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*Dynamics in Buddhist Networks in Eastern Central Asia 6th–14th Centuries*

**BuddhistRoad Paper No. 4.1**

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# **DONORS AND IMAGE AT DUNHUANG: A CASE STUDY OF OA 1919,0101,0.54**

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## BUDDHISTROAD PAPER

Peer reviewed

ISSN: 2628-2356

DOI: 10.13154/rub.br.121.107

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Please quote this working paper as follows:

**Sørensen, Henrik H., “Donors and Image in Dunhuang: A Case Study of OA 1919,0101,0.54,” *BuddhistRoad Paper 4.1* (2019).**

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### SPONSORS:



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 725519).

DONORS AND IMAGE AT DUNHUANG:  
A CASE STUDY OF OA 1919,0101,0.54

HENRIK H. SØRENSEN

*Abstract*

This essay explores a case of a religious painting in Dunhuang, an icon of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (OA 1919,0101,0.54), offered as a joint, multi-generational family enterprise. During the 9th and 10th centuries, we see that donor-portraits became increasingly important as fixtures in votive paintings produced in Dunhuang, in some cases even surpassing the importance of the main icon itself. Not only was it the living who sought to create religious merit for themselves and their deceased relatives, but in many paintings the dead were still very much ‘active,’ or at least present.

*1. Introduction*

Despite more than one hundred years of study of the material from Cave 17 at the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) in Dunhuang (敦煌), research into donor portraits—images of those who were behind the creation of much of the religious art associated with the site—has only begun in earnest within the last three decades or so.<sup>1</sup> Since then, scholars increasingly note that these portraits, though often generic, reveal important things about religious devotion, social organisation, and local clan history in the Dunhuang region during the late 9th to 10th centuries, i.e. the time when power in the region was under the control of the so-called Guiyijun regime (851–1036?, 歸義軍, Return-to-Allegiance Army). Donor portraits and accompanying donor inscriptions, though

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<sup>1</sup> For pioneering studies on Buddhist donors in Dunhuang see, Su Yinghui 蘇輝 (Kawasaki Michiko 川崎ミチコ trans.), “Bokō Yurin ni kutsu no kyōjin daigi ni tsuite 莫高 榆林 二窟の供人題記について [Records of Donors in the Two Cave Complexes of Mogao and Yulin],” in *Tonkō to Chūgoku bukkyō 敦煌中国と仏教 [Dunhuang and Chinese Buddhism]*, ed. Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 and Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅 (Tokyo: Daitō shūppansha, 1984), 415–424; Edith Wiercimok, “The Donor Figure in the Buddhist Painting of Dunhuang,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 1 (1990): 203–226; and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Guiyijun shi yanjiu 歸義軍史研究 [A Study of the History of the Guiyijun]* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 266–297.



often terse and formulaic, provide an important additional dimension to the history of Shazhou (沙州) and Guazhou (瓜州).<sup>2</sup>

As Michel Soymié discusses in his now classic article, many of the dedications on banner paintings involve the practice of the transference of merit (Chin. *huixiang* 迴向), in which relatives perform good deeds on behalf of deceased relatives. As such, these dedications are part of mortuary cults. However, the transference or dedication of merit also served other purposes/concerns in addition to/beyond those of the afterlife, although the latter was certainly also *en vogue*. Buddhist offerings presented to institutions in Dunhuang give evidence of donations whose resulting merit was sought for both altruistic intents as well as more immediate self-interested purposes.

This paper elucidates one such painting presented as an offering together with its elaborate dedications. The painting is part of the Oriental Arts (OA) Collection in the British Museum, and received a short descriptive note from Roderick Whitfield, when he published the majority of the paintings Aurel Stein brought back in the early 1980s (OA 1919,0101,0.54; fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> In his discussion of the painting, Whitfield

