumptions in modern scholarship about the relation of Buddhism with vernacularization on the one hand and Literary Sinitic on the other. Instead, drawing from earlier accounts of the invention of the clerical script and the pillars of Buddhist tradition and literary creation, Daoxuan enacts a Buddhist re-imagination of the history of writing in premodern China. By deftly inserting Buddhism into the history of Literary Sinitic and extending Literary Sinitic into new domains, Daoxuan creates in the process a new, uniquely philological, Buddhistic, cosmopolitan point of view.

In order to understand Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction,* the text needs to be placed within the linguistic order and topography of premodern China in the seventh century. The Sinographic Cosmopolis, a term coined by Ross King following Sheldon Pollock's term "Sanskrit cosmopolis," can be defined as the "transnational cultural sphere" in which texts written in Literary Sinitic transmitted influential knowledge and practices, including "government administration,

[6] Ang Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan: According to Others and in His Own Words* (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2018).

pedagogical methods, Confucian philosophy and practice, Buddhism, and literary composition."[7] The thesis will avoid using the term "Chinese" as much as possible to decouple the often assumed but problematic link between the modern nation-state of China and premodern Sinitic history. For purposes of clarity, however, this thesis uses the term China when dealing more generally with the historical area under Sinitic influence. When emphasizing this area as a domain in which the prestige cosmopolitan language bore influence, the thesis uses the term Sinographic Cosmopolis. This prestige language in which the literati, a small group that made up the Sinitic literate elite and connected them to socio political power in premodern China, wrote and read was called Literary Sinitic (*wényánwén* 文言文), the "conservative, formal, high-prestige written language" used throughout the Sinographic Cosmopolis from the Late Warring States period (c. 475–221 BC) through the early 20th century.[8]

Like other cosmopolitan languages such as Arabic and Latin, Literary Sinitic can be contrasted with vernaculars, which are regional spoken languages. I follow scholars like Zev Handel who uses the term "Literary Sinitic" instead of "Classical Chinese" to more accurately describe the writing system that flourished in the Sinographic Cosmopolis, thus avoiding the implication that Classical Chinese is "Chinese." Second, as Handel explains, Classical Chinese has a more narrow definition. Scholars use the term to describe not the written language used in China up until the early 20th century, but the language of the smaller canon of pre-Han Dynasty texts (500-200 BCE), such as the Confucian Analects.[9]

For two millennia, China was a "near-perfect example" of diglossia, wherein Literary Sinitic was the vehicle of a revered body of literature (the Confucian classics), but was never actually used as the medium of ordinary conversation. Instead, a group of separate but related Chinese languages

[7] Zev Handel, *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaptation of the Chinese Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 10.
[8] Handel, *Sinography,* 15-16.
[9] Handel, *Sinography,* 15.

were spoken locally and regionally while Literary Sinitic was used for formal and written purposes and learned through formal education. Several books have expounded on the linguistic, cultural, philological, and sociopolitical implications of the cosmopolitan versus vernacular divide, starting with Pollock's influential *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, which established a framework of cosmopolitan and vernacular language order in the context of premodern South Asia.[10] David Lurie's *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* describes the process of literacy that involved borrowing and adapting the Sinitic writing script and the broader cultural and political implications of such a process.[11] Most recently, John Phan's *Lost Tongues of the Red River* uses philological and comparative linguistic methods to trace the history of a Sinitic language in the Red River Plain of northern Vietnam and locates its implications within the cosmopolitan.[12] These books have shown the profound value that the study of the history of writing and language can have in elucidating questions about culture, power, politics, and ideology—both in the premodern era and the present.

Buddhism and the Vernacular?

In Victor Mair's influential 1994 article "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," he argues that Buddhism was essential to creating the foundation for the tradition of vernacular writing in China that would only truly begin to flourish during the 20th century.[13] His book *T'ang transformation texts*, which studies the earliest narrative vernacular texts found in China and its Buddhistic complexion, has documented

[10] Sheldon Pollock, The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
[11] David B. Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011).
[12] John D. Phan, *Lost Tongues of the Red River: Annamese Middle Chinese & the Origins of the Vietnamese Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center Press, 2025).
[13] Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," Journal of Asian Studies 53, no. 3 (August 1994): 707–751.

Buddhism's contribution to the evolution of the vernacular as early as the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).[14] However, Mair also argues that all facets of Buddhist ideology are rooted in the impulse for the vernacular tradition as opposed to the cosmopolitan. Mair radically asserts that the "gradual adoption of the vernacular' during the Tang and Song dynasties was due to a "complicated adjustment to the norms and values of Buddhist ideology." According to Mair, all manifestations of Buddhist ideology–its philosophy, literature, governmental and administrative documents, and so on–are born from the religion's "fundamentally demotic impulses."[15] These impulses are meant to contrast the ideology of elite Confucian literati, who had broadly defended the cosmopolitan Literary Sinitic for centuries by the time of the Tang.

This thesis complicates Mair's claims about the link between the demoticizing orientation of Buddhism and the emergence of vernacular forms of writing that eventually supplanted Literary Sinitic. Mair writes that "while Chinese authorities stubbornly resisted recognition of any of their own vernaculars as a national language—probably due to the extremely high prestige and power of [Literary Sinitic]—the Buddhists used the vernacular liberally in their own writings."[16] A clear distinction between "Chinese authorities" and Buddhists goes against the complex, storied history of how Buddhists were supported by and incorporated as "Chinese authorities" themselves. Granted, Buddhism would later meet moments of proscription throughout history, challenged by rivaling Daoist and Confucian ideologies, and never quite became part of "mainstream Chinese higher culture."[17] But this thesis' focus on the early Tang provides a window into a world in which the cosmopolitan tradition was shared by a multi-religious court, with Buddhists fully incorporated into the literati class.

---

[14] Victor H. Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1989).
[15] Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular," 721.
[16] Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular," 738.
[17] Wilkinson, *Chinese History,* 384.

Whereas Mair's article makes sweeping generalizations about Buddhism in order to associate it fully with the vernacular, this thesis offers a close reading of Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, written in Literary Sinitic during the early Tang, and frames it within two contexts: the history of Sinitic philology and writing as told through a web of connected premodern perspectives on conceptions of writing and language (chapter one); and the political incorporation of the Buddhism into the Tang empire and its implications on Buddhist practices and priorities (chapter 2). *The Record of Miraculous Instruction*[18] was written by the renowned Buddhist monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667 CE), a historian of Buddhism, a translator, and founder of the Nanshan Sect (*Nanshan zong* 南山宗) of Sinitic Buddhism. A master of *Vinaya*, or monastic code (*lü* 律), takes responsibility for the preservation of monastic codes of conduct.[19] Although other *vinaya* sects in China declined over time, Daoxuan's Nanshan sect remained unchallenged up until the Qing dynasty (1644-1912 CE).[20] His influence on Sinitic Buddhism cannot be overstated, as is evidenced by a wide swath of scholarship already written about Daoxuan, including comprehensive biographies. Because he was a prolific writer, best known for his compilation of *A Continuation of the Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, hereafter: *Biographies of Eminent Monks*), which provides a collection of over 500 hagiographies of prominent Buddhist cleric, his texts are also widely used in scholarship about other Buddhist monks.[21] Yet Daoxuan was a Sinitic philologist just as much as he was a Buddhist. *The Record of Miraculous Instruction* reimagines these two identities as intertwined in a single shared genealogical tradition. Daoxuan's *vinaya* thus challenges Mair's claim about the inherent and absolute connection between Buddhism and the vernacular.

---

[18] *Daoxuan lüshi gantong lu* 道宣律師感通錄, compiled by Daoxuan in 667, (T52 No. 2107). https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2107.

[19] Bruce Rusk et al., "Literary Information in China: A History" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 486; Martha P. Y. Cheung, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation, Volume One: From Earliest Times to the Buddhist Project*, advisory editor Lin Wusun (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2006), 148; Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan.*

[20] Hong Xiuping, *A Brief History of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist Thought*, trans. Jack Hargreaves and Darcy Littler (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 113.

[21] Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan*, 91-93.

Buddhism and the Cosmopolitan?

Daoxuan was committed equally to orthodox Sinitic philology as to monkhood, and he remained committed to the fundamental teachings of Buddhism. That is to say, the fact that his version of Buddhist ideology does not have demotic impulses does not mean that Daoxuan bent completely toward Confucian priorities or that his Buddhist identity was subsumed by the dominant, cosmopolitan worldview. It was not the case that Buddhist scholars in these courts were Buddhists in name only and did not actually uphold and propagate the doctrine of the Buddha. An exploration into Buddhism's political and sociological arc in the early Tang reveals a more complex negotiation between valuing Literary Sinitic at the expense of Buddhism and valuing Buddhism at the expense of Confucian scholars' understanding of Literary Sinitic. Avoiding a simple binary that separates the two, I argue that the emerging Sinitic Buddhist identity may have been deeply concerned with the cosmopolitan Literary Sinitic tradition but not exhaustively subservient to it.

The domain of my arguments against Mair is restricted to Literary Sinitic texts produced by Buddhist scholars at court. I do not contest all of his claims about the connection between Buddhism and vernacular intellectual life, such as Mair's suggestion that "perhaps Buddhist teaching contains a core precept that is conducive to the vernacular, a teaching for which there was no parallel in…Confucianism and Taoism."[22] My thesis is not meant to be a deep investigation into the religious and ideological precepts of Buddhism concerning preference for the vernacular. Instead, I examine Buddhism's relationship to the cosmopolitan in terms of its sociological and philological manifestations, focusing specifically on commentaries that explicitly think about writing and the history of writing. Moreover, because my thesis relies almost entirely on textual sources, it restricts its domain to those sources. It thus makes no claims about Buddhism outside of the surviving

[22] Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular," 713.

written records. Many monks that lived far away from the imperial center, often in places like hermitages, may have somehow been influential in the proselytization of Buddhism and contributed to vernacularization that emerged in a limited fashion during the Tang and Song. This thesis only seeks to offer considerations against Mair's generalizations, not to entirely overturn his argument about the connection between Buddhism and the vernacular.

The first chapter gives a broad overview of the differences between writing systems as it relates to the large-scale translation of phonographic Sanskrit Buddhist doctrines into the logographic Literary Sinitic. Then, I analyze some of the key figures and texts that have set the stage for the version of orthodox Sinitic philology that informs the philological arena of the Tang. The analysis addresses the impact of the Period of Disunion and subsequent Sui-Tang reunification of the Sinitic empire on the development of Sinitic philology. Finally, the chapter considers what Buddhist literati shared and did not share with their Confucian peers about perspectives on Literary Sinitic. The second chapter provides an overview of the political incorporation of Buddhism during the early Tang with formal sponsorship of translations from the emperor, including Buddhist's active cooperation with the dominant Confucian order. Then, it traces Daoxuan's participation within a state apparatus that supported Buddhism at this time as influenced by his family history and religious institutionalism, which in turn impacted his views on Buddhism's role in politics, translation, and writing.

These two chapters aim to set the stage for the third chapter, which provides an in-depth close reading of *Record of Miraculous Instruction* with a focus on its philological implications. My thesis proves just how shrewdly Buddhists could and did care about the cosmopolitan order, fusing together seemingly opposing interests in Mair's view (Buddhism and the cosmopolitan) into one reconcilable tradition. The text has never been translated fully in English: Appendix A contains a partial, annotated translation of the text, which has been excerpted to begin and end with the text's

explicit discussion of Sinitic writing. Whereas the scholarship on *Record of Miraculous Instruction* has tried to understand Daoxuan's motives as referencing Literary Sinitic merely to support his ultimate priority toward propagating Buddhism, my thesis argues that there is an equally strong line of argument in the other direction and that there is a regrettable scholarly lacuna in this direction. Analyzing Daoxuan's attempts to figure Buddhist phenomena into the evolution of Sinitic writing is crucial to actually understanding the cultural and social contours of Sintic Buddhism at this time. In doing so, my thesis reveals how the early Tang created a sociopolitical environment that primed and motivated Daoxuan to decide to write a reimagined history, stretching back into the time of the ancient Buddhas all the way to the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE), and complicates the simplistic assumption that Buddhists only oriented toward the demotic, which has left unexamined in modern scholarship the complex and rich negotiation of Sinitic Buddhist's dual concern for Buddhism and Literary Sinitic alike.

Chapter 1

Sharing a Court and Writing: Confucian and Buddhist Perspectives on Literary Sinitic

The earliest recorded instance of Sinitic writing, inscribed into oracle bone and dating back to the Shang era (~1250 BCE), can be characterized as logographic. In logographic scripts, each grapheme represents meaningful elements of the spoken language, with the word "meaningful" denoting the semantic value reflected in the graphical representation. This means that two graphs pronounced exactly the same but hold different meanings are graphically distinct. Sinitic writing during the Han developed into a morphosyllabic script, which is a script with graphic units that "typically represent individual monosyllabic morphemes of spoken language."[23] In other words, a morphosyllabic script is logographic, with each semantic unit representing monosyllables. Conversely, in a phonographic script, each graphic element represents how to pronounce the graph only, without inherent meaning.

Translations from Sanskrit, which uses a phonographic script, into Literary Sinitic, a logographic script, became a defining factor in the process of translating Buddhist doctrine. Although creating a sharp binary between phonography and logography is somewhat problematic—Literary Sinitic has contained phonographic elements since the script's inception—the contrast is useful in highlighting the main differences between the two scripts.[24] And, as will be explained in this chapter, many of these differences are explicitly and implicitly identified and analyzed by premodern Sinitic philologists and scholars.

During the early Tang, Confucian and Buddhist scholars, like Daoxuan, had separate but related reasons for investing time and energy into Literary Sinitic. Both parties in the imperial court shared a commitment to the cosmopolitan such that they both wrote in Literary Sinitic and wrote commentaries about Literary Sinitic as self-reflective justifications that try to make sense of Literary Sinitic's role in their respective religious and philosophical traditions. Confucians of the early Tang,

[23] Handel, *Sinography*, 30-31.
[24] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 12.

reeling from a long Period of Disunion, were invested in Literary Sinitic as part of the period's renewed interest in classicism. Among their goals was to ensure that the Confucian Classics, written during the pre-Han era (500-200 BCE), would be deciphered correctly after the Period of Disunion's introduction of increased language diversification. Buddhists' main task throughout the Period of Disunion and into the Tang was to take the vast body of Buddhist scholarship written in Sanskrit and translate it into Literary Sinitic, which motivated their own commentaries about the role of writing and differences between logography and phonography.

