Abstract

The earliest existing Chinese Buddhist manuscript found in the world, the Buddhāśāṅkṛiti Sūtra, was excavated at Toyuq 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 (Figure 1, 1a) who was one of the distinctive Buddhist scribes in Dharmarakṣa 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.¹ (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, 

¹ See Guo Feng 程峰, 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manuscripts were scattered in different countries’ collections, some were lost, and some are in private collections and unpublished.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 程峰 statistics compiled in 1991, Fang Guangchang 方廣銘 in 2003, and Xia Shengping 夏生平 in 2008.
cultural, and religious development of the Silk Road, as well as for the historical
Tsui Chunghui

development of Chinese calligraphy.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dunhuang</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>13,300</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turfan</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these numerous manuscripts, the earliest existing Chinese Buddhist manuscript found in the world, the *Buddhāsaṅghāti Sūtra*, was excavated at Toyuq in Turfan, and was dated the sixth year of Yuan Kang 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) 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) who was one of the Buddhist scribes in Dharmaraksä 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 香川典蔵, 《西域考古圖譜》卷下 (日本: 國際社, 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 笔受, 笔授”, or “shoushou 手受.” 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 Buddhists 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 笔受) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Translation team</th>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Number of scribes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ca.181</td>
<td>An Xuan 安玄</td>
<td>Yan Fotiao 嚴佛訓</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca.186</td>
<td>Lokak erna 卜伽</td>
<td>Foda 佛大, Mengfu 孟福, Zhanglian 張進</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>Wei Qinan 維淨</td>
<td>Zhi Qian 賢  (active 223-253)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bishou 笔受 (or 笔授) is the title of Buddhist scribe who takes down the oral recitation from the translation master.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Translation team</th>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Number of scribes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Tsui Chunghui</td>
<td>Zhu Daoxing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255</td>
<td>Zhi Qiangliangjie</td>
<td>Zhu Daoxing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291</td>
<td>Zhu Shixing</td>
<td>Zhu Taixuan, Zhou Xuanning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382-413</td>
<td>Zhu Fonian</td>
<td>Tanjing, Sengdao, Tanjiu, Sengrui, Huili, Sengmao, Daohan, Huisong (from Gaochang)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383</td>
<td>Sa ghbadhara</td>
<td>Huisong, Zhimin, Zhao Wenye, Zhao Wenye</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>397-398</td>
<td>Cautama</td>
<td>Daozu, Daoci, Li Bao, Kang Hua, Huigong (co-founding)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>398</td>
<td>Buddhahadra</td>
<td>Faye, Huiyi, Huiyan, Huiyan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca.406</td>
<td>Vimalakṣa</td>
<td>Huijuan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>Kumārajiva</td>
<td>Huijing, Faqin, Daolu, Sengrui, Faqin, Daolu, Sengrui, Daolu, Sengrui, Daolu, Sengrui</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

注：以弘始五年（391）四月二十三日，於京城之北道遠園中秋成此經。法師手執胡本口宣眾言，兩釋同音交解文旨，秦王射麋蕉經，驗其得失，詁其通途，結其宗故。與諸宿舊義業沙門釋慧恭合。
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Translation team</th>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Number of scribes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>423</td>
<td>Buddhajiva 惟飄什</td>
<td>Long Guang 龍光, Daosheng 道生, Dongan 東安, Huiyan 慧嚴</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>421-439</td>
<td>Dharmakema 但無識</td>
<td>Hui Song 慧嵩, Dao Lang 道朗</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>439</td>
<td>Buddhavarman 多陀跋摩</td>
<td>Daotai 道泰</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Having done careful research on numerous Buddhist manuscripts in the Lushun Museum, Chinese scholar Wang Zhenfen 王振芬 compared the calligraphy of the "Buddhasaṅgxīti Sūtra and The Sūtra on the Metaphor 謂喻經", 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 "Buddhasaṅgiti 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 正書正言."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

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.

