





CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND  
EARLY BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

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# CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND EARLY BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

BY  
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Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank my parents, whose love and guidance have been with me in whatever I have pursued since childhood. The monograph comprises study across several disciplines, which are my life interests: Buddhism; Buddhist art; history and archaeology; Chinese painting and calligraphy; and Dunhuang art, culture and manuscripts.

Almost thirty years ago, I became inspired by Buddhist masters and mentoring teachers when I was in Taiwan. Ven. Wu Yin 悟因法師 and Ven. Sheng Yan 聖嚴法師 inspired me on the right path to pursue Buddha's teaching. My mentoring teacher Wang Shou-xuen 王壽護 taught me the knowledge and skill of Chinese painting and calligraphy, with her good personality and moral character. My study of Buddhist art was inspired by Ven. Kuan Qian 寬謙法師 with my first field trip to the Silk Road in China in 1991. I learnt that studying Buddhist art should be based on an understanding of Buddha's teaching and Buddhist sūtras. My study of Chinese art and archaeology, starting in 1999 at SOAS University of London with Prof. Roderick Whitfield, was a milestone, encouraging me to further pursue an academic career. Thus, all of the earlier learning from my younger years, became a life-long journey to pursue teaching, research, and the practice of Buddhism, as well as service to society.

Last but not least, my deepest gratitude goes to my husband Ke Fang-I 葛芳儀 who has always stood by me during the ups and downs of life. None of this would have been possible without support and help from him.



## ABSTRACT

THE earliest extant Chinese Buddhist manuscript, the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*, was excavated at Toyuq in Turfan. It is dated the 6th year of the Yuankang era (296 CE) during the Western Jin Dynasty (266–316 CE). This sūtra is a copy by Zhu Fashou, one of Dharmarakṣa's monk disciples, a distinctive scribe on the translation team. Both historical documentation and archaeological findings of the period when Buddhism was initially transmitted into China demonstrate that the copying of Buddhist texts by monk scribes from Central Asia played a key role. The work of these scribes also enhanced the creation of diverse and vigorous calligraphic styles from the 3rd to 5th centuries. However, before the 20th century, early Buddhist scribes or foreign scribes were little known in the history of Chinese calligraphy, or in official records.

The discovery of the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts in the early 20th century provided scholars with new material with which to examine early Buddhist scribal culture. This monograph considers the culture of early sacred writing, and the role of early Buddhist scribes, scribal workshops, scriptural calligraphy, and the expertise of these early scribes, for the history of Chinese calligraphers and calligraphy.



## FORWARD

THE legendary sinologist Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 wrote the following poem after his visit to the Mogao grottoes in Dunhuang in 1980:

I have often dreamed of where the Yellow River and the Huang River  
meet;  
Scenes of flags flying in ancient battle would come across my mind.  
I could hear the sound of battle horses galloping on icy ground,  
Rattling on the paper as I write on my desk.  
I saw the green willow branches hanging outside the grottoes in spring;  
And I made the wish to spend my next life here scribing Buddhist texts  
day by day.<sup>1</sup>

Based on his research on the Dunhuang manuscripts in Paris, London and elsewhere, Prof. Jao had earlier written several articles on the scribing of early Buddhist texts in China, and their calligraphic styles. As Buddhism spread from Central Asia into China, a key task effecting transmission was the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit or Central Asian languages into Chinese. Following that, and prior to the invention and widespread use of printing, scriptural scribing would have been the next important task. Such scribing was often done by Buddhist monks or professional scribes under state sponsorship. There were also devout followers of Buddhism, who would commission scribes to write selected Buddhist texts for their daily recital or worship. Hence, the work of a scribe was rather prestigious and well-respected, and would have provided considerable intellectual and spiritual fulfillment as well. We could therefore understand why a scholar of Jao Tsung-I's caliber would aspire to spend his next life in Dunhuang, scribing Buddhist texts each and every day.

Notwithstanding the importance of scribing in the early history of Chinese Buddhism, there are relatively few scholarly books or papers on this subject. Over the past two decades, Tsui Chung-hui 崔中慧 has mapped the development of Chinese calligraphy from the clerical to standard script style during the Han to Wei-Jin period. As part of her study, she has identified a calligraphic style—the Northern Liang Style—created during the Northern Liang period, with substantial influence from Central Asian scriptural

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<sup>1</sup> Tr. Prof. Lok Sang Ho.

writing. The Northern Liang regime (397–460 CE) was one of the Sixteen Kingdoms in Northern China during the Wei-Jin period. It was founded by nomadic tribes of Hunnic origin. It was also the westernmost of the Sixteen Kingdoms, comprising the northwestern part of Gansu and the Turfan region, where Buddhism arrived from the west and flourished.

*Chinese Calligraphy and Early Buddhist Manuscripts* fills an important gap in the study of the spread of Buddhism into China. Like Prof. Jao, Dr. Tsui has been scribing Buddhist texts for many years, and is familiar with Chinese calligraphy and its evolution through the centuries. Along with her research on Dunhuang manuscripts, this makes her ideal for writing a scholarly book on the subject. I am confident that this work will be welcomed by scholars engaged in studies of the Silk Road, Dunhuang manuscripts, the history of Chinese Buddhism, and the evolution of Chinese calligraphy.

C. F. Lee

Professor Emeritus and former Pro-Vice-Chancellor  
Director, Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole  
The University of Hong Kong

## PREFACE

THE time span of Dunhuang and Turfan Buddhist manuscripts runs from the 3rd to 13th centuries, making these documents valuable for the study of the historical, cultural, and religious development of the Silk Road, as well as for the development of Chinese calligraphy.

This study is based on a methodology that combines Buddhist 'literary' sources<sup>1</sup> with Buddhist manuscripts found in Dunhuang and Turfan (3rd–5th c.), particularly items bearing inscriptions with a date before 500 CE, with which we attempt to trace and evaluate the evolution of the calligraphic styles used in copying Chinese Buddhist manuscripts before the Northern Wei period (386–534 CE).

Several sources have been used to study the dates of these manuscripts:

1. Buddhist manuscripts from archaeological finds that contained inscriptions with an exact date;
2. Buddhist sūtra translated before 500 CE, which can be cross-referenced and verified from literary sources such as the *Chu sanzang jiji*<sup>2</sup>;
3. Buddhist manuscripts that feature the characteristic calligraphy of the period before 500 CE; and
4. research output from various catalogues edited by Bo Xiaoying, Chen Guocan, Ikeda On, Inokuchi Taijun, Isobe Akira, Kagawa Mokushiki, Koitsuma Enjun, Nakamura Fusetsu, Oda Yoshihisa, Ryojun Hakubutsukan, Rong Xinjiang, Shi Pingting, Tang Changru, Turfan Research Academy in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Wang Su, and others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 'A Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka' (CSZJ); *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳 'Biography of Eminent Monks' (GSZ); and *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 'Record of the Historical Transmission of the Three Treasures' (LDSBJ).

<sup>2</sup> CSZJ was compiled around 515 CE by Shi Sengyou (445–518 CE), T2145, 55. For scribes in the CSZJ see: Ch. II.2 p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> For details on these catalogues see: Ch. I.2 p. 4 n. 5.

Based upon an examination and analysis of calligraphic styles from dated Buddhist manuscripts and stone inscriptions before 500 CE, this monograph explores the evolution of Buddhist manuscript writing styles and offers a mapping of the development of Chinese calligraphy from the clerical to the standard script styles during the Han to Wei–Jin periods.

This monograph contains material from chapters revised from the author’s doctoral dissertation,<sup>4</sup> as well as from papers delivered at various conferences.<sup>5</sup> There are three main aspects to this study:

1. Ch. I surveys the evolution and transmission of Chinese characters from the clerical script to the standard script. It investigates how the government’s official style of calligraphy, termed the ‘standard script’ *zhengshu*, was adopted and used in copying Buddhist manuscripts before the Northern Liang Dynasty (397–439 CE). Archæological and literary evidence demonstrates that the appearance of the standard script can be traced back to 176 CE, when Zhong You’s calligraphy was recognised as the highest level of achievement. This had an influence on a number of early Buddhist scribes (for example, Zhu Fashou, Hui Song, Dao Yang and Fan Hai), and on the relationship between Buddhist scribes and Chinese calligraphers (for example, Zhong You and Wang Xizhi).
2. Ch. II and III focus on the Buddhist scribes and writing styles in the translation teams of Dharmarakṣa and Dharmakṣema. They demonstrate the contribution of Buddhist scribes, who had a unique scriptural calligraphy, and who are little known in the history of Chinese calligraphy. It is noted that the Northern Liang Style (NLS) had a strong Central Asian influence. The NLS writing style was created during the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304–439 CE) and applied in some government documents in the Northern Liang period.
3. Ch. IV considers the writing styles of Buddhist manuscripts and stone inscriptions from archæological finds in Liangzhou, Dunhuang, Turfan and other regions. It is suggested that the formation of the early Buddhist scribal workshop in Liangzhou can be

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<sup>4</sup> (Tsui, 2010).

2015a, 2015b).

<sup>5</sup> See: (Tsui, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013,

traced to before the Northern Wei, probably to the early 5th century, during the Northern Liang period.

It was the integration of the NLS and the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi's tradition that brought about the evolution of the standard script of the Northern Wei period, around the mid 5th century, which in turn became the prototype of the standard script in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

Research into Chinese calligraphy and early Buddhist manuscripts requires reading and translating classical Chinese texts from various sources. Unless otherwise noted, all passages translated from the Chinese are by the author.

T. C.



## ABBREVIATIONS

CSZJJ = Chu sanzang jiji = 出三藏記集 = A Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka

GSZ = Gao seng zhuan = 高僧傳 = Biography of Eminent Monks

LDSBJ = Lidai sanbao ji = 歷代三寶記 = Record of the Historical Transmission of the Three Treasures

NLS = Bei liang ti = 北涼體 = Northern Liang Style

Juqu Anzhou Stele = Liang wang da Juquanzhou zaosi gongde bei = 涼王大沮渠安周造寺功德碑 = Stele to Commemorate the Merit of Constructing a Temple by Juqu Anzhou, the Great King of the Northern Liang



## CHINESE ERAS AND RULERS

Jiahe 嘉禾 = Reign of Sun Quan of Wu in the Three Kingdoms period  
(232–8 CE)

Zhengshi 正始 = Reign of Emperor Shao of Cao Wei in the Three  
Kingdoms period 三國曹魏魏少帝 (240–9)

Taishi 泰始 = Reign of Emperor Wu in the Western Jin 西晉武帝  
(265–74)

Yuankang 元康 = Reign of Emperor Hui in the Western Jin 西晉惠  
帝 (291–9)

Yongjia 永嘉 = Reign of Emperor Huai in the Western Jin 西晉懷帝  
(307–13)

Ganlu 甘露 = Reign of ruler Fu Jian 苻堅 in the Former Qin (359–64)

Shengping 升平 = Reign of two rulers in the Former Liang, Zhang  
Xuanjing 張玄靚 and Zhang Tianxi 張天錫 (357–61)

Xian'an 咸安 = Reign of Former Liang 前涼 (also in the same period  
of Emperor Sima Yu in the Eastern Jin 東晉簡文帝司馬昱)  
(371–2)

Linjia 麟嘉 = Reign of ruler Lü Guang 呂光 in the Later Liang  
(389–96)



## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

### CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY IN THE HAN–JIN

BUDDHISM was officially introduced into China in 67 CE —during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE)— although the generally acknowledged arrival of Buddhism in China from India was 2 BCE.<sup>1</sup> The translation and composition of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese was the primary vehicle used to promote Buddhism from the early Eastern Han (ca. 1st c. CE). This was also the period in which the art of Chinese calligraphy reached its apogee, with many calligraphers working in a wide variety of styles.

According to Fang Guangchang’s survey of the Buddhist canon, when Buddhism and Buddhist texts were transmitted to China, publication evolved in four phases: i. pure handwritten manuscripts; ii. block printed manuscripts; iii. modern printed books; and iv. digitalised electronic versions.<sup>2</sup> These four phases formed a step-by-step foundation for the publication of the Tripiṭaka in the later phase. Before the invention of printing, Buddhist texts were dependent on scribes for copying. This was the ‘pure handwritten manuscripts’ phase. The publication of Buddhist sūtra developed from small group, or team type projects, to large scale projects.

The phase of pure handwritten manuscripts, which relied on writing by hand and copying by professional scribes, was crucial for establishing the foundation of Buddhist sūtra. It preserved the original attributes of early sūtra produced by various Buddhist translation teams. These early written manuscripts have been used for the textual study of many translated versions of Buddhist scriptures. In studying these documents we can examine, for example, the writing style, the format of the manuscripts, the size of the paper, and the design of the early texts.

Due to their unique features, early manuscripts are valuable for researching the development of the Buddhist canon throughout history. The production of hand-copied manuscripts prior to the invention of printing represents the most important stage in the history of the compilation of Buddhist texts. Ochiai Toshinori has pro-

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<sup>1</sup> (Zürcher, 2007), p. 24. (Fang, 2006), pp. 14–25; (Fang, 2012),

<sup>2</sup> (Fang, 2015), pp. 1–34. See also: p. 32.

posed that the significance of the hand-copied manuscripts is three-fold: i. they contain sentences and words that have not been found in the printed versions of Buddhist scriptures; ii. they preserved various versions of the same scriptures; and iii. they provided new historical documents.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this monograph is to study the development of Buddhist scriptural calligraphy and scribes during the early periods. We will examine the evolution of writing styles by studying dated manuscripts and their relationship to contemporary calligraphy and calligraphers. We will identify the calligraphic styles chosen by Buddhist monks and translators on translation teams, and investigate how early scribal teams were organised. Before we examine manuscripts, however, we will provide a brief overview of the development of Chinese calligraphy from the Han to Jin period (before the 4th c. CE).

Chinese calligraphy entered a new era of development in the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). During the Eastern Han, the mature ‘clerical script’ *lishu* gradually evolved into a variety of different calligraphic styles, ‘running script’ *xingshu*, ‘draft cursive script’ *zhangcao*, and ‘standard script’ *zhengshu*. This marked the first peak in the development of calligraphy in Chinese history, a period that had a profound influence on the calligraphy of later generations. This occurred at the time Buddhism was introduced into China, although it is not clear whether Buddhism influenced the rapid development of various styles of calligraphy or not. The reasons for the flourishing of calligraphy in the Han Dynasty are as follows.<sup>4</sup>

The first reason is related to the correlation of calligraphy with official careers. In the Han Dynasty, great significance was attached to educating students in how to write calligraphy. The recruitment of imperial officials was based on their knowledge of the Chinese classics and other skills such as writing calligraphy. The government maintained a system of assessment for the promotion of civil officials, with their ability in writing as one of the criteria.<sup>5</sup> The government assigned officials to conduct examinations, from which students who were adept in calligraphy were selected and appointed as officials in charge of literature in counties, or even, in the government. A basic requirement for a historian, scholar, or scribe,

<sup>3</sup> (Ochiai, 2000), p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> (Hua, 2009), pp. 14–15.

<sup>5</sup> (Tomiya, 2007); (Hua, 2009), pp.

18–19.

Table 1: Chinese Dynasties

		<i>Reign</i>	<i>Capital</i>
Xia		2070–1766	–
Shang		1765–1122	–
W. Zhou		1121–771	–
E. Zhou		770–249	–
Qin		221–207	Xianyang
W. Han		206–8 CE	Chang’an
Xin <sup>a</sup>		9–24	–
E. Han		25–220	Luoyang
Three Kingdoms	Wei	220–65	Luoyang
	Shu	221–63	Chengdu
	Wu	229–80	Jiankang <sup>b</sup>
W. Jin		265–316	Luoyang
E. Jin		317–420	Jiankang
N. Dynasty	N. Liang	397–439	Guzang <sup>c</sup>
	N. Wei	386–534	Pingcheng, <sup>d</sup> Luoyang <sup>e</sup>
	E. Wei	534–49	Ye
	W. Wei	535–57	Chang’an
	N. Qi	550–77	Ye
	N. Zhou	557–88	Chang’an
S. Dynasty	Song	420–78	Jiankang
	Qi	479–501	Jiankang
	Liang	502–56	Jiankang
	Chen	557–88	Jiankang
Sui		581–618	Chang’an
Tang		618–907	Chang’an

<sup>a</sup> Wang Mang interregnum.<sup>b</sup> Nanjing.<sup>c</sup> Wuwei.<sup>d</sup> Datong.<sup>e</sup> 493–534.

was the ability to write calligraphy in the correct and standard way. As Galambos writes:

Since the ability, or choice, to write correctly was a measure of the scribe's moral integrity, the standard way of writing had to be enforced for those in government service. Xu Shen and Ban Gu recorded the rule that if an official's characters were not correct, he was to be punished immediately.<sup>6</sup>

The correlation of how one was educated to write with one's career and prospects for promotion resulted in people attaching great significance to calligraphy. Consequently, the Han government managed the vast country efficiently, owing to the well-established official secretarial system.<sup>7</sup>

Many renowned calligraphers excelled in one or more styles of writing, such as the seal script masters Cao Xi and Handan Chun; cursive script masters Liu Mu, Du Cao, Cui Yuan, and Zhang Zhi; masters of the *bafen* script<sup>8</sup> Shi Yiguan and Liang Hu; and running script master Liu Desheng. Some masters, such as Cai Yong and Zhong You, were adept in several disciplines (Tab. 2).<sup>9</sup>

Among these calligraphers, the two most influential figures were Zhong You and Zhang Zhi. Both were mentioned in the preface of *Shu pu* 'Treatise on Calligraphy' by Sun Guoting (ca. 648 CE, d. 687–702 CE). In this work, Sun gave the highest grade for artistic achievement to these two calligraphers in the Han–Wei period, writing:

The best calligraphers from antiquity to the present include Zhong You and Zhang Zhi of the Han and Wei Dynasties. They are unexcelled. Wang Xizhi and Wang Xiangzhi, of the late Jin, who considered themselves to be marvels, thought their craftsmanship to be on such a higher level than anyone else that this compelled the somewhat ungracious comment by Wang Xizhi who stated, 'I have recently surveyed the famous calligraphers. Zhong You and Zhang Zhi are surely unexcelled; the rest are not worth looking at.'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> (Galambos, 2006), p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> (Gao, 1947), p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> *Bafen* script is similar to the clerical style.

<sup>9</sup> (Hua, 2009), pp. 14–15.

<sup>10</sup> On Sun Guoting's calligraphy, see: *Shu pu* (1979), pp. 38–9, & *Shu pu* (1989); (Huang, 1979), p. 124. For the English translation of Sun's theory, see: (Chang & Frankel, 1995), p. 1.

Table 2: Calligraphers in the Han–Jin

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Style</i>
Du Cao	76–88 act. <sup>a</sup>	draft cursive
Cui Yuan	77–142	cursive
Cai Yong	132–92	clerical
Zhang Zhi	150–92 act.	cursive
Zhong You	151–230	standard, clerical, running
Shi Yiguan	ca. 168–88 act.	<i>bafen</i>
Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick <sup>b</sup>	176	standard
Wei Ji	–229	seal, clerical
Wei Guan	220–91	clerical, cursive
Huang Xiang	ca. 222–80 act.	cursive
Zhong Hui	225–64	cursive
Suo Jing	239–303	draft cursive
Suo Dan	ca. 250–325	standard
Lu Ji	261–303	running
Jiang Qiong	265–312 act.	ancient seal
Wei Shuo	272–349	clerical
Stone stele of Prefecture Chief Gulang at Jiuzhen <sup>c</sup>	272	clerical, standard
Wang Dao	276–339	running, cursive
Wang Xizhi	303–61	standard, running, cursive

<sup>a</sup> Active.

<sup>b</sup> This is one of the main pieces of archaeological evidence for writing in the standard script style. Cf. Ch. II.5.2 p. 38.

<sup>c</sup> The style of the Gulang stone stele has been regarded as close to standard script. Cf. Ch. I.3 p. 12.

In examining early calligraphers in the Hexi Corridor or Dunhuang region during the Han Dynasty, we find Zhang Zhi, a native of Guazhou<sup>11</sup> famous for his cursive calligraphy. He established an exclusive professional style known as the ‘Xizhou School of Cursive Script’ *Xizhou caoshu pai*,<sup>12</sup> the influence of which continued into the Western Jin Dynasty.<sup>13</sup> Another renowned calligrapher was Suo Jing (239–303 CE), a native of Dunhuang. He was the grandson of Zhang Zhi’s sister and his ancestors had lived in the Dunhuang area for generations. A Confucian scholar, who served as a government official with the title ‘Secretarial Court Gentleman’ *shangshu lang*, his calligraphy was deeply influenced by Zhang Zhi’s style.

In addition, an improvement in writing tools, such as paper, brushes, ink, and ink slabs, enhanced the aesthetics of this higher level of calligraphy.<sup>14</sup> Before the Han Dynasty, the materials used for writing included silk, bamboo slips, wooden tablets, stones and bronze. The invention of paper, and writing on paper, encouraged the development of Chinese calligraphy, starting in the early Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE).<sup>15</sup>

During the middle of the Eastern Han, Duke Cai Lun improved the technique for producing better quality paper, known as Cai Hou Paper,<sup>16</sup> made from tree bark, rags, and broken fishing nets. Towards the end of the Eastern Han, Zuo Bo (ca. 185 CE) improved the technology of Cai Hou Paper, and developed a more refined paper, Zuo Bo Paper. These inventions provided favourable conditions for the growth in popularity of calligraphy.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Near Dunhuang.

<sup>12</sup> (Hua, 2009), p. 15. In the Han to Jin Dynasties, the geographical region of Xizhou included the area of Guazhou, Dunhuang and Liangzhou (modern Wuwei) in Gansu. Zhang Zhi and Suo Jing were leading calligraphers in this region.

<sup>13</sup> (Hua, 2009), p. 189.

<sup>14</sup> (Tseng, 1993), p. 375.

<sup>15</sup> See: (Tomiya, 2007), pp. 4–7. This discusses paper fragments discovered at beacon tower sites in Xinjiang, Gansu, and Shanxi provinces in the 20th century. These fragments can be

dated to before Cai Lun, as a fragment excavated in 1957 is Baqiao paper from the Baqiao site near Xi’an and is dated to the 2nd c. BCE.

<sup>16</sup> *Han shu* (1962), fasc. 20, p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> From 1990 to 1992, archaeologists discovered 35,000 bamboo slips and around 460–70 paper fragments at the Xuan Quan Zhi site near Dunhuang. These slips and fragments can be dated to the Han Dynasty. As many were written documents, this provides more evidence for the popular use of paper during the Han Dynasty.

As a result, the famous three treasures of scholars' desks came into being, namely: the paper of Zuo Bo 左伯紙; the brushes of Zhang Zhi 張芝筆; and the ink of Wei Dan 韋誕墨 (179–253 CE).<sup>18</sup> The existence of these advanced tools led to an increase in the number of calligraphers during the Han Dynasty, and marked the first peak period in calligraphy in Chinese history.<sup>19</sup> When Buddhism was transmitted into China, the distribution of translated Buddhist scriptures and the copying of sūtra for circulation, subsequently became driving forces in the development of calligraphy.

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<sup>18</sup> (Tseng, 1993), p. 375.

<sup>19</sup> (Hua, 2009), pp. 14–15.

Table 3: The Sixteen Kingdoms

<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>First king</i> <i>Ethnicity</i> <i>Capital</i>	<i>Region</i>
Han F. <sup>a</sup> Zhao	304–18 318–29	Liu Yuan Xiongnu Pingyang, Chang'an	Wei River in Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Hebei; pts <sup>b</sup> Gansu
Cheng Han Han	306–38 338–47	Li Xiong Di Chengdu	E. pts Sichuan; pts Yunnan, Guizhou
F. Liang	314–76	Zhang Shi Han Guzang	Gansu; pts Ningxia; E. pts Xinjiang
L. <sup>c</sup> Zhao	319–51	Shi Le Jie Xiang, Yecheng	Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, Shandong, Shaanxi; pts Jiangsu, Anhui, Gansu, Liaoning
F. Yan	337–70	Murong Huang Xianbei Longcheng, Yecheng	Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, Anhui, Jiangsu, Liaoning
F. Qin	351–94	Fu Jian Di Chang'an	Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Anhui, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Guizhou, Hubei, Liaoning, Gansu; pts Ningxia, Xinjiang
L. Yan	384–407	Murong Chui Xianbei Zhongshan	Hebei, Shandong, Shanxi; pts Henan, Liaoning
L. Qin	384–417	Yao Chang Qiang Chang'an	Gansu, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan

Table 3: The Sixteen Kingdoms

<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>First king</i> <i>Ethnicity</i> <i>Capital</i>	<i>Region</i>
W. Qin	385–431	Qifu Guoren Xianbei Jincheng	E. pts Gansu
L. Liang	389–403	Lü Guang Di Guzang	W. pts Gansu; pts Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang
S. Liang	397–414	Tufa Wugu Xianbei Ledu	Qinghai; pts Gansu
S. Yan	398–410	Murong De Xianbei Guanggu	Shandong; pts Henan
W. Liang	400–21	Li Hao Han Dunhuang	W. pts Gansu; pts Xinjiang
N. Liang	397–439	Duan Ye, Juqu Mengxun Xiongnu Zhangye	W. pts Gansu; pts Ningxia, Xinjiang, Qinghai
Hu Xia	407–31	Helian Bobo Xiongnu Tiefu Tongwan	Shaanxi; pts Inner Mongolia
N. Yan	407–36	Murong Yun <sup>d</sup> Goguryeo, <sup>e</sup> Han Longcheng	Liaoning, Hebei

<sup>a</sup> Former.<sup>b</sup> parts of.<sup>c</sup> Later.<sup>d</sup> Later called Gao Yun.<sup>e</sup> Korean.



CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND  
EARLY BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS



CH. I  
EARLY BUDDHIST SCRIPTURAL CALLIGRAPHY  
(XIEJINGTI)

I.1 INTRODUCTION

DURING the early stage of the translation of Buddhist texts, Buddhist monks or laymen from India or Central Asia played an important role in translating, transcribing, and copying Buddhist texts. In the Buddhist text translation teams, translation was carried out by three individuals: the main translator, *zhuyi*; the person who gave the oral transmission, *chuanyan*; and the main scribe, *bishou*.<sup>1</sup> The *bishou* needed to have expertise in writing Chinese calligraphy.<sup>2</sup> The translator specialised in the oral interpretation of different languages, while the scribe recorded what was dictated, and wrote a scriptural translation into literary Chinese. In addition, other terms associated with scribe appeared in the 5th century: *xiejingsheng* (or *jingsheng*), a ‘copyist’ or a ‘writer of scripture.’

These scribes were official scholars, private scribes, or Buddhist monks with a good knowledge of Buddhism and traditional Confucian classical literature. Some laypeople would also have earned a living copying texts. Although these scribes were not well known calligraphers, their calligraphy would have been a respectable representation of the current style. What were the calligraphic styles of these foreign Buddhist scribes? And what impact did they have on the development of Chinese calligraphy?

We will now review historical documents to identify Buddhist scribes before the 5th century and their calligraphic styles, or *xiejingti*.<sup>3</sup> The process through which Chinese calligraphy evolved will be determined by observing the changes that occurred between the Han and Jin periods, as well as the change from using the clerical to standard scripts, and also by reviewing Buddhist manuscripts dated before the 5th century.

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<sup>1</sup> (Wang, 2004), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> (Ji, 2007), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> The terms for the calligraphic style of the Buddhist scribes —*xiejingti* or *jingshengti*— were created later, around the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (386–589 CE). See: *Wei shu* (1974), fasc. 44, p. 1219.