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<sup>2</sup> Among the most significant studies of recent years are Michel Soymié, “Les donateurs dans les peintures de Dunhuang,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 11 (1999–2000): 1–24; Zhang Peijun 张培君, “Dunhuang zangjing dong chutu yihua zhong gongyang ren tuxiang chutan 敦煌藏经洞出土遗画中供养人图像初探 [A Preliminary Discussion of Portraits of Donors found in the Extant Paintings found in the Scriptural Depository Cave at Dunhuang],” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Studies] 4 (2007): 91–97; Li Yingjin 李映瑾, “Dunhuang juanhua gongyang ren yuanwen chutan 敦煌绢画供养人愿文初探 [A Preliminary Study of Donors’ Prayer Texts in the Silk Paintings from Dunhuang],” *Dunhuang xue* 敦煌学 [Dunhuang Studies] 28 (2010): 1–18; and Sakajiri Akihiro 坂尻彰宏, “Mitsu no saku isao zō—kuyō hito zō karamita kigigun shi 三つの索勳像—供養人像からみた歸義軍史 [Three Rows of Images: The History of the Guiyijun from the Perspective of Donor Images],” *Tonkō shahon kenkyū nembō* 敦煌寫本研究年報 [Yearbook of Dunhuang Manuscript Studies] 10 (2016): 309–325. It is noteworthy that, besides the work of Lilla Russell-Smith on Uyghur patrons and donors, no studies of importance on them have been published in the West for quite some time. Cf. Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Roderick Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection at the British Museum*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha 1982–1985), pl. 26. A somewhat messy attempt at reconstructing the text into modern Chinese can be found in Ma De 馬德, “Dunhuang juanhua tiji jilu 敦煌絹畫題記輯錄 [A Compilation of the Inscriptions on the Silk Paintings from Dunhuang],” *Dunhuang xue jikan* 敦煌学辑刊 [Journal of Dunhuang Studies] 1 (1996): 136–147.

is primarily interested in its main icon and eschews any discussion of the donors, or the relationship between the donors and the image.



Figure 1. Banner painting of Avalokiteśvara offered by Mi Yande. Dunhuang, second half of 10th century. OA 1919,0101,0.54, BM.

I shall do the opposite here. Although for practical reasons I provide a brief presentation of the main icon and its iconography, I concentrate on the donor portraits and their interrelationship, as well as on an in-depth discussion of the motifs, of donors and the religious context in which they operated.



## 2. A Description of the Painting

Let us briefly review what the main icon in the painting represents and how it was conceived. Our painting is essentially unorthodox and idiosyncratic, and does not adhere to traditional templates nor standard compositional norms for rendering Avalokiteśvara images. Instead, it shows a rather eclectic approach to Buddhist iconography, which is not only evident in the main icon itself, but in the entire composition.

The image of Avalokiteśvara is nothing short of an anomaly, not just in the formal sense of late Tang (618–907, 唐) and Five Dynasties (906–978, 五代) Buddhist iconography, but even when seen within the context of 10th century imagery at Dunhuang. It is indeed an odd example, one which—to my knowledge—has no match elsewhere among the banner paintings from Mogao Cave 17. First of all, the image itself represents a somewhat peculiar conflation of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, which is found in the standard iconographical vocabulary of the late Tang. The image's primary identifying marker, in addition to the invocation set in a separate cartouche in the painting's upper left corner, is the small Amitābha placed in the crown. The flaming jewel held in the left hand, possibly indicating the celebrated *cintāmaṇi* pearl or wish-fulfilling gem, is a feature that is normally not associated with two-armed forms of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. However, standard images of Kṣitigarbha *are* commonly shown with a pearl (or crystal ball?) in the more or less same manner as the bodhisattva is depicted here. Images of Kṣitigarbha also feature a raised right hand, similar to the bodhisattva in this painting. The position of the legs is reminiscent of certain bodhisattva images, with one leg pendant on a lotus base and the other bent slightly under the figure. A peculiar trait here is the placement of the foot of the pendant left leg, which is hidden from view behind the lotus base (fig. 1).



Figures 2 and 3. The Youth of Good and the Youth of Evil.  
Detail of figure 1.

