"By the Power of the *Perfection of Wisdom*": The "Sūtra-Rotation" Liturgy of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* at Dunhuang

Yi Ding
Stanford University

This paper focuses on the ritual context of the 200,000-line Chinese *Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Dabore jing*; **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) at Dunhuang. Beside the fact that the purpose of the mass production of sūtras was to generate merit and then present a "merit gift" for the sponsor, the copies were reused as ritual instruments in the large-scale chanting liturgy called "sūtra-rotation" (*zhuanjing*). This paper examines the relevant administrative documents and liturgical texts to reconstruct the three modules of the liturgy, i.e., the preparation stage, the pronouncement of a "liturgical script," and the "long-playing" chanting. By analyzing key passages in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Perfection of Wisdom*) literature, the paper argues that the *Great Perfection of Wisdom* was taken as an apotropaic device with unmediated protective power.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of sheer volume, the majority of Dunhuang manuscripts comprise copies of four sūtras, (1) the *Lotus Sūtra*, translated by Kumārajīva,[1] (2) the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (Skt. **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, hereafter *Great Perfection*) in Chinese,[2] (3) the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (Skt. *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, hereafter *Hundred Thousand*) in Tibetan,[3] (4) the *Mahāyāna Sūtra of Buddha Unlimited Life*

Research for this article was sponsored by the Chung-Hwa Institute Fellowship for Graduate Students. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to John Kieschnick and James Benn for numerous comments, suggestions, and, most importantly, corrections. The two anonymous reviewers also provided very helpful comments, which I have tried to incorporate whenever possible. I thank Brandon Dotson for kindly answering my queries and sharing with me his unpublished paper and Paul Copp for commenting on my paper as a panel respondent at the meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in 2018.

1. Kumārajīva, tr., *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 (T no. 262). According to Fang Guangchang's rough estimate there are more than 5,000 scrolls or fragments of Kumārajīva's *Lotus Sūtra* in the Dunhuang corpus; see Fang Guangchang 方廣錩, "Miaofa lianhuajing," in *Dunhuang xue dacidian* 敦煌學大辭典, ed. Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1998), 688–89.

2. Xuanzang, tr., *Daboreboluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經 (T no. 220). Xuanzang's biographer claims that the Sanskrit original of the *Great Perfection* was composed of 200,00 lines; see Huili 慧立, *Datang Dacien si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T no. 2053, 50:275c24–c25). In 730 CE, Zhisheng 智昇 proposed to list the *Great Perfection*, instead of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* (*Huayanjing* 華嚴經) preferred by previous cataloguers, as the first sūtra in a canon; see Zhisheng, *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄, T no. 2154, 55:582a21–b14. Zhisheng's scheme was later adopted by the compilers of Chinese Buddhist canons.

3. The title is *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa* in Tibetan (Toh 8), or *Yum 'bum pa* in short. ITJ 1254 (=ITJ 56:73–74), an administrative document about the production of the *Great Perfection* and *Hundred Thousand*, refers to the *Great Perfection* as "the Chinese *100,000-Lined*" (*rgya'I 'bum pa*) and the *Hundred Thousand* as "the Tibetan *100,000-Lined*" (*bod kyi 'bum pa*). It seems that at Dunhuang the former was assumed to be a Chinese equivalent of the latter. In the two extant catalogues from the imperial period (the *lHan dkar ma Catalogue* and the *'Phang thang ma Catalogue*), the *Hundred Thousand* is placed as the very first sūtra; see Marcelle Lalou,

(Skt. *Aparimitāyur nāma mahāyānasūtra*; Tib. *Tshe dpag du myed pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*; hereafter *Unlimited Life*) in both Tibetan and Chinese.[4] If we set aside the *Lotus Sūtra*, whose production at Dunhuang on its own deserves a separate in-depth study, the last three sūtras form a distinct group whose production was "commissioned for the Tibetan emperor Khri Gtsug lde brtsan (r. 815–841) from the 820s to the 840s."[5]

Hirai Shun'ei calculates that at least 1,987 Chinese-style scrolls of the *Great Perfection* found their way to different museums or collections.[6] For the *Hundred Thousand*, Sam van Schaik estimates that there are about 14,000 large-format *pothī* leaves and less than 600 scrolls.[7] For the Tibetan *Unlimited Life*, in addition to more than 550 scrolls left in China,[8] there are about 1,345 shelfmarks that include copies or fragments of copies of this Tibetan sūtra held in the British Library,[9] and 1,951 in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.[10] For the Chinese *Unlimited Life*, the total number of the scrolls approximates 1,000.[11]

What were the main functions of these imperially commissioned sūtra copies? Brandon Dotson puts it in Buddhist terms: "the *Sūtra*s were a gift for the Tibetan emperor, meant to generate wisdom and merit so that the emperor, and all beings, might attain enlightenment by seeing, hearing, and worshipping them."[12] To be more specific, these items were

"Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-sroṅ-lde-bcan," *Journal asiatique* 24.3 (1953), 317; Rta-rdo, ed., *Dkar chag 'phang thang ma; Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 3.

4. See Mimaki Katsumi 御牧克己, "Daijō Muryōju shūyō kyō" 大乗無量寿宗要経, in *Kōza tonkō 7: Tonkō to chūgoku bukkyō* 講座敦煌7：敦煌と中国仏教, ed. Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 and Fukui Bun'ga 福井文雅 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha 1984), 167–72.

5. Brandon Dotson, "Misspelling 'Buddha': The Officially Commissioned Tibetan *Aparimitāyur-nāma Mahāyāna-sūtras* from Dunhuang and the Study of Old Tibetan Orthography," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79.1 (2016): 134. The production of the *Great Perfection* sponsored by local donors continued after the end of Tibetan rule (ca. 787–848); see Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林, "Wantang Wudai Dunhuang diqu Daborejing xinyang yu difang zhengquan de guanxi" 晚唐五代敦煌地區《大般若經》信仰與地方政權的關係, *Pumen xuebao* 34 (2006): 174–78.

6. Hirai Shun'ei 平井俊栄, "Dai hannyagyō" 大般若経, in *Kōza tonkō 7*, 12.

7. When the "Library Cave" was first discovered, there were eleven large bundles of the *Hundred Thousand*, each containing about 1,280 leaves; see Sam van Schaik, "The Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts in China," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65.1 (2002): 135–36. The *Hundred Thousand* scrolls are mostly under PT 1494–2063 and ITJ 109.

8. There are 313 scrolls of the Dunhuang Tibetan *Unlimited Life* conserved in several institutes in Gansu; see Huang Wenhuan 黃文煥, "Hexi Tufan wenshu jianshu" 河西吐蕃文書簡述, *Wenwu* 1978.12: 59. More than 250 scrolls found their way to the National Library of China, Beijing, among which 209 scrolls (BD 14213–14421) were initially collected during Otani Kōzui's 大谷光瑞 third Inner Asia expedition, later brought to the Lüshun Museum, and eventually handed over to the Beijing Museum in 1954. There are 202 scrolls in St. Petersburg as well; see Ueyama Daishun 上山大峻, "Toban no shakyō jigyō to Tonkō" 吐蕃の写経事業と敦煌, in *Chūgoku toshi no rekishi teki kenkyū* 中国都市の歴史的研究, ed. Tōdaishi Kenkyūkai 唐代史研究会 (Tokyo: Tosui shobō, 1988), 193.

9. See Dotson, "Misspelling 'Buddha'," 135.

10. "There is currently no printed catalogue of the *Aparimitāyur-nama* sūtra scrolls in the Bibliothèque nationale, which occupy the catalogue numbers Pelliot tibétain 2500–4450" (Schaik, "The Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts in China," 136 n. 29).

11. See the entry on the *Unlimited Life* in *Dunhuang xue dacidian*, 704–5. Ueyama puts the total number at 915 ("Toban no shakyō jigyō to Tonkō," 191). The Chinese *Diamond Sūtra* is right next to the Tibetan *Unlimited Life* in terms of quantity, for there are about 2,000 scrolls of the *Diamond Sūtra* in Chinese, about 1,000 of which are housed in the National Library of China; see Fang Guangchang 方廣錩, "Dunhuang wenxian zhong de Jingangjing jiqi zhushu" 敦煌文獻中的《金剛經》及其注疏, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1995.1: 74. The Chinese *Heart Sūtra* was much less popular, with the total number of the copies in the range of 100–200 (*Dunhuang xue dacidian*, 685).

12. Brandon Dotson, "The Remains of the Dharma: Editing, Rejecting, and Replacing the Buddha's Words in Officially Commissioned *Sūtras* from Dunhuang, 820s to 840s," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 36/37 (2015): 5. "The generation of wisdom" was part and parcel of the religious rhetoric revolving around the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature (for instance, see PT 1123, a prayer for the Tibetan emperor), even though there seems little evidence of the *Hundred Thousand* copies being actually used in scriptural study by the

not produced as a physical gift for the emperor or a type of local tribute, since the lode of manuscripts did not become the emperor's private possession and were kept in the custody of local institutions; the actual "gift" (*yon*) was in fact an abstract one, that is to say, the merit (Skt. *puṇya*) generated through the production of sūtra copies.[13] It is in this sense that PT 999 claims that "the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Unlimited Life* were copied in Shacu [Shazhou 沙州, i.e., Dunhuang] as a 'merit gift' [*sku yon*] for the son of the gods Khri gtsugs lde brtsan."[14] The physical sūtra copies were the byproduct of a process that transformed local resources into an abstract "merit gift," which became part of the sponsor's private "merit-field."[15]

More elusive than the question of who made these sūtras and why is the question of how these enormous, unwieldy scriptures were utilized after copies had been made. Based on the recent discovery of a Dunhuang *Hundred Thousand* copy stored in the sGrol dkar Monastery in Lho kha, Tibet,[16] and the administrative document ITJ 1254 that mentions the transportation of a set of *Hundred Thousand* from Dunhuang to Guazhou 瓜州,[17] Iwao Kazushi proposes that "the purpose of copying the *MP* [*Great Perfection*] and the *SP* [*Hundred Thousand*] was to distribute them to other places."[18] Iwao's claim here does not necessarily contradict

---

locals. The discrepancy between rhetoric and practice is partially addressed by the *Hundred Thousand* itself, which promises that the apotropaic power of the sūtra works the same for those who do not study the scriptures (see my analysis below).

