

When Indian “Victorious Crown Ornament” Encounters China: A Study on the Ritual Texts, Imagery, and the History of Buddhist Teachings Related to the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala during the Song-Yuan Period (960–1368)

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ABSTRACT

In the tantric Buddhist pantheon, “Victorious Crown Ornament” (Skt. Uṣṇīṣavijayā; Tib. Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma) represents the personified image of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī. The veneration of Uṣṇīṣavijayā began between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, paralleling the Song and Western Xia dynasties in China. The ritual texts from the Song to the Yuan dynasties (960–1368) recording the image of Uṣṇīṣavijayā include translations by various Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan translators, such as Candragomin (Tib. Btsun pa zla ba, active in the seventh century), Mitrayogin (Tib. Mi tra dzo gi, active in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries), Dharmadeva (Fa Tian 法天, ?–1001), Ba ri lo tsā ba (1040–1112), Jāyānanda (active in the twelfth century), and Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1242–1346). Based on the descriptions in these Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan tantric texts, this study compares key examples of Uṣṇīṣavijayā imagery from excavations and preserved art across the Hexi Corridor, Tibet, the Himalayas, and Hangzhou, examining the connections between the maṇḍala-making rituals described in these texts and the existing images in order to answer three key questions: Which Buddhist teachings were prevalent during the Western Xia period? According to which ritual texts were the Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍalas in Yulin Cave 3 and Feilai Feng possibly created? And what are the historical references for dating Yulin Cave 3?

Keywords: Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala, tantric Buddhist art and text, history of Buddhist teachings, Yulin Cave 3, Feilai Feng

PART I. INTRODUCTION

In the tantric Buddhist pantheon, “Victorious Crown Ornament” or Uṣṇīṣavijayā (Tib. *Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma*) embodies the personified manifestation of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī,¹ classified under the *Kriyā tantra* (Tib. *bya ba'i rgyud*) and as one of the five *buddha-uṣṇīṣas* associated with the Tathāgata family. She is also regarded as a manifestation emanating from the radiant uṣṇīṣa of Buddha Vairocana. Uṣṇīṣavijayā is closely associated with the construction of the *dharmakāya* Stūpa of Victory (Tib. *rnam rgyal mchod rten*), erected in the city of Vaiśālī after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*.² This stūpa represents the extension of the Buddha's life and the culmination of his virtuous deeds. Accordingly, her iconography often portrays her enshrined within the womb chamber (Skt. *garbha*) of a stūpa, holding a *viśva-vajra*, symbolizing the fulfillment of Buddha Vairocana's enlightened activities.

Long before the emergence of the personified female figure of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, the veneration of her stūpa and dhāraṇī was already well-practiced. By the Northern Song and Western Xia period (960–1127), the personified deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā had begun to gain reverence among both Chinese and Tibetan devotees. Scholars have conducted extensive research on the extant Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī and maṇḍalas. Notably, Lewis Doney identified a connection between the Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī and the maṇḍala of Vairocana with the eight bodhisattvas from the mid-Tang period (766–835) through his analysis of manuscript IOL Tib J466/3, discovered in the Library Cave (Mogao Cave 17) at Dunhuang.³ Art historian Rob Linrothe noted that the veneration of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala and the Stūpa of Victory during the Western Xia Empire (1038–1227) originated in the reign of Emperor Renzong (r. 1139–1193) and continued until the dynasty's decline.⁴ Carmen Meinert

1. This complete dhāraṇī is preserved in many Chinese and Tibetan tantric texts. For instance, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma'i gzungs zhes bya ba'i rtog pa* (The ritual of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī of all tathāgatas). See *Bka' 'gyur* (Sde dge), no. 594, vol. 90, p. 496.

2. Devāsantik 天息災 (Fa Xian 法賢, ?–1000), *Fo shuo ba da lingta minghao jing* (佛說八大靈塔名號經, *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaityastotra*), in *SAT Daizōkyō*, T. 32, no. 1685, 0773a23.

3. Lewis Doney, “Tibetan Ritual Texts and the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī on the First Panel of IOL TIB J 466,” *BuddhistRoad Paper* 2.7 (2023).

4. Rob Linrothe, “Xia Renzong and the Patronage of Tangut Buddhist Art: The Stūpa and Ushnīshavijayā Cult,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, no. 28 (1998):

shared a similar perspective.⁵ XIONG Wenbin 熊文彬 observed that the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala at Feilai Feng (Peak Flown from Afar) in Hangzhou, dating to the Yuan dynasty, was also created in accordance with Sakya (Tib. Sa skya pa) rituals.⁶

The most divergent opinions concern the dating of Yulin Cave 3. JIA Weiwei 賈維維, taking the Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala from Yulin Cave 3 as an example, argued that the transmission of the Sakya school's renowned Ba ri lo tsā ba (translator) was highly influential during the Western Xia dynasty. Linrothe also suggested that it was first constructed during the late Western Xia dynasty,⁷ a view supported by Max Deeg.⁸ However, LIU Yongzeng 劉永增 and YANG Fuxue 楊富學 considered it to be a Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) cave, citing the coexistence of Mongol and Tangut donor paintings in the corridor.⁹

The growing debate among scholars stems from the fact that both the archaeological typology and stylistic research methods commonly used in art historical studies are not entirely applicable to this case. Buddhist iconographies from the Mongol Yuan period generally adhere to their prototypes in the Nepalese style from the Western Xia Empire, with the dates being relatively close. This paper seeks to revisit the Buddhist context by examining a range of tantric texts relating to

91–121.

5. Carmen Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I: Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Brill, 2020), 244–271.

6. XIONG Wenbin 熊文彬, “An Examination of the Nine-Deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala Sculpture at the 55th Niche of Feilai Feng in Hangzhou” 杭州飛來峰第55龕頂髻尊勝佛母九尊壇城造像考, in *Tibetan Buddhist Art in Jiangnan: A Study of the Stone Sculptures at Feilai Feng in Hangzhou* 江南藏傳佛教藝術：杭州飛來峰石刻造像研究, ed. XIE Jisheng 謝繼勝 et al. (China Tibetology Publishing House, 2014), 28–30.

7. Rob Linrothe, “Xia Renzong,” 91–121.

8. Max Deeg, “Looking from the Periphery: Thoughts on Yulin Cave 3,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I: Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Brill, 2020), 230–243.

9. LIU Yongzeng 劉永增, “On the Date of Cave 3 of the Yulin Grottoes at Guazhou” 瓜州榆林窟第3窟的年代問題, *Art and Design Research* 藝術設計研究, no. 4 (2014): 17–23; YANG Fuxue 楊富學 and LIU Jing 劉璟, “Revisiting the Issue of Yulin Cave 3 as a Yuan Dynasty Royal Cave, Not a Western Xia Royal Cave” 再論榆林窟第3窟為元代皇家窟而非西夏皇家窟, *Image Historical Studies* 形象史學 22 (Summer 2022): 261–277.

Uṣṇīṣavijayā sādhanas written or translated between the Northern Song and Yuan dynasties, comparing them with the corresponding ritual images, namely *maṇḍalas*, as “dual evidence.” This approach aims to answer three key questions: Which Buddhist teachings were prevalent during the Western Xia period? According to which ritual texts were the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍalas* in Yulin Cave 3 and Feilai Feng created? And what are the historical references for dating Yulin Cave 3?

PART II. TANTRIC TEXTS AND THEIR AUTHORS

Although there are more than two hundred tantric texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese that describe the practices of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, most focus on chanting the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī*. However, the author identified seven *sādhana* *tantras* in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit, which were either translated or composed between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. These texts, corresponding to the Northern Song, Western Xia, and Mongol Yuan dynasties, detail the process of creating an Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, among other practices.

