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The Sacred Writing by Central Asian Buddhist Monks in China (3-5 C)

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Abstract

The earliest existing Chinese Buddhist manuscript found in the world, the Buddhassaṅgati Sūtra, was excavated at Touyuq in Turfan, and was dated the sixth year of Yuankang 元康六年 (296 CE), in the Western Jin. It was written by Dharmarakṣa's monk disciple Zhu Fashou 竺法首. (Figure 1, 1a) Who was one of the distinctive Buddhist scribes in Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 translation team and was probably of Yuezhi or Indian origin. During the period when Buddhism was initially transmitted into China, historical documentation and archaeological findings both demonstrated that the sacred Buddhist writing by Buddhist monk scribes from Central Asia played a key role in transmission of Buddhism without borders. It also enhanced producing the diversity and vigorous calligraphic styles in China during 3rd to 5th century. However, before the 20th century, early Buddhist scribes or foreign calligraphers were unknown in history of Chinese calligraphy or official records. This paper presents a broader and more in-depth study of the extent and nature of the role of the Central Asian Buddhist scribes, as well as the significance of their calligraphic expertise to the history of Chinese calligraphers and calligraphy.

1. Introduction :

In the early 20th century, as many as 100,700 Buddhist manuscripts were excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan.* (Table 1) The time span of the Dunhuang and Turfan Buddhist manuscripts runs from the 3rd to the 13th centuries which makes it extremely valuable for the study of the historical,

* See Guo Feng 郭鋒.1991. 敦煌西域出土文獻的一個綜合統計 (*General Statistics of Documents Unearthed from Dunhuang and the Western Region*), 敦煌學輯刊 (*Journal of Dunhuang Studies*), (1991-1: 63-76). The exact total number of the Turfan and Dunhuang manuscripts is still a mystery because the manuscripts were scattered in different countries' collections, some were lost, and some are in private collections and unpublished. The data is mainly based on Guo Feng's 郭峰 statistics compiled in 1991, Fang Guangchang 方廣錫 in 2003, and Xia Shengping 夏生平 in 2008.

cultural, and religious development of the Silk Road, as well as for the historical

development of Chinese calligraphy.

Table 1: Survey of number of Buddhist manuscripts excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan¹

Place	China	Japan	Russia	Germany	UK	France	Others	Total
Dunhang Manuscripts	19,000	1,000	19,000		13,300	6,000		58,300
Turfan Manuscripts	12,000	8,000		20000 ²	276		2,003 ³	42,400

Among these numerous manuscripts, the earliest existing Chinese Buddhist manuscript found in the world, the *Buddhasa α gxti S(tra*, was excavated at Toyuq in Turfan, and was dated the sixth year of Yuankang 元康六年 (296 CE), in the Western Jin. The manuscript was first recorded in the *Archive of Archeological Findings from the Western Region (Seiiki kōko zufu 西域考古圖譜)*⁴ by Otani Kozui (大谷光瑞 1876-1948), a Japanese explorer, who conducted archaeological explorations of the ancient Buddhist sites in Xinjiang, Gansu, and Tibet three times between 1902 and 1914. It was written by Buddhist monk scribe Zhu Fashou 竺法首 (Figure 2) who was one of the Buddhist scribes in Dharmarakśa 竺法護 translation team and was probably of Yuezhi or Indian origin.

The translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese was the primary vehicle used to promote Buddhism from the early Eastern Han period (ca.1st century CE) onwards. During the initial stage, Buddhist scriptures were still transmitted and translated orally.⁵ Before the invention of printing technology, ancient texts were all copied or written by hand by scribes “*xiejingsheng*” 寫經生, who were either Buddhist monks, lay persons, professional calligraphers or scribes, named a

¹ Ibid.

² 3,400 pieces in Chinese.

³ 1,917 pieces in Chinese, Finland collection.

⁴ 香川默識, 《西域考古圖譜》卷下 (日本: 國華社, 1915年6月), p. 3-4. The Archive of Archeological Findings from the *Western Region – Seiiki kōko zufu* (西域考古圖譜).

⁵ Ren, vol.1, p.91, The Indo-Scythians conquered Bactria in the 2nd century BCE, and accepted the Bactrian culture. Buddhism was popular at the end of the first century BCE. It is probable that the Buddhist scriptures were orally transmitted into Chinese by missionaries during that time.

“bishou 筆受, 筆授”, or “shoushou 手受.”⁶ Many Buddhist monks or laymen from Central Asia played important roles in translating and writing the Buddhist texts. However, these scribes were largely unknown in history. So what is their identity? If they were Chinese, their calligraphic style could also have the same aesthetic qualities of contemporary calligraphers who influenced them. If they were foreign Buddhist scribes or monks, quite obviously it would take a longer period of time for foreigners to practice and learn to write Chinese calligraphy than a native Chinese. Who, then, played the major role in teaching Buddhist scribes to write Chinese calligraphy?

According to a comprehensive survey which focuses on the foreign monk translators and scribes (bishou 筆受) in and before the 5th century, from literary records such as *Sengyou Catalogue* (出三藏記集), the *Biography of Eminent Monks* (高僧傳), *A History of the Development of the Buddhist Canon from the Latter Han to the Sui Dynasties* (歷代三寶紀), *An Illustrated Record of Translated Scriptures Past and Present* (古今譯經圖紀), indicates that in the very early stages, foreign monks assisted in the transcription of Buddhist texts by local Chinese or monks. (Table 2) Historical documentation shows that an increasing number of Central Asian Buddhist scribes joined the translation team of Dharmarakṣa from the Western Jin. Of further significance is that after the time of Zhu Fashou in 292 CE, some Central Asian and Sogdian scribes had acquired the ability to write Chinese calligraphy and join the translation team in the late 3rd to early 5th centuries.

Table 2: Ethnicity & number of Buddhist scribes in the translation team

Date	Translation team	Buddhist Scribes	Number of scribes		
			C	W	U
Ca.181	An Xuan 安玄	Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調	1		
ca. –186	Lokakṣema 支識	Foda 佛大, Mengfu 孟福, Zhanglian 張蓮	2		1
224	Wei Qinan 維祇難	Zhi Qian 支謙 (active 223-253)		1	

⁶ Bishou 筆受 (or 筆授) is the title of Buddhist scribe who takes down the oral recitation from the translation master.

Date	Translation team	Buddhist Scribes	Number of scribes		
		CE)			
255	Zhi Qiangliangjie 支疆梁接	Zhu Daoxing 竺道馨		1	
266-308	Dharmarakṣa 竺法護	Nie Chengyuan, 聶承遠, Zhang Xuanbo 張玄伯, Sun Xiuda 孫修達, Rong Xiye 榮攜業, Hou Wuying 侯無英, Zhang Shiming 張仕明, Zhang Zhongzheng 張仲政, Nie Daozhen 聶道真, Zhe Xianyuan 折顯元, Zhu Fashou 竺法首, Bo Yuanxin 帛元信, Zhi Fadu 支法度, Zhao Wenlong 趙文龍, Kang Shu 康殊, Bo Faju 帛法炬	10	5	
291	Zhu Shixing 朱士行	Zhu Taixuan 祝太玄, Zhou Xuanming 周玄明	2		
382-413	Zhu Fonian 竺佛念	Tanjing 曇景, Sengdao 僧導, Tanjiu 曇究, Sengrui 僧叡, Huili 慧力, Sengmao 僧茂, Daohan 道含, Huisong 慧嵩 (from Gaochang)		1	7
383	Saṅghabhadra 僧伽跋澄	Huisong 慧嵩, Zhimin 智敏, Zhao Wenye 趙文業	1	1	1
397-398	Gautama Saṅghadeva 瞿曇僧伽提婆	Daozu 道祖, Daoci 道慈 (筆受), Li Bao 李寶, Kang Hua 康化 (共書)	1	1 (S)	2
398	Buddhabhadra 佛跋陀羅	Faye 法業, Huiyi 慧義, Huiyan 慧嚴			3
Ca.406	Vimalākīa 卑摩羅叉	Huiguan 慧觀			1
412	Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什	Huigong 釋慧恭, Sengqing 僧 ^切 鞞, Sengqian 僧遷, Baodu 寶度, Huijing 慧精, Faqin 法欽, Daoliu 道流, Sengrui 僧叡, Daohui 道恢, Daobiao 道標, Daoheng 道恒, Sengzhao 僧肇, ⁷		1	14

⁷ “以弘始五年歲在癸卯四月二十三日,於京城之北逍遙園中出此經, 法師手執胡本口宣秦言, 兩釋異音交辯文旨, 秦王躬攬舊經, 驗其得失, 諮其通途, 坦其宗致, 與諸宿舊義業沙門釋慧恭僧

Date	Translation team	Buddhist Scribes	Number of scribes		
		Tangui 曇曇, Tanying 曇影, Bo Huirong 帛慧融			
423	Buddhajīva 佛馱什	Long Guang 龍光, Daosheng 道生, Dongan 東安, Huiyan 慧嚴			4
421-439	Dharmakīema 曇無讖	Hui Song 慧嵩, Dao Lang 道朗		1	1
439	Buddhavarman 浮陀跋摩	Daotai 道泰			1

(Symbols of Nationalities: C-Chinese; W-Western Region; S-Sogdian; U-Uncertain)

Having done careful research on numerous Buddhist manuscripts in the Lüshun Museum, Chinese scholar Wang Zhenfen 王振芬 compared the calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* and *The Sūtra on the Metaphor 譬喻經*, dated the first year of Ganlu in the Former Qin 359 CE 前秦甘露元年), (Figure 3) and identified the calligraphic style of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* by Buddhist monk scribe Zhu Fashou as being in the Zhong You 鍾繇 tradition of calligraphy,⁸ which was mainly used in writing official government documents of the Western Jin, ‘*Jinshu Zhengxie 晉書正寫*,’ or “*Zhengshu Jinyan 正書晉言*.”⁹ Owing to its authority, solemnity and faster writing speed than the official style of calligraphy, Standard Script, was not only used by government officials but was also adopted for

⁷ 若僧遷寶度慧精法欽道流僧叡道恢道欄道恒道悰等五百餘人，詳其義旨，審其文中，然後書之，以其年十二月十五日出盡，校正檢括，明年四月二十三日乃訖。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55.53, b3-11.