Flanking Avalokiteśvara are two youthful-looking characters commonly referred to as the Youths of Good and Evil (Chin. *shan tongzi* 善童子, *e tongzi* 惡童子) (figs. 2–3). This pair of minor spirit-officials are believed to be in charge of the records of the karmic deeds of humans, which are used to judge each individual at the end of his or her life.<sup>4</sup> The presence of the Youths of Good and Evil in a painting featuring Avalokiteśvara is slightly unusual, even in the context of the hybrid iconography we often see in the 10th century Buddhist paintings from Dunhuang. This pair of

<sup>4</sup> For an attempt at contextualising these spirits, see Henrik H. Sørensen, “The Meeting of Daoist and Buddhist Spatial Imagination: The Construction of the Netherworld in Medieval China,” in *Locating Religions: Contact, Diversity and Translocality*, ed. Reinhold F. Gleis and Nicholas Jaspert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 234–292.



secondary divinities usually assist in the bureaucracy of the netherworld, where they keep the records of good and evil karmic deeds. As such, they more typically belong in the entourage of Kṣitigarbha or Yāma, rather than Avalokiteśvara.<sup>5</sup> I suspect that the logic behind their presence in our painting is that they were meant to guarantee that the very deed of commissioning and donating the painting was recorded. By inserting this pair of divine officials into the painting, the donors were ensuring through representation that their meritorious deed would not go unnoticed.

In the upper part of the painting we see a pair of infants with their hands in veneration, seated on lotuses on either side of the bodhisattva. They are clearly not meant to represent *apsaras*, the heavenly musicians often found in Buddhist iconographical compositions (also in the Mogao Caves). Who could they possibly be? One possibility is that they represent the spirits of those fortunate beings who are reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land, Sukhāvātī, since there is a well-established connection between Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha. Moreover, the presence of the Youths of Good and Evil as indications of karmic judgement relating to rebirth, also supports a connection between these *putti*-like images and Sukhāvātī.

Accompanying the divinities are cartouches with captions identifying the three principal deities in the painting. The main caption is that of Avalokiteśvara, and is in the form of an invocation. It simply reads: "Namo Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva."<sup>6</sup> The captions of the Youths of Good and Evil read: "Time of Offering to the Youth of Evil," and "Offering to the Youth of Good," respectively.<sup>7</sup> The astute observer may notice that the character for time (Chin. *shi* 時) has been added to the caption of the Youth of Evil, which may underscore the event taking place, i.e. that the act of donating the painting to a Buddhist institution would be noticed and recorded by the powers on high.

Finally, we have at the bottom of the painting the registers with the donors arranged in two tiers or levels, with the figures placed in four sections. The men on the right side of the viewer, and the women on the left. At this point in our discussion it should be noted that the depicted

<sup>5</sup> This observation was also made by Whitfield, however without much in terms of elaboration or explication. Cf. Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia*, vol. 2, pl. 27.

<sup>6</sup> 南无觀世音菩薩.

<sup>7</sup> 惡童子供養時, 善童子供養.



portraits include deceased family members as well as the living, who were the ones behind the creation and sponsoring of the painting.

### 3. *The Donors and their Family Backgrounds*

The captions accompanying the donor portraits offer interesting insights into the social structure at Dunhuang during the early Northern Song (960–1126, 北宋). Not only do they clearly identify fifteen of the sixteen donors depicted, they also document an unusually high degree of interconnectedness through marriage among certain members of the leading families in the area.

Starting with the two right hand side registers, i.e. those belonging to the males, we first encounter the principal donor Mi Yande (second half of 10th c., 迷延德) in the top register, facing the cartouche bearing the central donor dedication. Mi Yande is an elderly gentleman easily identified by the long-handled incense burner he holds. His cartouche reads, “Wholeheartedly given by the principal donor and master Mi Yande, as an eternal offering” (fig. 4).



Figure 4. Male donors in the first upper row of the right side registers.  
Detail of figure 1.



Behind/next to Mr. Mi is a certain Yuanchang (n.d., 願昌), whose clan affiliation is not provided. He is identified by the adjacent cartouche, which reads: “Wholeheartedly given by the male Yuanchang as an offering” (fig. 4).

The third donor in the top register is a certain Yuanying (n.d., 願盈), also without his family name. The caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given by the male Yuanying as an offering” (fig. 4).

The last donor in the top register is yet another gentleman without his family name, called Fuchang (n.d., 富長). His caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given by the male Fuchang as an offering” (fig. 4).

Although we cannot be entirely certain, that the three males in the top register appear without family identifications probably indicates that they are three retainers or even family members of Mr. Mi. It is noteworthy that they have been rendered in gradually reduced scale, indicating their respective ranking in the family hierarchy.