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

Reviewing literary evidences from *Sengyou Catalogue* that specifically indicate that the calligraphic style used by Dharmarakṣa and and Gautama Sahadeva’s translation team before the 4th century was that of the Western Jin language (正書正言), 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》

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Nationalities</th>
<th>Buddhist Sutra</th>
<th>Calligraphic style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>284</td>
<td>Rong Xiye 果積葉</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra 修行道地經</td>
<td>Standard Script 正書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hou Wuying 侯無英</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>Zhu Taixuan 祝太玄</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Pañcaviśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra 放光經</td>
<td>Standard Script 正書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhou Xuanming 周玄明</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291</td>
<td>Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Tathāgatamahākaru ānirdeśa Sūtra 如來大哀經</td>
<td>Standard Script 正書正言</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nie Daozhen 聶道真</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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：「惟昔大鶴劉川朱士行。以甘露五年（260 CE）出家學道為沙門。出塞西至於僊國。寫得正書梵書，胡本九十章。六十餘言。乙太康三年（282CE）。遣弟子弗如瞿黎字法顯送經胡本到洛陽。住三年。復至許昌二年。後至陳留界倉垣南寺。以元康元年五月十五日（291CE）。衆賢者皆集議。梵書正寫。時執胡本者王闇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, T35, no. 2145, p. 47, c11-28）

12 291元康元年七月七日，燝煌菩薩支法護，手執胡經，經名如來大哀，口授瞿黎法顯正書梵書，以其年八月二十三日訖，護親自覆校，當令大法光輝流布，其有獲者，疾得總持妙法。” *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55, 63, b14-18.
The Sacred Writing by Central Asian Buddhist Monks in China (3-5 C)

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 竹, Bo 稲, 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

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Nationalities</th>
<th>Buddhist Sutra</th>
<th>Calligraphic style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>397</td>
<td>Gautama Saṅghadeva (translation)</td>
<td>Chinese／Sogdian</td>
<td>Mādhyamikārākhaṇḍa</td>
<td>Standard Script 草書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dao Ci 道慈筆受</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kan Hua 康化</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Li Bao 李寶書寫</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>Dharma-jātāyāsas 僧摩伽陀耶舍</td>
<td>Central India</td>
<td>Sutra of Innumerable Meanings 無量義経</td>
<td>Clerical Script 草書</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1. Chinese Buddhist Scribes

The first Buddhist monk to assist An Shigao 安世高 (active 2nd century CE) 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). 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. An Xuan was a merchant who went to Luoyang around 185–189 CE. Yan Fotiao joined An Shigao and An Xuan to translate the sūtras, and translated the Ugradattapariprccha (Fajing jing 法鏡經). During the translation Yan Fotiao wrote down bishou 筆受, the oral translation of An Xuan. 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.

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 Lokakema 聖支譯 (ca.167 CE), and Zhu Shuofo, 兰那佛 (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.
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, 無經微旨窮詠之義與述後代, 佛調, 鎮淮人也, 靜年詔僧, 至好學, 慧自然, 遂出家修道, 通譯經典見重於時, 世稱安玄, 都尉, 佛調三人傳譯譜為難繼, 佛調又數十載, 並傳於世, 世公稱, 佛調出經省不損全妙好。” Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 96 a14-20.
19 Ma Yong 馬勇. 1990. 西漢後期東晉中亞人考 (Survey of Central Asian People went to China during the Late Eastern Han) in 西域史地文物譯考 (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 唐僧惠 (mid. 3rd c.) of Wu in the Three Kingdoms.'
21 According to the 6th chapter of the You Lu 趙: "…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, 嚴佛調受, 言既稽古, 義又微妙。).
22 Mizuno, p.45.
23 The Sacred Writing by Central Asian Buddhist Monks in China (3-5 CE) included the *Pratyutpattanasamādhi Sūtra* in 179 CE, the *Akṣobhya-buddha-k etra Sūtra* 阿閦佛國經, and the *Mahāsaṅghikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 大集經等, 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 *Aśaḥsasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 道行經 in 179 CE at Pusasi 菩薩寺 in the western Luoyang city. Although Foda’s nationality is unknown, Meng Fu 孟福 and Zhang Lian 張蓮 were native Chinese and pious Buddhists 清信士 of Henan Province.