⁸ By the time of the Western Jin Dynasty, Zhong You’s 鍾繇 calligraphy of the standard script (*zhangchengshu 章程書*) had been adopted as the government official writing style. In the Western Jin, the *zhangchengshu 章程書* in Zhong You tradition was called *Jinshu Zhengxie 晉書正寫*, which was also used for writing sacred Buddhists texts.

⁹ Wang, Zhenfen 王振芬, 2006. 從西晉元康六年 (296 CE) 寫本探寫經體之源, (Research on the Origin of Buddhist Scripture’s Style: Based on the Manuscript of *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* Dated the 6th year of Yuankang Reign of the Western Jin), 書法叢刊 (Calligraphy Series), 2006-6, Vol.94, 文物出版社 Cultural Relics Publishing House, Beijing.p.1.

copying sacred books and writings, such as the Confucian classics and Buddhist sūtras, i.e., the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra*.¹⁰

Reviewing literary evidences from *Sengyou Catalogue* that specifically indicate that the calligraphic style used by Dharmarakṣa and Gautama Saṅghadeva's translation team before the 4th century was that of the Western Jin language (正書晉言), or the Standard Script *zhengshu* 正書, among which there are four sūtras written in the Standard Script of the Western Jin language; the data from Table 3 enables us to confidently conclude that the Standard Script was the main type of script used for copying Buddhist sūtras before the 4th century.

Table 3: Four Sūtras in Standard Script in *Sengyou Catalogue* 《出三藏記集》

Time	Buddhist Scribes	Nationalities	Buddhist Sutra	Calligraphic style
284	Rong Xiye 榮攜業 Hou Wuying 侯無英	Chinese	<i>Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra</i> 修行道地經	Standard Script 正書
290	Zhu Taixuan 祝太玄、 Zhou Xuanming 周玄明	Chinese	<i>Pañcaviṣāṭi-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra</i> 放光經 ¹¹	Standard Script 正書
291	Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠、 Nie Daozhen 聶道真	Chinese	<i>Tathāgatamahkaru ṅānirdeśa Sūtra</i> 如來大哀經 ¹²	Standard Script 正書晉言

¹⁰ A more detailed research about the use of Standard Script in Zhong You tradition in the Eastern Han period, please refer to my PhD thesis: TSUI Chung-hui (2010), *A Study of Early Buddhist Scriptural Calligraphy—Based on Buddhist Manuscripts found in Dunhuang and Turfan* (3-5 C), Chapter 1.

¹¹ 《出三藏記集卷7·放光經記第三》：「惟昔大魏潁川朱士行。以甘露五年（260 CE）出家學道為沙門。出塞西至於闐國。寫得正品梵書。胡本九十章。六十萬餘言。乙太康三年（282 CE）遣弟子弗如檀晉言法饒送經胡本至洛陽。住三年。復至許昌二年。後至陳留界倉垣水南寺。以元康元年五月十五日（291 CE）。眾賢者皆集議。晉書正寫。時執胡本者于闐沙門無叉羅優婆塞竺叔蘭口傳。祝太玄周玄明共筆受。正書九十章。凡二十萬七千六百二十一言。」（CBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 47, c11-28）

¹² 元康元年七月七日，燉煌菩薩支法護，手執胡經，經名如來大哀，口授聶承遠道真正書晉言，以其年八月二十三日訖，護親自覆校，當令大法光顯流布，其有攬者，疾得總持暢澤妙法。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55, 63, b14-18.

Time	Buddhist Scribes	Nationalities	Buddhist Sutra	Calligraphic style
397	Gautama Saṅghadeva (translation) 瞿曇僧伽提婆 Dao Ci 道慈筆受 Kan Hua 康化, Li Bao 李寶書寫	Chinese/Sogdian	<i>Mādhyamâgama</i> 中阿含經 ¹³	Standard Script 正書
481	Dharma-jātayaśas 曇摩伽陀耶舍	Central India	<i>Sutra of Innumerable Meanings</i> 無量義經 ¹⁴	Clerical Script 隸書

2. Early Buddhist Scribes along the Silk Road

It is furthermore noteworthy that Dharmarakṣa was assisted by a group of various ethnics from Central Asia, India as well as native Han Chinese. A multi-ethnic cultural translation team included around thirty more assistants or scribes from various geographical regions of Central Asia. Zhu Fashou was one of the foreign monk scribes in Dharmarakṣa's translation team.

Through an analysis of the Table 2, we may classify the Buddhist scribes into three categories according to various ethnicities: (1) Chinese Buddhist scribes: the surnames of these scribes indicates they are Chinese; (2) Buddhist scribes from the Western Region (including Sogdian): the surnames of these scribes are Zhi 支, Zhu 竺, Bo 帛, Kang 康...; (3) Uncertain ethnicity: their ethnicity cannot be identified from their names. Based upon the above literary resources, information about the Buddhist scribes and script forms used by the scribes when they copied the sūtras can be learned from its scrutiny.¹⁵

¹³梁·僧祐《出三藏記集》卷9：「然後乃以晉隆安元年丁酉之歲十一月十日（397 AA）。於揚州丹楊郡。建康縣界在其精舍更出此中阿含。請罽賓沙門僧伽羅叉令講胡本。請僧伽提和轉胡為晉。豫州沙門道慈筆受吳國李寶唐化共書。至來二年戊戌之歲六月二十五日。草本始訖。此中阿含凡有五誦。都十八品。有二百二十二經。合五十一萬四千八百二十五字。分為六十卷。時遇國大難未即正書。乃至五年辛丑之歲。方得正寫校定流傳。」（CBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 64, a11-20）

¹⁴《出三藏記集卷□·無量義經序第二十二》：「忽有武當山比丘慧表。生自羌胄。偽帝姚略從子。國破之日為晉軍何澹之所得。數歲聰黠。澹之字曰螟蛉。養為假子。俄放出家。便勤苦求道。南北遊尋不擇夷險。以齊建元三年（481AA）。復訪奇搜祕遠至嶺南。於廣州朝亭寺。遇中天竺沙門曇摩伽陀耶舍。手能隸書口解齊言。」（XBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 68, a29-b6）

¹⁵ See Appendix 4 in TSUI Chung-hui (2010). PhD thesis, p.423-425.

2.1. Chinese Buddhist Scribes

The first Buddhist monk to assist An Shigao 安世高 (active 2nd century CE)¹⁶ in the transcription of Buddhist texts in the Eastern Han (25-220 CE), was the Chinese monk Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調 (ca.117–197 CE).¹⁷ In 148 CE, An Shigao 安世高, went to Luoyang as a Parthian missionary where he established an informal translation group. He worked alongside An Xuan, 安玄 (active 181 CE), and Yan Fotiao.¹⁸ An Xuan was a merchant who went to Luoyang around 185–189 CE.¹⁹ Yan Fotiao joined An Shigao and An Xuan to translate the sūtras, and translated the *Ugradattapariprccha* (*Fajing jing* 法鏡經).²⁰ During the translation Yan Fotiao wrote down *bishou* 筆受, the oral translation of An Xuan.²¹ This could have been a very early informal organization for translating Buddhist scriptures in China. There were some 35 Buddhist scriptures in 41 fascicles, and 20 of these are still in existence.²²

There were other Chinese scribes who assisted the foreign monks during the initial stages. Among these were Meng Fu 孟福, Zhang Lian 張蓮, and Foda 佛大, according to records from *Sengyou Catalogue*. The Buddhist text translation teams were still on a small scale during these early stages. In the translation team of Lokakṣema 支讖 (ca.167 CE), and Zhu Shufo, 竺朔佛 (active 178–189 CE), the texts were translated by the two foreign monks and then written down by the Chinese scribes Meng Fu 孟福 and Zhang Lian 張蓮 at Luoyang. The sūtras

¹⁶ An Shigao was a Parthian Buddhist monk translator, who was one of the earliest foreign monks to translate a large number of Buddhist texts into Chinese during the late Eastern Han.

¹⁷ 玄與沙門嚴佛調, 共出法鏡經, 玄口譯梵文, 佛調筆受, 理得音正." *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 a14-15.