The bottom right register contains four figures, the first of whom is a member of the Sun clan, Mr. Sun Chouta (n.d., 孫醜撻). His caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an eternal offering by Sun Chouta” (fig. 5).

Following him is another scion of the Sun clan, Sun Chouding (n.d., 孫醜定), who may be Chouta’s son. His caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given by Sun Chouding as an offering” (fig. 5).

Finally, we have two children or youthful figures clad in red. They are also of the Sun clan and share a single caption, which notes, “Wholeheartedly given by Sun Chou’er and Sun Changxing as an offering” (fig. 5).



Figure 5. Male donors in second row of the right side registers.  
Detail of figure 1.

The top register on the left side depicts four women. The principal female donor is a member of the Cao clan, Dunhuang’s most prestigious clan. Given her place in the arrangement, she is likely the wife of Mi Yande. The identifying text reads, “Wholeheartedly given as an eternal offering by the principal donor, the new wife of the Cao clan” (fig. 6).

Next to Mrs. Cao is a second female donor, whose robe is slightly more elaborate than those of the other women. The caption identifies her as a woman from the Li clan and reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an offering by the pure servant-[woman], who has from the Li clan” (fig. 6).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In a personal communication with Tim Barrett (May 2019), he has suggested that this woman was directly linked with Mr. Mi through blood-relations, and may actually have been his sister. Moreover, she had left the Mi family to marry into the

The third woman in line is also designated as a ‘new wife.’ Her caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an offering by the new wife of the Yin clan” (fig. 6).

The final female figure in the upper left register is yet another ‘new wife,’ this time of the Wang clan. Her caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an offering by the new wife of the Wang clan” (fig. 6).



Figure 6. Female donors in first row of the left side register.  
Detail of figure 1.

The lower left register also depicts four female figures, the first of which is a woman from the Kang clan, most likely the first wife of Sun Chouta.

Li clan. This would make her a lady of importance, and not a concubine as I initially thought when starting to work on the painting.

Her caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an offering by the new wife of the Kang clan” (fig. 7).

She is followed by another female who is also entitled ‘Sun’s new wife,’ and who would appear to be Sun Chouta’s second wife. Her caption reads: “Wholeheartedly given as an offering by Sun, the new wife of the Zhang clan” (fig. 7).

Finally, we have two figures representing young girls. Their captions read: “Wholeheartedly given by Sun Chouzi (n.d., 孫醜子) as an offering,” and “Wholeheartedly given by Sun Changtai (n.d., 孫長泰) as an offering” (fig. 7). The two girls are likely the daughters of Sun Chouta and his two wives (cf. 7.1.1. in the appendix).



Figure 7. Female donors in second row of the left side register.  
Detail of figure 1.

These captions are obviously rather generic and replicate a highly formalised and stylized donor typology.



As for the pictorial arrangement of the donors, it is clear that the artist employed a social, hierarchal ranking of the figures through their respective sizes and order. The donor panels uphold a strict division between genders and indicate a generational ranking. This hierarchy is even upheld in the case of secondary relatives in collateral lines. This hierarchical arrangement is similar in function to the manner in which lineages are represented in ancestral paintings from time/place..., which depict lineages as... . These differences in gender, generation, and status are highlighted through the hierarchy of scale, in which each person is depicted as larger or smaller in accordance with their status, as in the case of Mr. Fuchang, whose portrait is rendered in slightly smaller size than those of his peers, indicating his status as the youngest

Perhaps one exception to this rigid hierarchical system is the second female portrait in the upper register, next to Madame Cao, which is described as the ‘pure servant-woman’ from the Li clan. It is interesting that she is second only to Mr. Mi’s principal wife, and that she wears a more decorated dress than the other women. As stated above she was likely the sister of Mr. Mi. In any case, it is interesting to note that she is placed before the two other ‘new wives’ in the arrangement, despite not being a “new wife” herself.