## I.2 MANUSCRIPT OF THE BUDDHASAṄĠĪTI-SŪTRA

In the early 20th century, numerous Buddhist manuscripts were excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan ranging from the 3rd to 13th centuries (Tab. 4).<sup>4</sup> This collection includes both hand-written and printed manuscripts. The hand-written manuscripts, in particular, are valuable for the study of the historical, cultural, and religious development of the Silk Road, as well as the historical development of Chinese calligraphy.

For this study, the author surveyed catalogues of these manuscripts, including those edited by Bo Xiaoying, Chen Guocan, Ikeda On, Inokuchi Taijun, Isobe Akira, Kagawa Mokushiki, Koitsuma Enjun, Nakamura Fusetsu, Oda Yoshihisa, Ryojun Hakubutsukan, Rong Xinjiang, Shi Pingting, Tang Changru, Wang Su, and the Turfan Research Academy in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.<sup>5</sup> From these catalogues it was found that there are at least 90 Buddhist manuscripts in Chinese dated before 500 CE.<sup>6</sup> Of these manuscripts, 49 have been verified as having dates in their inscriptions. Among these, the *Buddhasaṅġīti-sūtra*<sup>7</sup>—which has a definite date of 296 CE during the Western Jin Dynasty—has been identified as the earliest dated Chinese Buddhist manuscript known to exist (Fig. 1).<sup>8,9</sup>

This *Buddhasaṅġīti-sūtra* manuscript was excavated at Toyuq in Turfan in 1908 and recorded in the *Seiiki kōko zufu* ‘Archive of Archæological Findings from the Western Region,’ published in 1915 by Otani Kozui, a Japanese explorer who conducted archæological explorations of early Buddhist sites in Xinjiang, Gansu, and Tibet three times between 1902 and 1914.<sup>10</sup> In this book,

<sup>4</sup> (Guo, 1991), pp. 63–76. This data is mainly based on statistics compiled by Guo Feng in 1991, Fang Guangchang in 2003, and Xia Shengping in 2008.

<sup>5</sup> (Bo, 1990); (Chen, 2005–7); (Ikeda, 1990); (Inokuchi, 1980); (Isobe, 2005); (Kagawa, 1999); (Koitsuma, 2009); (Nakamura, 2003); (Oda, 1983); (Ryojun, 2006); (Rong, 2007); (Shi, 1999 & 2000); (Tang, 1983, 1990, 1992–6); (Turfan Research Academy in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 2007);

(Wang, 1997a, 1997b).

<sup>6</sup> For a list of these manuscripts, see: (Tsui, 2010), App. 1–1 & 1–2, pp. 412–5.

<sup>7</sup> *Zhufo yaoji jing* 諸佛要集經, T810.

<sup>8</sup> (Mazumi, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> The oldest known secular manuscript from the Western Region is the Li Bo manuscript 李柏尺牘 dated to the Former Liang (325 CE or later). It is in the collection of the Academic Information Centre, Ryukoku University.

Table 4: Buddhist manuscripts excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan

	China	Japan	Russia	Germany	UK	France	Others	Total
Dunhuang	19,000	1,000	19,000	-	13,300	6,000	-	58,300
Turfan	12,000	8,000	-	20,000	276	-	2,003	42,479

Otani recorded eighty-seven Chinese Buddhist manuscripts, which proved to be the most valuable of the many cultural treasures he obtained in his three expeditions.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1: Fragment with colophon of *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* (296 CE)



Ink on paper. After: (Inokuchi, 1980), v. 2, pl. 1. © Hōzōkan.

Fig. 1 shows the colophon of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* manuscript, stating that it was copied in 296 CE. The colophon is also inscribed with the name of Zhu Fashou, a Buddhist monk who was one of the scribes in the translation team of Dharmarakṣa (ca. 229–306 CE).<sup>12</sup> Itō Shin writes:

<sup>10</sup> (Kagawa, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Otani Kozui (1876–1948) was the 22nd descendant (patriarch) of the Nishi Honganji Temple in Japan. He acquired a considerable number of archaeological artifacts during his three

expeditions. He left the Nishi Honganji Temple shortly afterwards, but held a collection of artifacts in his private treasure house, the 二樂莊 *Erle Zhuang* ‘Second happiness villa.’

<sup>12</sup> (Chen, 1983), p. 9.

Figure 2: Fragments of Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra



Ink on paper. After: (Ryojun, 2006), p. 2. © Lushun Museum 旅顺博物馆.

The *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is one of only a very few existing pieces of calligraphy done by brush discovered to date that had its origins and dissemination from the Central Plain of China. I presume that the manuscript was written in the capitals Luoyang or Chang'an and then brought to Turfan.<sup>13</sup>

By the time that the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* was translated in the Western Jin period by Dharmarakṣa, Chinese scripts had evolved from the ancient to the standard script stage, through numerous phases: oracle bone script; bronze script; seal script; clerical script; draft cursive script; running script; and standard script (Figs 3 & 4).<sup>14</sup>

As indicated in Tab. 2 and Figs 1 and 3, the various writing styles developed into a mature phase during the late 3rd century CE. Having studied numerous Buddhist manuscripts in the Lüshun Museum, Wang Zhenfen compared the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* with that of the *Dharmapāda*,<sup>15</sup> dated the first year of Ganlu in the Former Qin Dynasty (359 CE) (Fig. 5).<sup>16</sup> She identified the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* as in the Zhong You tradition, written in standard script (Fig. 6).<sup>17 18</sup> However, what was the reasoning behind Dharmarakṣa's decision to use Zhong You's standard script to copy the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*? To understand the processes involved, we will explore the Buddhist scribes, scriptural

<sup>13</sup> (Itō, 1991), pp. 43–9; (Itō, 1996), no. 2, pp. 130–51; (Itō, 1995), no. 3, pp. 171–89; (Chen, 1983), pp. 6–13. Itō Shin presumed that it was copied at Chang'an or Luoyang, based on its calligraphic style in the Central Plain's tradition. According to Chen's research, the manuscript was copied by Zhu Fashou at Jiuquan, then circulated to Turfan. The present author believes that it was copied by Zhu Fashou at Jiuquan in the standard script style in the Zhong You tradition of the Central Plain.

<sup>14</sup> The *zhengshu*, or 'standard script,' is also called *kaishu*, and is sometimes translated 'regular script.' In the following discussion the author will use 'standard script.' See: (Nakata, 1983), p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> *Faju piyu jing* 法句譬喻經, T211.

<sup>16</sup> The *Dharmapāda*, *Faju piyu jing*, T211, was translated by Fa Ju and Fa Li in the Western Jin Dynasty in Luoyang.

<sup>17</sup> (Wang, 2006), p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Fig. 6, a rubbing of Zhong You's calligraphy that is very rare, and is the only copy by the painter and calligrapher Wen Zhengming (1470–1559 CE) of the Ming Dynasty, made from one of Zhong You's original works. Wen Zhengming's copy was engraved on stone by Zhang Jianfu (1491–1572 CE) and was collected in *Zhen shang zhai tie* by connoisseur Hua Xia (a contemporary of Wen Zhengming, act. 1522 CE) as a model calligraphy book in 1522 CE.

Figure 3: Evolution of styles in Chinese calligraphy and formation of standard script

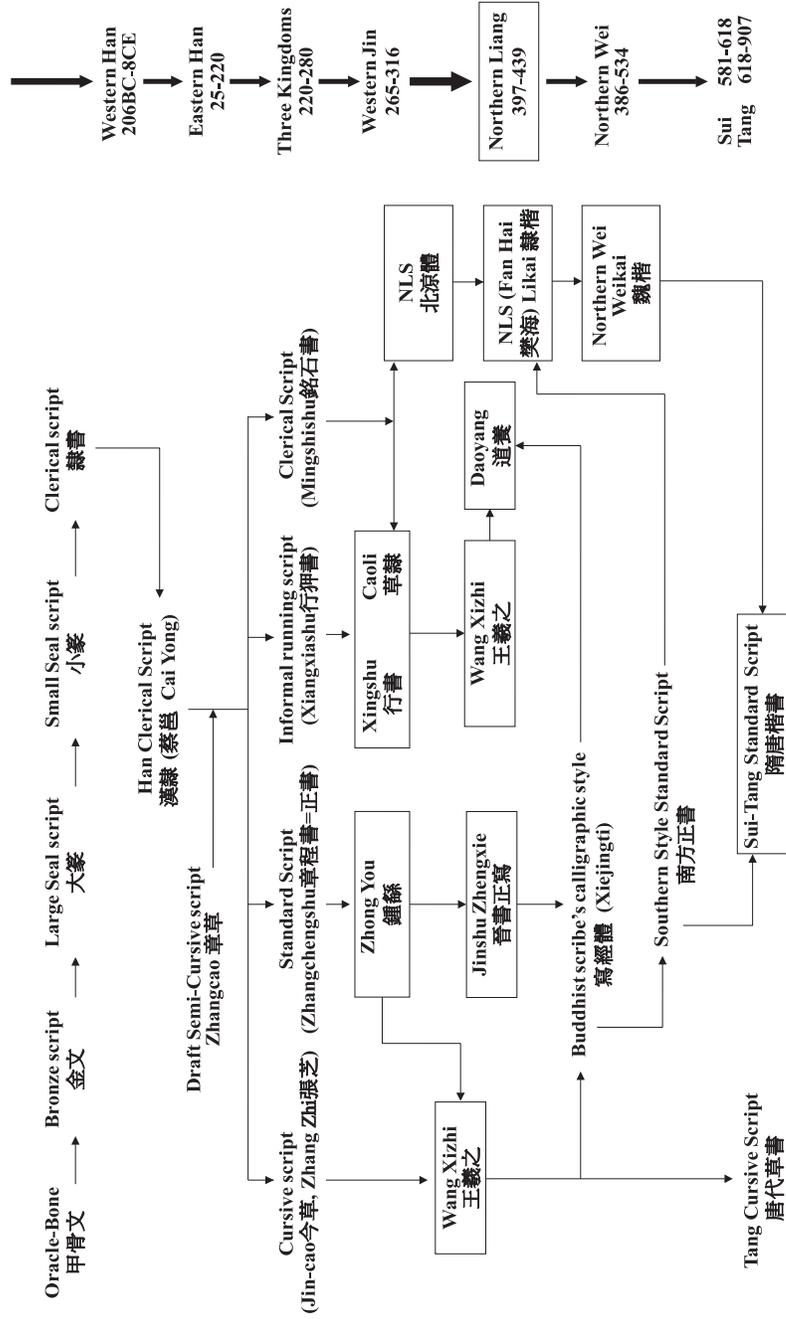


Figure 4: Evolution of Chinese characters

	Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Seal script	Clerical script	Standard script	Running script	Cursive script
水							
牛							
馬							

calligraphy, and the formation of the government official script system.

### I.3 CALLIGRAPHIC STYLE OF THE BUDDHASAṄĪTI-SŪTRA

The *Buddhasaṅġiti-sūtra* was translated by Dharmarakṣa in Luoyang in 292 CE, and copied by Zhu Fashou in 296 CE.<sup>19</sup> However, scholars have not yet reached agreement on the calligraphic style of the sūtra. Most of the manuscripts recorded in the *Seiiki kōko zufu* were lost, including the *Buddhasaṅġiti-sūtra*. In addition, the brushstrokes in the sūtra clearly show that the calligraphy was in mature standard script. This has led some scholars to doubt its authenticity.

Liu Tao, for example, suspected that the sūtra was a forgery made during the early period of the Republic of China.<sup>20</sup> He noted that Dunhuang manuscripts with an exact dating would be very rare, and argued that some colophons that were dated to the Western Jin were unreliable, such as the records in the third volume of *Shodō zenshū*.<sup>21</sup> Liu observed that fragments of the Daoist text *Daodejing* by Suo Dan,<sup>22</sup> and also the manuscript *Buddhasaṅġiti-sūtra* (Figs 1 & 2) —despite dated inscriptions— used brush techniques strikingly similar to the modern style; the calligraphy, he argued, had a rounded, blunt, and weak appearance.

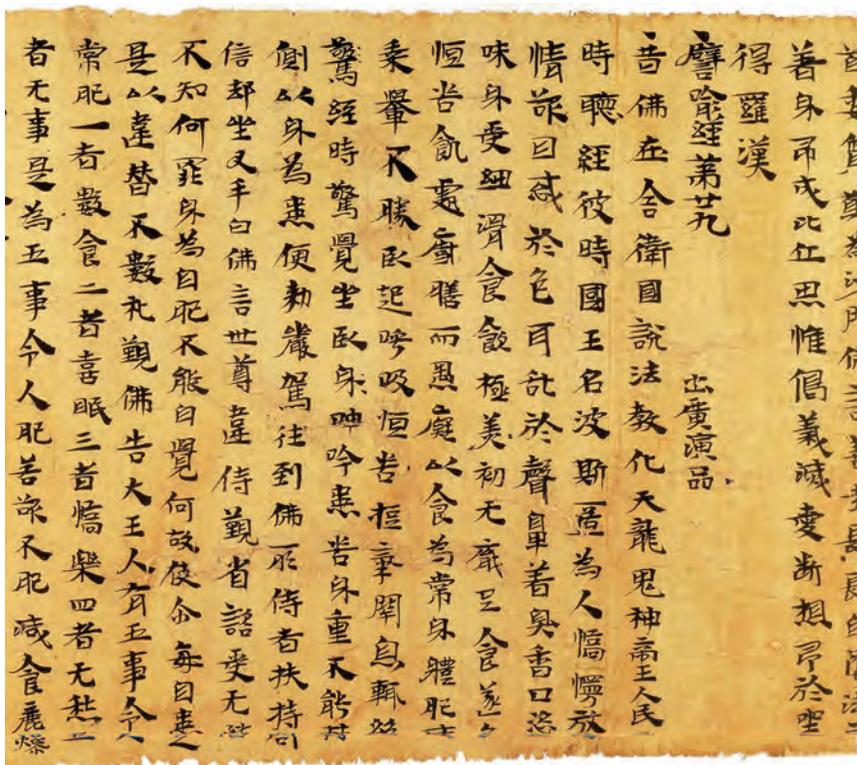
<sup>19</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 8b.

<sup>20</sup> (Liu, 2002), p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> (Shimonaka, 1954).

<sup>22</sup> The manuscript, entitled *Taishang Xuanyuan Daodejing* 太上玄元道德經, was attributed to Suo Dan (ca. 250–325 CE), a Dunhuang scholar

in the Western Jin period, but was identified by scholars as a forgery. However, the calligraphic style was imitated in the Zhong You tradition. Another Dunhuang calligrapher of the Western Jin is Suo Jing (239–303 CE).

Figure 5: Fragment of *Dharmapāda* (359 CE)

Ink on paper. 359.24 cm × 239.3 cm. After: (Isobe, 2005), v. 1, p. 18. © 2005 Taitō kuritsu shodō hakubutsukan 台東区立書道博物館.

Fortunately, certain items from the Otani expedition are still preserved in the Lüshun Museum.<sup>23</sup> From 2003–6, the Lüshun Museum and the Ryukoku University Library worked on a project to attempt to identify 26,000 Chinese manuscript fragments in the collection.<sup>24</sup> One of the results of the project was the rediscovery of fourteen fragments of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* that fit together with a previously discovered larger fragment, lost after it was published in the *Seiiki kōko zufu* in 1915. These findings verified the authenticity of the records in the *Seiiki kōko zufu* (Fig. 2), and reaffirmed the *sūtra* as the earliest extant Chinese Buddhist manuscript.<sup>25</sup>

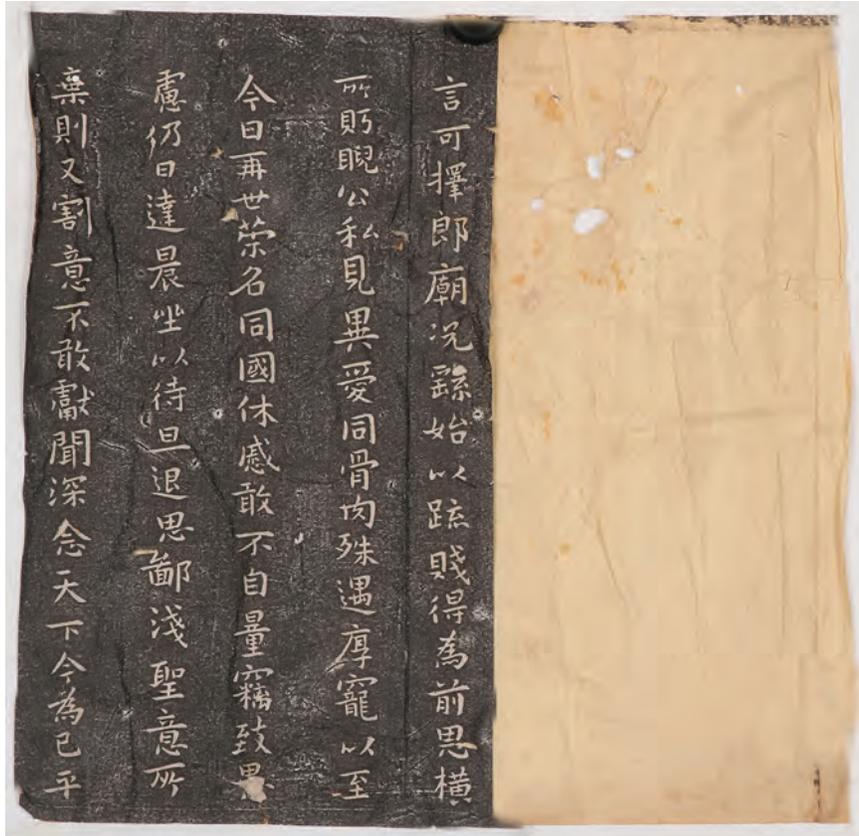
<sup>23</sup> (Guo, 2006), pp. 3–16.

<sup>24</sup> (Ryojun, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Another important finding was a fragment of the *Pusa chanhui wen* 菩薩懺悔文 ‘Document of a Bodhisattva’s Penitence,’ dated 427 CE, the 3rd year

of the Cheng Yang reign during the Northern Liang period. It was part of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi-sūtra Pusa shanjie jing* 菩薩善戒經, T1582, translated into Chinese by Guṇavarman in 431 CE.

Figure 6: Rubbing of Zhong You's *Xuanshi biao*, 'Memorial in response to an official notice'



25 cm × 27 cm. After: *China Bronze and Stone Rubbings Collection*, 2012, No. 27158.  
© 2012 Gansu wuliang guji shuzi jishu youxian gongsi 甘肃五凉古籍数字技术有限公司.

Fig. 2 was reconstructed from several fragments of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*. The largest on the left was lost after it was first published in 1915 in the *Seiki kōko zufu*. The fourteen smaller fragments on the right were rediscovered during the research project conducted by the Lüshun Museum and the Ryukoku University Library.<sup>26</sup> This image suggests that the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is, in fact, the earliest extant Chinese Buddhist manuscript. However, there remains considerable debate among scholars concerning the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* manuscripts.

<sup>26</sup> See: (Mazumi, 2006), pp. 1–4; (Okabe, 1983), pp. 13–47.

Naito Konan first indicated that the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* lies between the *bafen* and standard script, somewhat closer to standard script than the clerical style. It is close to the style used on stone inscriptions towards the end of the later Han and during the Three Kingdoms period, especially the stone stele of Prefecture Chief Gulang at Jiuzhen from the kingdom of Wu (272 CE).<sup>27</sup> It uses an extremely gracious style of writing (Figs 7 & 8).

Naito added that the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* was a transitional style from the old clerical to the standard script style, and that although the brush strokes still include traces of the clerical style, it was actually written in the standard script.<sup>28</sup>

After research on bamboo slips and manuscripts unearthed from the Western Region, Nishikawa Yasushi categorised the calligraphy of the Western Jin into five types — i. ‘clerical’ *lishu*; ii. ‘draft semi-cursive’ *zhangcao*; iii. ‘cursive’ *caoshu*; iv. ‘running’ or ‘semi-cursive’ *hangshu*; and v. ‘standard script’ *kaishu*— all of which developed during the reigns of Yuankang (291–9 CE) and Yongjia (307–313 CE) in the Western Jin. Thus, Nishikawa classifies the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* as clerical rather than standard script.<sup>29</sup> Fujieda Akira, on the other hand, placed the script used in about 400 CE in the Early Northern Dynasties (AA) phase, and referred to it as the *lishu* style. He designated the Later Northern Dynasties period the (A) phase, and referred to the later script as the ‘*lishu* to *kaishu*’ style.<sup>30</sup>

However, Chinese scholars such as Zhao Shengliang<sup>31</sup> and Zheng Ruzhong<sup>32</sup> define the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* as *likai*, which is ‘between *lishu* and *kaishu*’ but contains more of the techniques used in writing the *lishu* clerical script. Qiu Xigui further defined and named the style the ‘neo-clerical script’ *xin lishu*.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> ‘The stone stele of Prefecture Chief Gulang at Jiuzhen’ *Jiuzhen taishou Gulang bei* 九真太守谷朗碑 was dated 272 CE, the first year of the Feng Huang reign of the Kingdom of Wu in the Three Kingdoms period. It was unearthed in Leiyang, Hunan Province.

<sup>28</sup> (Mazumi, 2006), pp. 1–4.

<sup>29</sup> (Nishikawa, 1991–3), pp. 170–6.

<sup>30</sup> (Fujieda, 2002), p. 104.

<sup>31</sup> (Itō, 1991), pp. 43–9; (Zhao, 1995), pp. 171–89; (Zhao, 1996), pp. 130–51.

<sup>32</sup> (Zheng, 1994a). Zheng Ruzhong and Zhao Shengliang describe the early standard script in the Zhong You tradition as being *likai*.

<sup>33</sup> (Qiu, 1988), pp. 89–90.

It is clear, then, that the various definitions of the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* are ambiguous, and need further clarification.

As mentioned above, Wang Zhenfen compared the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* and *Dharmapāda*, and identified the calligraphic style of the sūtra as being in the Zhong You tradition. This style was used mainly for writing government documents of the Western Jin, and was therefore called ‘the official writing style of the Jin.’<sup>34</sup> Due to the authority, solemnity, and the faster writing speed of this official style of calligraphy, this script was used not only by government officials, but was also adopted for copying sacred books and writings, such as the Confucian classics and Buddhist sūtra, including the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*.

The flaw in Liu Tao’s assessment of the authenticity of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* manuscript was rectified by Wang Zhenfen in his research on the fragments in the collection of the Lüshun Museum. On the other hand, Liu’s observation that the calligraphy in the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* gravitated strongly towards standard script, and that the style was ‘more of a contemporary style than an archaic one,’ has demonstrated the sophistication of the standard script at that time.<sup>35</sup>

Although the contribution of Zhong You is immense, nothing remains of his actual written work. As Qiu Xigui states:

The earliest known master of the standard-script style calligraphy was Zhong You, and the oldest known samples of standard-script style calligraphy in existence are by him. These are found in various editions of handwritten copies of the *Xuan shi biao* in addition to his other style guides (among which the *Jian Ji Zhi biao* appears to be suspect).<sup>36</sup>

Some rubbings of ‘Zhong You’s calligraphy’ collected in the Song Dynasty *Chunhua Getie*<sup>37</sup> —such as *He ke jie biao* ‘Memorial celebrating a victory,’ dated 219 CE, *Xuanshi biao* ‘Memorial in response to

<sup>34</sup> (Wang, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> (Liu, 2002), p. 133.

<sup>36</sup> (Qiu, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> The ten-volume anthology *Zhen songben chunhua getie* ‘Model book of calligraphy from the imperial archives of the Chunhua reign’ by Wang Zhu (ca. 992 CE) during the reign of Em-

peror Taizong (976–97 CE) in the Northern Song Dynasty. This collection of engravings of master calligraphic pieces commissioned by the Northern Song court became an influential work among the literati. It includes six pieces of calligraphy attributed to Zhong You.

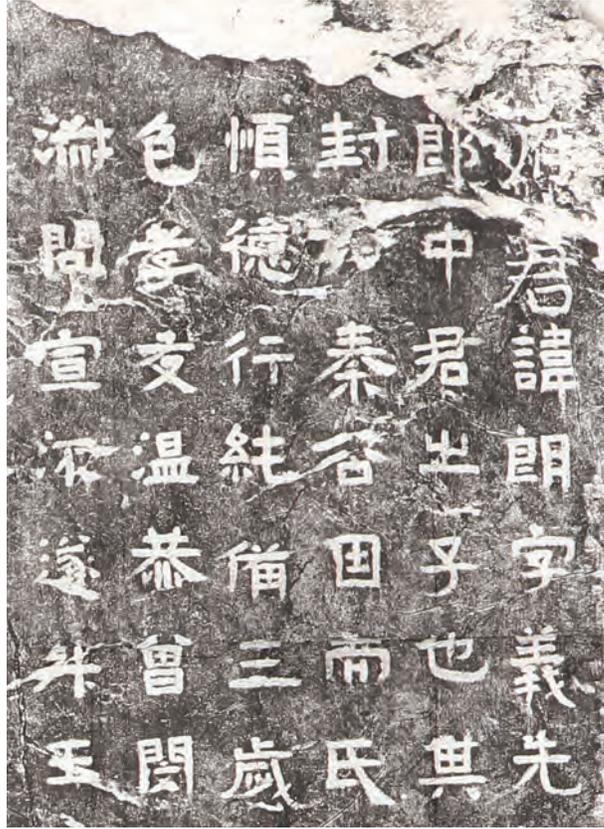
Figure 7: Rubbing from stone stele of Prefecture Chief Gulang at Jiuzhen (272 CE)



110 cm × 80 cm. After: *China Bronze and Stone Rubbings Collection*, 2012, No. 26276.  
 © 2012 Gansu wuliang guji shuzi jishu youxian gongsi 甘肃五凉古籍数字技术有限公司.

an official notice,' ca. 221 CE, and *Jian Ji Zhi biao*, dated 221 CE—are actually replications of works by other calligraphers in the Jin (4th–5th c.) and Tang (618–907 CE) Dynasties, or later periods. There are no written works discovered to date by Zhong You himself

Figure 8: Detail of rubbing from stone stele of Prefecture Chief Gulang



that would give firm evidence for the dating of standard script materials. This is one of the reasons that art historians have doubted the authenticity of Zhong You's calligraphy.<sup>38</sup> This is also why the creation of the standard script in the Zhong You tradition, and Wang Xizhi's style of calligraphy, are much discussed. Guo Moruo was even more skeptical about the calligraphic style and standard script used by Wang Xizhi.<sup>39</sup>

It would appear, then, that the calligraphic style of the *Budhasaṅgīti-sūtra* needs further study.

#### I.4 GOVERNMENT SCRIPT SYSTEM IN THE QIN-HAN

During the Spring and Autumn period (770–221 BCE) the number of scripts in the regions neighbouring China impeded communication and economic and cultural development. After unification,

<sup>38</sup> (Qiu, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>39</sup> (Guo, 1965).

the first Emperor Qin Shihuang (259–10 BCE) ordered Li Si (280–208 BCE) —a politician, writer, and notable calligrapher<sup>40</sup>— to unify the various ancient scripts into a small seal script for official writing. Subsequently, the government of each dynasty issued its own official form of writing.<sup>41</sup>

The seal script style proved too complicated and inconvenient for everyday use and communication. Thus a simplified and faster style of writing was developed, the clerical script. Qiu Xigui holds that the clerical script reached maturity during the reign of Emperor Wu in the Western Han (140–87 BCE).<sup>42</sup> In order to standardise the various forms of writing, as well as the different editions of Confucian texts, the court calligrapher Cai Yong (ca. 133–92 CE) suggested that monumental stelai —known as *Xiping shi jing* ‘Xiping stone classics’— be erected outside the Imperial College (Taixue) at Luoyang (175–83 CE).<sup>43</sup> These stone stelai were engraved by Cai Yong with classic Confucian texts, to serve as a model for public learning. The calligraphy on these stelai was considered a masterpiece, and the highest achievement in clerical script during the Eastern Han Dynasty.