This chapter will frame the relationship between Buddhism in the imperial courts and writing during the early Tang dynasty by understanding their concern for and adoption of Literary Sinitic against the backdrop of the rich philological tradition of the Confucian scholars with whom they began to share power. First, the chapter will provide historical context to the philological traditions of classical literati as early as the Han and into the early Tang. Then, it will analyze how some Confucians and Buddhists conceived of what Roy Andrew Miller originally termed the "Chinese world-view" among Confucians and Buddhists' understanding of the role of Literary Sinitic in this world-view.[25] Although his work was later elaborated on and challenged by other scholars for its reductive, essentialist perspective on "Chinese" thought, as well as its unwarranted assumptions about certain differences between logography and phonography, Miller nevertheless made valuable arguments about the impact of the literati's beliefs about writing on how Literary Sinitic changed and didn't change over time. Viewed in the context of a multi-religious court during the Tang, this chapter will frame Buddhist literati understandings and contributions to writing systems within a shared viewpoint, from which a multi-faith literati considered the philosophical and cosmological implications of Literary Sinitic's graphemic qualities. To elaborate on this point, I

[25] Roy Andrew Miller, "The Far East," in *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 13, part 2, ed. Thomas Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 1213–64.

examine an essay written by the Buddhist scholar Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518), which tries to make sense of the unfamiliarity of Sanskrit phonographic writing to a Sinitic writer. Sengyou's essay reveals one way in which a world-view that revered Literary Sinitic manifested under the circumstances of significant interlinguistic transmission. Ultimately, this chapter shows how Buddhist and Confucian literati shared a reverence for Literary Sinitic even if their motivations for using it differed.

A Synthetic Cosmopolitan Order

The philological tradition in the Sinographic Cosmopolis can be best exemplified by *The Explication of Simple and Compound Graphs* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, henceforth: *Shuowen jiezi*), compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 55 CE–ca. 149 CE) in 100 CE. This text is a deeply influential example of Sinitic philology and one of the earliest Sintic dictionaries.[26] In the postface (*xu* 序) of the text, Xu narrativizes the creation of writing and partitions its development into different stages, thus contributing to the early historiography of the development of Sinitic writing.[27] Chapter three will examine the postface's periodization in the context of Daoxuan's reimagining of the history of writing.

The work divides the formation of characters into six classes, known as *liushu* (六書). Xu considers Literary Sinitic from the perspective of how these characters are structured, using the six classes as "a set of explicitly descriptive, and perhaps implicitly prescriptive, rules accounting for the graphic structure and usage of characters in the writing system of the first century CE."[28] In these categories, Xu makes distinction between basic graphs (*wen* 文) and compound graphs (*zi* 字). Early Chinese graphs originated as pictographs (*wen*) representing objects or abstract concepts, which were

[26] Boucher, "Translation."
[27] Xu, Shen. *Postface of the Shuo-wen Chieh-tzu: The First Comprehensive Chinese Dictionary*. No. 1. Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, University of Wisconsin, 1966, trans. K.L. Thern, No. 1. Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, University of Wisconsin, 1966.
[28] William G. Boltz, "Early Chinese Writing," in *The World's Writing Systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels and William Bright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 191–99, quoted in Lurie, *Realms of Literacy,* 334.

later extended through the rebus principle to represent homophonous words not easily depicted in a graph. To address ambiguities from these phonetic extensions, compound graphs (*zi*) combined basic pictographs with semantic determiners, or radicals, to clarify meaning.[29] His is the first work to establish three categories, each relating to a different aspect of a character: form/structure (*xing* 形), sound (*yin* 音), and meaning (*yi* 義).[30] Xu shows that in an early and impactful text within the Sinitic lexicographical tradition, "phonography and logography are thoroughly and intricately intertwined."[31] His system of organization was taken up by succeeding premodern Sinitic lexicographic works at large, exhibiting its immense influence in Sinitic philology.

During the early Tang, Anna Shields argues that medieval writers had a "renewed interest in antiquity," which involved a "newly refurbished, recentered canonical tradition" under Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626-649) of the Tang, who enabled classical studies to thrive. Shields suggests the focus on antiquity in this period arose because the sociopolitical transformation of China succeeding the fall of the Western Jin (266–420), coupled with the rise of Buddhism and religious Daoism during the Southern Dynasties (420-589), meant that texts written by the great classical masters like Confucius, Mencius 孟子, and Xunzi 荀子 "as objects of study and commentary was not in fact guaranteed."[32] On this reckoning, anxiety about the disruption of the Confucian tradition in the face of challenges from other traditions motivated imperial sponsorship of Confucian learning.

In addition to imperial sponsorship, the literati were continuing to innovate on and expand heir philological toolkit in service of their ideologies. For example, the *Qieyun* 切韻, published in

---

[29] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy,* 172. This process in the history of writing is not unique to the Sinitic context. For more on how this process occurred in other parts of the world, see: Florian Coulmas, *Writing Systems: An Introduction to Their Linguistic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[30] Phan, *Lost Tongues*, 318.
[31] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 336.
[32] Anna Shields, "Classicisms in Chinese Literary Culture: Six Dynasties through Tang," in Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (eds), *The Oxford Handbook* ,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.013.26.

601, comprises rimes,[33] arranged in volumes designated by tone. The pronunciation of entries was transcribed using a method known as *fanqie* (反切), which uses two characters to gloss a single syllable: one representing the onset, and the other representing the rime.[34] This *fanqie* technique was also important to Buddhists because it was an "extension" of a practice born in translating Buddhist non-Sinitic words like Indic terms and transcriptions of magical mantras (*dhārani*) into Literary Sinitic by using characters for their phonographic quality alone, rather than for their semantic meaning. [35] According to Phan, the *Qieyun* "sought to guide the refined practices of the elite" who, during the Sui-Tang reunification, were redefining themselves and differentiating themselves from ordinary people. The *Qieyun* as a Tang era sound-based philological innovation represents both an evolution and reinforcement of the impulse toward standardization in wake of massive language diversification during the Period of Disunion. Because of the growing "phonological distance between the classical language and contemporary speech" that occurred during the Period of Disunion, deeply concerning the literati, new philological material from the Sui-Tang showed an increased interest in the sounds of characters like the *Qieyun.* Though it differed from the Qin and Han era philological focus on script, the literati of each era nevertheless shared a commitment to standardization.[36]

Over the course of the Sui (581-618) and Tang, Confucian scholars like Lu Deming 陸德明 (556-630) also authored philosophical rationales for these projects, including the *Textual Explications of the Classics and Canon* (*Jingdian Shiwen* 經典釋文, hereafter: *Jingdian Shiwen*), which was later widely circulated under Emperor Taizong of the Tang. The text is a collection of glossaries with

[33] A rime refers to the nucleus vowel(s) plus the final consonant which, together with the onset syllable, forms the entire sound of the character.
[34] Phan, *Lost Tongues,* 341.
[35] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy,* 336-7.
[36] Phan, *Lost Tongues,* 317.

commentaries explaining the pronunciation of important Chinese Classics.[37] In his view, the languages and schools of learning that had proliferated during the Period of Disunion were obstructing true understanding of the Confucian Classics. In this sense, Lu is part and parcel of the renewed interest in Classicism theorized by Shields. Without a standardized written language, the proper study of the Confucian classics could not be carried out. Because the study of Confucian classics was necessary for certain philosophical and political purposes in Sinitic history, this made standardization all the more crucial to a literati concerned with proper governance. To facilitate these projects by standardizing written language was the motive of philological projects like that of *Jingdian Shiwen*.[38]

These projects deal prominently with the significance of Literary Sinitic, a writing script that was explicitly examined and justified by Confucians on the basis of its graphemic qualities. Following Miller, William Boltz argues that a "Chinese world-view" firmly prevented Literary Sinitic from sliding into alphabetic writing and maintained it as a logographic script. This maintenance worked against historical-linguistic forces pulling towards alphabetism. Boltz uses historical linguistic evidence to argue that the logographic script was increasingly being used demotically throughout the Han dynasty (206-220 BCE) and was evolving toward regular desemanticized use of the characters.[39] For Boltz, it is therefore striking that it never fully developed into an alphabet and instead remained as a logographic script. In other words, many graphemes were used freely and variably, with evidence pointing to its increasing usefulness regarding its phonetic meaning. . According to Boltz, this points to "a latent, and very much embryonic, potential" for a phonetic and asemantic form of writing.[40]

---

[37] John Considine, ed., "The Ancient World," in *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 52.
[38] Lu Deming, "Preface to the Textual Explications of the Classics & Canon" (Jingdian Shiwen 經典釋文), trans. John Phan, *Lost Tongues,* 363.
[39] Boltz, for example, explains how the graph 后 ('hou'), used to represent the meaning 'queen,' was also used to represent the meaning of 'after' or 'behind,' which was conventionally represented by the homophonous graph 後 ('hou'). See: William Boltz, *The Origin and Impact of the Early Chinese Writing System,* (American Oriental Society, 1994), 168.
[40] Boltz, *The Origin and Impact of the Early Chinese Writing System,* 167-69.

Therefore, the fact that this embryonic potential did not actualize after the Han dynasty and stayed logographic must be explained.

Lurie argues that Boltz problematically assumes that the evolution toward phonography during the Han does not require explanation, taking for granted that logography develops teleologically into phonography, regardless of any emic cultural or philosophical explanations of phonography. As Lurie puts it, "'culture' is not an explanation to be brought in only when assumptions about internally driven script evolution break down."[41] However, following Miller, Boltz's cultural explanation still holds important weight as it outlines the literati's self-conscious commitment to maintaining the logography of Literary Sinitic, which manifested in texts such as philosophical commentaries on the value of logographic writing itself. Boltz theorized a world-view that believed in "the one proper order that satisfied the ethical expectations, indeed the ethical demands of society and the cosmos, an order in which everything fit and behaved as it 'ought' to."[42] In other words, to the literati, Literary Sinitic reflected the cosmological pattern of the universe. Deviation from a logographic script that inscribed this pattern graphically would be disordered behavior.

We see this sentiment present in in Lu's preface to the *Jingdian Shiwen* when he cites Confucius to explain the rationale for writing a guide to the Classics: "[If there is a] discrepancy [as small as] a hundredth of a hair, errors will be[come as broad as] a thousand *li*. Confucius once said: 'It would certainly be rectifying names! If names are not proper, then speech is disordered; if speech is disordered, then affairs cannot proceed. Therefore, the Gentleman names only that which is utterable, and speaks only that which is practicable.'"[16][43] By referencing Confucius' Analects 13:3,

[41] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy,* 342.
[42] Boltz, *The Origin and Impact of the Early Chinese Writing System,* 173.
[43] Lu, "Preface to the Textual Explications of the Classics & Canon," trans. John Phan, *Lost Tongues,* 363.

Lu suggests that his commitment to expressing the Classics correctly is directly connected to his concerns about political "affairs" and the broader mission of the literati to govern China properly.

In what way did this world-view impact Buddhists who were fully immersed in the monumental project of translating texts into Literary Sinitic? Whereas Confucian scholars were dealing with variation and error within a more limited linguistic and geographical scope, Buddhists had a tall order if they were to make sense of a cosmological vision of Literary Sinitic. The texts of Buddhism, written in Sanskrit and other Indic languages, were transmitted in an alphasyllabic script—a phonographic writing system—while their translations in Literary Sinitic were written in a logographic script. During this process, translations became "highly contaminated by vernacular elements."[44]

Vernacular elements were introduced into translations partly for practical purposes: as early as the late Han Dynasty, the use of Chinese characters as phonograms was standardized in order to transcribe Buddhist terminology. What emerged was a pool of desemanticized phonograms used to regularly transcribe foreign words like proper names of places and people in the Buddhist tradition.[45] In *The Contributions of Translation Are Far-Reaching and Immense* (*Yijing pian si fulun* 譯經篇(四)附論, hereafter: *Far-Reaching and Immense Contributions of Translation*), Doaxuan writes about the intrusion of vernacular elements in translations written during the late Tang dynasty. He compares the style of translation during this time to translation practices in earlier time periods, including the early Tang, when translations were more "pure and elegant." Daoxuan writes that "little consideration was given to the substance of the source; attention was on the use of language instead, and words and phrases from the marketplace and literati circles were smuggled into the translations, and sayings of poor

[44] Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular," 716. According to Mair, these vernacular elements included using verbal complements, the logograph shi 是 as a copula, and new reduplicative binomes, which ultimately followed into the medieval period even when the empire was reunified under an emperor.
[45] Handel, *Sinography*, 47.

taste were rampant."[46] Here, we can take "words and phrases from the marketplace and literati circles" to mean vernacular expressions that occurred in ordinary speech among commoners and literati alike, perhaps both referring to common vernacular expressions in the case of the marketplace and transliterations of foreign words in literati circles that both tarnish the pure and elegant Literary Sinitic. This sentiment represents Daoxuan's generally philologically conservative attitude, which will appear in much greater depth in *Record of Miraculous Instruction.* In light of Daoxuan's direct condemnation of expressions from everyday speech in writing, one could argue that Daoxuan is part of literati attitudes that form the basis for the *Qieyun's* purpose. Daoxuan's disparaging attitude toward vernacular language's involvement in Buddhist translation fits the "growing psycho-social concern for the purity and unity of language" that is typically attributed to the Confucian literati.[47] In chapter two, the thesis will return to this passage and contextualize Daoxuan's claims about translation in light of his role as an institutional Buddhist who took part in state-sponsored translation projects.

Daoxuan's distaste for contaminated translation was also supported by a general practice during the time for Buddhist participation in creating dictionaries and glosses during the early Tang in order to shape and refine their textual canons, suggesting that Daoxuan's feelings were not anomalous. The seventh century *Meaning and sounds of all sutras* (*Yīqièjīng yīnyì* 一切經音義), is collection of all the glossaries of scripture words and expressions in and before the Tang Dynasty. In the glossary collection, Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit words sit alongside their definition and phonological gloss.[48] Like the *Qieyun*, the text uses the *fanqie* method to aid in pronunciation, showing how Buddhist philological material was modeled off of existing Sinitic ones, suggesting that

---

[46] *The Contributions of Translation Are Far-Reaching and Immense* (*Yijing pian si fulun* **譯經篇(四)附論**) [Appendix to the Section "*On the Translation of Sutras, Part 4*"], collected in *A Continuation of the Biographies of Eminent Monks (Xu gaoseng zhuan* **續高僧傳**), trans. Martha P. Y. Cheung, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse*, 150.
[47] Phan, *Lost Tongues,* 317.
[48] Considine, 'The Pre-Modern World,' 122.

Sinitic Buddists other than Daoxuan shared anxieties about the purity of language alongside their desire to read and propagate Buddhist doctrines.