These *sādhana* *tantras* include a Chinese translation from Sanskrit, titled *Fo shuo yiqie rulai wusenisha zuisheng zongchi jing* (佛說一切如來烏瑟膩沙最勝總持經, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī*, SAT Daizōkyō, T. 19, no. 978), attributed to Dharmadeva (Fa Tian 法天, ?–1001). There are also five Tibetan translations. Among them is *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba shes bya ba'i gzhugs rtog pa dang bcas pa* (Ritual of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī* of all tathāgatas), attributed to Chos kyi sde (?–?) and Ba ri lo tsā ba (1040–1112) from *Chos kyi grags pa* (A hundred *sādhana*s, *Bka' 'gyur*, Sde dge, no. 594). Another is *Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma lha dgu'i sgrub thabs* (*Sādhana* for the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* of the nine deities) from the *Mi tra brgya rtsa* (A hundred *sādhana*s from *Mitra*), attributed to *Mitrayogin* (Tib. *Mi tra dzo gi*, active in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries). Two similar ritual manuals, *'Phags ma gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma'i sgrub thabs* (Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*; *Bstan 'gyur*, Pe cing, no. 4423) and *Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma'i sgrub thabs* (*Śrī-uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala*; *Bstan 'gyur*, Pe cing, no. 4424), are from *Sgrub thabs rgya mtsho* (Skt. *Sādhanaśāgara*, Sea of *sādhana*s), attributed to Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1242–1346). Additionally, there is *Bcom ldan 'das ma gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma la bstod pa* (Praise of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, the Blessed Crown of the Tathāgata; in *Bstan 'gyur*, Sde dge, no. 3115), attributed to Candragomin (Tib. *Btsun pa zla ba*, active in the seventh century). Finally, a Sanskrit ritual text,

Nama-uṣṇīṣavijayāyai,¹⁰ is included from the renowned *Sādhnamālā*, which was compiled and edited around the mid-twelfth century by various authors.

The aforementioned tantras highlight the shared characteristics of Uṣṇīṣavijayā’s figure in tantric practice: a white body, three faces, and eight arms. The three faces are depicted as a wrathful left face with fangs, a youthful central face, and a benevolent right face. Most tantras describe her as dwelling within the womb of a white *stūpa*. However, each tantra also presents distinct features. The configurations of attendants in Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍalas* vary across these tantras, ranging from fourteen-deity, nine-deity, and seven-deity arrangements to a single-deity of Uṣṇīṣavijayā herself.

1. The Fourteen-Deity Maṇḍala

(1) From Dharmadeva’s *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī*

The *maṇḍala*, as described by Buddha Amitāyus, features Uṣṇīṣavijayā with three faces and eight arms, dwelling at the center of a white *stūpa*, adorned with a crown bearing a *stūpa*. Surrounding her are two attendant bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, along with the four dharma protectors (Acalanātha, Ṭakkirāja, Nīladaṇḍa, and Mahābalā), the Four Heavenly Kings, two flying celestials, and Śakra. Additionally, the *maṇḍala* text specifies the placement of four burners around it to symbolize the four offering bodhisattvas, accompanied by offerings of incense and flowers (於爐四邊安四盞酥燈，即以香花四面供養). In this tantra, Śakra is depicted holding a bow (以手執弓). A secret syllable of Uṣṇīṣavijayā is also mentioned. Her *dhāraṇī* should be enshrined within the *stūpa*, and six *bījākṣaras* (seed-syllables) should be visualized by the yogin during the ritual, placed at her throat, heart, forehead, navel, and two feet.¹¹

(2) From *Chos kyi sde* and *Ba ri lo tsā ba’s The Ritual of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī of All Tathāgatas*

The tantra is written in Tibetan and closely resembles the previous one translated by Dharmadeva, suggesting that both were translated from

10. *Nama-uṣṇīṣavijayāyai*, in Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Sādhnamālā*, vol. II (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1968).

11. T. 19, no. 978, 0408b01–03, b06–09, c12–19, 0409a09–27, b15–16.

a very similar Sanskrit source text. The tantra describes Uṣṇīṣavijayā at the center, surrounded by two attendant bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi), the four Dharma protectors (Acalanātha, Ṭakkirāja, Nīladaṇḍa, and Mahābalā), the four directional heavens, two flying celestials, and Śakra holding an umbrella (Tib. *gdugs*).¹² The main differences compared to Dharmadeva's translation are Śakra's held object and the placement of the seven seed-syllables: on the top of the head (Tib. *mgo bo*), throat (Tib. *mgrin pa*), heart (Tib. *snying ga*), forehead (Tib. *dpral ba*), navel (Tib. *lte ba*), and two feet (Tib. *rkang pa gnyis*).¹³

Dharmadeva's *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* is the only tantra among the nineteen Chinese-translated *Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇīs* preserved in the SAT *Daizōkyō* that records a complete *Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala* and her *dhāraṇī*. Dharmadeva was a tenth-century Indian monk from the renowned Nālandā Monastery. Later, he traveled to China, where he served as an imperial Buddhist translator for the Northern Song (960–1127) court and was conferred the title *chuan jiao da shi* (傳教大師, Great Missionary Master) in 982.¹⁴ His monastic life at Nālandā predated that of Nāropā (?–1040), the guardian of Nālandā's northern gate and disciple of Tilopa (988–1069 CE), the founder of the Indian Kagyü (Tib. Bka' brgyud) school. It is highly likely that Dharmadeva's Sanskrit source text originated from Nālandā Monastery. However, it remains challenging for scholars to attribute the esoteric content of his translations to any specific Buddhist tradition.

According to the attainment practice of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* image introduced by Dharmadeva, there was a strong emphasis on the connection between Amitāyus and *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*, underscoring the role of venerating *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* in attaining longevity.¹⁵ However, despite the availability of detailed Chinese-translated esoteric texts on deity attainment practices by the early Northern Song period, detailed depictions

12. See *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba shes bya ba'i gzhuḡs rtog pa dang bcas pa, Bka' 'gyur* (Sde dge) (D594), rgyud 'bum, pha 235a1–3, 235b5–236a4 (vol. 90).

13. Ibid., D594.

14. "In the sixth month of the seventh year [of Emperor Song Taizu], the title of 'Great Missionary Master' was conferred upon Dharmadeva 宋太祖]七年六月, 賜法天傳教大師." In Zhi Pan 志磐 (active in the thirteenth century), *Fozu tong ji* (佛祖統紀, Chronicle of the Buddha Patriarchs), T. 49, no. 2035, 0398a27.

15. T. 19, no. 978, 0408b01–03, b06–09, c12–19, 0409a09–27, b15–16.

of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā figure remained rare in the Song, the State of Dali (937–1253), and Liao (907–1125) regions. The primary mode of practice continued to center on chanting her *dhāraṇī*. It was only within the Himalayas and Western Xia territory that *maṇḍalas* specifically used for *Kriyā tantra* practices began to emerge.

Another prominent practice of the fourteen-deity *maṇḍala* of Uṣṇīṣavijayā originated from the teachings of the second Sakya venerable supreme master, Ba ri lo tsā ba, as outlined in one of the *sādhana*s from his *Chos kyi grags pa* (A hundred *sādhana*s).¹⁶ These practices were considered Ba ri lo tsā ba’s personal *sādhana*s. Chinese scholar Du Xuchu 杜旭初 has traced the Sakyapa’s Uṣṇīṣavijayā practice lineage from Rdo rje ’chang (Vajradhara), through ’Phags pa ’jam dpal mtshan brjod (Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī), to the Indian master Jetari (950–1000), and then to Rdo rje gdan pa (active in the tenth century) and Rdo rje gdan pa chung pa (active in the late tenth century), ultimately reaching Ba ri lo tsā ba and the fifth Sakya patriarch, ’Phags pa (1235–1280).¹⁷ Thus, Ba ri lo tsā ba himself was one key link throughout this teaching, inheriting the practice from Rdo rje gdan pa chung pa and his guru, Rdo rje gdan pa, who was also a monk at Nālandā Monastery.¹⁸

This suggests that both Dharmadeva and Ba ri lo tsā ba’s source Sanskrit texts may have originated from Nālandā’s teachings. However, as the author observes, there was a gap of approximately 120 years between Ba ri lo tsā ba and ’Phags pa, which will be further examined in the following part.