13. For a nuanced explanation of the concept and the ritual economy of *yon* in the imperial period, see Brandon Dotson, "Sūtras as Royal Gifts: Buddhism and the Ritual Economy in Imperial Tibet and Dunhuang" (unpublished paper, Dec 10, 2015).

14. PT 999 lines 1–2: *lha sras khri gtsug lde brtsan gyi sku yon du // sha cur rgya bod gyI dar ma tshe dpag tu myed pa (br)is te //*. (Hereafter the capital *I* is used for the reverse *gi-gu*; translations are mine unless stated otherwise.) For a transcription and two different French translations, see Cristina A. Scherrer-Schaub, "Réciprocité du don: Une relecture de PT 999," in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1991), 429–34; Imaeda Yoshiro, "À propos du manuscrit Pelliot tibétain 999," in *Sūryacandrāya: Essays in Honour of Akira Yuyama on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Paul Harrison and Gregory Schopen (Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1998), 87–88. For a Chinese translation, see Wang Yao 王堯, *Wang Yao Zangxue wenji (juan si)*: *Dunhuang Tufan wenshu yishi* 王堯藏學文集(卷四)：敦煌吐蕃文書譯釋 (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2012), 233–34. Scherrer-Schaub, Imaeda, and Wang respectively translate it "offrande/donation," "profit," and "*gongde* 功德." Therefore, for Imaeda *yon* stands for *phan yon* (Skt. *anuśaṃsa*); for Wang *yon* stands for *bsod nams* (Skt. *puṇya*). F. W. Thomas interprets it as referring to the "donor" (*yon bdag*); see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan,* part II: *Documents* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1951), 79. Here I largely follow Brandon Dotson's interpretation; see Dotson, "The Remains of the Dharma," 12–14. As an Old Tibetan locution used in inscriptions from the imperial period and in Dunhuang materials, it does not appear in the *Kanjur* and *Tenjur* and hence there is no determinable one-to-one correspondence between it and any Sanskrit term.

15. Dunhuang Chinese documents that deal with Tibetan sponsors use the term *futian* 福田 ("merit-field" or "receptacle of merit") to convey the idea of *sku yon*. For example, PC 2583v, a "donation register," records that several Tibetan officials made donations to the sangha for the sake of their own or others' *futian*; the donations made by Chinese donors are recorded without using the term *futian*, seemingly because the term is not part of the usual diction.

16. See Ma De 馬德, "Xizang faxian de Labang jing wei Dunhuang xiejing" 西藏發現的《喇蚌經》為敦煌寫經, *Dunhuang yanjiu* 2009.5: 79–83.

17. "A set of the sūtra (*Hundred Thousand*) with the full appurtenances was sent by the minister rGyal khri and the minister lDong bzang to the monk dPal gyi bzang po to support the Kvachu (Guazhou 瓜州) prefecture" *kva chu'I khrom rkyen gyI dar ma sde gcig yo byad dang 'tshang bar // blon rgyal khrI dang blon ldong bzang gi[s] ban 'de dpal gyi bzang po la brdzangste /* (ITJ 1254, lines 2–4). I thank Sam van Schaik for allowing me to examine this fragmentary sheet in the British Library.

18. Iwao Kazushi, "The Purpose of Sutra-copying in Dunhuang under the Tibetan Rule," in *Dunhuang Studies: Prospects and Problems for the Coming Second Century of Research*, ed. Irina Popova and Yi Liu (St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2012), 105.

what Dotson observes, since the post-production function of an object can be different from the initial purpose of its production. The fact that the *Hundred Thousand* copies produced at Dunhuang were subject to long-distance distribution points to their possible post-production reuse. A Japanese parallel of long-distance distribution of sūtra copies, which took place in 728 CE and involved a public performance of sūtra-recitation, also points in this direction.[19]

PT 999, an administrative document with five vermilion seals,[20] gives us a further hint as to how these copies were used. According to its account, 135 scrolls (*bam po*) of the Chinese *Unlimited Life* and 480 scrolls of the Tibetan *Unlimited Life*, which had initially been produced as a merit gift for the Tibetan emperor Khri gTsug lde brtsan, were now to be taken out from the sūtra-deposit (*dar ma'i bdzod*) at the Longxing monastery 龍興寺 (Tib. Lung hung si) for the sake of an offering feast (*mchod ston*) that included 2,700 households, an event that was about to take place on the eighth day of the seventh lunar month in 844 CE.[21] "The two sanghas [i.e., the monks and nuns] of Shacu [i.e., Dunhuang] will dedicate [these sūtra copies] as a merit gift for prince 'Od srung, son of queen 'Phan, and as a gift [for] the households in the Shacu region and hold an offering feast."[22] As the document claims, the merit generated by the sūtra distribution and the large-scale offering feast would be in part dedicated to the prince and his queen mother by the priests. Still, is it possible that the copies were also used by the participants of the offering feast for a mass chanting ritual? Unfortunately, PT 999 does not explicitly mention it. In fact, we have not found any other Tibetan document that explicitly mentions a mass chanting ritual of the *Unlimited Life*, *Hundred Thousand*, or *Great Perfection* at Dunhuang.

However, there are many Chinese documents pointing to the existence at Dunhuang of a type of chanting liturgy featuring the *Great Perfection*. The liturgical genre is termed "sūtra-rotation" (*zhuanjing* 轉經), which theoretically can feature the chanting of any scripture(s). It is also referred to as "sūtra-opening" (*kaijing* 開經) or "sūtra-dispersal" (*sanjing* 散經) in Chinese sources. The practice of "*Great Perfection*-rotation"—the chanting of the longest Buddhist scripture—is my focus here (hereafter I use "*Great Perfection*-rotation" to refer to a sūtra-rotation performance featuring the *Great Perfection*).

The *Great Perfection*-rotation events at Dunhuang gave rise to three different types of document in the Dunhuang corpus: (1) "sūtra-lending registers" (*fujingli* 付經曆), (2) "liturgical scripts for sūtra-rotation" (*zhuanjingwen* 轉經文; *kaijingwen* 開經文; *sanjingwen* 散

19. "In the 12th month of 728, 64 caskets that contains 640 fascicles of the *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsottama-sūtra* were distributed to various provinces (*kuni*). Each province obtained ten fascicles (i.e., a whole sūtra). . . . On the day when the sūtra arrived (at the province), the text was to be rotated (*tendoku*), for it pacifies the country" 神亀五年 . . . 十二月 . . . 金光明経六十四帙六百四十巻頒於諸国，々別十巻 。 . . . 随経到日，即令転読，為令国家平安也; see Aoiki Kazuo 青木和夫 et al., ed., *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei 新日本古典文学大系 12 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 2:202.

20. Only the second and third seals contain legible names: Hong ben (Hongbian 洪辯) and dBang mchog. These two abbots (*gnas brtan*; *jiaoshou* 教授) were responsible for checking out the scrolls from the library; presumably, the first seal belonged to the director of monastic affairs (*chos gyi gzhi 'dzin*; *she[shazhou] sengzheng* 攝[沙州]僧政), and the fourth and fifth seals belonged to the two librarians (*dar ma'i rub ma pa*) who were to keep this document as a receipt (lines 7–13). Hongbian is referred to as *jiaoshou* in S. 779v/2; according to PC 4640v, he eventually became Abbot-in-Chief (*du jiaoshou* 都教授) for the Dunhuang region before 834.

21. PT 999, lines 3–9. For the dating, see Scherrer-Schaub, "Réciprocité du don," 432–33 nn. 29 and 30; Imaeda, "À propos du manuscrit Pelliot tibétain 999," 90. Because it happened on a poṣadha day (*zhairi* 齋日), the "offering feast" probably refers to a liturgy more commonly termed *zhai* 齋 at Dunhuang, where vegetarian food was provided to the participants after certain ritual performances took place.

22. PT 999, lines 5–7: *jo mo btsan mo 'phan gyI yum sras gyI pho brang 'od srung gI sku yon du // sha cu'I dge 'dun sde gnyis gyIs // sha cu yul phyogs gyI khyim pa / sku yon du bsngoste mchod ston gcIg stsald par //*. My translation here is indebted to Dotson, "Sūtras as Royal Gifts."

經文), and (3) miscellaneous administrative documents. Although several Chinese scholars have looked into *Great Perfection*-related documents from different perspectives, no one has attempted to reconstruct the *Great Perfection*-rotation liturgy by piecing together the related documents.[23] By examining how the three types of document worked with each other, this paper reconstructs the three distinct modules of the liturgy—a composite made up of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan elements—and describes some of the socio-political factors that enabled the local adaptation. Also, by taking the content of the *Great Perfection* seriously, the paper attempts to answer the question why the *Great Perfection* mattered for the Tibetan empire and for Buddhists at Dunhuang.

SŪTRA-LENDING REGISTERS

The sūtra-lending register at Dunhuang is a type of document used by a clerk to keep track of the manuscripts in a library. It usually consists of formulaic entries of "lending" (*fu* 付), with each entry indicating who has checked out what texts from the library or has returned what texts to the library. In the case of the *Great Perfection*-rotation, because the scripture was too voluminous for a single monastery to provide all the reciters needed and few monasteries possessed the entire 600 fascicles, most of the fascicles had to be lent out beforehand to the monastic reciters, who were drafted from different local monasteries.