Sengyou's Moral Evaluation of Logography Versus Phonography

During the 5th century, the Buddhist scholar Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518), author of *A Collection of Records on the Emanation of the Chinese Tripitaka* (*Chusanzang jiji* 出三藏記集), the earliest extant bibliography of Buddhist texts, wrote extensively about the similarities and difference between Sanskrit and Literary Sinitic in the context of working through the translation process. Although he himself did not know Sanskrit, Sengyou was seen as an authority on *vinaya* much like Daoxuan and became an influential model for Buddhist compilers of bibliographical and other information on Buddhist sutra translation.[49][21] In his essay titled *A Record of Similarities and Differences in Pronunciation and Meaning When Translating Scriptures From Western Languages to Chinese* (*Hu han yijing yin yi tongyi ji* 胡漢譯經文字音義同異記), Sengyou tries to reconcile the inherent differences between phonographic and logographic writing.[50] In his work, we see the perspective of a Sinitic Buddhist monk whose tendency is not to move toward vernacular writing but to consider the differences between two cosmopolitan writing systems.

In the essay, Sengyou's argument rests on a flawed premise: he wrongly equates script with language.[51] Sengyou conceives of the stylistic changes in script (citing the transition from seal script to clerical script) over China's history, all of which still represent Literary Sinitic, as a one-to-one comparison with the variety of scripts from India, which can represent different languages. Although

[49] Martha P. Y. Cheung, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse*, 114.
[50] Sengyou, "A Record of Similarities and Differences in Pronunciation and Meaning When Translating Scriptures From Western Languages to Chinese," trans. Daniel Boucher, "Buddhism and Language in Early-Medieval China." (Hawai'i Reader of Traditional Chinese Culture; 2005), 265-9.
[51] This is what Daniel Boucher, who translated and added an introductory commentary to the essay, argues. However, the nature of Sengyou's error seems potentially controversial, although there may be scholarly consensus that I am unaware of. For example, based on a reading of Sengyou's description of script variation in Indic and Literary Sinitic text, one could argue that his mistake was not conflating script and language, but believing falsely that all Indic texts were written in one language, which was represented by a changing script, just as Literary Sinitic was.

he mistakenly conflates script and language, his essay provides important insight into how Buddhist literati dealt with linguistic asymmetries during the translation process and their perception of Literary Sinitic as part of their own literary tradition. In his discussion of "half-characters" and "full-characters" in Indic script, he describes letters, or half-characters, as "moral defilements" for providing incomplete meaning. His criticism stems from the fact that a letter in phonographic writing systems does not hold any inherent meaning. It is only once it is linked with other letters, creating a word, or a full character, that the phonograph can be linked to meaning.

Therefore, the concept of letters may be strange to Sengyou because the smallest meaningful unit of Literary Sinitic, the logograph, holds semantic meaning. The alien aspects of a phonographic script, where letters have the ability to stand alone as sounds and must be strung together in different arrangements to form words with semantic meaning, prevent Sengyou from morally approving of the script. That is, until it produces something close to a logograph: a word. He states that full-characters are "good at expressing meaning." He takes it one step further and likens word-making to the Buddhist practice of enlightenment: "It is like an ordinary man, at first being stuck in ignorance, afterward attaining constancy. Therefore, we rely on characters to create meaning; one can liken this to nirvana."[52] Nirvana is the soteriological goal of the Buddhist path toward enlightenment, generally denoting a state of cessation and an end to suffering.[53]

Even though Sengyou is speaking about Sanskrit in this context, this argument provides a clear indication as to where his linguistic imagination and priorities lay in regards to writing generally. Like Boltz argued about Literary Sinitic's expression of the "one proper order," Sengyou manages to fit phonographic script into this world-view by valuing words as meaningful and degrading letters as "moral defilements." He does not completely denigrate phonographic writing, given his argument

[52] Sengyou, "Similarities and Differences," trans. Boucher, "Buddhism and Language," 266-7.
[53] Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., eds., "Nirvana," in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 597–598.

that the end goal of writing in a phonographic script—creating strings of words that create meaning— is spiritually productive. But he does try to fit it into a logographic mould, where it is only when a phonographic script is treated like a logographic one (where each word is treated like a logograph) that the script is good.

Sengyou's perspective on the moral degradation of Sanskrit offers a counterpoint to Mair. Mair argues that Indian Buddhist ideology played a crucial role in shaping the development and acceptance of written vernacular languages in East Asia, thereby claiming that aspects of Indian Buddhist ideology were transposed onto the East Asian context. According to Mair, the Buddha's explicit endorsement of using local languages to spread his teachings, as evidenced in various Buddhist texts, provided a model for linguistic diversity that extended beyond the Indian context. Mair emphasizes the Indian Buddhist context, with its use of Prākrits (vernacular languages in India) and a positive attitude from Indian Buddhists towards *deśa-bhāṣā* (meaning "language of a country" or the local, vernacular language spoken by people) offered a template for other cultures to follow.[54] He thus argues that the concept of written national languages based on spoken vernaculars in East Asia may have been inspired by the Indian concept of *deśa-bhāṣā* introduced through Buddhism. However, historians of South Asia, like Pollock and Andrew Ollett, deny that India could be the model since there is no evidence of any strong relation between Buddhism and vernacularization in premodern South Asia.[55] Nonetheless, the model on which Buddhism is a vehicle for vernacularization persists and is argued, by scholars like Mair, to accurately characterize linguistic shifts to the vernacular in premodern China.

---

[54] Mair, "Buddhism and the Written Vernacular," 724. There are serious doubts about whether all or even most Prākrits are really vernacular languages, or if they're literary languages that kind of mimic or mock vernacular languages. See: Andrew Ollett, *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

[55] For more on Pollock's interpretation of Mair's "erroneous" understanding of vernacularization in South Asia, see: Pollock, *Language of the Gods,* 487.

Sengyou's understanding of language and script offers a more complex attitude than a direct and one-dimensional influence of Indian Buddhist ideology on Sinitic Buddhist ideology. Rather than uncritically adopting an Indian Buddhist ideology that might, as per Mair, have predisposed Sengyou to treat alphasyllabaries as a vehicle for proselytization, Sengyou instead seems to be just as much a Sinitic philologist as his Confucian peers. His reconciliation of the literati's philosophical and moral orientation toward the cosmopolitan with phonography in light of unavoidable linguistic and cultural differences offers insight into how Buddhism navigated an environment deeply entrenched in its commitment to Literary Sinitic.. Around a century later, Daoxuan, as part of a continued tradition in line with Sengyou's dual commitment to Buddhism and the cosmopolitan, would continue to refine and expand upon this hybridization as the Tang dynasty consolidated power and emperors began officially supporting Buddhism.

Chapter 2

Incorporation of Buddhism into the Sociopolitical Arena of the Early Tang

Daoxuan as a literatus is best known for his *vinaya* commentaries, and therefore most scholars in the field of religious studies expound upon his importance as a a *vinaya master* (*lüshi* 律師).

Others have explained his importance as a translator, author, historian, and chronicler during the Tang dynasty. Religious discourses about soteriology and miracle stories also analyze Daoxuan and his writing.[56] This chapter will survey the political sphere that Buddhists occupied during the early Tang in order to better understand the role Daoxuan played in an existing imperial order.

First, I provide an overview of how Buddhists like Daoxuan carried out translations of their doctrine into Literary Sinitic, backed by the recently consolidated and centralized empire. Then, I analyze the political arena in which Buddhism and Confucianism operated by using a famous, apocryphal sutra written by an anonymous author in China in the second half of the fifth century and then rewritten with an added commentary during the Tang. Finally, I survey Daoxuan's personal background and his perspective on Buddhism and translation as it relates to ideas of political cooperation in order to elaborate on the analysis of his commitment to the cosmopolitan order. The chapter intends to set up further historical context for the close reading in chapter three and to argue that Daoxuan's viewpoint on the cosmopolitan was not divergent or unusual from other Buddhists at the time but instead was supported and shaped by the sociopolitical world in which he came from and inhabited.

Translation and Teamwork: Buddhist doctrine enters China

During the Period of Disunion, a legion of monks began to build up an enduring canon of Buddhist doctrine and scripture across South, Central, and East Asia. These translation efforts reflect the fractured, war-torn era, characterized by profound language diversification and foreign influence.[57] Erik Zürcher pinpoints one of several turning points during the Period of Disunion around which to center the history of Chinese Buddhism. In the early fifth century, the Central

[56] Ang Zou, Koichi Shinohara, Robin Wagner, Janine Nicol, and Antonio Forte have all written about Daoxuan in these myriad of ways.
[57] Boucher, 'Translation.'

Asian Buddhist monk Kumārajīva (344–ca. 409 CE) was patronized by the emperor Yao Xing 姚興 of the Later Qin (r. 394–416) to translate Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Literary Sinitic. His staff can be considered the first state-sponsored translation team. Before the emperor's support, these translation projects were ad-hoc, as foreign monks and local Sinitic translators worked together in small groups to translate texts into Literary Sinitic. This meant that the translations were scattered and less standardized, until a centralized bureaucratic governing system set up a system that allowed elite monks to produce polished translations.[58]

Yao Xing and Kumārajīva set a precedent that would be frequently repeated throughout Sinitic history, wherein emperors would both be able to control the doctrinal output of monks and help to proliferate it. Eventually, large, multi-level translation teams eventually began to form, often made up of several translators. Emperor Taizong, the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, ordered the monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664 CE) to begin translation work in the Tang capital Chang'an, marking the first imperially-backed translation team of the Tang dynasty.[59]

Daoxuan himself worked directly for the emperor as a member of Xuanzang's translation team. His role was to refine, edit, and hone translations from Sanskrit, offering a second-pass after a scholar more literate in Sanskrit made a preliminary translation. Xuanzang started a translation project in 645 after returning to China from a trip to India under the orders of Emperor Taizong; Daoxuan was involved in the project from the very beginning. According to Ang Zou, "some say that he was tasked with *zhui wen* 綴文 (literally, 'to compose elegant sentences'), while others suggest that his work focused on *bishou runwen* 筆受潤文 (literally, 'to transcribe and refine notes')."[60] Based on Zou's survey of 296 works attributed to Daoxuan, it remains unclear whether Daoxuan knew

[58] Sai Yau Siu. *The Evolution of Team-Based Buddhist Scripture Translation in Tang China: United in Dharma*, (SpringerBriefs in Religious Studies. Singapore: Springer Nature, 2024), 2.
[59] Sai Yau, *The Evolution of Team-Based Buddhist Scripture*, 35-36.
[60] Zou. "The Life of Daoxuan," 145-7.

Sanskrit: virtually all of his texts are written in Literary Sinitic. Regardless, these tasks suggest a masterful command of Literary Sinitic.

Political Legitimation of Buddhism: ***Sutra for Humane Kings***

By the founding of the Tang dynasty, Buddhism had become a serious contending force in China, functioning an institutional arm of the state. The Buddhist clergy (*sangha*) as an institution of the imperial government first appears in the mid-fifth century, with the superintendent of the *sangha* acting as a bureaucratic head appointed by the emperor to oversee monastic affairs, with the clergy itself being composed of lay officials. This "government-run" style of Buddhism was criticized for the registration of monks who served as officials, leading to a corrupted practice of Buddhism.[61]As a result of imperial influence on the superintendent, the *Perfect Wisdom Sutra for Humane Kings Who Wish To Protect Their States* (*Renwang Huguo Bore Boluomiduo Jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經; hereafter: *Sutra for Humane Kings*), argued Buddhism should not serve the state but that Buddhism and the state should serve one another. After the appearance of the first version in the 5th century, the Buddhist monk Amoghavajra (705-774) carried out a second translation from a version of the text.[62] Amoghavajara held the powerful position of *sangha* superintendent, meaning that Buddhism was firmly incorporated into the state by the time of his retranslation. The retranslation is a recension that includes commentary providing more theological reasoning about why Buddhism's assimilation in the Tang would be beneficial to the king.

Part of *Sutra for Humane Kings* reads: "If, in all the states of the worlds of the ten directions, there is a place where this [Buddhist] scripture is received and held, read, recited, and expounded,

---

[61] William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 476.

[62] *Perfect Wisdom Sutra for Humane Kings Who Wish To Protect Their States* (*Renwang Huguo Bore Boluomiduo Jing* **仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經**), trans. de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 476-480. Scholars are unsure if the text was originally written in Sanskrit or composed in China itself.

then I and the others go there in an instant, to guard and protect the Correct Teaching or to establish the Correct Teaching. We will ensure that these states are devoid of all calamities and difficulties."[63] The text suggests a reciprocal protection that benefits Buddhist monks as much as it benefits the emperor. Read against the context of the Period of Disunion, the kind of protection Buddhism offers—one that promises states will no longer have to contend with "calamities" like foreign invasions—would likely be a tantalizing prospect for an emperor.

The *Sutra for Humane Kings* is reflective of a larger model of cooperation between Buddhists and Confucians as the Tang political elite became religiously diverse, accomplished by providing a line of reasoning that connects Confucian and Buddhist concepts more explicitly. The sutra states that "because the humane king (*renwang* 仁王) explicates the Teaching and disseminates virtue here below, he is called 'humane.'... if he uses his ability to propagate the Teaching, the king is able to protect [the state], and it is the Highest Perfect Wisdom that is [the method of] protection. Moreover, one who is humane is forebearing."[64] Linking the Confucian concept of humanity (*ren* 仁), which is the expression of virtuous Confucian ideals, to the Buddhist concept of forbearance (*ren* 忍), which is the third of the six (or ten) *perfections* (pāramitā) mastered on the path toward enlightenment, the sutra suggests compatibility between a Sinitic past and a Buddhist present.[65] These two characters–*ren* and *ren*–are importantly homonymous. Sam Vermeesch argues that in enacting this maneuver, *Sutra for Humane Kings* also "defuses" accusations that Buddhism is foreign (*hu* 胡), used here for its negative connotation as an intrusive and non-Sinitic influence, insofar as the *Sutra* "collaps[es] the boundaries between 'foreign' and 'native' by making key concepts exchangeable."[66] One could look at the Buddhism of this time as a religion that conformed to fit

---

[63] *Sutra for Humane Kings*, trans. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 476-480.
[64] *Sutra for Humane Kings*, trans. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 477-8.
[65] Buswell Jr. and Lopez Jr., eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* , s.v. "Forbearance."
[66] Sem Vermeersch. "Who Is Legitimating Whom? On Justifying Buddhism's Place in the Body Politic". In *Buddhism in Central Asia I*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020) doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004417731_003.

existing political models while also positioning itself as a religion that ought to be protected and patronized by the emperor.