¹⁸ Yan Fotiao was also the first monk in the history of Chinese Buddhism. "玄與沙門嚴佛調, 共出法鏡經, 玄口譯梵文, 佛調筆受, 理得音正, 盡經微旨郢匠之義見述後代, 佛調, 臨淮人也, 綺年穎悟, 敏而好學, 信慧自然, 遂出家修道, 通譯經典見重於時, 世稱安侯, 都尉, 佛調三人傳譯號為難繼, 佛調又撰十慧, 並傳於世, 安公稱, 佛調出經省不煩全本妙巧." *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 a14-20.

¹⁹ Ma Yong 馬雍. 1990. 東漢後期來華中亞人考 (Survey of Central Asian People went to China during the Late Eastern Han) in 西域史地文物叢考 (Essays on History and Cultural Heritage of Western Region), 文物出版社. Cultural Relics Publishing House, Beijing. p.5.

²⁰ Zurcher, p.34, "...the attribution is confirmed by Kang Seng-hui 康僧會 (mid. 3rd c.) ' of Wu in the Three Kingdoms.

²¹ According to the 6th chapter of the *You Lu* 祐 : "...Yan Fotiao took down the dictation by An Xuan 安玄, the language of what he transmitted was archaic but achieved the meaning of Buddha's doctrine", (...都尉 [An Xuan 安玄] 口陳, 嚴調筆受, 言既稽古, 義又微妙.) .

²² Mizuno, p.45.

included the *Pratyutpannasamādhi Sūtra* in 179 CE,²³ the *Akṣobhya-buddha-kṣetra Sūtra* 阿閼佛國經, and the *Mahāsaṅghata Sūtra* 大集經²⁴... etc., in 186 CE. The translation team of two other Buddhist scribes consisted of Foda 佛大, and Lokakṣema, who participated in the oral translation of the *Aśāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 道行經 in 179 CE at Pusasi 菩薩寺 in the western Luoyang city.²⁵ Although Foda's 佛大 nationality is unknown, Meng Fu 孟福 and Zhang Lian 張蓮 were native Chinese and pious Buddhists 清信士 of Henan Province.²⁶

2.2. Buddhist Scribes from Central Asia

From the above discussion we know that when Buddhism was transmitted to China from the Eastern Han onwards, many Buddhist monks or laymen from Central Asia played important roles in translating and writing the Buddhist texts.²⁷ Most Buddhist texts were mainly introduced into China by Buddhist monks from the Western Region, such as Kāśyapamātanga 加攝摩騰 (active ca.67 CE-), Dharmaratna 竺法蘭 (active ca.67 CE-), An Shigao 安世高 (d.ca.170 CE),²⁸ Lokakṣema 支謙 (or 支婁迦讖 147-185 CE).....etc., from Yuezhi, Central India, Parthia, Kucha, or the ancient Kushan Empire of the Central Asia.²⁹ Chinese scholars presumed that the Yuezhi were probably a

²³ 《出三藏記集》 般舟三昧經, 光和二年十月八日 (179 XE), 天竺菩薩竺朔佛於洛陽出, 菩薩法護時傳言者, 月支菩薩支謙授與, 河南洛陽孟福字元士, 隨侍菩薩, 張蓮字少安筆受, 令後普著, 在建安十三年□於佛寺中校定悉具足, 後有寫者, 皆得南無佛, 又言, 建安三年歲在戊子八月八日 (208 XE) 於許昌寺校定. "Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 48 c10-16,

²⁴ 沙門支婁迦讖, 月支國人, 操行純深性度開敏, 稟持法戒諷誦群經, 志在宣弘遊方化物, 以桓帝建和元年歲次丁亥, 至靈帝中平三年歲次丙寅, 於洛陽譯阿閼佛國經 (二卷) 大集經 (二十七卷), 般若道行品經 (十卷), 首楞嚴經 (二卷), 屯真陀羅尼經 (二卷) 阿闍世王經 (二卷) 無量清淨經 (二卷) 孝本經 (二卷), 般舟三昧經 (二卷), 古品遺日說般若經 (一卷), 寶積經 (一卷), 問署經 (一卷), 梵般泥洹經 (一卷), 阿闍世王問五逆經 (一卷) 兜沙經 (一卷), 內藏百品經 (一卷), 大方便報恩經 (一卷), 光明三昧經 (一卷), 禪經 (一卷), 雜譬喻經 (一卷), 阿育王太子壞目因·經 (一卷), 總二十一部合六十三卷, 審得本旨曾不加飾, 可謂善宣法要弘道之士, 河南清信士孟福張蓮等筆受." *An Illustrated Record of Translated Scriptures Past and Present*, T55. 348 c6-20,

²⁵ 《出三藏記集》 光和二年十月八日, 河南洛陽孟元士口授, 天竺菩薩竺朔佛時傳言者譯, 月支菩薩支謙時侍者南陽張少安南海子碧, 勸助者孫和周提立, 正光二年九月十五日洛陽城西菩薩寺中沙門佛大寫之." *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 47 c5-9,

²⁶ See Appendix 4 in TSUI Chung-hui (2010). PhD thesis, p. 423-425.

²⁷ Lin Meicun 林梅村, 1995. 西域文明--考古 民族 語言和宗教新論 *New Theory of Civilization of the Western Region*, Archaeology, Ethnicity, Language and Religion, p. 4.

²⁸ Chen, p.43. An Shigao 安世高 arrived at Luoyang during the reign of Emperor Huan 東漢桓帝 (ca.148 CE) .

²⁹ Mizuno, 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

branch of the Tocharian, who were active between Dunhuang and the Qilian Mountain. Due to their multicultural background these Buddhist monks were quite familiar with the various Central Asian languages.³⁰ Yang Fuxue suspected that the early translation of Buddhist scriptures used various languages, such as Tocharian, Sanskrit or Pali.³¹ The earliest languages of Buddhist scriptures probably used were Tocharian A (in Gaochang and Qarasahr 焉耆), and Tocharian B (which was popular in Kucha).³²

What is worthy of note from the list in Table 2, is that the number of foreign Buddhist scribes gradually increased from the 3rd century onwards. Buddhist scribes' nationalities can be ascertained from their family names, since their various surnames represented their geographic origins. Those Buddhist monks and translators might be good with several different kinds of Central Asian languages as well as Chinese.

However, what kind of Chinese writing script was adopted by Buddhist monk translators to write down the sacred texts during the period when Buddhism was initially transmitted into China? According to Ouyang Zhongshi 歐陽中石, "Clerical Script 漢隸 evolved gradually from Seal Script 篆書 and was in common use among the people during the late Warring States period (221-207 BCE). It reached its mature stage after the reign of Han Emperor Wu (140-87 BCE)."³³ Scholars such as Hua Rende 華人德,³⁴ generally believe that the gradual transformation of the mature Clerical Script 隸書 into Running Script 行書, Draft Cursive Script 章草 and Standard Script 正書 during the middle to late Han

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

³⁰ Yang, p.181.

³¹ "支樓迦識,亦直云支識,本月支人,操行純深性度開敏,稟持法戒以精勤著稱,諷誦群經志存直法,漢靈帝時遊於雒陽以光和中平之間,傳譯梵文,出般若道行般舟首楞嚴等三經,時有天竺沙門竺佛朔,亦以漢靈之時,齋道行經,來適雒陽,即轉梵為漢,時又有優婆塞安玄,安息國人,性貞白,深沈有理致,博誦群經多所通習,亦以漢靈之末,遊賈雒陽,以功號曰騎都尉,性·靖·恭,常以法事為己任,漸解漢言,志宣經典,常與沙門講論道義,世所謂都尉者也,玄與沙門嚴佛調共出法鏡經,玄口譯梵文,佛調筆受,理得音正盡經微旨,郢匠之美見述後代...." *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50.324, b13.

³² Lin Meicun 林梅村, (1995: 3).

³³ Ouyang Zhongshi 歐陽中石. 2008. *Chinese Calligraphy*, p.59.

³⁴ Hua Rende 華人德. 2009. 中國書法史-兩漢卷 (*History of Chinese Calligraphy*), 江蘇教育出版社 Education Press of Jiangsu Province. P. 15.

dynasty (25-220 CE) constituted the first peak in the history of Chinese calligraphy and exerted profound influence on the calligraphy of ensuing generations. As such, it led to a bloom of calligraphers during the Han Dynasty and marked the first peak period of calligraphy in Chinese history.³⁵ (Figure 4)

Due to the different cultural and language backgrounds, at the start the Buddhist scribes who assisted in writing the texts were local Chinese. As Buddhism grew in popularity more foreign monks or Buddhists also learned Chinese calligraphy as scribes and joined translation teams or copied sutras for circulation. One must take into consideration that it took time for foreign monks to become proficient in writing Chinese calligraphy. The Buddhist scribes or calligraphers from the Western Region really made great contributions to the transmission of the doctrine of Buddhism in Chinese history. However, they were largely unknown in the traditional history of Chinese calligraphy.

Some of them were translators, while some practiced Chinese calligraphy of high quality as professional Buddhist scribes. Some of them were also good in writing Chinese calligraphy because their ancestors had immigrated to China generations previously,³⁶ such as Kang Senghui 康僧會, Zhi Qian 支謙,³⁷ and Dharmarakṣa 竺法護³⁸ ... etc. They learned Chinese calligraphy with the utmost devotion, respect, and perseverance so that they may help to spread the teachings of the Buddha.

