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*From North India to Buryatia  
The 'Sandalwood Buddha' from the Mongols' perspective*

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The Sandalwood Buddha, also known as the Udayana Buddha in Western literature, was one of the most famous icons of Qing dynasty Beijing. This statue was a 'living image' reputed to be a lifelike portrait of Buddha Shākyamuni, carved in red sandalwood on the order of King Udayana; it arrived miraculously in Central Asia and then China. The historians and art historians have studied its story up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century; I will focus my paper on the Qing dynasty and on the Manchu and Mongolian perspective.

I will first present the significance of this holy statue for the emperors who ruled China and particularly for Qing emperors. Through a short biography of this statue from ancient India to modern Beijing up to its disappearance in 1900 and a description of the last Beijing temple that enshrined it, I will discuss the construction of Beijing as a site of pilgrimage for Tibetan Buddhists from the Yuan to the Qing dynasty.

The second part of my paper investigates the development of the significance of the Sandalwood Buddha for Mongols. This famous statue had become a major site of pilgrimage for Mongols visiting the capital in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The popularity of the statue of the 'Sandalwood Buddha' is a good example of the Mongols' consciousness of the long history of Buddhism. It created a link between Mongol, Indian, Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism and helped the Mongols to realize that they belonged to a single Buddhist continuum extending from India to Mongolia.<sup>1</sup> But how did the legend of the Sandalwood Buddha circulate in Mongolia through popular tales and official narratives, and how did the pilgrimage to the statue develop? Were the Buddhist Manchu emperors responsible, through their own

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

devotions and through the guidebooks they sponsored, of the success of this pilgrimage among Mongols? And what was the role of the reincarnated lamas of Beijing in the propagation of these narratives in Mongolia?

In the third part, I will present the iconography and style of the statue and of its numerous copies in different materials produced by the Qing imperial workshops, by the Mongols and the Tibetans, as well as its painted representations, in order to highlight the different interpretations of this image among Tibetans, Mongols and Chinese Buddhists.

## 1. The Sandalwood Lord from the Imperial perspective

### *The long biography of the statue from ancient India to modern Beijing*

With a history of more than two thousand years, the Sandalwood Buddha naturally occupies a special place in the history of Buddhist art. The Chinese Buddhist ‘propaganda’ informs us that the statue was transported (or transported itself) from India to Central Asia and then China at the beginning of the first millennium AD, following the propagation of the faith.<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1) This story may have been created around 400 AD to justify the production and worship of anthropomorphic Buddhist icons.<sup>3</sup> Like many other ‘Indian’ statues and relics of the Buddha that have been transported to China or have been ‘discovered’ on the Chinese soil, the statue “served to create a direct link and tangible relation between China and the holy land of Buddhism.”<sup>4</sup>

Comparable to Pallas’ statue that was believed to have fallen from the sky, and the possession of which ensured the safeguard of the city of Troy, the Sandalwood Buddha thus became a palladium, a National Treasure that protects the state and the ruling dynasty, and travelled in China, transmitted or stolen from one dynasty to another. Eventually, the Sandalwood statue arrived in 1163 in Beijing where it remained until 1900.

From the Manchus’ perspective, the emblematic icon contributed to establish the Qing as a legitimate dynasty able to rule a multiethnic Buddhist empire. Its specific link to the Yuan dynasty helped the Qing emperors to claim to be successors of the Chinggisid Mongols. Beside, the Manchu rulers also needed this statue to protect their state. When the monastery

<sup>2</sup> Rolpe Dorje (Rol pa’i rdo rje), *Candan jovo-yin domoγ ergiküi kemjiye aci tusa-luγa qamtu tobcilan quriyaγsan erdeni erike neretü orosiba* [Tradition concerning the Sandalwood Lord, presented in a concise manner with the expansion of its cult and its merits, called Rosary of Jewels], Mongolian trans. of *Tsan dan jo bo’i lo rgyus skor tshad phan yon mdor bsdus rin po che’i ’phreng ba*, xylograph in the Royal Library of Copenhagen (see note 13); stone inscription “Zhantanfo lidai chuan(si) ji” (1721): see Appendix, etc. For a critical survey of the story of the Sandalwood Buddha, see Alexander Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China*, Ascona (Switz.), 1959: 259-265; Erich Zürcher, “Buddhist art in medieval China: the ecclesiastical view,” in van Kooij, K. R., and H. van der Veer (eds), *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*, Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995: 4-5, 12-13; Herbert Franke, “From tribal chieftain to universal emperor and god: the legitimation of the Yüan dynasty,” in Herbert Franke, *China under Mongol Rule*. Hampshire (GB) & Vermont (USA): Variorum, 1994 [1978], 3-85: 72-76 and Appendix p. 85. On the Indian legends, *Hōbōgirin, Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme, d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises*, troisième fascicule, Tokyo: Maison franco-japonaise, 1974, III, article “Butsuzō”, 210-211; Martha L. Carter, *The Mystery of the Udayana Buddha*, Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Soper, *Literary Evidence*: 259; Carter, *The Mystery of the Udayana Buddha*: 10, 1; Zürcher, “Buddhist art in medieval China”: 4.

<sup>4</sup> Franke, “From tribal chieftain to universal emperor”: 74.

that housed the statue burnt to the ground in 1900, the event was for many a sign of loss of the Mandate of Heaven and thus the end of the dynasty.

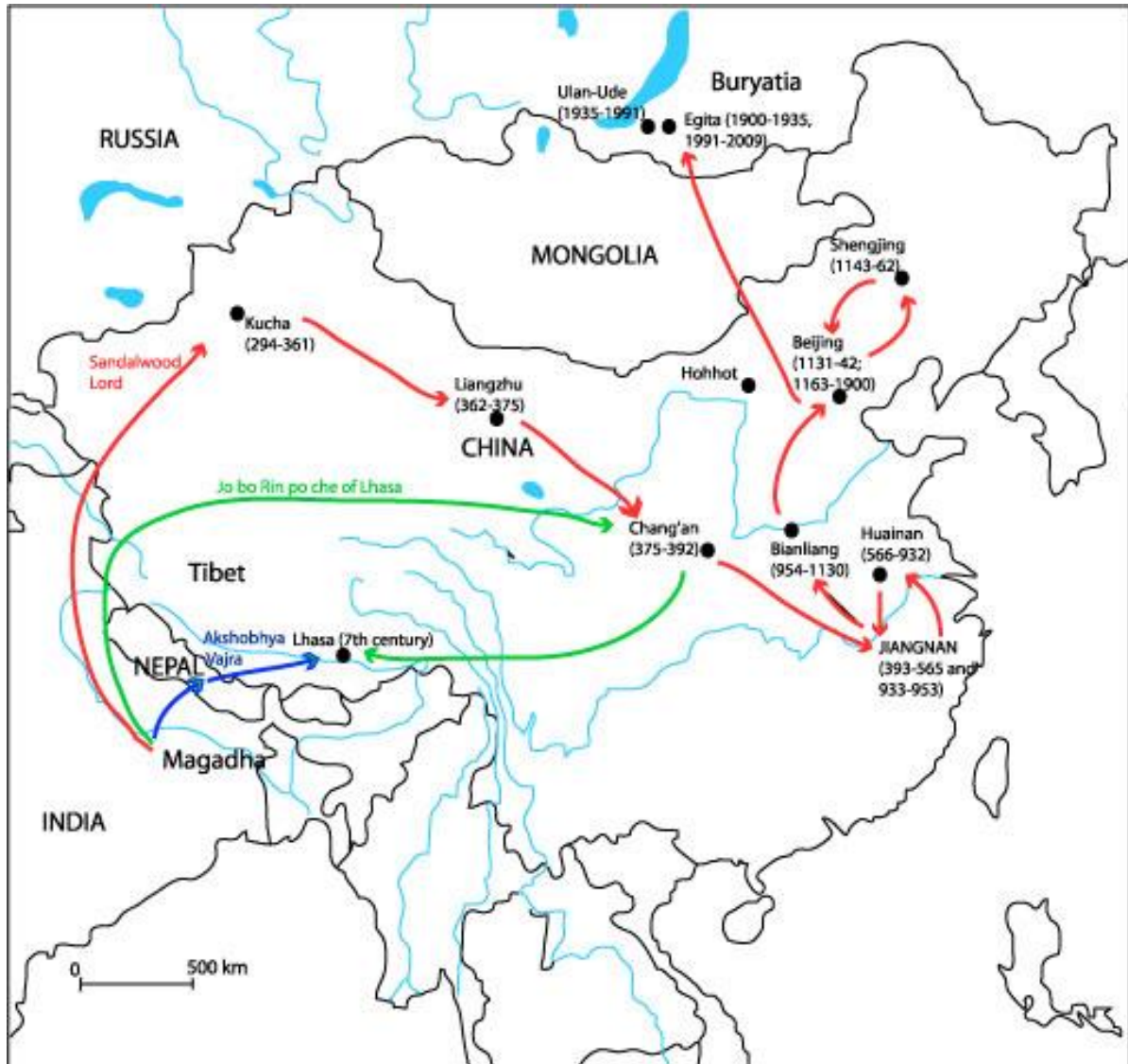


Fig. 1. Map comparing the 'biographies' of the Sandalwood Lord with that to the two Jowo Rinpoche of Lhasa. © I. Charleux

## **Zhantansi 旃檀寺 or Hongrensi 弘仁寺**

Emperor Kangxi ordered to build in 1665 the Zhantansi on the site of an earlier Ming temple in the northwest corner of the Imperial City and the statue was moved there.<sup>5</sup> Kangxi's grandmother, the Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang 孝莊 who was a devout Buddhist Qorcin Mongol, was probably responsible for its construction. The monastery received the official title Hongrensi, 'Monastery of Vast Humaneness.' Emperor Qianlong had it restored in 1760.