#### 4. *The Colophon*

The dedication text/panel of the painting serves as a division between the male and female donors (fig. 8). It records the intentions of the principal donor, Mr. Mi Yande, and as such reveals his devotion to Avalokiteśvara. It also conveys his prayers for his fellow beings, in particular the present and future members of the Sun clan. The text reads (fig. 8, see also 7.1.2. in the appendix):

The principal donor, the Buddhist follower of pure faith, Overseer of Gardens and Government Buildings in Dunhuang District, concurrently [in charge of] the Garden of Great Progress, as well as [serving as] Registrar of Families, Mi Yan<sup>9</sup>de, has set his mind on donating a painting [depicting] the Great Sympathetic and Compassionate Alleviator of Suffering, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, praying that the country will be at peace, the

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<sup>9</sup> The text has here *yuan/yun* (員), which appears to be an error. It should be *yan* (延), according to the identification in the portrait’s caption given above.

people respectful, the God of the Soil and Grain [(*she ji* 社稷)]<sup>10</sup> be persistently prosperous, that the population is at peace and pleased,<sup>11</sup> that there be no happenings of calamities or misfortune, and that the descendants of the Sun [clan] may flourish for a million years of wealth [...] eternally given as an offering, together with an abundance of incense and the lighting of pure lamps [(*jingdeng* 淨燈)].<sup>13</sup> This dedication was recorded on the 17th day of the 7th month of the 8th year of the Taiping Xingguo..

This formal record of the donated painting shows that, as the principal donor, Mr. Mi is mostly concerned with dedicating the accrued merit towards the general good/wellbeing of the nation and its people. We only see a more personalised or self-interested aspect/note/feature to the dedication of merit when the Sun clan is singled out for special mention. It is noteworthy that the text makes no mention of deceased ancestors, which underscores the fact that these paintings could be given for a wide range of reasons other than filial piety, mortuary beliefs, or other practices concerning deceased members of one's own family.

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<sup>10</sup> This can also be interpreted as a poetic reference to the state of the nation, i.e. the Northern Song empire.

<sup>11</sup> The text has here *yao* (藥), i.e. medicine, which is obviously an error for *le* (樂) happiness or bliss.

<sup>12</sup> One character illegible.

<sup>13</sup> 'Pure lamps' indicates that they are religious offerings.

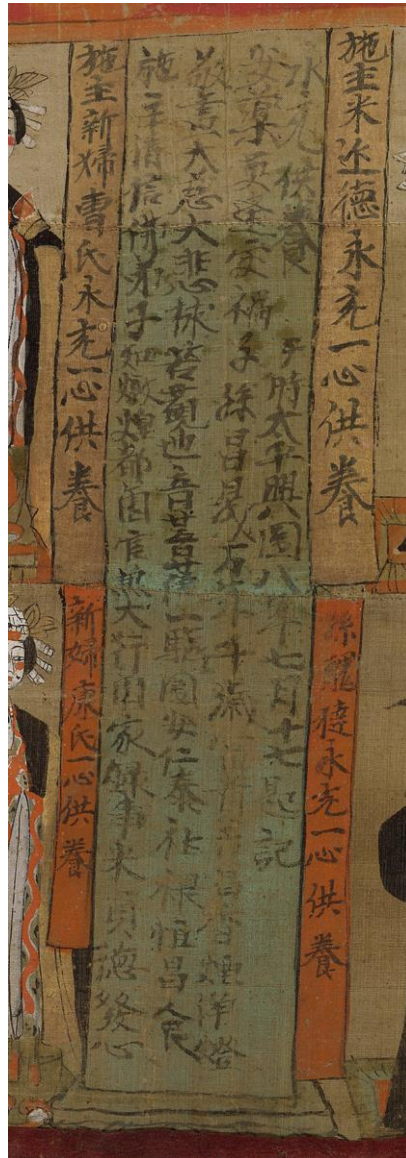


Figure 8. Colophon in lower middle register.  
Detail of figure 1.



### 5. *On the Sun Clan and Its Involvement with Buddhism*

Before ending this excursion into the circumstances of a single painting which involved members of several of Dunhuang's families, it would seem worthwhile to take a brief look at the Sun clan's relationship with Buddhism, and it fits into the broader picture of Dunhuang's Buddhist history, since the Sun clan features so centrally among the donors.