The Wei government that followed during the Three Kingdoms period erected its own stone stelai with Confucian texts. These stelai —known as *Zhengshi shi jing* ‘Zhengshi stone classics’— were erected outside the Imperial College in 241 CE, the second year of the Zhengshi reign.<sup>44</sup> Three different calligraphic styles were inscribed, to help educate the public in the standard forms of writing<sup>45</sup>: the ancient script; the seal script; and the clerical script.<sup>46</sup>

### I.5 GOVERNMENT SCRIPT SYSTEM IN THE WESTERN JIN

The Western Jin state which followed the Three Kingdoms period gave more attention to the government’s writing system; it was not only important for the unification of written languages, but was

<sup>40</sup> Li Si served as chancellor during the time of the first and second Qin emperors.

<sup>41</sup> (Galambos, 2006), pp. 51–4. In Ch. 2 Galambos provides a detailed discussion on the establishment of standard writing.

<sup>42</sup> (Qiu, 1988), p. 97.

<sup>43</sup> (Tsien, 2002), p. 60.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> See: (Chen, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> *Jin shu* (1974), pp. 1055–68, *Wei Guan zhuan* ‘Biography of Wei Guan.’

also a symbol of the authority of the ruling regime.<sup>47</sup> Due to the increasing demand for written official documents, Emperor Wu of Jin—Sima Yan (265–90 CE)—issued an edict in 270 CE establishing an official archival bureau, the *Mishujian*. The title of *Mishujian* was also assigned to the position of head librarian; the responsibilities included directing the Imperial Library and overseeing all official documentation. In *Jin shu: Wudi ji* ‘The book of the Jin: Record of Emperor Wu,’ it is stated:

Starting in the Taishi era [270 CE], every major event had to be written and recorded by scribes. Events that followed were recorded and always collated with prior texts as the normal convention.<sup>48</sup>

From this time, the government recorded events in a script based on the calligraphy of Zhong You and Hu Zhao (ca. 161–250 CE). Emperor Wu of Jin appointed an official calligrapher to teach the standard form of writing, using the works of Zhong You and Hu Zhao as models.<sup>49</sup> An imperial school to teach calligraphy was established, with the head given the title of *shuxue boshi* ‘Doctor of Calligraphy.’ The influence of the official style can be seen in wooden tablets excavated in Turfan and Gansu, inscribed with the date of the Taishi reign of Emperor Wu of Jin.<sup>50</sup> The tablets demonstrate that the standard script for official documents was becoming established.

Zhong You’s standard script was adopted as the government’s official writing style during the Western Jin. Official letters were written in standard script, as well as scholarly documents and texts. This was, to a large extent, due to Zhong You’s high artistic achievements. The formation of the standard script was the most significant event in the history of Chinese calligraphy, and exerted a far-reaching and all-encompassing influence.

The consensus is that the maturity of the standard script occurred between the later Eastern Han and the Three Kingdoms period, and that Zhong You was the first distinguished calligrapher of this style, which was to be imitated in the Jin, Tang, and even later periods.<sup>51</sup> The steady and solemn lines of his work reveal a serene

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1037–50, *Pei Xiu zhuan* ‘Biography of Xun Xu.’  
‘Biography of Pei Xiu.’

<sup>50</sup> (Ho, 2000), p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>51</sup> (Qiu, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1153–60, *Xun Xu zhuan*

and quiet spiritual world. The Southern Dynasty calligraphy theorist and *littérateur* Yu Jianwu (487–551 CE) regarded Zhong You's achievements in calligraphy as of the highest level of excellence.<sup>52</sup> Indeed Yu regarded the calligraphy of Zhong You, Zhang Zhi and Wang Xizhi as of the three highest grades.

After the deaths of Zhong You and Zhang Zhi, Wang Xizhi held:

If you compare my calligraphy with that of Zhong You and Zhang Zhi, Zhong You's is equal to mine, or, as some people say, mine surpasses his. Zhang Zhi's *cao* [cursive] is still a little ahead of mine, but he refined his art through long practice, blackening a whole pond with ink. Had I applied myself like that, there is a chance that I would not be inferior to him.<sup>53</sup>

Zhong You was also celebrated by the Tang theorist and calligrapher Zhang Huaiguan (act. ca. 724–60 CE) in his *Shu duan* 'Judgments on calligraphy':

[Zhong] You is good at calligraphy ... the standard script is the best of contemporary scripts; its beauty is both vigorous and gentle. The brush strokes are manipulated with a special taste for beauty. It reveals profound mystery with an infinitely quaint flair.<sup>54</sup>

Zhang Huaiguan used terms to describe Zhong You's calligraphy—'unusually delightful' *yi qu*, 'profound and mysterious' *you shen*, and 'classically elegant' *gu ya*—that are normally used to describe the sensibilities of artworks detached from, and unconcerned with, the secular world. Zhong You's writing revealed that he was a cultivated spiritual calligrapher, full of peace and harmony.

Zhong You's standard script calligraphy was also regarded as the best by Song Dynasty author, poet, and musician Jiang Kui (ca. 1155–1221 CE). In his work on calligraphy entitled *Xu shupu* 'The continuation of theories on calligraphy' he wrote:

The best standard script calligrapher from ancient times to the present is Zhong You, and the next best is Wang Xizhi. The secular view of standard script, that it should be balanced, is a misunderstanding that was influenced by the wrong views of the Tang Dynasty.<sup>55</sup>

As well as being a calligrapher, Zhong You was a minister and government official for Cao Cao (155–220 CE) during the Three

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Shu pin* by Yu Jianwu (ca. 487–553 CE).

<sup>54</sup> See: (Huang, 1979), p. 178.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>53</sup> (Chang & Frankel, 1995), p. 1.

Kingdoms period.<sup>56</sup> According to master calligrapher Yang Xin (370–442 CE),<sup>57</sup> Zhong You was skilled in three types of writing: stone-inscription script *mingshishu*; the standard script of official documents *zhangchengshu*<sup>58</sup>; and the informal running script *xingxiashu*. From a young age, he studied the calligraphy of the masters Cao Xi,<sup>59</sup> Cai Yong,<sup>60</sup> Cui Yuan,<sup>61</sup> and Liu Desheng.<sup>62</sup> He learned clerical script from Cai Yong, cursive from Cui Yuan, and running scripts from Liu Desheng.<sup>63</sup> A large number of highly skilled calligraphers seem to have been active in the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms periods.<sup>64</sup> Of Zhong You's three calligraphic styles, the most far-reaching and influential was the standard script used for writing government documents in the Han–Wei periods.

The *Fashu yaolu* and *Xuanhe shu pu* suggest that Zhong You's influence was important during the early formation of the standard script. He was famed as the founding father of the standard script, and his calligraphy was the most highly regarded in Luoyang in the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms periods.<sup>65</sup> Zhong You's script represented the very early phase of standard script, that is, it had not yet made the complete transition from clerical script. The *Xuanhe shu pu* 'Calligraphy catalogue of the Xuanhe reign' notes:

Wang Cizhong created the method of writing the standard script from the clerical script during the Jianchu reign of the later Han period (76–84

<sup>56</sup> (Liu, 2002), p. 71. Zhong You was born in Changshe, Yingchuan (modern Xuchang, Henan Province).

<sup>57</sup> *Fashu yaolu* (1984), p. 16. Yang Xin was a Southern Dynasties calligrapher. He compiled the names of sixty-nine famous calligraphers from the Qin to Jin Dynasties in his work *Cai gulai nengshu renming*. It was passed down by Wang Sengqian (426–85 CE) and collected in the work *Fashu yaolu* in the Tang Dynasty by painting and calligraphy theorist Zhang Yanyuan (ca. 815–77 CE). See: (Huang, 1979), pp. 43–8; (Liu, 2001), pp. 72–4.

<sup>58</sup> Later, in the Western Jin Dynasty, the word *zhengshu* was used instead of

*zhangchengshu*. The Chinese palaeographer Tang Lan described how this transformation came about: when the two characters *zhang* and *cheng* were pronounced together quickly, the combination of the two syllables became one sound, *zheng*. Thus, *zhengshu* has the same meaning as *zhangchengshu*, and was also called *zhenshu*. See: (Tang, 1949), p. 178; see also: (Liu, 2001), p. 73.

<sup>59</sup> act. ca. 76–84 CE.

<sup>60</sup> 132–92 CE.

<sup>61</sup> 77–142 CE.

<sup>62</sup> ca. 132–89 CE.

<sup>63</sup> (Zhu, 1992), p. 123.

<sup>64</sup> (Huang, 1979), p. 44. See: Tab. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 46.

CE) ... The maturity of the standard script is seen in *He ke jie biao* by Zhong You in the Wei period of the Three Kingdoms. The method of writing the standard script was well established by that time; [Zhong You] was the initiator of standard script.<sup>66</sup>

Contemporary calligraphy historian Liu Tao suggests that there are two aspects to Zhong You's contribution to the history of Chinese calligraphy: first, he was the founding pioneer of standard script and was responsible for it becoming the recognised model for official writing; and second, he composed the rules for the usage of running script, and thus increased its popularity with the public and caused it to spread rapidly.<sup>67</sup>

#### I.6 FUNCTION OF OFFICIAL SCRIPTS

The preceding discussion suggests that the official writing system of the government was important not only for the unification of written scripts, but also as a symbol of the authority of the ruling regime.

This is confirmed by Fujieda Akira, who argues that the various writing systems and scripts had a clear and definite function, and that in traditional Chinese writing, different scripts were to be used depending on what was to be written, and on the purpose for writing. Drawing on Fujieda, Ōba Osamu classifies the scripts as follows<sup>68</sup>:

1. Clerical script was the typical formal writing used for official documents such as dictionaries, ancient classical texts, imperial decrees, laws, and so on.
2. Clerical script was also used by the highest-level administrative departments in government organisations, especially for submitting official documents from lower level to higher level departments.
3. Semi-cursive clerical script was used in documents used for daily communication, and by a higher authority when addressing a subordinate organisation.

<sup>66</sup> (Gu, 1984), p. 19.

<sup>68</sup> (Ōba, 2001), pp. 258–9.

<sup>67</sup> (Liu, 2002), p. 81.

4. Cursive script was used in documents for daily communication, such as letters, private documents, urgent messages, or drafts.

The Western Jin Dynasty marked a transitional phase in the development of standard, cursive, and running scripts. The use of different scripts for different purposes suggests the choice of standard script for Buddhist calligraphy. Although Zhong You's standard script was mainly used for official documents, the Western Jin government encouraged the use of this style for important texts.

The development of the standard script and of Zhong You's calligraphy was thus of crucial importance in the history of Chinese writing and Buddhist calligraphy. Zhong You's style, in particular, revealed a sense of transcendent artistic beauty. And due to its authority, solemnity, and faster writing speed, the standard script was used not only by government officials, but was also adopted for sacred works and writings, such as Confucian classics and Buddhist sūtra.



## CH. II

### BUDDHIST SCRIPTURAL CALLIGRAPHY IN DHARMAKṢA'S TRANSLATION TEAM

#### II.1 INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL documents and archaeological findings suggest that the work of Buddhist monk scribes from various regions in Central Asia and India played a key role in the initial transmission of Buddhism to China. However, little attention has been given to the study of early scribes in translation teams before the 5th century.<sup>1</sup>

At the start of this period, the Buddhist scribes who assisted in writing texts were local Chinese. As Buddhism became more popular, more foreign monks or lay Buddhists learned Chinese calligraphy and joined translation teams as scribes, or copied sūtra for circulation. It would have taken time for foreign monks to become proficient in Chinese calligraphy, but Buddhist scribes from the Western Region<sup>2</sup> made great contributions to the transmission of Buddhism to China. This chapter will consider the role of scribes in translation teams before the 5th century, with a focus on Dharmarakṣa's team.

The translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese was the primary vehicle for promoting Buddhism from the early Eastern Han (ca. 1st c. CE).<sup>3</sup> Before the invention of printing, texts were written or copied by scribes. The early Chinese terms for government scribes during the Han Dynasty were *shuzuo*, literally 'book assistant,' *zuoshu* 'assister of books,' *shi* 'history,' or *shuli* 'book clerk.' These scribes acted as secretaries or archivists for the government.<sup>4</sup> *Han shu* 'The book of Han' describes the strict regulations for scribes in government service at that time:

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<sup>1</sup> Scribes on Dharmarakṣa's translation team are discussed in: (Boucher, 1996), pp. 95–102. Uyghur Autonomous Region. Early historical records on *xiyu* can be found in *Han shu* (1962).

<sup>2</sup> The Western Region or Western Territories *xiyu* 西域 is the name often used to refer to the modern-day Xinjiang

<sup>3</sup> (Ren, 1981), v. 1, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> (Gao, 1947), p. 81; *Hou han shu* (1999), p. 2001.

At the rise of the Han, Xiao He [d. 193 BC] drafted regulations. He also composed their methods [of application]: The Grand Historian tests the students. Those who can memorise over 9,000 characters can become historians. Their text also includes the six [calligraphic] styles. The best of them will become Censors of the imperial Secretarial and Calligraphy Clerks. If an official submits a document with irregular characters, he is to be immediately punished.<sup>5</sup>

Before the 5th century CE, the title of a scribe was *jingsheng* 'student of scripture.' These scribes earned their living by copying Confucian and Daoist texts and other documents. Early records of such scribes can be found from the Han Dynasty onwards.<sup>6</sup> During the Han, a well known general named Ban Chao (32–102 CE) initially earned his living as a scribe, copying documents for government officials. There were also scribes in the Northern and Southern Dynasties copying Buddhist texts for monks, such as Liu Fang in the Northern Wei period.<sup>7</sup>

During the early stage, monks and laypeople from India and Central Asia were involved in translating and transcribing Buddhist texts. In Buddhist text translation teams, the work of translation was divided into several roles: the main translator *zhuyi*; the person who gave the oral transmission *chuanyan*, or who worked as a bilingual intermediary *chuanyi*; the person who gave the oral explanations *koujie*; the scribe *bishou*; and the person who did the final revision *zhengyi*, or *jiaoding*.<sup>8</sup>

In the Buddhist translation teams, the title for the main scribe was *bishou* or *shoushou*. The use of *bishou* started from the Western Jin onwards, with the scribes Nie Chengyuan and Nie Daozhen in Dharmarakṣa's translation team.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, *bishou* was the title of the Buddhist scribe who took down the oral recitation from the main translator, who was either a Buddhist monk, a layperson, or a professional scribe.<sup>10</sup> The term *xiejingsheng* — a 'copyist' or 'writer of scripture' — also appears in historical documents and archaeological evidence, up until the Northern and Southern Dynasties.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The English translation is from: p. 140; (Cao, 1990), pp. 41–51. (Galambos, 2006), p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> *Fanyi mingyi ji*, T2131, 54: 1067-

<sup>6</sup> See: *Hou han shu* (1999), p. 1571. c15-18

<sup>7</sup> *Wei shu* (1980).

<sup>10</sup> (Ji, 2007), p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> (Zürcher, 2007), p. 31. See also: (Tsui, 2016), pp. 99–134; (Wang, 2004),

<sup>11</sup> See also: Ch. I. The related title *jingsheng* appears in Dunhuang Bud-

One of the main requirements to serve as a scribe on a translation team was the ability to write Chinese calligraphy.<sup>12</sup> The identity of these non-Chinese scribes, however, is largely unknown.

## II.2 SCRIBES IN THE CHU SANZANG JIJI

The *Chu sanzang jiji* ‘A compilation of notes on the translation of the Tripiṭaka’ (CSZJJ)<sup>13</sup> and *Gao seng zhuan* ‘Biography of eminent monks’ (GSZ) would suggest that in the early stages foreign monks assisted in the transcription of Buddhist texts produced by local Chinese laypersons and monks (Tab. 5).<sup>14</sup>

From the records in the CSZJJ and GSZ we may presume that some of scribes might be identified as native Chinese, while others were probably foreigners. We could place the Buddhist scribes in three categories: Chinese Buddhist scribes, identified by their names; Buddhist scribes from the Western Region, including Sogdia, whose surnames were Zhi, Zhu, Bo and Kang; and scribes of uncertain ethnicity, who cannot be identified by name.

The CSZJJ indicates that the Chinese monk Yan Fotiao (ca. 117–97 CE) assisted An Xuan (act. 2nd c. CE)<sup>15</sup> in the transcription of Buddhist texts in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE).<sup>16</sup> An Shigao, a Parthian missionary, went to Luoyang in 148 CE, where he

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dhist manuscripts until 513 CE in the Northern Wei Dynasty. For further discussion of the *xiejingsheng* in the Northern Wei Dynasty, please see: (Tsui, 2016), p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> *Shi shi yao lan* (2014), T2127, 54: 293b21-29. There were eight requirements and ten regulations for translators or scribes who worked on Buddhist text translation teams.

<sup>13</sup> The CSZJJ was compiled in about 515 CE by Shi Sengyou (445–518 CE) according to previous catalogues no longer extant, and became the most complete and reliable published source of the early Chinese Tripiṭaka. See:

(Buswell & Lopez, 2014), p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> See also the present author’s survey of Buddhist monk translators and scribes in the 3rd to 5th centuries: (Tsui, 2010), p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Muller’s ‘Digital Dictionary of Buddhism’ states: ‘An Xuan was a Buddhist layman from Parthia. In the late reign of Late Han Emperor Ling (168–188), he was graced by the Chinese government with the title Commandant of Cavalry.’ (Muller, 2017), <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=安玄> (accessed: 2017/11/17).

<sup>16</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 96a14-15.

Table 5: Scribes in early translation teams (from CSZJJ &amp; GSZ)

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Scribe</i>
An Xuan	ca. 181	Yan Fotiao
Lokakṣema	ca. 186	Fo Da, Meng Fu, Zhang Lian
Wei Qinan	224	Zhi Qian
Zhi Qiangliangjie	255	Zhu Daoxing
Dharmarakṣa	266–308	Nie Chengyuan, Zhang Xuanbo, Sun Xiuda, Rong Xiye, Hou Wuying, Zhang Shiming, Zhang Zhongzheng, Nie Daozhen, Zhe Xi-anyuan, Zhu Fashou, Bo Yuanxin, Zhi Fadu, Zhao Wenlong, Kang Shu, Bo Faju
Zhu Shixing	291	Zhu Taixuan, Zhou Xuanming
Zhu Fonian	382–413	Tan Jing, Seng Dao, Tan Jiu, Seng Rui, Hui Li, Seng Mao, Dao Han, Hui Song
Samghabhadra	383	Hui Song, Zhi Min, Zhao Wenye
Gautama Samghadeva	397–398	Dao Zu, Dao Ci, Li Bao, Kang Hua
Buddhabhadra	398	Fa Ye, Hui Yi, Hui Yan
Vimalākṣa	ca. 406	Hui Guan
Kumārajīva	412	Shi Huigong, Seng Qing, Seng Qian, Bao Du, Hui Jing, Fa Qin, Dao Liu, Seng Rui, Dao Hui, Dao Biao, Dao Heng, Seng Zhao, Tan Gui, Tan Ying, Bo Huirong
Buddhajīva	423	Long Guang, Dao Sheng, Dong An, Hui Yan
Dharmakṣema	421–39	Hui Song, Dao Lang
Buddhavarman	439	Dao Tai

subsequently established an informal translation group.<sup>17</sup> An Xuan, a merchant, went to Luoyang around 185–9 CE.<sup>18</sup> Yan Fotiao joined An Shigao and An Xuan and together they translated the *Ugradat-taparipṛcchā-sūtra*.<sup>19</sup> During the translation, Yan Fotiao acted as *bishou*, writing down the oral translation made by An Xuan.<sup>20</sup> Some thirty-five Buddhist scriptures in forty-one fascicles were translated by this early group, twenty of which are still in existence.<sup>21</sup>

Other Chinese scribes assisted foreign monks during the initial stages of the transmission of Buddhism to China. According to the CSZJJ, these included Meng Fu, Zhang Lian, and Fo Da. During this early stage, the Buddhist text translation teams were still small. In the translation teams of Lokakṣema (ca. 167 CE) and Zhu Foshuo (act. 178–89 CE)<sup>22</sup> in Luoyang, the texts were translated by two foreign monks and then written down by the Chinese scribes Meng Fu and Zhang Lian. The texts translated included the *Pratyut-pannabuddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra*<sup>23</sup> in 179 CE,<sup>24</sup> and the *Akṣobhyatahāgatasavyūha-sūtra*<sup>25</sup> and others in 186 CE. Another team, which also included Lokakṣema and Fo Da, translated the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*<sup>26</sup> in 179 CE, at Pusa Temple in the western part of Luoyang.<sup>27</sup> Although Fo Da's nationality is uncertain, Meng Fu and Zhang Lian were native Chinese Buddhists from Henan.

It seems, then, that when Buddhism was transmitted to China from the Eastern Han onwards, Buddhist monks or laymen from Central Asia played an important role in translating and writing

<sup>17</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 96a14-20. Yan Fotiao was the first monk in the history of Chinese Buddhism in the latter Han and came from Linhuai in Henan Province.

<sup>18</sup> (Ma, 1990b), p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> *Fa jing jing* 法鏡經, T322. (Zürcher, 2007), p. 34: '... the attribution is confirmed by Kang Seng-hui of Wu in the Three Kingdoms.'

<sup>20</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 46c2-6. According to Ch. 6 of CSZJJ: 'Yan Fotiao took down the dictation by An Xuan. The language in which he transmitted was

archaic but achieved the meaning of Buddha's doctrine.'

<sup>21</sup> (Mizuno, 1982), p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 324b21-25

<sup>23</sup> *Bo zhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經. There are four extant Chinese versions in Taishō: T416, T417, T418 & T419.

<sup>24</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 48c10-16; T2145, 55: 97c-98b.

<sup>25</sup> *Achufo guo jing* 阿闍佛國經, T313.

<sup>26</sup> *Daoxing bore jing* 道行般若經, T224.

<sup>27</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 47c5-9.

down texts.<sup>28</sup> These included An Shigao,<sup>29</sup> An Xuan, Lokakṣema, and others from Khotan, Parthia, Kucha, Sogdia and the Kushan Empire of Central Asia.<sup>30</sup> Due to their diverse backgrounds, and the requirements of their work, these Buddhist monks and translators were probably proficient in several Central Asian languages, as well as Chinese.<sup>31</sup>

### II.3 SCRIBES IN DHARMAKṢA'S TRANSLATION TEAM

Our survey of 2nd to 5th century translators and scribes in the CSZJJ and GSZ, summarised in Table 5, suggests that an increasing number of foreign Buddhist scribes from Central Asia joined Dharmarakṣa's translation team from the 3rd century onward, during the Western Jin Dynasty. Dharmarakṣa was assisted by people of various ethnicities, from Central Asia and India, as well as native Han Chinese, both laypeople and monastics.<sup>32</sup> His multi-cultural translation team included around thirty assistants or scribes.

In 292 CE, Zhu Fashou and Nie Chengyuan worked together in Luoyang to transcribe the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*. As there is no record of Nie Chengyuan traveling to Dunhuang or Jiuquan, Chen Guocan speculates that the original manuscript of the sūtra was copied by Zhu Fashou in Jiuquan in 296 CE, and that afterwards it was taken to Turfan.<sup>33</sup> The extant manuscript, then, may be a copy made by Zhu Fashou for circulation.

The colophon of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is the earliest record of the transcription of a Buddhist sūtra into Chinese. The fragment is still well preserved, with eighteen lines of characters written in ink, and five lines in the colophon; with the dates, names of the

<sup>28</sup> (Lin, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> (Chen, 1964), p. 43. An Shigao arrived in Luoyang during the reign of Emperor Huan in the Han Dynasty (ca. 148 CE).

<sup>30</sup> (Mizuno, 1982), p. 45: 'Lokakshema, who went to China at about the same time as An Shigao, was born in Kushan, a large country that spread from Central Asia to northwestern India and was the most powerful nation in

the area. ... Lokakshema went to China and at Luoyang translated into Chinese 12 scriptures in 27 fascicles.'

<sup>31</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 324b13-c4. For material on the languages of early Buddhist texts see: (Karashima, 2006), pp. 355–66, 356 n. 4; (Karashima, 2013), pp. 171–88; (Yang, 1998b), p. 181; (Lin, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> (Boucher, 2006), pp. 30–1.

<sup>33</sup> (Chen, 1983), pp. 6–13.

scribes, number of characters in the text, and a wish for the sūtra to be spread widely. The colophon reads:

On the twelfth day of the first month of the second year of Yuan Kang [12th Jan. 292 CE], the Yuezhi bodhisattva Dharmarakṣa, holding [the text] in his hand ... conferred it upon Nie Chengyuan and the *upādhyāya*, disciple, *śramaṇa* Zhu Fashou, who took it down in writing. May this sūtra be spread in ten directions [so that others] will carry out the magnanimous [work of] conversion and quickly achieve ... this was copied on the eighteenth day of the third month of the sixth year of the Yuan Kang reign [18 Mar. 296 CE]. Altogether there are three scrolls and twelve chapters totalling 19,596 characters.<sup>34</sup>

The five lines of the colophon in Chinese read:

□<sup>35</sup>康二年正月十二日，月支菩薩法護手執□

□授聶承遠和上弟子沙門竺法首筆

□□令此經布流十方，戴佩弘化，速成...

元康六年三月十八日寫已

凡三萬（卷）十二章合一萬九千五百九十六字<sup>36</sup>

Zhu Fashou's written vow was 'may the profound dharma be disseminated in ten directions, and the great vehicle established forever.'<sup>37</sup>

Who played the leading role in teaching or guiding these foreign and local scribes such as Zhu Fashou to write Chinese calligraphy and copy sūtra? Was Zhu Fashou's teacher the senior scribe Nie Chengyuan, a native Chinese who had been a member of Dharmarakṣa's translation team for the longest time, and was possibly the most accomplished? In order to answer this question, the author searched the CSZJJ for Buddhist scribes who were part of Dharmarakṣa's translation team, and who transcribed at least two sūtra (Tab. 6).

<sup>34</sup> English translation is from: (Boucher, 1996), p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> The square spaces in the colophon indicate missing characters on the fragment.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81. Some scholars suspected the character 萬 in the last line

was a writing error by the copyist. The correct character could be *juan* 卷.

Boucher noted that the version extant in the T810 consists of two rolls with no apparent chapter divisions.

<sup>37</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 51b5-7.

Table 6: Main scribes in Dharmarakṣa's team and the sūtra they translated

	Date	Sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	266	Suvikrāntacintādevaputrapariṣcchā-sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	286	Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	286	Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	289	Vimaladattāpariṣcchā-sūtra
Nie Daozhen	289	Paramārthasaṃvṛtisatyānirdeśa-sūtra
Nie Daozhen	289	Mañjuśrīvikurvāṇaparivarta-sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	291	Śūraṅgamasamādhi-sūtra <sup>a</sup>
Nie Chengyuan, Nie Daozhen	291	Tathāgatopattisaṃbhavanirdeśa-sūtra
Zhu Fashou, Nie Chengyuan	292	Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra
Zhu Fashou	294	Acaladharmamudrā-sūtra
Zhu Fashou	294	Sarvavaitulyasaṅgraha-sūtra
Nie Chengyuan	297	Daśabhūmika-sūtra

<sup>a</sup> There were at least ten earlier Chinese translations of the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi-sūtra*, with variant titles being *Shou lengyan sanmei jing* 首楞嚴三昧經 and *Yong fu ding jing* 勇伏定經. However, these texts are not extant. The only extant full version was translated by Kumārajīva with the title *Foshuo shou lengyan sanmei jing* 佛說首楞嚴三昧經, T642. See: (Muller, 2017), <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=首楞嚴三昧經> (accessed: 2017/11/14).