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. Most Buddhist texts were mainly introduced into China by Buddhist monks from the Western Region, such as Kāśyapamātanaka 㤭尸婆提桓 active ca.67 CE, Dharmaratna 㤭尸婆提桓 active ca.67 CE, An Shigao 安世高 d.ca.170 CE, Lokakṣema 㤭尸婆提桓 or Ṛṣyānaka 㤭尸婆提桓1 4 7 185 CE … etc., from Yuezhi, Central India, Parthia, Kucha, or the ancient Kushan Empire of the Central Asia. Chinese scholars presumed that the Yuezhi were probably a
Tsui Chunghui

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. Yang Fuxue suspected that the early translation of Buddhist scriptures used various languages, such as Tocharian, Sanskrit or Pali. The earliest languages of Buddhist scriptures probably used were Tocharian A (in Gaochang and Qarasahr, and Tocharian B (which was popular in Kucha).

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, “Clerical Script 漢隸 evolved gradually from Seal Script 草書 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).” Scholars such as Hua Rende generally believe that the gradual transformation of the mature Clerical Script 漢隸 into Running Script 行書, Draft Cursive Script 章草 and Standard Script 正書 during the middle to late Han
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. 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 sūtras 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, such as Kang Senghui, Zhi Qian, and Dharmarakṣa … 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. He was also a skillful scribe during the end of the Eastern Han until

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, 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, 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 and Zhu Jiangyan who were both from India. 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. 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, 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, 182–252 CE of Wu who appointed him as a prince tutor. 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), states that Zhi Qian went to the southern Wu area in 223 CE.

40 “吴黄武二年 (223 CE), 西域月氏国涛婆塞支谨, 字志明, 博览经籍造游洛邑。黑瘦眼多白睛，时语曰，支郎眼中，形微小是智囊, 避地归吴。吴主悦之拜为博士，译佛经一百三十九部凡一百五十二卷，谨受業於支亮，亮字纪明, 亮受業於支謨, 世谓天下博知不出三方。” 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 Vimalakīrtiṇīrdeśa Sūtra 順摩經 and the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment 《最上開悟妙經》.

42 “以孫權吳三年相善結姻好本來至武昌, 梵鉞即法句經也, 時支謨請出經, 乃令同道支亮譯傅譯, 謹寫為漢文, 時尚未善漢言, 謹有不盡, 然志存義本近於質, 則今所傳法句是也, 自延陵, 不知何許人, 耆正始之末遠譯之。” Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 96a23-28.

43 “憐見未及避地於吳, 常宿願招才, 召見飲之, 為為博士, 佐輔導東宮, 與華渚人共盡匡益, 似生自外域, 故吳志不載。” Biography of Eminent Monks, T50.325a25-27.

44 “吴黄武二年 (223 CE), 西域月氏国涛婆塞支谨, 字志明, 博览经籍造游洛邑。黑瘦眼多白睛，时语曰，支郎眼中，形微小是智囊, 避地归吴。吴主悦之拜为博士，译佛经一百三十九部凡一百五十二卷，谨受業於支亮，亮字纪明, 亮受業於支謨, 世謂天下博知不出三方。” An Outline of Historical Researches into the Śākya Family Lineage (弘明集), T49.770b20-26.
from Luoyang between 189 and 220 CE. He translated 129 volumes 部 with a total of 152 fascicles 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 Sūtra 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. 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. 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 Buddhāsa-zāṅsā-puttā Sūtra was written by Zhu Fashou in 296 CE in the Zhong You 緣蔬 tradition of calligraphy. (Figure 6, Figure 6a) We observed that some fragments were Buddhist texts