The Sun clan's relationship with Buddhism, as followers and donors, can be documented well back in Dunhuang's history. We have at least one case in 670, when a copy of the first chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (T. 262.9) was commissioned by a lay woman of the clan on behalf of her deceased mother (P. 2881, fig. 9). Around the same time, another member of the Sun clan, a certain Sun Xuanshuang (fl. 7th c., 孫玄爽), who served as a scribe in the local government, also appears to have done work for the local Huadu Temple (Chin. Hudu si 化度寺). From his hand we have a copy of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (S. 1456), not as an example of a personal offering, but in his capacity of scribe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A number of members of the Sun clan are known to have functioned as scribes and scripture copyists in Dunhuang during the Tang and Five Dynasties period, as low-ranking members of the local government and for the Buddhist temples. For another example, see S. 4012.

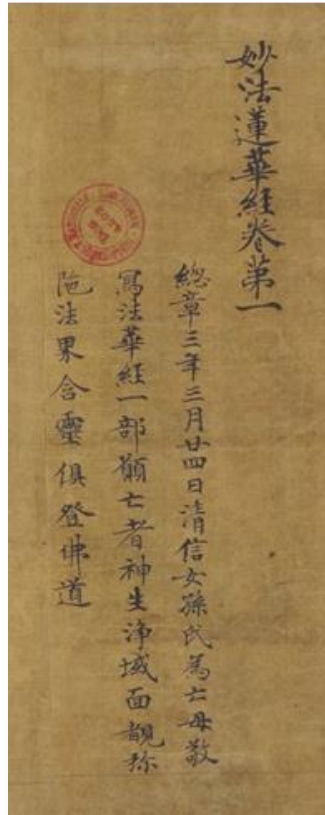


Figure 9. Colophon of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*. Dunhuang, 670.  
P. 2881, BnF.

Likewise, we find a short note appended to a manuscript copy of the apocryphal *Guanding jing* 觀頂經 [Scripture of Consecration] (T. 1331.21), supposedly from the 7th century (Giles, 97b), a text that is essentially several different scriptures bundled together to promote a series of powerful spells, a statement to the effect that: “Received and upheld by Sun Shanhu [(fl. 7th c., 孫善護)], the disciple of the Bodhisattva Precepts.”<sup>15</sup> Given that the Bodhisattva Precepts<sup>16</sup> are directly

<sup>15</sup> S. 3768: 菩薩戒弟子孫善護受持.

mentioned, we must surmise that Mr. Sun was a lay person rather than a monk.

Another Buddhist scripture dedication, this time the short version of the *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T. 367.12) from the beginning of the Kaiyuan period (713–741), describes how the text/scripture was copied as a donation by a certain Sun Sizhong (fl. first half of 8th c., 孫思忠). In the text, Sun refers to himself as a ‘disciple of pure faith’ (Chin. *jingxin dizi* 清信弟子). The lengthy donor’s dedication, a classic example of Buddhist devotion and spirituality, makes special reference to how uttering the spell for rebirth in the Pure Land (Chin. *Amituo fo shuo Zhou* 阿彌陀佛說呪 [Amitābha Buddha Utters the Spell])<sup>17</sup> multiple times will effectuate the practitioner’s arrival in that hallowed destination. The more utterances one makes, the faster one’s goal will be achieved (S. 1910).<sup>18</sup>

We also have an instance, albeit much later, of a member of the family serving as temple controller (Chin. *sizhu* 寺主) in CE 911. Since temple controller is a monastic title, this indicates that members of the Sun clan were also part of local Buddhist communities at that time (P. 3638, S. 2614V<sup>o</sup>). Likewise, a fragment of what appears to have been a ledger dating from the beginning of the 10th century mentions a Sun Rongzi (n.d., 孫榮子) in its list of monks (P. 5579 (1)).

Another piece of data on the Sun clan and their involvement with Buddhism relates how an association for managing irrigation held a vegetarian feast to commemorate the passing of one of its members, a certain Sun Huizi (d.u., 孫灰子). The feast took place at the home of a person who appears to have been the association’s leader. The date for this event is only given with *jiazi*, so it might have taken place either in 898 or 958 (P. 5032). Although the person being commemorated

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<sup>16</sup> Bodhisattva precepts were widely bestowed upon the Buddhist laity in medieval China, and there are numerous examples of this. The practice is also well-documented in the Dunhuang manuscripts, including a large number of ordination certificates, mostly dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. Zhanru 湛如, *Dunhuang fojiao liyi du yanjiu* 敦煌佛教律儀制度研究 [A Study of Dunhuang’s Buddhist Vinaya Rituals and Regulations], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 133165. It was the the apocryphal *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 [Brahmajāla Scripture], (T. 1484.24) which served as the primary, scriptural authority for the practices relating to the Bodhisattva precepts.