16. Bsod nams rtse mo (1142–1182), “Bla ma ba ri lo tsā ba rin chen grags kyi rnam thar bzhugs so” (Biography of Ba ri lo tsā ba), in Bsod nams tshe ’phel, ed., *Sa skya’i rje btsun gong ma rnam lnga’i gsung ma phyi gsar rnyed* (Attainment of the five venerable supreme Sakya patriarchs’ speeches), vol. 1, 255–266.

17. Du Xuchu 杜旭初, “A Comparative Study and Textual Analysis of the Chinese and Tibetan Versions of the *Rulai dingji zunsheng fomu xianzheng yi*” 《如來頂髻尊勝佛母現證儀》漢藏對勘及文本研究, in *History through Textual Criticism: Tibetan Buddhism in Central Eurasia and China Proper* 文本中的歷史：藏傳佛教在西域和中原的傳播, ed. SHEN Weirong 沈衛榮 (China Tibetology Publishing House 中國藏學出版社, 2012), 317–366.

18. Tāranātha (1575–1634), *Qi xi fu fa chuan* (七系付法傳, Transmissions of the Seven Buddhist Lineages), in *Dazangjing bubian* (《大藏經》補編, Supplement to the Chinese Tripitaka Collection), trans. GUO Yuanxing 郭元興, vol. 11, no. 69, p. 46.

2. The Nine-Deity Maṇḍala

The nine-deity *maṇḍalas* of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, comprising Uṣṇīṣavijayā herself, two attendant bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi), four Dharma protectors, and two flying celestials, were the most widely disseminated *maṇḍalas* between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. Notable figures associated with these *maṇḍalas* include Mitrayogin, Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan, and Candrayogin.

(1) From Mitrayogin's Sādhana for the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala of the Nine Deities

The nine-deity *maṇḍala* features a three-faced, eight-armed Uṣṇīṣavijayā adorned with a gemstone crown, positioned at the center of a white *stūpa*. Surrounding her are two attendant bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, along with the four Dharma protectors (Acalanātha, Ṭakkirāja, Nīladaṇḍa, and Mahābalā) and two flying celestials.¹⁹ The *maṇḍala* exhibits several unique characteristics as described in Mitrayogin's tantra. In the beginning, the tantra states:

gzhāl yas khang gru bzhi sgo bzhi pa/ phyi nas rim pa bzhin sngo
ser dmar ljang dkar ba'i rtsig pa lnga dang ldan pa'i/ zhes pa nas//
gzhāl yas khang gi nang gi steng 'og rnam shar sngo/ lho ser/ nub
dmar/ byang ljang/ dbus dkar por.... g.yon gyi dang pos thugs kar
sdig mdzub dang bcas pa'i zhags pa/ gnyis pa mi 'jigs pa sbyin pa/
gsum pas gzhu/ bzhi pas cho'i bdud rtsis gang ba'i bum pa 'dzin pa.²⁰

The immeasurable palace is square in shape, featuring four gates and surrounded by walls in five colors: blue in the east, yellow in the south, red in the west, green in the north, and white at the center.... Her first left hand is placed at the chest, presenting the *tarjanī-mudrā* and holding a noose, the second hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā*, the third hand holds a bow, and the fourth hand holds a vase.²¹

Thus, firstly, the *yidam*, Uṣṇīṣavijayā, dwells in a square, five-colored immeasurable palace rather than within the womb of a white *stūpa*. Secondly, among her four left hands, the hand presenting the

19. See Mitrayogin, "Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma lha dgu'i sgrub thabs," in *Mi tra brgya rtsa*, pp. 16 (front)–17 verso.

20. Ibid., p. 16 (front).

21. My translation.

abhaya-mudrā is positioned above the hand holding a bow, which differs from all other known depictions of Uṣṇīṣavijayā.

(2) *From Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala*

The composition of this nine-deity *maṇḍala* is similar to that of Mitrayogin’s. The characteristics of this Uṣṇīṣavijayā are broadly the same as those of Dharmadeva and Ba ri lo tsā ba. However, she holds a red Amitābha on a lotus (Tib. *chu skyes dmar po’i steng na bzugs pa’i rgyal pa ’od dpag med*) in one of her right hands, with her fourth left hand presenting the *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting a vase filled with water (Tib. *bum pa bzang po*), instead of holding a vase (in contrast to Mitrayogin’s Uṣṇīṣavijayā). Atop Uṣṇīṣavijayā is a Vairocana. The tantra records the secret syllable of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, which is *bhrūṃ*.²²

(3) *From Candragomin’s Praise of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, the Blessed Crown of the Tathāgata*

Candragomin, the original author, rose to prominence during the early propagation of Buddhism to Tibet (around 641–738). He was skilled in the use of metaphorical rhetoric, and his writing style is considered quite refined. While the Tibetan translator remains unknown, the composition of this nine-deity *maṇḍala* is similar to the previous two. The depiction of Uṣṇīṣavijayā is almost identical to that of Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan, suggesting that the Tibetan translator may also have been from the Sakya school. However, the text is in the form of a *gāthā* (verse), relatively short in length. The characteristic of this tantra is that the *yidam* Uṣṇīṣavijayā is adorned with Amitāyus on top of the head,²³ instead of Vairocana as seen in Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s teaching.

There are barely any biographical records of Mitrayogin, and researchers often study him through his Tibetan translated works from the later propagation of Buddhism to Tibet (tenth century onward).²⁴ According to a Tibetan history book, *The Blue Annals* (Tib. *Deb ther sngon po*), Mitrayogin was a disciple of Rol pa’i rdo rje, who was himself a disciple of one of the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*, Tilopa. Mitrayogin initially

22. See *Bstan ’gyur* (Pe cing), vol. 73, no. 4423, pp. 294 verso–295 verso.

23. See *Bstan ’gyur* (Sde dge), (D3115) rgyud ’grel, pu, 214b7–215b1 (vol. 74).

24. Chandra Lokesh, “Tibetan Buddhist Texts Printed by the mDzod-dge-sgar-sar Monastery,” *Indo-Iranian Journal*, no. 4 (1964): 298–306.

practiced the yogas of Avalokiteśvara, attaining a total of 120 *sādhana*s, which together formed the *Mi tra brgya rtsa* (A hundred *sādhana*s from Mitra).²⁵ The lineage of his *sādhana*s descended from Rdo rje 'chang (Vajradhara) to Spyān ras gzigs (Avalokiteśvara), then to Mi tra dzo gi (Mitrayogin), and to Paṇḍita Don yod rdo rje.²⁶ Descending from Vajradhara and Avalokiteśvara suggests that Mitrayogin was the first human *siddha* of these practices, and he passed his attainments on to Paṇḍita Don yod rdo rje.²⁷

If we consider the records from *The Blue Annals*, Mitrayogin is said to have demonstrated his power multiple times at Nālandā Monastery to protect it from Muslim invasions. Thus, his life likely predated or ran parallel to that of Ba ri lo tsā ba. The latter's *Chos kyi grags pa* (A hundred *sādhana*s) lineage descends from Mitrayogin's disciple, Paṇḍita Don yod rdo rje, whose name is the same as Rdo rje gdan pa.²⁸

However, according to the research by David P. Jackson and Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp on Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadra (?–1225), who was the last abbot of Vikramashila Monastery (Skt. Vikramaśīlā Vihāra), he met the Indian *siddha* Mitrayogin in 1197.²⁹ The latter was invited by Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa dpal (1172–1235) to present his teachings in Tibet for one and a half years.³⁰ This research challenges the records from *The Blue Annals*. According to van der Kuijp, Mitrayogin's life ran parallel to that of the third Sakya patriarch Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216) and the fourth Sakya patriarch Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251). Therefore, Ba ri lo tsā ba's guru Paṇḍita Don yod rdo rje, as recorded in *The Blue Annals*, was not a

25. However, there are 108 *sādhana*s recorded in the *Mi tra brgya rtsa*. See 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481), *Deb ther sngon po* (*The Blue Annals* 青史), trans. Guo Heqing 郭和卿 (Tibet People's Publishing House 拉薩人民出版社, 1985), 673–681.