Take WB32(3)1/1 as an example. It consists of seven sūtra-lending registers, of which six are concerned with sūtra-rotation and only one is concerned with individual loans of manuscripts.[24] The first register starts with a heading that specifies the date of the distribution and the pending ritual activity: "On the tenth day of the seventh month of 814, in order to 'rotate' the sūtra for the Tibetan emperor, we lent out the *Great Perfection* [as follows]" 午年七月十日贊普轉經付般若經. Following this heading are fourteen entries for the fourteen participating monasteries,

For Long (i.e., Longxing si 龍興寺), caskets nos. 1–4 consigned to Bi'an 彼岸.
For Lian (i.e., Liantai si 蓮臺寺), caskets nos. 51–53 consigned to Faguang 法光.
For Qian (i.e., Qianyuan si 乾元寺), caskets nos. 5–7.
For En (i.e., Bao'en si 報恩寺), caskets nos. 8–10.
For Xiu (i.e., Lingxiu si 靈修寺), caskets nos. 11–14.
For Kai (i.e., Kaiyuan si 開元寺), caskets nos. 15–17 consigned to Haicheng 海澄.
For Yong (i.e., Yong'an si 永安寺), caskets nos. 18–19.
For Guo (i.e., Anguo si 安國寺), caskets nos. 20–22.
For Cheng (i.e., Dacheng si 大乘寺), caskets nos. 23–27; nos. 39 and 50 to Ranhu 然護.
For Jin (i.e., Jinguangming si 金光明寺), caskets nos. 28–30.

23. Fang Guangchang treats the sūtra-lending registers as materials for the bibliographical study of the Buddhist canon; see Fang Guangchang 方廣錩, *Dunhuang fojiao jinglu jijiao* 敦煌佛教經錄輯校 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), 810–54. Zheng Binglin posits that there was "worship of the *Great Perfection*" 大般若經信仰 at Dunhuang and takes the production, circulation, and sūtra-rotation of the *Great Perfection* as evidence for this type of worship; see Zheng Binglin, "Wantang Wudai Dunhuang diqu," 155–86. Hao Chunwen 郝春文 provides a solid analysis of the existing administrative documents that bear on sūtra-rotation; see Hao Chunwen, *Tang houqi Wudai Songchu Dunhuang sengni de shehui shenghuo* 唐後期五代宋初敦煌僧尼的社會生活 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 220–29.

24. For a transcription, see Ma De 馬德, "Dunhuang wenshu Zhusi fujingli chuyi" 敦煌文書《諸寺付經曆》芻議, *Dunhuangxue jikan* 1999.1: 36–37. The *Hundred Thousand* entry consists of only one line in WB: "On the twenty-sixth day of the second month in 815, we consigned a set of the Tibetan *Hundred Thousand* to the monk Zhijie, which Abbot lDong would rotate" 未年二月廿六日，付僧智捷蕃摩訶般若經一部，東教授轉 (WB32(3)1/4). Abbot lDong was Tibetan; the term *jiaoshou* 教授 is used to refer to the chief administrator in a monastery in this period.

For Tu (i.e., Lingtu si 靈圖寺), caskets nos. 32–32 and 43.
For Ku (i.e., the Mogao Grottoes), caskets nos. 45–47 consigned to Lingda 靈達.
For Yong (i.e., Yong'an si 永安寺), caskets nos. 18–19 and 48 consigned to Hui[?] 惠□.
For Yun (i.e., Dayun si 大雲寺), caskets nos. 51–53 consigned to Fahui 法惠.[25]

In total, twenty caskets (nos. 33–42, 44, 49, 52, 54–60) are not accounted for in this list (a complete set of the *Great Perfection* is, as a rule, made of sixty caskets), while three caskets (nos. 51–53) are repeated. The gaps indicate that even an imperially sponsored sūtra-rotation event at Dunhuang was normally not large-scale or well-funded enough for the reciters to finish chanting the entire 600 fascicles.

In Table 1, except for no. 19, the *Great Perfection*-rotation (or *Hundred Thousand*-rotation in one case) was sponsored by either the state (*guojia* 國家; Tib. *rgyal khams*) or people of political importance, including the Tibetan emperor (*zanpu* 贊普; Tib. *brtsan po*), the Inspector of the Army (*jianjun* 監軍; Tib. *spyan*), the Prefect of Guazhou (*Guazhou jiedu* 瓜州節度; Tib. *kva cu'i rtse rje blon*) and his wife, and the ruler of Dunhuang (*fuzhu* 府主).[26] Conversely, when a sūtra-rotation liturgy was not imperially sponsored, the chanting usually did not feature the *Great Perfection*.[27] BD 6359v/3 details a sūtra-rotation event that features a personalized set of sutras:

> In 815, for the merit-field of the town prefect of our prefecture (i.e., Shazhou) *rGyal rje khri [Hejieqili],[28] we, the monks headed by Cideng from the Lingshu Monastery, rotated the *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsottama-sūtra* in its entirety once, the *Diamond Sūtra* seven times, the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* [i.e., the *Samantamukha-parivarta* of the *Lotus Sūtra*] ten times, the *Heart Sūtra* 108 times, the *Unlimited Life* 108 times, and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* once, and [made] 2,000 clay icons of the Buddhas. For the merit-field of the town prefect's wife, we "rotated" the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* ten times, the *Heart Sūtra* 108 times, and the *Unlimited Life* 108 times, and [made] 2,000 clay icons of the Buddhas (Tib. *sa tsa* or *tsa tsa*).[29]

In this case, the town prefect and his wife commissioned a sūtra-rotation liturgy that was small-scale enough for the monks from the Lingshu Monastery to finish in one day. Since the chosen sūtras were commonplace at Dunhuang and readily available for the monastery, there was no need to borrow sūtra copies from other monasteries. In fact, the above passage does not count as a sūtra-lending register. Only a large-scale sūtra-rotation event would necessitate

25. Ma De, "Dunhuang wenshu Zhusi fujingli chuyi," 36. These registers routinely mention eleven monasteries for monks, five monasteries for nuns, and a place called Ku 窟, probably referring to the Northern Area caves at Mogao.

26. Most of the datable registers cluster in the Tibetan Occupation period (Table 1), whereas all but two liturgical scripts for sūtra-rotation were composed after the Tibetan Occupation (Table 2). It is likely that the discrepancy stems from the nature of the Dunhuang corpus: we do not know much about why some of the administrative documents ended up in the Library Cave and others did not. I choose not to include the rotation of the *Great Perfection* in U 673, because it seems that in this case the *Great Perfection* scrolls were chanted privately by only one monk called Chongying 崇英; see *Tonkō hikyū* 敦煌秘笈 (Osaka: Takeda Kagaku Shinkō Zaidan, 2009–2013), 9:30.

27. For example, see the lists of sūtras used in sūtra-rotation liturgies in S. 1612, PC 3187, and BD 7217v/1. BD 7217v/1 mentions "four caskets of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*" 摩訶般若經四袟, which refers to the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* in forty fascicles translated by Kumārajīva, not to the *Great Perfection*.

28. In Dunhuang Chinese documents *jieer* 節兒 ("town prefect") is a phonological calque of the Tibetan title *rtse rje*; see Joanna Bialek, *Compounds and Compounding in Old Tibetan: A Corpus Based Approach* (Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2018), 416–18.

29. [未]年七月十日，靈樹寺眾僧慈燈等，為本州節兒紇結乞梨作福田轉：金光明經一部十卷一遍，金剛經七遍，觀音經十遍，般若心經一百八遍，無量壽呪一百八遍，維摩經一遍，印沙佛二千 。為節兒娘福田轉：金剛經七遍，觀音經十遍，般若心經一百八遍，無(量)壽呪一百八遍，印沙佛一千 (BD 6359v/3). The ritual reuse of the *Unlimited Life* here supports the hypothesis that the offering feast in PT 999 might have involved the chanting of the *Unlimited Life*.

Table 1. Sūtra-rotation Events in the Extant Registers

	Mss.	Lending Dates	Sponsors	Activity Descriptions	Sūtras
1	WB32(3)1/1&3	814 (午年七月十日)	Emperor	*MP*-lending for sūtra-rotation (轉經付般若經)	*MP*
2	WB32(3)1/4	815 (未年二月廿六日)	Emperor	*Hundred Thousand*-lending to Zhijie (付僧智捷蕃摩訶般若經)	*SP*
3	WB32(3)1/5	815 (十月三日)	Emperor	sūtra-rotation for the merit field (福田道場)	*MP*
4	BD 15473	820? (□年後六月十三日)	Emperor	[sūtra-rotation on] a streaming ritual arena for the merit field (新加水則道場)	*MP*
5	BD 15473v	820 (子年後六月十七日)	Emperor	*MP*-lending for the merit field of . . . (. . . 福田，出大般若經)	*MP*
6	PC 3336/1	821 (丑年九月卅日)	Emperor	*MP*-rotation for the newly acquired merit field (新加福田轉大般若經)	*MP*
7	PC 3336/2	822 (寅年正月八日)	Emperor	--	*MP*
8	S. 10566	832 (壬子年十月)	Emperor	[sūtra-]rotation in the autumn (秋季轉)	*MP*
9	PC 3654/1	Tib. (七月廿六日)	Emperor	sūtra-rotation for the merit field (福田轉經)	*MP*
10	PC 3654/2	[illegible]	Emperor	sūtra-rotation (轉經)	*MP*
11	PC 3654/3	Tib. (十二月十三日)	Emperor	sūtra-rotation for the winter merit field (冬季福田轉經)	*MP*
12	WB32(3)1/7	815 (未年正月十一日)	State	[sūtra-rotation on] a ritual arena for the merit field (福田道場)	*MP*
13	PC 2727	829 (酉年三月十三日)	State	sūtra-rotation on a streaming ritual arena for the generation of merit on behalf of the state (緣國家建福，水則道場轉經)	*MP*
14	PC 3336/3	822 (寅年正月三十日)	Prefect of Guazhou	sūtra-rotation (轉經)	*MP*
15	PC 3654/4	Tib. (二月十八日)	Wife of Prefect of Guazhou	sūtra-rotation (轉經)	*MP*
16	PC 3336/4	822? (二月年二日)	Inspector of the Army	sūtra-rotation (轉經)	*MP*
17	S. 4914r	823/835? (卯年九月七日)	--	[sūtra-]rotation in the current monastery (當寺轉)	*MP*
18	PC 3365	974? (甲戌年五月十日)	Ruler of Dunhuang	lending sūtras on behalf of the governor for his ailments (為府主大王小患付經)	*MP*
19	S. 6031	860/920? (庚辰年十一月中)	Zhai family	opening the *MP* (開大般若經)	*MP*
20	WB32(3)1/6	813 (巳年六月)	--	[sūtra-rotation on] a ritual arena for *BĀ*-rotation (花嚴道場)	*BĀ*
21	S. 10967	Tib.	--	--	misc.
22	BD 11875	Tib.	--	--	*MP*
23	PC 3060	Tib.	--	--	*MP* & misc.

