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**TIBETAN TANTRA AND CHINESE
ESOTERIC BUDDHISM IN THE
MELTING POT: A STUDY OF A
CHINESE RECENSION OF THE
TWENTY-EIGHT VAJRA PRECEPT**

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TIBETAN TANTRA AND CHINESE ESOTERIC BUDDHISM IN
THE MELTING POT: A STUDY OF A CHINESE RECENSION OF
THE TWENTY-EIGHT VAJRA PRECEPTS

HENRIK H. SØRENSEN

Abstract

This paper is devoted to an elucidation of the Chinese manuscript of the *Jingang ershiba jie* 金剛二十八戒 [Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts], which appear as part of a ritual manual located among the manuscripts from Dunhuang (敦煌) (P. 3861 (3)). This Tantric Buddhist text, in which the proper behaviour of a Tantric adept is set forth, was most likely transmitted via Tibetan Buddhism to the Chinese Buddhist community in Dunhuang in the course of the 9–10th centuries. The paper explores the history of the Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts as reflected in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts, and seeks to contextualise it as well as accounting for its usage in local Buddhist practice. A fully annotated translation accompanies the presentation.

1. *Introduction*

With the growing importance of Esoteric Buddhism (Chin. *mijiao* 密教) during the mid-Tang, the practices and beliefs of this Buddhist tradition quickly spread across sectarian boundaries to effect virtually all forms of Chinese Buddhism current at the time. While there were many factors behind the importance and spread of Esoteric Buddhism during the Tang, this development can be documented to have been bolstered by the activities of three Indian masters: Śubhākarasiṃha (635–735), Vajrabodhi (671–741) and the latter’s disciple Amoghavajra (705–774), who in the following will be referred to as the Three Ācāryas.¹

¹ For a contextual discussion of these masters, see Klaus Pinte, “Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735),” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charle D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 339–341; Charle D. Orzech, “Vajrabodhi (671–741),” EBTEA, 345–350; Martin Lehnert, Amoghavajra: His Role in and Influence on the Development of Buddhism,” EBTEA, 351–359. See also the comprehensive treatment of Esoteric Buddhism during the mid-Tang in Lü Jianfu 呂建福, *Zhongguo mijiao shi* 中國密教史 [The History of Esoteric Buddhism in China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995, revised and expanded edition 2010), 269–386.



As a centre of Buddhism, and due to its strategic location on the eastern stretches of the Silk Road, Dunhuang developed a special, intercultural and multifaceted form of Buddhism, which in many ways was unique. This paper will explore one case of such intercultural Buddhist exchange, namely the influence, or perhaps better, the impact of incoming Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism on local Buddhism in Shazhou (沙州) during the 9–10th centuries as outlined in a text dedicated to a special set of Tantric Buddhist precepts transmitted in Chinese.

2. On the Manuscript P. 3861

The Pelliot Collection of Dunhuang manuscripts contains an interesting Sino-Tibetan ritual manual, which clearly was employed in an Esoteric Buddhist context (P. 3861).² It consists of sixty folios stitched together to form a small folding book, and as such may be considered a private compilation. It features a series of different Buddhist texts and opens with the following:

(1) A Khotanese text consisting of a three-line vow for attaining enlightenment (Skt. *bodhicitta*). It is unclear how this short text corresponds to the rest of the manual (fol. 1).

(2) An untitled series of six *mantras* in Tibetan with open slots for the corresponding names of the concerned deities or titles in Chinese characters.

(3) *Jingang ershiba jie* 金剛二十八戒 [The Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts] (fol. 1–10).

(4) *Sanshi fa* 散食法 [Method for Dispensing Food] (fol. 10–16). This text belongs to the *shishi* (施食) tradition, and is related to Amoghavajra's *Shi zhu egui yinshi nai shuifa* 施諸餓鬼食及水法 [Method for Bestowing Food and Water on all Hungry Ghosts] (T. 1315.21)³ However, it appears that the *Sanshi fa* is not a pure Chinese

² Cf. *Catalogue des manuscrits Chinois de Touen-Houang*, Fonds Pelliot chinois de la Bibliothèque Nationale, vol. 4 (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991), 343–344.

³ See Charles D. Orzech, "Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China," in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition. Selected Papers from the 1989 SBS Conference*, ed. Henrik H. Sørensen (Copenhagen and Aarhus: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994), 51–72.

text, but would seem to have been partly influenced by notions of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism of the kind that was present in Dunhuang during the period of the Tibetan Occupation and after. This is most clearly apparent in the terminology used in the text, which differs on a number of points from what we find in the material associated with Amoghavajra.

(5) *Sanke fayi* 三窠法儀 [Methods of the Rite for the Three Regulations] (fol. 16–34). This is a rather long text on how to practice the *dharmā* in accordance with a curious blend of Esoteric Buddhist precepts and Chan (禪) Buddhist concepts on practice.⁴ It also includes a discussion of the six perfections (Skt. *ṣaṭpāramitā*). The *Vajracchedikā* [?] is referred to on fol. 31⁵. Given the stress on practice in this text, it could in principle be used for repentance.⁶

(6) Then follows a lengthy *dhāraṇī*, an unidentified invocation to a *vidyārāja* or *mingwang* (明王), a wrathful protector, the *Jingang da zonghuchi dasui tuoluoni zhenyan* 金剛大怛持大碎陀羅尼真 [言] [Dhāraṇī Mantra of the Great Vajrayakṣa the Great Destroyer].⁷ Some similarities with the type of *mantras* used for the invocation of Vajrayakṣa, Vajrakumāra, Subahu, etc.⁸ (fol. 34–38).⁹

⁴ The conflation between Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism and Chinese Chan is dealt with in Sam van Schaik and Jacob Dalton, “Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism in Dunhuang,” in *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, ed. Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams (London: British Library—Serindia Publications, 2004), 63–71. See also Henrik H. Sørensen, “The Meeting and Conflation of Chan and Esoteric Buddhism during the Tang,” in *Chan Buddhism in the Northwestern Region (Dunhuang and Beyond ...)*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Christian Wittern (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), 135–170.

⁵ See also S. 1977, P. 3373R°, and P. 3215.

⁶ Studied by Tanaka Ryōshō 田中良昭, *Tonkō zenshū bunken no kenkyū* 敦煌禪宗文獻の研究 [A Study of the Chan Manuscripts from Dunhuang] (Tokyo: Daito shuppansha, 1983), 357–388. The entire text is edited here. See also Paul Magnin, “Dépassement de l’expérience noétique selon trois courtes traités de Mādhyamika chinois,” in *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang*, vol. 3, ed. Michel Soymié (Paris: Publications de l’EFEO, 1984), 263–303.

⁷ Neither in the Taishō nor the Zokuzōkyō. It is significant that Marcelle Lalou noted this spell in her *Inventaire des manuscrits tibétains de Touen-houang conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale* (fonds Pelliot tibétains), vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1939), 28. This indicates a connection with the Tibetan Buddhist material, and supports the view that P. 3861 as a whole was created in a Sino-Tibetan Buddhist context.

⁸ Cf. eg. T. 895B.18, P. 744a.