26. *Blue Annals*, 680.

27. *Ibid.*, 680.

28. *Ibid.*, 666 and 685.

29. Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "On the Lives of Śākyaśrībhadra (?–1225?): Review Article on David Jackson's "Two Biographies of Sakyasribhadra, The Eulogy of Khro phu Lo-tsā-ba and Its 'Commentary' by bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po: Texts and Variants from Two Rare Exemplars Preserved in the Bihar Research Society, Patna," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 4 (1995): 599–616.

30. *Blue Annals*, 676.

disciple of Mitrayogin, but rather the tenth-century Indian monk Rdo rje gdan pa chung pa.

Due to Mitrayogin’s meeting with Śākyaśrībhadrā, his teachings also spread to Mang yul (west of Ngari) and to the Kashmir region.³¹ When he was teaching in Tibet around 1197 to 1200, great masters from the Kagyü (Tib. Bka’ brgyud) school, such as Drikung Kagyü (Tib. ’Bri gung bka’ brgyud) and Karma Kagyü, all heard and learned from him.³² This occurred during the reign of Western Xia Emperor Huanzong Li Chunyou (r. 1193–1206), who appointed the disciple of the first Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), Dge shes Gtsang po ba (?–1218), as the imperial preceptor (Tib. *ti shri*).³³ He served as the imperial preceptor from 1189 to 1216. His disciple Ros pa (1163–1236) entered Western Xia in 1196 and took over the imperial preceptor position in 1216, spreading teachings for about thirty years in Western Xia.³⁴ They were all disciples of the Kagyü school. Thus, Mitrayogin’s *sādhana* for the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* of the nine deities was possibly disseminated to the Hexi Corridor, which was under the rule of Western Xia, by the great masters of the Kagyü school at the close of the twelfth century.

The teachings of Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan, however, were spread in the thirteenth century. According to *The Blue Annals*, Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s *Sea of Sādhana*s (Tib. *Sgrub thabs rgya mtsho*) records the teachings from Kīrticandra.³⁵ According to van der Kuijp, Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan must have been a junior contemporary of Sakya Paṇḍita, and his translations were significantly influenced by him.³⁶ Sakya Paṇḍita once

31. *Blue Annals*, 676; David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (Shambhala, 2002), 393 and 429.

32. *Blue Annals*, 673–681.

33. Kun dga’ rdo rje (1309–1364), *Deb ther dmar po* (*The Red Annals* 红史), trans. CHEN Qingying 陳慶英 et al. (Tibet People’s Publishing House 拉薩人民出版社, 2002), 254.

34. E. Sperling, “Further Remarks apropos ’Ba’-rom-pa and the Tanguts,” *Acta Orientalia Academia Scienitarum Hungaricae* 57, no. 1 (2004): 1–26.

35. *Blue Annals*, 684.

36. Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, “On the Vicissitudes of Subhūticandra’s Kāmadhenu Commentary on the Amarakoṣa in Tibet,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 5 (2009): 1–105.

studied under Śākyaśrībhadrā, who is believed to have arrived in Tibet around the year 1204.³⁷

3. The Seven-Deity Maṇḍala

(1) From Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Śrī-Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala

phyag g.yas nyid kyi rbugs kar ni// sna tshogs rdo rje yang dag
bsnams// gnyis pa chu skyes steng gnas pa'i// sangs rgyas dang ni
gsum par mnga'// mchog sbyin phyag rgya bzhi pa'o// g.yon ni go
rims ji bzhin du// sdigs mdzub dang bcas zhags pa dang// gzhu dang
de bzhin mi 'jigs pa// bum pa gang ba bsnams pa ni//³⁸

Her first right hand holds a *viśva-vajra* at her chest, the second holds a Buddha seated on a lotus, the third holds an arrow, and the fourth presents the *varada-mudrā*. Her four left hands are positioned orderly as follows: the first presents the *tarjanī-mudrā* with a noose, the second holds a bow, the third presents the *abhaya-mudrā*, and the fourth presents the *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting a vase filled with water.³⁹

This *maṇḍala* lacks two flying celestials compared to the nine-deity *maṇḍala*. This tantra may provide a detailed account of practicing the Uṣṇīṣavijayā ritual under the guidance of the fourth Sakya patriarch, Sakya Paṇḍita (Tib. Sa pan).⁴⁰ Moreover, this teaching places particular emphasis on the orderly (Tib. *go rim*) contemplative process of Uṣṇīṣavijayā's holding objects, as prescribed by the tantra.

During Śākyaśrībhadrā's visit to Tibet, the fourth Sakya patriarch, Sakya Paṇḍita, studied under him.⁴¹ However, Śākyaśrībhadrā had passed away long before Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan was born. The *Śrī-uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala* as recorded in the *Sea of Sādhana*s

37. Van der Kuijp, "On the Lives of Śākyaśrībhadrā," 599–616.

38. Grags pa rgyal mtshan, "Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma'i sgrub thabs," in *Bstan 'gyur* (Pe cing), no. 4424, vol. 73, p. 296.

39. My translation.

40. Ibid., P4424. However, a current Sakya master Kun dga' bstan 'dzin suggests that the Tibetan "sa pan" here is a writing error for "sa bon," which means "seed syllable."

41. Van der Kuijp, "On the Lives of Śākyaśrībhadrā," 599–616.

may suggest a transmission from the Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadra to Sakya Paṇḍita.

4. Single Deity

(1) From No. 191 of Anonymous’s *Sādhanaṃālā*

The characteristics of this depiction of Uṣṇīṣavijayā closely resemble those in Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s teachings. For instance, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is adorned with a Vairocana on her crown; seven seed syllables are placed at the seven *cakras* during contemplation; and her secret syllable is *bhrūṃ*. However, all three of Uṣṇīṣavijayā’s faces are described as youthful (Skt. *navayauvana*), and her form represents the eight-armed (Skt. *aṣṭa-bhujā*) Bhagavatī dwelling in the womb of a white *stūpa* (Skt. *caitya guhā garbha*).⁴² This is the only reference that mentions Uṣṇīṣavijayā as representing the eight-armed female Bhagavatī.

PART III. TWO ICONOGRAPHICAL STYLES OF UṢṆĪṢAVIJAYĀ FROM THE SONG AND WESTERN XIA DYNASTIES

The earliest relics unearthed from the northern monasteries of Sakya Monastery in Shigatse Prefecture, Tibet, include an Uṣṇīṣavijayā sculpture (fig. 1a) that was venerated by the great scholar Ba ri lo tsā ba for his attainments (Tib. *bla chen ba ri lo tsā ba chen pos thugs dam gyi rten du phyag gis bstar nas bzhengs*), dating to the eleventh to twelfth centuries. This Uṣṇīṣavijayā is three-faced and eight-armed. The arrangement of her left four hands holding objects follows the teaching of Ba ri lo tsā ba, holding a noose (now lost), a bow, presenting *abhaya-mudrā*, and presenting *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting a vase. This is very similar to an Uṣṇīṣavijayā sculpture unearthed from Nālandā Monastery (fig. 2). However, this sculpture’s lineage, originating from Akṣobhya and dwelling under three *stūpas*, differs from most other relic examples. According to John C. Huntington’s photo, a round *stūpa* base was unearthed alongside the sculpture (fig. 2). The two parts could be combined to form a complete round Uṣṇīṣa *stūpa*. A similar round *stūpa* base was also found along with an Uṣṇīṣavijayā sculpture at the northern monasteries of Sakya Monastery. In his famous work *The Indian*

42. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Sādhanaṃālā*, no. 191, vol. II, 2nd ed. (Oriental Institute, 1968), 394–395.