Based on our review of the CSZJJ, we found three scribes in Dharmarakṣa's translation team who transcribed at least two sūtra: Nie Chengyuan, Nie Daozhen, and Zhu Fashou. Zhu Fashou helped translate three sūtra: first, the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* in 292 CE in Luoyang; then the *Acaladharmamudrā-sūtra*<sup>38</sup> in Jiuquan in 294 CE; and finally, the *Sarvavaitulyasaṅgraha-sūtra*, also in 294 CE.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Fo shuo sheng fa yin jing* 佛說聖法印經, T103. title is *Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi-sūtra* in: (Boucher, 1996), p. 87. According to

<sup>39</sup> *Fo shuo ji zhu fang deng xue jing* 佛說濟諸方等學經, T274. The Sanskrit Karashima the title is *Sarvavaitulyasaṃ-*

Tab. 6 shows that the earliest record of Nie Chengyuan in the CSZJJ was his translation of the *Suvikrāntacintādevaputra-paripṛcchā-sūtra*<sup>40</sup> in 266 CE, and that the last record was his translation of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*<sup>41</sup> in 297 CE. Nie Chengyuan, then, was a member of Dharmarakṣa's translation team for at least thirty years.

According to the CSZJJ,<sup>42</sup> Nie Chengyuan was intelligent and possessed a firm aspiration to help Dharmarakṣa promote Buddhism. Nie Chengyuan, and his son, are said to have devoted most of their lives to transcribing Buddhist texts. According to the *Lidai sanbao ji* 'Record of the historical transmission of the three treasures' (LDSBJ), also known as the Changfang Catalogue,<sup>43</sup> Dharmarakṣa's translation project began in 265 CE, the first year of the Taishi era, under Emperor Wudi of the Western Jin Dynasty, and lasted until 308 CE, the 2nd year of the Yongjia era, under Emperor Huaidi. A total of 154 sūtra and 309 fascicles (*juan*) were translated.

Much of the responsibility for the transcription in Dharmarakṣa's team was given to Nie Chengyuan,<sup>44</sup> who had been working as a scribe for nearly thirty years before Zhu Fashou, Bo Yuanxin, Zhi Fadu, Kang Shu, and Bo Faju joined the team. With his experience, it is likely that Nie was the primary teacher of the other scribes, both Chinese and foreign. Dharmarakṣa translated sūtra in Chang'an and Luoyang, two cities where Nie Chengyuan was active.

Nie Chengyuan's calligraphic training was most likely influenced by the Central China —or Zhong You— model of calligraphy. Nie Chengyuan's written manuscripts would have been copied and modelled by other scribes. His writing style was most likely the standard script, similar to that of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* that seems to have been copied by Zhu Fashou. This is suggested by the

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*graha-sūtra*. See: (Karashima, 2017), 德經, T285.

p. 13

<sup>42</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 98a23-27.

<sup>40</sup> *Xu zhen tianzi jing* 須真天子經, T588.

<sup>43</sup> LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 64c18-65a7.

<sup>44</sup> LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 64c19-20.

<sup>41</sup> *Jian bei yiqie zhide jing* 漸備一切智

colophon: 'Nie Chengyuan took it down in writing [□] *shou*<sup>45</sup> and the *upādhyāya* disciple, *śramaṇa* Zhu Fashou, copied it [*bi*].'

Tab. 5 suggests the presence of a number of scribes from the Western Region in Dharmarakṣa's translation team. Their surnames relate to their geographical origins: Bo Yuanxin and Bo Faju, having the surname Bo, came from Kucha. Zhi Fadu's surname indicates that he came from Yuezhi, and Kang Shu's surname that he was a Sogdian from Kangju.<sup>46</sup> Both Bo Yuanxin and Zhi Fadu collaborated with Nie Chengyuan to transcribe the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* in 297 CE. The Sogdian Buddhist monk scribe Kang Shu and Kuchean scribe Bo Faju, transcribed the *Lalitavistara-sūtra*<sup>47</sup> in 308 CE.<sup>48</sup> The colophon of the *Lalitavistara-sūtra* from the CSZJJ reads:

... on the day *upoṣadha*, in the fifth month of the year Wuchen, the 2nd year of the Yongjia reign [308 CE], the *bodhisattva śramaṇa* Fa Hu was at Tianshui Monastery, where he held the foreign [version of the] text in his hand, and orally delivered it in Chinese. The *śramaṇa* Kang Shu and Bo Faju were scribes, and they wrote down [*bishou*] the texts.<sup>49</sup>

From the late Eastern Han Dynasty onwards, Sogdians migrated to the Central Plain along the Hexi Corridor and inter-married with the Chinese.<sup>50</sup> They had probably migrated to China long before, and may have learnt and studied Chinese calligraphy for some time before participating in the translation team. We should therefore remain cautious when identifying the ethnicity of foreigners by name alone. As Boucher writes:

<sup>45</sup> The Chinese sentence on this line is: [□] *shou* Nie Chengyuan, *heshang dizi shamen Zhu Fashou bi* [□授] 聶承遠, 和上弟子沙門竺法首筆. There are three possibilities for the missing character before the first word *shou*. The phrase could be either: i. *koushou* 'orally received'; ii. *bishou* 'take down in writing'; or iii. the character *wen* 文 following *fanwen* 梵文 from the previous line. According to the record on the translation of *Chixin jing* 持心經—*Chixin fantian suowen jing* 持心梵天所問

經, T585, *Brahmaviśeṣacintipariṣṭhā-sūtra*— which was translated in 286 CE, Nie Chengyuan transcribed the oral Sanskrit delivered from Dharmarakṣa. Nie Chengyuan helped with both dictation and transcribing the translation, as he was skilled in Sanskrit. See: CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 57c19-21.

<sup>46</sup> (Boucher, 1998), p. 488.

<sup>47</sup> *Pu yao jing* 普曜經, T186.

<sup>48</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 48b28.

<sup>49</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 48b28-c1.

<sup>50</sup> (Wu, 1997), p. 303.

The presence of foreign ethnicons among the named scribes raises a significant problem for our sources that we will not be able entirely to resolve. That is, we will not always be able to discern if a foreign ethnicon indicates a newly arrived missionary-cum-translator from India or Central Asia; a person of foreign parentage who was born in China and therefore fully Sinicised; or even a native Chinese devotee who had adopted the ethnicon of his foreign teacher. Dharmarakṣa, a Yuezhi, acquired his ethnicon Zhu 𑖀𑖂 in this fashion.<sup>51</sup>

#### II.4 WRITING STYLES OF THE TRANSLATION TEAMS

It is generally agreed that the calligraphic style of the earliest extant Buddhist manuscript —the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* (296 CE)— is standard script in the Zhong You tradition, the script used in the official writing of the Western Jin Dynasty. It can reasonably be assumed that that this style had been used for some time in official documents. If so, what style of script was used in the nearly 1,000 Buddhist texts before the Northern Liang Dynasty (397–439 CE)?

So far, no Buddhist manuscript fragments have been found bearing a date before 296 CE. Liu Tao believes that: ‘the calligraphy of the Dunhuang manuscripts is basically written in standard script.’<sup>52</sup> Does this imply that early Buddhist manuscripts were also written in standard script in the Zhong You tradition? We will explore this question by examining:

1. Buddhist scriptural calligraphy in early translation teams, specifically sūtra translated before 400 CE that can be referenced in ‘literary’ sources such as the CSZJJ and GSZ.<sup>53</sup>
2. Archæological evidence: i. Buddhist manuscripts from archæological finds with inscriptions or colophons with an exact date<sup>54</sup>; and ii. secular writings.

<sup>51</sup> (Boucher, 1996), p. 96.

CE by Shi Sengyou (445?–518). CSZJJ,

<sup>52</sup> (Liu, 2002), p. 131.

T2145, 55: 1a-114a.

<sup>53</sup> CSZJJ was compiled around 515

<sup>54</sup> (Ikeda, 1990).

## II.4.1 Dharmarakṣa (230?–316 CE)

Dharmarakṣa<sup>55</sup> was the most significant Chinese translator before Kumārajīva (344–413 CE). A review of literary sources shows disagreement about the number of sūtra his translation team is said to have translated.<sup>56</sup> According to Seng You's CSZJJ, Dharmarakṣa's team translated 154 volumes and 309 scrolls. According to Zhi Sheng's *Kaiyuan shi jiao lü* 'Record of Śākyamuni's teachings compiled during the Kaiyuan period' in Tang Dynasty records,<sup>57</sup> his team translated 175 volumes and 354 scrolls.<sup>58</sup>

Records in the GSZ and CSZJJ indicate that six texts were written by Dharmarakṣa in standard script.<sup>59</sup> In addition, historical records indicate that the writing style used by Dharmarakṣa and Gautama Saṃghadeva's translation teams was that of the Western Jin language *zhengshu Jin yan*, the government's writing style, or the 'standard script' *zhengshu*.<sup>60</sup> Tab. 7 identifies Buddhist sūtra written in the 3rd to 4th centuries CE in 'standard script.'

Tab. 6 indicates that Nie Chengyuan was a member of Dharmarakṣa's translation team in Chang'an and Luoyang for at least thirty years, and was most likely the leader and master teacher of the other scribes, both Chinese and foreign.<sup>61</sup> Nie played an important role in Dharmarakṣa's team as most of the translated texts were directly transcribed. His calligraphic style was probably similar to

<sup>55</sup> Dharmarakṣa, Zhu Fahu, is also transliterated in Chinese as Tanmoluocha 曇摩羅察 or Zhu Tanmoluocha 竺曇摩羅察. He worked at various sites in China, including Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Chang'an, and Luoyang. Born of Indian and Scythian parents in Dunhuang around 230 CE, he entered the order early in life, had a wide acquaintance with Confucian works, and traveled extensively. His work was widely seen as building the foundation of Buddhism in northern China and setting the stage for Dao An and Kumārajīva in the centuries that followed. See: CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 97c20.

<sup>56</sup> (Liu, 2000), pp. 168–9.

<sup>57</sup> *Kaiyuan shi jiao lü* (2014), T2154, 55.

<sup>58</sup> For comments on the number of Dharmarakṣa's translations see: (Okabe, 1963); (Kawano, 1986, 1989); (Boucher, 1996, 2006).

<sup>59</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 327a1-6; CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 51b8-13; CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 47c11-28; CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 63b14-18; CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 64a11-20.

<sup>60</sup> *Quan jin wen* (1999), fasc. 166.

<sup>61</sup> There are no records of works translated by Dharmarakṣa's translation team between 273 and 284 CE. If these ten years are deducted, Nie Chengyuan assisted Dharmarakṣa's translation project for at least twenty years.

Table 7: Early sūtra written in standard script

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Scribe</i>	<i>Style</i>
Yogācārabhūmi-sūtra <sup>a</sup>	284	Rong Xiye, Hou Wuying	zhengshu
Mañjuśrīvikurvāna- parivarta-sūtra <sup>b</sup>	289	Nie Daozhen, Zhe Xianyuan	Jinshu zhengxie
Pañcaviṃśatisāha- srikāprajñāpāra- mitā-sūtra <sup>c</sup>	290	Zhu Taixuan, Zhou Xuanming	Jinshu zhengxie, zhengshu
Tathāgatamahākaraṇā- nirdeśa-sūtra <sup>d</sup>	291	Nie Chengyuan, Nie Daozhen	zhengshu Jinyan
Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra	292	Zhu Fashou, Nie Chengyuan	zhengshu
Mādhyamāgama <sup>e</sup>	397	Gautama Saṃghadeva <sup>f</sup> ; Dao Ci, <sup>g</sup> Kang Hua, <sup>h</sup> Li Bao <sup>h</sup>	zhengxie, zhengshu

<sup>a</sup> *Quan jin wen* (1999), fasc. 166.

<sup>b</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 51b8-13.

<sup>c</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 47c11-28.

<sup>d</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 63b14-18.

<sup>e</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 64a11-20.

<sup>f</sup> Translator.

<sup>g</sup> Main scribe (*bishou*).

<sup>h</sup> Scribes.

that of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*, written in the Western Jin style using standard script of the Zhong You tradition, and dated 296 CE, four years after the original translation (Fig. 1). This sūtra was written about sixty years after Zhong You had died and is the earliest example of the standard script style inscribed with a definite date.

Examination of the manuscript of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* shows that it was written in the standard and reverent format typical of Buddhist sūtra calligraphy. It was done in very orderly and precise handwriting using the standard script. Each stroke of the brush was made in a careful and deferential manner. Zhu Fashou's writing was described by Seng You in the CSZJJ as: 'very tidy calligraphy with a

dense structure.<sup>62</sup> This short description reflects the sublimely spiritual world of a Buddhist monk and scribe. However, when examined carefully, we find that the calligraphy of Zhu Fashou's manuscript reveals a static, hesitant, over-cautious nature, and that the axis of the vertical lines lack fluent flow *hangqi* in their composition. This is possibly because the manuscript was a copy from Nie Chengyuan's model *linxie*.

We may conclude from the above that the main calligraphic script used in Dharmarakṣa's translation team was the standard script.

#### II.4.2 Zhu Shixing (203–82 CE)

Zhu Shixing's translation team also used the standard script. According to the CSZJJ the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*<sup>63</sup> was translated by Mokṣala in 291 CE. Apparently the text was based on a Sanskrit version introduced to China by Zhu Shixing. It is noted in the CSZJJ that: 'Zhu Taixuan and Zhou Xuanming did the transcription. It was written in the standard script [*zhengshu*] with a total of 90 chapters.'<sup>64</sup>

In order to spread Buddhism, monks, translators, scribes, and members of the laity joined translation teams to write down and copy Buddhist texts. Chinese calligraphy was widely learnt and studied by foreigners from the late Eastern Han period onwards. The Zhong You tradition was the main calligraphic style used in transcribing Buddhist scriptures, and the standard script of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* was typical *zhengshu* of the Western Jin. The sūtra was written in the Zhong You tradition as the script was elegant and quick to write; it had also become well established for the composition of important governmental documents.

### II.5 EVIDENCE OF EARLY BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

According to different catalogues, over 1,000 Buddhist sūtra were translated into Chinese before the Northern Liang Dynasty.<sup>65</sup> As

<sup>62</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 50c27-51a1.

<sup>64</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 47c11-28.

<sup>63</sup> *Fang guang bore jing* 放光般若經, T221.

<sup>65</sup> (Ren, 1981), v. 1, p. 482, & v. 2, p. 754.

Buddhism moved from its initial early phase to that of rapid development, there was an increasing demand for copies of texts. We will now review archæological discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts with inscriptions or colophons with an exact date.

### II.5.1 Buddhist manuscripts dated before 400 CE

Five Buddhist texts have been found in Dunhuang and Turfan with verifiable dating indicating that they were translated before 400 CE. All are written in standard script (Tab. 8). Wang Zhenfen has argued that the style used in the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* —*Jinshu zhengxie*— is identical to Zhong You’s calligraphy.<sup>66</sup>

Table 8: Five manuscripts with verifiable dates before 400 CE

	Date	Style
Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra	296 <sup>a</sup>	standard
Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra	308 <sup>b</sup>	standard
Dharmapāda <sup>c</sup>	359 <sup>d</sup>	standard
Dharmapāda <sup>e</sup>	368, <sup>f</sup> 373	standard
Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra <sup>g</sup>	393 <sup>h</sup>	standard, running

<sup>a</sup> Colophon reads: on the 18th of March in the 6th year in Yuankang reign 元康六年三月十八日.

<sup>b</sup> Colophon reads: ... February in the 2nd year of Yongjia reign 永嘉二年二月. (Date incomplete.)

<sup>c</sup> *Faju piyu jing*, T211.

<sup>d</sup> Colophon reads: on the 17th of March in the 1st year of Ganlu reign 甘露元年三月十七日.

<sup>e</sup> T210.

<sup>f</sup> Colophon records two dates: i. the 12th year of the Shengping reign in the Former Liang 前凉升平十二年 (368 CE); and ii. the 20th of October in the 3rd year of Xian’an reign in the Former Liang 前凉咸安三年十月二十日 (373 CE).

<sup>g</sup> With annotation, copied by Wang Xianggao.

<sup>h</sup> Colophon reads: on the 9th of June in the 5th year of Lingjia reign in the Later Liang 後凉麟嘉五年六月九日.

<sup>66</sup> (Wang, 2006), p. 1.

### II.5.2 Secular writing

Twentieth century archaeological excavations of early secular writing dating from before the 3rd century CE —on objects such as bamboo slips, wooden tablets, pottery jars<sup>67</sup> and tomb bricks<sup>68</sup>— provide more evidence of the relationship between *Jinshu zhengxie* and the tradition of Zhong You's calligraphy. We shall now compare the brush strokes on the following: the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*; the Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick (Figs 9 & 10); wooden tablets and bamboo slips from the Dongpailou and Zoumalou sites in Changsha (Fig. 11); and bamboo slips from the Suxian Qiao site in Hunan Province (Tab. 9).

Figure 9: Liu Yuantai 'land purchase tomb brick' (176 CE)



Heptagon cylinder: sides, 40 cm × 1.9 cm; diameter, 1.2 cm. © Yangzhou Museum. Image courtesy of Yangzhou Museum.

#### Liu Yuantai Land Purchase Tomb Brick (176 CE)

An important piece of evidence in our study is the Liu Yuantai 'land purchase tomb brick'<sup>69</sup> found in Yangzhou, a culturally developed area in the Wu region during the Three Kingdoms period. It was excavated in 1975 in Ganquan Mountain, Jiangsu Province, and is now in the Museum of Yangzhou.<sup>70</sup>

The brick was dated the 5th year of the Xiping era in the Eastern Han Dynasty (176 CE). It is a heptagon cylinder, with each side measuring 40 cm × 1.9 cm. According to Jiang Hua, the brick was

<sup>67</sup> (Nakamura, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> (Hu, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Here, 'land purchase' means 'proof

of ownership,' and is similar to a deed.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.

Figure 10: Rubbing of Liu Yuantai 'land purchase tomb brick'



After: (Hu, 2008), p. 35. © Yangzhou Museum.

used for burial purposes and is our earliest example in this shape.<sup>71</sup> Seven lines of engraved characters, with a total of ninety-six characters remain.

In the catalogue *Zhongguo gudai zhuanke mingwen ji* 'Collection of inscriptions on engraved bricks from ancient China'<sup>72</sup> Hu Haifan has stated that the inscriptions on the Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick are in clerical script. The tomb brick's calligraphy,

<sup>71</sup> (Jiang, 1980), pp. 17–18.

<sup>72</sup> (Hu, 2008).

Table 9: Secular writing using standard script before the 3rd century (compared with the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*)

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Excavation date</i> <i>Site</i>
Wooden tablets of the E. Han	171–86	clerical, cursive, running, standard	2004 Dongpailou site, Changsha, Hunan Province
Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick	176	standard	1975 Ganquan Mountain, Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province
Zhong You's calligraphy	221	standard	–
Bamboo slips & wooden tablets	220–37	clerical, cursive, running, standard	1996 Zoumalou site, Changsha, Hunan Province
Jin Dynasty bamboo slips (140)	239–43	standard, clerical	2004 Suxian Qiao, Binzhou, Hunan Province <sup>a</sup>
<i>Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra</i>	296	standard	1908 Tuyoq, Turfan

<sup>a</sup> See: (Wo, 2013).

though, is very similar to that of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* dated 296 CE.

As the calligraphy on the tomb brick was inscribed on a hard surface, the brush strokes, in comparison with the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*, are slightly simplified. Closer examination, though, reveals that the structure and composition of the brush strokes are alike, and that both the tomb brick and *sūtra* are in standard script (Fig. 12).

It would seem, then, that the standard script found in the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* was being used at least one hundred years earlier. And that standard script in the tradition of Zhong You was being used not only in government documents and Buddhist texts, but had also been adopted, early in the Eastern Han Dynasty, for daily use by the public.

Figure 11: Wooden tablet No. 1105 from Dongpailou site, Changsha, Hunan Province (Eastern Han, 171–86 CE)



After: (Liu, 2006), p. 51. © Hunan Changsha Jiandu Bowuguan 長沙簡牘博物館.

#### Wooden tablets from Dongpailou site (Changsha)

In 2004, archaeologists excavated several hundred wooden tablets from the Dongpailou site in Changsha. The wooden tablets are dated from 171 to 186 CE, during the Eastern Han Dynasty.

Liu Tao has examined the calligraphy and has identified seal, clerical and cursive scripts, and most importantly, various types of early running and standard script.<sup>73</sup> He has also concluded that the

Figure 12: Comparison of calligraphy from Liu Yuantai 'tomb brick,' *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*, and Zhong You's writing

	176 CE Liu Yuantai 劉元台買地券磚	296 CE <i>Buddhasaṅgīti Sūtra</i> 諸佛要集經	151-230 CE Zhong You 鍾繇
一			
年			
道			
戈			
乙			
為			
萬			
元			

standard script on the wooden tablets is evidence that the script was created before Zhong You.

Wang Zhenfen has argued that one of the features typical of mature standard script is a brush stroke known as 'vertical hooks.'<sup>74</sup> One of the main differences between the standard and clerical scripts, he suggests, is the use of such hooks.

<sup>73</sup> (Liu, 2014), pp. 80–1.

Fig. 14b – the enlarged character 子.

<sup>74</sup> (Wang, 2006), p. 20. See also:

## Bamboo slips &amp; wooden tablets from Zoumalou site (Changsha)

In 1996, archæologists excavated nearly 100,000 bamboo slips and wooden tablets from the Zoumalou site in Changsha, Hunan Province,<sup>75</sup> a find that has helped advance research on the calligraphy of the Three Kingdoms period (Figs 13 & 14). The bamboo slips are dated from 220 to 237 CE, and are written in various calligraphic styles. Liu Zhengcheng has identified clerical, cursive, running, and standard scripts.<sup>76</sup> Some of the wooden tablets are also written in mature standard script<sup>77</sup> (Fig. 15).

The discovery of the bamboo slips at Zoumalou, together with the calligraphy of the Liu Yuantai tomb brick, demonstrate that a mature style of standard script in the Zhong You tradition had already been created as early as 176 CE, and was widely used by the general public in daily life during the late Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms periods.

Liu Zhengcheng applied a ‘Double-Evidence Method’ to investigate the mature style of standard script in the Zhong You tradition.<sup>78</sup> He selected eleven characters from bamboo slips from the Zoumalou site and compared them with Zhong You’s calligraphy. His conclusion was that they bear a close resemblance to each other, and that the calligraphy of the Zoumalou site was strongly influenced by the Zhong You tradition (Fig. 16).<sup>79</sup> This in turn suggests that Zhong You’s calligraphic style was already popular in the Southern region during the Wu Kingdom (229–80 CE) of the Three Kingdoms period.

<sup>75</sup> (Wang, 2004). Hunan Province was the Wu region during the Three Kingdoms period.

<sup>76</sup> (Liu, 1998), pp. 11–40. The earliest date was the 25th year of the Jianan reign during the Eastern Han (220 CE). The latest date was the 6th year of Jiahe during the Wu Kingdom (237 CE).

<sup>77</sup> (Nishibayashi, 2003), p. 68.

<sup>78</sup> (Liu, 1998), pp. 11–13; (Liu, 1999), p. 386. The ‘Double-Evidence Method’ was proposed by Wang Guowei (1877–1927) in 1925. See: (Wang, 1994),

pp. 2–3. This method compares and contrasts two different sources: i. historical material collected in archæological excavations; and ii. historically documented literary records. Li Xueqin confirmed the value of this method. See: (Li, 1994), p. 3. Jao Tsung-I further proposed a ‘Triple-Evidence Method,’ by adding indirect evidence: anthropological sources and historical sources from other countries. See: (Jao, 2005), pp. 67–8.

<sup>79</sup> (Liu, 1998), pp. 11–13

Figure 13: Wooden tablet No. 1166 from Dongpailou site, Changsha, Hunan Province (Eastern Han, 171–86 CE)



After: (Liu, 2006), p. 51. © Hunan Changsha Jiandu Bowuguan 長沙簡牘博物館.

These archaeological findings provide evidence that the standard script was created earlier than Zhong You. However, due to a lack of physical evidence, Qiu Xigui has hypothesised that standard script first appeared between the Han and Wei periods.<sup>80</sup> Qiu also tentatively used the term ‘neo-clerical style’ to describe the early phase of ‘standard script’ writing:

<sup>80</sup> (Qiu, 2000), p. 113.

Figure 14: Detail of wooden tablet No. 1166



Probably sometime during the mid Eastern Han period, a simpler and more convenient form of popular script evolved from the clerical script in daily use, which we shall tentatively term the neo-clerical style. By the late Eastern Han, semi-cursive script had come into existence and was based on the neo-clerical and cursive scripts. It was probably sometime between the Han and Wei periods that standard script came into existence, which was based on the semi-cursive script. After the appearance of standard script, by no means were the clerical and neo-clerical scripts suddenly overshadowed. It was not until after the Wei-Jin period, which lasted some two hundred years, that standard script finally supplanted them as the dominant form of script in use.<sup>81</sup>

In the development from clerical to standard script, the first major difference is in the writing of horizontal strokes, the second is

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<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

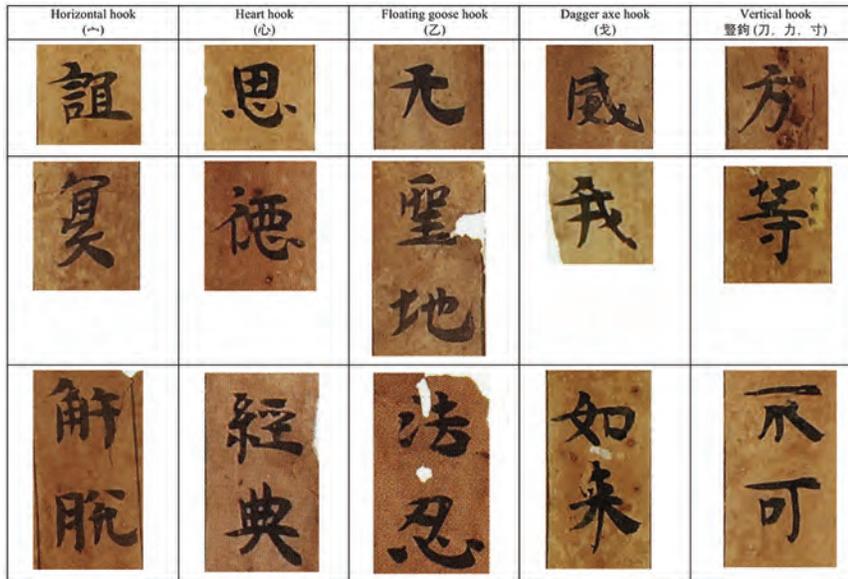
Figure 15: Wooden tablet No. 1170 from Dongpailou site, Changsha, Hunan Province (220–37 CE)



After: (Liu, 2006), p. 67. © Hunan Changsha Jiandu Bowuguan 長沙簡牘博物館.

in the various brush techniques used for writing hooks. Bai Qian-shen argues that these different ‘hooks’ —which include the horizontal hook, the diagonal hook, and especially the vertical hook (Fig. 14b)— are a defining characteristic of standard script. Regarding the wooden and bamboo slips from the Zoumalou site in Changsha<sup>82</sup> Bai says:

<sup>82</sup> During the Wu Kingdom, Changsha was the capital of Jingzhou prefecture.

Figure 16: 'Hook' brush techniques in calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*

Images after: (Ryojun, 2006), pp. 2–3.