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(7) *Great Compassion Dhāraṇī* [*Nīlakaṇṭhaka-dhāraṇī*] (T. 1060.20, the leading scripture on the worship of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara. In two parts (fol. 38–48).¹⁰

(8) *Da bei jing zhenyan yin* 大悲經真言印 [The *mantras* and *mudrās* of the Great Compassion *sūtra*] in one chapter.¹¹ This includes the use of *mudrās* and their *mantras* in accordance with the ritual phases of the above scripture in a total of twenty pairs (fol. 48–55).

(9) A long untitled invocation of most of the divinities in the Buddhist pantheon in Tibetan with the names of the invoked deities also given in Chinese (fol. 55–66).

As stated above, this compilation is a sort of ritual manual consisting for the most part of a number of major spells associated with the practice of Esoteric Buddhism. The French catalogue text in which P. 3861 is discussed does not acknowledge the inter-cultural and inter-religious aspects of the texts in the manuscript, and therefore largely fails to understand its wider significance.

3. *The Samayas in Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism*

In what follows I shall limit myself to one text in P. 3861, namely the third item, the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*. A quick overview of the text reveals that it does indeed deal with a special category of precepts, namely those which are normally referred to in the primary sources as the *samaya* (Chin. *sanmoye* 三摩耶, Tib. *dam tshig*). *Samaya* as a term occurs in the mainstream Buddhist literature, Indian, Tibetan and Chinese, as a substantive and has a number of standard meanings such as ‘coming together,’ ‘time’ (Skt. *kāla*), etc. However, *samaya* in the mainstream Buddhist material is neither an important concept, i.e. a

⁹ Again we find the entry on this spell in the French catalogue to be inadequate and mistaken. Most problematic is that it mixes up the sets of additional spells and places them under wrong headings. Cf. *Catalogue des manuscrits Chinois de Touen-Houang*, vol. 4, 344.

¹⁰ Text roughly identical with the *Nīlakaṇṭhaka dhāraṇī* as found in T. 1060.20, but with numerous variations. It is possible that the Chinese transcription has been based on a Tibetan translation.

¹¹ Like the preceding *dhāraṇī*, this section has been lifted more or less verbatim from T. 1060.20.

concept of major significance, nor one which carries the same range of meanings as it does in the Esoteric and later Tantric Buddhist contexts including both Indian and Chinese developments. Its specific use as an important term carrying a whole series of meanings is a characteristic of Esoteric Buddhism and its conceptual universe.¹²

Despite these various meanings and contextual diversity, it is *samaya* in the meaning of ‘vow’ or ‘pledge,’ which shall interest us here. As such the *samayas* can be understood as an alternative, regulative system, which in a certain way replaced or at least augmented the traditional monastic precepts transmitted by the various *vinayas*. This does not mean that the traditional precepts are absent from Esoteric Buddhism: they certainly were considered mandatory for ordained monastics just as in mainstream Buddhism. However, one may speculate that because many practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism—even in the pre-Tantric phase in both India as well as in China—were not always formally ordained monks or nuns, nor necessarily celibate, a new, behavioural codex for them was needed. Nevertheless, Esoteric Buddhist practitioners—whether lay or monastic—were bound and regulated as much by their *samayas* as if they had been full-fledged members of the monastic community.

The various sources on the *samayas*—and here I speak mainly about what we find in the Chinese material, including that from Dunhuang—indicate that they had a lot to do with identity and the self-understanding of the Esoteric Buddhist practitioner. In other words, the type of *samayas* upheld and mastered by a given practitioner also defined him (or her) in relation to other practitioners, both the teacher (Skt. *ācārya*), co-practitioners as well as those belonging to other families of adepts (Skt. *kula*).¹³ In this sense one may speak of the *samayas* as a hermeneutic tool of identify.

¹² While the discussion of the term as found in the *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 [Comprehensive Foguang Shan Dictionary], 8 vols, ed. Foguang da zangjing bianxiu weiyuan hui 佛光大藏經編修委員會 (Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 1988), favours overwhelmingly the hermeneutical interpretations of Esoteric Buddhism, it does acknowledge its pre- and also non-Buddhist history. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1, 672a–673b.

¹³ An extensive discussion of the application of this concept in the Indian Tantric Buddhist context can be found in Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A*



Given that the present study is primarily concerned with the *samayas* in their Esoteric and Tantric Buddhist contexts, I shall leave a more general discussion of the term and its application in mainstream Buddhism to another occasion. Let us therefore begin our investigation into the Dunhuang manuscript P. 3861 (3) by first taking a brief look at the application of the *samayas* in the Esoteric Buddhist context as based on the Chinese sources.

It must be acknowledged that precepts in Esoteric Buddhism are not always conceptualised as *samayas*, nor does the term always occur in the relevant literature, even when it is clearly implied, as is the case in P. 3861. Even so, let us trace the type of vows or pledges we encounter in the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* to their precedents in the primary sources.

One of these is the *Susiddhikara* (T. 893.18),¹⁴ ostensibly one of the oldest Esoteric Buddhist scriptures representative of the mature phase to deal with the issue of specific Esoteric Buddhist precepts, i.e. a series of regulations that together form a distinct codex for proper behaviour, most of which would eventually form the core of the *samaya* vows similar to those found in our text. The *Susiddhikara* represents a milestone in the Esoteric Buddhist conceptualisation of a special and distinct type of normative behaviour, which in many ways sets the tradition apart from mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhism broadly defined. Despite this, it must be noted that *samaya* as a term does not occur in the *Susiddhikara*, indicating that it had not yet come about as a specific, characterising marker of Esoteric Buddhism. Once we go to the *Mahāvairocanasūtra* (T. 848.18),¹⁵ which together with the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* (T. 865.18)¹⁶ forms the mainstay of mature Esoteric Buddhism, data on the *samaya*-vows/pledges proliferate, and so do the various textual contexts in which the term occurs (T.

Social History of the Tantric Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 13–142, 299–303.

¹⁴ Cf. Rolf W. Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras* (Berkeley: Numata Center, 2001), 109–325.

¹⁵ Cf. Rolf W. Giebel, *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra* (Berkeley: Numata Center, 2005).

¹⁶ Cf. Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras*, 1–107.