(*MP*: *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*; *SP*: *Hundred Thousand*; *BĀ*: *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*; misc.: miscellaneous scriptures; Tib.: in the Tibetan Occupation period; —: no relevant information.)

a sūtra-lending register; documents generated by a smaller-scale sūtra-rotation liturgy were less likely to be retained over time and eventually to be brought to the "Library Cave," which in turn explains why sūtra-rotation sponsored by ordinary locals seldom appears in Table 1.

In 774 CE, Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空; 705–774), one of the three most prominent Tantric masters in the Tang, successfully petitioned the court for the establishment of two "ritual arenas" in his monastery. Twenty-one disciples of his were allowed to serve as "recitation-monks" (*chisong seng* 持誦僧) to "regularly rotate and chant [the scriptures] for the sake of the state" 常為國轉讀.[30] Functionally speaking, what Amoghavajra had set up in the capital should be similar to the so-called "streaming ritual arenas" (*shuize daochang* 水則道場 or *shuizi daochang* 水子道場) and "long-playing ritual arenas" (*changxing daochang* 長行道場) mentioned in Table 1.[31] An administrative document (PC 2058) composed in the early Guiyijun period explicitly identifies the latter two as the same:

> The streaming ritual arena will next be in the Sanjie Monastery. All decorations, including fragrant flowers and altars, must be ritually set up as before. One should not be inattentive and negligent [in this matter]. Every morning, the reciters will be divided into two shifts, and at noon one shift will step up [to the ritual arena] as the other shift steps down. [The stipulations about] the aforementioned long-playing ritual arena are old practices originating in the past. 水則道場，次至三界寺。所有敷設，香花案機，準舊莊嚴，不得怠慢違闕。逐晨分為兩翻，日中交替為上下。右件長行道場，元是積古舊規.[32]

Therefore, the ritual arena refers to a consecrated space for a sūtra-rotation performance, with the word "streaming" or "long-playing" symbolizing the continuous ritual chanting performed by two shifts of reciters who took turns ascending the ritual arena.[33] The same document also clarifies that the ritual arena was supervised by administrative monks.[34] In

30. Amoghavajra, "Qing yu Xingshan dangyuan liang daochang gezhi chisongseng zhi yishou" 請於興善當院兩道場各置持誦僧制一首, in Yuanzhao 圓照, ed., *Sanzang heshang biaozhi ji* 三藏和上表制集, T no. 2120, 52:845b27–c22.

31. In addition to these two terms, one administrative document (S. 4664) mentions a "ritual arena for confession" (*bailu daochang* 白露道場), where nonstop chanting performed by six groups (*tuan* 團) was monitored by administrators. One solution is to take *bailu* as a typo for *ganlu* 甘露 ("nectar"); less likely, *bailu* might be a contraction of *biaobai* 表白 ("public pronouncement") and *falu* 發露 ("public confession"). WB32(3)1/6 (no. 20 in Table 1), which involves a sūtra-rotation liturgy that lasted for half a year, mentions a ritual arena for the chanting of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*: "In the sixth month of 813, a ritual arena for [reciting] the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* was established in the Yong'an Monastery. Seventy-seven fascicles were lent out [to the Yong'an Monastery]. In the first month of the year 814, [the rotation] was completed in the Cave Monastery. Thirty-six fascicles of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* have been regathered by a monk named Lingzhe" 巳年六月，永安寺置花嚴道場，付經七十七卷。至未年正月，終於窟寺。僧靈哲邊收得花嚴經叁拾陸卷哲.

32. This is the last liturgical text in the long scroll PC 2058. The liturgy might have been for the merit of Zhang Yichao 張議潮 (799–872), "the governor who marched east and defeated the [Tibetan] ministers" 東征府主定骨都; see Hao Chunwen, *Tang houqi Wudai Songchu Dunhuang*, 226–27.

33. For example, S.3189, titled as "Register of the [Two] Shifts for Sūtra-Rotation" (*Zhuanjing fantili* 轉經翻替曆), lists sixteen monks for two shifts, eight for each; BD 16453A, an administrative document that deals with "rotating the *Sūtra* [*of the Great Perfection*] in a long-playing and streamflow manner" (常[read 長]行水則轉經), specifies twenty monks for two shifts. For a more detailed study, see Hao Chunwen, *Tang houqi Wudai Songchu Dunhuang*, 224–29.

34. "It will fall to the Judge-in-Chief [from the Office] of Merit-Field and others [in the same office] to examine [the performance] personally. If a monk does not attend the ritual arena, his name will be recorded, and he will be fined half a bolt of cloth. There will definitely be no leniency" 仍仰都福田判官等親自巡檢。如不赴道場，僧錄名各罰布半疋，的無容免者 (PC 2058). Another administrative announcement issued in 901 carries roughly the same warning, "Every day each [reciter] should recite two fascicles of the *Great Perfection* and cannot neglect [his duty]. For each turn, a judge [from the Office] of Merit-Field will be sent to examine whether it is the case. If a

sum, the first module of the liturgy—the preparation stage—largely consists of the lending out of the fascicles, the organizing of the reciters, and the configuring of the ritual arena.

Given the fact that the *Great Perfection* was not a popular text in terms of readership and that the liturgy required administrative coordination and supervision, local families apart from the ruling house would have had little willingness to seek its performance. As I attempt to demonstrate below, the use of the *Great Perfection* could also be associated with warfare and kingship. The associations, together with the possible psychological relief that the liturgy provided to the public, seem to have appealed strongly to a politically prominent sponsor at Dunhuang, a region constantly under threat of invasion or military unrest.

LITURGICAL SCRIPTS FOR SŪTRA-ROTATION

The liturgical script for sūtra-rotation is a type of performative text that is announced (*biaobai* 表白) in front of a ritual audience just before the commencement of the actual long-playing chanting of the *Great Perfection* and/or other scriptures. In terms of structure and phraseology, it is similar to the so-called "liturgical scripts" (*zhaiwen* 齋文) found at Dunhuang and discussed by many Dunhuang scholars.[35] There are eleven extant liturgical scripts of sūtra-rotation (Table 2).[36]

The two earliest instances (nos. 1 and 2), which state that the prime minister Zhang khri sum rje (Ch. Shangqixin'er 尚綺心兒) was the sponsor,[37] can be dated to shortly before 816.[38]

---

monk is missing for his duty, he will be fined half of a bolt of cloth. There will be no leniency. I post this announcement publicly lest the public not notice it. [Issued] in the third month of the year 901, by the General Director of the Sangha" 每日人各轉誦《大般若經》兩卷，不得怠慢。每亂令遣福田判官檢幸若也。當翻僧不在，各罰布半疋，的無容恕。恐眾不知，將貼曉示。光化四年三月。都僧錄 (PC 3894v/1).

35. See, for example, Hao Chunwen 郝春文, "Guanyu Dunhuang xieben zhaiwen de jige wenti" 關於敦煌寫本齋文的幾個問題, *Shoudu shifan daxue xuebao* 1996.2: 64–71. Wang Sanqing 王三慶, "Dunhuang wenxian zhaiyuan wenti de yuanliu yu jiegou" 敦煌文獻齋願文體的源流與結構, *Chengda Zhongwen xuebao* 54 (2016): 27–58; Stephen Teiser, "Shilun zhaiwen de biaoyanxing" 試論齋文的表演性, *Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu* 10 (2007): 295–307; "The Literary Style of Dunhuang Healing Liturgies," *Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu* 14 (2014): 355–77.

36. I exclude the so-called "Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation on the Four Gates" (*Simen zhuanjing wen* 四門轉經文) in S. 5957/8, PC 2838/7, and 3765v/3, because it resembles the liturgical scripts used in esoteric *maṇḍala* rites; see *YW*, 492–93. I also exclude the untitled S. 4537r/4 (titled "Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Opening" by *YW*), because it was probably composed for a public lecture on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, just like PC 3804r/1; see *YW*, 478.

37. The name also shows up in the Sino-Tibetan Treaty Inscription of 821/823 CE at Lhasa as Commander in Chief of the Army (The North Face, Line 4: *dmag go chog gi bla zhang khri sum rje*); see H. E. Richardson, "The Sino-Tibetan Treaty Inscription of A.D. 821/823 at Lhasa," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1978): 155–56. According to a letter from Emperor Xianzong 憲宗 of the Tang (r. 805–820) to the Tibetan cabinet drafted by Bai Juyi 白居易 in 810 CE, Zhang khri sum rje was already Prime Minister of Tibet at the time; see Bai Juyi, "Yu Tufan zaixiang Shangqixiner deng shu" 與吐蕃宰相尚綺心兒等書, in *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, ed. Dong Hao 董浩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 6758–59.

38. After the An Lushan Rebellion in 755 CE and the ensuing rapid decline of the Tang Empire's control of Eastern Turkestan, the Tibetan Empire and Uyghur Khaganate clashed in the region constantly and battled for dominance until 822/823 CE, when the Tibetan Empire, Uyghur Khaganate, and Tang Empire decided to conclude a peace treaty between the three; see Iwao Kazushi 岩尾一史, "Kodai Chibetto teiikoku no gaikō to sangoku kaimei no seiritsu" 古代チベット帝国の外交と「三国会盟」の成立, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 72.4 (2014): 14–18. Against this backdrop, the "northern barbarians" (*beilu* 北虜; Tib. *byang phyogs na dru gu*) in S. 2146/8 must refer to the Uyghur army from the north, against which Zhang khri sum rje campaigned in 816 CE; see Moriyasu Takao, "Chibettogo shiryōchū ni arawareru hoppō minzoku, Drug-gu to Hor" チベット語史料中に現われる北方民族：Dru-guとHor, *Ajia afurika gengo bunka kenkyū* 14 (1977): 37–40. PC 2765v/2 (=PT 1070v/2) contains a text titled "A Paean of the Merit (Generated from the Establishment of) Shengguang Monastery by Zhang khri sum rje" ("Shangqilüxiner Shengguangsi gongde song" 尚綺律心兒聖光寺功德頌), which provides a poetic account of this campaign against the "Nine Tribes" (*jiuxinghu* 九姓)—a calque of Toquz Oghuz referring to Uyghur Khaganate.