Daoxuan and the State

To place Daoxuan into this political model and understand the reasons for his imperial commitments requires an investigation into his family background. His ancestral history illuminates aspects about the social world that gave rise to his institutionalist and imperial identities. Daoxuan himself was likely originally born in Chang'an, the capital of several Sinitic dynasties, including the Tang.[67] His family could have either been descendants of the deposed Jin dynasty (266-420) who had fled the north in the wake of the Yongjia disasters (311 CE), resulting in the sacking of the capital of the Western Jin Luoyang; or descendants of an elite southern clan. Zou seems to find the second possibility more likely: "Daoxuan's father is mentioned in Daoxuan-related works, he is described as a key minister in the court of the Chen Dynasty. In other words, he almost certainly arrived in Chang'an with the emperor and the other ministers in 589, then remained there until his death."[68] In any case, the social world Daoxuan inherited from his father's time was one of weakening family clans (for families in the South and elite northern emigres alike), the centralization of court power under the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577), and the hyper-elitism of the Liang (502–557). In this world, "the emerging complexion of sixth century elites was one of economic and military impotence, coupled with a peculiar dependence on scholarly erudition for social advancement."[69] As the status of family clans weakened, families turned toward the centralized government. The position of Daoxuan's father as a key minister of the Chen reflects this newer orientation toward serving the state.

[67] Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan,* 99.
[68] Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan,* 100.
[69] Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan,* 313.

Daoxuan's personal history provides further reasoning as to why his orientation is so firmly toward the central government. Robin Wagner argues that Daoxuan was a staunch "religious institutionalist" who was "concerned with promoting conformity and standards for the internal stability of the religion." As an officially appointed Buddhist leader, Daoxuan showed political authorities that Buddhism in the Tang was "controlled."[70] Part of the mechanism of control may be found in his interest in regularization and standardization of the process by which groups of monks assemble in order to expound upon and recite Buddhists disciplinary codes. In *Excerpts on Monastic Ceremonies with Abridgements and Additions to the Dharmaguptakavinaya (Sifen lüshan fanbuque xingshicao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔, hereafter: *Excerpts on Monastic Ceremonies*), Daoxuan attempts to make sīmā, a Sanskrit word meaning the procedure for defining groups of monks *as communities* in space, a standardized practice. In Ghichul Jung's analysis of *Excerpts on Monastic Ceremonies*, Daoxuan excavates fragments in other Buddhist doctrines about *sīmā* in order to form a regular process by which groups of monks assembled in the Tang in order to protect Buddhist law for monastic communities.[71] Daoxuan's treatment of *sīmā* reflects his commitments to both the community as a place where community-based translation work occurred and to standardization in general. In my third chapter, standardization will come up again when Daoxuan discusses it in the context of the evolution of Sinitic writing as it pertains to the standardization of script forms.

His project of portraying Buddhism to political authorities as "controlled" also involved representing the task of translation in a manner responsive to accusations that Buddhism was foreign or barbaric. In one of his *vinaya* commentaries, which interprets monastic rules governing daily practice, Daoxuan argues that Buddhism is not a barbarian or foreign (*hu* 㺚) religion. The term *hu* is often used to describe foreign influences and groups, and thus contrasted with the 'Sinitic'

[70] Wagner, *Buddhism, Biography and Power*, 95-102.
[71] Ghichul Jung, "'Natural Land Is Too Weak to Sustain the Great Dharma': Daoxuan's Commentary on the Sīmā and Medieval Chinese Monasticism." (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 42: 2019): 265-314.

(*han* 漢). He states that "it is true that since the old days some masters, when they were writing commentaries, frequently employed the terms hu and han to refer to [,respectively,] the languages of the original texts and the translation. No doubt, these wise masters did this for a good reason. But after careful consideration, [the use of *hu* and *han*] must be avoided, because it discriminates against our ancestors. [Such a practice] is utterly wrong."[72] Without directly attacking the masters from the old days—Sinitic philologists from previous periods—Daoxuan gently shifts the connotation of the original texts, written in Sanskrit, to honor his ancestors, who are the Buddha and disciples of the Buddha that initially propagated Buddhism. Daoxuan's role in softening the negative associations originally made by previous Sinitic scholars about Buddhist doctrines originally written in Sanskrit supports Vermeesch's claims about how the early Tang saw an increasingly defused binary between foreign and native, as exemplified by the *Sutra for Humane Kings*.

Around the Sui-Tang, during the time of Daoxuan, there was a broad institutional shift as Buddhism became more accepted in Sinitic culture that led to the systematic replacement of of *hu* 婁 in the canon with *fan* 梵, meaning "brahma" and used to reference Indian languages.[73] Later in the same *vinaya* commentary, Daoxuan points out that the counterpart term for *han* should be *fan* rather than *hu* because *fan* refers to the true sages and gives an accurate account of their origins. [74] Daoxuan uses *fan* both to more accurately describe the origins of Buddhist doctrine and to counteract a negative perception of Buddhism.

This doubled responsibility—both to the religion of Buddhism and to the classical literati and their philological traditions—is a recurring theme in Daoxuan's understanding of how writing and translation fits into his role as part of the imperial center. The *Far-Reaching and Immense*

---

[72] *Sifen lü bhikṣu han zhu jieben shu* 四分律比丘含注戒本疏, "Commentary on the Annotated Prātimokṣa of Sifen Lü." Daoxuan, W62/ X39.714, trans. Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan*, 176.
[73] Daniel Boucher, "On Hu and Fan Again: The Transmission of 'Barbarian' Manuscripts to China," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): 7–45.
[74] Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan,* 177.

Contributions of Translation, a text written by Daoxuan about translation briefly analyzed in the first chapter, extends beyond a simple disapproval of vernacular elements from the "marketplace" and into a more ambivalent attitude toward translation:

> In itself, the great enlightenment needs few words; the wonderful, unique message stands apart from this world, and finds full expression in the supple and melodic use of tones and all forms of delivery used by the Buddha. If only we could find the man who knows his mortal limitations and surrenders his will to the revelations of the Buddha, so that he could propagate the truth single-mindedly rather than asserting his own authorship! Such a man, preaching the doctrines untiringly like the Buddha, offering explanations in different contexts as the Buddha did, and setting reason apart from feeling, could spread the Buddha's words to all corners of the world. Nonetheless, his use of language should be truly inspiring, his literary style lofty and sonorous, and his translations incisive and chiseled; for only then can they become heavenly music and surpass ordinary expression.[75]

In this passage, which somewhat moves away from centering writing in the practice of Buddhism, there continues to be a philological concern that is only heightened because of the precariousness of writing. Part of Mair's argument about Buddhism's demotic orientation is based in Buddhism's oral transmission of sutras: "With such tremendous emphasis on the presumed orality of the canon, there might have been resistance to rendering it in stilted, 'unsayable' [Literary Sinitic.]"[76] Indeed, Daoxuan agrees that Buddhist teachings are better off in the "supple and melodic use of tones," referencing speech, and that generally "the great enlightenment needs few words." However, this does not lead Daoxuan to completely dismiss the value of translation or of writing more generally. Instead, because writing has an incredibly difficult time reflecting the "unsayable" that is needed to attain enlightenment, Daoxuan requires that a translator's "use of language should be truly inspiring, his literary style lofty and sonorous, and his translations incisive and chiseled; for only then can they become heavenly music and surpass ordinary expression." Daoxuan's ambivalent attitude toward translation complicates the argument that when Buddhists prioritized oral

[75] *The Contributions of Translation Are Far-Reaching and Immense*, trans. Martha P. Y. Cheung, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse*, 150.
[76] Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular," 714.

transmission, they necessarily had to dismiss or denigrate writing. Instead, Daoxuan's ambivalence introduces a viewpoint that struggles to supplant his religious and sociopolitical responsibilities in favor of the other. Reformulating Daoxuan's concern for writing, what emerges is far from a disregard for writing. Instead, Daoxuan illustrates a deep commitment to the arduous task of putting Buddhist teachings into words. Getting Buddhism right, so to speak, means one must take extra care for language and writing, rather than abandoning it completely. Daoxuan's concern for writing will be a crucial thorough line in chapter three's close reading of *Record of Miraculous Instruction.* Scholarship has tended to see his concern as dismissal of Sinitic history and writing whereas this thesis will recognise it as an extension of trends present in orthodox Sinitic philology embedded in Daoxuan's innovative contributions to historiography from the perspective of a Sinitic Buddhist.

Chapter 3

Dual Commitments and Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction*

"The rise of clerical script (*lishu* 隸書) occurred in the time of ancient Buddhas."[77]

In this line alone, Daoxuan radically reimagines history, temporally linking historical Buddhist figures with the evolution of Sinitic writing. In doing so, Daoxuan collapses two timelines often discussed in different contexts—the history of Buddhism and the history of Sinitic

[77] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. **[隸書之興，興於古佛之世。]**

writing—into one.[78] *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, most likely written in 667, is virtually[79] the only text written during the Tang to mention clerical script alongside the legendary inventor of Sinitic writing Cangjie 蒼頡 in the *Taishō Tripitaka*, a definitive collection of Chinese Buddhist canonical works along with Japanese commentary.[80] The text, one of the last texts Daoxuan wrote before he died, is more generally categorized by Koichi Shinohara as a "miracle story collection" given its format as "a purported series of dialogues between the author and various divine visitors. These typically take a question-and-answer form, the monk probing for explanations for a variety of strange phenomena, the god answering with a celestial assurance."[81] Similar to many of Daoxuan's other texts, the text uses this format to offer insight into his *vinaya* (*lü* 律) commentary, which provide ways in which to carry out monastic rules, with *vinaya* being one of the three three largest classifications for Buddhist texts.[82] This *vinaya* includes commentary on the religious importance of Buddha Kāśyapa's robe handed over to Śākyamuni[83] and the presence of sacred Buddhist sites in China.[84] Its particular focus on a host of historical figures known to have been involved in the actual evolution of script forms (or at least the study of that evolution), however, sets this text apart from Daoxuan's other works.

---

[78] For more on the veracity of when the text was authored and by whom, see: Nelson Elliot Landry, "Daoxuan and the Medieval Chinese Encounter with Relics and Images," *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–55, https://dx.doi.org/10.15239/hijbs.05.01.01.

[79] In order to survey the *Taishō* cannon and search for texts that may have also dealt with the history of writing, I used the The Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) edition, which contains volumes 1–55 and 85 of the *Taishō* cannon. The volumes it excludes are Literary Sinitic texts written by Japanese Buddhist scholars. I digitally searched the database to see if other texts contained these terms and found none.

[80] The work is nearly exactly identical to that of another work by Daoxuan, also located in the *Taishō* cannon, called *Account of the Stimuli and Responses Related to the Vinaya* (*Lüxiang gantong zhuan* **律相感通傳**), also compiled in 667. Ang Zou compares the two texts in an appendix to her dissertation. See: Zou, *The Life of Daoxuan*, 244. For the purposes of this thesis, the variations have not overtly impacted the excerpted passage that is the focus of the analysis.

[81] Shinohara, quoted in Brinckmann, *The Old Buddhist Pagoda*, 5.

[82] Bruce Rusk et al., "Literary Information in China: A History" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 486. The other two are Sūtra (*jing* 經, "Sermons of the Buddha") and Abhidharma (*lun* 论, "Systematic treatises"). Together, these three categories makeup the famous name for the Buddhist canon: *Tripitaka* in Sanskrit and *San Zang* in Literary Sinitic (三藏, "Three baskets").

[83] Koichi Shinohara."The Kasāya Robe of the Past Buddha Kāśyapa in the Miraculous Instruction Given to the Vinaya Master Daoxuan (596~667)." Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal 13, no. 2 (2000): 299-367.

[84] Janine Nicol, "'This is The Very Place!': Shi Daoxuan 釋道宣 (c. 596–667) and The Creation of Buddhist Sacred Sites in China," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 54, no. 2 (November 2022): 216.

This chapter uses the historical, political, and philological context from the first two chapters to set up an analysis of *Record of Miraculous Instruction* that is significant both for modern historiography and scholarship and for its impact on early Tang history. First, perhaps partly because of the general assumptions about Buddhism and the vernacular influenced by Mair, there is a widespread scholarly blindness toward Daoxuan's care toward and concern for Literary Sinitic. Although many scholars have investigated the importance of Daoxuan and his writings, few have dealt directly with the role of philology and the history of writing in the *Record of Miraculous Instruction*.[85] The bias at times is strong enough that passages that directly discuss the creation and evolution of Sinitic writing, including references to revered Sinitic figures such as kings and scholars, are analyzed as symptomatic only of Daoxuan's intellectual commitment to Buddhism. Without also considering his commitments and concern for Sinitic philology, including how bringing Sinitic philology closer to Buddhism services or validates the religion, these analyses fall flat.

Second, on the level of *Record of Miraculous Instruction's* significance historically, Daoxuan posits a highly complex and sophisticated reimagining of the development of Sinitic writing to include and account for key figures and spaces in Buddhist history. James Robson argues that *Record of Miraculous Instruction* is part of a series of sources that represents "fundamental doctrinal shifts represented in Mahāyāna texts where stories about the Buddha are displaced from their moorings at sites in India and relocated in the new cosmic vision of 'no-place', making it possible to establish connections with the Buddha at any time in any place (and not just in the homeland of India)."[86] This chapter will agree that the text displaces stories originally set in India and relocates them, but disagrees with the idea of the so-called "no-place." In fact, Daoxuan's relocation of stories about the

[85] Ang Zou, Koichi Shinohara, Robin Wagner, and Antonio Forte, to name a few.
[86] James Robson, "Buddhist Sacred Geography," in *Early Chinese Religion*, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2010), quoted in Brinckmann, *The Old Buddhist Pagoda*, 5.

Buddha are incredibly specific, lodged firmly within spaces and times that are relevant to and studied by orthodox classical Confucian philologists.

The historically accurate early development of the writing system is a separated, less relevant focus of this chapter. Instead, we can approach the significance of Daoxuan's arguments for their historiographical contributions, and the ways in which they follow and diverge from analyses and conceptualizations of writing before and around his own lifetime.[87] This historiography, arriving new to scene as Buddhism officially entered the political and literary sphere of the Sinitic elite, was one that conceived of a version of Buddhism that was compatible with Literary Sinitic to the point of enfolding it into the history of Buddhism itself—without degrading or devaluing Buddhist doctrine. In the narrative presented in *Record of Miraculous Instruction* Daoxuan attempts to carefully embed early Tang Buddhism into the timelines and locales articulated in orthodox Sinitic works of philology.

Clerical Script in the Time of the Ancient Buddhas and Kāśyapa Buddha

Record of Miraculous Instruction is written in question-and-answer format, typical of some Buddhist doctrine, where the instructions Daoxuan receives from various celestial beings are recorded as a series of questions asked by Daoxuan himself with answers provided by the celestial being. An exchange between Daoxuan and a celestial being in which the celestial being explains that an entombed image of the Prabhūtaratna Buddha originally produced in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha was unearthed during the Jin Dynasty (256-419 CE) sets the scene, at which point the excavators noticed that the base of the image was inscribed with the two characters *duobao* 多寶 (Sanskrit: *prabhūta*). Apparently confused by the plausibility of the inscription, Daoxuan poses the following question: "The clerical script forms of the characters 'duo' and 'bao' (*duo bao lishu* 多寶隸

[87] Lurie, *Realms of Literacy,* 334.