The monastery was staffed with several hundred Tibetan monks from Gandan monastery in Tibet and served as a residence for several high reincarnations such as the Galdan Siregetü Qutuγtu (who was appointed abbot in 1735). It was the main administrative center of Chinese Gelugpa Buddhism before the foundation of Yonghegong 雍和宮. The Zhantansi also housed an important library of Tibetan religious texts. It was famous for its *cham* exorcist dances on the New Year (the 8/I).

The Zhantansi was first of all an imperially sponsored monastery. It was the main monastery outside of the palace where the emperor came in person to worship the statue every year, on the first day of the Lunar year: he burnt incense, and received the wishes from the reincarnated lamas for the New Year. Prayers for the emperor were held in front of the statue. Of the 43 Gelugpa monasteries of Qing dynasty Beijing, the Zhantansi was one of the most generously funded; the written sources mention the priceless treasures—Buddha images, embroideries, golden altar vessels, jewels, silver mandala and so on. But parts of its treasures were given by visiting devotees.

In 1900, the architecture was turned into barracks for the Boxers' headquarters, and then was subsequently destroyed by the French armies as reprisals.

### ***Architecture of the Zhantansi***

Its architecture is known to us through written and pictorial documents such as a 17<sup>th</sup> century written description by Gao Shiqi (*Jin'ao tui shi biji*), a drawing and a description by the

<sup>5</sup> Gao Shiqi 高士其, 17<sup>th</sup> century *Jin'ao tuishi biji* 金鰲退食筆記, ed. Taipei: Jinxue shuju, 1970 *juan xia*; Wu Tingxie 吳廷燮 (b. 1863) *et al.*, *Beijing shi zhigao* 北京市志稿, 3 vol., 1939, ed. Beijing: Beijing yan shan, 1989: 244; Miao Zhou 妙舟, *Meng Zang fojiao shi* 蒙藏佛教史, 1935, ed. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1994; *juan 7*: 75; Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (ed.), *Rixia jiu wen kao* 日下舊聞考, 160 *juan*, ca 1785, ed. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2000, 4 vol.: 41, 647 ff.; Rolpe Dorje, *Candan jovo-yin domoγ*, "Zhantanfo lidai chuan(sì) jì" 1721; Dharmatāla (Dam chos rgya mtsho Dharmatāla), *Rosary of White Lotuses, Being the Clear Account of How the Precious Teaching of Buddha Appeared and Spread in the Great Hor Country*, trans. from Tibetan and critical annotation of the *Chen po Hor gyi yul du dam pai'i chos ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa padma dkar po'i phreng ba*, 1889, by Piotr Klafkowski, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987: 418; Eugen Pander, *Lalitavajra's manual of Buddhist iconography*, Sushama Lohia ed. and trans. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1994 [*Das lamaische Pantheon*, Berlin, 1889]: 40, n. 12; Alphonse Favier, *Peking, Histoire et Description*, Peking: Imprimerie des Lazaristes au Pei-Tang, 1897: 357-358; Juliette Bredon, *Peking. An historical and Intimate Description of its chief Places of Interest*, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapour, Hankow & Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1922: 200; Franke, "From tribal chieftain to universal emperor": 76; Chen Qiangyi 陳鏘儀, "Hongrensi yu Qingdai lama yinwuchu" 弘仁寺與清代喇嘛印務處, *Beijing dang'an* 北京檔案 1996-6: 42; Huang Hao 黃顥, *Zai Beijing de Zangzu wenwu* 在北京的藏族文物, Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1993: 28; Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2000.

Manchu official Linqing (*Hongxue yinyuan tuji*), and the Beijing map dated 1750 (**fig. 2, fig. 3**).<sup>6</sup>

The monastery followed a south-north symmetrical axis. There were an entrance gate, a river spanned by three bridges, then the Hall of the Four Celestial Kings, the Bell and Drum towers. In the second courtyard, there were two lateral halls and the Cirenbaodian; a funerary stupa flanked by two lateral halls, and finally, the Dabaodian, the main hall, that enshrined the statue, flanked by two smaller halls. The monastery thus followed the classical layout of Qing dynasty Buddhist monasteries, with the exception of the Tibetan style stupa, and did not include Sino-Tibetan architectural innovations seen for instance in the Yonghegong. The private part of the monasteries—lamas' quarters, treasuries, residence of the reincarnation—adopted a reverse U-shape.

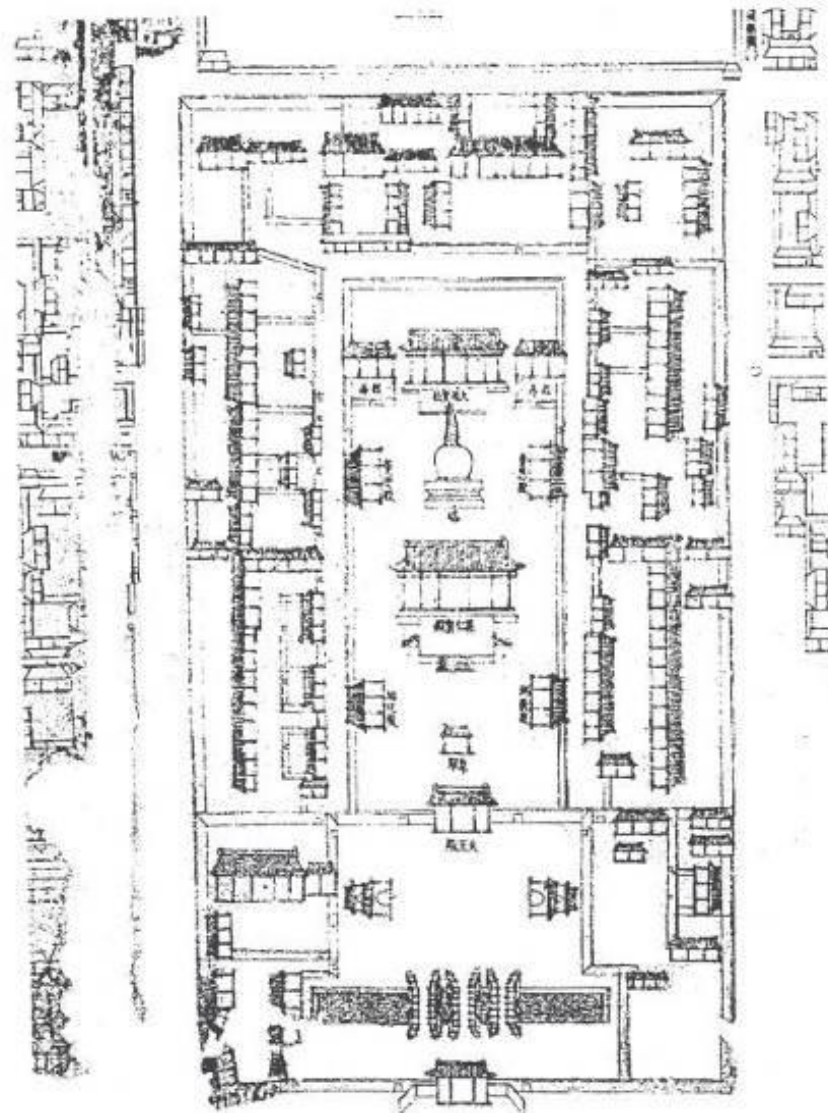


Fig. 2. Zhantansi, *Jingcheng quantu*, 1750, detail. © Naquin, *Peking*: 343, fig. 10.5

<sup>6</sup> Linqing 麟慶, *Hongxue yinyuan tuji* 凝香室鴻雪因緣圖記, Yangzhou, 12 fasc., 1849, ed. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1984, vol. 3; Yu Minzhong, *Rixia jiu wen kao*: 41, 647; Wu Tingxie et al., *Beijing shi zhigao*: 245-246; Miao Zhou, *Meng Zang fojiao shi*, juan 7: 75; *Jingcheng quantu: Qing Neiwufu cang Jingcheng quantu* 清內務府藏京城全圖, at 1:650 in 442 sheets, held in the Palace Museum, Beijing, 1750, ed. Beijing in 1940.