Buddhist Iconography, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya notes that the sculpture from Nālandā Monastery (fig. 2) was made in accordance with the context of No. 191 in the *Sādhnamālā*.⁴³ However, the lineage of this sculpture from Akṣobhya cannot be traced to any specific reference. The fourth left hand holding a vase is much closer to No. 191 than Ba ri's presenting *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting a vase. Through textual and iconographical research, employing a method of dual evidence, it can be concluded that the Uṣṇīṣavijayā sculpture venerated by Ba ri is a prototype that spread from Nālandā Monastery.

The Uṣṇīṣavijayā images found at the Helan Mountains, Shazhou, Guazhou, and Khara-Khoto (Heishuicheng) along the Hexi Corridor during the late Western Xia dynasty correspond to the interregnum of the Sakya-pa's Uṣṇīṣavijayā teaching between Ba ri and the fifth Sakya patriarch 'Phags pa, spanning approximately 120 years. During this period, renowned Buddhist monks and scholars such as Jāyānanda (active in the twelfth century), Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadrā, Mitrayogin, and the first Sakya patriarch Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158) to the fourth Sakya patriarch Sa pan were spreading their teachings. According to Kirill Solonin's research, the Kagyü school had interactions with Western Xia during the later years of the reign of Xia Renzong, continuing until the end of the dynasty, which covers the final thirty years of the Western Xia dynasty.⁴⁴

In accordance with the requirements outlined in the *Tiansheng gaijiu xinding lüling* (Tiansheng revised and newly codified statutes 天盛改舊新定律令) issued during the reign of Emperor Xia Renzong, all Tibetans, Han Chinese, and Qiang people who petitioned or were granted approval to ordain must first thoroughly study the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī*.⁴⁵ One of the earliest images (fig. 3) of Uṣṇīṣavijayā is found

43. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography, Mainly Based on the Sādhnamālā and Cognate Tāntric Texts of Rituals* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958), 215.

44. Kirill Solonin, *Dapeng zhanchi: Zangchuan fojiao xin jiuyi mizhou zai xixia de chuanbo* (The great eagle spreads its wings: The spread of ancient and new translations of Tibetan Buddhism in Western Xia 大鵬展翅: 藏傳佛教新舊譯密咒在西夏的傳播) (Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House 上海古籍出版社, 2023), 47.

45. Shi Jinbo 史金波 et al., trans., *Tiansheng gaijiu xinding lüling* (Tiansheng revised and newly codified statutes 天盛改舊新定律令), vol. 11, article 9 (Law Press China 北京法律出版社, 2000), 404–405.



Fig. 1a (left). Uṣṇīṣavijayā, venerated by Ba ri lo tsā ba for his attainments, eleventh to twelfth centuries, unearthed from the northern monasteries of Sakya Monastery. Fig. 1b (right). Drawn by the author.



Fig. 2. Uṣṇīṣavijayā, eleventh to the twelfth centuries, unearthed from the Nālandā Monastery, preserved by National Museum of India. The John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art.



Fig. 3. TK164 and TK165, combined woodblock-printed title page of *Sheng Guanzizai dabeixin zongchi gongneng yijing lu* 聖觀自在大悲心懺持功能依經錄 and *Shengxiang dingzun zongchi gongneng yijing lu* 勝相頂尊懺持功能依經錄, the eleventh year of Emperor Renzong of Xia (1149), unearthed from Khara-Khoto.



Fig. 4. A nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, cave 2 of the Eastern Thousand-Buddha Caves.

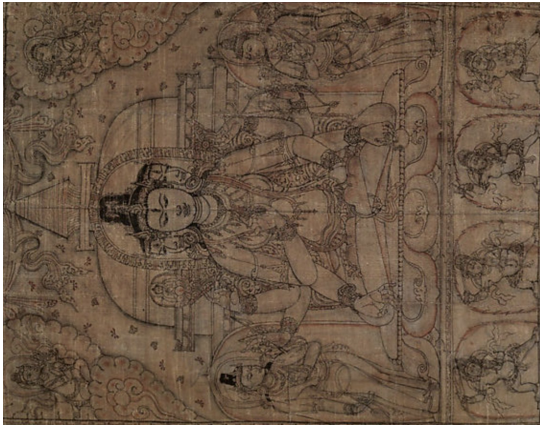


Fig. 5. A nine-deity Uṣṇiṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, Eastern India or Central Tibet (?), twelfth century, The Kronos Collections.



Fig. 6. A seven-deity Uṣṇiṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, the Lo tsā ba Palace, Alchi Monastery, Ladakh, thirteenth century. The John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art.



Fig. 7. A four-deity Uṣṇiṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, Cave 3 of Shanzuigou North Caves.



Fig. 8. *Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī* pillar, woodblock print, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, unearthed from Khara-Khoto.



Fig. 9. *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*, X. 2469, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, unearthed from Khara-Khoto.



Fig. 10. *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*, west slope of Cave 465, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, Dunhuang Mogao Caves.



Fig. 13. A nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, thirteenth century, niche 84 of Feilai Feng, Hangzhou.



Fig. 12. A fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, Western Xia to Yuan dynasty, Yulin Cave 3.



Fig. 11. A fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*, X. 2406, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, unearthed from Khara-Khoto.

on the title page of a combined woodblock print of *Sheng guanzizai da-beixin zongchi gongneng yijing lu* (Collection of the scriptures on the Śrī-Avalokiteśvara's great compassion dhāraṇī 聖觀自在大悲心惣持功能依經錄) and *Shengxiang dingzun zongchi gongneng yijing lu* (Collection of the scriptures on the Śrī-Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī 勝相頂尊惣持功能依經錄), dating to the year 1149. This was transmitted by the Kashmiri monk and state preceptor of both esoteric and exoteric five vidyās, Jāyānanda, and was translated into Chinese by the state preceptor Xianbei Baoyuan.⁴⁶ Jāyānanda, after engaging in discussions on Madhyamaka with the renowned Kadam master Phywa pa Chos kyi seng ge (1100–1169), was eventually defeated and fled to the Hexi Corridor, before the arrival of the imperial preceptor from the Kagyü school in the summer of 1189.⁴⁷ The woodblock print depicts the Uṣṇīṣavijayā yidam with a round face and wide nose, wearing intricate hair accessories typical of the Pāla style. This reflects that Jāyānanda's source text was similar to No. 191 of the *Sādhnamālā*. Beneath the Uṣṇīṣavijayā stūpa, the seed syllable *bhrūṃ* can also be found. Since the Sanskrit manuscript No. 191 does not specify which incarnated buddha is held in her second right hand, this version shows a lotus stem pointing toward the crown of the head, supporting Amitāyus Buddha presenting the *dhyāna-mudrā*. This depiction became a prototype for Uṣṇīṣavijayā during the reign of Emperor Xia Renzong.

Scholars such as ZHANG Baoxi 張寶璽 and LIU Yongzeng 劉永增 have suggested that cave 2 of the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves in Guazhou County, Gansu, was established by the Western Xia people.⁴⁸ Within this cave, there is a mural featuring a nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā

46. St. Petersburg Branch of Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences et al., *Heishuicheng Manuscripts Collected in the St. Petersburg Branch of Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences 4: Chinese Manuscripts* 俄藏黑水城文獻.4.漢文部分 (Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House 上海古籍出版社, 1997), 35.