---

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, Buddhasaṅgiti 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 鐵蘇 (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 translation group three times. (Table 4) His first joining was in 292 CE, at Luoyang, to translate the Buddhasaṅgiti Sūtra,47 his second in 294 CE (at Jiuquan 酒泉, to translate Acaladharmamudrā Sūtra 聖法印經) and the third

time was to translate the Tathāgatājñānamudrāsamādhi Śūtra 佛說印三味經 and Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi Śūtra 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddhist Scribes</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sūtras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan, 聶承遠</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>Suśrūśintacinti-devaputra-parip  चहो शृंग देवपुर सुधारक</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>Paiticā śati-sūtraṁ-kā-prajñānāmā Sūtra 光觀般若經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>Saddharmo-pūra  शदानन्धर भधर</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>Vimalatāparip  विमलानाथ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Daozheng, 聶道真</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>Paramārthaśamārtisatyanirdesa Sūtra 文殊師利法幢經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Daozheng</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>Mañjusriśrivikurvāṇaparvarta Sūtra 摩訶観自在観経</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan, Nie Daozheng</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>Śūramgamasamādhi Śūtra 首楞嚴三味經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Fashou, 諸法善, Nie Chengyuan</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>Buddhāsāgati Sūtra 佛說會集經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Fashou</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Acaladharmamudrā Śūtra 佛說法印經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Fashou</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Tathāgatājñānamudrāsāṃāthi Śūtra 佛說印三味經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Fashou</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddhi Śūtra 佛說濟諸方等學經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie Chengyuan</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>Daśabhūmikā Sūtra 佛說一切智經</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

48 Chen Guocan 陳國燁, 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 Buddhāsaṣṭi Sūtra Found at Turfan and the sūtra Translated by the Eminent Monk of
of the *Buddhaasarati Sūtra* was probably a copy made by Zhu Fashou primarily for circulation purposes. The colophon of the *Buddhaasarati 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 Zhu Fashou 竺法首 who took it down in writing *bishou* [筆]. May this sūtra be spread in ten directions [so that others] will carry out the magnanimous [work of] conversion (戴義弘化) 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.”

“□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”

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

---


50 Boucher, Daniel J. (1996: 81). The character "巂" was a writing error by Zhu Fashou. The correct character is “巂” (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, śrama a Zhu Fashou 竺法首 bi [wrote, copy].” (Figure 2)

Zhu Fashou deliberately wrote down his dedicatory prayer (fayuanwen 发愿文) as a postscript of the Buddhāsa xītī 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 Buddhāsa xītī 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 Buddhāsa xītī 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.” 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 Jiuzhuan 九泉, 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.” In the same year, the other two Sūtras Tathāgatājñānamudrāsāmadhī 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 Buddhāsa xītī 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。大唐七年三月十一日，鴻照師竺法護在長安設出梵文處所。」(CBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 57, c19-21)

52 “慧印三昧及濟方等學二經序讚第十四” 《出三藏記集》卷8：「持心經記第十出經後記。大唐七年三月十一日，鴻照師竺法護在長安設出梵文處所。」(CBETA, T55, no. 2145, p. 57, c19-21)
53 “鴻照師竺法護在長安設出梵文處所，設立二經序讚第十四，其版題云，佛陀誓薩薩頭支法護所出。法護稱受，共為一卷，寫以流通，敷用津誦，書甚緊潔，點點可觀，究眾義趣，或微或顯。」 Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 50 c27-51 a1.
54 “元康四年十二月二十五日(294 CE), 月支薩薩頭支法護，於寶泉演出此經，弟子竺法護受，令此曹法濟流四方大乘常住。” Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 51 b5-7.
Tsui Chunghui

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 Dharmarakṣa’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 Dharmarakṣa’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 靳承遠 in Sengyou Catalogue was his translation of the Suvikrāntacintidevaputraḥ Sūtra 須真天子經 in 266 CE, and the last record was his translation of the Daśabhūmika Sūtra 漢備一切經 in 297 CE. The time span of his membership of the translation team was at least 30 years. According to Sengyou Catalogue, Nie Chengyuan 靳承遠 was intelligent and possessed a firm aspiration to help Dharmarakṣa promote Buddhism. He and his son devoted most of their lives to transcribing Buddhist texts. According to records in the Changfang Catalogue, Dharmarakṣa’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 Dharmarakṣa.