On Linqing's drawing the statue is represented with reversed gestures, between two vases containing coral. In front of it, outside the temple, offerings are displayed on an altar, and a large incense burner stands south of the terrace.

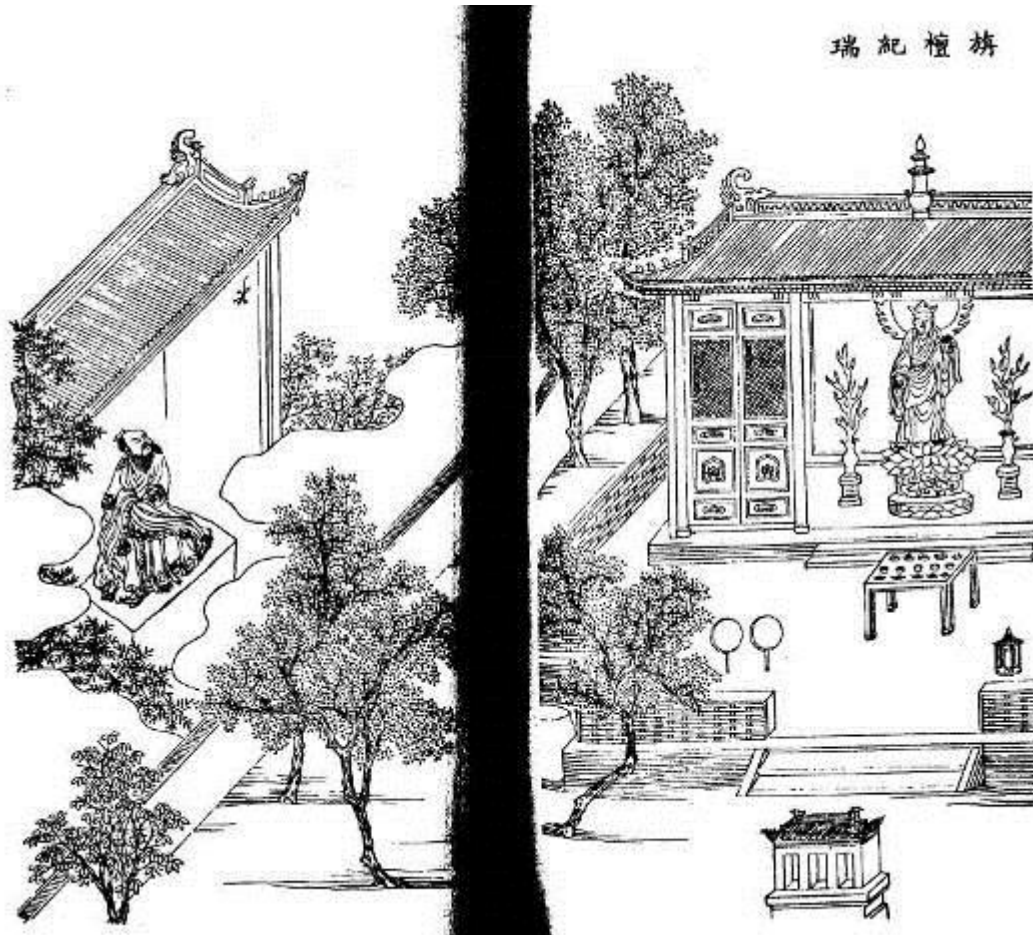


Fig. 3. Zhantansi. © Linqing, *Hongxue yinyuan tuji*: III, 69

## 2. The Mongols and the Sandalwood Lord

### *The most sacred statues for the Mongols*

The Sandalwood Buddha had become one of the three holiest statues for the Mongols, one of the three 'Lords' (Mong. *Juu*, <Tib. *Jowo*),<sup>7</sup> the other icons being the two holy *Jowos* *Shākya*muni of Lhasa (Jokhang and Ramoche temples). (fig. 4) The 16<sup>th</sup> century Mongols made copies of the Lhasa *Jowos* in Hohhot; but from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Beijing Sandalwood Buddha became more popular.

<sup>7</sup> *Juu* means in Mongolian 1) the two numinous statues of Lhasa plus the Candan *Juu* statue of Beijing; 2) other 'precious' statues generally modelled on the Lhasa and Beijing 'Lords'; 3) by metonymy, a monastery or temple enshrining one of these statues, and 4) holy cities such as Hohhot and Lhasa.

The two Jowos of Lhasa were also thought to be contemporaneous of the Buddha Shākyamuni.<sup>8</sup> The Jowo and the Sandalwood Buddha were both enshrined at the Tang court in Chang'an for a time, and the legend may have confounded the two statues. (fig. 1)



Fig. 4. Jowo Shākyamuni, Jokhang, Lhasa, Tibet. © Andre Alexander

### *Tales of the statue in Tibet and Mongolia*

The story was known since at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at the court of the Mongol emperors:<sup>9</sup>

- A translation from Chinese into Uyghur by Amtsang Danasi (a disciple of Sakya Pandita?) and then from Uyghur into Tibetan was made under the Yuan dynasty and included in the *Tanjur*. The story is found in several Tibetan chronicles such as the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Red*

<sup>8</sup> Cameron D. Warner ("The Precious Lord: The History and Practice of the Cult of the Jowo Shākyamuni Statue in Lhasa, Tibet," PhD dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge (MA), 2008: 162-185) compares the legends of the Sandalwood Buddha and the Jowo of Lhasa (before it left China for Tibet in 641) and assumes there may have been a confusion between the two statues. Like the Sandalwood Buddha, the Jowo has a shining jewel adorning the front of the *ushnīsha*.

<sup>9</sup> Under the Yuan dynasty the Hanlin academician Cheng Jufu 程鉅夫 wrote the "Zhantan foxiang ji" 旃檀佛像記, 1316, in *Xuelou ji* 雪樓集, 30 *juan*, ed. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 1202, Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1986.



*Annals*; the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Clear mirror of royal genealogies*; etc.<sup>10</sup> The story has been included in the Tibetan version of the *Tanjur* printed in Beijing and then in the Mongolian version.<sup>11</sup>

- The tale was already well-known for 17<sup>th</sup> century Mongols; it is found in Sayang Secen's *Precious summary* (*Erdeni-yin tobci*), written in 1662.<sup>12</sup>

- The Zhangjia Qutuṣtu Rolpe Dorje (1717-1786) wrote in 1770 a short treatise on the "History of the Sandalwood Buddha," using mostly Chinese sources, which was then translated into Mongolian and published in 1771.<sup>13</sup> This text must have had a very wide and rapid diffusion since as soon as 1774 the Qaracin noble Rasipungsuy used it as a source for his chronicle, the *Bolor erike*. A thangka representing Rolpe Dorje testifies of the important role of the Sandalwood Lord for Rolpe Dorje: the Sandalwood Lord can be seen near to his head, and seems to hold a rosary in his right hand. (fig. 5)

- The famous Mongolian scholar Gombojab (mGon po skyabs, fl. 1692-1789, historian, philologist and translator) also wrote a version of the story.<sup>14</sup> The Sandalwood Buddha's history is from then on found in most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Mongol and Tibetan

<sup>10</sup> *Deb ther dmar po* [The Red Annals] by Kun dga' rdo rje; *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* [The Clear mirror of royal genealogies]; a 15<sup>th</sup> century *rGya Bod yig chang* (290 fol.) written by dPal byor bzang po, the 18<sup>th</sup> century *dPal bsam ljon bzang* by Sum pa mkhan po, a two folio text of the Tibetan *Tanjur*. On the different versions and chronologies in the Tibetan versions: Ariane MacDonald, "Préambule à la lecture d'un *Rgya-Bod yig-chan*," *Journal Asiatique* 251/1, 1963: 53-159; for a study of the account of the Sandalwood Buddha in the *Tanjur*: Per K. Sørensen, *The Mirror illuminating the royal genealogies: Tibetan Buddhist historiography*; an annotated translation of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan chronicle *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* [compiled by Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan], Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994: 500, 503-506; for a list of Tibetan texts mentioning the legend: Loden Sherab Dagjab, *Tibetan Religious Art*, 2 vols., Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977: 22; Warner, "The Precious Lord": 182-184.