Table 2. Liturgical Scripts for Sūtra-rotation in the Dunhuang corpus

	Mss.	Titles	Sponsors	*Sūtra*
1	S. 2146/8 (*YW,* 497)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation on Behalf of the Marching Army (行軍轉經文)	Prime Minister	*MP*
2	S. 2146/9 (*YW,* 498)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation (轉經文)	Prime Minister	*MP* (?)
3	S. 5957/4 (= PC 2838v/3; 3084r/1; 3494/5; 4999) (*YW,* 470–71)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Opening (開經文)	a certain patron	
4	S. 5957/5 (= PC 2838v/4; 3084r/2; 3494/6) (*YW,* 402–3)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Dispersal (散經文)	a certain patron	
5	S. 5957/6 (=PC 2838v/5; 3084r/3+3765r/1) (*YW,* 482–83)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation	Ruler of Dunhuang	*MP*
6	S. 5957/7 (=PC 2838v/6; 3765r/2) (*YW,* 487–88)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation	Ruler of Dunhuang	*MP* (?)
7	S. 6417/17 (*YW*, 480)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation	a certain patron	
8	PC 2226/6 (*YW,* 500)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Dispersal	a certain patron	
9	S. 1441/3 (YW, 43–44)	Sūtra-Opening (開經)	a certain patron	
10	PC 3405r/1 (not in *YW*)	Liturgical Script for Rotating and Dispersing the Sūtra on a Ritual Arena (轉經散道場文)	Ruler of Dunhuang	*MP* (?)
11	U 702/2 (not in YW)	Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Dispersal	a certain patron	

Three latest datable ones state that the performance was on behalf of Zhang Chengfeng 張承奉, the Dunhuang ruler who claimed that he was the emperor of Xihan Jinshanguo 西漢金山國 (Golden Mountain Kingdom of the Western Han) between ca. 910 and 914.[39] The condition of these manuscripts seems to suggest that the copying of these texts could have happened as late as the mid-tenth century.

Script no. 1 in Table 2 contains the phrase "chant aloud the *bore* 般若" and no. 5 mentions "unfolding the scripture of the *bore*"; the term *bore* here should be interpreted as the *Great Perfection*. The other eight texts do not explicitly stipulate which sūtras the reciters are to use. Considering that the sūtra-lending registers from the Tibetan Occupation period closely associate the *Great Perfection* with Tibetan sponsorship, it seems safe to assume that the *Great Perfection* was part of the program in no. 2. In the case of the sponsor being the governor (nos. 5, 6, and 10), the use of the *Great Perfection* would at least be one of the obvious options. The liturgical scripts that target a lower-level sponsor (nos. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 11) intentionally keep the option of scriptures open by not specifying one, and these manuscripts

39. In Table 2, they are script no. 5 (PC 2838v/5 and PC 3084r/3), script no. 6 (3765r/2), and script no. 10 (PC 3405r/1). For the uncertainty revolving around the dating of Zhang Chengfeng's reign, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Guiyijun shi yanjiu: Tangsong shidai Dunhuang lishi kaosuo* 歸義軍史研究：唐宋時代敦煌歷史考索 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 95–96.

mostly serve as templates for an actual liturgical composer to consult. For example, no. 4 contains a typical generic phrase in its "statement of intention" (*shenyi* 申意): "This (liturgy) is performed for a certain patron concerning a certain matter" 則有某公奉為某事作.

A translation of no. 1—the earliest extant sample—might serve to demonstrate the overall structure. Not only does it conform relatively well to the form of a template liturgical script, but it also provides some biographical information of the actual sponsor. [40]

[Title]

Liturgical Script for Sūtra-Rotation on Behalf of the Marching Army
行軍轉經文

[Section A]

When the Buddhas generate their compassion, it is unconditional and reaches everyone. Sentient beings may witness the wonders, but these traces of resonance depend on virtue.[41] Hence, for those who take refuge [in Buddhism], good fortune will arise, accompanying their wishes; for those who frivolously malign [Buddhism], misfortune will strike, following their thoughts. One should know that you yourself bring blessing and disaster to you, not the affection or hostility of the saints!
夫諸佛興悲，無緣普備；有情見異，感迹緣老(*YW*: read 善)。故使歸向者，福逐願生；輕毀者，禍隨心起。則知禍福自致，非聖愛增(*YW*: read憎)者與！

[Section B]

Now as to the purpose of this sūtra-rotation gathering, it has been organized to generate merit for the protection of the west-marching generals and soldiers, sponsored respectfully by the prime minister (*zhang blon ched po*) in charge of the Eastern Military District [of the Tibetan Empire].
然今此會轉經意者，則我東軍國相論掣脯敬為西征將仕保願功德之建修也。

[Section C]

As for the gentleman, Heaven sent down heroic spirits to him, and Earth bestowed an excellent temperament upon him. Like a marchmount he stands guard [over the country]; with tactics and strategies he devises plans. He often sees that the barbarians wage war and repeatedly invade the border regions, kidnapping people, looting cattle, and laying waste to seedlings in the field. People were anguished over it, and beacon-fires were set off several times. Our prime minister rose with ire, with his bristling hair bumping off his hat. Then he picked out the talents and led the army to march west.
伏惟相公：天降英靈，地資秀氣；岳山作鎮，謀略坐籌。每見北虜興師，頻犯邊境，抄劫人畜，暴耗(*YW*: read 耗)田。使人色不安，峯(*YW*: read 烽)颺數舉。我國相悖(*YW*: read 勃)然忿起，怒髮衝冠，遂擇良才，主兵西討。

[Section D]

Even though strategizing is as easy as gesturing with fingers and hands for him and he anticipates [the enemy's] every move without fail, he still relies on the assistance of his merit to ensure safety and auspiciousness.
雖料謀指掌，百無一遺；然必賴福資，保其清吉。

40. For a transcription of S. 2146/8, see T no. 2853, 85:1302b23–c11 and YW, 497.

41. Alternatively, if we keep the original reading, the translation is "the traces of resonance have distant causes." *YW*'s suggestion fits better with the apologetic thrust of the section, and the cursive forms of *lao* 老 and *shan* 善 can look similar.

[Section E]

For this reason, he from afar makes use of the sangha at Mt. Sanwei (i.e., Dunhuang) to pray from a distance with the texts from the eightfold canon.[42] He wishes that the soldiers and warhorses may be safe, and the country pacified forever. Therefore, he asks the faithful and devout to recite the *Diamond* [*Sūtra*], and the numerous monks and nuns to chant aloud the *Prajñāpāramitā*.[43] How can one add more to this distinguished magnificence?
是以遠啟三危之侶，遙祈八藏之文。冀仕*(YW*: read 士*)*馬平安，永寧家國。故使虔虔一志，諷誦金剛；濟濟僧尼，宣揚般若。想此殊勝，夫何以加？

[Section F: First Empowerment]

First, we use [the merit] to empower[44] the four world-protecting heavenly kings, together with dragons, gods, and the rest of the eight kinds of supernatural beings.
先用莊嚴護世四王、龍神八部。

[Section F: First Prayer Proper]

We wish to make the light of their might blaze and their auspicious energy grow; may both armies [i.e., non-human and human] become equally powerful, and the northern aggressors be vanquished and submit to us.
願使威光盛，福力增，使兩陳齊威，北戎伏款。

[Section F: Second Empowerment]

Second, we perform the empowerment of the generals and ministers who are leading the campaign.
又用莊嚴行軍將相。

[Section F: Second Prayer Proper]

Humbly we wish their abilities to increase daily, their fortunes to accumulate to the size of a mountain, their lifespans to extend long into the future, and their official careers to be successful. May the many officers and soldiers be taken care of and guarded by the Three Jewels.
伏願才智日新，福同山積。壽命遐遠，鎮坐檯階。諸將仕*(YW*: read 士*)*等，三寶撫護。

[Section F: Third Empowerment]

[Lastly,] may myriads of good deeds be empowered [by the remaining merit].
萬善莊嚴！

[Section H]

After these.
然後。

42. For two different explanations of the eightfold canon, see Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, tr., *Pusa chutai jing* 菩薩處胎經, T no. 384, 12:1058b19–b22; Chengguan 澄觀, *Dafangguang fohuayan jing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔, T no. 1736, 36:38b8–9.

43. The term *Bore* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) here likely refers to the *Great Perfection*, which contains the *Diamond Sūtra* as its 577th fascicle. It is also possible that the chanting involved an array of texts, including both the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Great Perfection*.

44. For a detailed analysis of *zhuangyan* 莊嚴 as a liturgical term at Dunhuang, see Stephen Teiser, "Ornamenting the Departed: Notes on the Language of Chinese Buddhist Ritual Texts," *Asia Major* 22.1 (2009): 227–34. As Teiser demonstrates, the basic meaning of the verb is "to ornament someone with merit," and the function of the act is either to shore up the guardian deities by infusing them with merit or to fortify a human by decorating him or her with merit. Here I take the liberty to translate *zhuangyan* as "empower(ment)."