書) emerged during the Three Qin period. How could there have been divine writing (*shenshu* 神書) already in the time of Buddha Kāśyapa?"[88] Now, writing from the perspective of a celestial being, Daoxuan, taking the perspective of a celestial being in the narrative, offers up the following explanation: ""The clerical script of Li Si of Qin is a recent inheritance of a distant tradition. The rise of clerical script occurred in the time of ancient Buddhas.""[89] In other words, Daoxuan's initial question casts doubt as to how Buddha Kāśyapa, one of the predecessors to the original historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, who is postulated to have lived between 563 and 483 BCE, could have been around for the invention of writing if the clerical script emerged more recently during the Three Qin period.[90] The main point here is that the passage begins to point toward Daoxuan's knowledge of philological history as seen in his understanding of clerical script and its connection to the Qin.

The celestial being's answer not only proposes that Sinitic writing existed in the time of Buddha Kāśyapa, but that a certain even earlier form of clerical script existed in the time of the ancient Buddhas. Daoxuan references the clerical script, a specific and evolved script form, that has a much deeper history, farther back in time than the Qin by many centuries. This suggestive, deep chronology of script evolution is extended into the future when the celestial being also states that "the clerical script of Li Si of Qin is a recent inheritance of a distant tradition." In drawing a connection between the clerical script of Li Si 李斯 (c. 280–208 BCE) and the proto-clerical script from the time of the ancient Buddhas (*gufo zhi shi* 古佛之世), Daoxuan expands and modifies traditional accounts of the evolution of the script forms, offering new historiographical insights in light of orthodox understandings of the history of Sinitic writing. At the same time, the characters that serve as the linchpin of this revelation of the deep history of clerical script clearly invoke the quintessentially Buddhist figure of the Prabhūtaratna Buddha.

---

[88] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. [**多寶隸書出於三秦之代。如何迦葉佛時已有神書也？**]

[89] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. [**秦李斯隸書，此乃近代遠承。隸書之興。興於古佛之世。**]

[90] The Three Qin period refers to the period just after the collapse of the Qin dynasty (221 to 207 BCE).

Clerical script was the standardized style of writing created during the Qin, the dynasty that represented the first successful attempt in the Sinographic Cosmopolis to standardize not only a style of script but also of weights, roads, and a complex legal system.[91] The actual evolution of the script's visual form was likely not a simple, orderly linear development, but instead an overlapping, complex process of development. To philologists preceding and during Daoxuan's time, clerical script was seen as a significant innovation in the evolution of script form style. According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, the Warring States had their own languages and scripts before unification under the Qin. When the First Qin Emperor Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝 (ca. 246–210 BCE) brought the regional states under his control, his chancellor Li Si 李斯 (ca. 280–208 BCE), a philologist and calligrapher, "proposed to unify the script and discard everything that did not agree with the Qin script."[92] This script was called Qin variety of seal script (*qinzhuan* 秦篆) or small seal script (*xiaozhuan* 小篆), which was set as the standard for the empire and was enforced, attempting to stamp out variant characters that had emerged from the various scripts of the preceding six states called the scripts of the Six Kingdoms (*liuguo wenzi* 六國文字) before the Qin unified China in 221 BCE. The scripts of the Six Kingdoms were referred to in the Late Han as ancient script (*guwen* 古文) or tadpole script (*kedouwen* 蝌蚪文). It is important to note that although the celestial being references "the clerical script Li Si," Li Si is not historically considered the direct creator of the clerical script. Nevertheless the script unification he proposed set the stage for clerical script to emerge over time.[93]

Daoxuan's insistence that it was a type of clerical script in particular that exists in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, and not previous script forms, may suggest a particular fixation on standardization

[91] Mark Edward Lewis. "Writing the State." In *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 15-52. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 22.
[92] Galambos, Imre, 'The Chinese Writing System', in *The Oxford Handbook* 17), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.013.3
[93] Wilkinson, *Chinese History,* 33.

consistent with his attempt to regularize religious practices in the *Excerpts on Monastic Ceremonies*. In addition, the anxieties over standardizing script that occurred during the Qin unification offer an insightful mirror to hold up against early Tang anxieties over the standardization of language in the wake the proliferation and diversification of languages over the Period of Disunion—a chronologically distinct but thematically similar era of disunification and foreign influence in the Sinographic Cosmopolis. Just as Li Si's Qin variety of seal script set out to suppress variant characters from the previous pre-unification period, the *Qieyun* as a sound-based philological tool in the Tang set out to "resolve the diversity of contemporary visions" of classical language, with Lu Fayan's preface of the *Qieyun* closely reflecting the situation of variant character proliferation during the pre-Qin period.[94]

With Daoxuan's clear reference to this Sinitic orthodox philological history, it appears that serving the state's interests, like the role clerical script has in creating a more efficient bureaucracy, does not have to negate Buddhist priorities. Instead, Daoxuan brings Buddhism closer to the state by carefully engineering a fused timeline that puts Buddhas in conversation with the chronology of script standardization, and makes a thorough historical treatment of Buddhist figures indispensable to the resolution of anxieties over language proliferation. Moreover, the celestial being's answer to Daoxuan's initial question does not simply end when it links the time of Kāśyapa Buddha with clerical script. Read in full, the answer betrays the depth of Daoxuan's commitment to reconciling the history of Sinitic philology with Buddhist chronology. Daoxuan writes:

> Now in the southern regions, across over a thousand prefectures, adorning over ten thousand countries of Jambudvipa, the writing and the sounds of speech are the same. Today in the Tang, due to the separation by vast sea routes of hundreds of thousands of *li*, translators have not transmitted this. Therefore, it is not surprising that this region is

[94] Phan, *Lost Tongues*, 350.

> defended obstinately against innovation.[95] Haven't you heard? Gu Yewang of Liang, a great scholar of the Imperial Academy, extensively researched the origins of characters, finding them to be inconclusive. Thus, the preface of the *Yupian* states that when opening the tomb of Lord Chunshen, inscriptions were found, and they were all in clerical script. Examining Lord Chunshen's time, this shows that the Six States period of Zhou simultaneously used clerical script, concurrent with the time of their annexation. If even the seal and clerical scripts of this country are still obscure, how can one know about matters from Buddha Kāśyapa's time? It is not what one's ears and eyes have heard or seen.[96]
>
> 如何迦葉佛時已有神書也。答曰:秦李斯隸書,此乃近代遠承。隸書之興，興於古佛之世。見今南州四面千有餘州，莊嚴閻浮一萬百有餘國。文字言音同。今唐國但以海路遼遠，動數十萬里，譯者莫傳。故使此方封守株柱不足怪也。師不聞乎？梁顧野王，太學之大博士也。周訪字源。出沒不定。故玉篇序云。有開春申君墓得其銘文。皆是隸字。撿春申君。是周代六國同時隸文。則吞併之日也。此國篆隸諸書尚有茫昧，寧知迦葉佛之事乎？非其耳目之所聞見也。

The rest of the argument follows that in the southern parts of Jambudvipa, a Sansrkit term corresponding to India, the same phonetic scripts are used (ie. where "speech and writing are the same"). Isolated geographically, the region of the Tang is instead "defended obstinately against change " and has maintained an ancient way of writing. It is at this point that the celestial being mentions scholars like Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519-581 CE), who, according to Daoxuan, graduated from the Imperial Academy, the highest educational institution of their time. Then, the celestial being turns to Gu Yewang's composition of a highly influential dictionary, the *Yupian* 玉篇, in 543. The original dictionary contained 16,917 headgraphs alongside a preface. Gu Yewang's strove

---

[95] The phrase translated as "defended obstinately against change" reads in the original Literary Sinitic as *shouzu* **守株**, which literally means "to guard a tree stump." The phrase refers to a passage in the Warring States Period philosopher Hanfeizi's work Five Vermins *Wudu* **五蠹**. The relevant passage is from the opening of the work as is as follows: "Among the people of Song (a state during the Warring States period) there were plowmen, and in the fields there were tree trunks. The rabbit ran into one, broke its neck, and died. Thereupon the farmer cast aside his plow and protected the tree stump, hoping to get the rabbit again, but the rabbit could not be gotten, and so the plowman was made into the laughing stock of all of Song. Desiring to govern the people of the world with the laws of the sage kings is the same kind of action as protecting those trunks." **宋人有耕田者，田中有株，兔走，觸株折頸而死，因釋其耒而守株，冀復得兔，兔不可復得，而身為宋國笑。今欲以先王之政，治當世之民，皆守株之類也。**The point being made is that the plowman's strategy of guarding the stump is a ridiculous and illogical way to try to obtain rabbits, since the chance of them running into the stump and dying is very low. The final line of reasoning is that trying to govern people today with the laws of the sage kings of the past is as misguided of a strategy as that of the plowman.

[96] Daoxuan, *Daoxuan Liishi gantong lu* **道宣律師感通錄**, T, 2107. Please note that this translation is a work in progress.

towards philological robustness in the compilation of the *Yupian* by referring to other commentators and adding glosses from older dictionaries alongside his own interpretations.[97]

Although the celestial being clearly considers Gu Yewang to be an accomplished scholar, he goes on to admit that even Gu had trouble when researching the origins or characters, "finding them to be inconclusive." The celestial being states that in the *Yupian's* preface inscriptions in clerical script were found in the tomb of Lord Chunshen 春申君, a military general and politician of the Warring States period (c. 475 – 221 BCE). Therefore, the celestial being posits that clerical script might have predated Qin unification and Li Si and instead been around during the Warring States Period, firmly going against the accepted narrative about script evolution in canonical texts like the *Shuowen jiezi*.

The celestial being then goes on to argue that "if even the seal and clerical scripts of this country are still obscure, how can one know about matters from Buddha Kāśyapa's time? It is not what one's ears and eyes have heard or seen." By invoking Gu and claiming that he could not determine the origins with characters, the celestial being tactfully employs Gu Yewang's authority to argue that the literati close to Daoxuan's time, accomplished though they were, still struggled to uncover the true meaning of texts.

What emerges so far is a sharp and beguiling contrast between Daoxuan's apparent clarity of deep time and confusion of the events of more recent history. Whereas it is obvious to the celestial being that clerical script in the form it is purported to assume at the time of Li Si existed during the time of Kāśyapa Buddha and in some proto-form during the time of the ancient Buddhas, more recent attempts to inquire into script evolution are less clear. Though seemingly contradictory at first, this dyad may in fact neatly encapsulate Daoxuan's double identity as both a Buddhist scholar and philological enthusiast. Clarity of the time of the ancient Buddhas and their deep, cosmic

[97] Considine, John, ed. "The Ancient World," 57.

connection to clerical script would open up a sanctioned space for Buddhism in a world of Confucian literati. Uncertainty and admission of philological troubles about the recent past would certify Daoxuan's active and committed role to the project of philology not merely to legitimate Buddhism but also because he identified himself with scholars like Gu Yewang who took great care to puzzle over the origins of Sinitic writing, admitting when the answers eluded them or when new information came to light like tomb inscriptions in service of the philological truth.

This entire section, then, is elegantly bookended by two instances of unearthing, and in doing so Daoxuan contrasts the irrefutable, materially verifiable origin of clerical script in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha with Gu Yewang's less enlightening exhumation. In the first instance, the digging up of the image of Prabhūtaratna Buddha during the Jin dynasty leads to immediate insights into the dating of clerical script if, as the celestial being contends in the previous question-and-answer exchange, the the fact that the image of Prabhūtaratna Buddha was first created during the type of Kāśyapa Buddha can be taken at face value. The recent excavation of Lord Chunshen's tomb—perhaps surprisingly—bears less fruit.

Cangjie and the Creation of Writing

The next question Daoxuan asks once again reiterates his doubt about clerical script's placement in history: "Now, west of the capital city, there is the Gaosi Earth Terrace. Folk tradition says this is the Terrace where Cangjie created writing. How can you say that clerical script existed in ancient times?" This time, Daoxuan references Cangjie, who is said to have observed bird tracks and was then moved to invent Sinitic characters after finding inspiration from the tracks.[98] The celestial being responds:

[98] Nicol, "'This is The Very Place!'," 216.

> The answer was: "Cangjie did add earth to build up this Terrace and created writing. As for observing bird tracks, this is not without basis. Moreover, the people in this land scarcely know the origins of what is said about Cangjie. Some say he was a minister of the Yellow Emperor, others say he was a prince of an ancient emperor. The bird track script changed over time, and now it is obsolete. There's no point in discussing such useless matters, so there is no need to further elaborate."
>
> 答云:蒼頡於此臺上增土造臺。觀鳥迹者非無其事。且蒼頡之傳, 此土罕知其源。或云:黃帝之臣。或云:古帝之王也。鳥迹之書時變一途, 今所絕有。無益之言, 不勞述也。

The celestial being clearly confirms that Cangjie did indeed invent writing and that he did so by observing the bird tracks. The insistence on the origins of Cangjie's inspirations resting on the observance of bird tracks supports the cosmological worldview that Miller initially outlined, whereby the universal pattern of nature (the bird tracks) are then reflected in logographic writing, imbuing a philosophical importance to Sinitic writing. But what can be known about Cangjie seems to end there, and the celestial being questions the particular origin and evolutionary trajectory of Cangjie's bird track script, finally advising that "there's no point in discussing such useless matters." Janine Nicol, who references this passage, considers the celestial being's answer as a kind of Buddhistic dismissal of discussion the origin of writing at all, stating "discussion of this matter was of no value" in reference to Cangjie.[99] But if we read into this passage the philological attitudes that Daoxuan has set up in the earlier passage regarding clerical script and Gu Yewang, we should not view the celestial being's point about refraining from discussing "useless matters" as a dismissive attitude toward the creation of writing nor its continued evolution.

Instead, we can read it as Daoxuan being philologically conservative and careful. That is to say, Daoxuan argues that the origin of writing has no clearly knowable origin, not that it doesn't matter at all. The bird tracks that inspired Cangjie's act of creation had long been trampled into

[99] Nicol, "'This is The Very Place!,'" 216.

nothingness, and moreover, the celestial being notes that the bird track script had been modified to the point of obsoletion. Conveniently, it may seem, the excavated image of Prabhūtaratna—replete with characters permanently inscribed in clerical script on its surface—becomes an appropriate locus for philological attention in the absence of concrete information about Cangjie's contribution to the history of writing. Read alongside the earlier exchanges in this passage, the expressed sentiment that discussing Cangjie's bird track script is useless is far from a dismissal of writing in general. Rather, Daoxuan makes an example out of Cangjie to remind his audience of the appropriate forms of evidence that can be adduced to make claims about the origin and evolution of writing.