848.18: 11c, 12b, 13c, 33ab, etc., T. 865.18: 207a).¹⁷ This shows that between the *Susiddhikara* and the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*, the *samaya*-vows became increasingly important and central to Esoteric Buddhist discourse in India. As this material was transmitted to China, chiefly by the Three Ācāryas of the mid-Tang, the concept of *samaya*-vows became central to Esoteric Buddhist discourse in China, something which is also documented in the teachings brought back to Heian Japan by Kūkai (774–835, 空海).¹⁸

In Dunhuang Buddhism the idea of *samaya*-vows, as well as the extended meanings of the term, were already present before the Tibetan occupation of Shazhou during the late 8th century, mainly transmitted through the translations associated with Amoghavajra.¹⁹ However, in the course of the Tibetan occupation of ca. 780 to 848, undoubtedly due to the association with nascent Tantric Buddhism imported into the Hexi Corridor (Chin. Hexi zoulang 河西走廊) from the Tibetan heartlands, Chinese Buddhism in Dunhuang came under the influence of the developed Indo-Tibetan Tantric understanding of the *samayas*. It is against this background that the material presented here should be seen. *The Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* obviously differ on a number of points from the ordinary precepts of both the Buddhist *vinaya* broadly conceived and the *bodhisattva* precepts (Chin. *pusa jie* 菩薩戒) as set forth in the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 [Pseudo-Brahmajāla Scripture] (T. 1484.24).²⁰ The traditional precepts are not mentioned in the text,

¹⁷ There is a tendency in the latter work for *samaya* to take on an entire new and extended set of meanings to include ‘divine injunctions,’ a state of ‘mental absorption’ (Skt. *samādhi*), a quality akin to empowerment that can be bestowed upon the practitioner, divine protection, an alternative for seal (Skt. *mudrā*), etc. Thereby the original meanings of *samaya* as found in the earlier Esoteric Buddhist context are here expanded and endowed with additional spiritual and transcendent qualities. For these extended meanings see Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras*, 49–54, 56, 58–59, etc.

¹⁸ Cf. Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 53–55.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive study on Amoghavajra and the historical context in which he operated, see Geoffrey C. Goble, *Chinese Esoteric Buddhism: Amoghavajra, the Ruling Elite, and the Emergence of a Chinese Buddhist Tradition* (forthcoming, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

²⁰ A discussion of the *bodhisattva* precepts in Dunhuang can be found in Zhanru 湛如, “Dunhuang *pusa jieyi yu pusa jie die zhi yanjiu* 敦煌菩薩戒仪与菩薩戒牒之研究 [A



whereas the *Vajra Precepts* are defined in direct correspondence with Esoteric Buddhist doctrine and belief. The severity of the *Vajra Precepts* is stressed repeatedly throughout the text, and the resulting *karma* for violating them, such as disrespecting one's teacher or failing to perform the rites diligently, will result in immediate descent into the deepest hells. The explication of each precept is followed by the warning: "Do not abandon this precept!"²¹

In connection with the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, it is important to note that there are a number of Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts from the 9–10th centuries (?) which deal with the *samaya* precepts. Although not always featuring the exact same sequence as in our text, they reflect more or less the same injunctions, including the so-called 'root vows,' but there given in considerably more detail (S.T. 718).²² Van Schaik and Dalton refer to the vows of that text as being "closest to the Mahāyoga version of the *samaya*," thereby indicating a full-blown Tantric context of the vows.²³ Another source mentions "how someone who breaks the vows will be smashed up and suffer in the hells" (S.T. 346). The importance of maintaining one's pledges or vows is also underscored in another Tibetan manuscript (S.T. 348). These Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts clearly indicate that such sets of *samaya* injunctions were circulating in the Buddhist communities in Dunhuang during the late Tang and possibly onwards. More on this will be said below.

4. *The Chinese Version of the Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*

In the Chinese text of the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, the *samayas* are in a number of cases divided into five groups, probably to invoke the Five Buddha Families (Skt. *pañcakula*). They are as follows:

- (1) Precepts of the Body (1),

Study of Bodhisattva Precept Rituals and Bodhisattva Precept Certificates from Dunhuang],” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 2 (1997): 77–88.

²¹ 不捨之戒. See also the enumeration in the Tibetan language manuscript S. T. 577.

²² See *Catalogue of the Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection*, ed. Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik, International Dunhuang Project. <http://idp.bl.uk> 2005, accessed 4/20/2019; entry IOL Tib J 718.

²³ ...XXX...

- (2) Precepts of Speech (1),
- (3) Precepts of the Mind (1),
- (4) Precepts of Non-Abandonment (5),
- (5) Precepts of the Knowing Ones (5),
- (6) Precepts of Accomplishment (5),
- (7) Precepts of Non-Renunciation (5),
- (8) Precepts of Constant Cultivation (5),
- (9) Method of Repentance.

The text has the form and structure of a formal lecture. This is evident from the style and diction of its discourse which is a straightforward admonition addressed to what was presumably a group of followers. The manner in which the precepts or *samayas* are conceptualised follows a standard model common to Esoteric Buddhist discourse in which the tripartite model of body, speech and mind, i.e. the Three Mysteries (Chin. *sanmi* 三密), form the core of the structure. The final part of the text is made up by the typical injunction to adhere to what has been said in the discourse and to heed the various injunctions such as those dealing with the transmission and dissemination of the precepts in question. Towards the end, the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* also contains a section on repentance in case one has violated the precepts, another aspect of the traditional *vinayas*, which here appears more in line with Esoteric Buddhist concerns.²⁴

Moreover, the text warns that only qualified persons may receive the precepts. Without these, one is not allowed to receive initiation or ascend the altar. The text also points out that a person of shallow comprehension cannot receive the necessary oral instructions (Chin. *chuanshuo* 傳說), given in addition to the written word, a defining aspect of transmission in Esoteric Buddhism. Those violating the injunctions against unqualified practice will invoke the anger of all the buddhas and protecting spirits, and receive the most severe punishment in the hells. Interestingly, the text refers to this injunction as “this is the root precept,”²⁵ indicating the hermetic nature of the instructions set forth in Esoteric Buddhism.

²⁴ For a study on repentance in the context of Dunhuang Buddhism, see Kuo Li-ying, *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du Ve au Xe siècle* (Paris: Publication de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994).

²⁵ 此是戒之根本



The *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* offers us interesting insights into a ritual text which signals the presence and influence of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism on Chinese Buddhism. The term *jingang jie* (金剛戒) itself is noteworthy as it indicates the existence of a special and separate type of Tantric precepts above and beyond those followed by mainstream monastics in Tang China.

At the very end of the text we are given the names of three people, who appear as the formal transmitters and verifiers of the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*. Namely Old Master An (安古師) and two disciples (?), one Posa (波薩) (Pusa = Bodhisattva) and another called Botema (鉢特摩), i.e. Padma. Unfortunately, we have no information on either of these men. What we can say is that while Master An was most probably of Chinese origin, the other two appear to have been foreigners as revealed by their non-Chinese names. Could they be Tibetans or perhaps Uyghurs? In any case, I consider it safe to assume that Master An was the *ācārya* lecturing on the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, while it is likely that Posa and Botema were followers, possibly his disciples.

With regard to dating P. 3861, we are unfortunately not helped much by the relevant entry in the French catalogue. It is not only limited in scope, but fails to address certain crucial aspects of the manual, which might otherwise have assisted us in our effort to understand it and help in its dating. The text of the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* is not a sophisticated one; it has been written in relatively simple Chinese bordering on the primitive. It is immediately clear that it does not share much of the otherwise elaborate and detailed technical language which is characteristic of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures translated during the Tang, in particular those we normally associate with the Three Great *Ācāryas* of the 8th century. The vernacular feel to the text is further underscored by its stenographic structure and many abbreviations, which makes the reading difficult and in places almost incomprehensible. It is almost as if we are missing certain important contextual elements which the late 9th or early 10th century writer undoubtedly took for granted. The peculiar Chinese evident throughout the text, its non-standard Buddhist terminology, the many abbreviations and general clumsy syntax, evidenced by the abnormal ‘punctuation,’ could be indications that the text was perhaps translated from Tibetan. Alternatively, it might perhaps

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be a Chinese transcript of a sermon originally delivered in Tibetan. This might indicate that Master An was bilingual and that he had received the transmission of the text. As I see it, both hypotheses are possible. Most surely, the text does not belong to mainstream Esoteric Buddhist Chinese literature. In sum, could this be taken as indicative that our text was originally orally transmitted?