Formally-written clerical script has few hooked strokes, but in its more informal styles on the bamboo and wooden slips and tablets of the Han, characters sometimes have strokes with hooked termini. Even so, these hooks are usually not rendered as carefully as in regular script, and some do not kick upwards but extend horizontally, instead.<sup>83</sup>

Analysing the brush techniques of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*, and comparing them with the techniques of clerical script, we may identify some significant differences (Fig. 16). The *sūtra* differs from clerical script in its use of vertical hooks, horizontal hooks, falling leftward strokes *pie*, and falling rightward strokes *na*.<sup>84</sup> The use of hooks and strokes in the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is typical of the mature standard script.

The *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is the earliest extant Chinese Buddhist manuscript (296 CE). It is generally agreed that the *sūtra* is written in *Jinshu zhengxie* in the Zhong You tradition. This should be understood as a recognition of the high level of expertise and aesthetic beauty that had been achieved by Zhong You's standard script. The actual beginnings of the standard script precede the time of Zhong

<sup>83</sup> (Bai, 2003), p. 577.

<sup>84</sup> (Nishikawa, 1991–3), p. 52.

Table 10: Strokes and hooks

Strokes:	horizontal	一
	vertical	丨
	slanting	人
Hooks:	horizontal	㇇
	vertical	丿
	right-angled turn from horizontal to vertical	冂
	'dagger axe'	戈心

You, as he only became well known as a calligrapher after his appointment to a government post by Cao Cao during the Wei era of the Three Kingdom period (220–65 CE).<sup>85</sup> The bamboo slips from the Eastern Han Dynasty in Dongpailou (171–86 CE) and the Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick (176 CE) were written in standard script over a century before the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra*.

<sup>85</sup> (Kakui & Fukumoto, 1990), pp. 15–16. Remnants of Zhong You's calligraphy include works such as *Jian Ji Zhi biao*, *Xuan shi biao*, *Li ming biao* 力命表 'endeavour and destiny,' and *Mu tian Bingshe tie* 墓田丙舍帖 'guest living at Bingshe,' created in about 221 CE.

CH. III  
CALLIGRAPHY IN DHARMAKṢEMA'S TRANSLATION  
TEAM

III.1 INTRODUCTION

DURING the Northern Liang period (397–439 CE), a new style of calligraphy was gradually adopted for writing Buddhist scriptures, the Northern Liang Style (NLS). The diverse and vigorous calligraphic style of the NLS is unique in the history of Chinese calligraphy, and reflects a strong Central Asian influence. The rise of the NLS is closely related to the multicultural background of the Northern Liang Dynasty and to the development of Buddhism. However, as historians of calligraphy have given little attention to early Buddhist material, and as few Buddhist studies art historians have studied the calligraphy of early manuscripts, there has been little systematic research on the calligraphy of the NLS.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter considers the origins, formation, and development of the NLS. We will explore the historical and cultural origins of NLS calligraphy from this perspective:

1. External factors: how, and to what extent, did Liangzhou's unique geographical location affect the flourishing of Buddhism?
2. Internal factors: what were the implications of the multicultural background of the Northern Liang ruling class?
3. State and government support: to what extent did political support from the Northern Liang court in Liangzhou expedite the large-scale translation of Buddhist texts?

The analysis will outline the influence of the NLS within Central Asia and on the wider development of Chinese calligraphy.

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<sup>1</sup> (Shi, 1985), pp. 58–66.

### III.2 NORTHERN LIANG & CENTRAL ASIAN INFLUENCE IN LIANGZHOU

Liangzhou<sup>2</sup> and Dunhuang are located at the east and west ends of the Hexi Corridor respectively. From the early 4th century CE, Liangzhou and Dunhuang were the two most important Buddhist centres in the Hexi area.<sup>3</sup> Due to their position along the route to the trading and political centre of Chang'an, they had been considered important since the Han Dynasty. Liangzhou's location allowed it to control passage along the Silk Road, which also allowed for the transmission of Buddhism from Central Asia into China. As well as foreign merchants from the Western Region—who travelled the Silk Road to trade in the Northern Liang capital of Guzang (412–39 CE)—many Buddhist monks, craftsmen, and artisans from the Western Region stayed in Liangzhou, and emigrated there for generations.<sup>4</sup> Liangzhou's strategic location made it the ideal place for a capital city from the Wei Dynasty in the Three Kingdoms period, as well as for some of the Sixteen Kingdoms.<sup>5</sup>

The cohesiveness of different ethnic groups made it possible to work collectively to realise the spread of Buddhism. There was co-operation between eminent monks from the Western Region and some local rulers. These included Shi Le and Shi Hu of the Later Zhao (Tab. 3), both Buddhists of Jie origin under the guidance of the monk Fo Tucheng (232–348 CE).<sup>6</sup> Fu Jian, of the Former Qin, was of Di origin; the Yao family of the Later Qin was of Qiang origin; the Qi Fu family of the Western Qin (385–431 CE) was of Xianbei origin; and Zhang Gui and Zhang Tianxi of the Former Liang, and the Juqu family of the Northern Liang, were of Xiongnu origin. Cultural differences amongst these government officials were most likely overcome due to their shared belief in Buddhism, a source of mutual respect between local Han Chinese and various 'foreigners.'

<sup>2</sup> (Howard, 2000), p. 267: "The term "Liangzhou" stands for two different geographic entities: firstly, the large area administered by the Liangs, especially Former and Northern Liang, equivalent to most of Gansu, minus the Southeast; and, secondly, the town of Wuwei, the last capital of the Northern Liang from 412–39 CE."

<sup>3</sup> *Wei Shu* (1974), fasc. 114, p. 3032.

<sup>4</sup> *Hou han shu* (1999).

<sup>5</sup> (Tsukamoto, 1985), p. 183.

<sup>6</sup> (Du, 1998), p. 129. Fo Tucheng, who was also well known as a worker of wonders and magician, was from Central Asia, but travelled to Luoyang in 310 CE to disseminate Buddhism.

The Northern Liang was the most prominent and thriving kingdom during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. The kingdom was established by the Han Chinese ruler Duan Ye in Gansu Province in the Hexi area from 397–9 CE.<sup>7</sup> A few years later, the non-Chinese Juqu Mengxun overthrew Duan Ye, establishing his own reign in 401 CE.<sup>8</sup>

Juqu Mengxun was the chieftain of the nomadic Huns, whose ancestors were a branch of *Xiongnu* from the Han Dynasty, who lived near the Lushui River at Linsong. Juqu was reputed to be fond of learning, and well versed in literature and astronomy. Liang Xi the Provincial Governor of Liangzhou, and Lü Guang the founder of the Later Liang, both thought him unusual, and feared him.<sup>9</sup> Juqu Mengxun ruled with the help of many eminent Chinese scholars and Huns.

The length of the Northern Liang Dynasty was only forty-two years, but the activity of the Juqu clan in the Hexi and Turfan areas spanned more than 800 years: from the Western Han (177 BCE) until the Tang Dynasty (640 CE).<sup>10</sup> During their long stay in the Liangzhou area they adopted Chinese culture, which became integral with their own. Juqu Mengxun also seems to have understood the importance of Buddhism as a tool to consolidate his kingship. His promotion of Buddhism had two major aspects<sup>11</sup>: the construction of the Buddhist cave temples in Liangzhou; and the establishment of a national centre for the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese.

It has long been suspected that some of the remains of Buddhist grottoes, sculptures, and mural paintings in the Hexi Corridor were created during Juqu Mengxun's reign in the Sixteen Kingdoms period.<sup>12</sup> According to 'Collections of Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China,'<sup>13</sup> Juqu erected a sixteen foot sculpture of the Buddha in honour of his mother who died in 414 CE. There were also Buddhist grottoes and enshrined sculptures to the south of

<sup>7</sup> *Shiliu guo chunqiu jibu* (2000), pp. 646–59.

<sup>8</sup> (Du, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Jin shu* (1974), p. 3189.

<sup>10</sup> (Wang, 1995), p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> *Shiliu guo chunqiu-beiliang lu* (1981), p. 30; *Wei shu* (1974), p. 3032.

<sup>12</sup> (Zhang, 2000), p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantonglu* (2014), T2106, 52: 417c27-418a26.

Liangzhou. Shi Yan, Xiang Da, and Zhang Xuerong, suspect that remains of these grottoes are probably at the site at the foot of Tiantishan.<sup>14</sup> Although seriously damaged, a few caves can be identified as of the *caitya* type with a vajra throne.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the Dunhuang Mogao caves have been in existence since 366 CE, three of which are dated to the Northern Liang.<sup>16</sup>

Juqu Mengxun controlled the Liangzhou area from 401 to 439 CE, a time when Buddhism flourished.<sup>17</sup> Although the period of the Northern Liang was short, it played an important role in the early transmission of Buddhism into China. According to Su Bai, a 'Liangzhou Mode' in Buddhist art is evident in some of the remains of Buddhist cave temples in the Hexi Corridor.<sup>18</sup>

The Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi Province were constructed from the Northern Wei Dynasty (453–95 CE). Su Bai holds that: 'Buddhist art spread from Xinjiang towards the east, reaching first the Hexi area,<sup>19</sup> and subsequently spread further eastward to Yungang. He also holds that the 'Liangzhou Mode' was based on the influence of Buddhism from Central Asia, and that Buddhism was well established in Liangzhou before the reign of Juqu Mengxun of the Northern Liang. Angela Howard proposes that the early Buddhist monuments in the Hexi Corridor were started during the Former Liang, writing that: 'the Former Liang, Western Liang, and Northern Liang played a decisive role as builders of Buddhist cave temples in the corridor.'<sup>20</sup>

The 'Liangzhou Mode' is also evident in calligraphy, which can be seen in Buddhist manuscripts and stone inscriptions from the Northern Liang period. During the Northern Liang, Buddhist monks from the Western Region were joining the 'National Translation Centre'<sup>21</sup> to become scribes. The 'Liangzhou Mode,' a culturally

<sup>14</sup> (Shi, 1955), p. 76; (Xiang, 1957), p. 342; (Zhang, 2000), pp. 8–12.

<sup>15</sup> (Ji, 1997), pp. 42–56.

<sup>16</sup> See: (Fan, Ma & Guan, 1982), pp. 185–97. Cave nos 268, 272, & 275.

<sup>17</sup> (Tong, 2004), p. 103. Buddhist sūtra—comprising eight-two texts *bu* and 311 fasc. (incl. fifty-three texts and seventy-five fasc. that have been lost)—were translated in the Northern Liang pe-

riod by: Dao Gong 道龔; Dao Tai 道泰; Fa Sheng 法盛; Fa Zhong 法眾; Buddhavarma 佛陀跋摩; Saṃgata 僧伽陀; Dharmakṣema 曇無讖; Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲; and Zhi Meng 智猛.

<sup>18</sup> (Su, 1986), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>20</sup> (Howard, 2000), p. 251.

<sup>21</sup> *Guojia yichang* 國家譯場.

specific and artistic calligraphic style, with close links to the Central Asian region, also denoted the beginnings of the Northern Wei.<sup>22</sup> This helps to explain why some of the calligraphy of the NLS contains a 'foreign,' or 'outsider's,' aesthetic sensibility, which was not present before, and which disappeared after the Northern Liang.

### III.3 SCRIBES IN DHARMAKṢEMA'S TRANSLATION TEAM

The translation, compilation and transmission of Buddhist texts was a significant development in the Northern Liang period. When the ruler of the Northern Liang —Juqu Mengxun— established the capital at Guzang in 412 CE, he also founded the *Guojia yichang*, the National Translation Centre. This large-scale project for the translation of Buddhist texts was overseen by Dharmakṣema, an eminent monk from central India.

Among the texts translated by Dharmakṣema, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*<sup>23</sup> is regarded as one of the most important. According to his biography in the CSZJJ, after the first part of the sūtra was translated, Dharmakṣema returned to Central Asia to obtain the middle and last parts in Khotan.<sup>24</sup> The translation began in 414 CE, and was completed in Guzang in 421 CE.<sup>25</sup>

Juqu Mengxun was a pious and ambitious Buddhist, eager to promote Buddhism. He asked Dharmakṣema if he could translate Buddhist texts, but Dharmakṣema refused. The reason for his refusal was that he did not know the local [Chinese] dialect or language and making any mistakes in the translation of the Dharma was not allowed. Dharmakṣema studied for three years and learned the regional Chinese dialect. Then he himself began to translate and transcribe the Buddhist texts that had been requested of him by Juqu Mengxun three years earlier. At that time, Hui Song and Dao Lang were the most distinguished *śramaṇas* in the Hexi area. They were both asked to take a subordinate role to Dharmakṣema to assist him in the translation of the Buddhist texts into Chinese. Song Gong [Hui Song] served as scribe, transforming the work into writing. Hundreds of other Buddhist monks and laymen also joined the translation team, discussing and resolving translation problems together. Dharmakṣema could resolve any problem or conflict, making explanations and implementing resolutions without hesitation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See: (Howard, 2000), pp. 235–78.

<sup>25</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 336b1-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經.

<sup>26</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a25-b2.

<sup>24</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103b5-7.

Figure 17: Colophon of *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* (427 CE)

Dated the 16th year of Xuanshi (427 CE) in the Northern Liang. Ink on white hemp paper. After: (Inokuchi, 1980), pl. 18. © Hōzōkan.

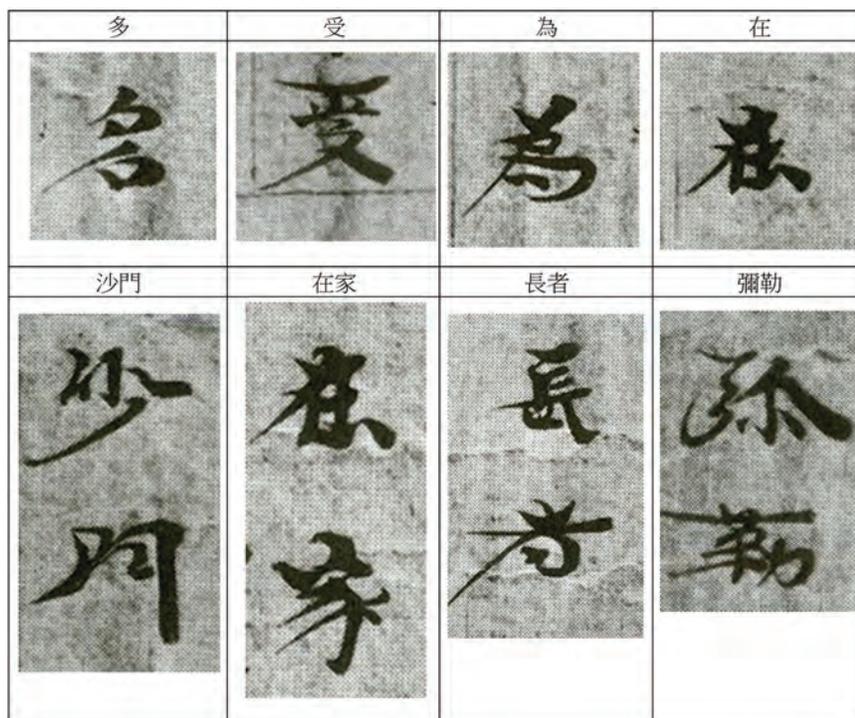
Hui Song and Dao Lang were both highly qualified for the National Translation Centre.<sup>27</sup> According to the CSZJJ and GSZ, Hui Song became a Buddhist scribe, and was active in the Liangzhou area, during the Former Qin Dynasty (351–94 CE). Although he lived in Liangzhou during the late 4th century CE,<sup>28</sup> he was originally from Gaochang (Turfan). He was from a family deeply rooted in

<sup>27</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a28-b5.

*Ekottarāgama* in 384 CE. See: T1549, 28:

<sup>28</sup> Hui Song was a scribe when Zhu Fonian translated *Sengqie luocha suoji-jing*, *Zunpoxumi pusa suoji-lun*, & the

721a24-28; T194, 4: 115c2-5; & T125, 2: 549a12-14.

Figure 18: Calligraphy of śramaṇa Dao Yang in *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra*

Images after: (Inokuchi, 1980), pl. 18.

traditional Chinese culture, and was said to have been a brilliant scholar, a distinguished śramaṇa,<sup>29</sup> and a professional scribe before the Northern Liang.<sup>30</sup> Hui Song was involved in the transcription of the first five texts in Tab. 11; for the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā-śāstra*,<sup>31</sup> he was a proofreader. He was on the team that translated the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*,<sup>32</sup> and Juqu Mengxun had also selected him to be a court scribe.<sup>33</sup>

Two other court scribes can be identified from the colophons of manuscripts from the Northern Liang with exact dates: the śramaṇa Dao Yang, who transcribed the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra*<sup>34</sup> in 426 CE (Figs 17 & 18); and the civil minister and court scribe Fan Hai, who copied a

<sup>29</sup> CSZJJ, T2059, 50: 336a24-b3.

<sup>30</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 71b03.

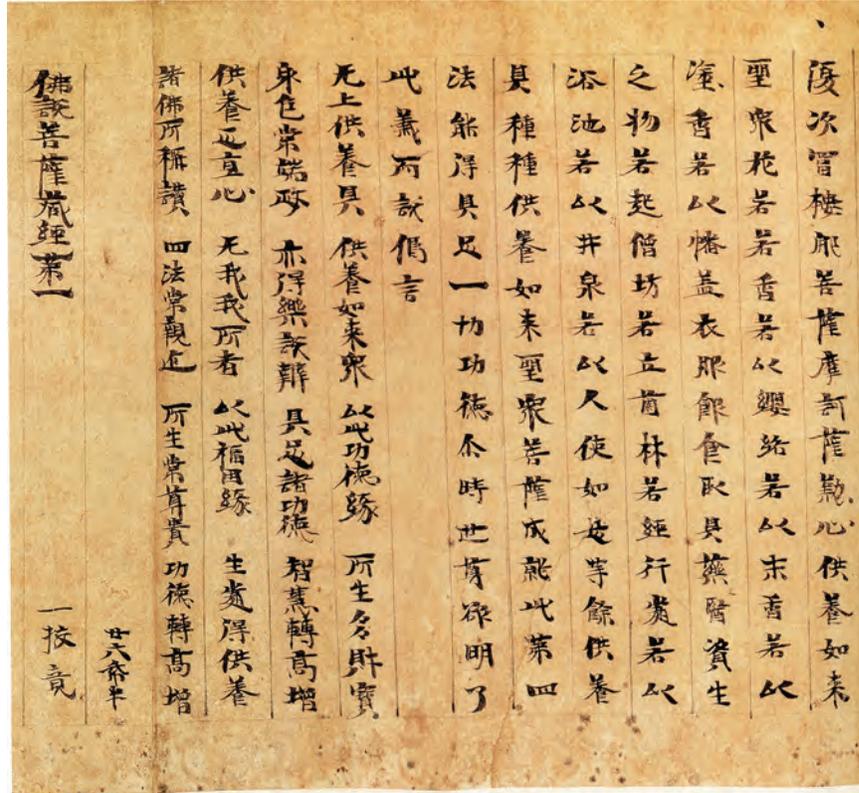
<sup>31</sup> The *Vibhāṣā-śāstra Piposha lun* 鞞婆沙論, T1547, in fourteen volumes was translated by Saṃghabhadra. The *Abhidharmavibhāṣā-śāstra A pitan piposha lun* 阿毘曇毘婆沙論, T1546, in sixty

volumes was translated by Buddhavarman.

<sup>32</sup> See excerpt above from: CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a25-b2.

<sup>33</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a24-b7.

<sup>34</sup> *You po sai jie jing* 優婆塞戒經, T1488.

Figure 19: Part of fragment of *Buddhapiṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*

Ink on paper. 25.6 cm × 116.4 cm. After: (Isobe, 2005) v. 1, pp. 47–8. © Taitō kuritsu shodō hakubutsukan 台東区立書道博物館.

fragment of the *Buddhapiṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*<sup>35</sup> dated 457 CE, in the 15th year of the Chengping era (Fig. 19). Dao Yang was a court scribe in the National Translation Centre when the Northern Liang capital was in Guzang.<sup>36</sup> Fan Hai was a court scribe during the Gaochang period of the Northern Liang (444–60 CE).

#### III.4 CALLIGRAPHY IN THE NORTHERN LIANG DYNASTY

With the growth of Buddhism during the Northern Liang Dynasty there was an increasing demand for the circulation of sūtra. This attracted more monks and laypeople, who either joined the translation teams or copied sūtra.<sup>37</sup> During the Sixteen Kingdoms period,

<sup>35</sup> *Fo shuo pusa zang jing* 佛說菩薩藏經. The text was first translated the *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra* in the Tang Dynasty, T310.

by Kumārajīva but later compiled into <sup>36</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 7b03.

Table 11: Buddhist scriptures transcribed or proofread by Hui Song

	<i>Translator</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Kingdom, Dynasty</i>
Vibhāṣā-śāstra <sup>a</sup>	Samghabhadra	383	F. Qin
Āryavasumitrasaṅgīti <sup>b</sup>	Samghabhadra	384	F. Qin
Saṅgharakṣasaṅgrhīta-sūtra <sup>c</sup>	Zhu Fonian	384	F. Qin
Ekottarāgama <sup>d</sup>	Zhu Fonian	384	F. Qin
Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra <sup>e</sup>	Dharmakṣema	421	N. Liang
Abhidharmavibhāṣā-śāstra <sup>f</sup>	Buddhavarman	437	S. Dynasty

<sup>a</sup> LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 76a3-10.

<sup>b</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 99b1-5; LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 76a3-10.

<sup>c</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 71b16-21; LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 76a3-10.

<sup>d</sup> Dao An, Preface to *Ekottarāgama*, T125, 2: 549a10-16.

<sup>e</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 336a21-28; CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a24-b2.

<sup>f</sup> Hui Song was a proofreader, see p. 62: GSZ, T2059, 50: 339a14-28.

Table 12: Court scribes of the Northern Liang Dynasty

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Source</i>
Hui Song	384-437?	GSZ, CSZJJ, LDSBJ
Dao Tai	act. 437	GSZ, Abhidharmavibhāṣā-śāstra
Dao Yang	426—	CSZJJ, Upāsakaśīla-sūtra MS
Fan Hai	457	Buddhapiṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra MS

foreign monks learnt Chinese calligraphy as professional scribes, with some having their own unique sense of aesthetics. This will be discussed below, based on the three stages of the Northern Liang Style (NLS): i. 397-411 CE: the early phase, inheritance from the Han-Jin tradition; ii. 421-44 CE: the flourishing phase (capital, Guzang); and iii. 444-60 CE: the Gaochang phase (capital, Gaochang).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 102c12-18. The CSZJJ notes that the translations of the *Dirghāgama* were made by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian in 412-3 CE.

<sup>38</sup> (Fujieda, 2005a), pp. 8-9; see also: (Ryojun, 2006), p. 253. Fujieda has analysed the periodisation of the vari-

### III.4.1 Early phase of the NLS (397–411 CE): Inheritance from Han–Jin tradition

An evaluation of the calligraphy of dated Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan from the late 3rd to early 5th centuries reveals that the calligraphy of Northern Liang manuscripts was written in three different scripts,<sup>39</sup> or three conventional styles. The first was the *zhengshu* style—the standard script—in the Zhong You tradition. Also called *Jinshu zhengxie*, it was used in government documents in the Western Jin period.<sup>40</sup> The second type, which was mainly a transformation of the clerical script, or *mingshishu* ‘stone-inscription script,’<sup>41</sup> of the Han Dynasty, was the most characteristic script of the NLS. Its structure and brush techniques reveal a transition between clerical and standard script.<sup>42</sup> Also referred to as the *likai* style,<sup>43</sup> this type of script was used both for writing on paper and engraving on stone during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. The third type, ‘running script’ or *xingshu*, was mainly for everyday use, for example for informal documents, or for personal practice, such as the chanting of Buddhist texts.

### III.4.2 Flourishing phase of the NLS (421–44 CE): Central Asian influence

Buddhist calligraphy underwent a significant change with the development of the *likai* style. The NLS exhibited continuities with

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ous calligraphic styles of Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts. According to his research, the calligraphy of the Northern Dynasties was transitional, a bridge between the evolution of the ‘Li to Kai script.’ He further sub-divided the Northern Dynasty into three phases: (AA) The Early Phase of the Northern Dynasty; (A) The Later Phase of the Northern Dynasty; and (A’) The Phase of the Gaochang Kingdom. Though far-reaching and broad-based, Fujieda’s research was not concerned with identifying the style of a particular period.

For example, detailed research pertaining to a single specific period, such as the Northern Liang and its calligraphic styles, regional influence, calligraphers, scribes, and so on, was left undone.

<sup>39</sup> (Tsui, 2010), App. 1–1, pp. 412–5.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of standard script during the Western Jin period see: *ibid.*, Ch. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Mingshishu* was one of Zhong You’s three types of calligraphy.

<sup>42</sup> (Zheng, 1994), pp. 10–11.

<sup>43</sup> (Itō, 1991), pp. 43–9.

Han and Western Jin calligraphy, but also displayed temporal, regional, and personal characteristics. It was distinguished by its unique aesthetic sensibility, and was defined by Shi Anchang as the NLS.<sup>44</sup> Once the Northern Liang established its capital in Guzang in 412 CE, and started the project of translating Buddhist texts, a mature NLS began to appear.

Some features of the NLS are quite different from the Han ‘clerical script’ (*lishu*) and from the ‘standard script’ (*zhengshu*). The most characteristic example of the mature phase of NLS is Dunyan F0019, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscript from the Dunhuang Academy collection. According to records from the Academy, the manuscript is dated to the Northern Dynasty. Shi Pingting has identified its writing style as *likai*,<sup>45</sup> a style that shifted between clerical script and standard script (Figs 20 & 21).

*Likai* was somewhat suspended in the middle of a calligraphical transformation from the clerical to the standard script, but in terms of technique, it retained more of the clerical script than the standard script.<sup>46</sup> The calligraphy of Dunyan F0019 was in the same style as Dunyan F0020, F0031, F0108, F0160, and F0371. The square-shaped structure of the characters in these manuscripts was manipulated by vigorous writing.

The Dunyan F0019 manuscript was written on high quality white hemp paper in the standard format of a *sūtra*. It was drawn with columns ruled in ink, with each column having seventeen characters. The tidy and careful page design and fluent brushwork demonstrate that it was the work of a professional scribe. From the neat standard format, composite design, and the delicate quality of the paper, Shi suggests that Dunyan F0019 ‘was not written by an ordinary scribe.’<sup>47</sup> Although each line is only 1.7 cm wide and 22.1 cm long, the characters are evenly arranged in the limited space.<sup>48</sup> The calligraphy reveals a sense of beauty and vigorous movement not seen in other Buddhist manuscripts. Most of the above-mentioned

<sup>44</sup> (Shi, 2001a), p. 242.