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，時有信士靳承遠，乃更詳正文義，刪為二卷，今之所傳是也，永明護有才理詮絡法趣，護公出經多參正焉。” Sengyou Catalogue, T55. 98 a23-27.
56”月支國沙門慧摩羅寫，譬如法護，本姓支，遊西域得六國語及書，從天竺國大蘭若梵婆羅門經，來達玉門，因居敦煌，遂稱竺氏。後到洛陽及往江左。起武帝太始元年，至懷帝永嘉二年，其間於所遇，便為，經信士靳承遠執筆助翻，卷帙最多，而高僧傳唯云譯出一百六十五部，僧護出三藏記止。一百五十四部三百九卷，其中釋道安，又開四部稽足。” Changfang Catalogue. T49. 64 c14-23.
team was given to Nie Chengyuan “[清]信士聶承遠執筆助翻卷帙最多 ( T49. 64 c19-20),” 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 布法炬 (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 集法印經 (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, 巻帙最多.” Changfang Catalogue, T49.64 c19-20.
2.3. The Sogdian Buddhist Scribes

According to the *Biography of Eminent Monks*, in the Three Kingdoms period, (220 - 280 CE), there were Buddhist monks from the Western Region of Kangju with the family name of “Kang 康” or “An 安” who were skilled in Chinese calligraphy. They participated in translation teams to become scribes, such as Kang Senghui 康僧会, a Sogdian, whose ancestors came from Kangju 康居 in the Western Region. (Table 5) Kang Senghui 康僧会 was an accomplished calligrapher and Buddhist scribe. The Sogdian Buddhist monks, Kang Shu 康殊, and Bo Faju 波法炬 transcribed the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* 普曇経 in 308 CE. These surnames related to their geographical origins, Bo Yuanxin 博元信 and Bo Faju 波法炬, having the surname Bo 博, 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 Sogdia from Kangju 康居. Both Bo Yuanxin 博元信, and Zhi Fadu 支法度, collaborated with Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠 to transcribe the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* 逝備一切智經 in 297 CE.

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

---

58 唐僧會。其先康居人。世居天竺。其父因商居移于交趾。會年十餘。二親並亡。以至性闇。既而出家。緣行異時。為人弘雅有識量。志好學。明識三藏博覽六典。天文圖經多所貫・。晉於經機頗屬文翰。時孫權稱制江左。而未有佛教。欲欲興流。大法。乃振錦東遊。以赤烏十年 (247 CE) 至建業。營立茅茨設像行道。”*Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 b1-7; "釋僧諦。姓康。其先康居人。漢魏時移於中國。獻帝末亂移止吳興” *Biography of Eminent Monks*, T50.370, c24-25.


60 *Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 96 b1-7.

61 "會於建初寺澤出經法。阿難念經文。時蘇王安徽王梵皇王經。道品及六度集。並妙得經體文義允正。又注安般守意法闡道體三卷。並製經序。辯趣難簡義皆微密。並見重後世。會以晉武帝太康元年卒 (280 CE)。”*Sengyou Catalogue*, T55. 97 a12-17.

62 唐僧會。其先康居人。世居天竺。其父因商居。移於交趾。會年十餘。至孫權時出家。欲興流道。為人弘雅有識量。志好學。易解三藏。博覽經文。天文圖經多所貫・。晉於經機頗屬文翰,”*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 šrama 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 šrama a Kangshu and Bo Faju were scribes, and they wrote down the (bishou 筆受) texts.”

Since both Kang Shu 康殊, who was Sogdian, and Bo Faju 布法炬, 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 Dharmarakśa’s translation group after Zhu Fashou 竹法首. From the late Eastern Han onwards, the Sogdians immigrated to the Central Plain along the Hexi Corridor and inter-married with the Chinese. They were astute merchants conducting business along the Silk Road, and were also accomplished horsemen, hunters, and craftsmen. 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, Kangjiu, such as Kang 康, He 何, Shi 史, Shi 石, Cao 曹, Mi 米, An 安… etc.