5. A Translation of the Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts

Page 1.

1. *The Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*. [They are] the highly secret and deep *dharma* Treasury of equality,

2. which has the infallible as its principle. It is rich, honourable and self-contained, vast, great and complete, extraordinary are its essential marvels.

3. I will now explain [to you] the *Twenty-eight Precepts* so that you may know that there are three kinds of precepts. [Moreover,] of those who practice these precepts, there are five kinds [of practitioners].

4. Do not ignore knowing the five kinds of precepts. Always remember to reflect on and know their five kinds. The wise ones must know that [these] precepts consists of

5. five kinds of precepts which one should seek to know. The precepts are of five kinds; altogether they make twenty-eight. You must know that these precepts have three [aspects],

6. namely the precepts of body, speech and mind. *The Precept of the Body*: At the time when obstructions and difficulties arise, the master of the teaching, i.e.

7. the *ācārya*, should make a rite for making offerings (Chin. *zhai* 齋) together with the practitioner. Those who cultivate together the Vajra-mahāyāna (i.e. co-practitioners) must distinguish

8. all evil states of mind [such as] the idle and slothful mind, the slow and strange mind, and the fickle²⁶ and scattered mind. One certainly must not to allow these to arise.

²⁶ Mistake for *zhi* 跬.



9. The first of [the Vajra Precepts] [is] *The Precept of Speech*: This consists in [the use of] the *dhāraṇī*, *mudrās*, etc.²⁷ They may not be interrupted. The second [precept is]

Page 2.

1. The Precept of the Mind: This is very secret, and is the mind-seal of the supreme vehicle. [Here] calculation does not apply. It is transmitted orally and directly.

2. The third [concerns] the Master of Secrets (i.e. the *ācārya*), who shares [with the disciple] the methods of the altar together with one's fellow practitioners such as the elder or younger sisters and brothers.²⁸ [When this sexual union (Skt. *karmamudrā*) is being performed,] it is not permissible to do so [with] a hasty²⁹ or tardy mind-set.

3. Behold at a distance the realm of feelings of flattery and slander when the mind thinks about them, [then] when beholding from afar the affairs related to these feelings,

4. flattery and slander will be cut off. [If one does not do these things,] one (眷) will recede and revolve [in *saṃsāra*]. The master of the Great Vajra Vehicle (Chin. *Jingang dasheng shi* 金剛大乘師, i.e. the *ācārya*) must be respected like one's own parents.

5. It is the same as when making offerings to the Buddha. If one does so in a commanding manner, one will not obtain a proper relationship (i.e. a contact based on devotion). If one does not observe [these injunctions] when practicing, one is sure to enter

6. the Great Avīci Hell, [where] one will not be able to see the Buddha or hear his teachings. [Moreover,] the spells and *mudrās* must not be interrupted or [their use] broken off. All the Buddhas observe

²⁷ While it may be seen as illogical that *mudrās* appear here, as they are gestures done with the body, it may be because they are used in conjunction with spells and visualisation in accordance with the practices of the Three Mysteries.

²⁸ These do not refer to actual female relatives, but to female co-practitioners under the same teacher. For further discussion concerning instructions given for how to act during a Tantric feast such as is referred to here, see David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, (London: Serindia, 1987), 160170.

²⁹ Mistake for *zhi* 踉.

7. the thoughts and mental images in the practitioner's mind, [who should] calm his mind according to the teaching with the spells and *mudrās*, and never cease cultivating them.

8. [Using them must be like] water which enters the river and streams: day and night they (i.e. the spells and *mudrās*) must not be cut off. If one does not cultivate like this, for the duration of two *kalpas* one will descend into the Avīci Hell.

9. Regarding the highly secret mind seal. Cunning thought cannot grasp it, nor can various kinds of idle discourse. In the Vajra-mahāyāna³⁰ we

Page 3.

1. entrust the treasury of its teachings [to qualified persons]. If one does not receive the teaching, he or she cannot [ascend] the altar together [with the *ācārya*]. Those who violate the precepts may not hear it spoken. [Similarly, those]

2. who practice it agitatedly will not obtain the intimate vision (Chin. *jiaojian* 交見). This method is not for those of shallow comprehension, [hence] the master will not entrust the teaching to them.

3. His tongue is like a *vajra* (i.e. a thunderbolt) [therefore] they will not be able to receive oral transmission (Chin. *chuanshuo* 傳說). Such people are not practitioners, and for the duration of three *kalpas*

4. they will descend into the Great Avīci Hell. [Moreover,] all Buddhas and holy ones who are inside the altar will most certainly all be angry. [The culprits] will be cut into seven pieces, and their

5. ancestors will have all their offspring cut off. The wrathful *vajra* [-*pālas*], seething with anger (Skt. *mahākrodha*), their hearts full of courage, having arrived at the funerary fire,

6. they command the *yakṣas* and *rakṣas* [in their retinue] to finish them (i.e. the evil people) off by cutting off their roots of life (Chin. *minggen* 命根); [while] the blood-drinking great spirits destroy their minds and drink their blood,

³⁰ This signals that the religious context in which the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* came about was of a sectarian type with the understanding that its practitioners constituted a special category of Mahāyāna Buddhists, namely as followers of the Tantric dispensation.



7. make them descend into the eighteen great hells. This precept is the root precept. So it is.

8. The one who practices these five precepts must have a harmonious, liberating [manner of] speech in a low voice when instructing,³¹ [not using] foolish speech,³² or a foul mouth.³³ These are the five.

9. *Precepts of Non-abandonment*. Do not abandon this precept! The five ones [are for each of the] five categories of vexations: desire, anger, asthma, slothfulness, and pregnant women. Constantly cultivate this precept.

Page 4.

1. The fifth is the greatly fragrant Vajra Tree Flower with dew on its top, [which is] the great inner mind of *bodhicitta*, and in addition to which there are the five fruits:

2. The rose apple,³⁴ myrobalan,³⁵ jackfruit,³⁶ garuga,³⁷ *naluo'e* (那羅俄).³⁸ These

3. are the items of the combined offerings; additionally prepare all kinds of offerings of drink and food every month of the year. Do not transgress this [*samaya*].

4. *Precepts of the Knowing Ones*. Of these five [kinds, we have] the five *skandhas*, the five elements, the five forms, the five realms/spheres, the five kinds of knowledge, the Five Tathāgatas,

5. the Five Wisdoms, the Five Fathers and the Five Mothers in union.³⁹ Comprehend them together thus.

The Precepts of Accomplishment

³¹ The text has ‘to steal’ or ‘rob’ (Chin. *dao* 盜), probably the intended meaning is ‘to instruct’ (Chin. *dao* 導).