Further support for Daoxuan's enthusiasm for philological rigor is found in another text attributed to Daoxuan written in 667 (the same year *Record of Miraculous Instruction* was written). In the *Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya* (*Shijia fangzhi* 釋迦方志), Daoxuan writes that "Cangjie, by the bird tracks, created the characters, but his writing system was incomplete." After this statement, Daoxuan explicitly references the *Shuowen jiezi* and relates it to his current situation, stating that "during the Han Dynasty, Xu Shen compiled the *Shuowen jiezi*. The characters were limited to 9,000, categorized and ordered. Now, gradually, the written language has reached 30,000 characters. This [writing system] thus evolves according to the individual and the era, formed through interpretation and association."[100] Here, Daoxuan clearly describes script evolution and how scholars over time make sense of the evolution of writing and how it occurs while also making explicit that he has read the *Shuowen jiezi*. In the next section, this chapter will argue that reading Daoxuan's texts in light of his knowledge of and reference to the *Shuowen jiezi* bolsters the argument that Daoxuan's weaving of Buddhism into the history of writing relies on existing Sinitic philological tools and frameworks.

[100] Daoxuan, *Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya*, T2088. "During the Han Dynasty, Xu Shen compiled the *Shuowen Jiezi*. The characters were limited to 9,000, categorized and ordered. Now, gradually, the written language has reached 30,000 characters" **[漢時許慎方出說文。字止九千以類而序。今漸被世文言三萬。]**

The *Shuowen jiezi* as a Temporal Blueprint

The postface of the *Shuowen jiezi* records the following about Cangjie: "Cangjie, scribe of the Yellow Emperor, on looking at the tracks of the feet of birds and animals, realizing that the patterns and forms were distinguishable, started to create graphs, so that all kinds of professions could be regulated, and all people could be kept under scrutiny."[101] Across the entire dictionary, Cangjie is associated with ancient script (*guwen* 古文), which was then modified into large seal script (*dazhuan* 大篆) the end of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-771 BCE), even further modified by Li Si into small seal script (*xiaozhuan* 小篆) during the Qin dynasty.[102] How, then, can we reconcile Daoxuan's statement that clerical script existed in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha (and in fact arose during an even earlier time period) with the widely accepted (although undoubtedly no less thoroughly mythologized) chronology of the *Shuowen jiezi*?

A comment of Lu Deming about the *Shuowen jiezi* from the *Jingdian shiwen* may prove instructive in this regard. Lu Deming states that for most of the entries in the *Shuowen jiezi* Xu Shen has used "clerical script to write out the *guwen* [structure]."[103] Thus, from the perspective of a nearly contemporaneous Tang scholar, clerical script could be used to represent the *graphemic structures* of earlier forms of Sinitic writing even if the overall appearance of the character was different. Similarly, when Daoxuan writes that clerical script existed in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, it seems plausible that what he really could have meant is that there existed at that early time characters whose forms (more specifically, their combination of graphemes) would not be significantly altered in the course of their transition into clerical script after unification under the Qin.

---

[101] Xu, *Shuowen jiezi xu*, trans. K.L Thern, Postface of the Shuo-wen Chieh-tzu, 8-9.
[102] Note how this chronology differs slightly from Daoxuan's reference to "the clerical script of Li Si." Refer back to pg. 42, footnote 91 for a clarification.
[103] Lu Deming qtd. in Timothy O'Neil. "Xu Shen's Scholarly Agenda: A New Interpretation of the Postface of the *Shuowen jiezi*," (Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 133, No. 3, July-September 2013), 420.

This interpretation is largely consistent with the internal logic of the *Shuowen jiezi* and its desire to recover the structure of *guwen*. Timothy O'Neill, drawing heavily the on *Commentary on the Shuowen jiezi* (*Shuowen jie zi zhu* 說文解字注) written by Qing philologist Duan Yucai (1735-1815), argues that the *Shuowen jiezi* is designed in order "to prove that the changes in the writing systems are historically and graphemically observable, and consequently that the original intentions of the sages who used *guwen* to write the classics are literally recoverable by working backwards through the reforms and changes in writing to a proper understanding of how they classified and used their words in the *guwen* writing system."[104] In many ways, Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction* reflects this exact process of "working backwards," inserting into the orthodox story Buddhist figures like Buddha Kāśyapa, and retroactively calling clerical script anything that underwent minimal changes from this time until the maturation of clerical script proper during the Three Qin period, a fact which Daoxuan concedes in the first exchange examined in this chapter. But whereas the *Shuowen jiezi* takes Cangjie's invention of *guwen* as its unambiguous launching pad, Daoxuan refuses to say anything concrete about the system of writing Cangjie devised even though he acknowledges this ancient origin of writing, preferring to figure Kāśyapa Buddha as the earliest time point about which he will make bold assertions (compare Daoxuan's unhedged claim of clerical script in the time of Kāśyapa with his more ambiguous references to "the rise of clerical script" (*lishu zhi xing* 隸書之興) in an earlier time period). This may suggest that Daoxuan actually wishes to present himself as more philologically careful than some of his Cofnucian philological predecessors, while also highlighting that his ultimate purpose is not deciphering the classics as is for them. Therefore, for Daoxuan it is not as pressing to actually uncover the original meanings of the classics but rather adapting methods of philological reasoning towards his own purposes. At the same time, Daoxuan's relative muteness about the time of Cangjie leaves a blank space in his account that he will attempt to remedy. The

[104] Timothy O'Neil, "Xu Shen's Scholarly Agenda," 413.

intricate strategy Daoxuan employs in to pay his respects to Cangjie without saying anything concrete about *guwen* is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Let us return briefly, however, to Daoxuan's quotation in the *Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya* about the proliferation in the number of characters from the time of Xu Shen's compilation of the *Shuowen jiezi* in the Han dynasty and his own time. In Timothy Felt's interpretation of this passage, Daoxuan's comment can be taken unproblematically as "evidence of the degenerate nature of the Chinese language" because Daoxuan points to the language's "mushrooming vocabulary."[105] He goes on to argue that "thus, because China's language was not set, nor was it divine, it was just as peripheral as that of the Western Barbarians. According to Buddhists, the Indic language, not Chinese, was the standard of civilization for the world, and India was the single point on earth where men and gods spoke the same language."[106] Although it may be true that Buddhists in general revered and centered the Indic language—Sengyou's interpretation of the moral degradation of phonographic script and Daoxuan's understanding of translation in chapter one being the clearest expression of this sentiment—it is not an accurate leap to presume that Buddhists in the Sinographic Cosmopolis all held this vision of a "degenerate" Chinese language as irremediable, or otherwise beyond the remit of meaningful engagement and investigation. Felt once again reveals a tendency in the field to dismiss Daoxuan's troubles with the messiness of language as a Buddhist's scorning of language while ignoring the fact that the corruption and unchecked proliferation of character forms was not only an explicit site of intervention of Sinitic philology as expressed in the *Shuowen jiezi*, but often *the most important* motivation for the practice of Sinitic philology writ large.

In summary, Daoxuan's references to Cangjie and Li Si already indicate Daoxuan's engagement with the temporal blueprint of the *Shuowen Jiezii.* More than that, Daoxuan takes the

[105] Jonathan D. Felt. "De-Centering the Middle Kingdom: the Argument for Indian Centrality within Chinese Discourses from the 3rd to the 7th Century," (Open Access Publications from the University of California, 2010), 83.
[106] Felt, "Decentering the Middle Kingdom," 9.

chronological skeleton of the *Shuowen jiezi* and reformats it to incorporate Buddhist figures like Kāśyapa Buddha. The next section will continue to add to this temporal blueprint as Daoxuan offers additional Buddhist insertions into the evolution of writing that Xu Shen initially mapped out during the Han dynasty. It will also add a spatial component as Daoxuan reimagines the place where Cangjie invented writing, the earthen Gaosi Terrace, into a Buddhist sacred site.

Cangjie's Terrace as a Spatial Blueprint

The rest of *Record of Miraculous Instruction* takes on a narrative style, where the celestial being builds on the original claim that Cangjie's Terrace was the place where writing was created and introduces a rich and layered story involving King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. 976-922 BCE), Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (d. 621 BCE), and other Sinitic protagonists that participate in the active reshaping of the Cangjie's Terrace—which comes to be referred to as the Gaosi Terrace—into a place of deep Buddhistic importance. To do this, the another celestial being, Lu Xuanchang 陸玄暢, comes to Daoxuan and claims that he was born in heaven during the time of King Mu of Zhou, which was also originally during the time of Kāśyapa Buddha.[107] Once again, Kaysapa is enveloped into a Sinitic timeline. Lu states that "Whatever is asked about the Gaosi Terrace, its origin [is in] Kāśyapa Buddha." Gaosi Terrace is the contemporary site, geographically contiguous with the Terrace where Cangjie created writing introduced in the previous exchange.[108] The immediate association between the Gaosi Terrace and Kāśyapa Buddha, however, only first becomes apparent with an intermediary Sinitic protagonist.

[107] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107 **[弟子周穆王時初生在天。本是迦葉佛時。]**
[108] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "Now, west of the capital city, there is the earthen Gaosi Terrace. Folk tradition says this is the Terrace where Cangjie created writing." **[今京城西高四土臺。俗諺云：是蒼頡造書臺。]**

In the following passage, Lu discusses how King Mu became a follower of two disciples of the Buddha, Manjusri[109] and Maudgalyāyana,[110] who "came and transformed King Mu."[111] Crucially, a magician "revealed numinously to King Mu the Gaosi Terrace."[112] Now, however, with the knowledge that the Gaosi Terrace was revealed in a vision to King Mu of Zhou, Kāśyapa Buddha is linked syllogistically to the Gaosi Terrace in the following manner: Kāśyapa Buddha existed at the same time as King Mu of Zhou, and King Mu of Zhou had a vision of the Gaosi Terrace, so therefore there is an immediate association between Kāśyapa Buddha and the Gaosi Terrace.

This initial line of syllogistic reasoning connects Kāśyapa Buddha with the Gaosi Terrace with King Mu of Zhou as the shared term, but Daoxuan goes a step further and completes the triangle when he establishes a direct connection between Kāśyapa and the Gaosi Terrace. In the following line of the narrative, Lu Xuanchuang additionally reveals that the Gaosi Terrace is "where Kāśyapa Buddha expounded the Dharma,"[113] thus linking Kāśyapa Buddha to the physical site of the Gaosi Terrace without a go-between. The story continues that King Mu, on top of the Terrace, created a three-assembly Dharma hall (*sanhui Daochang* 三會道場), which is a space meant for Buddhist practice or teachings.[114] Duke Mu of Qin, another famous Sinitic figure renowned for his role in helping to expand the territory of the Qin state during the Zhou dynasty, then arrives on the scene. After not recognizing a stone Buddha statue's religious importance and casting it aside in a horse stable, the "deity became angry and caused the Duke to fall ill."[115] After the Duke asks his

---

[109] Manjusri is the Bodhisattva that personifies supreme wisdom, usually depicted seated on a lion or on a Lotus, and is the patron deity of Mount Wutai **五台山** in Shanxi Province.

[110] Maudgalyāyana (along with Śāriputra) was one of the Buddha's closest male disciples.

[111] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "The reign of King Mu of Zhou arrived. Manjusri and Maudgalyāyana came and transformed King Mu. [King Mu] followed them" **[至周穆王時。文殊目連來化穆王。穆王從之]**

[112] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. **[化人示穆王高四臺。]**

[113] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. **[是迦葉佛說法處。]**

[114] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "Thereupon [King Mu] created a three-assembly Dharma hall **[因造三會道場。]**

[115] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "The time of Duke Mu of Qin arrived. Fufeng (see Appendix A) acquired a stone Buddha. Duke Mu did not recognize [it]. [Duke Mu] abandoned [the statue] in the middle of the horse

attendant You Yu to interpret a dream in which he is severely reprimanded by Shangdi, You Yu explains that he had been reading ancient texts (*gushu* 古書) which revealed that during King Mu's time a magician had come to the this land and said "'this is a Buddha deity.'"[116]

The ancient text You Yu recounts to Duke Mu ends with the construction of a separate terrace, "the Zhongtian Terrace on Mount Zhongnan," as well as a shrine to Buddha deity on Cangjie's Terrace, now known as the Three Assembly Dharma Hall.[117] Returning focus to the present moment, You Yu asks Duke Mu: "Is the Duke's current affliction not caused by the Buddha deity?" Duke Mu agrees that his disrespect and disposal of the Buddha statue was likely the cause of his illness after hearing about the historical and religious significance of the deity.[118] He then found the statue and "placed it in a pure and peaceful location," but the offerings he gave to the statue were not of the right kind, and so the statue was removed by a group of unspecified celestial beings.[119]

---

stable. This statue [of the Buddha] became filthy and contaminated. The deity became angry and caused the Duke to fall ill."
[至秦穆公時。扶風獲一石佛，穆公不識。棄馬坊中。穢污此像。神瞋令公染患。]

[116] "The Duke dreamt of traveling to the Supreme Diety, where he was severely reproached. Upon waking he asked his attendant You Yu [about his dream]**.** He replied, saying: "I have been reading the ancient texts When King Mu (of Zhou) reigned as king there was a transformed person who came to this land and said: 'this is a Buddha deity.'" [**公又夢遊上帝。極被責數。覺問侍臣由余。答云: 臣讀古書。周穆王時有化人來此土云: 是佛神。**] The magician (*huaren* **化人**, lit. "transformed person") is a reference to a version the legend of King Mu of Zhou presented in a Daoist text, the *Liezi* **列子**. In the *Liezi*, King Mu is visited by a magician who then guides him on a spiritual journey to various Daoist abodes. In Buddhist adaptations of the story of King Mu presented in the *Liezi,* the magician is associated with the Buddha himself. Jülch, Thomas. "The Buddhist Re-Interpretation of the Legends Surrounding King Mu of Zhou." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 4 (2010): 625–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044575.