2.2.1. Zhi Qian 支謙

The very early foreign Buddhist translator and scribe was Zhi Qian 支謙 (active 223–253 CE). Zhi Qian was of Yuezhi origin and was the earliest foreign *upāsaka* translator.³⁹ He was also a skillful scribe⁴⁰ during the end of the Eastern Han until

³⁵ Hua Rende 華人德. (2009: 14-15).

³⁶ 康僧淵,本西域人,生於長安,貌雖梵人語實中國, *Βιογραφησι φη Εμνετι Μονκω*, T50. 346 χ28-29.

³⁷ 後有沙門維祇難者,天竺人也,以孫權 武三年齋曇鉢經胡本來至武昌,曇鉢即法句經也,時支謙請出經,乃令其同道竺將炎傳譯,謙寫為漢文," *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 a22-25.

³⁸ See *Sengyou Catalogue* (T55.97c20) .

³⁹ "時孫權已制江左,而佛教未行,先有優婆塞支謙,字恭明,一名越,本月支人,來遊漢境,初漢桓靈之世有支謙,譯出眾經,有支亮字紀明,資學於謙,謙又受業於亮,博覽經籍莫不精究,世間伎藝多所綜習,遍學異書通六國語,其為人細長黑瘦,眼多白而睛 時人為之語曰,支郎眼中 形軀雖細是智囊,漢獻末亂避地于吳,孫權聞其才慧,召見悅之,拜為博士,使輔導東宮," *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50. 325 a17-26.

the period of the Three Kingdoms. Zhi Qian's ancestors had immigrated to China from Yuezhi in the time of the Emperor Ling in the Eastern Han, 東漢靈帝 (r.156–189 CE). He had been well educated in the traditional Chinese culture since childhood, and had also studied Sanskrit when he reached adulthood. In the latter period of the Emperor Xian of the Eastern Han 東漢獻帝 (r.189–220 CE), when the Luoyang area was in chaos, Zhi Qian escaped to the Wu Kingdom in the south. In 224 CE, he joined the translation team of Wei Qinan 維祇難 and Zhu Jiangyan 竺將炎 who were both from India.⁴¹ These two Indian monks were not well versed in Chinese, which left the assigned task of writing down *Dhammapada* in the Chinese of the Wu Kingdom to Zhi Qian.⁴² According to the *Sengyou Catalogue*, Zhi Qian escaped together with a group of his countrymen to the southern Wu Region during the latter period of the reign of the Emperor Xian of the Eastern Han, r.189–220 CE, when chaos was spreading in Luoyang throughout the northern area. Zhi Qian received most of his formal education in Central China where the influence of Zhong You calligraphy was pervasive. Zhi Qian was renowned for his linguistic skills, being fluent in six languages. Zhi Qian's talent and abilities greatly impressed the ruler Sun Quan, 孫權 (182–252 CE) of Wu who appointed him as a prince tutor.⁴³ This record illustrates the very high level achievement of Zhi Qian's Chinese calligraphy and literature.

The record in the *An Outline of Historical Researches into the Śākya Family Lineage* (*Shi shi ji gu lue*, 釋氏稽古略),⁴⁴ states that Zhi Qian went to the southern Wu area

⁴⁰ “吳黃武二年 (223 CE), 西域月氏國優婆塞支謙, 字恭明, 博覽經籍遊洛邑, 黑瘦眼多白睛。時語曰, 支郎眼中, 形雖小是智囊, 避地歸吳, 吳主悅之拜為博士, 譯佛經一百二十九部凡一百五十二卷。謙受業於支亮, 亮字紀明, 亮受業於支識。世謂天下博知不出三支。” *An Outline of Historical Researches into the Śākya Family Lineage* 弘明集, T49. 770b20-26.

⁴¹ Zhi Qian translated many Buddhist sūtras, two of the important texts were *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* 維摩經 and the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment* 瑞應本起經。

⁴² “以孫權。武三年齋曇鉢經胡本來至武昌, 曇鉢即法句經也, 時支謙請出經, 乃令其同道竺將炎傳譯, 謙寫為漢文。時炎未善漢言, 頗有不盡, 然志存義本近於質, 實今所傳法句是也。白延者, 不知何許人, 魏正始之末重譯出首楞嚴, 又須賴及除災患經凡三部云。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96a23-28.

⁴³ “漢獻末亂避地於吳, 孫權聞其才慧, 召見悅之, 拜為博士, 使輔導東宮, 與韋曜諸人共盡匡益, 但生自外域, 故吳志不載。” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50.325a25-27.

⁴⁴ “吳黃武二年 (223CE), 西域月氏國優婆塞支謙, 字恭明, 博覽經籍遊洛邑, 黑瘦眼多白睛。時語曰, 支郎眼中, 形雖小是智囊, 避地歸吳, 吳主悅之拜為博士, 譯佛經一百二十九部凡一百五十二卷, 謙受業於支亮, 亮字紀明, 亮受業於支識, 世謂天下博知不出三支 (弘明集)。” *An Outline of Historical Researches into the Śākya Family Lineage*, T49.770b20-26.

from Luoyang between 189 and 220 CE. He translated 129 volumes *bu* 部 with a total of 152 fascicles *juan* 卷 of Buddhist sūtras, fifty-three of which are still in existence. Zhi Qian's translation project was mainly carried out in the south. Some early important texts, such as the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* 維摩詰經, and the *S(tra of Perfect Enlightenment* 瑞應本起經, were translated by Zhi Qian. There may have been other scribes working together as a collaborative team to assist in such a large project.

However, very little record is known about him and other foreign monks in official Chinese history because they were foreigners.⁴⁵ Zhi Qian's translations and transcriptions of Buddhist texts were made in the south. The Buddhist calligraphy of a man of his stature surely did not go unnoticed and had an influential effect in the southern region. According to my research of early Buddhist scriptural calligraphy, the mature Standard Script of the Zhong You tradition had been created in 176 CE during the Eastern Han period.⁴⁶ Archaeological findings proved that it was adopted as government official writing as well as for the public daily usage in north and south China.

A comprehensive review of the Dunhuang and Turfan Buddhist manuscripts did not find any fragments or manuscripts bearing dates before 300 CE which were attributed the sūtras translated by Zhi Qian. The earliest extant dated Buddhist manuscript of a sūtra whose translation is attributed to Zhi Qian was dated to 368 and 373 CE in the Former Liang 前涼 *Dhammapada* 法句經. (Figure 5) The calligraphic style of the manuscript of *Dhammapada* is very close to a non-Buddhist text - the manuscript *Biography of Sun Quan* (in History of the Kingdom of Wu) 三國志吳孫權傳, which was unearthed from ancient city Yingsha 英沙故城 in Turfan in 1965 and dated to the early fourth century. (Figure 5a, 5b) The calligraphy of both manuscripts still retained strong implication with the archaic style of bamboo slips in the Han dynasty.

As mentioned above, the earliest Buddhist manuscript *Buddhasaṅgati S(tra* was written by Zhu Fashou in 296 CE in the Zhong You 鍾繇 tradition of calligraphy. (Figure 6, Figure 6a) We observed that some fragments were Buddhist texts

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ See TSUI Chung-hui (2010). PhD thesis, Chapter 1.

originally translated by Zhi Qian and then copied in the Zhong You calligraphic tradition. The calligraphy also preserved the archaic style of the usage of bamboo slips during the Han dynasty.

2.2.2. Zhu Fashou 竺法首

One of the distinctive foreign Buddhist scribes in Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 translation team to draw our attention is Zhu Fashou 竺法首, who was probably of Yuezhi or Indian origin. According to a comprehensive survey from Sengyou Catalogue which focuses on the foreign monk translators and scribes in and before the 5th C (Table 2), historical documentation shows that an increasing number of foreign Buddhist scribes joined the translation team of Dharmarakṣa from the Western Jin. Of further significance is that after the time of Zhu Fashou in 292 CE, more foreign and Sogdian scribes had acquired the ability to write Chinese calligraphy and join the translation team in the late 3rd to early 5th centuries.

The Buddhist manuscript, *Buddhasaṃgāti Sūtra*, was excavated at Turfan in the early 20th century. This manuscript has been determined to be the earliest Chinese Buddhist manuscript in existence, translated by Dharmarakṣa and written by his disciples, Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 (from Luoyang) and Zhu Fashou 竺法首. It was written in the Western Jin style, using the Standard Script “zhengshu” of the Zhong You 鍾繇 (ca.151-230 CE) tradition, dated 296 CE, four years later than the date of the original translation 292 CE. Hence, it was written about 60 years after Zhong You had passed away. It is the earliest example discovered to date of the Standard Script style which includes the exact date and name written on paper from the Western Jin period.

According to records in the *Senyou Catalogue*, Zhu Fashou 竺法首 joined Dharmarakṣa's translation group three times. (Table 4) His first joining was in 292 CE, at Luoyang, to translate the *Buddhasaṃgāti Sūtra*,⁴⁷ his second in 294 CE (at Jiuquan 酒泉, to translate *Acaladharmamudrā Sūtra* 聖法印經) and the third

⁴⁷ See Appendix 4 (Buddhist scribes/calligraphic styles in translation teams, 181-439 CE) in TSUI Chung-hui (2010). PhD thesis, p.423-425.

time was to translate the *Tathāgatajñānamudrāsamādhi Sūtra* 佛說慧印三昧經 and *Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi Sūtra* 佛說濟諸方等學經 respectively.