³² The text has here ‘neglectful speech’ (Chin. *wangyu* 忘語), which is surely a mistake for ‘foolish’ or ‘incoherent speech’ (Chin. *wangyu* 妄語).

³³ The text is somewhat garbled at this point, so my translation is tentative.

³⁴ Skt. *drākṣā-phala*, Chin. *putaoguo* 蒲桃菓, *Syzygium jambos* L.

³⁵ Skt. *amalaka/āmalakī*, Chin. *anmeiluo* 庵沒羅, *Phyllanthus emblica* L.

³⁶ Skt. *paṇasa*, Chin. *bannapo* 般捺婆, *Artocarpus integrifolia* L.

³⁷ Skt., *golikā*, Chin. *alujia* 阿魯加, *Garuga pinnata* Roxb. L.

³⁸ Skt. *Naradhāra* (?)

³⁹ These groups of five are all related to the basic concept of the families of the Five Buddhas in accordance with Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism.

6. These are five in number: They are meant to explain the five families (Skt. *pañcakula*), the Ten Fields (of practice),⁴⁰ Three Evil Paths (of rebirth), deviant views to be destroyed, obstructing difficulties,

7. and upsetting vexations. The five kinds of disrupting persons are those who [disrupt] someone discoursing on the Mahāyāna, as well as those who with anger disturb a master of the Mahāyāna,

8. or upset the mind of a master of the Mahāyāna, or those who with anger upset the minds of all sentient beings, as well as and other kinds of beings in this Great Vehicle.

9. Due to the power of the above these successive sentient beings will certainly all be delivered (from their human form). Moreover, there is the holy power,

Page 5.

1. which delivers [through] harmonious union, [such as] all the majestic rituals of the Five Tathāgatas in union, etc. Do not harbour deviant views [in this regard].⁴¹

2. Those who receive the Buddha's precepts. For those who steal the wealth and goods of the Three Treasures, or those of the Vajra Master,

3. of those of parents and sisters, or those of fellow practitioners (Chin. *tongfa ren* 同法人), or [things such as] the eight great numinous *stūpas* and goods, or such things for the altar and offerings,

⁴⁰ This could be a reference to the Ten Fields of Liberation, through the performance of which the 'liberation' of an enemy is justified, i.e. the performance of destructive rites of compassionate killing (i.e. black magic). In that context, the ten fields are explained as follows: (1) the general enemy of the three jewels (Tib. *dkon-mchog gsum-gyi spyi dgra*), (2) the personal enemy of the instructor (Tib. *slob-dpon-kyi sku-dgra*), (3) the private enemy of one's spiritual siblings (Tib. *mched-lcam-gyi sgos-dgra*), (4) he who hates us *yogins* (Tib. *rnal-'byor rang-la 'khu-ba*), (5) he who harms all sentient beings (Tib. *sems-can yongs-la gnod-pa*), (6) he who has performed the five boundless sins (Tib. *mtshams-med-pa lnga byed-pa*), (7) he whose temperament is evil (Tib. *rang-rgyud ngan-pa'i ngang-tshul-can*), (8) he who becomes a general enemy of the *yogins* (Tib. *rnal-'byor-ba spyi'i dgrar-gyur-pa*), (9) he who has depraved his pledges (Tib. *dam-las log-pa*) and (10) the three evil destinies (Tib. *ngan-song gsum*). I wish to thank Dylan Esler for providing this information.

⁴¹ This appears to be an oblique and general description of the practice of sexual union.



4. including *vajra* seats, or things from the constantly dwelling, i.e. the Buddhist *samgha*, or additional things such as those for deliverance, for all such greedy people, who snatch the offerings, [as well as] for those who lie to the Vajra Master (i.e. one's teacher), his Dharma brothers, and Dharma associates, [such as] Dharma sisters,

6. [one should use] *upāya* to entice and guide them to enter the Great Vehicle. One must respectfully assume [the use of] *upāya*

7. for the liberation of those who engage in evil speech, and those in high positions who are cruel, liberating them with the spells in the Ten Locales (Chin. *shitian* 十田),⁴² and with soft words

8. discourse on the profound teaching (Chin. *shenfa* 深法). *Precepts of Non-Renunciation*. There are five of these. These are the Five Tathāgatas, [which means that] the essence of the five vexations, are actually the Five Buddhas.⁴³

9. *The Precepts of Constant Cultivation*. There are five of these. [The] five concern the making of all kinds of offerings, and that one does not transgress during the past months and year Concerning the Tathāgatas,

Page 6.

1. there are five, just as there are five fingers [with which] one naturally forms the *mudrā*. [They are similar] to parents and relatives. We have widely spoken of accomplishing

2. the precepts of the five, [which are those of the buddhas] Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and

3. Amoghasiddhi.⁴⁴ Which person can know and understand these precepts? It is the one who depends on them for his or her cultivation [in order that] the mind attains to the self-so (Chin. *zhenru* 真如).

4. This is the highest secret of [?] (Chin. *sutuowei* 蘇陶味).⁴⁵ This is the same as wisdom.

⁴² I take this to refer to the ten locales where the Esoteric or Tantric teaching may be taught.

⁴³ This is a typical Tantric Buddhist statement, which signals that the true nature of the vexations is emptiness and that they are as such sources of wisdom, the idea being that by inverting the passions and utilising their potential, they are transformed into their opposite qualities, i.e. hatred is turned into compassion, ignorance into wisdom, etc.

⁴⁴ Character added for the sake of textual consistency.

5. If one does not understand this, but has inverted views, this [teaching] will be [like a] poisonous medicine, and [by taking it] one will become similar to a domestic animal. It is the same as this. Then at the time of death (lit. dispersing) the evil paths [of rebirth will open.]

6. If one does not break this precept, then one may become a Buddha. If [on the other hand] one breaks this precept, then one will descend into the hells.

7. Do not go back on this precept! If someone breaks or violates them, one must repent for a *kalpa*. Those who break the root precepts

8. may repent thrice. [However] if one [still] transgresses them, then one cannot repent anymore. This is the root precept. In addition, those who offend

9. should always seek to repent.

The *Method of Repentance* [Chanhui fa 懺悔法]. This is two-fold. [The first:] The holy congregation of the Dharma assembly has the means to destroy the [causes of their] transgressions,

Page 7.

1. and all must repent together. The second is the repentance itself, which also destroys the [causes of the] transgressions. This [also] extends to the repentance of the masses. Certainly

2. they can obtain it if they know the precepts, and if they cultivate knowledge of the precepts. With a focused mind one should uphold the precepts, [with]

3. these three offerings, and always seek [to repent] the transgressions [of the past] months and year. If one does not do so, it will constitute a great offence. Accordingly, one needs to repent three times. If one transgresses three times, one cannot repent [again].⁴⁶ [...] Do not abandon this precept!

5. Understanding the precept. This and the following body of precepts. When the assembly of knowing ones are making the offerings

⁴⁵ The text appears to be garbled here. In any case I was unable to make proper sense of this term or name, so it has been left as it stands.

⁴⁶ This repeats what has been stated above. In other words, there is a limit in Tantric Buddhist practice for regret and contrition.



6. while chanting, one's mind must not be scattered. Then in a single-minded [manner] one will have a bright awakening, and little by little one will reach completion. For an eternity one must not default on this precept.