<sup>11</sup> "Tsan dan gyi sku rgya nag na bshugs pa'i byon tshul," Beijing edition of the Tibetan *Tanjur* (vol. *rgyud* 154a1-155a4). Sørensen, *The Mirror*: 505-506; MacDonald, "Préambule": 83-85, 87; Tibetan text p. 134-135 n. 142.

<sup>12</sup> Sanang Secen [Sayang Secen], *The Jewelled summary of the origin of Khans* (*Qad-un ündüsün-ü Erdeni-yin tobci*): *A history of the Eastern Mongols to 1662*, trans. John R. Krueger, Bloomington (Ind.): The Mongolia Society, 1964

<sup>13</sup> Rolpe Dorje, *Tsan dan jo bo'i lo rgyus skor tshad phan yon mdor bsdus rin po che'i 'phreng ba* [Precious garland of the authentic, beneficial, and concise account of the Sandalwood Lord] (21 fol.); ed. Rolpe Dorje, *gSung 'bum* [Complete works], vol. 7, Beijing, n.p., n.d. On different blockprint versions: Dan Martin and Yael Bentor, *Tibetan Histories. A Bibliography of Tibetan-language Historical Works*, London: Serindia, 1997: 318, n°315; Manfred Taube, *Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke*, W. Voigt, ed., Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland series, vol. 11, Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1966, vols. 1-4, vol. 4: 1005-1006: no. 2752 and 2753; A.I., Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, trans. from Russian by Harish Chandra Gupta & R.K. Maitra, Calcutta, 1970: 109-110; Berger, Patricia, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003: 164 and n. 80 p. 227. On the Mongolian translation: Walther Heissig, *Die Pekinger Lamaistischen Blockdrucke in mongolischer Sprache. Materialien zur mongolischen Literaturgeschichte*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954: 135-136, n°147 (xylograph in the Royal Library of Copenhagen). Another copy was brought back by A.M. Pozdneyev in 1882 to the Library of Saint-Petersburg University, and was translated by A. Iwanowsky, "Dsandan dsou yin domok, légende de la statue de Bouddha faite en bois de tchandana," *Muséon*, 1883, 93-104.

<sup>14</sup> Peking blockprint, printed in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. György Kara, *The Mongol and Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, Budapest: Akademiai Kiadó, 2000: Mong. 111, p. 161-162; Sh. Bira, "Syān'cānānī 'Si yui czi' bicig / Gun Gombojavīn Tövd örčüulgyn eh huulbar," *Monumenta Historica* 6/2 (Ulaanbaatar, 1973): 145-147. According to Kara, Gombojab surely used the 14<sup>th</sup> century Uyghur Amsang's account of the history of the famous statue.

histories of Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> The story is therefore common to Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists of late imperial times.

- Prayers to the Sandalwood Buddha were also composed in Tibetan in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 5. Thangka representing Rolpe Dorje, H. 23,30 cm. © Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich

<sup>15</sup> For instance Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotus*: 418. For a modern Tibetan version of the story: Thubten, Legshay Gyatsho, *Gateway to the Temple*, trans. from Tibetan by David Jackson, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1979 [1971]: 58-59.

<sup>16</sup> Walther Heissig mentions a prayer written by the Galdan Siregetü Qutuγtu, abbot of the Zhantansi in 1735, at the request of monk (*gelung*) Blo-bzang bsam-grub from the Caqar banners during his sojourn in Zhantansi: Tsan-dan jo-bo gsol-'debs bzhugs-sho ("Offering prayer to the Sandalwood Lord"): Heissig, *Die Pekinger Lamaistischen Blockdrucke*: 93. A Tibetan prayer in *pothi*-format (2 folios) entitled "Prayer in front of the sandal Jowo of the Zhantansi," was written by the Fourth 'Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa (Skal-bsang thub-bstan dbang-phug, born in 1856).

### ***The Mongol presence in Beijing***

The Beijing statue thus became a pilgrimage site for the Mongols. For instance the Russian Orientalist A. Pozdneev met on November 14, 1892 in Mongolia two Mongol foot travellers near the Khangai range who told him they were on the way to Beijing to worship the Sandalwood Lord.<sup>17</sup> Mongols, especially noblemen, monks and merchants, had several reasons to undertake a trip to Beijing, and the sacred icon may have been one of them. Noblemen and reincarnated lamas from Mongolia and Inner Mongolia had to come every six year on the New Year for 'pilgrimage' to the Holy Manchu emperor, and to bring tribute.<sup>18</sup> They stayed in Beijing two or three months in winter, sold cattle and dairy products, and bought many luxury goods to bring back with them—mostly tea, silk, books and Buddhist images. In 1694, the Lifanyuan 理藩院 had to provide accommodation for more than ten thousand Mongols who came to Beijing to bring the tribute.

Beside, a community of about 150,000 Mongols lived in Beijing in a permanent or temporary residence.<sup>19</sup> Bannermen and noblemen from Eastern Inner Mongolia often had a residence in the Inner city. Tributaries, pilgrims and caravans camped in the northern suburb. A Mongol Qalqa district developed in this district, around the Huangsi 黃寺 and Heisi 黑寺 monasteries. Another Mongol district was located in the Inner city, behind the English legation.

Mongol monks also came to Beijing to learn with a famous master or to study in a college of Yonghegong. Under Qianlong's reign, the lamas (mostly of Mongol and Tibetan origin) represented a third of the whole clergy of the Inner City (about 4,000 to 5,000 lamas).<sup>20</sup> From the sinicized bannermen to the ordinary merchant, the Mongols were part and parcel of the Beijing society. How did the presence of what they considered to be one of the holiest statues in Asia contributed to attract them to the capital of the empire?

### ***Frequentation of the Zhantansi***

The Zhantansi was visited by all the great reincarnations and masters in sojourn at the capital. Zanabazar, the First Jebcündamba Qutuγtu (1635-1723) and emperor Kangxi met and exchanged scarves in 1695 in front of the Sandalwood Jowo.<sup>21</sup> In 1724, the seven years old Zhangjia Qutuγtu resided several months in the Zhantansi.<sup>22</sup> In 1738, the Second Jebcündamba (1724-1757) specifically worshipped the icon.<sup>23</sup> The Sixth Panchen Lama who traveled to Beijing in 1780, worshipped the statue together with the Qianlong emperor in person.<sup>24</sup> This reveals the deep politico-religious significance that the Sandalwood Buddha came to represent.

<sup>17</sup> Aleksei M., Pozdneev, *Mongolia and the Mongols*, vol. I, trans. from Russian by J. R. Shaw and D. Plankrad, Bloomington: Mouton & Co., 1971 [Saint-Petersburg, 1892]: 399

<sup>18</sup> Ning Chia, "The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian rituals in the Early Qing (1644-1795)," *Late Imperial China* 14/1 (June 1993), 61-63.

<sup>19</sup> Naquin, *Peking*: 470.

<sup>20</sup> Naquin, *Peking*: 585.

<sup>21</sup> Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*: 341; Pozdneev, *Mongolia and the Mongols*: 333.

<sup>22</sup> Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*: 312; Miao Zhou, *Meng Zang fojiao shi: juan 7*: 96. His first audience with the emperor took place within the monastery in front of the statue.

<sup>23</sup> Pozdneev, *Mongolia and the Mongols*: 342.

<sup>24</sup> Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*: 308-309.

The Zhantansi was one of the most popular monasteries in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Beijing, for Manchus, Mongols, Chinese and Tibetans alike. During the first Lunar month, the great festival attracted a crowd of devotees, even women were allowed inside<sup>25</sup> (women were generally forbidden to enter Chinese temples). But it is unclear how much the monastery was open to commoners the rest of the year (probably for the other religious festivals of the year). The German professor Eugen Pander for instance had considerable difficulties to enter the monastery at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Anyway we can imagine that the visiting Mongol princes and high-ranking lamas coming for the New Year in the capital, along with their immense retinue, could easily visit the Zhantansi, which must have been a lively place in winter.

Rolpe Dorje's guide makes several recommendations to the pilgrims. "If one has a serious disease or wound, if he worships with his whole heart or see his image in a dream, he will be cured."<sup>27</sup> He advises to make:

- 2870 circumambulations in the middle of the compound
- 2480 circumambulations if the stupa is included
- Or 1530 around the whole walled compound
- And great rewards will be obtained if one recites a *dhāranī* at the same time, prays to the statue and gives offerings...

Mongols and Tibetans practiced circumambulations and prostrations in this Beijing monastery exactly as they would have acted in any Gelugpa monasteries. However it can be useful to mention that Chinese Buddhists do not generally circumambulate around their temples and their icons at the modern period. The narrow streets surrounding the monastery must have been very crowded, and even more when/if the ordinary pilgrims could not enter the precinct.