This script contains the seven sections—or at least the first six sections[45]—that have been identified and carefully studied by Stephen Teiser.[46] The officiant (*ācārya*) starts the liturgical pronouncement with an "opening invocation" (*haotou* 號頭), a set of verses in parallel prose (*pianwen* 駢文) that calls the attention of the Buddhas to the ritual scene and justifies the use of Buddhist ritual by explaining the mechanism of merit (Section A). Then, the officiant switches to a vernacular register to pronounce a statement of intention in front of a ritual audience, which includes the sponsor (or his representative, in this case), participating monastics, lay public, and supernatural beings (Section B). With the audience in mind, the officiant switches back to parallel prose to "praise the virtue" (*tande* 嘆德)[47] of the sponsor—the Tibetan prime minister (Section C). Section C informs the audience, especially the supernatural beings, of the circumstances in which the sponsor finds himself. In this case, a Uyghur military force has been harassing the border region and causing economic loss, and the sponsor has decided to lead a campaign west to counteract the Uyghur offensive. Next, the officiant connects the sponsor's situation with Buddhism by explaining the ritual logic: the sponsor seeks the power of the liturgy to safeguard him and his troops (Section D). Though the sponsor is on the front line and hence absent from the ritual scene, he joins in spirit the ritual arena, which is exalted with parallel prose in Section E. The pronouncement culminates with a *zhuangyan* performance that alternates between two acts of empowerment and three acts of praying (Section F). The officiant, perhaps together with the audience chiming in, concludes the second module of the liturgy with a "benediction" (*haowei* 號尾) (Section H). Afterward, the officiant exits and the reciters enter the streaming ritual arena to start the long-playing sūtra chanting that could last from several days to several months, which constitutes the third module of the liturgy.

THE APOTROPAIC PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ

After finishing the translation of the *Great Perfection* in 663 CE, Xuanzang told the celebrating crowd in the Yuhua 玉華 Monastery that "this is the tome that keeps the country at peace; it is a great treasure for men and gods alike."[48] Though this succinct assessment is well known in East Asia, the reason why this text protects the state and commands the attention of the gods is not as obvious as it may sound. In order to see through the buildup of the rhetoric and the appeal of the *Great Perfection*, we need to turn to one of the earliest *Prajñāpāramitā* texts—*The Sūtra on the Prajñāpāramitā as the Way of Practice* (*Daoxing borejing* 道行般若經; hereafter *Way of Practice*), translated in 179 CE by Lokakṣema.[49]

45. It is also possible that *ranhou* 然後 marks the start of an omitted third prayer proper, instead of the omission of the benediction. Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 provide the standard benediction *mohe bore* 摩訶般若 (Skt. *mahāprajñā*); no. 10 uses *yunyun* 云云 ("et cetera"); nos. 2, 7, and 8 omit this part. For an explication of Section H, see Teiser, "The Literary Style of Dunhuang Healing Liturgies," 368–69.

46. For an analysis of the seven sections, see Teiser, "Shilun zhaiwen de biaoyanxing," 299–304.

47. In Chinese liturgical texts, this term can be used to refer to both the opening praise of the Buddha (Section A) or the praise of a ritual participant (Section C). For the use of parallel prose and its significance, see Teiser, "The Literary Style of Dunhuang Healing Liturgies," 356–61.

48. 此乃鎮國之典, 人天大寶 (Huili慧立, *Datang Dacien si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T no. 2053, 50:276b13–b14).

49. Except for one slightly earlier Gāndhārī manuscript that covers only chapters 1 and 5, the *Way of Practice* is the earliest extant version of the *8000-Lined Prajñāpāramitā* (which incidentally is still much shorter than 8000 lines); see Karashima Seishi, ed., *A Critical Edition of Lokakṣema's Translation of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2011), xii–xiii. Karashima's reconstruction of the proper names in the text has convincingly demonstrated that the *Way of Practice* was translated from a text written in Gāndhārī, instead of Sanskrit.

In the *Way of Practice*, after Subhūti preaches the *Prajñāpāramitā* doctrine to Indra and a host of *deva*s in chapter two, the Buddha reenters the scene in chapter three, "Qualities" (*Gongde pin* 功德品), to explain the "worldly qualities" 現世功德 of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, that is to say, the various benefits brought by the sonic practice of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.[50] To list the important ones, first, the hearer, reciter, or practitioner of the *Prajñāpāramitā* will be deeply honored and jointly protected by the various kinds of *deva*s;[51] second, he will not be harmed or murdered by a Māra, Māra-deva, human, or non-human;[52] third, "he will not be afraid [of any harm] when he is in the wilderness, on the road, or loses his way";[53] fourth, "even though he enters the battleground, he will not be hurt by weapons."[54] These "benefits" become the subject of expanded dialogues in the larger versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, such as the *18,000-Lined Prajñāpāramitā*, *25,000-Lined Prajñāpāramitā*, *Hundred Thousand*, and *Great Perfection*. For example, the above-mentioned fourth "quality," which may have resonated the most with the concerns of the Tibetan military government at Dunhuang, is expanded in the *Great Perfection* into the following,

> When a son or daughter of a good family enters the front of a battlefield with the troops, if they sincerely recite the *Prajñāpāramitā*, they will not be hurt or killed by weapons. All their enemies will generate compassion; those who attempt to hurt them will naturally be defeated. It is not possible for them to die on the battlefield![55]

In essence, *Great Perfection*-recitation is a "sonic act" that replays the sound of the Buddha's longest sermon, which was thought to have been preached to an audience consisting of both the visible (*śrāvaka*s and bodhisattvas) and the invisible (*deva*s). When the first *Prajñāpāramitā* text was composed in the first century before or after the Common Era, it had already been established in the *nikāya*/*āgama* scriptures that the Buddha was not only preaching to his human interlocutors, but also to supernatural beings, including various *deva*s, *yakṣa*s, *nāga*s, etc. An important development that happens in the earliest *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* is the mythical pledge that the Buddha extracts from those supernatural beings. In front of the Buddha's followers—the witnesses (*zheng* 證)—the four heavenly kings, Indra, and Brahmā Sahāmpati each promise the Buddha that they will listen whenever someone reads and studies the text and protect them against daemons, hindrances, and misfortunes.[56] In a Dunhuang Tibetan prayer titled "The Confession and Prayer by the Tibetan Emperor and His Court" (PT 175), the emperor starts his prayer by invoking a mythical pledge made by the supernatural beings to the Buddha in the sūtras, which very likely refers to this *Prajñāpāramitā* pledge.[57]

50. *Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:431a1–38a16; Karashima, *A Critical Edition*, 57–128.

51. *Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:431a1–a6 and 8:431a25–b2; Karashima, *A Critical Edition*, 57–60.

52. *Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:431a18–a21; Karashima, *A Critical Edition*, 59.

53. Kumārajīva, tr., *Xiaopin boreboluomi jing* 小品般若波羅蜜經 (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*), T no. 227, 8:541c25–c26; see *Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:431a23–a25; Karashima, *A Critical Edition*, 59.

54. 正使入軍，不被兵 (*Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:431c11–c12; Karashima, *A Critical Edition*, 64)

55. 是善男子、善女人等若隨軍旅交陣戰時，至心念誦如是般若波羅蜜多，不為刀杖之所傷殺，所對怨敵，皆起慈心。設欲中傷，自然退敗。喪命軍旅，終無是處！(*Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 5:568a25–28). See *Hundred Thousand*, in *bKa' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* (Beijing: Krung go'i Bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2006–2009), 18:562–63; Kimura Takayasu, ed., *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā II* (Tokyo: Sankibo Busshorin, 2009), 4:23.

56. *Daoxing bore jing*, T no. 224, 8:431a14–31b2. An expanded version is in *Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 7:146b1–47b11.

57. PT 175: "According to the sūtras, when in the past the Buddha Śākyamuni came to the world and turned the dharma-wheel, he exacted a pledge to act (*bya ba yi dam*) from all protectors, gods, *nāga*-kings, and their retinues in the ten directions. The pledge was made as follows, 'From now on, in any country where vessels of the Three Jewels are established, and the correct dharma is accordingly practiced, we, the lords and ministers together with

This pledge becomes a recurring theme in the expanded versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In chapter eighteen of the *Hundred Thousand* (or chapter twenty-nine, part five of the *Great Perfection*), the Buddha again reminds the *deva*s that they should even protect those who only have a *pro forma* relationship with the *Prajñāpāramitā*:

> Kauśika! Again, if human or non-human beings in a household, village, town, or city make a copy of this *Prajñāpāramitā* and keep it, and even if they do *not* take it up, study it, read it, understand it, or internalize it, they will *not* be taken advantage of by those who seek the opportunity to do harm.
>
> Why is that? In order to honor the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *deva*s in the great trichiliocosm, including the four great kings, from the Trāyastriṃśa *deva*s, . . . [a long list of devas omitted] to the Akaniṣṭha *deva*s, will perpetually and uninterruptedly guard, protect, and save those sons and daughters of a good family who have made a copy of this profound *Prajñāpāramitā* and kept it. These *deva*s will even arrive to serve, pay respect to, and make offerings to the *Prajñāpāramitā.*
>
> Kauśika! These are the worldly benefits for whoever makes a copy of this *Prajñāpāramitā* and keeps it![58]

This surprising claim also lays bare the idea that the "worldly qualities" of the *Great Perfection* are not mediated by any philosophical fine points and, instead, depend only on the existence of the text. As the *Great Perfection* explains, "the power of the *Prajñāpāramitā*" (*prajñāpāramitāyā bala*) is like the snake-repellent power of a herb called *maghī* [*moqi* 莫耆; Tib. *ma* g[*h*]*i*]; worldly evils will dissipate in front of the *Prajñāpāramitā* just like a serpent [*āśīviṣa*] recoils from the mere smell of *maghī*.[59] In other words, "worldly qualities" is a euphemism for unmediated magic power.[60] The *Great Perfection*, though made of meaningful words, can be employed as a spell. In fact, the scripture claims that it is the ultimate incantation:

> As such this *Prajñāpāramitā* is the *Great Efficacious Spell*; as such this *Prajñāpāramitā* is the *Great Wisdom Spell*; as such this *Prajñāpāramitā* is the *Unsurpassed Spell*; as such this *Prajñāpāramitā* is the *Matchless Spell*; as such this *Prajñāpāramitā* is the *King of All Spells*. It is the uppermost, the most marvelous, and the unrivalled. It possesses great power capable of subduing everything, and it cannot be subdued by anything. If a son or daughter of a good family studies such a *King of Spells* diligently, he or she would not harm himself or herself, or harm others, or be harmed by both [the self and others].[61]

---

their retinues, will avert all kinds of harm [from the country], and protect it and save it from battles with enemies, famines, human diseases, and cattle diseases.'" The Tibetan title is *Bod gyi lha btsan po 'khor bar dang bcas pa'i 'gyod tshangs dang smon lam du gsol ba*. Although no Chinese translation of the text has been found, a Chinese title for this text, "The Prayer Text for a Tibetan Buddhist Service" (*Tufan fashi fayuan wenben* 吐蕃法事發願文本), is inscribed on the back of the sheet.