7. If one makes a transgression, [such as] revolting against the king, the great ministers, or important officials, one will live in fear for many lives.

8. Dragon spirits and other spirits of the night will angrily rebuke and reprimand [such persons]. [If it is] a high official, he will be stripped of [his rank] and demoted to the status of a pauper, poor and without means.

9. A person with a mind of desire for horses, wives and children [ought to know that] all surely will die and perish [eventually]. This is the outline (?) of [the instructions concerning the] breaking the precepts. If the situation is like this, one must straight away,

Page 8.

1. at an auspicious time, very quickly set up a ritual space, and according to the same methods, [together with] one's fellow practitioners, invoke and summon [the gods to come and partake of]

2. the offerings. It is important to cultivate these injunctions. If one does not do so, at the time of death, the good spirits who protect the Buddhist teaching

3. will shout in anger and reprimand [the person], and they will say thus: "This is a person who has broken the precepts! He (or she) must consequently descend into the hells, where for long *kalpas* he will endure suffering." If someone is like this, [they will be] like flowers blossoming in snow, and a withered trunk of wood without branches. They will eternally sever

5.[their Buddha] seeds, cutting themselves off from the great compassion. Whether [reborn] as gods above or as men in between [heaven and earth], they will not obtain bliss, but will float eternally in the sea of suffering.

6. If one does not transgress this precept while in the world, one will attain the fruits of *nirvāṇa* (Chin. *chu shejian zhi guo* 出世間之果) and

receive verification [of their attainment of Buddhahood] (Chin. *shenshang zheng* 身上證)⁴⁷ as well as

7. obtaining *siddhi*.⁴⁸ In the future one will widely liberate sentient beings by making them leave the threefold worlds. This teaching concerning

8. the affairs of body, speech and mind (i.e. the Three Secrets), constitutes the essence of the precepts of the higher vehicle. That is how it is. If people slander this teaching, saying that it is not true,

9. they will eternally cut off their own Buddha seeds⁴⁹ enabling them to share in the teachings of the Supreme Vehicle. They will be [like] blind people [holding] the inverted views of deviant demons.

Page 9.

1. The demon-spirits [of the netherworld] will arrest⁵⁰ such persons. With their three eyes and ten heads, all these demons

2. will lead [them away tied] with nooses. Afterwards they will be beaten and enter directly into the hells. The Precept King of all the Buddhas can verify what I have here said.

3. These are the essentials emanating from the Supreme Vehicle, the highest and most worthy. These are the precepts of Mahāyāna.

4. Examine and cultivate them. Keep them secret, treasure them and do not forget to transmit them widely. Signed by the old master An (Chin. An gushi 安古師),

5. I Posa (波薩, i.e., Bodhisattva), I Botema (鉢特摩, i.e. Padma).

6. *The Message of the Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts and its Religious Context*

The severity of the discourse surrounding the *samayas* and the manner in which it is presented leaves the reader in no doubt that the upholding of

⁴⁷ Being endorsed by a buddha or bodhisattva, who touches the crown of the person's head and gives prediction of his or her future attainment of Buddhahood.

⁴⁸ These spiritual qualities are expressed in a slightly unusual way, which indicates that the original from which this was translated/conveyed was not a Chinese text.

⁴⁹ I.e. their karmic potentials for becoming buddhas.

⁵⁰ The text reads *she* (攝), which I take to mean 'pacifying,' or 'to incapacitate.'



these precepts was of utmost importance. In fact, the repeated stress on the consequences of failing to adhere to them underscores their nature. At every turn the unworthy are threatened with rebirth in the deepest and most severe of all hells, sometimes for several eternities, as well as with being subjected to a whole array of tortures. It is very clear that a correct upholding of religious precepts has by no means been dispensed with in this type of Tantric Buddhist teaching. In fact, it would appear that the karmic penalties for breaking them were considered considerably more severe than in mainstream Mahāyāna, where the most graphic horrors are usually limited to standard discourses on the hells. Undoubtedly this hinged on the special relationship between master and disciple that prevails in Tantric Buddhist discourse, a relationship which—as the text also states—was conceived of as both intimate and based on mutual trust of the highest order. Hence, violation of this bond could only result in the most severe punishment.

Elements of Esoteric Buddhism, or more correctly Vajrayāna/Tantric Buddhism, are evident throughout the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*. There are references to the Five Jinas, and even to sexual union, i.e. ritual sexual union as exemplified by the reference to the Five Buddhas and their consorts referred to respectively in the text as fathers and mothers. This clear-cut Tantric Buddhist feature of course places the discourse of the text well outside of mainstream Chinese Esoteric Buddhism as we know it from the second half of the Tang dynasty. Furthermore, the dispensation of Sinitic Esoteric Buddhism as transmitted via Amoghavajra and his disciples does not feature a series of Vajra Precepts or *samayas* similar to those found in the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*. This is not to say that P. 3861 as such does not reflect Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang; it certainly does, both the *Sanshi fa*, i.e. ritual material on feeding the hungry ghosts, and the material related to the *Nīlakaṇṭhakadhāraṇī* being standard aspects of that tradition. Hence, it makes most sense to understand our *samaya* text as part of an integrated ritual complex in which Esoteric Buddhist texts belonging to Chinese Esoteric Buddhism have been integrated with material that was transmitted by the Tibetan Tantric tradition. As such, the manual would appear to reflect local developments in Dunhuang current during the 9–10th centuries.

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As for the Tantric Buddhist context that produced the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, Sam van Schaik has written a highly useful study, one which places the *samayas* of our text squarely in the Tibetan material from Dunhuang.⁵¹ In addition, van Schaik and Jacob Dalton have identified a number of Tibetan manuscripts from Stein's Tibetan collection, which in various ways relate to the *Vajra Precepts*, including one which deals directly with the *Twenty-eight Samayas* (S.T. 436). Especially interesting is their comment to the effect that, "The second part of the text is concerned with the *samaya* vows, categorising the 28 vows into the groups of view (Tib. *lta ba*), practice (Tib. *spyod pa*) and accomplishment (Tib. *bsgrub pa*)." This is followed by "a confession prayer for the infringement of the *samaya* vows."⁵² What we see here is essentially the same overall structure reflected in the Chinese text. Elsewhere we find in S. T. 473 "a warning of the dire consequences of violating the *samaya*,"⁵³ as well as a text, which features "a discussion of the faults inherent in contradicting the *samaya* (Tib. *dam tshig*)" (S.T. 546).⁵⁴ Some of the Tibetan texts echo the warning of the same severe punishment for violating the *samaya* vows, namely descent into the hells and consequent suffering there as found in the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* (S.T. 346).⁵⁵ As already noted, another text lists the entire set of vows to be upheld by the Tantric practitioner, which are by and large similar to those of our text (S.T. 718), and yet another fragmented manuscript again features injunctions against abandoning the *samayas* (S.

⁵¹ Cf. Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The Samaya Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 61–83. There the author seeks to elucidate the textual background for the samaya vows we encounter in the Tibetan material from Dunhuang, and in the process accounts for the origin of the Twenty-eight Vows as part of the early Tantric Buddhist dispensation. However, most of the texts he uses to discuss the *samayas* actually derive from Tibetan material produced during the so-called Second Spread of the Dharma, i.e. post-11th century developments. Even so, P. 3861 and van Schaik's Tibetan Tantric texts are most surely related contentwise.