### 3. The Sandalwood Lord and its copies under the Qing dynasty

#### *What did the Lord of Sandal look like?*

Aside from the fact that the above-mentioned legends on its Indian origin have no historical value whatsoever, there existed one statue in late imperial China claiming both ancientness and authenticity, enshrined in the Zhantansi of Beijing. No photography of the statue is known, but paintings, drawings, prints, copies as well as written descriptions give us an idea of its appearance.

The Sandalwood Buddha was a life-size statue standing in a rigid frontal pose said to be carved in red sandalwood.<sup>28</sup> Compared to stone or metal, wood is a living material: it lives and dies, has diseases, is individualized, suffers like human beings, etc. The Christian statues that were said to speak, move, bleed, or cry in Medieval Europe were all made of wood, not

<sup>25</sup> Gao Shiqi, *Jin'ao tuishi biji, juan xia*, 8b.

<sup>26</sup> Pander, *Lalitavajra's manual*: 40, n. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Rolpe Dorje, *Candan jovo-yin domoγ*.

<sup>28</sup> On sandalwood, a very precious wood found in India and Southeast Asia, known for its fragrance, and its medicinal qualities: P.K. Gode, "Some notes on the history of Candana". *Studies in Indian cultural history* 1, 1961, Hoshiarpur, 314-346; Sylvain Lévi, "Pour l'histoire du Rāmāyana," *Journal Asiatique* 1<sup>st</sup> série-11, 1918, 5-160: 104-111.

stone. A wooden statue has probably more chance to be a 'living image' and perform miracles than a stone one.

The right hand of the Sandalwood Buddha formed the *abhaya mudrā*, and its left hand the *varada mudrā*. The hair was styled in a 'rosette' in front and a jewel adorned the front of the *ushnīsha*. The body was covered by drapery folds forming U-shaped motifs disposed about the vertical axis of the body. The lower part of the drapery fell down each leg separately in folds clinging closely to the thighs as if wet.<sup>29</sup> The robe is the most non-Chinese characteristic of the statue. It is supposed to represent a non Chinese tradition, and the 'foreignness' of the style alone gave the statue a claim for authenticity.<sup>30</sup>

These features are repeated by Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian sources.<sup>31</sup> Beside, Ming dynasty observers noted some miraculous particularities of the icon, that clearly belongs to the category of 'living images'<sup>32</sup>: its color subtly changed with the seasons and with the temperature and hour of the day. When hit, its wood had the hard resonance of metal or stone. It can be as light as lacquer ware, and it was soft enough to be scratched. In the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was gilded.<sup>33</sup> It is also said that it "is standing and looks upwards, seen from behind, it appears to look upwards (or: to lift his head, look with respect), but looked at from the front, the face seems looking downwards (or: inclining his head, looking with benevolence)"—*huli shangshi, hou zhan ruo yang, qian zhan ruo fu* 鵠立上視, 後瞻若仰, 前瞻若俯.<sup>34</sup> The Qing dynasty sources all repeat the Ming descriptions.<sup>35</sup> The guidebook written by Rolpe Dorje also says that the statue is raising his eyes upwards.<sup>36</sup> This look is very unusual: the Sandalwood Buddha would be the only Buddhist statue looking upwards.<sup>37</sup> The

<sup>29</sup> Liu Tong 劉侗 (*jinshi*, d. 1637) and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略, 8 *juan*, 1635, ed. Shanghai: Shanghai yuandong chubanshe, 1996: *juan* 4, 251-252, "Jiufengsi" and other sources mentioned p. 253 in a note.

<sup>30</sup> The exact source for this style has been the subject of much discussion among scholars, who have related it to styles of 4<sup>th</sup> century Mathura (Gregory Henderson), Khotan statuery (Alexander Soper), Ajanta (in Central India), South India, and Gandhara (Japanese scholars), or believed it to be a creation of the Northern Wei from a variety of foreign sources (James Caswell). Their opinions are summarized in Amy McNair, "Sandalwood auspicious image," in Weidner Marsha (ed.), *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism: 850-1850*, Lawrence (Kans.): Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas; Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994, cat 1: 224-225.

<sup>31</sup> Thubten *Gateway to the Temple*: 58-59; Rolpe Dorje, *Candan jovo-yin domoγ*; Liu Tong & Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwu lue*: *juan* 4, 251, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian images*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997; Richard H. Davis (ed.), *Images, Miracles, and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*, Boulder (Co.): Westview Press, 1998; Robert H. Sharf, and Elizabeth H. Sharf, *Living images: Japanese Buddhist icons in context. Asian religions and cultures series*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Liu Tong & Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwu lue*: *juan* 4, 251.

<sup>34</sup> Liu Tong & Yu Yizheng, *Dijing jingwu lue*; Wu Tingxie et al., *Beijing shi zhigao*: *juan* 4: 251. This last sentence is ambiguous, but another Ming source clearly says: "It looks upwards." ("Mu shang shi" 目上視): Sun Guomi 孫國敕, *Yandu youlan zhi* 燕都遊覽志, 40 *juan*, between 1626 and 1636), quoted in Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1592-1676), *Chunming mengyu lu* 春明夢餘錄, 70 *juan*, ed. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987, "Jiufengsi").

<sup>35</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Gao Shiqi (*Jin'ao tuishi biji*, *juan xia*, p. 7a-7b); the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Manchu official Linqing (*Hongxue yinyuan tuji*, vol. 3); Yu Minzhong (*Rixia jiu wen kao*: 41, 647).

<sup>36</sup> Rolpe Dorje, *Candan jovo-yin domoγ*, see Heissig, *Die Pekingier Lamaistischen Blockdrucke*: 136.

<sup>37</sup> The upward look may refer to the part of the story when the statue was just completed: the king wished to compare the statue to the Buddha who was preaching to his deceased mother in Heaven, therefore the Buddha descended to the world of men, and the statue rose into the air to present itself to the Buddha who looked down

upward look is a paradox: if the icon was believed to be the Buddha himself, how could it look at the Buddha? The devotees certainly preferred to worship an icon that looked at them, i.e. downwards. This strange peculiarity of the iconography was, as we will see, seldom respected among copies.

Four representations of the Beijing icon seem to be particularly close to the late imperial description of the statue:

a) A Ming dynasty rubbing of a stele dated 1597, with a long inscription in Chinese and a short one in Tibetan, is preserved in the Field Museum of National History, Chicago.<sup>38</sup> **(fig. 6)**

b) A painting, previously kept in the Zhantansi, survived the destruction of the monastery. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was preserved in the Taihedian 太和殿 of the Imperial Palace. In 1932, Chinese Buddhists continued to held rituals in front of the image to protect the Republican state against wars and natural disasters. He is represented in a sea of clouds and lifts its eyes upwards.<sup>39</sup> **(fig. 7)**

c) A print on cloth dated from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. **(fig. 8)**<sup>40</sup>

d) A drawing reproduced in Alphonse Favier's book on Beijing published in 1897. **(fig. 9)**

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at the image. The statue looked up at the Buddha and inclined his head, and the Buddha put his hand on the statue's sinciput and prophesied the statue would go to China one thousand year after his Nirvana.

<sup>38</sup> McNair, "Sandalwood auspicious image", cat 1: 221-225.

<sup>39</sup> Wan, Jiuling, "A Brief History of the First Sandalwood Image of Shākyamuni Buddha, Sept. 29, 1932 of the Lunar calendar, on the website of the "T'ang Dynasty Esoteric School": [www.tangmi.com/indiaphoto/buddha1.htm](http://www.tangmi.com/indiaphoto/buddha1.htm), consulted on August 31st, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Height 155 cm, width 49 cm, Institute of Mongolian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, Russian Federation. "Spread of Buddhism and wandering statues: Case of the Beijing sandalwood Buddha," in Ciurtin, E. (ed.), *Indian Religions and Buddhist Studies*, Proceedings of the 6th EASR / IAHR Special Conference "Religious History of Europe and Asia," Bucharest, 20-23 September 2006, forthcoming: fig. 2.