---

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, 口宣音言, 時筆受者, 沙門康殊, 布法炬.”
66 It was said that Zhu Geliang 諸葛亮 cooperated with Sogdians to defeat Cao Cao 曹操 in the Three Kingdoms periods.
Table 5: Sogdiana (the region around Samarkand that straddles modern-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) as the Nine Jeweled Clans (zhao wu jiuxing 昭武九姓)

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

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

2.3.1. Kang Fashi 康法讞

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 草隷. 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 康法讞 and Kang Xin 康昕, contemporaries of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca.303–361 CE), who were both famous for copying Buddhist sūtras and skilled at writing Caoli 草隷. 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. There are no existing manuscripts or fragments of Kang Fashi 康法讞 or Kang Xin 康昕 that have been

---

69 “康法讞 （c.374）亦有義學之功，而以草隷知名，嘗遇康昕，昕自謂筆道過讞，讞共昕各作右軍草，傍人稱以為倉，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 Dharmaraksā. The “Biography of Eminent Monks” states that 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 大寺 in Luoyang. At one point he made a copy of the larger version of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra 大品經 (Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra) 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. He sent his manuscript on silk as a gift to a military general, Zhou Min 周敏, who was a pious Buddhist in the Western Jin. 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入工正書善書坐。” 晉永嘉中天下兵起, 則書亦稀罕, 顧天神符筆以應眾。一日出寺門見兩石形如筆, 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, 手自精書, 側寫大品經一部。合為一卷, 字如小豆, 而分明可識, 凡十餘本, 以一本與汝南同位智胡母氏供養。胡母過江欲經自隨, 後為火所延。倉卒不暇取經, 悲泣懽懐, 火息後乃於灰中得之, 且稲一無損, 於時同見聞者莫不感信, 此經今在京師簡靖寺首題, 時洛陽又有康慧持者, 亦同異致靈云。” 《Biography of Eminent Monks》T50. 389 b9-22.
72 Pearl Forest in Dharma Garden, 法苑珠林 T53. 0417b05.
73 The larger version of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra 大品經 copied by An Huize was probably the version translated by Dharmarakṣa 大法護 in 286 C.E., it was Pañca viśālāsati-sāhasrikā-prajñāramitā 多說經 (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 "皆南陽, 汝南人也。昔護國將軍, 世奉法, 道峻之流都邑人士皆東西結遊, 毋家有大品一部, 以半幅八丈素反覆書之, 又有餘經數篇。大品亦隨在其中。言道護雖善行不能得盡持去, 尤惜大品不知何處藏, 坐育藏去, 不展發無哀回憶。不覺大品忽自出外, 坐驚喜去, 坐道遂失之。今云尚在, 既見華, 菩提聞此言, 筆素數大品, 所在五十, 而大品一部盡在焉, 並有之有持者, 鋡本皆之, 並Ⓢ於深藏, 大品之流復出皆舍, 舍及舍自出既外, 因取懷之以渡江, 既還遇火不暇取經, 及盟火滅得之於灰燼之下, 擱然若故, 會稽王道子就簡曾夢, 求以供犧, 後簡在新清寺, 周敏迎之, 會稽一言, 簡與密義, 令據道慧書所出也, 或云, 時在簡靖寺, 稱首尼灌頂之” Pearl Forest in Dharma Garden 法苑珠林 T53. 417b.
Standard Script calligraphic style was not influenced by the Zhong You tradition.\(^7\)

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.


“對於寫經體的書法特色，各家論述不一，有的認為是從隸到楷衍變過程中，形似顏體；有的認為是隸書向楷書的過渡，但大多數論者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，很少涉及吐魯番北朝寫經體的具體特點及其書體之源。”
Selected References

Ban Gu 班固. (1962). 漢書 History of the Han · Western Region. 漢書·西域下


Tsui Chunghui


List of Figures

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

From: Chinese Calligraphy, p.147.
Figure 1a. Fragments of the buddhāsaṅkīrti 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 buddhāsaṅkīrti Sūtra. The largest one on the left went missing after it was first published in 1915 in the Seiiki kōko zufu. The 14 smaller fragments on the right were rediscovered during a research project conducted by the Lushun Museum and the Ryukoku University Library from 2003 to 2006.)

From: 旅順博物館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 *Buddhasagāti Sūtra*

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

「授書承達和弟子沙門竺法首筆」.

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

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 車騐譯 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

Figure 5b. Biography of Sun Quan (in History of the Kingdom of Wu) retaining strong influence from the writing of bamboo slips.

Figure 6. Portrait of Zhong You

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