⁵² Catalogue of the Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, IOL Tib J 436.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, IOL Tib J 473.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, IOL Tib J 546.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IOL Tib J 346.



T. 577).⁵⁶ What is especially noteworthy in regard to the Tibetan Dunhuang material on the *samayās* is that they often occur in tandem with treatises or ritual proceedings (Skt. *sādhana*) on Mahāyoga, the highest form of Tantric practice and realisation.⁵⁷ This underscores the function of the vows or pledges as an integral part of Tantric Buddhist practice. Moreover, the fact that a Chinese text features the essentially same set of vows indicates that Mahāyoga in some form was also practiced by Chinese adepts in Dunhuang. As such, van Schaik and Jacob Dalton's observations offer valuable data with which to contextualise the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, something which again makes it clear that our Chinese text derives from what is ostensibly a Tibetan Tantric Buddhist context. Even so, it remains unclear whether Tibetan Tantric Buddhists were actually operating in Dunhuang themselves, or whether the texts were brought there from elsewhere in Tibet.⁵⁸ It is also important to understand that the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* is a unique text in Chinese, one that has only counterparts in the Tibetan Dunhuang material. This is surely not a coincidence, but something which reflects the rarity of the text.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the term Mahāyāna, which actually occurs prominently in our text, is used in a decidedly hermeneutic sense meaning both Buddhism very broadly defined as well as being synonymous with Tantric Buddhism, i.e. Mahāyoga. This is of course a sign that the religious context which produced the *Twenty-eight Vajra*

⁵⁶ Catalogue of the Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, IOL Tib J 577.

⁵⁷ See Sam van Schaik, "A Definition of Mahayoga—Sources from the Dunhuang Manuscripts," *Tantric Studies* 1 (2008): 45–88. See also the classic study by Kenneth Eastman, "Mahāyoga Texts at Tun-huang," in *Ryūkoku daigaku zō Chibeto go bunken no kenkyū* 龍谷大學藏チベット語文獻の研究 [Studies of Tibetan Language Texts in the Library of Ryūkoku University], Bukkyō bunkan kenkyūkiyō 佛教文化研究所紀要 [Annals for Studies in Buddhist Culture] 22 (1983): 42–60.

⁵⁸ One is justified in arguing thus, since to my knowledge no one has so far been able to pinpoint the location or locations where the transgressive Tibetan Buddhists, who we suppose were using the Tantric texts in question, were actually living. One may rule out the major seventeen or eighteen Chinese temples in the area, as these were occupied by monks and nuns, mostly of Chinese origin during the 9–10th centuries. For a study of Dunhuang's temples, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Buddhist Temples in Dunhuang: From the Late Tang to the Early Northern Song," *BuddhistRoad Paper* 5.2 (forthcoming 2019).

Precepts was thoroughly permeated by the ideology of this particular dispensation of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Moreover, this underscores the manner in which it formulated itself as a distinct brand of Buddhism: All its doctrines and concepts are basically self-referencing, and defined in accordance with its own particular soteriological programs.

Conclusion

As indicated above, P. 3861 is a unique manuscript, of which no comparable example has as yet been discovered among the Dunhuang material. As a ritual manual it provides us with an interesting example of the ritual merging of the Tibetan and Chinese Esoteric Buddhist traditions, seemingly without any great obstacles. It is significant to note that the *Jingang ershiba jie*, the *Sanke fayi*, and the *Jingang dahuchi dasui tuoluoni zhenyan* appear to have been partly based on Tibetan rather than original Chinese sources. Being part of a ritual manual the *Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* was obviously meant as a guide to correct behaviour for an adept of Esoteric Buddhism, and therefore represents a type of text which has turned out to have been relatively common in Dunhuang during the late Tang and onwards.

The fact that the manual is partly bi-lingual (trilingual if one includes the initial Khotanese prayer), i.e. Sino-Tibetan, informs us about the religious context which produced it. As we have noted, *The Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts*, as well as the rest of P. 3861, has been written with a stylus. As the use of styluses is a fairly secure sign of Tibetan cultural practice as shown by Fujieda Akira (藤枝晃) long ago, it may be taken as an indicator that the manuscript was not produced too long after the Tibetan Occupation.⁵⁹ I was initially of the opinion that the manual was compiled locally during that time, i.e. during the first half of the 9th century, but it actually seems most likely that it dates from the second half of the 9th century or even after 900 due to the fact that booklets of

⁵⁹ Fujieda Akira, "The Dunhuang Manuscripts: A General Description, Part I," *Zinbun* 9 (1966), 1–32; Part II, *Zinbun* 10 (1970), 17–39. See also Fujieda, "Chronological Classification of Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts." In *Dunhuang Manuscript Forgeries*, edited by Susan Whitfield, 103–114. London: The British Library, 2002.

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this type only came in use locally at the very end of the Tang.⁶⁰ However, this does not mean that the text itself could not be from the end of the Tibetan Occupation, but in any case the Tibetan imprint on our text remains unmistakable. What is evident is that *The Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts* was transmitted by a Tantric master or *ācārya*, i.e. Old Master An, and conveyed into Chinese by the two disciples Bodhisattva and Padma, both of whom appear to have been of non-Chinese stock. If it turned out that our text is a Sinitic transcription of a lecture or an oral set of instructions that were originally transmitted in Tibetan, this would explain the text's relatively rough and primitive form of Chinese.

⁶⁰ Thanks to Imre Galambos for pointing out that small, stitched manuals such as P. 3861 only came about at the very end of the 9th century in Dunhuang, but are common during the 10th century. This obviously excludes the possibility that the handbook could have been produced during the Tibetan Occupation.

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8. Appendix I. Chinese Text of the Twenty-eight Vajra Precepts⁶¹

Page 1.

1. 金剛二十八戒. 秘密甚深法藏. 平等
2. 無差之理. 當貴自在. 廣大一切. 殊其要妙. 令當解
3. 說. 二十八戒. 所知之戒有其三種. 所行之戒有其五種.
4. 不捨知戒五種. 尋常思念知五種. 識會知戒五種.
5. 戒就知戒五種. 合爲二十八戒. 所知之戒三者. 所爲
6. 身口意戒是也. 身戒者. 所有障難起時. 教主
7. 阿闍梨. 同齋行此行者. 金剛大乘. 同行之者. 分上
8. 一切惡心. 懈怠之心. 慢異之心. 輕⁶²舞之心. 悉不得起.
9. 此是一. 口戒者. 陀羅尼印契等. 不得斷絕. 此是二. 意

Page 2.