<sup>45</sup> (Shi, 1999), p. 271.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

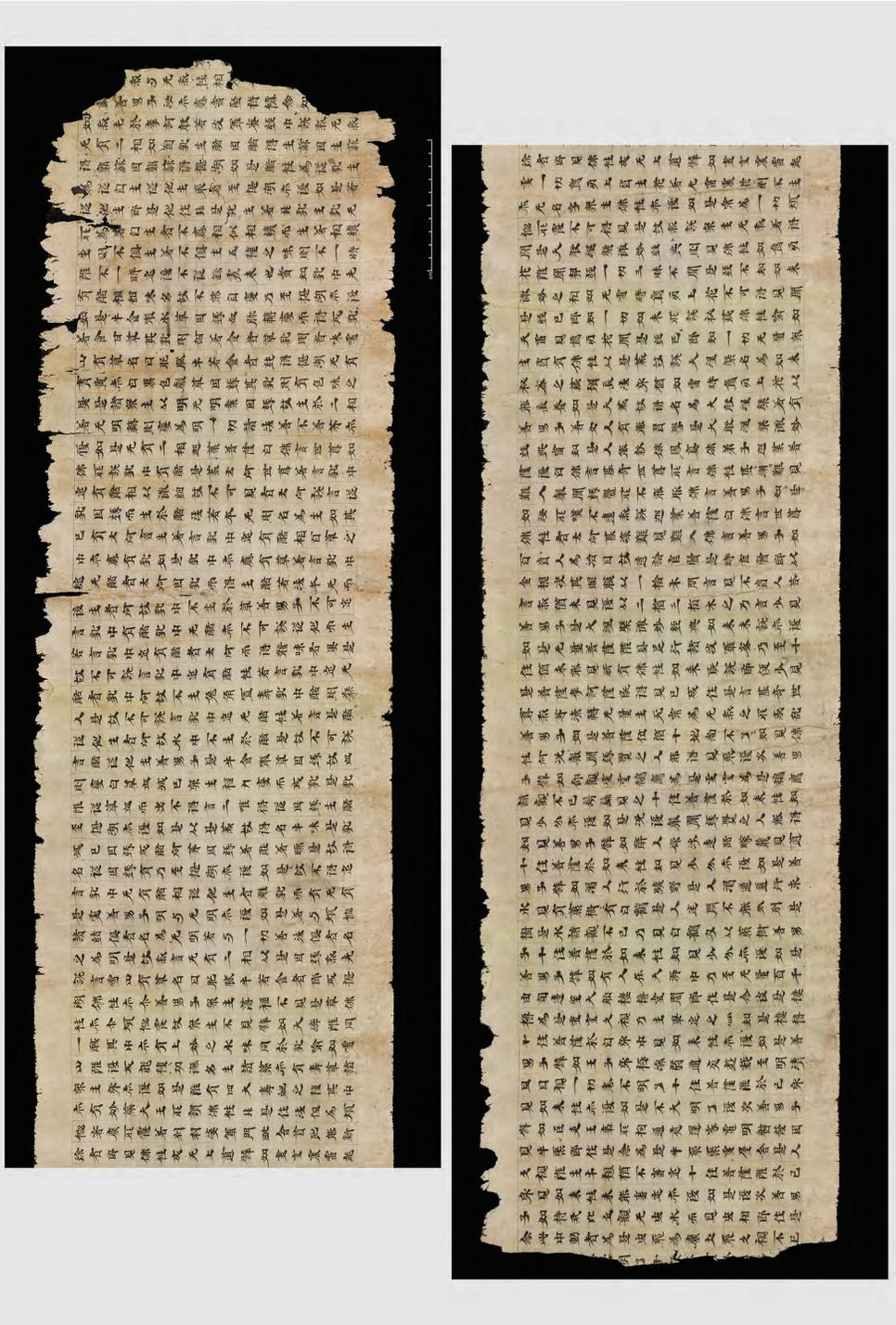
<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> This format was already established as a standard rule for copying

Buddhist *sūtra* in the late 3rd century.

The earliest extant Buddhist manuscript, the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* (296 CE), was written with sixteen or seventeen characters on each line.

Figure 20: Dunyan Foo19, Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra



Ink on white hemp paper. 27.6 cm × 332 cm. © Dunhuang Research Academy. Photograph by Sheng Yanhai 盛岩海, courtesy of Dunhuang Research Academy.

Figure 21: Detail of Dunyan F0019



Dunyan manuscripts were written in the same format.<sup>49</sup> This would suggest that they probably belonged to an imperial collection.<sup>50</sup>

#### Hui Song and the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

Hui Song was probably the most influential scribe in the National Translation Centre, and his calligraphy may have been used as a model. According to the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 ‘Record of the Historical Transmission of the Three Treasures,’ in the 19th year of the Jianyuan reign of the Former Qin Dynasty (383 CE), Hui Song, Zhi Min, and Zhao Wenye<sup>51</sup> transcribed the translation of the *Vibhāṣā-sāstra* in fourteen volumes in the Qin language (Tab. 11).<sup>52</sup> In 384 CE, Saṃghabhadra, a monk from Kōphēn, together with Zhu Fonian, translated the *Zunpoxumi pusa suojiulun*<sup>53</sup> and *Sengqie*

<sup>49</sup> Dunyan F0019, F0020, F0031, and S116 are in the British Library Stein collection. There are many other fragments held in museum and library collections, including in the Beijing National Library.

<sup>50</sup> The undated NLS fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* numbered Dunyan F0020, F0021, F0022, F0023, F0029, F0031, F0056, F0108, F0125, F0127, F0160, F0172, F0318, F0371, F0373 and F0374 are from the collection in the Dunhuang Academy. In addition, S737

<sup>51</sup> The secretary at the archival bureau of Fujian.

<sup>52</sup> LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 76a3-10.

*luocha suojiing*,<sup>54</sup> with Hui Song as a scribe.<sup>55</sup> The translation of the *Ekottarāgama*<sup>56</sup> by Dharmanandi, was also transcribed (*bishou*) by Hui Song in 384 CE. In the preface of the *Ekottarāgama* Dao An writes:

The foreign *śramaṇa* Dharmanandi was a Tokharian who became a monk when he was a child. He travelled to Chang'an in the 20th year of the Jianyuan period in the Former Qin. Zhao Wenye, the governor of Wuwei, asked him to translate the *Ekottarāgama*. Zhu Fonian was the main translator and Tan Song [Hui Song]<sup>57</sup> recorded his translations. The translation work began in the summer of the year Jiashen, and finished in the spring of the next year. There are forty-one fascicles in total.<sup>58</sup>

A survey of archæological objects from Dunhuang and Turfan indicates that there are over twenty manuscripts or stone stūpas with dated colophons or inscriptions from the Northern Liang period (Tab. 13).<sup>59</sup> The objects were excavated from different sites and are dated between 399 and 457 CE: the earliest is the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*,<sup>60</sup> and the latest is the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥ-śīlanirgraha-sūtra*, which was transcribed by Fan Hai in 457 CE, the 15th year of the Chengping reign.

The quality of the paper and calligraphy of the extant manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan written in the NLS is exquisite; the most typical are the undated manuscripts of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. When one compares the calligraphy of these *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts with other existing manuscripts, they can be called masterpieces. These very refined

<sup>53</sup> 尊婆須蜜菩薩所集論, *Āryavasumitrasaṅgīti*, T1549, 28: 721a24-29. p. 194.

<sup>54</sup> 僧伽羅剎所集經, \**Samgharakṣasamgrhīta-sūtra*. There is actually no Sanskrit title for this sūtra. This translation is by the author's colleague Gao Mingyuan.

<sup>55</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 71b16-23.

<sup>56</sup> *Zeng yi a han jing* 增壹阿含經.

<sup>57</sup> In the preface of the *Ekottarāgama* Dao An refers to Hui Song as 'Tan Song.' According to Nakajima's notes, Tan Song is another name of Hui Song. See: T125, 2: 549a1015; (Nakajima, 1997),

<sup>58</sup> *Ekottarāgama*, T125, 2: 549a10-15.

<sup>59</sup> (Tsui, 2010), pp. 426–7. The items in Tab. 13 are only those related to Northern Liang.

<sup>60</sup> *Zheng fahua jing* 正法華經, T263. Of the two early complete Chinese versions of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, the earliest was translated by Dharmarakṣa in 286 CE with the title *Zheng fahua jing*, and the later was translated by Kumārajīva in 406 CE with the title *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, T262.

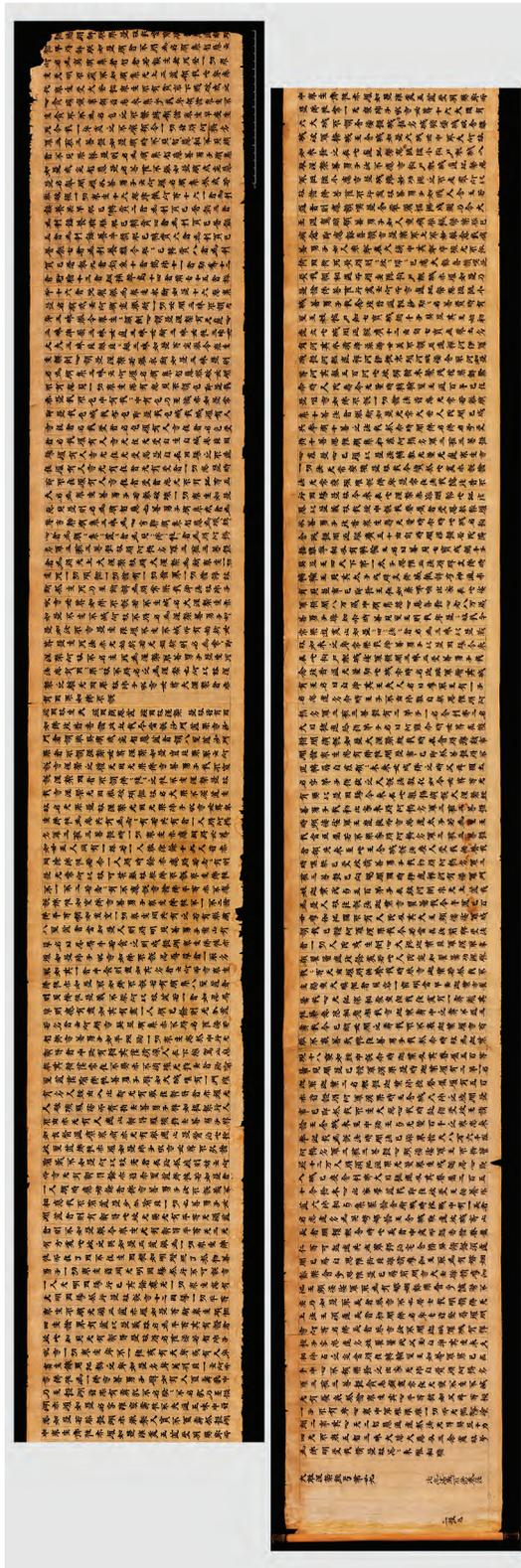


Figure 22: Or.8210/S.737, Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

Ink on paper. 28 cm x 375 cm. After: The International Dunhuang Project (IDP), [http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo\\_scroll\\_h.a4d?uid=7471688149;recnum=736;index=3](http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=7471688149;recnum=736;index=3) © British Library. Image courtesy of The British Library.

Figure 23: Detail of Or.8210/S.737, *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*

and elegant examples probably came from the imperial collection of the Northern Liang Dynasty. This would suggest that the scribe was either Hui Song himself, or other scribes who followed the NLS. However, after reviewing calligraphy from the Northern Liang,<sup>61</sup> the author could not find any dated manuscripts with inscriptions saying they were written by Hui Song, or by Dao Lang.

Three stone stūpas with inscriptions and definite dates might be able to assist in dating the undated *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts: a Northern Liang stūpa sponsored by Tian Hong (429 CE) (Fig. 24); a stūpa sponsored by Ma Dehui (426 CE); and a stūpa sponsored by Gao Shanmu (428 CE) (Figs 25 & 26). The calligraphic style of the inscriptions on these stūpas is similar to that of the Dunyan F0019 manuscript of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Figs 20 & 21). This might indicate that they were completed around the same time.

<sup>61</sup> See Tab. 13, which includes manuscripts, and stone stelae and stūpas from 399 to 470 CE.

Table 13: Buddhist calligraphy from 399 to 457 CE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Collection</i>
399	Saddharmapuṇ- ḍarīka-sūtra <sup>a</sup>	Tuyuq	standard, semi- cursive	Germany
399	Bhadrakalpika- sūtra	Turfan	–	Anhui Museum, China
416	Dharmaguptaka- vinaya	Dunhuang	NLS	Beijing National Library, China
426	Stūpa sponsored by Ma Dehui	Jiuquan	NLS	Gansu Provincial Museum, China
426	Stūpa sponsored by Ji De	Dunhuang	NLS	Dunhuang City Museum, China
427	Upāsakaśīla-sūtra sponsored by Juqu Xingguo <sup>b</sup>	Tuyuq	standard, semi- cursive	Japan
427	Pusa chanhui wen	Tuyuq	semi-cursive	Lüshun Museum, China
428	Stūpa sponsored by Gao Shanmu	Jiuquan	NLS	Gansu Provincial Museum, China
429	Stūpa sponsored by Tian Hong	Jiuquan	NLS	Gansu Provincial Museum, China
429	Saddharmapuṇ- ḍarīka-sūtra <sup>c</sup>	Tuyuq	standard, semi- cursive	Japan
429	Xun Xiaozan zao jing ji <sup>d</sup>	–	–	Japan
430	Suvarṇaprabhā- sottama-sūtra	Turfan	standard, semi- cursive	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum
434?	Vinayapiṭaka of Bhikṣuṇī	Dunhuang	–	Japan
434	Mahāmegha-sūtra	Turfan	NLS, semi-cursive	Russia

Table 13: Buddhist calligraphy from 399 to 457 CE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Collection</i>
434	Stūpa inscribed by Bai Shuangqie	Jiuquan	standard, semi-cursive	National Palace Museum, Beijing, China
435	Stūpa sponsored by Suo Ahou	Dunhuang	standard	The Cleveland Museum of Art, USA
436	Stūpa sponsored by Cheng Duaner	Jiuquan	NLS	Jiuquan City Museum, China
436	Śūraṃgamasam-ādhi-sūtra	Turfan	NLS, semi-cursive	–
b. <sup>e</sup> 439	Stūpa sponsored by Wang family	Dunhuang	NLS	Dunhuang City Museum, China
b. 439	Bilingual stūpa from Minzhou Temple	Dunhuang	NLS	Dunhuang Academy, China
b. 439	Stūpa from Shashan	Dunhuang	–	Dunhuang City Museum, China
b. 439	Stūpa from Sanwei Mountain	Dunhuang	–	Dunhuang City Museum, China
442–60	Stūpa sponsored by Song Qing <sup>f</sup>	Turfan	NLS	Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Germany
442–60	Stūpa from Turfan	Turfan	NLS	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum
445–9	Stele to commemorate the merit of constructing a temple by Juqu Anzhou	Tuyuq	standard, clerical (NLS)	Berlin, Germany <sup>g</sup>

Table 13: Buddhist calligraphy from 399 to 457 CE

Date	Object	Site	Style	Collection
449	Lokadharapari- pṛcchā-sūtra	Tuyuq	standard <sup>h</sup>	Japan
455	Wooden tomb tablet of Juqu Fengdai <sup>i</sup>	Turfan	NLS	–
455	Epitaph of Juqu Fengdai <sup>j</sup>	Turfan	NLS	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum
445–55	Daśabhūmikavi- bhāṣā-śāstra sponsored by Juqu Anzhou	Tuyuq	NLS	Japan
445–55	Buddhāvataṃ- sakamahāvai- pulya-sūtra sponsored by Juqu Anzhou	Tuyuq	standard, semi- cursive	Japan
457	Buddhapiṭaka- duḥśīlanirgraha- sūtra sponsored by Juqu Anzhou <sup>k</sup>	Tuyuq	clerical, semi- cursive (NLS)	Japan & Russia

<sup>a</sup> *Zheng fahua jing* 正法華經, a copy based on Dharmarakṣa's version. Colophon reads: on the 17th of July in the 3rd year of Shenxi reign in the Northern Liang 北涼神璽三年七月十七日 (399 CE).

<sup>b</sup> Transcribed by Dao Yang.

<sup>c</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, a copy based on Kumārajīva's version.

<sup>d</sup> 'Record of compilation of Buddhist texts by Xun Xiaozan.'

<sup>e</sup> Before.

<sup>f</sup> Red sandstone.

<sup>g</sup> The only rubbing is preserved in the Beijing National Library. The stone stele, originally in Berlin, was probably destroyed or lost during the Second World War.

<sup>h</sup> In Wang Xizhi tradition.

<sup>i</sup> Official governor of Dunhuang, *taishou*.

<sup>j</sup> Official governor of Gaochang, *taishou*.

<sup>k</sup> Transcribed by Fan Hai.

Figure 24: Northern Liang stūpa sponsored by Tian Hong (429 CE)



H 41 cm × D 21 cm. © Gansu Provincial Museum. Image courtesy of Gansu Provincial Museum.

*Gansu cang Dunhuang wenxian* 'Dunhuang manuscripts in the Gansu collection' lists a number of undated *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts in the Dunhuang Academy collection written in the Northern Liang style, including Dunyan F0019.<sup>62</sup> S737 and S116

in the British Library Stein collection were also written in this style (Figs 22 & 23). Shi Pingting holds that these manuscripts are in a style influenced by Hui Song, and that they were probably transcribed by an organised group, possibly by a combination of family members and others within a mentoring tradition.<sup>63</sup>

As various Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan were written in imitation of a particular calligraphic style, the Dunhuang Academy and British Library manuscripts would seem to suggest that the calligraphy of the NLS, or the Hui Song style, was a model widely copied in the Hexi Corridor and Turfan. The aesthetics of the main court scribe (*bishou*) Hui Song's style may also have been pleasing to the sensibilities of Juqu Mengxun; it matched the court tastes of the Northern Liang, with vigorous movements and bold, vital brush strokes. It would seem likely, then, that the NLS was the main calligraphic stream in the Northern Liang court.

It is related in the GSZ that Hui Song was thought to have been killed in 446 CE, during the persecution of Buddhism under Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei Dynasty.<sup>64</sup> Having come from Gaochang, he worked in Liangzhou from around 384 CE in the Former Qin Dynasty (351–94 CE), through the Northern Liang (397–439 CE). Hui Song was the preeminent scribe in Liangzhou for almost fifty years, and NLS calligraphy would flourish in Liangzhou and Turfan until the middle of the 5th century.

#### Court scribe Dao Yang and the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra*

Apart from Hui Song, three other court scribes are mentioned in the GSZ, CSZJJ, LDSBJ, and so on (Tab. 12): namely, the *śramaṇa* Dao Yang, who transcribed the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* in 426 CE; *śramaṇa* Dao Tai; and the civil minister court scribe Fan Hai, who transcribed the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*, dated 457 CE, in the 15th year of the Chengping reign. While Dao Yang was a professional court scribe in Dharmakṣema's National Translation Centre when the Northern Liang capital was at Guzang (412–39 CE),<sup>65</sup> Fan Hai was a court scribe during the Gaochang period of the Northern Liang (444–60 CE).

<sup>62</sup> For refs see p. 61 n. 50. (Shi, 1999),  
v. 1 & 2.

<sup>64</sup> GSZ, T2059, 50: 398a3-7.

<sup>65</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 71b03.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, v. 1, p. 272.

Figure 25: Stūpa sponsored by Gao Shanmu (428 CE)



H 44.6 cm × D 15.2 cm. © Gansu Provincial Museum. Image courtesy of Gansu Provincial Museum.

Figure 26: Detail of stūpa sponsored by Gao Shanmu



The calligraphy of Dao Yang and Fan Hai resulted from the transformation of two styles: one was a mixture of standard script, running script and clerical script, to enable faster writing; and the other was more influenced by clerical script, which can be seen in the calligraphy of Fan Hai.

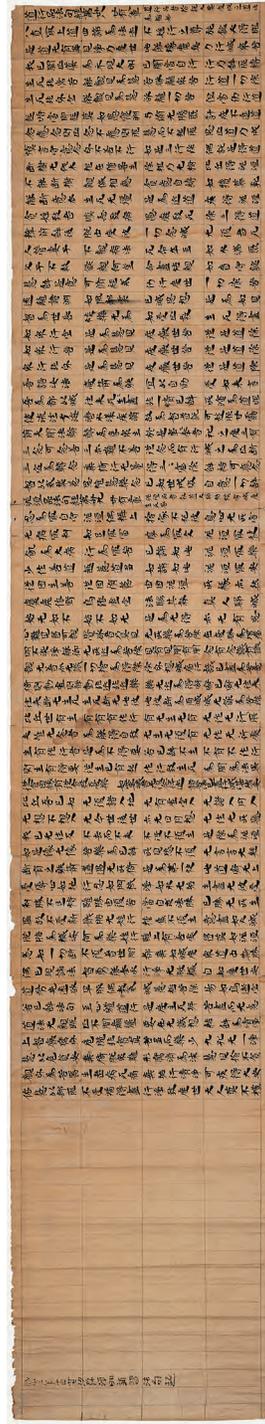
The manuscript fragment of the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* was written in the standard sūtra format, with seventeen words on each line in ink columns, and with the vertical columns neatly arranged. The *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* is one of the most important early-dated Buddhist manuscripts, because the date, the scribe's name, and the name of the donor are all legible. The colophon, written at the end of the seventh fascicle, indicates that the sūtra was translated in the 16th year of Xuanshi (426 CE) in the Northern Liang, and that it was sponsored by the son of Juqu Mengxun, Juqu Xingguo (Fig. 17):

From the 23rd of the 4th month in the summer in the year Dingmao, until the 23rd of the 7th month in the autumn, the son of the great Hexi King, General Juqu Xingguo, and 500 Buddhist laymen invited a central Indian dharma master named Dharmakṣema to translate the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* in the capital city. This text was written down by the Qin śramaṇa Dao Yang. They wished that the merit of this endeavour would help to ensure the state a boundless life and allow them to meet Maitreya in the future.<sup>66</sup>

The Chinese scholar Zhou Zheng suspected that Dao Yang was Chinese, as during the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms ethnic

<sup>66</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 64c25.

Figure 27: Fragment of Ganbo 001, *Dharmapāda* (368, 373 CE)



Dated 373 CE, the third year of Xianan reign in the Former Liang. Ink on yellow hemp paper, scroll. 135 cm × 24.9 cm. © Gansu Provincial Museum. Image courtesy of Gansu Provincial Museum.

Figure 28: Detail of Ganbo 001

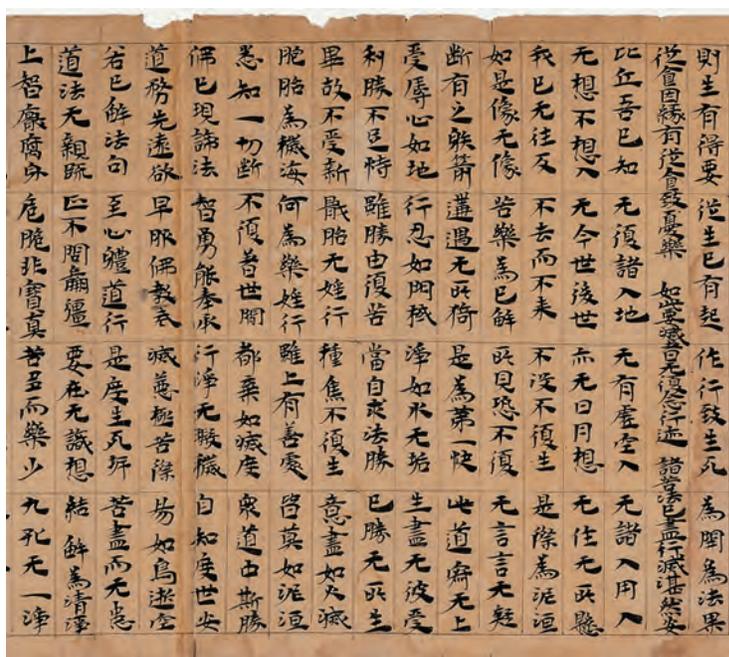


Figure 29: Detail of Ganbo 001



After: (Xu, 1985), p. 4. © Gansu Provincial Museum.

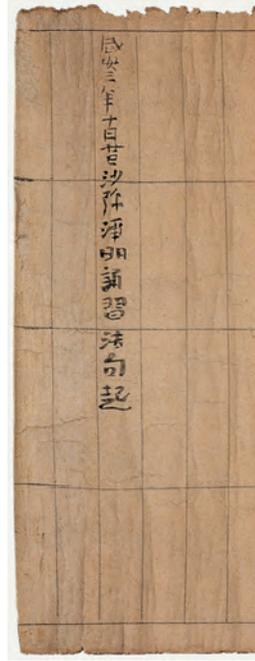
minority groups called Chinese people 'Qin.'<sup>67</sup> The CSZJJ mentions that the *Dīrghāgama*<sup>68</sup> was first recited by Zhu Fonian in the 'Qin' language, and then transcribed by Dao Han. In this case the word 'Qin' probably meant 'Han Chinese.'<sup>69</sup> It is possible that while living in a multicultural area Dao Yang added 'Qin' to his name to stress Han Chinese ethnicity. He may, then, have been a Chinese

<sup>67</sup> (Zhou, 1981).

<sup>69</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 102c9-19.

<sup>68</sup> *Chang a han jing* 長阿含經.

Figure 30: Colophon of Ganbo 001



monk skilled at writing both Chinese and Central Asian characters. His calligraphic style certainly has some features that differ from traditional Chinese writing; typical are the compelling and sharp diagonal leftward brush strokes, which create a sense of dynamic movement (Figs 20 & 21).

Although the squat, round-shaped characters show that Dao Yang's calligraphy had been transformed from standard script in the Zhong You tradition, and mixed with draft running and clerical scripts for speed of writing, its vigorous movement differs from traditional calligraphy in the Zhong You tradition (Fig. 6).<sup>70</sup>

The characteristics of the brushwork show that the horizontal lines were done with an exposed tip, a technique called *loufeng*, or *chufeng*, where the brush tip touches the paper, and, at the beginning of each horizontal line, starts with a pointed attack.

<sup>70</sup> Between October 1980 and July 1981, the Conservation Department of Turfan excavated the Thousand Buddha Cave at Bezklik in Turfan and found more than 1,000 manuscript fragments. The earliest fragment was dated 559 CE. However, the author found that the calligraphy of two fragments —nos 132 & 133 of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*— was the same as Dao Yang's. See: (Turfan Research Academy in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 2007), p. 91.

Figure 31: Bilingual stone stūpa from Minzhou Temple (before 439 CE)



96 cm × 48 cm. © Dunhuang Research Academy.

The ending of each line finishes with a fast retrieval, such as the horizontal stroke (一). The left slanting strokes (丿) are very thin, straightforward, and forceful; done with sharp, pointed-tipped brush strokes, at a fast speed, exhibiting vigorous movement.

The dynamic orientation of Dao Yang's brush strokes reveals a strong Central Asian influence. In contrast, a manuscript with item number Ganbo 001 entitled the *Dharmapāda-sūtra*,<sup>71</sup> dated 368 CE,

<sup>71</sup> *Daoxingpin faju jing* 道行品 to the 28th chapter, called *Daoxing*, of 法句經. *Daoxingpin faju jing* refers the *Dharmapāda Faju jing*, which was

Figure 32: Rubbing of bilingual stone stūpa from Minzhou Temple



After: (Yin, 1999), pl. 72. © Chue Feng Buddhist Art & Culture Foundation.

the 12th year of the Shengping reign in the Former Liang period, was written in the Zhong You tradition, but sharing a degree of the writing style of the Han bamboo slips (Figs 27, 28, 29 & 30). The brush strokes and writing of the *Dharmapāda* show calmness and tranquility.

Dao Yang's writing, however, is dynamic, and seems to have been executed quickly. To achieve speed in his writing, Dao Yang used many simplified radicals or linked lines, which is

compiled by Dharmatrāta, T210, then translated by the Indian monk Vighna *et al.* Various records in the CSZJJ state that the *Dharmapāda Faju jing*, T210, was brought by Vighna to Wuchang, China, in 224 CE, and translated by Zhu Jiangyan and Zhi Qian. Another version

of the *Dharmapāda* is called *Faju piyu jing*, T211, and was translated by Fa Ju and Fa Li in the Western Jin period (ca. 290–306 CE). See: (Muller, 2017), <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=法句經> (accessed: 2017/11/14).

characteristic of draft cursive script. His calligraphy displays extreme speed and abbreviated writing, a transformation of the clerical and standard scripts, brought about by mixing them with draft-cursive and running style. Although many characters were written in a mix of standard script and running style, the whole composition remains very well structured and balanced. The exquisite calligraphy and standard sūtra format of this fragment of the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra* indicates that it was most likely from the imperial collection.