Table 4: Main Buddhist scribes in Dharmarakṣa's translation team

(The scribes listed in the table who had joined the translation team to write down more than two Buddhist sūtras)

Buddhist Scribes	Year	Sūtras
Nie Chengyuan, 聶承遠	266	<i>Suvikrāntacinti-devaputra-paripīcchā Sūtra</i> 須真天子經
Nie Chengyuan	286	<i>Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāramitā Sūtra</i> 光讚般若經
Nie Chengyuan	286	<i>Saddharma-puṣṭīkā Sūtra</i> 正法華經
Nie Chengyuan	289	<i>Vimaladattāparipīcchā Sūtra</i> 離垢施女經
Nie Daozhen 聶道真	289	<i>Paramārthasamvṛtisanirdesa Sūtra</i> 文殊師利淨律經
Nie Daozhen	289	<i>Mañjuśrīśrīvīkuroṣṭāpanavarta Sūtra</i> 魔逆經
Nie Daozhen	291	<i>Śūramgamasamādhi Sūtra</i> 首楞嚴三昧經
Nie Chengyuan, Nie Daozhen	291	<i>Tathāgatopattisambhavanirdeśa Sūtra</i> 如來興顯經
Zhu Fashou 竺法首, Nie Chengyuan	292	<i>Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra</i> 諸佛要集經
Zhu Fashou	294	<i>Acalaḍḍharmamudrā Sūtra</i> 聖法印經
Zhu Fashou	294	<i>Tathāgatajñānamudrāsamādhi Sūtra</i> 佛說慧印三昧經
Zhu Fashou	294	<i>Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi Sūtra</i> 佛說濟諸方等學經
Nie Chengyuan	297	<i>Daśabhūmika Sūtra</i> 漸備一切智經

In 292 CE, Zhu Fashou and Nie Chengyuan worked together to write down the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* at Luoyang 洛陽. Because there is no record of Nie Chengyuan traveling to Dunhuang or Jiuquan 酒泉, Chen Guocan 陳國燦 speculates that the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* was copied by Zhu Fashou at Jiuquan first in 296 CE, and then brought to Turfan subsequently.⁴⁸ Thus, the manuscript

⁴⁸ Chen Guocan 陳國燦, 1983. 吐魯番出土的殘卷與敦煌高僧竺法護的譯經考略, (A Brief Examination of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* Found at Turfan and the *sūtra* Translated by the Eminent Monk of

of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* was probably a copy made by Zhu Fashou primarily for circulation purposes. The colophon of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* is the earliest record of the transcription of a Buddhist sūtra into Chinese. The fragment is still well preserved today, with 18 lines of characters written in ink, with five lines of colophons with the dates, names of the scribes, number of characters, and a wish for this sūtra to be spread widely. It was recorded that:

“On the twelfth day of the first month of the second year of the Yuan-kang (12th Jan. 292 CE), the Yuezhi bodhisattva Dharmarakṣa (Fahu 法護), holding in his hand ...conferred it upon Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 and the *upādhyāya*, disciple, *śramaṇa* 竺法首 who took it down in writing *bishou* 筆 [受]). May this sūtra be spread in ten directions [so that others] will carry out the magnanimous [work of] conversion (戴佩弘化) and quickly achieve.... this was copied on the eighteenth day of the third month of the sixth year of the Yuankang reign period (18th Mar., 296 CE). Altogether there are three scrolls and twelve chapters totaling 19,596 characters.”⁴⁹

□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”⁵⁰

The inscription records that “Nie Chengyuan took down in writing *bishou*;⁵¹ and

Dunhuang Dharmarakṣa), 敦煌學輯刊 (Collected Articles on Dunhuang Studies) Lanzhou, (1983-4: 6-13).

⁴⁹ English translation after Boucher, Daniel J. PhD thesis p.81. Buddhist translation procedures in third-century China: A study of Dharmarakṣa and his translation idiom, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (0175), 1996.

⁵⁰ Boucher, Daniel J. (1996: 81), The character “萬” was a writing error by Zhu Fashou. The correct character is “卷” (scroll).

⁵¹ There is one character lost in this sentence, it could be “口授” or “筆授.” Nie Chengyuan helped both dictation and writing down the translation from Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 because he was also good

the *upādhyāya* disciple, *śramaṇa* Zhu Fashou 竺法首 bi [wrote, copy].” (筆授聶承遠和上弟子沙門竺法首筆). (Figure 2)

Zhu Fashou deliberately wrote down his dedicatory prayer (*fayuanwen* 發願文) as a postscript of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* which reads:

“May this sūtra be spread in the ten directions so that others will carry out the magnanimous work of conversion (戴佩弘化) and quickly achieve...”

Close examination of the manuscript of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* shows that it was copied in the very standard and reverent format of Buddhist sūtra calligraphy. Comparisons made with Zhu Fashou’s calligraphy of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* show it too was done in a very orderly and precise handwriting using the Standard Script. Each stroke was made in a very careful and deferential manner. Zhu Fashou’s calligraphy was described by Sengyou in Sengyou’s Catalogue as being, “very tidy calligraphy with a dense structure 書甚緊潔.”⁵² This very short description of his calligraphy reflected the sublimely spiritual world of a Buddhist monk as well as a scribe. However, when examined more carefully, the calligraphy of Zhu Fashou’s manuscript reveals a static, hesitant, and over-cautious nature, one illustration being that the axis of the vertical lines lack fluent flow (*hangqi* 行氣) in the composition. This is because the manuscript was a copy from a model (*linxie* 臨寫) and not an original.

Meanwhile in 294 CE, Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 translated the *Acaladharmamudrā Sūtra* 聖法印經, at Jiuquan 酒泉, with Ju Fashou as his scribe. Ju Fashou’s written vow was “may the profound dharma be disseminated in ten directions, and the great vehicle established forever.”⁵³ In the same year, the other two sūtras *Tathāgatajñānamudrāsamādhi Sūtra* 佛說慧印三昧經, and *Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi Sūtra* 佛說濟諸方等學經, were also written down by Zhu Fashou. The written vow of *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* and *Acaladharmamudrā Sūtra* is a decisive indicator

in Sanskrit. 《出三藏記集》卷8：「持心經記第十出經後記。 大康七年三月十日。 燉煌開士竺法護在長安說出梵文授承遠。」(CBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 57, c19-21)

⁵² “慧印三昧及濟方等學二經序讀第十六, “其軸題云, 燉煌菩薩沙門支法護所出, 竺法首筆受, 共為一卷, 寫以流通, 軸用淳漆, 書甚緊潔, 點製可觀, 究尋義趣, 或微或顯。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 50 c27- 51 a1.

⁵³ “元康四年十二月二十五日(294 CE), 月支菩薩沙門曇法護, 於酒泉演出此經, 弟子竺法首筆受, 令此深法普流十方大乘常住。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 51 b5-7.

that Zhu Fashou was a well-trained professional Buddhist scribe who adhered to a solemn *bodhicitta* (*bodhayecitta*□*pari*□*āmya*) vow.

This raises the question: who taught the foreign Indian monk Zhu Fashou to write Chinese calligraphy? Was his teacher the senior scribe Nie Chengyuan, who had been a member of Dharmarakśa's translation team for the longest time? He was in fact the oldest and probably most skilled scribe and calligrapher in the group, Nie Chengyuan certainly would be a chief candidate. (Table 4) In order to clarify this point, we comprehensively surveyed the records from *Sengyou Catalogue* of the important Buddhist scribes who attended Dharmarakśa's translation team and had written down at least two Buddhist sūtras as listed in the Table 3.

From the Table 4, it clearly shows that the earliest record of Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 in *Sengyou Catalogue* was his translation of the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputrapari*□*ccha Sūtra* 須真天子經 in 266 CE, and the last record was his translation of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* 漸備一切智經 in 297 CE. The time span of his membership of the translation team was at least 30 years. According to *Sengyou Catalogue*,⁵⁴ Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 was intelligent and possessed a firm aspiration to help Dharmarakśa promote Buddhism. He and his son devoted most of their lives to transcribing Buddhist texts.⁵⁵ According to records in the *Changfang Catalogue*,⁵⁶ Dharmarakśa's translation project began in 265 CE, the first year of the Taishi era, Emperor Wudi of the Western Jin 晉武帝太始元年, and lasted until 308 CE, the 2nd year of Yongjia, Emperor Huaidi 晉懷帝永嘉二年. A total of 154 sūtras and 309 fascicles *juan* 卷 were translated by Dharmarakśa. Much of the responsibility pertaining to the assistance of the writing translation

⁵⁴“初護於西域得超日明經胡本譯出，頗多繁重，時有信士聶承遠，乃更詳正文偈，刪為二卷，今之所傳經是也，承遠明練有才理篤志法務，護公出經多參正焉。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 98 a23-27.

⁵⁵“清信士聶承遠，及子道真，竺法首，陳士倫，孫伯虎，虞世雅等共承護旨執筆詳校，而護孜孜所務唯以弘通為業，終身寫譯勞不告倦，經法所以廣流東夏者護之力也。” *Zhenyuan Catalogue*. T55. 794 a20-24.