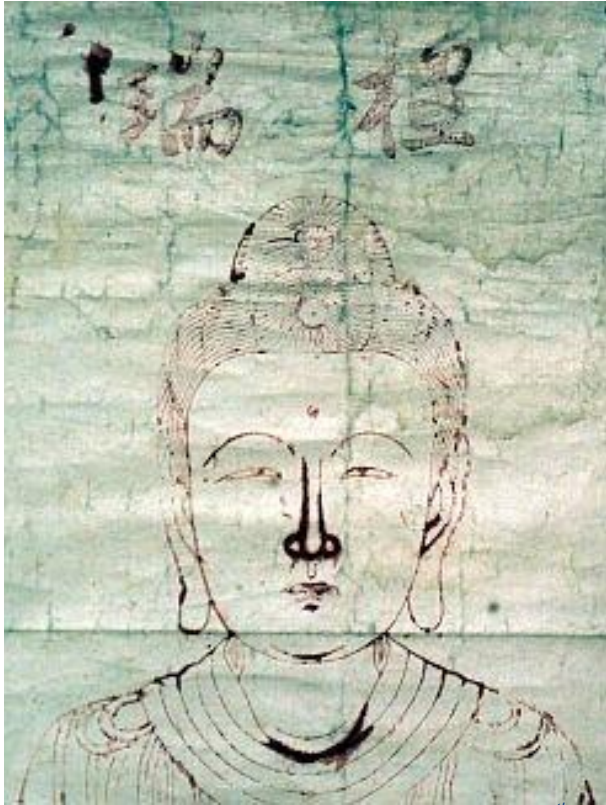


Fig. 6. "Sandalwood auspicious image", 1597, text in Chinese (plus a sentence in Tibetan) written by Shaoqian, a Buddhist monk from Chengdu, Ming dynasty, ink rubbing from a stone engraving, 136x77 cm. © Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Il6437



*Fig. 7. Painting of the Sandalwood Lord, previously kept in the Zhantansi, known to us by a picture (the painting survived the destruction of the monastery and was preserved in the Imperial Palace up to the 1930s, I do not know if it is preserved up to this day).  
© <http://www.tangmi.com/indiaphoto/buddha1.htm>*





*Déesse de Tcham-t'an-ssé.*

**Left:** Fig. 8. Print on cloth dated from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, height 155 cm, width 49 cm. © Institute of Mongolian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, Russian Federation.

**Right :** Fig. 9. Sandalwood Lord of the Zhantansi, Beijing, line drawing. © Favier, Peking, Histoire et Description: 357

### *Late imperial replicas*

Ancient copies have been extensively studied, and the most famous one, made in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and brought to Japan, has been the object of a detailed study that informs us, if not on the ‘original,’ at least to 10<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist sculpture.<sup>41</sup> I will here consider only some “late imperial” copies of the Sandalwood Lord produced at the Qing court:<sup>42</sup>

- In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Sheng’an monastery 聖安寺 in the Outer city displayed a copy of the famous icon. **(fig. 10)** It had housed the Sandalwood Buddha for a while during the Yuan dynasty, before the statue was moved to the Da Shengshou Wan’ansi 大聖壽萬安寺.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Made by the monk Chōnen (938-1016) in 987, now preserved in the Seryōji 清涼寺 temple in Kyoto. The Japanese believe the two statues exchanged places when in China, so that the icon now enshrined at Seryōji would be the original image. See Gregory Henderson, and Leon Hurvitz, “The Buddha of Seiryōji: new finds and new theory,” *Artibus Asiae* 19/1, 1956, 5-55: 9-12.

<sup>42</sup> On the proliferation of copies of ‘true’ images under the reign of the Manchu emperors, especially Qianlong: Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*.

<sup>43</sup> Under the Ming Zhengtong period (1436-1449), the monastery was rebuilt and renamed Pujisi 普濟寺. In 1559, the Ruixiangting 瑞像亭 was built to house a copy of the statue (Wang Jiapeng 王家鵬, “Diwang yu zhantan ruixiang” 帝王與旃檀瑞像, *Zijin Cheng* 紫禁城 128 (2005-1), 178-187: 180). See a Ming dynasty copy of the Sandalwood Lord in the Fogg Art Museum : Benjamin Rowland, *The Evolution of the Buddha image*, New York: Abrams, 1963: fig. 49



**Left:** Fig. 10. Sandalwood Lord, bronze statue, Ming dynasty. Fanhualou, Imperial Palace, 2,10 m. © Wang Jiapeng, “Diwang.”

**Right:** Fig. 11. Sandalwood Lord, wooden statue, 18<sup>th</sup> century, 1,53 m, with golden leaf covering the robe and hair (except for the ushnīsha and the ‘rosette’), Baohuadian, Gugong. © Chen Haoxing 陳浩星, Miao di xin chuan: Gu gong zhencang Zangchuan fojiao wenwu 妙諦心傳：故宮珍藏藏傳佛教文物 - Lightness of essence: Tibetan Buddhism relics of the Palace Museum, Aomen : Aomen yi shu bo wu guan, 2003 fig 6.

The Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors ordered many copies of the ‘original’ statue to be made.

- In 1735, a copy of the Sandalwood Buddha was carved for the Xianliang temple 賢良寺 located in the eastern part of Beijing.<sup>44</sup> According to an archival document the carving was realized in front of the original statue—which is a rare mention of a Chinese sculptor making a statue in front of a model. The monastery has since been destroyed and the copy has disappeared.

- Wang Jiapeng believes the copy now preserved in the Baohuadian 寶華殿 (in the Imperial Palace) could have been made at the same time as the 1735 Xianliangsi statue. (**fig. 11**) This replica is a 1,53 m. statue in *zitan* wood. It has a black-purple colour, and the face, hands and feet are gilded. The rosette of his hair is doubled by a second rosette on his high *ushnīsha*.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Wang Jiapeng, “Diwang”: 180-181.

<sup>45</sup> Wang Jiapeng, “Diwang”: 181.

- In 1774, Emperor Qianlong ordered the Ming dynasty bronze copy of the Sheng'ansi to be moved in the Fanhualou 梵華樓, a major Tibetan Buddhist temple in the Imperial Palace.<sup>46</sup> **(fig. 10)** Qianlong wanted to have an old copy within the Palace, and, interestingly, this one measuring 2,10 m. was at that time the largest statue of the whole Forbidden City. The statue still stands in the Fanhualou. It bears all major characteristics of Ming statuary: large upper eyelids, long ears, its eyes are almost closed, a jewel decorates the *ushnīsha*, the round bun has hair curled as snails, and the golden throne has an inscription of the reign of Qianlong.

- Qianlong did not leave the Sheng'ansi devoid of a major statue and ordered the same year (1774) a new lacquer wooden statue carved for this monastery.<sup>47</sup> It has not been preserved.

- Two copies of the icon were made for the Yonghegong. The first one, a bronze statue, 2,04 m high, in a niche carved in *nanmu* 楠木 wood, was made for Qianlong's mother. It still stands in the Zhaofolou 照佛樓 within the Yonghegong.<sup>48</sup> **(fig. 12)**



Fig. 12. Sandalwood Lord, bronze statue, 6,69 ft, Yonghegong, Zhaofolou. © Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 182.

<sup>46</sup> Archival document dated 1774, quoted by Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 180.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 182.

- The second one is a wooden statue, 1,70 m. high, located in the Xipeidian 熙配殿, the west part of the Falundian 法輪殿 within the same monastery. This later statue was personally worshipped by Qianlong.<sup>49</sup> Besides, the colossal Maitreya statue of the Wanfuge 萬福閣 was also carved out of sandalwood, as well as numerous statues of the Qing dynasty.

- At least two copies of the Sandalwood Buddha were preserved in Chengde, the summer retreat of the Qing emperors. An 18<sup>th</sup> century copy was enshrined in an elaborate case that was kept at the summer palace. It is a gold-lacquered wood statue that looks like the Baohuadian statue.<sup>50</sup> Other copies were enshrined in the temples of the imperial gardens.<sup>51</sup>

- After Emperor Kangxi ordered to move the statue from Jiufengsi to Zhantansi (see below), he ordered painters to realize thangkas representing it. (fig. 14)<sup>52</sup>



Fig. 13. Sandalwood Lord, bronze statue, Wanshousi monastery, Beijing. © Isabelle Charleux.

To this above list of copies made under the Ming and Qing dynasties documented in imperial records, we may add many other unofficial copies that were not recorded in the archives. The copies replicate *grosso modo* the characteristic 'Indian' pattern of the robe, the *mudrā*, the usual *lakshana* with or without jewels, and sometimes the hair 'rosette'. But only a few of them, such as a statue kept in the Beijing Wanshousi 萬壽寺 monastery (fig. 13), a statue kept

<sup>49</sup> See Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 183. A third statue preserved in Yonghegong is reproduced by Jin Shen, "Han zang fojiao zhong de zhantan ruixiang" 漢藏佛教中的旃檀瑞像, *Wenwu chunqiu* 文物春秋2005-4, 31-40: 37, fig. 12.

<sup>50</sup> See Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*: 165, fig. 56. Another metal copy, 1.40 meters high, was found in 1991 in Shuxiang monastery and now kept at Xumifushou monastery of Chengde (Jin Shen, "Han zang fojiao zhong": 39-40 & fig. 19.)

<sup>51</sup> Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 183. Other Qing dynasty examples: Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 186; Rowland, *The Evolution of the Buddha image*: fig. 50; Jin Shen, "Han zang fojiao zhong", fig. 20, etc.