47. Sperling, "Further Remarks apropos 'Ba'-rom-pa and the Tanguts," 1–26.

48. ZHANG Baoxi 張寶璽, "The Art of the Western Xia Caves at the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves" 東千佛洞西夏石窟藝術, *Cultural Relics* 文物, no. 2 (1992): 81–89; LIU Yongzeng 劉永增, "The Iconographic Origins and Historical Value of the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves in Guazhou—Also Discussing the Initial Creation Date of the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves" 瓜州東千佛洞的圖像源流與歷史價值—兼談東千佛洞的初創年代, *Palace Museum Journal* 故宮博物院院刊, no. 4 (2016): 71–81.

maṇḍala (fig. 4), which bears similarities in order and composition to earlier woodblock prints. The nine deities include Uṣṇīṣavijayā, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, two flying celestials, and four offering bodhisattvas who hold an umbrella and a vase and present the *añjali-mudrā*, respectively. These four offering bodhisattvas are similar to the figures depicted on the left side of a woodblock print from 1149 (fig. 3). Additionally, the offering bodhisattvas holding an umbrella and a vase in the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* of cave 7 exhibit similar imagery. In cave 2, Uṣṇīṣavijayā (fig. 4) is depicted with Vajrapāṇi in a blue, wrathful form beneath her, and below the *stūpa* is her seed syllable *bhrūṃ*. According to the tantric rituals, such as those outlined by Dharmadeva, Ba ri, and No. 191, the placement or chanting of seed syllables at different parts of Uṣṇīṣavijayā’s body is emphasized as a necessary step in the practice. However, in the iconographic examples, the only seed syllable *bhrūṃ* appears beneath the *stūpa*, as specifically recorded in No. 191. Two other different Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍalas* transmitted by Yar klung Grags pa rgyal mtshan of the Sakya school also mention the placement of seed syllables, dating from the thirteenth century onward, and were transmitted from the Paṇḍita Kīrticandra.⁴⁹ According to the woodblock text *Shengxiang dingzun chongchi gongneng yijing lu* (TK 164), this *dhāraṇī* was revealed by the celestial emperor Śakra at the request of Amitāyus.⁵⁰ In Ba ri’s teaching, Śakra is depicted holding an umbrella. Therefore, the figures holding an umbrella in the TK 164 and TK 165 woodblock prints (fig. 3), as well as in cave 2 (fig. 4) and cave 7, are identified as Śakra. Regarding the bodhisattva holding a treasure vase, this figure may represent the bodhisattva often depicted alongside Śakra in Dharma-hearing iconography, possibly Brahmā holding a *kundikā*.

The characteristics of a nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* sketch from Eastern India or through Nepal to Central Tibet (fig. 5) and dating to the twelfth century are notably distinct from Ba ri’s teaching. In this depiction, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is adorned with a gemstone crown, and her left four hands are arranged to present the *tarjanī-mudrā* with a noose, the *abhaya-mudrā*, and a bow and a vase, aligning perfectly with Mitrayogin’s nine-deity *maṇḍala*. Another similar example is a

49. *Blue Annals*, 684; van der Kuijp, “On the Vicissitudes of Subhūticandra’s Kāmadhenu Commentary on the Amarakośa in Tibet,” 1–105.

50. St. Petersburg Branch of Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences et al., *Heishuicheng Manuscripts*, 35–38.

seven-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* (fig. 6) from the Lo tsā ba Palace in Alchi Monastery, dating to the thirteenth century. This *maṇḍala* exhibits a typical Kashmiri style, characterized by the use of red and blue colors. The composition of the *maṇḍala* and the arrangement of the four protectors in a dome shrine beneath Uṣṇīṣavijayā's lotus throne are the same as in the previous example (fig. 5), except for the absence of the two attendant bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, outside the shrine. Additionally, wearing a *stūpa* atop of the crown is a characteristic of Dharmadeva and Ba ri, but the lineage from Vairocana is derived from No. 191. Before or concurrently with the spread of Mitrayogin's attainments throughout Tibet, his nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* became popular across Kashmir.

His nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* also gained popularity along the Hexi Corridor due to the activities of Kagyü gurus in Western Xia at the end of the twelfth century. Near Western Xia's capital city, Xingqing Prefecture, a four-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* (fig. 7) is displayed at Baisigou in the Helan Mountains, dating to the mid-late Western Xia dynasty. This *maṇḍala* is part of a triad. Due to poor preservation, the author can only identify the central *yidam* of the main *maṇḍala* as Vairocana. The Uṣṇīṣavijayā is depicted wearing a gemstone crown, with her left hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā* above the hand holding a bow. Additionally, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is not seated within the *stūpa*'s womb, a feature consistent with Mitrayogin's teaching. However, the depiction of Śakra standing below her, wearing an official Western Xia uniform and holding an umbrella, reflects characteristics from Ba ri's teaching. A woodblock print of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī* pillar dating to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries of Western Xia dynasty and housed in the Hermitage Museum, Russia (fig. 8), follows the record in Buddhapāla's (Jue Hu 覺護, active in the seventh century) Chinese-translated Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī sūtra*, inscribing the Sanskrit Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī* within the tall pillar for her protection.⁵¹ In line with Mitrayogin's teaching, the left hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā* is placed higher than the hand holding a bow, and Uṣṇīṣavijayā is not depicted within the *stūpa*. The feature of an incarnated Buddha

51.「若人能書寫此陀羅尼，安高幢上，或安高山或安樓上，乃至安置窣堵波中……彼諸眾生所有罪業，應墮惡道地獄畜生閻羅王界餓鬼界阿修羅身惡道之苦，皆悉不受亦不為罪垢染汚。」Buddha-pāla 覺護, *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī sūtra*), T. 19, no. 967, 0351b09–16.

atop her crown reflects characteristics transmitted by Candragomin or recorded in No. 191.

Similarly, the *thangka* depiction of a single Uṣṇīṣavijayā from Western Xia, discovered in Khara-Khoto (fig. 9), shows her adorned with a tri-leaf crown, round facial features, a South Asian-style short skirt, and seated on a deep red base. This piece is an excellent example of the influence of Nepalese art style on Tibetan Buddhist art that developed during the Western Xia period.⁵² The arrangement of objects in Uṣṇīṣavijayā’s left hands also reflects Mitrāyogin’s teaching. In the depiction of Uṣṇīṣavijayā on the western slope of the ceiling in Cave 465 at Dunhuang (fig. 10), she is likewise not placed within a *stūpa*. Her second right hand holds a lotus with an incarnated Buddha or a lotus stem that supports an incarnated Buddha atop her crown—details that have largely faded over time. Nonetheless, this imagery paradigm, which combines features of Mitrāyogin and the teaching of Jāyānanda or No. 191, can almost certainly be identified as a late Western Xia work.

A noteworthy topic for discussion in this article is a wooden panel painting of a fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* excavated from Khara-Khoto (fig. 11). This piece intricately combines elements from the records of Mitrāyogin, Dharmadeva, Ba ri, and No. 191, presenting complex characteristics. At the center of the circular *maṇḍala* wheel, Uṣṇīṣavijayā dwells within the five-colored Immeasurable Palace, depicted as a square. Its features align with the arrangement described at the beginning of the tantra transmitted by Mitrāyogin: “The Immeasurable Palace is blue in the east, yellow in the south, red in the west, green in the north, and white at the center.” In front of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *stūpa* stands the figure of Śakra, kneeling and holding an umbrella, whose depiction differs significantly from the murals at Baisigou in the Helan Mountains (fig. 7).

Two similar wooden panel-painted *maṇḍalas* were unearthed, both featuring a blue background inscribed with *dhāraṇī* in Western Xia characters. These were venerated by a couple, a Tangut man named Songbaishan 松柏山 and a Han Chinese woman from the prestigious

52. XIE Jisheng 谢继胜, *Tibetan Painting of the Western Xia: A Study of Tibetan Thangkas Unearthed from Khara-Khoto* 西夏藏傳繪畫: 黑水城出土藏傳唐卡研究 (Hebei Education Press 河北教育出版社, 2002), 212.