1. 戒者. 所有秘密. 最上大乘心印. 圖不得輒然傳說.
2. 此是是三. 秘密師. 同壇法. 眷屬姊妹兄等. 輕⁶³心. 慢心. 俱
3. 不得起. 見遠情之境. 心念諛⁶⁴謗. 見遠情之事. 不
4. 得諛謔. 終退轉. 金剛大乘師. 所敬甚如父母. 如
5. 佛供養. 所有指揮. 不得遠逆⁶⁵(?). 若如此不行時. 當入
6. 大地獄. 不得見佛聞法. 咒印不得間斷者. 諸佛. 觀
7. 行心想事成. 安心如法. 咒印尋常不絕. 入川流之
8. 水. 晝夜不絕. 若如此不行者. 二切之中. 墮大地獄.
9. 所有秘密心印. 圖不得. 等閑說者. 金剛大乘. 付藏

Page 3.

1. 之法. 不受此法者. 不同壇者. 破此戒者. 不得爲說. 行
2. 動作用. 不得交見. 此法不深會者. 師不付法者.

⁶¹ Since the original Chinese text has its own peculiar punctuation, I have chosen to retain that here, rather than following the manner in which the translation has been done.

⁶² Mistake for *zhi* 跏.

⁶³ Mistake for *zhi* 跏.

⁶⁴ I am uncertain with regard to the characters used here, but as they make sense in the context, I suppose that they are the intended ones.

⁶⁵ Variant character.



3. 舌如金剛. 不得傳說. 如此不行者. 三劫之中. 墮大
4. 地獄. 一切壇內. 所有諸佛聖賢. 悉皆嗔 [忿] 怒. 處分. 七
5. 祖已來. 種子斷除. 忿怒. 金剛嗔怒. 心膽已來. 墳燒
6. 令盡夜叉羅刹. 斷絕命根. 飲血大神. 破心. 喫血.
7. 十八大地獄. 墮在其中. 此是戒之根本. 是也.
8. 所行之戒五者. 和合解說. 偷盜忘語. 惡口. 此五. 不捨
9. 之戒. 五者. 煩惱五般. 貪嗔癡. 我慢嫉妬. 常行之戒

Page 4.

1. 五者. 金剛大香樹花. 上露. 大內菩提心. 別有五菓. 蒲
2. 桃菓 庵沒羅. 半捺思般捺婆. 阿魯(?)加. 那羅俄. 此者惣全
3. 供養. 具足別造飲食. 種種供養. 年月. 不過也.
4. 會者之戒. 五者. 五蘊. 五大. 五相. 五境. 五識. 五知來.
5. 五智. 五父. 五母. 和合. 會同是也. [...] 成就之戒.
6. 五者. 五部解說. 十田. 三惡道. 邪見破懷. 障難. 惱
7. 乱. 者五逆(?)人. 退轉大乘者. 惱乱大乘師者. 或
8. 乱大乘師心者. 惱乱一切眾生心者. 此等眾
9. 生. 於大乘. 力上. 悉皆度脫. 此外別者. 聖力. 度

Page 5.

1. 脫和合者. 一莊⁶⁶嚴. 五如來. 同威儀等. 不邪見.
2. 受佛戒者. 偷盜者. . 三寶財物. 金剛師財物. 父.
3. 母奸妹. 同法人物. 八大靈塔物. 供養壇之物. 金
4. 剛座. 常住物. 此外別者. 物度脫. 此等慳貪人. 坎
5. 奪(?). 取供養. 狂語者. 金剛師. 法兄. 法弟. 法奸. 法
6. 妹. 此外別者. 方便誘引. 合入大乘. 敬設方便
7. 度. 惡語者. 以威猛者. 呪度脫. 十田. 鹿言. 深法爲
8. 說. 不捨者戒. 五者. 此是五如來. 五煩惱體. 即是五佛.
9. 常行之戒. 五者. 五作具供養. 不過月年. 如來

⁶⁶ A variant character for zhuang (莊), which as part of the compound zhuangyan (莊嚴) means 'majestic' or 'imposing.'

Page 6.

1. 五者. 即五指. 自然成印. 父母. 視現. 廣說成就者
2. 戒. 五蘆舍那. 阿閼佛. 寶生佛. 阿彌陀佛. 阿目
3. 俄悉地[佛]⁶⁷. 誰人. 識會此戒. 者. 依之行者. 心得自在.
4. 此是秘密蘇陀味. 此是智. 即是與同此. 若不
5. 會. 倒見者. 此是毒藥. 與畜生. 同此. 即散惡道. 不
6. 破此戒者. 即是成佛. 若破此戒者. 即是地獄. 不退此
7. 戒者. 若有破犯者. 却乃懺悔. 根本戒破者. 三遍
8. 懺悔得. 若過此者. 不得懺. 根本戒. 外犯者. 尋
9. 常懺悔. 懺悔法. 此二種. 法會聚集. 所有破犯.

Page 7.

1. 皆乃懺悔. 第二懺悔者. 所有破犯. 到 [?] 眾懺悔. 悉
2. 得如固. 所知之戒. 所修知戒. 一心持者戒. 此三
3. 供養. 尋常月年過者. 不得年過者. 大犯. 亦
4. 許. 三遍懺悔. 過三. 不懺悔也. [...] 不捨之戒.
5. 識之戒. 此等戒躰. 識會者. 依時供養持課念
6. 誦. 心不散亂. 一心明悟. 漸漸成就. 永不退此戒. 若
7. 犯者. 被王. 罰勒. 大臣官長等. 恐怖多生. 龍神
8. 夜之等. 嗔責高官. 剝貧窮不賤. 心所愛
9. 者. 爲馬妻子. 悉皆死盡. 此是破戒之相. 若如此直

Page 8.

1. 祥出時. 急急起建道場. 同法者. 眷屬. 呼召供
2. 養. 重修此戒. 若不修時. 臨命終. 護法善神. 呵
3. 責嗔怒. 言如是. 破戒之人. 當墮地獄中. 長
4. 却受苦. 若如此者. 似花開值雪. 枯木無枝. 永斷
5. 種子. 斷大慈悲. 天上人間. 不得受樂. 永淹苦海.
6. 若此戒不犯者. 世間. 出世間之果. 獲得身上證
7. 得. 悉地. 來世之中. 廣度眾生. 出於三界. 此法. 身口
8. 意事. 上乘戒躰. 此之是也. 若人謗言. 此法不是者.
9. 永斷佛種. 最上乘法中. 無眼之人. 倒見邪魔.

⁶⁷ Character added for the sake of textual consistency.



Page 9.

1. 鬼神所攝之人. 爲諸三眼十頤. 諸鬼等. 以索
2. 前引. 後乃打. 直令入地獄. 諸佛戒王. 視吾所說.
3. 最上乘中. 所出之要. 極上極尊. 此是大乘之戒.
4. 審而行之. 秘之. 重之. 莫忘宣傳. 名字安 [?] 古師. 吾唵波薩. 吾唵鉢摩

Abbreviations

EBTEA	Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia, ed. Charle D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
FDC	<i>Foguang da cidian</i> 佛光大辭典 [Comprehensive Foguang Shan Dictionary], 8 vols. Ed. Foguang da zangjing bianxiu weiyun hui 佛光大藏經編修委員會. Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 1988.
IOL Tib J	Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London (formerly in the India Office Library (IOL))
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
S. T.	Stein Collection of Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London
T.	Takakusu Junjirō 高順次郎 et. al., ed. <i>Taishō shinshū dai zōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō <i>tripitaka</i>]. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.

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