58. *Hundred Thousand*, in *dKa' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, 18:567–69; Kimura, *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā II*, 4:26; see *Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 5:570b6–b16.

59. *Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 5:560b24–29; see *Hundred Thousand*, in *dKa' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, 18:525; Kimura, *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā II*, 4:6.

60. The self-referential term "power of the *Prajñāpāramitā*" (Skt. *prajñāpāramitāyā bala*; Tib. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i mthu*; Ch. *boreboluomiduo weishenli* 般若波羅蜜多威神力) is employed by the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras themselves; both the Chinese and Tibetan translations point to the fact that here the Sanskrit word *bala* ("power") refers to something magic by nature. By "magic," I mean that the efficacy in question is not subject to pure reason, but a matter of imagination. For an analysis of the role of verbal actions in the mechanics of a ritual, see Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Magic Power of Words," *Man, New Series* 3.2 (1968): 175–208. For Tambiah, the magic power of verbal actions hinges on the fact that "language . . . owes nothing to external reality" (p. 202). Hence, language has the power of invoking imagination and emotions, which in turn affect the ritual participants.

61. 如是般若波羅蜜多是大神呪，如是般若波羅蜜多是大明呪，如是般若波羅蜜多是無上呪，如是般若波羅蜜多是無等等呪，如是般若波羅蜜多是一切呪王。最上、最妙、無能及者，具大威力能伏一切，不

Repeating these five epithets, the *Great Perfection* further boasts that the Buddhas in the past, present, and future, owing to this profound *Great King of Spells*, realized, realize, and will realize the Great Unsurpassed Perfect Awakening.[62] Note that the first and the last epithets do not appear in the same passages in the *Hundred Thousand*.[63] In fact, in almost every other version of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, only three epithets are mentioned.[64] In contrast, the *Great Perfection* is uniquely awash with epithets that carry the metaphor of kingship, such as the *King of All Spells* (*yiqie zhouwang* 一切呪王), *Great King of Spells* (*dazhouwang* 大呪王), or *King of Great Efficacious Spells* (*dashenzhou wang* 大神呪王). The *Great Perfection* avoids the clichéd modus operandi of attaching a mantra or dhāraṇī to an existing scripture;[65] instead, it builds on its unparalleled size with the claim that it is an unparalleled wisdom-spell (Skt. *vidyā*; Tib. *rig sngags*; *mingzhou* 明咒), a Sanskrit pun intended.[66] Therefore, the *Great Perfection* tops the already over-the-top rhetoric of the *Prajñāpāramitā* by metaphors of kingship and positions itself as a royal ritual instrument of unparalleled size and unmatched potency, in keeping with the status of a king. In this sense, the long-playing chanting of the fascicles becomes the most straightforward way to harness the spell and redirect the magic power to more specific matters.[67]

為一切之所降伏。是善男子、善女人等精勤修學如是呪王，不為自害，不為害他，不為俱害 (*Great Perfection*, T, no. 220, 5:568b18–25).

62. *Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 5:580c7–c13. The same passage in the *Hundred Thousand* uses the epithet *Unequaled Spell* (*asamasamā vidyā*) instead of *Great King of Spells*; see Kimura, *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā II*, 4:55; *dKa' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, 18:631–32.

63. *Mahāvidyeyaṃ kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā, anuttareyaṃ kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā, niruttareyaṃ kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā, atra ca vidyāyāṃ śikṣamāṇeḥ kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā nātmavyābādhāya cetayate na paravyābādhāya cetayate nobhayavyābādhāya cetayate* (Kimura, *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā II*, 4:23–24). See *Hundred Thousand*, in *dKa' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, 18:564.

64. For example, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, T no. 227, 8:543b25–b27; *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, T no. 223, 8:286b29–c3 and 847c24–c25; *Way of Practice*, T no. 224, 8:433b20–c23. Note that the *Way of Practice* uses the variant *zhu* 祝 (read *zhou*) to stand for the more standard *zhou* 呪 ("spell").

65. For example, the *Heart Sūtra* adds a mantra that represents the *Prajñāpāramitā* at its end. "Therefore, the *Prajñāpāramitā* is to be known as the 'Great Wisdom Spell' (*mahavidyā*), the 'Supreme Wisdom Spell' (*anuttaravidyā*), and the 'Matchless Wisdom Spell' (*asamasamavidyā*). It dispels all suffering; for it is true and not false, the *Prajñāpāramitā* spell is spoken. The spell goes as follows: *gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā*" 故知般若波羅蜜是大明呪，無上明呪，無等等明呪，能除一切苦，眞實不虛，故説般若波羅蜜呪。即説呪曰：竭帝竭帝 波羅竭帝 波羅僧竭帝 菩提 僧莎呵 (*Mohe bore boluomi damingzhou jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜大明呪經, T no. 250, 8:847c24–c28). For the issues concerning this passage in the *Heart Sūtra*, see Jan Nattier "The *Heart Sutra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15.2 (1992): 211–13 n. 53. For the relationship between this textual phenomenon in Mahāyāna sūtras and ritual magic, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "Spells and Magical Practices as Reflected in the Early Chinese Buddhist Sources (c. 300–600 CE) and Their Implications for the Rise and Development of Esoteric Buddhism," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 41–71, especially 54–56.

66. The *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras generally do not refer to themselves as a mantra or dhāraṇī; the *Heart Sūtra*, which might not have been composed in India (Nattier, "*Heart Sutra,*" 153–223), provides a separate mantra. It seems that the compilers of the expanded *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras take textual expansion as an alternative way of "esotericizing" the *Prajñāpāramitā* to the use of mantras or dhāraṇīs. For the claim that the *Prajñāpāramitā* is even harder for the gods to comprehend than mantras, see *Great Perfection*, T no. 220, 5:454b07–454b10. Similarly, Tambiah argues that the distinction between unintelligible spells (e.g., Sanskrit mantras) and spells made of an intelligible language (e.g., Trobriand spells or, in our case, the *Great Perfection*) is not absolute but relative and that (un) intelligibility is not central to the mechanics of ritual magic; see Tambiah, "The Magic Power of Words," 181–82.

67. The orality of *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, which has a long history in China and is beyond the scope of this paper, stands in sharp contrast to the highly developed materiality of dhāraṇīs in China. For the practical traditions of writing down, inscribing, and physically embodying a dhāraṇī, see Paul Copp, *The Body Incantatory: Spells and the Ritual Imagination in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2014), 29.

CONCLUSION

Great Perfection-rotation as a royal ritual has an Indian pedigree, or at least a perceived one in the eyes of East Asian Buddhists. In Yijing's (635–713) *Biographies of Eminent Tang Monks Who Sought the Dharma in the Western Regions*, he relates a story about a devout Indian king:

> The Dhyāna Master Zhe . . . returned to East India and arrived at the country Samaṭata. The king was called Rājabhaṭa. This king deeply respected the Three Jewels and was a great upāsaka. . . . Every day he had 100,000 mold-imprinted clay icons made, had the 100,000-versed *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* read, and made an offering of 100,000 fresh flowers himself.[68]

Here the seemingly unrealistic scale of offering-making reminds us that the number 100,000 matters in a ritual context because of the grandeur it implies.[69] On the one hand, for the sponsor, the costlier the performance of the chanting is, the more unmediated power the text is perceived to contain; on the other hand, for the ritual audience, the magnitude of the ritual signals the socio-political status of the sponsor.[70]

The only reference to *Great Perfection*-rotation as an imperially sponsored ritual in Tang China is found in a "Memorial for Celebrating the End of the Rain" submitted to the Tang Emperor Daizong 代宗 composed in 777 CE.[71] It mentions an imperial decree that "orders monks from the monasteries in the capital to 'rotate' the *Great Perfection*, *The Great Peahen Spell* (*Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī*), and other sūtras in a vigorous effort to end the (excessive) rainfall."[72] Because of the existence of the imperially sanctioned ritual arenas for sūtra-rotation in the capital, this *Great Perfection*-rotation performance was likely an organized chanting liturgy. However, *Great Perfection*-rotation was clearly not a popular liturgy either in or outside the Tang capital in the ensuing centuries after the Chinese *Great Perfection* came into existence in 663 CE, evidenced by its rare appearance in Chinese sources and its absence in the eighth-century anthology of liturgies titled *The Paragons of Liturgical Scripts* (*Zhaiwanwen* 齋琬文).[73]

For a contemporary parallel of the liturgical scripts of *Great Perfection*-rotation at Dunhuang, we need to turn to medieval Japan, where the tradition of *Great Perfection*-rotation

68. Yijing, *Datang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* 大唐西域求法高僧傳, T no. 2066, 51:8b25–c04: 僧哲禪師者，. . . 到三摩呾吒國。國王名曷羅社跋弋(var.: 俾)。王既深敬三寶，爲大鄔波索迦。. . . 每於日日造拓模泥像十萬軀，讀大般若十萬頌，用鮮華十萬尋(var.: 朵)親自供養。

69. The vastness of the *Great Perfection* or *Hundred Thousand* at least partially contributes to the veneration that the text commands. According to Xuanzang's biography, as he was deciding on whether to translate the *Great Perfection* in full or to condense it, he received sibylline dreams that compelled him to take the original size seriously (Huili 慧立, *Datang Dacien si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T no. 2053, 50:275c24–76a9).