Dao Yang's calligraphic style draws our attention to a Northern Liang bilingual stone stūpa from the Minzhou Temple (Fig. 31). A section of the stūpa was engraved with the *Ekottarāgama*, in both Chinese and Brāhmī (Fig. 32). The Sogdian Brāhmī script and the scripts of other Central Asian languages were written from right to left, and we can see the influence of such scripts in the writing style of Dao Yang. The vivid dynamism of his special curved and wavy brush lines reflects the multiculturalism around Dunhuang and Liangzhou. Dao Yang made significant changes in the writing of certain Chinese characters, such as simplifying the brushstrokes of the square character 口 —*kou*, meaning 'mouth'— writing it as a small circle.

#### III.4.3 Gaochang phase (444–60 CE): Court scribe Fan Hai

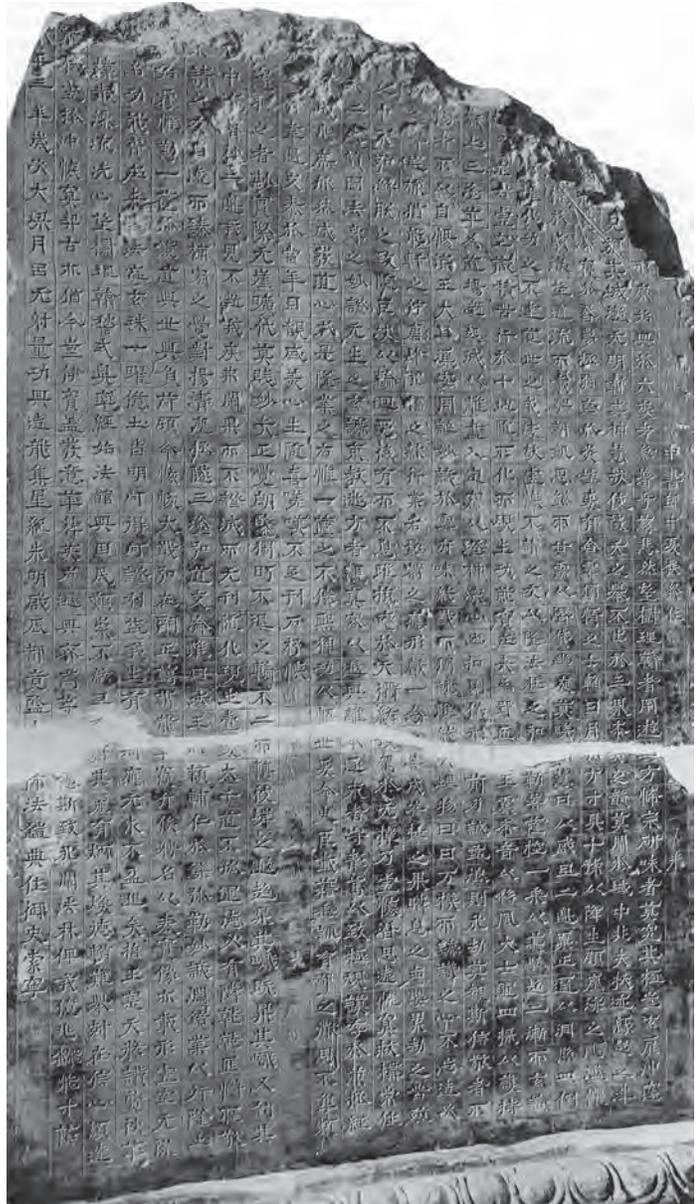
Northern Liang *likai* calligraphy was used widely by both government officials and private scribes; typical examples are the inscriptions on various stone stūpas, the Dunyan F0019 manuscript, and the Juqu Anzhou Stele (Figs 33, 34, 35 & 36). NLS calligraphy continued to be widely practised when the Northern Liang capital had moved from Guzang to Gaochang (444–60 CE).

The Northern Liang Dynasty was defeated by the Northern Wei in 439 CE, and the Northern Liang governors —Juqu Wuhui (d. 444 CE) and Juqu Anzhou (d. 460 CE)— fled to Gaochang. Juqu Anzhou succeeded to the throne in Gaochang and inherited an unstable kingdom, worsened by subsequent natural disasters and famines. Dao Jin, a well known Buddhist master, helped Juqu Anzhou in reestablishing the kingdom around Gaochang.<sup>72</sup> Juqu Anzhou wished to rebuild the empire in the Hexi region, and promoted Buddhism by building temples and sponsoring sūtra. His

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<sup>72</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 102c9-19.

Figure 33: Juqu Anzhou Stele (*Liang wang da Juquanzhou zaosi gongde bei*) (445–9 CE)



135.2 cm × 58.8 cm. After: (Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, 2004), pl. 2. © Reimer.

efforts were brought to an end by another ethnic political group, the Rouran, in 460 CE.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> A nomadic tribe on the Mongolian Plateau, the Rouran was active in the Western Region during the Northern and Southern Dynasties.

Figure 34: Rubbing of Juqu Anzhou Stele



After: (Ren, 2001), p. 151. © National Library, Beijing.

The *Liang wang da Juquanzhou zaosi gongde bei* or Juqu Anzhou Stele —discovered by Grünwedel in 1902<sup>74</sup>— provides evidence that

<sup>74</sup> German archæologist and explorer Albert Grünwedel (1856–1935) found the *Liang wang da Juquanzhou zaosi*

*gongde bei* 涼王大且渠安周造寺功德碑 ‘Stele to Commemorate the Merit of Constructing a Temple by Juqu Anzhou,

Figure 35: Detail of Juqu Anzhou Stele



After: (Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, 2004), pl. 2. © Reimer.

Buddhism flourished in Turfan during the Northern Liang reign of Juqu Anzhou (Figs 33, 34, 35 & 36). The calligraphy of the stele is of particular interest to the author; especially the identity of the scribe, and the relationship between the calligraphy of the stone inscriptions and that of contemporary manuscripts (Figs 37, 38 & 39).<sup>75</sup>

The most representative manuscript written in the NLS is the *Buddhapiṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra* dated 457 CE (Figs 19 & 39). The colophon indicates that the manuscript was transcribed by the official scribe (*shuli*) Fan Hai,<sup>76</sup> and sponsored by King Juqu Anzhou, the tenth son of Juqu Mengxun.<sup>77</sup> This would suggest that

the Great King of the Northern Liang' at the Buddhist temple ruin known as the 'M' site in Turfan. The temple was built between 445 and 449 CE.

<sup>75</sup> (Tsui, 2013, 2015a).

<sup>76</sup> See: *Shodō zenshū*, v. 3, p. 190, where the name is wrongly transcribed as Fan Ji 樊濟.

Figure 36: Detail of Juqu Anzhou Stele



After: (Ren, 2001), p. 174. © National Library, Beijing.

a translation team supported by the government was active in Gaochang during the reign of Juqu Anzhou.

A comparison of the calligraphy of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscript Dunyan F0019 (Figs 20 & 21) with that of the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra* manuscript of Fan Hai shows the shared influence of the clerical script within the idiom of the NLS. And a comparison of the *likai xiejingti* of the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra* with the style of the characters on the Juqu Anzhou Stele shows that they too appear similar (Figs 37 & 38); the calligraphy of the Juqu Anzhou Stele is also typical of the NLS, and also retains features from the clerical script. The calligraphy of the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra* manuscript is even and

<sup>77</sup> The colophon records the official Buddhist manuscript of the use of the government title of Fan Hai, *shuli* 書吏. This is the earliest occurrence in a title *shuli* for a Buddhist scribe.

Figure 37: Comparison of calligraphy on Juqu Anzhou Stele and Fan Hai's *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*

1	2	3	4
445-449 Juqu Anzhou Stele	457 <i>Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīla -nirgraha sūtra</i>	445-449 Juqu Anzhou Stele	457 <i>Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīla -nirgraha sūtra</i>
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

balanced, with characters written in a square-shaped structure, neatly done, within vertical, ruled columns.<sup>78</sup> The upward angles at the beginning and ending of the horizontal strokes are vigorous, features also present in the Juqu Anzhou Stele.

At least five Buddhist manuscripts and stone stelai excavated from Turfan were written by the court scribe Fan Hai. The

<sup>78</sup> These vertical ruled lines are called *wusilan* and were drawn with black, red, or gold ink. Roderick Whitfield drew the author's attention to the use of rulers in the preparation of the paper. Fujieda Akira discovered such a ruler in Japan. See: (Fujieda, 2002), pp. 103–14.

Figure 38: Variant styles of writing on Juqu Anzhou Stele and Fan Hai's *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*

1	2	3	4
445- 449 Juqu Anzhou Stele	457 <i>Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha sūtra</i>	445- 449 Juqu Anzhou Stele	457 <i>Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha sūtra</i>
无為	无為	成就	成就
			
身	身	華	華
			

colophons of four fragments —the *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*, *Buddhāvataṃsakamahāvaiṇya-sūtra*, *Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā-śāstra* and *Lokadharapariṣcchā-sūtra*— state that they were sponsored by Juqu Anzhou during his reign (444–60 CE) (Fig. 39).<sup>79</sup> Calligraphy in the style of Fan Hai can also be seen in some undated manuscripts, that are also close in style to the Juqu Anzhou Stele.<sup>80</sup> This may suggest that the calligraphic style of Fan Hai was used as a model, both by monks and laypeople.

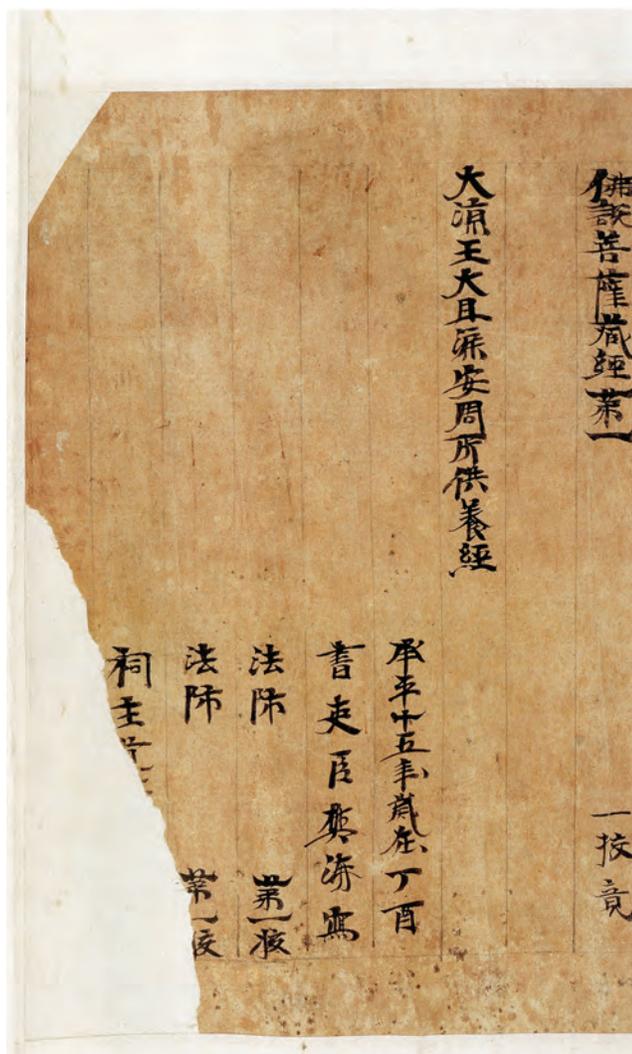
Fan Hai's calligraphy represented the last phase of the NLS in Gaochang. The inscriptions on the Juqu Anzhou Stele record the merit accrued by Juqu Anzhou for sponsoring the construction of a

<sup>79</sup> The four fragments are in the Nakamura Collection in Japan. See: (Isobe, 2005), v. 1, pp. 41–9, 60–1; v. 3, pp. 7, 43. See also: (Tsui, 2010), p. 179, Tab. 3.1: Sūtra sponsored or Calligraphy

by Juqu Anzhou.

<sup>80</sup> For further analysis of the NLS and Fan Hai's writing style, please see: (Tsui, 2015a), pp. 29–58.

Figure 39: Part of colophon of *Buddhapīṭakaduḥśīlanirgraha-sūtra*, stating it was sponsored by Juqu Anzhou



After: (Isobe, 2005) v. 1, p. 47. © Taitō kuritsu shodō hakubutsukan 台東区立書道博物館.

temple in Turfan between 445 and 449 CE.<sup>81</sup> The inscriptions show that Buddhism flourished in Turfan during this time, and that the NLS was in general use. As the NLS was so prevalent during the Northern Liang Dynasty can we propose that it was a 'regional style'?

<sup>81</sup> (Jia, 1995), pp. 35–41.

## CH. IV THE EARLY SCRIBAL WORKSHOP IN LIANGZHOU

### IV.1 INTRODUCTION

THE development of Chinese Buddhism in the early part of the Han Dynasty was established mainly through the translation and composition of scriptures. During this initial stage, Buddhist scriptures would have been transmitted and translated orally.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, more Buddhist missionaries and monks brought texts from Central Asia to China, some of whom formed small teams to translate, copy, and circulate texts. Following the growth of Buddhism during the Sixteen Kingdoms period, there was an increasing demand for sūtra, which attracted more foreign monks and laypeople for the production and distribution of texts.

The discovery of Buddhist manuscripts in Dunhuang and Turfan in the early 20th century provided material with which to examine the formation of early scribal workshops. The inscriptions in these manuscripts suggests that there were well-organised scribal teams in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE).<sup>2</sup> Fujieda Akira has observed that in Dunhuang the development of organised workshops can be traced back to the Northern Wei (386–534 CE).<sup>3</sup>

By the early 5th century Buddhist translation centres had been established in Northern and Southern China. In Central China, in Chang'an and Luoyang, the monk translators Dao An (ca. 312–85 CE) and Kumārajīva (ca. 344–413 CE) were responsible for translating many sūtra; in the Hexi Corridor, in Dunhuang and Liangzhou, Dharmarakṣa (230?–316 CE) and Dharmakṣema (385–433 CE) made significant contributions. Jiankang and Jingzhou were important centres of the Southern Dynasty.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Ren, 1981), v. 1, p. 91. The Indo-Scythians conquered Bactria in the 2nd century BCE and accepted Bactrian culture. Buddhism was popular there at the end of the 1st century BCE. It is probable that scriptures were orally transmitted into Chinese by missionaries during that time. See

also: (Boucher, 1998), pp. 471–506; (Karashima, 2015), pp. 113–62, (Karashima, 2017), pp. 12–13.

<sup>2</sup> (Wang, 1995), pp. 156–7.

<sup>3</sup> (Fujieda, 2005b), p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> (Funayama, 2013), p. 32. See also: (Ji, 2007), p. 147.

We will now consider the formation of the early scribal workshop in Liangzhou, based on discoveries of manuscripts and stone inscriptions from Dunhuang, Turfan, and other regions.

#### IV.2 BUDDHIST STONE STŪPAS

During the 20th century fourteen Buddhist stone stūpas from the Northern Liang Dynasty were excavated in Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Wuwei, and Turfan (Tab. 13 & Fig. 40).<sup>5</sup> All of these stūpas were found in cities that were important, not only as Buddhist centres, but also for government administration. From the Western Jin, Sixteen Kingdoms, and Eastern Jin periods, up until the early Northern Wei, the growth of Buddhism led to an increase in demand for sūtra, as well as for images and stūpas.

These stone stūpas demonstrate the regional distribution of Buddhism during the Northern Liang. Seven of the fourteen stūpas were engraved in NLS calligraphy with a short excerpt from the *Ekottarāgama*.<sup>6</sup> They range in date from the 15th year of Xuanshi (426 CE) to the 2nd year of Taiyuan (436 CE).<sup>7</sup> These stūpas reveal that Buddhism was flourishing,<sup>8</sup> and may hold the earliest extant sūtra engraved on stone.<sup>9</sup>

Among the fourteen stūpas are the Ma Dehui stūpa, the Gao Shanmu stūpa, the Tian Hong stūpa, the Cheng Duaner stūpa, the Wang family stūpa, and the Song Qing stūpa, all of which are inscribed in the NLS (Tab. 13). The Bai Shuangqie stūpa and the Suo Ahou stūpa were written in standard script.<sup>10</sup> These stūpas were inscribed using vertical lined columns, the same format used for writing on paper.

The most noteworthy of these stūpas was discovered at Minzhou Temple, in the ancient Shazhou City, South Western Dunhuang (Figs 31 & 32). This stūpa is not only the largest, but the only one that

<sup>5</sup> (Yin, 1999). See also: (Zhang, 2006). found in the Northern Wei and North-

<sup>6</sup> (Yin, 1999), p. 201. ern Qi Dynasties in Henan, Hebei and Shandong provinces. The Northern

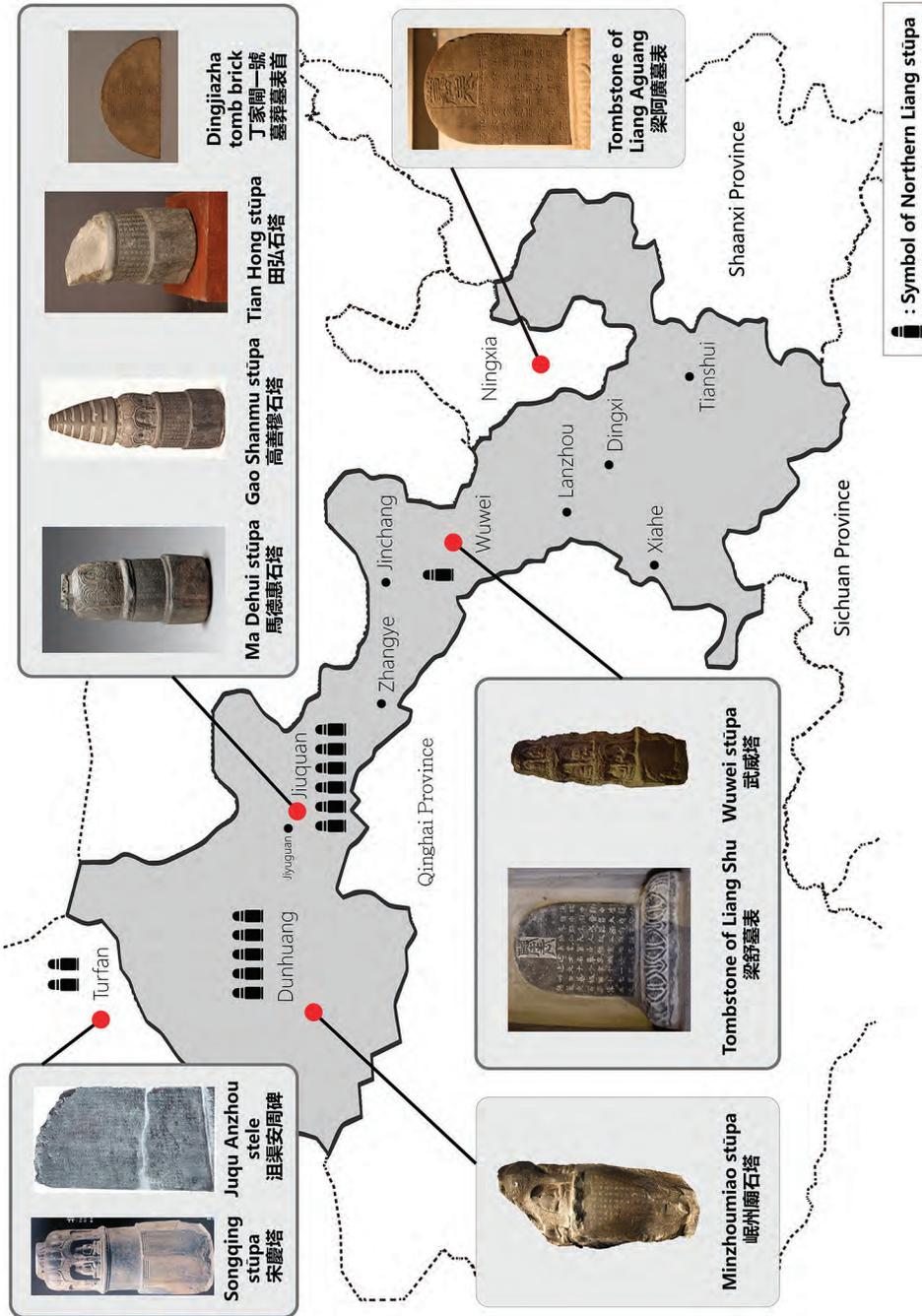
<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* See also: (Zhang, 2006). Liang stone stūpas contain the earliest

<sup>9</sup> The remains of early engraved Buddhist sūtra on stone or rocks can be stone sūtra discovered to date.

<sup>10</sup> (Tsui, 2010), App. 5, p. 426.

Figure 40: Sites of Northern Liang stūpas and related sites of tombstones



was inscribed bilingually, in Chinese and Brāhmī.<sup>11</sup> These fourteen stūpas are on average 40 cm high, but the Minzhou Temple stūpa stands at 96 cm.

Gokhale has identified the Brāhmī inscriptions on the Minzhou Temple stūpa as from the *Pratītyasamutpāda-sūtra*.<sup>12</sup> The other parts of the conical-shaped stūpa are in Chinese: one part inscribed vertically with eleven lines of the *Ekottarāgama*<sup>13</sup>; and the other inscribed horizontally with eleven lines of prayers by donors. Yin Guangming suggests that the Minzhou Temple stūpa was made in the Northern Liang,<sup>14</sup> during the reign of Juqu Mujian (433–9 CE).<sup>15</sup>

Why was the *Ekottarāgama* chosen for a number of these stūpas? One reason may be related to the discussion in the sūtra of the doctrine of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*); another may be that the erection or sponsoring of stūpas is encouraged in the sūtra as a way to accumulate merit.<sup>16</sup> A number of stone stūpas of the Northern Liang were also engraved with prayers by monks or laypeople.<sup>17</sup> It would appear then that during the early 5th century in China, Buddhists were coming to see the erection of stūpas as meritorious.

<sup>11</sup> According to *Gansu tongzhi jinshi zhi* —(Xu & Li, 1984)— the bilingual stone stūpa at Minzhou Temple (No. Z1111) was found after the Dang River flooded during the Yongzheng reign (雍正 1678–1735) in the Qing Dynasty. There were two stone Buddha statues and two stone sculptures of lions, with one heavenly king known as Vaiśramaṇa, excavated together, which were all preserved at Minzhou Temple in Dunhuang. Xiang Da discovered these artifacts at Minzhou Temple in 1943.

<sup>12</sup> *Yuan qi jing* 緣起經. (Gokhale, 1963), p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> T125, 2: 776a18-b2. *Ekottarāgama*, 結禁品 *Jiejīn pīn*, *Upāliṭṭhapāna*.

<sup>14</sup> (Yin, 1999), p. 91.

<sup>15</sup> Also Juqu Maoqian.

<sup>16</sup> The reason for sponsoring a stūpa with inscribed sūtra is clearly stated in this sūtra, wherein the Buddha expounds on the ‘Four Blessed Deeds of Brahmā’ *brahmapunya* 梵福, one of which is the act of establishing and repairing an old stūpa or temple. See: (Palumbo, 2013), p. 288.

<sup>17</sup> (Tsui, 2016), p. 120. The stūpas engraved with prayers are: Ji De 吉德塔; Ma Dehui 馬德惠塔; Gao Shanmu 高善穆塔; Tian Hong 田弘塔; Bai Shuangqie 白雙且塔; Suo Ahou 索阿後塔; Wang family 王氏塔; and Cheng Duaner 程段兒塔.

## IV.3 ZHU FONIAN &amp; THE EKOTTARĀGAMA

Buddhism was popular in the Liangzhou area as early as Fu Jian's reign in the Former Qin Dynasty (350–94 CE) and Zhang Gui's in the Former Liang (363–76 CE). Liangzhou was the easternmost city of the Hexi Corridor. It was a commercial centre for merchants, the first rest stop from central China. For generations, craftsmen and artisans came from the Western Region to settle in Liangzhou.

In order to translate Buddhist texts into Chinese, early Buddhist translators and scribes would have needed to be familiar with several languages. Some would have written Chinese calligraphy and also the calligraphy of Western Region languages. As the Western Region was multicultural, the calligraphic style of the scribes would most likely have combined various influences.

Zhu Fonian, or Buddhasmṛti, was one of the eminent monk translators in Liangzhou to assist Dao An. He translated sūtra in Chang'an between 379 and 385 CE.<sup>18</sup> According to the LDSBJ, Zhu translated thirteen sūtra and commentaries,<sup>19</sup> with one of the most important being the *Ekottarāgama*.<sup>20</sup> This sūtra was translated in Chang'an in 384 CE, on the basis of the recitation by Dharmanandi.<sup>21</sup> The extant version appears to have been translated in 397 CE by Gautama Saṃghadeva.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 99b24-27.

<sup>19</sup> LDSBJ, T2034, 49: 123b4.

<sup>20</sup> For research on the different versions of the *Ekottarāgama*, see: (Legittimo, 2009), pp. 1199–1205.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1199: 'The Chinese EA [*Ekottarāgama*] preserves references to early Buddhist teachings, some of which have not survived in other versions, as well as numerous traces of doctrinal evolution. These seemingly contradictory aspects are not mutually exclusive and most likely indicate that the collection was transmitted orally for a long time, possibly up to the time of its translation into Chinese at the end of the fourth century. A long oral

transmission process could account for the "natural growth" of the collection.

This supposition goes hand in hand with the hypothesis that the extant EA might still be the translation made by Buddhasmṛti (Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, ca. 365) in Chang'an (長安) in 384 A.D. on the basis of the exposition recited by Dharmanandi (曇摩難提), possibly from memory. The EA often bear the imprint of Buddhasmṛti's translation style and terminology.'

<sup>22</sup> Gautama Saṃghadeva came from Kashmir and worked with translation teams in Chang'an in 383–5 CE and in Luoyang (with Fa He) in 391 CE.

## IV.4 A SURVEY OF THE LIANGZHOU SCRIBAL WORKSHOP

The fourteen stone stūpas found in Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Wuwei and Turfan —the earliest Buddhist stone stūpas found to date— provide evidence for studying Buddhist culture of the Northern Liang period (Tab. 13 & Fig. 40). These stūpas reflect the beginning of sponsoring and erecting stūpas in the Hexi Corridor during the early 5th century, and suggest that there was a scribal workshop in Liangzhou at the time. Since they were mainly made in the Northern Liang, we will further investigate the Liangzhou workshop, the scribes on the translation teams who engraved sūtra on stūpas, as well as the relationship between written manuscripts and the engravings.

## IV.4.1 Scribes in Dharmakṣema and Zhu Fonian's translation teams

When Juqu Mengxun established the capital at Guzang in 412 CE, he also established the National Translation Centre in Liangzhou. The main translator at the Centre was Dharmakṣema. At this time, one of the main court scribes was the *śramaṇa* Hui Song,<sup>23</sup> who was also perhaps the most outstanding scribe in the Centre (Tab. 5).<sup>24</sup> It would seem that Hui Song had become a scribe at some point in the Former Qin.<sup>25</sup> He had been a scribe in the teams of both Zhu Fonian and Dharmakṣema from the late 4th to the early 5th centuries (Tab. 5). Is there any evidence, then, to support the possibility that the NLS could have originated in the Liangzhou area, possibly from within the scribal workshop in Liangzhou?