[117] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "[King Mu] constructed the Zhongtian Terrace on Mount Zhongnan, and it was over one thousand *chi* (see Appendix A) tall. The foundation and foot [of the Terrace] are still visible. [King Mu] also constructed a shrine to the Buddha deity on Cangjie's Terrace, and it was called the Three Assembly Dharma Hall." **[於終南山造中天臺，高千餘尺。基趾見在。又於蒼頡臺造神廟，名三會道場。]**

[118] Is the Duke's current affliction not caused by the Buddha deity?" **[公今所患，殆非佛神為之耶? 公聞大怖。語由余曰: 吾近獲一石人。衣冠非今所制。棄之馬坊。將非此是佛神耶?]**

[119] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "The Duke took the statue of the Buddha, bathed it, and placed it in a pure and peaceful location. The statue of the Buddha thereupon emitted light. The Duke was again frightened. He regarded [the light] as the wide-eyed glare of the deity. The Duke sacrificed three animals as an offering to the statue, and the sundry deities lifted up the statue and discarded it in a far away place." **[公取像澡浴安清淨處。像遂放光。公又怖。謂神瞋也。宰三牲以祭之，諸神擎棄之遠處。]**

It is unclear what exactly You Yu is referring to when he talks about reading the ancient texts, but this is in some ways irrelevant. What is important to register is that this part of the story corroborates the reimagined history of King Mu that Daoxuan outlined just a few lines prior, creating a framework of internal logic and fact checking for the new historical links Daoxuan is fabricating. In other words, Daoxuan begins to place historical witnesses inside the narrative who are able to verify certain associations between figures and locales just as he finishes linking them together. At the same time, reading the narrative of Duke Mu as a conversion story against the earlier transformation of King Mu rehearses Daoxuan's ongoing argument for cycles of deeper layers of history characterized by clarity and immediacy, and a more recent layers of history where the state of things is more confused and disorderly. Daoxuan confidently dates clerical script to the time of Kāśyapa Buddha but deems the findings of Gu Yewang's more recent philological investigations inconclusive. Similarly, King Mu's conversion to Buddhism is accomplished practically within the same breath as his first mention within the text,[120] whereas Duke Mu's conversion story is much more torturous, involving several wrong turns and missteps. Daoxuan seems to buy into a version of Sinitic history that oscillates between moments of standardization and entropic dissolution, whether the latter periods correspond to pre-standardized world Qin state during the Zhou dynasty or Gu Yewang's world language diversification.

Eventually, Duke Mu seeks to construct a new statue—now knowing both the significance of making an image of the Buddha and the course of ritual action it demands—just as King Mu had with the Three Assembly Dharma Hall on the Gaosi Terrace. He asks You Yu about which craftsmen helped King Mu accomplish such a task, who then pointed him to an 180 year-old person

[120] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "The reign of King Mu of Zhou arrived. Manjusri and Maudgalyāyana came and transformed King Mu. [King Mu] followed them." **[至周穆王時。文殊目連來化穆王。穆王從之]**

in a village south of the Terrace, eventually renamed as the Gaosi Terrace, named Wang An 王安.[121] Wang An confirmed that he had personally witnessed the construction of King Mu's Three Assembly Dharma Hall by four brothers. Wang An aids Duke Mu in finding the brothers "so they may jointly construct [a statute.]"[122] After the statue is built Duke Mu is "pleased greatly and rewarded them."[123] The celestial narrator of the entire story Lu states that the brothers "obtained wealth, and also generated moral merit" and that the terrace known as Gaosi Terrace was finally constructed on the original Cangjie site and named after the brothers who built it (the eldest brother had the name Gaosi).[124] Because of the introduction of Wang An and the brothers as characters in the story, Daoxuan's history now has built from the inside out a network of Sinitic protagonists, both well-known and powerful as well as lesser known and ordinary, that have all bought into and contributed toward Daoxuan's manufacturing of a spatiotemporal world in which Sinitic writing and Buddhism are mutually constitutive.

To review the entire story, Daoxuan first transforms a famous Sinitic ruler in history into a follower of the Buddha. Then, disciples of the Buddha provide King Mu with new information about the Terrace that has already been addressed for its original significance as the birthplace of Sinitic writing. Finally, he consecrates the Terrace, making it into a sacred Buddhist site. Many scholars like Robson, who posited the argument about Buddhism's dislocation from sites in India

---

[121] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "Duke Mu and You Yu then obtained an old person in the village to the south of the Gaosi Terrace. His name was Wang An. He was 180 years old.

[122] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. He said: 'Once in the Three Assembly Dharma hall I saw the construction [of the temple]. Now I am old and I am without strength to work. Where I live is to the north of the village, there are four brothers. Please allow me to seek them out so that they may jointly construct [a statue].'" [自云: 曾於三會道場見造之。臣今老年，無力能作。所住村北，有兄弟四人。曾於道場內。為諸匠執作。請追共造。]

[123] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. [公悅，大賞賚之。]

[124] Daoxuan, *Record of Miraculous Instruction*, T, 2107. "Those people [i.e. the brothers] obtained wealth, and also generated moral merit. On an earthen terrace [i.e. Cangjie's original site] they constructed a multistoried tower three hundred *chi* tall. The people of the time called it the Gaosi Terrace. Some people call it the Gaosi Tiered Pavillion. The [brothers] had the surname Gao, and the first name of the eldest brother was Si. Some say that it is named after the four brothers who built it together. Others say it comes from the first name of the eldest brother. Hence, Gaosi's name up until now has been the name [for the structure]." [彼人得財，並造功德。於土臺上造重閣。高三百尺。時人號為高四臺。或曰高四樓。其人姓高，大者名四。或曰兄弟四人同立故也。或取大兄之名，因之名樓。故高四之名，至今稱也。]

and relocated into a new "cosmic no-place," have sufficiently addressed how this tries to prove an early existence of Buddhism on Sinitic soil so as to make the religious practice of Buddhism far away from its revered origins in India more legitimate. However, this relocation is clearly not a "no-place" and Daoxuan probably would not feel as though one could or should "establish connections with the Buddha at any time in any place" given the considerable craft behind his fusion of various locales, people, and periods of time.[125] For all of its imported Buddhistic significance, the Gaosi Terrace is crucially first referenced in connection with Cangjie and the creation of writing; the long-winded narrative that follows thus must be read as sprouting from this original association. Daoxuan's construction of new history for the Gaosi Terrace—and a narrative that self-consciously affirms its historical claims as it lays them out—is evidence of his considerable dedication to the platform on which Cangjie invented writing as a place worthy of veneration and historical reworking. In light of the earlier discussions of clerical script, Cangjie, Li Si, and Gu Yewang, the relocation of Buddha Kāśyapa on the Terrace has a marked specificity and significance that cannot be overstated within Daoxuan's reimagining of Sinitic history.

Conclusion

The spatiotemporal journey Daoxuan takes the reader on, though at first glance seemingly riddled with contradictions and a hodge-podge of historical figures and terms, is revealed to be incredibly sophisticated and clever, selecting characters, locales, and moments in time that can carefully serve his dual commitment toward Buddhism and Literary Sinitic. The identities that a Sinitic Buddhist literatus touts requires reconciling a myriad of antitheses: reconciling Sanskrit phonography with Literary Sinitic logography; reconciling Buddhistic political power with Buddhist

[125] Robson, "Buddhist Sacred Geography," qtd. in Brinckmann, *The Old Buddhist Pagoda*, 5.

philosophy; reconciling the primacy of the Buddha's word with the prestige and cosmological importance of the written cosmopolitan; and reconciling the ever-changing concerns of philological investigations into writing and language with timeless religious doctrine. As Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction* shows, this reconciliation is no easy feat. At least for him, bridging some of these chasms required innovative manipulations of time and space.

Chapter one analyzed how the "renewed interest in antiquity" impacted philological texts written by Confucian literati. In light of Daoxuan's *Record of Miraculous Instruction,* perhaps this interest in antiquity takes on a unique valence for Sinitic Buddhism. For Sinitic philologists such as the author of the *Jingdian shiwen* Lu Deming, this was a renewed interest because it restored and revitalized commitments of past Sinitic scholars like *Shuowen jiezi's* Xu Shen. For their peers, Sinitic Buddhists, who were relatively new to the scene, as it were, their relationship to the Sinographic Cosmopolis differed in the sense that any interest in philology, Sinitic writing, or the classical past was not renewed but newly imagined. Therefore, part of the significance of Daoxuan's arguments are that they contributed to a fundamentally *new* interest into antiquity, requiring him to piece together his formal education as Sinitic literati and teachings from Buddhist doctrine into a reimagined history that, at its core, still cared about the act of reimagining history in the first place. "We are also able to see a coherent history of this spirit of classical revival in part because its Tang participants actively wrote and rewrote that history, identifying and praising their most valued writers and texts often over the course of the dynasty," Shields writes.[126] As shown in the third chapter, Daoxuan's innovative process of slotting Buddhism into this history required all of the same tasks: an active rewriting of history, praising valued writers, and citing revered texts.

There is no doubt that, as Mair argues, many aspects of Buddhism probably motivated what existed of vernacularization in China in spite of the cultural and linguistic forces at play in the

[126] Shields, "Classicisms in Chinese Literary Culture: Six Dynasties through Tang."

Sinographic Cosmopolis. On one level, this thesis has undermined Mair's generalization by providing ample evidence for many Buddhists' genuine orientation toward the cosmopolitan. On another level, Daoxuan's text goes above and beyond obeying the cosmopolitan and actively and impressively reshapes it according to his own personal religious and philological values. That this text was written in the year that Daoxuan died, one of his last texts to talk about Buddhism after a prolific career during the Tang, is a profoundly symbolic statement on how decades of participation in the cosmopolitan as a practicing Buddhist may have ended with Daoxuan coming to terms with and reflecting on the seeming impossibility of his life as a Sinitic Buddhist and the simple fact that he managed anyway to live with all of its contradictions.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Daoxuan lüshi gantong lu 道宣律師感通錄 (*The Record of Miraculous Instruction Given to Vinaya Master Daoxuan*), compiled by Daoxuan in 667, 1 juan (T52 No. 2107). Translated by Ann Vettikkal and Andreas Welch.

Huhan yijing yinyi tongyi ji 胡漢譯經文字音義同異記 (A Record of Similarities and Differences in Pronunciation and Meaning When Translating Scriptures From Western Languages to

Chinese), Sengyou. Translated by Daniel Boucher, "Buddhism and Language in Early-Medieval China." (Hawai'i Reader of Traditional Chinese Culture; 2005), 265-9.

Jingdian Shiwen 經典釋文 ("Preface to the Textual Explications of the Classics & Canon"), Lu Deming, translated by John D. Phan, *Lost Tongues of the Red River: Annamese Middle Chinese & the Origins of the Vietnamese Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center Press, 2025)

Renwang banruo boluomi jing 仁王般若波羅蜜經 [Karunikarājaprajñāpāramitā sūtra], translated by Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什. T8, no. 245. Translated by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Sifen lü bhikṣu han zhu jieben shu 四分律比丘含注戒本疏. "Commentary on the Annotated Prātimokṣa of Sifen Lü." Daoxuan. W62/ X39.714. Translated by Ang Zou.

Shijia fangzhi 釋迦方志 (Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya), Daoxuan (T2088). Translated by Ann Vettikkal and Andreas Welch.

Shuowen jiezi xu 說文解字序 (Postface to the Shuowen jiezi), Xu, Shen, Translated by K.L. Thern, No. 1. Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, University of Wisconsin, 1966.

Secondary Sources

Boltz, William. "Early Chinese Writing." In *The World's Writing Systems*, edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, 191–99. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

———.The Origin and Impact of the Early Chinese Writing System, American Oriental Society, 1994.

Boucher, Daniel, 'Translation', in Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature, Oxford Handbooks (2017; online edn, Oxford

Academic, 2017), https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.013.32.

———. "On Hu and Fan Again: The Transmission of 'Barbarian' Manuscripts to China." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): 7–45.

Bruce Rusk, Anatoly Detwyler, Christopher Nugent, Xiao Liu, and Jack W. Chen. 2021. Literary Information in China : A History. New York: Columbia University Press. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=2912118&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Buswell, Robert E., Jr., and Donald S. Lopez Jr., eds. "Nirvana." In *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 597–598. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Campany, Robert F., Mingfei Shi, Livia Kohn, and Shoucheng Yan. "Taoist Resources: Volume 4, Number 1," 1993. https://hdl.handle.net/2022/22791.

Cheung, Martha P. Y., ed. *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation, Volume One: From Earliest Times to the Buddhist Project*. Advisory editor Lin Wusun. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2006.

Considine, John, ed. "The Ancient World." In *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography*, 52. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Coulmas, Florian. *Writing Systems: An Introduction to Their Linguistic Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

de Bary, Wm. Theodore, and Irene Bloom, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Felt, David Jonathan. "De-Centering the Middle Kingdom: the Argument for Indian Centrality within Chinese Discourses from the 3rd to the 7th Century." (2010).

Handel, Zev. *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaptation of the Chinese Script*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2019) doi: https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1163/9789004352223.

Henderson, John B. Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Heming Yong, and Jing Peng. 2008. Chinese Lexicography : A History From 1046 BC to AD 1911. Oxford, UK: OUP Oxford. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=271277&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Hirakawa, Akira. *Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary*. *Lingyou hui* 霊友会, 1997.

Jung, Ghichul. "'Natural Land Is Too Weak to Sustain the Great Dharma': Daoxuan's Commentary on the Sīmā and Medieval Chinese Monasticism." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 42 (2019): 265-314.

Jülch, Thomas. "The Buddhist Re-Interpretation of the Legends Surrounding King Mu of Zhou." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 4 (2010): 625–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044575.

Keightley, David N. "Early Chinese Writing." In *The World's Writing Systems*, edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, 191–99. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Landry, Nelson Elliot. "Daoxuan and the Medieval Chinese Encounter with Relics and Images." *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–55. https://dx.doi.org/10.15239/hijbs.05.01.01.

Lurie, David B. *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.

Mair, Victor H., Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, and Paul Rakita Goldin, eds. *Hawai'i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.

———."Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages." The Journal of Asian Studies 53, no. 3 (1994): 707–51. https://doi.org/10.2307/2059728.

———.*T'ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1989.

Makeham, John. Transmitters and Creators: Chinese Commentators and Commentaries on the Analects. Electronic resource. Harvard East Asian Monographs 228. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003. http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio16090537.

Miller, Roy Andrew. "The Far East." In *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 13, part 2, edited by Thomas Sebeok, 1213–64. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

Nicol, Janine. "'This is The Very Place!': Shi Daoxuan 釋道宣 (c. 596–667) and The Creation of Buddhist Sacred Sites in China." East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine 54, no. 2 (November 2022): 200-237. https://doi.org/10.1163/26669323-bja10003.

Nienhauser, William H., ed. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Nylan, Michael. The Five "Confucian" Classics. Electronic resource. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14079814.001.

Ollett, Andrew. *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

Phan, John D. *Lost Tongues of the Red River: Annamese Middle Chinese & the Origins of the Vietnamese Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center Press, 2025.

———. “Rebooting the Vernacular in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam.” In Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014) doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004279278_005

Pollock, Sheldon. "Philology in Three Dimensions." Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies 5, no. 4 (2014): 398-4131.

———. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Sebeok, Thomas A., ed. "The Far East." In *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 13, part 2 (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 1213–64.