<sup>52</sup> Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 183.

in the Palace Museum,<sup>53</sup> and another one kept in Yonghegong,<sup>54</sup> as well as **fig. 7** reproduce the upward look mentioned in the written sources.



Fig. 14. Sandalwood Lord, Tibetan thangka, 54x41cm. Zhaofolou, Yonghegong. © Qin Zhong 秦忠 and Xiong Gengsheng 熊更生, *Fojiao tuxiang ji: yiqian wu bai nian fojiao huihua xunli* 佛教图像集：一千五百年佛教绘画巡礼, Chongqing: Chongqing chu ban she, 2001. fig. 123

### *Copies in Tibet and Mongolia*

The Mongols and the Tibetans also realized many sculpted copies and paintings of the Sandalwood Lord. The earliest known Mongol copy was enshrined in a hexagonal pavilion of the first court of Dailuoding 黛螺頂 monastery in Wutaishan in 1691 (**fig. 15**). According to a stone inscription dated 1691<sup>55</sup> written in Mongolian and Chinese, standing in front of this pavilion, seven Mongol devotees from Beijing gave money for the making of the statue and the construction of the pavilion. The golden statue looks downwards and is about 1,50 m. high.

<sup>53</sup> Bronze statue, 80,5 cm. Li Yuhang 李雨航, *Ming Qing foxiang* 明清佛像, Taipei: Yishu tushu, 1997: 48, fig. 12.

<sup>54</sup> Illustration in Wang Jiapeng 2005: 183.

<sup>55</sup> “Qing fengding zaoxiang jian ting ji” 青峰頂造像建亭記: “Inscription for the construction of a pavilion for the statue of Qingfengding.”



Fig. 15. Sandalwood Lord, Dailuoding monastery, Wutaishan, 1691. © Isabelle Charleux



Fig. 16. Sandalwood Lord in a shrine, Erdeni Juu. © Anna Bělková (Left) and J. Choinhor, *Öndör gegen Zanabazar / Undur gegen Zanabazar, Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO, 1995: 45-46* (Right).

Hundreds of copies made in Mongolia, in wood or in metal, as well as pictorial representations are scattered in Western and Mongolian museums and monasteries. But many modern Mongol and Western scholars as well as Mongolian monks have forgotten the link between these reproductions and the Beijing statue. These are often labeled as ‘Dipankara Buddha’, ‘Shākyamuni’ or ‘Maitreya Buddha’ in Mongolian monasteries. ‘Candan juu’ is often distorted as ‘Gandan zuu’, ‘Kaldan zuu’, etc., or anything sounding like *candan*. A Candan Juu that is particularly worshipped in Mongolia is the statue preserved in a small reliquary at Erdeni Juu (Cyr. Erdene Zuu), one of the main monasteries of the country. **(fig. 16)** Another one, of a high quality, belongs to the Altangerel collection in Ulaanbaatar. **(fig. 17)** A statue preserved in the Lithuanian museum is the only Mongol example I could find that raises its eyes upwards. **(fig. 18)**



**Left:** Fig. 17. Sandalwood Lord (‘Zuu burhan’), 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, woodcarving, gilt, 37,3 cm, on a lotus base, crescent moon and sun carved and gilt on the lower part of his robe. Collection of Altangerel Ayurzana. C. Narantuya, *Mongol urlagiin ünēt büteelüüd*. © Ayuurzany Altangereliin cugluulgaac / Treasures of Mongolian Art. Collection of Altangerel Ayurzana, Ulaanbaatar: *The Asian Art antique gallery*, 2005: 26.

**Right:** Fig. 18. Sandalwood Lord, statue. © The M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas (Lithuania) – Tt 2507

It is probably owing to the fame of the Sandalwood Lord, as well as the Indian tales translated into Mongolian, that sandalwood has acquired a special value for the Mongols. It was imported in Mongolia: many precious objects of the Mongol material culture were made

of (or said to be made of)<sup>56</sup> sandalwood, such as statues, rosaries, coffins, etc. Moreover, the main relic of Kumbum (Mong. Gumbum)—the monastery founded on the birthplace of Tsongkhapa in Amdo, and one of the most important pilgrimages for Mongols—was the sandal tree reminding the place where Tsongkhapa's mother buried her placenta. The leaves were sold to pilgrims who used them in infusions to facilitate difficult births.

Paintings and prints certainly contributed to spread this particular iconography in Tibet and Mongolia.<sup>57</sup> (fig. 20) The existence of numerous miniature images of the Sandalwood Buddha, usually carried in a reliquary (Tib. *ga'u*) by ordinary pilgrims, evidences personal devotion to this specific icon in the Tibetan world.<sup>58</sup> (fig. 19)

As for Tibetan images, Wang Jiapeng believes that the first representations came from China to Tibet with the Ming patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, and that the vehicle of the iconography could have been thangkas made at the court of Ming Emperor Yongle (1403-1424) sent to Tibetan hierarchs. He gives the example of a thangka representing the Sandalwood Buddha, made in 1412 in Beijing (2,50 x 1,30 cm), and preserved in Nying monastery near Gyantse in Central Tibet.<sup>59</sup> Wang Jiapeng compares the round face, the robe with red flowers, and the jewel on the *ushnīsha* of the Buddha with the Ming statue of Fanhualou. The Tibetan artists, taking the Yongle painting as a model, then placed the Chinese style Sandalwood Buddha within Tibetan style thangkas, surrounded by the figures of Tsongkhapa and his disciples, bodhisattvas and *dharmapāla*.

A comparison between Tibetan, Mongol and Chinese copies and pictorial representations of the Sandalwood Buddha shows one major difference: while the existing Chinese copies of the Sandalwood Buddha (as well as the 17<sup>th</sup> century Wutaishan copy), dressed as a monk, strike by their simplicity (absence of crown, of jewellery, and of mandorla), the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Mongol and Tibetan images are adorned: the Buddha is crowned by a five-leaf diadem, and he wears earrings and necklaces.<sup>60</sup> The adding of crown, necklaces and jewels on Tibetan and Mongol icons of the Sandalwood Buddha can be explained to make them resemble to the two 'Lords' of Lhasa. The very controversial crown of the Jokhang's Jowo, as well as earrings and a necklace, were added only in 1409 by Tsongkhapa.<sup>61</sup> The Sandalwood Buddha and the Jokhang's Jowo therefore both changed categories: their original form belonged to the *nirmānakāya* ('emanation body') while their crowned form belonged to the *sambhogakāya* ('enjoyment body').

<sup>56</sup> It happens that most of the wooden copies of the Sandalwood Lord were not made of sandal but of another fragrant wood.

<sup>57</sup> Several printing blocks were bought from Tibet by the Japanese monk Ekai Kawaguchi 河口慧海 (1866-1945) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are now preserved in Japan: see Jin Shen, "Han zang fojiao zhong": 33, fig. 2.

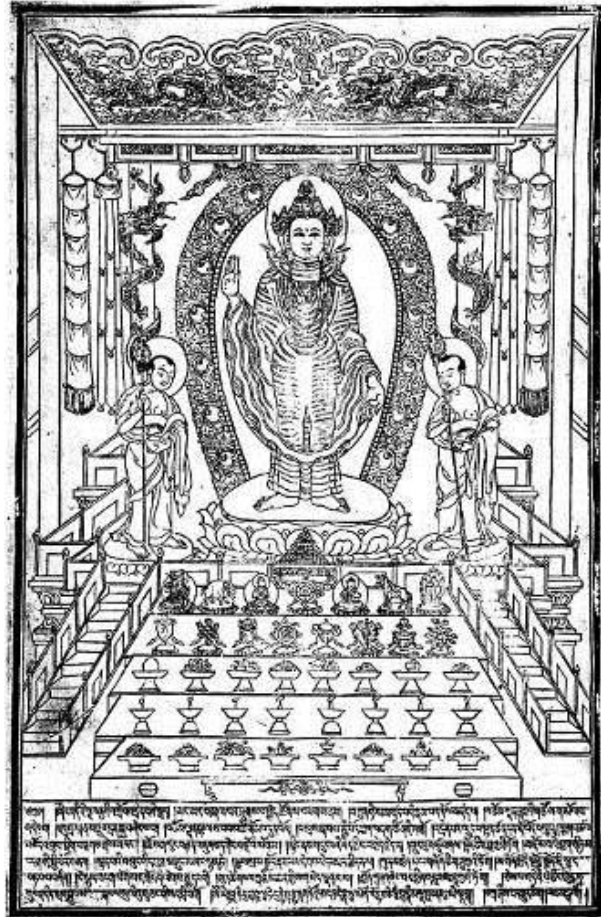
<sup>58</sup> See a miniature thangka (8,1x7,2 cm) from Tibet or Mongolia, ca. 19<sup>th</sup>-beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in the Czech Republic (No. A 17224): Bělka, "Spread of Buddhism": fig. 4

<sup>59</sup> Wang Jiapeng, "Diwang": 187.