⁵⁶“月支國沙門曇摩羅察，晉言法護，本姓支，遊西域解三十六國語及書，從天竺國大齋梵本婆羅門經，來達玉門，因居燉煌，遂稱竺氏，後到洛陽及往江左，起武帝世太始元年，至懷帝世永嘉二年，其間在所遇，便譯，經信士聶承遠執筆助翻，卷軸最多，而高僧傳唯云護出一百六十五部，僧祐出三藏集記止，一百五十四部三百九卷，其中釋道安，又闕四部祐足。” *Changfang Catalogue*. T49. 64 c14-23.

team was given to Nie Chengyuan “[清]信士聶承遠執筆助翻卷軸最多 (T49. 64 c19-20),”⁵⁷ who had been working as a scribe for nearly thirty years before Zhu Fashou (292 CE), Bo Yuanxin 帛元信, Zhi Fadu 支法度 (297 CE), Kang Shu 康殊, and Bo Faju 帛法炬 (307 CE), joined Dharmarakśa’s translation team. Thirty years was unquestionably a long enough period of time for a dedicated and talented individual such as Nie Chengyuan to cultivate and achieve a very high level of expertise and artistry. He was probably the teacher of the other scribes, both Chinese and foreign monks. Who else amongst this group was more qualified than he? Dharmarakśa translated these sūtras in Chang’an or Luoyang, two cities where Nie Chengyuan was also active. His calligraphic training may have been directly influenced by the Central China or Zhong You’s model calligraphy.

The aforementioned information indicates that Nie Chengyuan was the oldest and most skilled calligrapher in Dharmarakśa’s translation team and was active until the end of the 3rd century. There is a very distinct possibility that he may have taught his students to write the sacred teachings of the Buddha in the standard or the clerical script. We can reasonably assume that, after his death, Nie Chengyuan’s calligraphy of these Buddhist texts would in fact be copied and modeled by other scribes and Buddhists. It is also noteworthy that in the above discussion of the scribes and early Buddhist calligraphy, the written vow in the colophon of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* (296 CE), and the *Acaladharmamudrā Sūtra* 聖法印經 (294 CE), written by Zhu Fashou, 竺法首 without question proclaims that Zhu Fashou was a well-trained professional Buddhist scribe.

In short, one of the most distinguished calligraphers, who worked as a scribe in the translation team of Dharmarakśa 竺法護, was the Chinese Buddhist scribe Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠. He played an extremely important role in the translation team of Dharmarakśa because most of the translated texts were directly transcribed; or he played some other role, in providing assistance to Dharmarakśa’s translation team. His calligraphy was probably modeled and learned by many foreign scribes in the translation team, and it may be presumed that Nie Chengyuan’s own calligraphic style was similar to the manuscript, the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra*, which was copied by Zhu Fashou.

⁵⁷ “其間在所遇 ▪ 便譯, 經信士聶承遠執筆助翻, 卷軸最多.” *Changfang Catalogue*. T49.64 c19-20.

2.3. The Sogdian Buddhist Scribes

According to the *Biography of Eminent Monks* 高僧傳, in the Three Kingdoms period, (220 - 280 CE), there were Buddhist monks from the Western Region of Kangju⁵⁸ with the family name of “Kang 康” or “An 安” who were skilled in Chinese calligraphy.⁵⁹ They participated in translation teams to become scribes, such as Kang Senghui, 康僧會 (? - 280 CE), a Sogdian,⁶⁰ whose ancestors came from Kangju 康居 in the Western Region.⁶¹ (Table 5) Kang Senghui 康僧會 was an accomplished calligrapher and Buddhist scribe.⁶² The Sogdian Buddhist monks, Kang Shu 康殊, and Bo Faju 帛法炬 transcribed the *Lalitavistarasūtra* 普曜經 in 308 CE.⁶³ These surnames related to their geographical origins, Bo Yuanxin 帛元信 and Bo Faju 帛法炬, having the surname Bo帛, came from Kizil. Zhi Fadu’s 支法度 surname indicates he came from Yuezhi, and Kang Shu 康殊, with the surname of Kang, indicates he was a Sogdian from Kangju 康居. Both Bo Yuanxin 帛元信, and Zhi Fadu 支法度, collaborated with Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 to transcribe the *Daśabhūmikāsūtra* 漸備一切智經 in 297 CE.

The colophon of the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* from *Sengyou Catalogue* recorded:

⁵⁸“康僧會。其先康居人。世居天竺。其父因商賈移于交趾。會年十餘歲。二親並亡。以至性聞。既而出家。礪行甚峻。為人弘雅有識量。篤志好學。明練三藏。博覽六典。天文圖緯多所貫。辯於樞機。頗屬文翰。時孫權稱制江左。而未有佛教。會欲運流大法。乃振錫東遊。以赤烏十年 (247 CE) 至建業。營立茅茨。設像行道。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 b1-7; “釋曇諦。姓康。其先康居人。漢靈帝時移附中國。獻帝末亂。移止吳興。” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50.370, c24-25.

⁵⁹ Wang Naidong. 王乃棟1991. 絲綢之路與中國書法藝術: 西域書法史綱 (*Silk Road and Chinese Calligraphic Art: Outline History of Western Region Calligraphy*), 新疆人民出版社 Xinjiang People's Publishing House, Wulumuqi. p.88.

⁶⁰ *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 b1-7.

⁶¹“會於建初寺譯出經法, 阿難念彌經, 鏡面王察微王梵皇王經, 道品及六度集, 並妙得經體文義允正, 又注安般守意法鏡道樹三經, 並製經序, 辭趣雅贍。義旨微密, 並見重後世, 會以晉武帝太康元年卒 (280 CE)。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 97 a12-17.

⁶²“康僧會, 其先康居人, 世居天竺, 其父因商賈, 移于交趾, 會年十餘歲。二親並終, 至孝服畢出家, 勵行甚峻, 為人弘雅有識量, 篤至好學, 明解三藏, 博覽六經, 天文圖緯多所綜, 辯於樞機。頗屬文翰。” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50. 325 a13-17.

⁶³ T55.0048b28.

“on the day *upo□adha* 本齋, in the fifth month of the year wuchen (戊辰), the 2nd year of the Yongjia reign (308 CE), the *bodhisattva śrama□a* Fahu 法護 was at the Tianshui Monastery, where he held the foreign (*hu*-version) text in his hand, and delivered it into Chinese orally. The *śrama□a* Kangshu and Bo Faju were scribes, and they wrote down the (*bishou* 筆受) texts.”⁶⁴

普曜經 “永嘉二年 (308 CE) 太歲在戊辰五月本齋, 菩薩沙門法護在天水寺, 手執胡本, 口宣晉言, 時筆受者, 沙門康殊, 帛法巨。”

Since both Kang Shu 康殊, who was Sogdian, and Bo Faju 帛法炬, who came from the Western Region, joined the translation team as scribes to transcribe the Buddhist texts into Chinese, they may have learned and studied Chinese calligraphy previously for many years.

A point to consider concerning the identity of the Buddhist scribes from the list in Table 2, is that there was an increasing number of scribes from the Western Region who joined Dharmarakṣa's translation group after Zhu Fashou 竺法首. From the late Eastern Han onwards, the Sogdians immigrated to the Central Plain along the Hexi Corridor and inter-married with the Chinese.⁶⁵ They were astute merchants conducting business along the Silk Road, and were also accomplished horsemen, hunters, and craftsmen.⁶⁶ In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the term “Hu” 胡 or “Zhaowu Jiuxing” 昭武九姓, referred to the nine family names of the Sogdians and represented families of the same origin, Kangju, such as Kang 康, He 何, Shi 史, Shi 石, Cao 曹, Mi 米, An 安... etc.⁶⁷ (Table 4)

⁶⁴ “普曜經, 永嘉二年太歲在戊辰五月, 本齋菩薩沙門法護, 在天水寺, 手執胡本口宣晉言, 時筆受者, 沙門康殊帛法巨.” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 48 b28-c1.

⁶⁵ Wu Yugui 吳玉貴 1997. 涼州粟特胡人安氏家族研究 (*Research on the Sogdian An Family of Liangzhou*), *Journal of Tang Studies*, 1997-3, 北京大學 Peiking University, Beijing. p. 303.

⁶⁶ It was said that Zhu Geliang 諸葛亮 cooperated with Sogdians to defeat Cao Cao 曹操 in the Three Kingdoms periods.

⁶⁷ Wu Yugui 吳玉貴 1997. p.303.

Table 5: Sogdiana (the region around Samarkand that straddles modern-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) as the Nine Jeweled Clans (*zhaowu jiuxing* 昭武九姓)

Clan	Chinese	Regions in Central Asia
An	安	Bukhara
Cao	曹	Kabudhan, Gubdan (north of the Zerafshan River)
He	何	Kushaniyah (between Samarkand and Bukhara)
Kan	康	Samarkand
Mi	米	Maimurgh (either southeast of the Zerafshan River or Panjikent)
Shi	史	Kesh (modern Shahrisabz)
Shi	石	Chach (modern Tashkent

From Valerie Hansen, *The Impact of the Silk Road Trade on a Local Community: The Turfan Oasis, 500-800*

2.3.1. Kang Fashi 康法識

According to records from Buddhist literary resources, some types of script which were used for Buddhist calligraphy were standard script *Zhengshu* 正書, cursive 草書, and cursive-clerical *Caoli* 草隸.⁶⁸ As cursive script was in the early 4th century that the now famous and accomplished Wang Xizhi, 王羲之 (ca.303–361 CE), under the influence of cursive style by Wang Xizhi, a type of faster writing “cursive-clerical” was developed. According to the *Biography of Eminent Monks*, there were two Sogdianas from the Western Region, Kang Fashi 康法識 and Kang Xin 康昕, contemporaries of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca.303–361 CE),⁶⁹ who were both famous for copying Buddhist sūtras and skilled at writing *Caoli* 草隸. The public was very impressed by their style of calligraphy. They had the ability to copy the Wang Xizhi style so precisely that it was impossible to distinguish theirs from the real thing.⁷⁰ There are no existing manuscripts or fragments of Kang Fashi 康法識 or Kang Xin 康昕 that have been

⁶⁸ See Appendix 4 in TSUI Chung-hui (2010) PhD thesis, p.423-425.