## IV.4.2 Regional distribution of the NLS

A manuscript of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* in the National Library collection in Beijing is dated the '12th year of the Jianchu reign in the Western Liang' (416 CE).<sup>26</sup> The calligraphy on this scroll is in the *likai* style, but the title of each chapter is in the NLS. Using the NLS

<sup>23</sup> CSZJJ, T2059, 50: 336b1-8.

<sup>24</sup> CSZJJ, T2145, 55: 103a25-b2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ekottarāgama*, T125, 2: 549a14-18.

<sup>26</sup> (Zheng, 1994b), v. 1, pp. 22–58.

The *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya Si fen lü* 四分律, T1428, was translated by Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 and Zhu Fonian.

to highlight the title at the beginning and end of each chapter was common in sūtra in the 5th century.<sup>27</sup>

Shi Anchang examined the calligraphy of the Beijing *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* and speculated that the NLS had been in use for a long time, and was popular before the Jianchu era in the Western Liang (405–17 CE).<sup>28</sup> Shi did not investigate the calligraphic origins of the NLS, although he held that it was a ‘regional style,’ as it was often seen in Liangzhou and related areas. To avoid confusion he provided criteria for calligraphy to be considered a ‘regional style’<sup>29</sup>:

1. the style should be based on a number of works;
2. the works<sup>30</sup> should have been created in the same area;
3. the works should have been written by different hands, not only by one scribe;
4. the manuscripts or documents should have a definite date, and, if not, other related materials should unambiguously support their dating; and
5. the documents or manuscripts may have been used for different purposes, but their brush technique, or structure of calligraphy, will have been of the same tradition or school.

Hua Rende argues, however, that the NLS was not a ‘regional style,’ and holds it was only a type of Han clerical script transformed from stone engravings of the Wei–Jin period during the late 4th to early 5th centuries.<sup>31</sup> The origin of the NLS is discussed below—with evidence from archaeological excavations from the late 20th century—to support the assertion that the NLS calligraphy should be considered a ‘regional style.’

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<sup>27</sup> (Zheng, 1994b), v. 1, pp. 22–58; written on paper or silk or engraved (Xu, 1985), p. 29. on stone, and could be used either for

<sup>28</sup> (Shi, 2002b), p. 242. official or secular functions, religious

<sup>29</sup> (Shi, 2002c), p. 252. or non-religious purposes.

<sup>30</sup> The works include calligraphy <sup>31</sup> (Hua, 2004), pp. 65–84.

### NLS Buddhist manuscripts and stone stūpas

A review of the calligraphic style of dated Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan before 500 CE indicates that the characteristic calligraphy was the NLS. The NLS can be seen in the Juqu Anzhou stone stele dated 449 CE, and also in stone stūpas and manuscripts of the same period.<sup>32</sup>

The NLS exhibits both continuities and new creative characteristics from Han and Western Jin calligraphy. Having been created in the Northern Liang, the features of a specific region and time became enmeshed and inseparable. The NLS was distinguished by a singular aesthetic sensibility, which was reflected in the calligraphy of the Sixteen Kingdoms. Shi Anchang was the first to note this:

In view of the calligraphy being the most typical and popular style used in Liangzhou and the west during the late 4th and early 5th centuries, we named it NLS.<sup>33</sup>

The most typical example of the mature phase of NLS calligraphy was the Dunyan F0019 *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscript (Figs 20 & 21). This has been referred to as NLS *likai*,<sup>34</sup> which shifted and transformed the clerical script. Further, the NLS inscriptions of the *Ekottarāgama*<sup>35</sup> on stone stūpas (Figs 43, 44, 45 & 46) demonstrate the regional distribution of Buddhism during the Northern Liang (Fig. 40).

### Non-Buddhist stone tablets from Liangzhou

From the late Eastern Han to the Western Jin, the government—to prevent the spread of luxurious burials— forbade the erection of monumental stone stelai in front of tombs. Monumental stone stele from this period are therefore rare, with most archaeological finds being of smaller-sized tomb stelai, which were buried. Early calligraphy appears on such stelai excavated in Gansu and Ningxia provinces in the 20th century, and dated to the Sixteen Kingdoms and Wei–Jin periods. Some of the inscriptions are in the tradition of the NLS, such as a Sixteen Kingdoms’ tomb brick found in Jiuquan Dingjia Gate No. 1 Tomb, near Dunhuang<sup>36</sup> (Figs 41 & 42).

<sup>32</sup> (Tsui, 2013, 2015a).

pp. 10–11.

<sup>33</sup> (Shi, 2001a), p. 240.

<sup>35</sup> (Yin, 1999), pp. 201–20.

<sup>34</sup> (Shi, 1999), p. 271; (Zheng, 1996),

<sup>36</sup> 酒泉丁家闸一号墓葬表首.

*Figure 41:* Tomb brick found in Jiuquan Dingjia Gate No. 1 Tomb, near Dunhuang (Sixteen Kingdoms period)



H 7.4 cm × W 5.5 × D 4.8 cm. © Gansu Provincial Museum. Image courtesy of Gansu Provincial Museum.

*Figure 42:* Rubbing of tomb brick found in Jiuquan Dingjia Gate No. 1 Tomb



After: (Shi, 1999), p. 271. © Gansu Provincial Museum. Image courtesy of Gansu Provincial Museum.

Two tombstones, from the Former Liang and Former Qin, were also written in the NLS: that of Liang Shu, a governor of Jinchang County (Figs 43 & 44); and that of Liang Aguang, a military general (Figs 45 & 46).

Figure 43: Tombstone of Liang Shu, Former Liang period



Stele: H 37 cm × W 27 cm; Base: W 40 cm × H 10 cm. © Wuwei City Museum. Photograph by Ye Lixin 叶笠新, courtesy of Wuwei City Museum.

*Tombstone of Liang Shu:* The tombstone of Liang Shu<sup>37</sup> was unearthed in 1975 from a tomb at Jinsha community<sup>38</sup> 7.5 km northwest of Wuwei (Figs 43 & 44). It bears the date of the 12th year of the Former Liang (376 CE). Liang Shu was an official governor *taishou* of Jinchang city in the Former Liang (301–76 CE). The rounded top of the epitaph tablet, engraved in relief, bears the word ‘tomb epitaph’ *mubiao*<sup>39</sup> in ‘seal script’ *zhuanshu*, with some clerical script features. The epitaph is inscribed in nine lines, each of which has eight characters, in mixed standard and clerical script style. This calligraphy

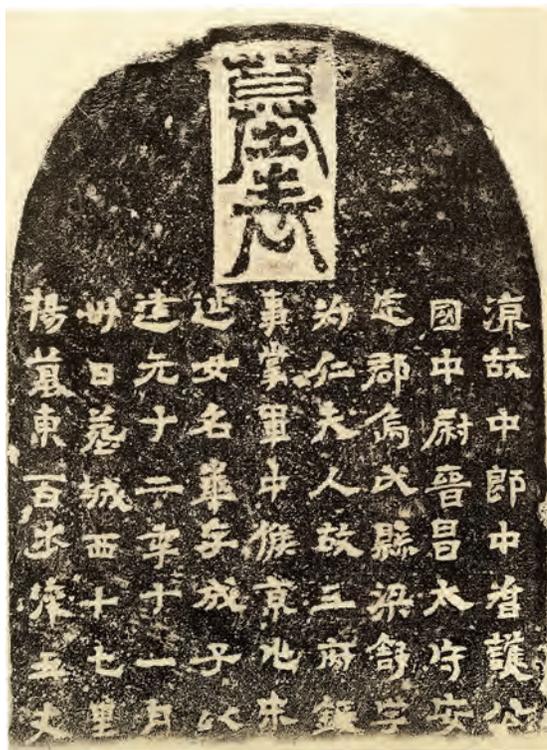
<sup>37</sup> 前凉晋昌太守梁舒墓表.

<sup>39</sup> 墓表.

<sup>38</sup> 金沙公社.

of the epitaph possesses a natural and naïve beauty, which echoes the later NLS.

Figure 44: Rubbing of tombstone of Liang Shu



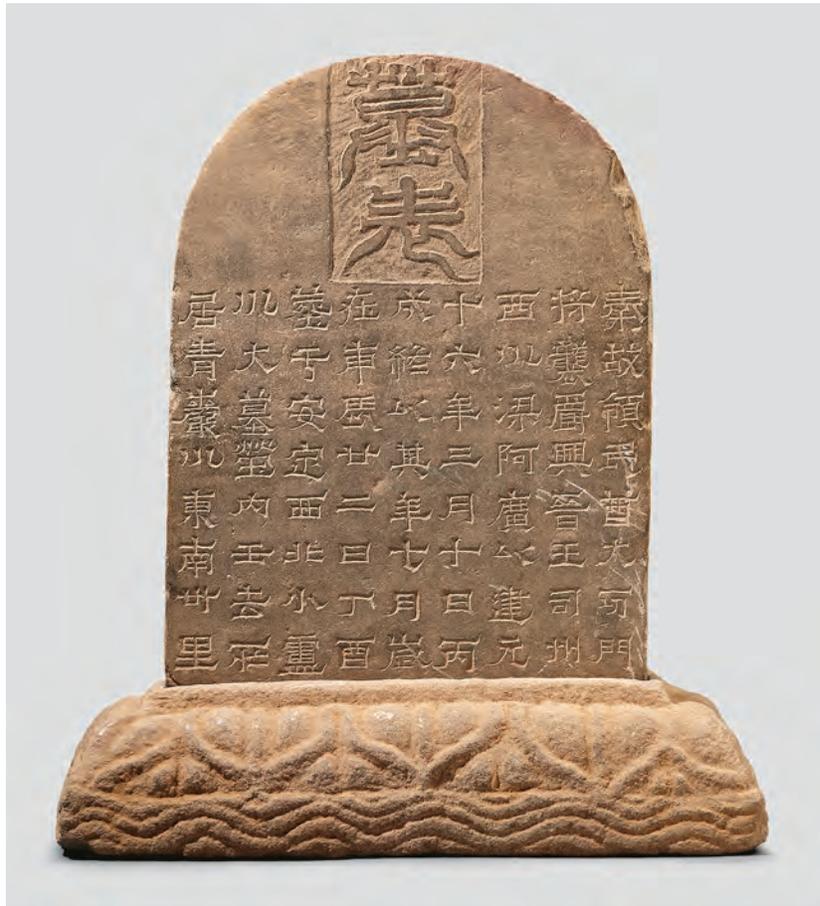
After: (Li, 2010), p. 8. © Wuwei City Museum.

*Tombstone of Liang Aguang:* Another tombstone, of a military general Liang Aguang, is dated the 16th year of the Jianyuan reign in the Former Qin (380 CE). It was found in 2003 in Xinji, Pengyang County in Ningxia Province (Figs 45 & 46). The back of the tombstone was engraved with two lines of twelve characters that read: ‘This tombstone and funeral artefacts were made in Liangzhou’ (Fig. 46).

The calligraphy on the tombstone is clerical script, but with features that make it a prototype of the NLS; the ‘wavy’ brush strokes at the beginning and end of some of the lines reflects the NLS. The two characters *mubiao* inscribed on the rounded top of the tombstone are in seal-clerical script, similar to that of the tombstone of Liang Shu.

The similarity in calligraphy and design between the tombstones of Liang Shu and Liang Aguang suggest that there were workshops, professional scribes, and calligraphers in Liangzhou, and

Figure 45: Tombstone of Liang Aguang (380 CE)



Gray sandstone. H 36 cm × W 27.5 cm. © Guyuan Museum of Ningxia. Image courtesy of Guyuan Museum of Ningxia.

that Liangzhou was important for the production of religious and burial materials. The tombstones also provide evidence that the NLS originated in Liangzhou during the Former Qin, and that it had become popular by the early 5th century. Both tombstones were made to be erected on a lotus base. This in turn would suggest that the tomb owners—a military general, and the governor of Jinchang County—and perhaps also the craftsmen, were Buddhists.

These two tombstones, each from different sites, show the geographical distribution and ‘regional’ character of the NLS. It seems likely that the NLS originated in the Liangzhou area and then spread to Dunhuang, Ningxia, Yunnan, Sichuan, and so on. It is also possible that the tombstones were inscribed in Liangzhou under the

Figure 46: Rear of tombstone of Liang Aguang



© Guyuan Museum of Ningxia. Image courtesy of Guyuan Museum of Ningxia.

influence of Hui Song, possibly by one of his disciples, and that the NLS went on to be imitated by craftsmen in other places.

Due to the increasing popularity of Buddhism, there was a gradual increase in demand for copies of sūtra and for inscriptions of various kinds. There would have been many artists and craftsmen in Liangzhou making Buddhist sculptures, murals, and copying sūtra. Su Bai referred to the early period of Buddhist cave art at Liangzhou—in sculpture, mural painting and architecture—as the ‘Liangzhou Mode.’<sup>40</sup> We might also think of NLS calligraphic art as in the ‘Liangzhou Mode.’

#### IV.5 ANALYSIS OF CALLIGRAPHY

In the government writing of the Han Dynasty there were traditional procedures that determined which scripts were to be used, and for what purposes. The Han ‘clerical script’ *lishu* was normally used in the official, formal documents.<sup>41</sup> The clerical script was also

<sup>40</sup> (Su, 1986), p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> (Ōba, 2001), pp. 258–9.

used for the transcription of Confucian texts from the Han Dynasty onwards. However, a significant change in Buddhist calligraphy was seen in the Northern Liang period.

Shi Pingting and Zheng Ruzhong refer to the NLS as the *likai* Buddhist scriptural style.<sup>42</sup> An assessment of the NLS reveals features that differ from the Han clerical style, or standard script. The structure of the NLS is flat, square, and angular, with some of the long horizontals still retaining the clerical style. And although the writing was executed in a fluent and vigorous manner, the composition of the spatial arrangement remains balanced. Still, when the brush strokes of the NLS are observed, the small but powerful characters reveal a dynamic energy and force. The long horizontal strokes begin with a light and pointed brush, and end with a rounded tip and strong pause. The falling leftward and rightward strokes are long and curved, sometimes raised upward to the left. NLS calligraphy also skilfully mixes the clerical style with running script. This innovation enhanced the ability to write quickly, a feature that may have been influenced by the increasing demand for *sūtra*.

We can see that some undated manuscripts of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, although written by different scribes, reveal the unique Northern Liang calligraphic style.<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, there remain three Buddhist stone stūpas with inscriptions and exact dates that can be used for dating these manuscripts: the Northern Liang stone stūpa sponsored by Tian Hong (429 CE); the stūpa sponsored by Ma Dehui<sup>44</sup> (426 CE); and the stūpa sponsored by Gao Shanmu (428 CE) (Tab. 13).

The calligraphy of these stūpas and manuscripts is characterised by a liveliness and fluency of line. The difference between the calligraphy on paper, and that on the stone, is due to the strength required to inscribe the stone. The horizontal strokes in the stone begin with sharp, knife-shaped incisions, which give the engraved inscriptions a more rough, steady, and powerful appearance.

<sup>42</sup> (Shi, 1999), p. 271; (Zheng, 1996), pp. 10–11. survey.

<sup>43</sup> Due to the numerous fragments of the manuscripts of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the author leaves it for another project to make a comprehensive

<sup>44</sup> The Ma Dehui stūpa was engraved with a scribe's name, Linghu Sa 令狐颯. The Linghu family was of an ethnic minority active in the Dunhuang region during the Sixteen Kingdoms period.

A comparison of the calligraphy of the undated Dunyan F0019 and S737 manuscripts of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* with that of the Ma Dehui and Tian Hong stone stūpas confirms that they are similar in style, with only minor variations (Figs 47 & 48). The shared NLS calligraphy is a transformation of the Han clerical script, a combination of standard and clerical script that could be applied equally to writing on paper, as to engraving on stone. These stūpas provide evidence for dating these two NLS manuscripts; it would seem likely that the manuscripts and stūpas were produced at about the same time. The scribes may have been trained by the same teacher or teachers, possibly through the National Translation Centre of the Northern Liang.

Fragments of Northern Liang *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts are held in various collections — Dunhuang City Museum: nos Dunbo 001, Dunbo 002, Dunbo 078; Dunhuang Academy: nos Dunyan F0017, F0019, F0029; British Library: S116, S737; German Turfanschung Digitales Turfan Archive: Ch117, Ch1300, Ch2117, Ch2329. The calligraphic style of these manuscripts shows at least ten different calligraphic typologies —by different scribes— employing the typical NLS.<sup>45</sup> Many similar features are apparent in the various types of calligraphy. This indicates that they were written by different hands trained in the same writing style. It also suggests that in the Northern Liang large-scale translation of Buddhist texts was undertaken with imperial patronage. It is clear that NLS calligraphy was popular in the Liangzhou area during the Former Qin, and matured during the Northern Liang period. It was then transmitted to the Turfan area during the Gaochang period of the Northern Liang Dynasty.

#### IV.6 CONCLUSION

Before the invention of printing, manuscripts, such as Buddhist texts, depended on scribes, who copied them by hand. Despite their importance, these scribes have been largely overlooked by historians. When Buddhism was spreading to China, monks, translators, scribes, and laypeople joined translation teams to translate, transcribe, and copy Buddhist texts. This period is referred to as the ‘pure hand-written manuscripts phase.’<sup>46</sup> The publication of

<sup>45</sup> (Tsui, 2016), pp. 112–13.

<sup>46</sup> (Fang, 2012), p. 32.

Figure 47: Comparison of calligraphy of two *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts and inscriptions of two stone stūpa – A

	F 0019 <i>Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra</i>	S737 <i>Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra</i> sponsored by Fa Wei	426 CE Buddhist stone stūpa, sponsored by Ma Dehui	428 CE Buddhist stone stūpa, sponsored by Tian Hong
大				
在				
有				
佛				
為				
心				
受				
无				
死				

sūtra developed from a small group into a large-scale project. This formed the basis for the later publication of the Tripiṭaka. Small scale early Buddhist publishers were critical to the initial dissemination of Buddhism and Buddhist culture.

The government's official writing system was standardised during the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE) and subsequent dynasties paid close attention to their own systems. Official scripts were used not

Figure 48: Comparison of calligraphy of two *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* manuscripts and inscriptions of two stone stūpa – B

	F 0019 <i>Mahāparinirvāṇa</i> <i>sūtra</i>	S737 <i>Mahāparinirvāṇa</i> <i>sūtra</i> sponsored by Fa Wei	426 CE Buddhist stone stūpa, sponsored by Ma Dehui	428 CE Buddhist stone stūpa, sponsored by Tian Hong
惱				
比丘				
世尊				
父母				
如來				
成就				

only by the government, but also in sacred writings such as Confucian classics and Buddhist sūtra. Standard script in the Zhong You tradition *zhangchengshu* was used in government documents of the Western Jin Dynasty. This script was also referred to as *Jinshu zhengxie* or *zhengshu Jinyan*,<sup>47</sup> and at this time it was also being used in Buddhist texts, for example in the earliest extant Chinese Buddhist manuscript the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* (296 CE) (Figs 1, 2, 7 & 8).

<sup>47</sup> (Wang, 2006), p. 1.

Although scholars have generally agreed that the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* is in *Jinshu zhengxie* in the Zhong You tradition, this should be seen only as the recognition of Zhong You's highest level of achievement in the standard script. The standard script was present in secular writing on the Liu Yuantai land purchase tomb brick dated 176 CE (Figs 9 & 10), well before Zhong You.

The mature phase of standard script occurred between the later Eastern Han and the Three Kingdoms periods. After examining the calligraphic styles of Buddhist manuscripts before 500 CE, and the styles used by early scribes, we may conclude that the standard script was the main script used in *sūtra* before the Northern Liang period. In Ch. II we discussed some of the most important scribes in Dharmarakṣa's translation team, especially Zhu Fashou and Nie Chengyuan. From the 4th century onwards, perhaps influenced by Wang Xizhi, scribes increasingly used the running script mixed with standard or clerical script. The transformation of, or transition from, standard script reached its highest visual artistic form during the Northern Liang period.

Our review of the CSZJJ suggests that an increasing number of Central Asian Buddhist scribes joined Dharmarakṣa's translation team from the Western Jin period onwards. After the time of Zhu Fashou, in the late 3rd to early 5th centuries, there was an influx of Central Asian and Sogdian scribes. As a result, a unique calligraphic style, the Northern Liang Style (NLS) was created in the Northern Liang period, influenced by the style of Central Asian scriptural writing. Some manuscripts of the Sixteen Kingdoms period also appear to have been written by scribes who specialised in bilingual or multilingual scripts.

As Buddhism had been popular in the Liangzhou area since the Former Qin and Former Liang in the 4th century, many monks and laypeople came from the Western Region and settled in Dunhuang, Liangzhou, and Chang'an. These places became economic and religious centres to people of different cultures. Our survey shows that many manuscripts of the Sixteen Kingdoms period excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan would suggest that foreign monks and professional scribes practiced Chinese calligraphy. Their style of calligraphy possessed features such as wavy and dancing lines, characteristic of the NLS but not of writing in the Zhong You tradition. Scriptural calligraphy in the Zhong You tradition underwent a substantial change between the late 4th and early 5th centuries.

The appearance of the NLS, then, was influenced by the growth of Buddhism in and around Liangzhou, and by the presence of Buddhist monastic scribes from Central Asia. The Northern Liang king Juqu Mengxun, and the eminent monk Dharmakṣema, also proved to be major figures in the promotion of Buddhism in the Hexi Corridor. Archæological finds from Turfan, Dunhuang, Jiayuguan, Jiuquan, Zhangye, Wuwei and Ningxia indicate the regional distribution of Buddhist and non-Buddhist use of the NLS during the Sixteen Kingdom period. The incorporation of a ‘temporal style,’ a regional style, and the strongly Western Region-influenced ‘personal style,’ into the ‘Liangzhou Mode’ of calligraphy—the NLS—was an important developmental dynamic, and demonstrates a new creative and æsthetic expression by calligraphic artists (Fig. 49).

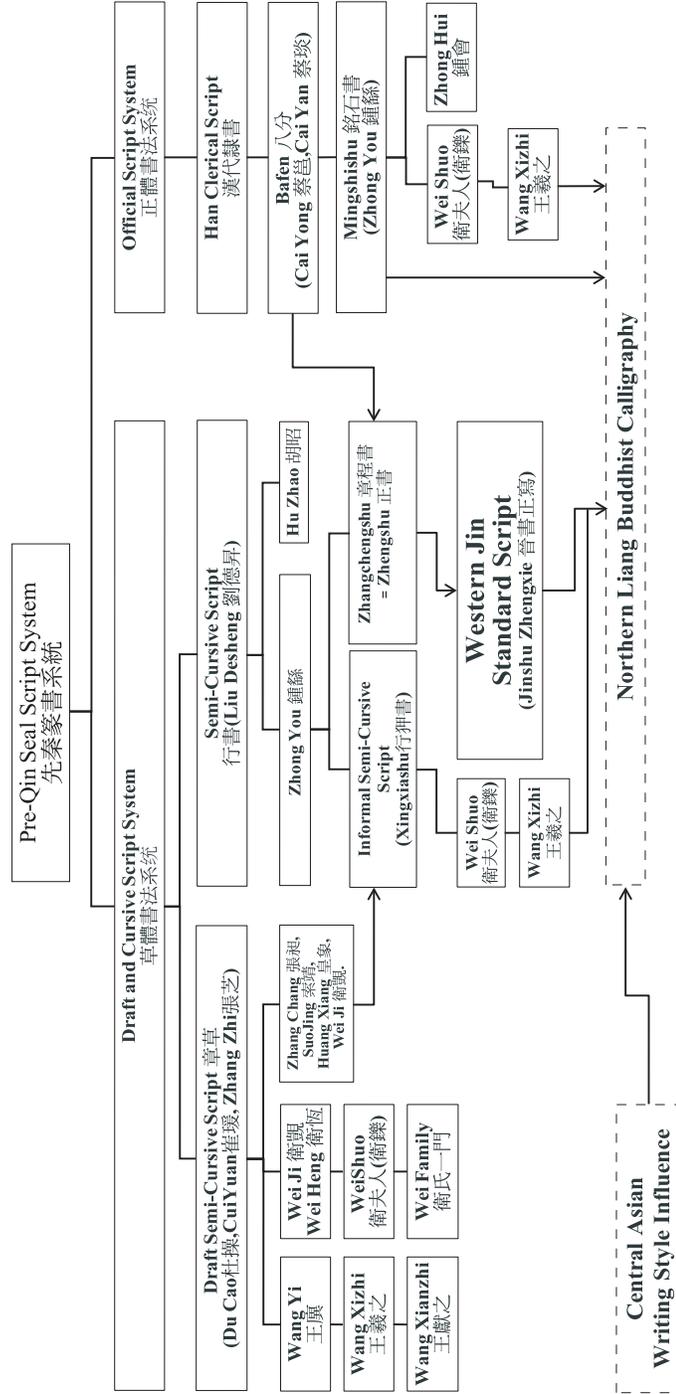
We conclude, then, that NLS calligraphy originated in the Liangzhou area, and was then disseminated to other areas, such as Gansu and Ningxia provinces. The NLS was widely imitated and learnt by craftsmen in various workshops of these regions. Due to the increasing popularity of Buddhism, there was a gradual increase in demand for copies of sūtra and for various types of inscription. As demonstrated by Su Bai, the early period of Buddhist caves in Liangzhou exhibited art in a ‘Liangzhou Mode,’ with influence from Xinjiang.<sup>48</sup> It is possible that many of those who worked in Liangzhou producing Buddhist sculptures and murals, also produced copies of sūtra. At this time, there were also Buddhist monk scribes who specialised in writing bilingual or multi-language scripts. The calligraphic art of Buddhist manuscripts and stone inscriptions of this period—the NLS—could have been influenced by the writing style of Xinjiang and Central Asia.

Fujieda Akira observed that the early development of a well-organised scribal workshop could be traced back to the Northern Wei Dynasty in Dunhuang.<sup>49</sup> In the early 20th century, the discovery of Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts provided us with clues with which to examine the possibility of an earlier Buddhist scribal workshop in Liangzhou. Textual sources, and stone stūpas with engraved inscriptions and sūtra from the Northern Liang period, suggest that Buddhist scribal culture had entered a new stage; the turning point for this probably occurred in the late 4th century after the *Ekottarāgama* was translated into Chinese.

<sup>48</sup> (Su, 1986), p. 443.

<sup>49</sup> (Fujieda, 2005b), p. 115.

Figure 49: Evolution and formation of NLS calligraphy in Northern Liang period



北涼佛教寫經書法系統源流圖

Traditional scribal education for members of Buddhist translation teams was passed down from the Former Qin to the Northern Liang periods, marking a milestone in Buddhist publications and cultural transmission. Furthermore, the examination of writing on dated stone inscriptions and manuscripts in the Sixteen Kingdoms period shows that state sponsorship for translation bureau, or organised workshops for translating Buddhist texts, as well as for a systematic literary or secretarial system, had a far-reaching impact on Buddhist scribal culture and the development of the Tripiṭaka in the Northern Wei and after.

Our assessment of the calligraphy during the late Han to the Northern Liang period reveals a definite evolutionary pattern and process, a step-by-step transformation leading to the eventual development of standard script. Shi Pingting summarises the significance of the evolution of standard script:

This script, due to the beauty of its shape and the way it demonstrates how brush pressure was applied and the rhythm of the strokes, was very well received by the general public. It was precisely because the folklore and religious elements of this Buddhist scriptural calligraphy were so welcomed by people of the time that the writing of Chinese characters gradually underwent the process of transformation into the standard script.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> (Shi, 1999), p. 272. The author is grateful to Dorothy Ho, who helped in the translation of this passage.



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