Liang family in the Hexi Corridor.⁵³ Based on the nine-deity *maṇḍala* from Mitrayogin's teaching, this depiction incorporates Śakra and the outer four offering bodhisattvas to form a fourteen-deity *maṇḍala*. However, this differs from the fourteen-deity *maṇḍala* in the teachings of Dharmadeva and Ba ri. Instead of the Four Heavenly Kings, the outer four offering bodhisattvas at the four corners symbolize the personifications of incense, flowers, lamps, and fragrance outside the *maṇḍala* wheel, closely resembling the description in Dharmadeva's tantra of four offering bodhisattvas outside the hearth (以香花四面供養). Additionally, in the wooden panel painting, the arrangement of *mudrās* and holding objects in Uṣṇīṣavijayā's left hands is consistent with Mitrayogin's teaching. The presence of Vairocana at the crown aligns with the features described in No. 191.

Based on the examination of the aforementioned images, depictions from India and Kashmir (figs. 2, 5, and 6) consistently show the goddess's fourth left hand holding a vase that hangs near her left knee. In contrast, depictions from Tibet and the Hexi Corridor (figs. 1b, 3, 4, and 7–11) distinctly present the fourth left hand in *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting the vase, highlighting a clear regional characteristic. A comparison of tantras and images reveals that, in the mid to late Western Xia period, the Hexi region predominantly followed three similar types of tantric texts of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā practice: the texts transmitted by Jāyānanda and No. 191 of the *Sādhana-mālā*; the versions by Dharmadeva and Ba ri; and the lineage of Mitrayogin. These three textual types converged into two primary prototypes in imagery.

The first prototype integrates characteristics transmitted by Jāyānanda, No. 191, and Śakra holding an umbrella from Ba ri's teaching, and was primarily popular during the mid to late reign of Emperor Xia Renzong. Notable features include Uṣṇīṣavijayā's right hand holding an incarnated Buddha figure atop a lotus stem leading to her crown, her left hand holding a bow raised higher than the hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā*, and the seed syllable *bhrūṃ* appearing beneath the throne.

The second prototype reflects the imagery transmitted by the Kagyü school during the late Western Xia period, combining elements from No. 191 and Mitrayogin's teaching. Distinguishing features

53. Tangut inscriptions are present on both wooden panels, X. 2406 and X. 2407.

include the goddess wearing a gemstone crown, her left hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā* positioned higher than the hand holding a bow, and a small Vairocana image atop her crown.

PART IV. THE LEGACIES FROM WESTERN XIA

Various Uṣṇīṣavijayā ritual and *dhāraṇī* texts circulated throughout the Western Xia region. One piece of evidence, from the reign of Xia Renzong, shows that TK 164 and 165 were edited and revised by Jāyānanda. His versions were new to Western Xia and differed from other existing Chinese and Tangut versions, which were likely translated from a Sanskrit source or a Tibetan interlingua reference into Chinese (TK 164, 165) and Tangut (St. Petersburg, No. 6796), respectively, as discussed by SUN Bojun 孫伯君, LIN Yingjin 林英津, and WANG Rongfei 王榮飛.⁵⁴ During the later period of the Western Xia dynasty, complex mixed ritual texts were redefined, potentially leading to the development of two integrated iconographic prototypes of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*. These prototypes differ significantly from the earlier single-deity sculpture excavated at Nālandā Monastery in India (fig. 2) and the one venerated by Ba ri (fig. 1b). Based on the discussions above, of these two prototypes, the iconographic prototype attributed to Jāyānanda predated the prototype transmitted by the Kagyü school from Mitrayogin’s teaching. However, features of the Mitrayogin prototype are observed in regions extending from Western Xia’s capital,

54. Recent research by scholar WANG Rongfei 王榮飛 suggests that TK164 and TK165 were translated by Jāyānanda from a combination of Ba ri lo tsā ba’s Tibetan version and Chinese sources. While the texts of TK164 and TK165 cover the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *dhāraṇī*, they do not include Uṣṇīṣavijayā’s figure or *maṇḍala*. However, from an image retrospective, the figure on the title page closely resembles the Sanskrit version, No. 191. See SUN Bojun 孫伯君, “An Examination of the Western Xia Monk Baoyuan’s Translation of *Collection of the Scriptures on the Śrī-Avalokiteśvara’s Great Compassion Dhāraṇī*” 西夏寶源譯《聖觀自在大悲心懺持功能依經錄》考, *Dunhuang Studies Journal* 敦煌學輯刊, no. 2 (2006): 34–43; LIN Yingjin 林英津, “A Brief Discussion on the Tangut Translation of *Collection of the Scriptures on the Śrī-Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī*” 簡論西夏語譯《勝相頂尊懺持功能依經錄》, *Xixia Studies* 西夏學, vol. 1 (2006): 78–86; WANG Rongfei 王榮飛, “Interaction and Integration: Textual Borrowing and Inheritance of the Multilingual Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī Sūtra in the Tangut Xia State” 互動與融合—西夏多語種《尊勝經》的文本借鑒和繼承, *Journal of the Chinese Nation Studies* 中華民族共同體研究, no. 4 (2024): 43–56.

Xingqing Prefecture, to Guazhou and Dunhuang, and even as far as Khara-Khoto, western Tibet, and Kashmir. This prototype became especially prominent during the last three decades of the Western Xia dynasty.

Based on the previous discussions, it can be briefly concluded that Ba ri's Uṣṇīṣavijayā lineage originated from a ritual practice at Nālandā Monastery, spread by Rdo rje gdan pa. However, this lineage had limited dissemination during the Western Xia dynasty. Only a few characteristics, such as Śakra holding an umbrella or the goddess wearing a *stūpa* on her hair, are found in the existing images. The two *maṇḍalas* from *Sea of Sādhana*s by Yar klung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan, also from the Sakya school, did not originate from Ba ri's lineage but rather from the teachings of Paṇḍita Kīrticandra and Sakya Paṇḍita, derived from the Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadrā. From the reign of Xia Renzong to the late Western Xia period, it is nearly impossible to find any extant images that strictly adhere to the fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* as transmitted by Ba ri lo tsā ba. The only example is the highly debated fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* on the east side of the south wall of Yulin Cave 3 (fig. 12).

In this *maṇḍala*, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is situated at the center of a square Immeasurable Palace, with colors arranged as “pure white in the east, dark blue in the south, red in the west, and green in the north,” following the five-color regulation introduced by Chinese tantras.⁵⁵ She wears a *stūpa* on her head, and her second right hand holds a lotus stem that extends upward to support Amitābha atop her head. The fourth left hand holds a vase instead of presenting the *dhyāna-mudrā* while supporting a vase, suggesting a preservation of the characteristics of Ba ri's lineage. Moreover, during the mid to late Western Xia dynasty, most depictions of Uṣṇīṣavijayā are single-deity images; even multi-deity compositions rarely form a *maṇḍala* as described in ritual texts.

55. The brown color at the bottom of this *maṇḍala* is due to the oxidation of white, while the red and white alternating pattern at the top is caused by the peeling of red. See Devaśāntika 天息災 (?–1000), trans., *Foshuo dacheng guanxiang manmuluo jingzhu equ jing* (Mahāyāna visualized maṇḍala for purification of evil destinies sutra 佛說大乘觀想曼拏羅淨諸惡趣經): “The center is yellow, forming an eight-spoked wheel, pure white in the east, dark blue in the south, red in the west, and green in the north (中心用黃色, 為八輻輪, 東方純白色, 南方大青色, 西方赤色, 北方綠色).” T. 19, no. 939, 0094b02–04.

Complete multi-deity *maṇḍalas* are only found in two wooden panels unearthed at Khara-Khoto, featuring the fourteen-deity *maṇḍala* (fig. 11). These were based on Mitravogin's nine-deity *maṇḍala* and further integrated elements from the teachings of Dharmadeva, Ba ri lo tsā ba, and No. 191. These works date back to the late Western Xia period.