⁶⁹ “康法識 (c.374) 亦有義學之功, 而以草隸知名, 嘗遇康昕, 昕自謂筆道過識, 識共昕各作右軍草, 傍人竊以為貨, 莫之能別, 又寫眾經甚見重之,” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50.348, b2-5)

⁷⁰ Ibid.

found to date, but given what is stated as historical record, it may logically be presumed that the Buddhist scribes from the Western Region were quite capable of writing high quality Chinese calligraphy in the 4th century which was at an equally high level as that of the calligraphic sage Wang Xizhi.

2.3.2. An Huize 安慧則 (307-313)

As legend has it, a copy of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* made in Standard Script was written by a Sogdian Buddhist monk, An Huize 安慧則 (active ca. 307–313 CE, a contemporary of Dharmarakṣa). The “*Biography of Eminent Monks*” states that⁷¹ An Huize was not a scholarly and determined boy but, upon reaching adulthood, he went on to become famous for his eloquence and skill at writing Standard Script calligraphy 正書 during the Yongjia reign at the Dashi Monastery 大市寺 in Luoyang.⁷² At one point he made a copy of the larger version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 大品經 (摩訶般若波羅蜜經), totaling ten volumes of work,⁷³ on a particular variety of very fine silk for the purpose of making it as an offering. The characters of his writing were small, the size of beans, yet they could still be clearly read.⁷⁴ He sent his manuscript on silk as a gift to a military general, Zhou Min 周閔, who was a pious Buddhist in the Western Jin.⁷⁵ Every indication from historical records indicates that An Huize studied and learned Chinese calligraphy during the late 3rd century in Central China. It would seem so unlikely as to make it almost an impossibility that his

⁷¹ “安慧則,未詳氏族, 少無恒性卓越異人而工正書善談吐, 晉永嘉中天下疫病, 則晝夜祈誠, 願天神降藥以愈萬民, 一日出寺門見兩石形如甕, 則疑是異物, 取看之, 果有神水在內, 病者飲服莫不皆愈, 後止洛陽大市寺, 手自細書・繡寫大品經一部, 合為一卷, 字如小豆,而分明可識, 凡十餘本, 以一本與汝南周仲智妻胡母氏供養, 胡母過江齋經自隨, 後為災火所延, 倉卒不暇取經,悲泣懊惱, 火息後乃於灰中得之, 首軸顏色一無虧損, 於時同見聞者莫不迴邪改信, 此經今在京師簡靖寺首尼處, 時洛陽又有康慧持者, 亦神異通靈云,” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50. 389 b9-22

⁷² *Pearl Forest in Dharma Garden*, 法苑珠林 T53. 0417b05.

⁷³ The larger version *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 大品經 copied by An Huize was probably the version translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 in 286 C.E., it was *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāramita* 光讚經 (T 222.8.147a–216b.) in ten fascicles with a total of 25,000 lines.

⁷⁴ *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50. 389 b9-22.

⁷⁵ “晉周閔, 汝南人也, 晉護軍將軍, 世奉法, 蘇峻之亂都邑人士皆東西滅遷, 閔家有品一部, 以半幅八丈素反覆書之, 又有餘經數囊, 品亦雜在其中, 既當避難單行不能得盡持去, 尤惜品不知在何囊中, 倉卒應去, 不展尋搜裘回嘆咤, 不覺品忽自出外, 閔驚喜持去, 周氏遂世寶之, 今云尚在, 一說云, 周高婦胡母氏有素書品, 素廣五寸, 而品一部盡在焉, 又並有舍利, 銀甕貯之, 並緘於深篋, 永嘉之亂胡母將避兵南奔, 經及舍利自出篋外, 因取懷之以渡江東, 又嘗遇火不暇取經, 及屋盡火滅得之於灰燼之下, 儼然如故, 會稽王道子就高曾雲, 求以供養, 後嘗暫在新渚寺, 劉敬叔雲, 曾親見此經, 字如麻大巧密分明, 新渚寺今天安是也, 此經蓋得道僧釋慧則所寫也, 或云, 嘗在簡靖寺, 靖首尼讀誦之” *Pearl Forest in Dharma Garden* 法苑珠林, T53. 417b.

Standard Script calligraphic style was not influenced by the Zhong You tradition.⁷⁶

3. Conclusion

Before the invention of printing technology, the ancient books, or Buddhist texts, were all dependent on scribes for copying. Despite their immeasurable importance, these scribes remain unknown and were ignored by historians or art historians. In the process of spreading Buddhism into China, Buddhist monks, translators, scribes, and members of the laity joined translation teams to translate, write down, or copy Buddhist texts. Examining of the calligraphic styles of Buddhist manuscripts based on an analysis of early Buddhist scriptures before 500 CE and the calligraphic styles used by Central Asian Buddhist translators and scribes in copying Buddhist texts, it can be concluded that the Standard Script was the main writing script form used in copying sacred sūtras before the 5th century. In this paper, we also explored the identity of some important Central Asian Buddhist scribes during the period when Buddhism was initially transmitted into China.

⁷⁶Sun Chuanpo 孫傳波. 2007. 旅順博物館藏吐魯番出土北朝時期佛經殘片書體探源 (Origin of the Calligraphy of the Buddhist Manuscripts of the Northern Dynasty Unearthed from Turfan in Lüshun Museum Collection), 大連文物, 2007-11, http://www.whj.dl.gov.cn/info/158883_179189.vm. “對於寫經體的書法特色，來方家多有論述。有的認為‘是從隸到楷衍變過程中，形形色色的楷書體’，有的認為寫經體是隸書體向楷體的過渡，但多數論者是從書法特點的角度來分析，且多以敦煌寫經為範本來進行研究，很少及吐魯番北朝寫經體的具體特點與其書體之源。”

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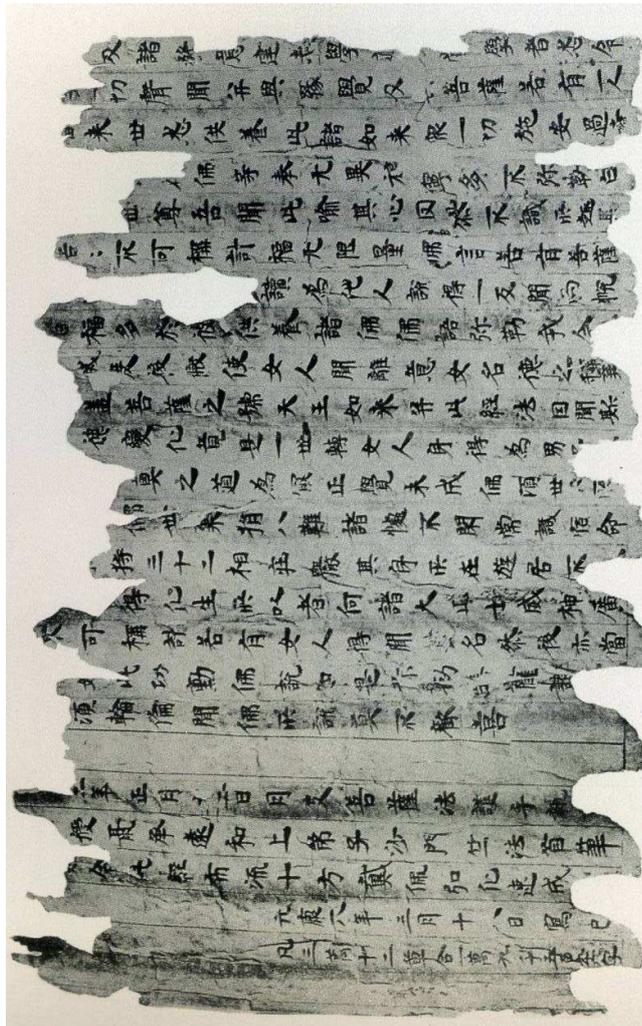


Figure 4. The earliest existing Buddhist manuscript, the Buddhasaṅgīti Sūtra, 諸佛類集經 dated 296 CE, was found at the Buddhist site, Toyuq, in Turfan in 1908.

From : Chinese Calligraphy, p.147.

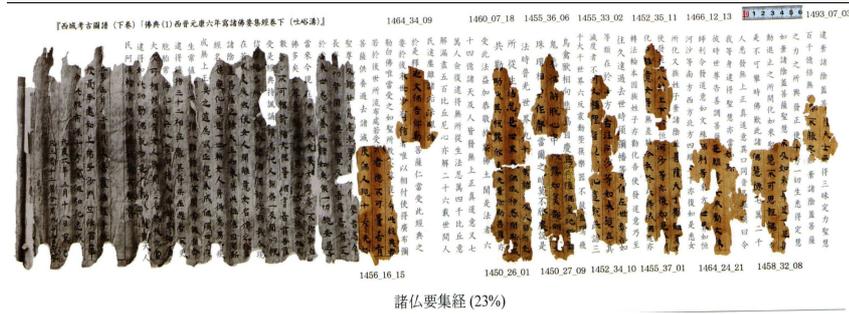


Figure 1a. Fragments of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra* 諸佛要集經, Ink on paper.