<sup>60</sup> See three thangkas from Tibet preserved in the American Museum of National History, New York: n°70/11171 (inscription: *tsan dan jo bo*): <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/94175.html>; n°70.°/5057: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/94186.html>; n°70.0/5086: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/94214.html>; and a thangka from Tibet or Mongolia, ca. 19<sup>th</sup>-beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in Prague, Czech Republic (No. A 16334): Bělka, "Spread of Buddhism": fig. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Warner, "The Precious Lord": Chapter 5.





**Left:** Fig. 19. Sandalwood Lord, miniature thangka, Mongolia or Buryatia, 21,9x16,1 cm, ca 19<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. © The Buryat Buddhist Academy, Verkhnya Berezovka, Lama Samayev Collection, Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, Russian Federation.

**Right :**Fig. 20. Sandalwood Lord, print on cloth; 60x39,4 cm; printed in Yonghegong monastery, with a prayer written by monk Liu heshang Beijing, end of 19<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation. © Private collection, Saint Petersburg.

Did the Beijing Zhantansi Sandalwood Buddha have a crown and necklaces in the Qing period? Only Linqing's drawing of the Sandalwood Buddha represents the Beijing statue adorned with a three-pointed crown: because the Tibeto-Mongolian style was predominant at the Qing court, a separate crown may have been added on the 'authentic' Beijing image, as well as on other Qianlong bronze copies and reproductions. The crown seems to be such an important feature of the statue that the Buryats recently added a crown to their 'authentic', unadorned statue of the Sandalwood Buddha (see below).

### ***The Sandalwood Buddha after 1900***

For a true believer it must have been difficult to admit that an authentic portrait of the Buddha that was about 2500 years old, had made so many miracles and had witnessed the birth and the death of so many dynasties could simply disappear. Modern Mongol pilgrims from Inner Mongolia especially go to Wutaishan to worship the two Sandalwood Buddhas of Tayuansi 塔院寺 and Dailuoding (fig. 15), and had never heard about the old Beijing statue and the story of its disappearance.

The Buryats now claim the statue enshrined in Egita monastery, located eastwards of Ulan-Ude,<sup>62</sup> is the original Sandalwood Buddha from Beijing.<sup>63</sup> (fig. 21) In a forthcoming article, Luboš Bělka questions the story of the Buryat statue and retraces its 'career' since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He cites sources that actually assert that after the Boxer rebellion, the statue had been taken by Buryat monks to Buryatia, or by Buryat Cossaks on Russian order. Another version states that the statue was hidden in Wutaishan before being moved to the Egita monastery in Buryatia.<sup>64</sup>

The Beijing statue would have been transferred to Buryatia, housed in the Egita monastery in 1901, transferred in 1935 in the Ulan-Ude State Antireligious Museum, and to have been returned to the reopened Egita monastery in 1991. An expertise of the statue made by the State Hermitage in Saint Petersburg in 1995 concluded that the statue was dated late 18<sup>th</sup> century-early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It could therefore be a copy different from the Beijing statue—actually we have seen that several copies were made on Qianlong's order, such as the 1774 statue. It is a human-size statue that raises its eyes upwards like the original Sandalwood Buddha, but no trace of jewel can be seen on the base of the *ushnīsha*. Its strange crown with a bull head is probably of recent facture. A copy of the Candan Juu is currently situated in Kizhinga Monastery, Buryatia.



Fig. 21. Sandalwood Lord (*Zandan zuu*), Egita monastery, © A. I. Breslavce.

<sup>62</sup> Yeravin Aimak, Republic of Buryatia, Russian Federation.

<sup>63</sup> See Bělka, "Spread of Buddhism".

<sup>64</sup> Bělka, "Spread of Buddhism"; Üjeed Hüreibaatar, "History of the Lord Buddha is narrated differently: the cases of beliefs, legends and history of the Sandalwood Buddha in East Asia and Inner Asia," oral presentation, Cambridge: Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, 1999.

## ***Conclusion***

This article raises comparative questions on the adoption of foreign objects and narratives in situations of contact between cultures (how artifacts are culturally defined and put to use), on the circulation of miraculous images in North Asia, and on the insertion of 18<sup>th</sup> century Mongols within a Buddhist historical continuum.

The craze of Mongols for the Sandalwood Buddha is obviously the conjunction of several factors: the Tibetan tradition already developed in the Tibetan canon and in historical chronicles, the interest of the Yuan emperors for the statue that they enshrined in their holiest monastery, the promotion by high ranking lamas who bowed to the statue and presented incense together with the emperor, and the regular presence of Mongols at the capital during the winter months. It is also true that Rolpe Dorje's work had a tremendous influence and was even translated into Russian for modern Buryats. The many copies made by the Mongols aimed to have the presence of the Buddha in their community.

The promotion of the Sandalwood Buddha by the Qing dynasty, through the intermediary of high-ranking Buddhist reincarnations, contributed to impose Beijing as a holy city of pilgrimage. The Mongols do not go in pilgrimage to Beijing anymore, which—beside the fact that their annual visit to Beijing was generally motivated by political and commercial purposes as much as religious ones—points out that for the Mongols, the sanctity of Beijing was closely linked to the Sandalwood Buddha. Will they now go to see the Buryat Sandalwood Buddha, reversing the old routes of pilgrimages that went from Buryatia to Urga and then to Tibet and China?

## ***Appendix: Stone inscriptions, Zhantansi***

. “Hongrensi beiwen” 弘仁寺碑文, 1666: short inscription recording the construction of the Hongrensi and the transportation of the statue from the Jiufengsi during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Kangxi. Text preserved in Gao Shiqi's *Jin'ao tuishi biji*, *juan xia*, 9a-9b. Also Yu Minzhong, *Rixia jiu wen kao*: 41, 648. Translation from the Chinese by Rainer von Franz, *Die unbearbeiteten Peking-Inschriften der Franke-Lauferschen Sammlung*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984: 184-185.

. “Zhantanfo xilai lidai chuansi ji” 旃檀佛西來歷代傳祀記, 1666. Text preserved in Gao Shiqi's *Jin'ao tuishi biji*, *juan xia*, 9b-11b (cf. Zhang Yuxin 張羽新, *Qing zhengfu yu lamajiao* 清政府與喇嘛教, Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1988: 230-232); Tibetan text in Huang Hao, *Zai Beijing de Zangzu wenwu*: 99-100. Translation from the Chinese by von Fran, *Die unbearbeiteten Peking-Inschriften*: 185-188.

. “Zhantanfo lidai chuan(su) ji” 旃檀佛歷代傳(祀)記 (Mong. “Qayan-u bicigsen jandan juu barayun yajar-aca iregsen ba üye üye-dür takiysan temdeglegsen namtar”): stele of restoration, 1721, in three languages (Manchu, Mongol, Chinese). Based on the “Zhantan foxiang ji” written by the Hanlin academician Cheng Jufu of the Yuan dynasty (Yu Minzhong, *Rixia jiu wen kao*: 41, 650-651). See Paul Pelliot, Review of Otto Franke, and Berthold Laufer, *Epigraphische Denkmäler aus China*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1914, *Journal Asiatique* 2, 1914, 177-191: 189, n. 1. Rubbing preserved in the Franke-Laufer collection (Otto Franke, & Laufer, Berthold, *Epigraphische Denkmäler aus China. Erster Teil: Lamaistische Tempelinschriften aus Peking, Jehol und Si-ngan*, Berlin-Hamburg: Dietrich Reimer, 1914, pl. 26). Three versions transliterated and translated into German, with annotations and

appendices by von Franz, *Die unbearbeiten Peking-Inschriften*: 166-189; Chinese version translated into French by Paul Pelliot, Review: 188-191. Also Yu Minzhong, *Rixia jiu wen kao*: 41, 648-649; Wu Tingxie *et al.*, *Beijing shi zhigao*: 245-246.

. The tetraglot poem written by Qianlong on a stele on the occasion of the 1760 restoration. Rubbing preserved in the Franke-Laufer collection (*Epigraphische Denkmäler*, pl. 27/28). Texts transliterated and translated into German, with annotations and appendices by von Franz, *Die unbearbeiten Peking-Inschriften*: 190-195.

. “Chongxiu Hongrensi beiwen” 重修弘仁寺碑文, two-language (Chinese, Manchu) inscription written on the occasion of the 1760 restoration. Rubbing preserved in the Franke-Laufer collection (*Epigraphische Denkmäler*, pl. 29/30). Texts transliterated and translated into German, with annotations and appendices by von Franz, *Die unbearbeiten Peking-Inschriften*: 196-212.