70. It is possible that in India the compilation of the expanded versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā,* such as the *18,000-lined*, *25,000-lined*, and *100,000-lined* versions, was liturgically motivated in the first place. In each case, the content of a smaller *Prajñāpāramitā* was expanded at the hands of the ritualist(s) to a size commensurate with the social status of their clients.

71. See Feixi 飛錫,"Heqing biao yishou bingda" 賀晴表一首并答, in Yuanzhao 圓照, ed., *Sanzang heshang biaozhi ji* 三藏和上表制集, T no. 2120, 52:854a16–b4. The author Feixi was one of Amoghavajra's initiated disciples (*guanding dizi* 灌頂弟子).

72. 令京城諸寺釋門衆，轉大般若、孔雀王等經，精勤止雨用 (T no. 2120, 52:854a18–a19). For the connections between the *Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī* and Chinese kingship constructed by Amoghavajra, see Charles D. Orzech, "Metaphor, Translation, and the Construction of Kingship in *The Scripture for Humane Kings* and the *Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārājñī Sūtra*," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 13 (2002): 76–80.

73. For the content of the ten incomplete manuscripts, see Wang Sanqing 王三慶, *Dunhuang Fojiao zhaiyuanwen yanjiu* 敦煌佛教齋文研究 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 2008), 115–21.

was established in the eighth century.[74] Kukai's 空海 (774–835) "Liturgical Script for *Great Perfection*-Rotation Humbly Announced by a Priest on Behalf of the Emperor" composed in the 820s is the earliest example of this kind of liturgical script outside China.[75] Despite the strong resemblance between Kūkai's piece and the Dunhuang examples, there are several key differences. First, Kūkai's prayer proper is liturgically much simpler than the Dunhuang cascading alternation between empowerments and prayers proper (Section F). Second, in terms of content, Kūkai's piece is more sophisticated, as he attempts to infuse elements of the *Prajñāpāramitā* discourse into his composition,[76] whereas no discernible effort of this kind can be found in the liturgical script at Dunhuang. Last, Kūkai's piece lacks any discernible military overtone and does not even attempt to invoke protective deities; instead, it is more concerned with the generation of merit and wisdom on behalf of the emperor.[77]

The existence of an eighth-century Tang antecedent and a more concrete Japanese tradition suggests that the *Great Perfection*-rotation tradition at Dunhuang drew most of its inspiration from the imperial rituals and the *zhaiwen* tradition that had existed in Tang China. Nonetheless, it was at Dunhuang that an obscure ritual in the Tang capital was transformed into a well-defined liturgy that catered to the interests of a ruler. The liturgy might be considered a composite made of three layers. At its center, the political connotation, the practice of chanting a spell-like scripture, and the ideology of merit originated in India; the literary form of the liturgical script first appeared in China proper and later evolved at Dunhuang; the performance at Dunhuang was first carried out under Tibetan sponsorship, and the administrative practices revolving around the liturgy took form in the Tibetan Occupation period.

74. Scholars generally point to an entry under the third month of the third year of the Daihō 大宝 period (703 CE) of Emperor Monmu in the *Shoku Nihongi* as the earliest evidence for an instance of *Great Perfection*-rotation in Japan, where it reads, "in the third month, . . . [the court] ordered the four major monasteries to recite the *Great Perfection* and ordain one hundred people" 三月 . . . 詔四大寺讀大般若経，度一百人; see Aoiki, ed., *Shoku Nihongi*, 1:66. It is not clear to what extent this refers to a formal public liturgy; in fact, the compounds "rotation-chanting" (*tendoku* 転読) and "sūtra-rotation" (*tenkyō* 転経) are not used here at all. The chanting of the *Great Perfection* was performed again in 725 and 735 and became an annual performance at Daianji 大安寺 in 737 (Aoiki, ed., *Shoku nihongi*, 2:158, 2:290, and 2:312). Hence, it might be the case that a *Great Perfection*-rotation liturgy took form in Japan in the 730s. The so-called "cursory reading" (*ryakudoku* 略読) of the *Great Perfection*, which involves choreographed performance of hurling up a foldable fascicle (*orihon* 折本) and chanting only the chapter title and/or a few lines, is a Japanese invention; see Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, ed., *Bukkyō daijiten* 仏教大辞典 (Tokyo: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1954–1963), 3933b. Enomoto convincingly argues that the *ryakudoku* performance was invented at the earliest after the twelfth century; see Enomoto Eiichi 榎本栄一, "Kyōten no dendoku ni tsuite" 経典の転読について, *Tōyōgaku kenkyū* 27 (1992): 45–58.

75. See Kūkai, "Ujō hōi ki ōdai tendoku Daihannyakyō ganmon" 和尚奉為祈皇帝轉讀大般若經願文, in *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 弘法大師全集, ed. Sofū Senyōkai 祖風宣揚会 (Wakayama: Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1965–1968), 6.530–31. The genre *ganmon* 願文 in medieval Japan is derived from *zhaiwen* in China; both have similar overall structure and ritual functions. Despite the literal meaning of *ganmon* (lit., "prayer text"), *ganmon*, just like *zhaiwen*, is much more complicated than a prayer proper, which normally constitutes the last section of a *ganmon*. Hence, here I take the liberty to translate *ganmon* as "liturgical script."

76. For example, "we wish that this singular word (i.e., *kū* 空; "empty"), [which ultimately represents] the emptiness of the idea of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatāśūnyatā*), cleanses the karma of our people, and that the two principles of omniscience (Skt. *sarvajñajñāna*) increase the merit of our sovereign" 仰願空空一字，蕩吾民之業；智智二理，茂吾君之福 (Kūkai, "Daihannyakyō ganmon" 6.531). Note that there was a difference between the *zhaiwen* and *ganmon* in terms of literary importance. In medieval China and at Dunhuang, the composition of *zhaiwen* was not deemed a serious intellectual activity and hence was mostly carried out by unknown monks; in medieval Japan, *ganmon* was considered a worthy genre, whose composers include famous writers such as Ōe no Masahira 大江匡衡, Ōe no Asatsuna 大江朝綱, Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真, etc.

77. The concerns of the court in medieval Japan were mostly focused on natural phenomena (such as rainfall, earthquakes, anomalous weather, etc.); the *Great Perfection*-rotation as an instrument of rain-making was particularly important; see Sasaki Reishin 佐佐木令信, "Kodai ni okeru ki'u to Bukkyō: Kyūchū midokyō wo megutte" 古代における祈雨と仏教：宮中御読経をめぐって, *Ōtani gakuhō* 50.2 (1970): 65–88.

A typical *Great Perfection*-rotation liturgy at Dunhuang is made of three modules, (1) the preparation stage where ritual instruments, ritual space, and ritual performers are set up, (2) the pronouncement and performance of a liturgical script, and (3) the long-playing chanting of the scripture mostly performed by two shifts of reciters taking turns. Though a sūtra-rotation liturgy could use the same procedure and feature non-*Great Perfection* scriptures as ritual instruments, the *Great Perfection* was the scripture of choice when the sponsor had a political connection with rulership. "By the magic power of the *Perfection of Wisdom,*" the *Great Perfection*-rotation liturgy at Dunhuang appears to be a royal mechanism to lure the protective deities in, to remind them of their solemn pledge, to direct their attention to a specific situation, and to urge them to react against the enemies.

As it turns out, the actual use of the *Great Perfection* at Dunhuang was quite different from what scholars had anticipated.[78] This is an expected result, since the ritual practice revolving around the *Great Perfection*, which had a history of its own and a local ritual context, was far removed from both the intellectual context that gave rise to the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras in India and the scholastic tradition in China proper that promoted the study of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.[79] In this sense, liturgical texts matter in that they help us discover, gauge, and make sense of the gap between rhetoric and practice. Sometimes they even offer a lens to see through the rhetoric, especially when it comes to the scriptures that routinely employ allegories, paradoxes, and hyperboles.

ABBREVIATIONS

BD	Dunhuang manuscripts at National Library of China, Beijing.
U	Kyō'u Sho'oku 杏雨書屋 Dunhuang collection.
ITJ	India Office Library Tibetan J manuscripts (IOL Tib J) at British Library.
PC	Fonds Pelliot chinois at Bibliothèque nationale de France.
PT	Fonds Pelliot tibétain at Bibliothèque nationale de France.
S.	The Stein Collection Or.8210 at British Library.
T	*Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経. Edited by J. Takukusu and K. Watanabe. Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankō kai, 1924–1934.
WB	The Dunhuang Collection at National Diet Library, Japan.
YW	Huang Zheng 黃徵 and Wu Wei 吳偉, eds. *Dunhuang yuanwen ji* 敦煌愿文集. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1995.

78. Fang Guangchang speculates that the "doctrinal study" (*yixue* 義學) of the *Great Perfection* at Dunhuang reached a high level (Fang Guangchang, "Qianyan" 前言, *Dunhuang Fojiao jinglu jijiao*, 12); Zheng Binglin conjectures that there was large-scale "sūtra-preaching" 講經 of the *Great Perfection* at Dunhuang (Zheng, "Wantang Wudai Dunhuang diqu," 179); Hirai surmises that Fascicle 52 of the *Great Perfection* was used in studying Buddhist meditation (Hirai, "Dai hannyagyō," 14–15). There is a lack of evidence for either Fang or Zheng's claims. Fascicle 52 was copied more frequently than other fascicles, because local scribes, knowing that local sponsors were not concerned with which fascicles were being copied, tended to copy certain fascicles that they had easy access to.

79. For example, there is no sign of "book shrines" at Dunhuang, despite the fact that Schopen derives his hypothesis from the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras that were popular at Dunhuang as well; see Gregory Schopen, "The phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975): 147–81. The absence of "*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*" at Dunhuang—regardless of how to construe the phrase with precision—does not negate Schopen's hypothesis; the point here is that what is prescribed in a scripture might be entirely irrelevant to the practice revolving around the scripture in a different place and time. Hirai also observes that the ritual tradition of the *Great Perfection* in East Asia stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese scholastic tradition centered on the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Hirai, "Dai hannyagyō," 12).