Shinohara, Koichi. "Buddhism, Patronage, and Power." In *Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions*, edited by Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, 1–25. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003.

———."The Kasāya Robe of the Past Buddha Kāśyapa in the Miraculous Instruction Given to the Vinaya Master Daoxuan (596~667)." Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal 13, no. 2 (2000): 299-367.

Shields, Anna, 'Classicisms in Chinese Literary Culture: Six Dynasties through Tang', in Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, Oxford Handbooks (2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017), https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.013.26.

Soothill, William Edward, and Lewis Hodous, eds. *A dictionary of Chinese Buddhist terms: with Sanskrit and English equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali index*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1977.

Vermeersch, Sem 2008. *The Power of the Buddhas: The Politics of Buddhism during the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

———. "Who Is Legitimating Whom? On Justifying Buddhism's Place in the Body Politic". In Buddhism in Central Asia I, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020) doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004417731_003.

Wagner, Robin Beth. "Buddhism, Biography and Power: A Study of Daoxuan's Continued Lives of Eminent Monks." PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995.

Weinstein, Stanley. *Buddhism under the T'ang*. Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Wilkinson, Endymion Porter. *Chinese History: A New Manual*. Rev. ed. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 84. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012.

Wu, Shaowei. "A Study on the Literacy Rate of Buddhist Sangha in the Tang Dynasty." Religions 15, no. 3 (March 2024): 306. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030306.

Zou, Ang. *The Life of Daoxuan : According to Others and His Own Words*. Ghent University, 2018.

Zürcher, Erik and Jonathan A. Silk. *Buddhism in China : Collected Papers of Erik Zürcher*. Sinica Leidensia. Leiden: Brill, 2013. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=878184&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Translation of an excerpt of Daoxuan's *The Record of Miraculous Instruction Given to Vinaya Master Daoxuan* (*Daoxuan lüshi gantong lu* 道宣律師感通錄)

余問:多寶隸書 出於三秦之代。如何迦葉佛時已有神書也？答曰:秦李斯隸書, 此乃近代遠承。隸書之興。興於古佛之世。見今南州四面千有餘州。莊嚴閻浮一萬百有餘國。文字言音同。今唐國但以海路遼遠。動數十萬里。譯者莫傳。故使此方封守株柱不足怪也。師不聞乎。梁顧野王。太學之大博士也。周訪字源。出沒不定。故玉篇序云。有開春申君墓得其銘文。皆

是隸字。撿春申君。是周代六國同時隸文。則吞併之日也。此國篆隸諸書尚有茫昧。寧知迦葉佛之事乎。非其耳目之所聞見也。

I asked: The clerical script forms of the characters 'duo' and 'bao' emerged during the Three Qin period. How could there have been divine writing already in the time of Buddha Kāśyapa?' The answer was: 'The clerical script of Li Si of Qin is a recent inheritance of a distant tradition. The rise of clerical script occurred in the time of ancient Buddhas. Now in the southern regions, across over a thousand prefectures, adorning over ten thousand countries of Jambudvipa, the writing and the sounds of speech are the same.[127] Today in the Tang, due to the separation by vast sea routes of hundreds of thousands of *li*, so translators have not transmitted this. Therefore, it is not surprising that this region is defended obstinately against change.[128] Haven't you heard? Gu Yewang of Liang, a great scholar of the Imperial Academy, extensively researched the origins of characters, finding them to be inconclusive. Thus, the preface of the Yupian states that when opening the tomb of Lord Chunshen, inscriptions were found, and they were all in clerical script. Examining Lord Chunshen's time, this shows that the Six States period of Zhou simultaneously used clerical script, concurrent with the time of their annexation. If even the seal and clerical scripts of this country are still obscure, how can one know about matters from Buddha Kāśyapa's time? It is not what one's ears and eyes have heard or seen.'"

又問:今京城西高四土臺。俗諺云:是蒼頡造書臺。如何云隸字古時已有?答云:蒼頡於此臺上增土造臺。觀鳥迹者非無其事。且蒼頡之傳,此土罕知其源。或云:黃帝之臣。或云:古帝之王也。鳥迹之書時變一途,今所絕有。無益之言,不勞述也。又有天人。姓陸名玄暢來謁云:弟子周穆王時初生在天,本是迦葉佛時。天為通化。故用暫現。所問高四臺者,其本迦葉佛。於此第三會說法度人。至周穆王時。文殊目連來化穆王。穆王從之。即列子所謂化人是也。化人示穆王高四臺。是迦葉佛說法處。因造三會道場。至秦穆公時。扶風獲一石佛,穆公不識。棄之馬坊中。穢污此像。神瞋令公染患。公又夢遊上帝。極被責數。覺問侍臣由余。答云:臣讀古書。周穆王時有化人來此土云:是佛神。穆王信之。於終南山造中天臺,高千餘尺。基趾見在。又於蒼頡臺造神廟,名三會道場。公今所患,殆非佛神為之耶?公聞大怖。語由余曰:吾近獲一石人。衣冠非今所制。棄之馬坊。將非此是佛神耶?由余聞往視之。對曰:

[127] The Southern regions of Jambudvipa refers to the region of the Indian subcontinent where Buddhism prevailed. See Nicol, "The Creation of Buddhist Sites in China," 215.

[128] The phrase translated as "defended obstinately against change" reads as *shouzu* **守株**, which literally means "to guard a stump." The phrase refers to a passage in the Warring States Period philosopher Hanfeizi's work Five Vermins *Wudu* 五蠹. The relevant passage is from the opening of the work as is as follows: "Among the people of Song (a state during the Warring States period) there were plowmen, and in the fields there were tree trunks. The rabbit ran into one, broke its neck, and died. Thereupon the farmer cast aside his plow and protected the tree stump, hoping to get the rabbit again, but the rabbit could not be gotten, and so the plowman was made into the laughing stock of all of Song. Desiring to govern the people of the world with the laws of the sage kings is the same kind of action as protecting those trunks." **宋人有耕田者,田中有株,兔走,觸株折頸而死,因釋其耒而守株,冀復得兔,兔不可復得,而身為宋國笑。今欲以先王之政,治當世之民,皆守株之類也。**The point being made is that the plowman's strategy of guarding the stump is a ridiculous and illogical way to try to obtain rabbits, since the chance of them running into the stump and dying is very low. The final line of reasoning is that trying to govern people today with the laws of the sage kings of the past is as misguided of a strategy as that of the plowman.

此真佛神也。公取像澡浴安清淨處。像遂放光。公又怖。謂神瞋也。宰三牲以祭之，諸神擎棄之遠處。公又大怖。以問由余。余答云: 臣聞。佛神清潔不進酒肉。愛重物命，如護一子。所有供養燒香而已。所可祭祀餅果之屬。公大悅造像，絕於工人。又問由余。余答曰：昔穆王造寺。側應有工匠。遂於高四臺南村內得一老人。姓王名安。年百八十。自云: 曾於三會道場見造之。臣今老年，無力能作。所住村北，有兄弟四人。曾於道場內，為諸匠執作。請追共造。依言作之，成一銅像。相好圓備。公悅，大賞賚之。彼人得財，並造功德。於土臺上造重閣。高三百尺。時人號為高四臺。或曰高四樓。其人姓高，大者名四。或曰兄弟四人同立故也。或取大兄之名，因之名樓。故高四之名，至今稱也。

There are also celestial beings (deva). Lu Xuanchang came to pay respects, saying: "I, the disciple, was born in heaven during the time of King Mu of Zhou. This was originally during the time of Kāśyapa Buddha. Whatever is asked about the Gaosi Terrace, its origin [is in] Kāśyapa Buddha.Upon this the Dharma is spoken to guide the people at the third assembly. The reign of King Mu of Zhou arrived. Manjusri[129] and Maudgalyāyana[130] came and transformed King Mu. King Mu followed them. This is what Liezi[131] refers to as "the transformation of people." The magician revealed numinously to King Mu the Gaosi Terrace. This is the place where Kāśyapa Buddha expounded the Dharma. Thereupon [King Mu] created a three-assembly[132] Dharma hall. The time of Duke Mu of Qin[133] arrived. Fufeng[134] acquired a stone Buddha. Duke Mu did not recognize [it].[135] [Duke Mu] abandoned [the statue] in the middle of the horse stable. This statue [of the Buddha] became filthy and contaminated. The deity became angry and caused the Duke to fall ill. The Duke dreamt of traveling to the Supreme Diety, where he was severely reproached. Upon waking he asked his attendant You Yu [about his dream]**.** He replied, saying: "I have been reading the ancient texts. When King Mu (of Zhou) reigned as king there was a magician who came to this land and said: 'this is a Buddha deity.' King Mu trusted him. He constructed the Zhongtian Terrace on Mount Zhongnan, and it was over one thousand *chi*[136] tall. The foundation and foot [of the Terrace] are still visible. [King Mu] also constructed a shrine to the Buddha deity on Cangjie's Terrace, and it was called the Three Assembly Dharma Hall. Is the Duke's current affliction not caused by the Buddha deity?" The Duke heard this and was greatly frightened. He spoke to You Yu[137] saying: "I recently obtained a stone person. Its clothing and hat (crown) are not those which are currently made. I abandoned it in the horse stable. Might it not be that this is the Buddha deity?" When You Yu heard this he went to see it. [You Yu] replied saying: "This is the authentic Buddha deity." The Duke took the statue of the Buddha, bathed it, and placed it in a pure and peaceful location. The statue of the

[129] Manjusri is the Bodhisattva that personifies supreme wisdom, usually depicted seated on a lion or on a Lotus, and is the patron deity of Mount Wutai **五台山** in Shanxi Province.
[130] Maudgalyāyana (along with Śāriputra) was one of the Buddha's closest male disciples.
[131] The Liezi **列子** is a Daoist text ascribed to the c. 5th century philosopher Lie Yukou **列禦寇**.
[132] The two places and three assembles (*erchu sanhui* 二處三會) are the places Sakyamuni preaches the Lotus sutra as described in the sutra itself.
[133] Duke Mu of Qin (d. 621 BCE) was a duke (*gong* 公) in the state of Qin 秦, and is sometimes considered one of the Five Hegemons (*wuba* 五霸) of the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 BCE).
[134] Fufeng county in Shanxi.
[135] Duke Mu was not aware of its religious value, hence leading him to abandon it in the horse stable.
[136] Ancient unit of measurement approximately equal to one foot.
[137] You Yu was a confidante of the Duke Sima Qian.

Buddha thereupon emitted light. The Duke was again frightened. He regarded [the light] as the wide-eyed glare of the deity. The Duke sacrificed three animals as an offering to the statue, and the sundry deities lifted up the statue[138] and discarded it in a far away place. The Duke was again greatly frightened. He asked You Yu about it. You Yu responded saying: "I have heard of this. The Budha deity is pure and does not accept wine or meat. [The Buddha deity] cherishes and considers the life of animals important, as one would shield a child. What is supplied [to the deity] should consist of incense and nothing more, and what can be offered in sacrifice are things like cakes and fruits."[139] The Duke was delighted and thereupon constructed a statue but was cut short by the workers. He again asked You Yu,[140] and You Yu responded saying: "In the past King Mu constructed a temple, so there should be a craftsman nearby." Duke Mu and You Yu then obtained an old person in the village to the south of the Gaosi Terrace.[141] His name was Wang An. He was 180 years old. He said: "Once in the Three Assembly Dharma hall I saw the construction [of the temple].[142] Now I am old and I am without strength to work. Where I live is to the north of the village, there are four brothers. Once, within the Dharma hall, they carried out the work as craftsmen. Please allow me to seek them out so that they may jointly construct [a statue]." The brothers, relying on instructions, made it, forming a bronze statue of perfect and complete appearance. The Duke was pleased and greatly rewarded them. Those people [i.e. the brothers] obtained wealth, and also generated moral merit. On an earthen Terrace [i.e. Cangjie's original site]they constructed a multistoried tower three hundred *chi* tall. The people of the time called it the Gaosi Terrace. Some people call it the Gaosi Tiered Pavillion. The [brothers] had the surname Gao, and the first name of the eldest brother was Si. Some say that it is named after the four brothers who built it together. Others say it comes from the first name of the eldest brother. Hence, Gaosi's name up until now has been the name [for the structure].

[138] The object of the verb *qi* 棄 "to abandon" is taken as "the statue" and not the sacrifice that was made to the deity in light of 1) the principle of continuity in the absence of specification and 2) the fact that Duke Mu builds a *new* statue in the remainder of the paragraph, implying that the original one had been taken away.

[139] The previous sentence uses the verb *gongyang* 供養 to denote one type of sacrifice, whereas the sentence here explicitly uses the verbs *jisi* 祭祀 another type of sacrifice to the image of the deity that apparently operates according to different rules from the first.

[140] More specifically, Duke Mu asked You Yu for advice about what to do in this situation.

[141] Because we learn in the remaining part of the paragraph that the four brothers are responsible for construction of the Gaosi Terrace, the meaning of this sentence must be construed as "the village to the south of the location the Gaosi Terrace *would eventually occupy*."

[142] I.e. the temple that King Mu ordered to be built.

Appendix B:

Translation of the an excerpt of Daoxuan's *Gazetteer on the Land of the Shakya* (Shijia fangzhi 釋迦方志).

從本語書天法不斷。故彼風俗事天者多。以生有所因故也。胡本西戎無聞道術。書語國別傳譯方通。神州書語所出無本。且論書契可以事求。伏羲八卦文王重之。蒼頡鳥迹其文不行。漢時許慎方出說文。字止九千以類而序。今漸被世文言三萬。此則隨人隨代會意出生。不比五天書語一定。上以五義。以定中邊。可以鏡諸。餘如隋初魏郡沙門靈裕聖迹記述。

From the Book of Heaven, the principles of nature are constant. Therefore, those who follow the customs and matters of Heaven are numerous. This is because all things are caused by a particular origin. The Hu (barbarian) peoples of the Western regions have never heard of the Way (Dao) or its teachings. Written language and its transmission vary according to the country. The written language of the Divine Land (China) has no origin. Furthermore, the writing and texts can be used for practical matters. The Eight Trigrams of Fuxi and the [legacy] of King Wen are revered. Cangjie, by the bird tracks, created the characters, but his writing system was incomplete**.** During the Han Dynasty, Xu Shen compiled the *Shuowen jiezi*. The characters were limited to 9,000, categorized and ordered. Now, gradually, the written language has reached 30,000 characters. This [writing system] thus evolves according to the individual and the era, formed through interpretation and association.

It is not like the five heavenly books and languages, which are fixed. [It follows] five principles to establish the central and peripheral boundaries. This can be used as a mirror for reflection. As for the rest, it is like the record of the sacred traces of the monk Lingyu from Wei Commandery, written at the beginning of the Sui Dynasty.