<sup>17</sup> This title also appears in the Dunhuang manuscript of S. 5337, where the same spell is found.

<sup>18</sup> For a full translation of the dedication, see Giles, 103ab.



certainly appears to belong to a lowly strata of the population, the fact that a vegetarian feast was held on his death indicates that the family was Buddhist.

We also find members of the Sun clan in donor inscriptions related to the construction and maintenance of caves at Dunhuang. However, they do not appear as leaders or primary donors, but as ordinary participants, either as Buddhist clerics or ordinary lay persons (DMGT: 95, 161, etc.). This would seem to indicate that only some of the Sun lineages were sufficiently important to be counted among the powerful clans in the Shazhou area.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article we see how donated Buddhist paintings were conceived and utilised not only as expressions of Buddhist devotion and piety by middle-range members of Dunhuang's society, but also as formal statements of clan connections and joint action. We also see that the reasons/motivations for donating such paintings were not always associated with mortuary concerns and the afterlife, especially in the form of prayers for ancestors to escape punishment in the netherworld. That being said, the presence of the Youths of Good and Evil in the painting also makes it clear that Mi Yande, the principal donor, and his relatives were keen to have their good deed, i.e. the donation, recorded in the divine registers.

That the dedication clearly refers to the well-being of the Sun clan could be taken as an indication that Mr. Mi was an in-law of the Sun clan, that his son or daughter was perhaps married into that family, which was one of the major and most prestigious clans in Dunhuang during the Guiyijun reign. In any case the dominance of donors belonging to the Sun clan is abundantly clear in the captions for the donor portraits in our painting.

The painting is perhaps most noteworthy for its donors, as they incorporate so many of Shazhou's most prominent clans, including the Cao (曹氏), the Zhang (張氏), the Kang (康氏), the Wang (王氏), and the Li (李氏). This more than anything reveals how the donation of a single and relatively humble icon, such as the one at hand, could serve as

a vehicle for strengthening local inter-clan relations and at the same time display their status and religious devotion.

## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Chinese Texts of the Donor Captions and Donor Dedication

#### 7.1.1. Chinese Text of the Donor Captions

##### Right top register:

施主迷延德永充一心供養.

男願昌一心供養.

男願盈一心供養.

男富長一心供養.

##### Right bottom register:

孫醜撻

孫醜定

孫丑儿, 孫長興供養.

##### Left top register:

施主新婦曹氏永充一心供養.

女清婢一心供養出適李氏.

新婦陰氏一心供養.

新婦王氏一心供養.

##### Left bottom register:

新婦康氏一心供.

孫新婦張氏一心供養.

孫長泰一心供養.

孫醜子一心供養.

#### 7.1.2. Chinese Text of the Donor Dedication

(1) 施主清信佛弟子, 知敦煌都園官兼大行園, 家錄事迷員 (延?) 德發心



- (2) 敬畫大慈大悲救苦觀世音菩薩一軀，願國安，人泰，社稷恒昌，人民
- (3) 安樂(樂)，莫逢災禍，子孫昌晟萬年，千歲富貴，□香煙淨燈
- (4). 永充供養. 於時 太平興國八年七月十七日題記.

### Abbreviations

- BnF Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris  
BM British Museum in London  
DMGT *Dunhuang Mogao ku gongyangren tiji* 敦煌莫高窟供养人题记 [Donor Inscriptions from the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang], comp. Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986, 1–5.  
Giles Giles, Lionel. *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum*. London: The British Museum, 1957.  
OA Oriental Arts Section of the British Museum in London  
P. Pelliot Collection of Chinese Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the Bibliothèque National in Paris  
S. Stein Collection of Chinese Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London  
T. Takakusu Junjirō 高順次郎 et. al., ed. *Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō *tripiṭaka*]. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.

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