I argue that it was only after 1251, following the passing of Sakya Paṇḍita in Liangzhou, that 'Phags pa took over the leadership of the Sakya school and continued the Uṣṇīṣavijayā practices transmitted by Ba ri lo tsā ba. In the first year of the Zhongtong era (1260), 'Phags pa was appointed State Preceptor by the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan (1215–1294) as the head of Buddhism across the Yuan Empire. By the seventh year of Zhiyuan era (1270), he was further elevated to the title of Imperial Preceptor. It was likely after this time that the Mongol princely family of the Hexi Corridor, along with the remnants of the Western Xia Tangut people and Han Chinese patrons of the Sakya school, began commissioning *maṇḍala* images representing the orthodox Sakya lineage. Rob Linrothe once suggested that the depiction of Śakra holding an umbrella beneath the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *stūpa* in Yulin Cave 3 is Xia Renzong himself, identifying the cave as a Western Xia site.⁵⁶ However, he might not have been aware of the fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* ritual practiced by Ba ri lo tsā ba. Furthermore, the attire of Śakra in this *maṇḍala* is clearly styled after Han Chinese fashion.

In southern China, during the Yuan dynasty, a Tangut and disciple of 'Phags pa, Rin chen skyabs (楊璉真迦, ?-?) guided the construction of Buddhist stone sculptures at Feilai Feng in Hangzhou. Appointed by Kublai Khan as the Chief Supervisor of Buddhist Affairs in Jiangnan (江南釋教總攝) in the fourteenth year of the Zhiyuan era (1277), he was later promoted to Chief Administrator of Buddhist Affairs in Jianghuai (江淮釋教總統) between the twenty-fourth year (1287) and the twenty-eighth year of the Zhiyuan era (1291), until his dismissal in the twenty-eighth year (1291).⁵⁷ The stone sculptures and carvings from the Yuan

56. Linrothe, "Xia Renzong and the Patronage of Tangut Buddhist Art," 91–121.

57. There are various discussions regarding the period during which Rin chen skyabs, who held the title of Chief Administrator, lived; these primarily focus on the years between the twenty-fourth and twenty-eighth years of the Zhiyuan era. For reference, see CHEN Gaohua 陳高華, "Revisiting the Tangut

dynasty were all created between the eighteenth year (1281) and the twenty-ninth year (1292) of the Zhiyuan era.

Among these, the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala in niche 84 (fig. 13) was supervised and constructed during Rin chen skyabs's promotion as the Chief Administrator of Buddhist Affairs in Jianghuai. According to ongoing research on the stone sculpture art of Feilai Feng by Chinese scholars XIE Jisheng 謝繼勝 and LIAO Yang 廖陽, most tantric stone carvings from the Yuan dynasty exhibit a "Sino-Tibetan fusion style" that developed during the Western Xia dynasty. This style combines the solemn, gentle-faced modifications characteristic of Chinese art with Indo-Tibetan artistic elements influenced by Nepalese art.⁵⁸

Previously, XIONG Wenbin suggested that the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala in niche 84 was largely based on Ba ri's lineage and Yar klung Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Sea of Sādhana*s,⁵⁹ drawing from the Tibetan Buddhist canon *Bstan 'gyur* (P. 4071, 4198, 4205, 4423, and 4424).⁶⁰ However, employing a dual-evidence approach that combines textual analysis and iconographic comparison, the author finds that the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā maṇḍala in Feilai Feng exhibits distinctive features, such as the goddess wearing a gemstone crown and the *abhaya-mudrā* hand positioned above the hand holding a bow. This suggests that it is more likely based on the attainment practices transmitted by Mitrāyogin to the Kagyü school. The four dome niches surrounding the central deity, along with the four Dharma protectors within them, closely resemble the maṇḍala sketches from Eastern India or Central Tibet (fig. 5) and the images left by the Drikung Kagyü school in Kashmir (fig. 6). Furthermore, contrary to textual descriptions that depict the deity as having a "young central face, a benevolent right

Monk Rin chen skyabs of the Yuan Dynasty" 再論元代河西僧人楊璉真加, *Journal of Chinese Literature and History* 中華文化論叢, no. 2 (2006): 159–180.

58. Xie, *Tibetan Painting of the Western Xia*, 212; Xie et al., *Tibetan Buddhist Art in Jiangnan*, 245.

59. According to the numbering system of the Hangzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, niche 84 corresponds to niche 55 in XIONG Wenbin's article. See Xiong, "An Examination of the Nine-Deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā Maṇḍala Sculpture at the 55th Niche of Feilai Feng in Hangzhou," 28–30.

60. The author of P. 4071, 4198, and 4205 from *Bstan 'gyur* (Pe cing) is Ba ri lo tsā ba, and the contents are similar to D. 594 from *Bka' 'gyur* (Sde dge).

face, and a wrathful left face with fangs,”⁶¹ this Uṣṇīṣavijayā features three serene young faces. Her gentle and rounded visage resembles the style of a court lady from the Tang dynasty, and her form aligns more closely with the single-deity depiction found in Sanskrit text No. 191 of the *Sādhanaṃālā*.

This evidence demonstrates that although Rin chen skyabs was a monk of the Sakya school, he chose to base the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* on a prototype from the late Western Xia period, which was more prevalent in the Hexi Corridor and more closely aligned with Mitrāyogin’s lineage, rather than adhering to the “orthodox” lineage of the Sakya school transmitted by the Imperial Preceptor ‘Phags pa from Ba ri’s lineage.

PART V. CONCLUSIONS

Since the eleventh century, the personified figure of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, along with Amitāyus and White Tārā, has formed the Three Longevity Deities, a trio widely venerated by people in praying for long life. Concurrently, the imagery of a single Uṣṇīṣavijayā and the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* also gained popularity. During the mid to late Western Xia dynasty, three similar types of tantric texts of the Śrī-Uṣṇīṣavijayā practice circulated in the Hexi Corridor: the texts transmitted by Jāyānanda and No. 191 of the *Sādhanaṃālā*; the versions of Dharmadeva and Ba ri lo tsā ba; and Mitrāyogin’s teaching. Previous research has overlooked the possibility that these ritual texts were edited and compiled in the Hexi Corridor, leading to the creation of two mixed Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* prototypes that influenced the Yuan dynasty.

The first mixed prototype incorporates elements from Jāyānanda’s transmission, features from No. 191, and Ba ri’s lineage, with notable characteristics such as the right hand of the goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā holding an incarnated Buddha figure atop a lotus stem leading to her crown, the left hand holding a bow positioned higher than the hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā*, and the seed syllable *bhrūṃ* beneath the

61. For example, in the aforementioned Ba ri’s D594, Yar klung Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s P4423 and 4424, Candragomin’s D3115, and Mitrāyogin’s nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala*.

goddess's throne. This version is generally considered to have been popular during the reign of Xia Renzong.

The second mixed prototype combines Mitrayogin's teaching transmitted by the Kagyü school in the late Western Xia period with No. 191, featuring key elements such as the goddess wearing a gemstone crown, the left hand presenting the *abhaya-mudrā* positioned higher than the hand holding a bow, and a small Vairocana Buddha atop her crown.

Overall, the Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍalas* influenced by Ba ri's lineage during the Western Xia dynasty were limited, with images often featuring only partial ritual characteristics, such as Śakra holding an umbrella or wearing a *stūpa* atop the crown. Images primarily based on the fourteen-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* recorded in the *Hundred Sādhana*s seem to appear much later, with the associated murals in Yulin Cave 3 more likely painted during the Yuan dynasty.

Yar-klung Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Sea of Sādhana*s and the orthodox Uṣṇīṣavijayā practice of the Sakya school represent two distinct lineages. The practices of Uṣṇīṣavijayā from *Sea of Sādhana*s records a lineage passed down from Paṇḍita Kīrticandra and Sakya Paṇḍita. As a result, the orthodox Uṣṇīṣavijayā practice of the Sakya school skipped over the first to fourth Sakya patriarchs and directly connects to the fifth patriarch, 'Phags pa. The imagery of the nine-deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā *maṇḍala* carved at Feilai Feng during the Zhiyuan era was derived from the more popular nine-deity *maṇḍala* prototype of the last thirty years of Western Xia rule in the Hexi Corridor—Mitrayogin's teaching.