Dated 296 CE (the 6th year of Yuankang reign in the Western Jin西晉元康六年), excavated from Toyuq, Turfan.

(The picture was reconstructed from several fragments of the *Buddhasaṅgati Sūtra*. The largest one on the left went missing after it was first published in 1915 in the *Seiki kōko zūfu*. The 14 smaller fragments on the right were rediscovered during a research project conducted by the Lüshun Museum and the Ryukoku University Library from 2003 to 2006.)

From: 旅順博物館藏新疆出土漢文佛經選粹 (Selections of Chinese Buddhist Manuscripts from Lushun Museum Collection) p.2

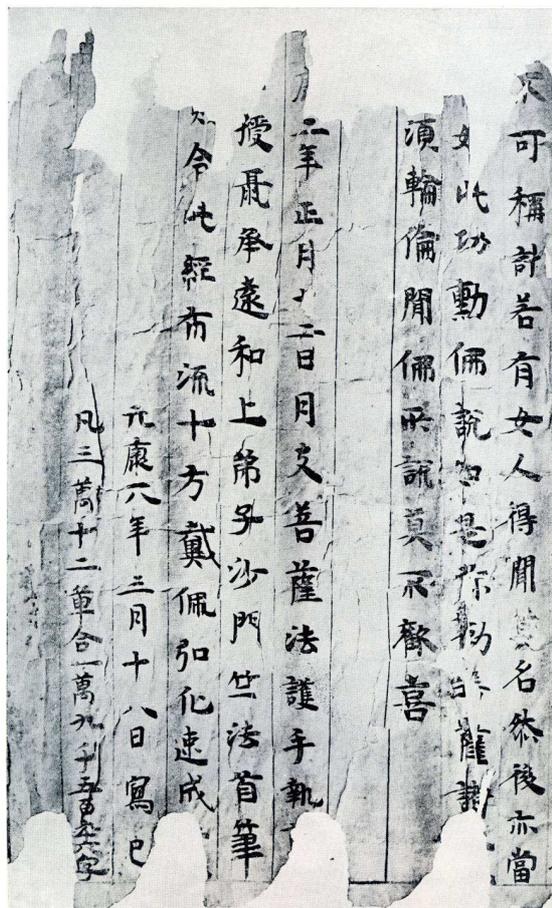


Figure 5. The colophon of *Buddhasa xg xti S(tra*

It records that “Nie Chengyuan took down in writing bishou; and the upādhyāya disciple, śramaṇa Zhu Fashou 竺法首 bi [wrote, copy].”

「授聶承遠和上弟子沙門竺法首筆」.

From : Nigensha, 1967. Rikuchō shakei shū 六朝寫經集 (Collection of Buddhist Manuscripts of the Six Dynasties), p.1.

譬喻經第廿
出廣演品
昔佛在舍衛國說法教化天龍鬼神帝王人民三
時聽經彼時國王名波斯匿為人憍慢放恣
情欲日減於色目訖於聲鼻著臭香口恣
味身受細滑食餼極美初无厭足人言遂多
恒告飢渴憂懼而思處以食為常身體肥盛
乘輦不暇臥起呼吸喧苦極辛聞息輒絕
驚寤時驚覺坐臥身呻吟患苦身重不能轉
側以身為患便勅羣駕往到佛所侍者扶持問
信却坐叉手白佛言世尊處侍覲省諮受无階

Figure 6. *The Sūtra on the Metaphor*, 譬喻經出廣演品

Dated the first year of Ganlu reign in the Former Qin (359 CE).

359.24 x 239.3 mm, ink on paper, (figure from *Chinese Calligraphy*, p.170)

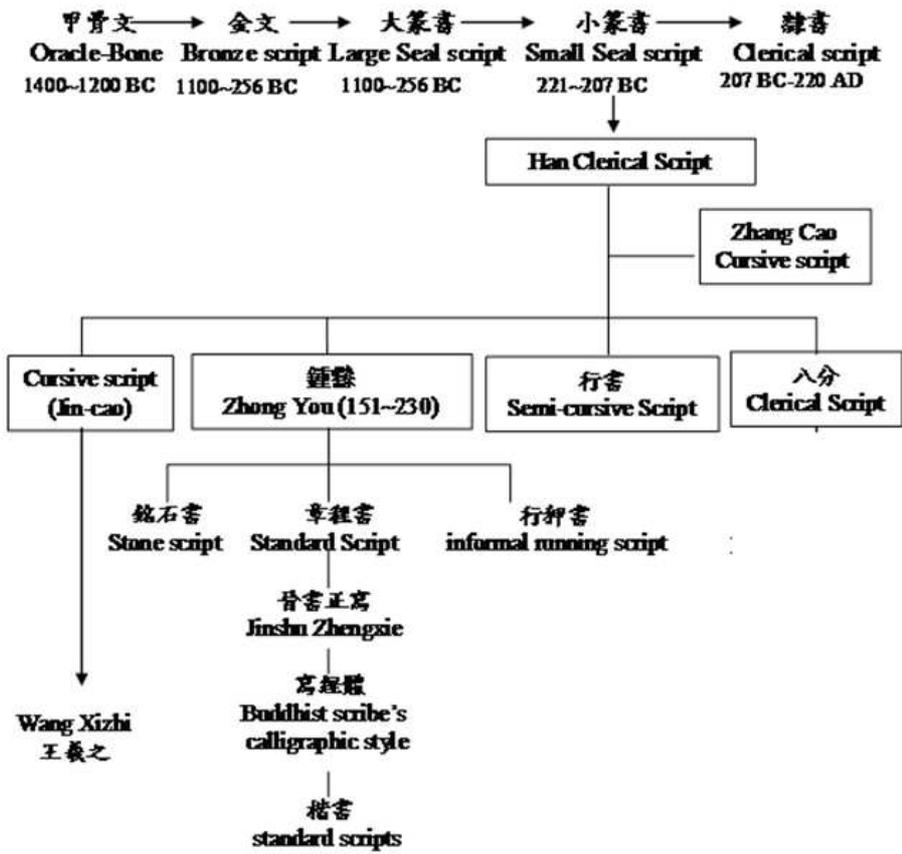


Figure 4. Evolution of styles of Chinese calligraphy

The transformation of various scripts from Clerical Script in the Han Dynasty



Figure 5. Dhammapada 法句經, attributed to Zhi Qian's 支謙 translation.

135 cm × 24.9 cm, scroll, ink on yellow hemp paper 黃麻紙,

Gansu Provincial Museum collection,

From : Xu Zufan 徐祖藩, 1985, 敦煌遺書書法選 (Selection of Dunhuang Manuscripts Calligraphy)



Figure 5a. Enlargement of calligraphy of *Dhammapada*
法句經



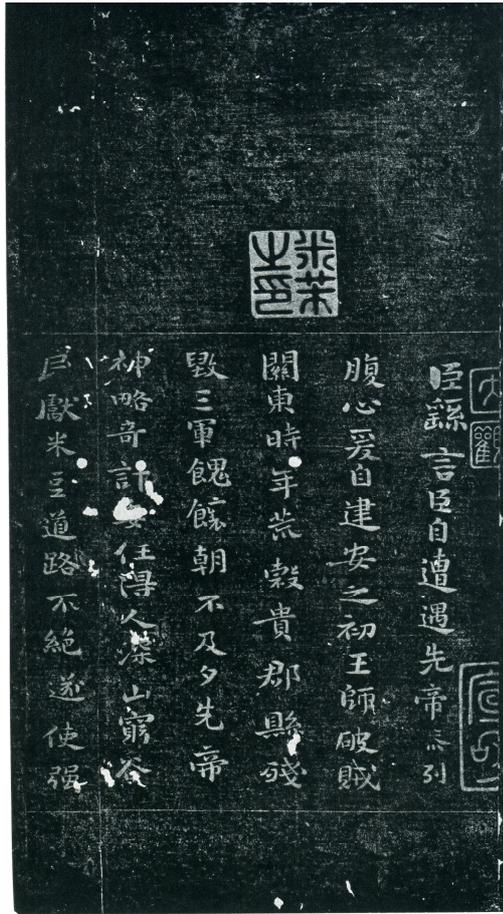
Figure 5b. Biography of Sun Quan (in *History of the Kingdom of Wu*) 三國志吳志孫權傳, retaining strong influence from the writing of bamboo slips.

像 常 元 鍾



Figure 6. Portrait of Zhong You

From: *Shodō zenshū*, V.3, p.24.



薦季直表(真賞齋帖)

Figure 6a. Rubbing of Zhong You Memorial Recommending Jhi zhi 薦季直表,

12.6 x 40.4 cm

Wei of Three Kingdoms, 221 CE, was a work of the later phase by Zhong You,

From Zhen Shang Zhai Tie 真賞齋帖, a model calligraphy book of the Ming dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing.

From: *Shodō zenshū*, V.3, p.111.