

Zen and the “Hero’s March Spell” of the *Shoulengyan jing*

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TODAY, monks, nuns, and some lay practitioners recite spells in Zen 禪 Buddhist temples and monasteries in Japan, China and Taiwan (Chan), Korea (Sŏn), and Vietnam (Thiền). For example, the simple and straightforward depiction of daily life as an apprentice monk in the Tōfukuji 東福寺 branch of the Rinzai 臨濟 Zen tradition in Satō Giei’s richly illustrated *Unsui nikki* 雲水日記 (Daily Record of a Zen Monk in Training) explains that during morning service—or *chōka* 朝課—training monks recite scriptures and spells (*zukyō* 誦經 or *dokuju* 読誦) for the transference of merit (*ekō* 回向).¹ The *Unsui nikki* lists the *Hannya shin gyō* 般若心經 (Heart Sutra), the *Daihi shu* 大悲呪 (“Great Compassion Spell”), the *Kanro mon* 甘露門 (“Gate of Sweet Dew”), the *Sonshō darani* 尊勝陀羅尼 (“High Victory Dhāraṇī”), the *Shuryōgon shu* 首楞嚴呪 (“Hero’s March Spell”), the *Kannon gyō* 觀音經 (Sutra on Avalokiteśvara), and the *Kongō kyō* 金剛經 (Diamond Sutra) to be chanted during morning service. By reciting spells on a daily basis or on specific ritual occasions from widely circulated manuals for daily recitation practice—or “monk books”—such as the *Zenrin kaju* 禪林課誦 (Ch. *Chanlin kesong*; Daily

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¹ Satō 2006, p. 36. Note that the list of spells—and scriptures—is not included in the English translation (see Satō 1973: plate nos. 15–16).

Liturgies from the Zen Groves; pub. 1662),² these Buddhists are engaging in neither esoteric nor tantric Buddhist practice. Instead, they primarily chant spells or recite scriptures to obtain “blessings” or “benefits” in this world, but also to achieve concentration during meditation exercises, and perhaps even sometimes with the intention of avoiding unfortunate rebirths in hells or as bugs or birds.³ We know that Zen communities across East Asia regularly recite the *Heart Sutra* and *Diamond Sutra*, the “Universal Gateway to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara” chapter from the *Lotus Sutra*, and several spells, in the form of either longer *dhāraṇīs* (Jp. *darani* 陀羅尼, or *sōji* 總持) or shorter mantras.⁴ One spell, in particular, and the first in the *Zenrin kaju*, is the *Daibucchō shuryōgon shu* 大仏頂首楞嚴呪 (“Hero’s March Spell of the Buddha’s Topknot”) with 427 “terms” (Ch. *ju* 句; Jp. *ku*), which seems to be the longest spell Zen monastics have recited for nearly a thousand years.⁵ Numerous modern dictionaries and premodern commentaries point out that this spell comes from roll seven of the Chinese pseudo-*Śūraṅgama Sutra*, or *Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 (Jp. *Shuryōgon kyō*).⁶ I refer to this scripture as the *Book of the Hero’s March [Absorption]*, which is a translation of the

² This is probably a Ming dynasty (1368–1644) compilation of daily recitations within Chan monasteries, which came to Japan via the founder of the Obaku 黄檗 tradition, Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (Ingen Ryūki; 1592–1673); see Wu 2008, pp. 271–72. The edition I purchased from Kichūdō bookstore in Kyoto has a colophon indicating it was originally published in the *Jiaxing ban xu zangjing* 嘉興版續藏經 (Supplement to the Jiaxing Edition of the Buddhist Canon), also commonly referred to as *Fangce ban* 方冊版 (Square-format String-bound Edition), published in 1666; see Ibuki 2001, p. 151. For an exhaustive study of the *Zenrin kaju* with coverage of both contemporary versions in Japan and China, as well as premodern editions and changes, see Kamata 1986, pp. 276–80. See also Matsuura 1987, pp. 343–52 (esp. p. 352, n. 1).

³ Schopen 2012.

⁴ T no. 251, 8: 848c4–23; T no. 235, 8: 748c19–752c5; and T no. 262, 9: 55a–58b5. Matsuura 1987, pp. 41–42, also records ample references to recitation of the *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (Jp. *Daihōkō butsu kegon kyō*; T no. 278, 9 [60 rolls]; T no. 279, 10 [80 rolls]) in Chan/Zen monastic codes.

⁵ “Hero’s March Spell” translates the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit term *Śūraṅgama-dhāraṇī* or *-mantra*, and follows Kapstein 2000, p. 257, n. 77. The Chinese term *ju*, which means sentence or line, translates either the Sanskrit term *akṣara* or *pada*, which mean “word” and “phrase,” respectively. See Tribe 2016, p. 52. I call these “terms”—as opposed to phrases, words, or verses—because they are transliterations of meaningful terms in Sanskrit that may be nearly impossible to comprehend in Chinese. An example is the first line from a *dhāraṇī* Sarasvatī utters in the *Konkō myōō kyō* 金光明王經, “same bisame svaha,” rendered into Chinese by Yijing 義淨 (635–713) as *sanmi pisanmi shahe* 三謎 毘三謎 莎訶 (T no. 665, 16: 435b23). See translation and discussion in Emmerick 1992, p. 49.

⁶ On the designation “pseudo-*Śūraṅgama Sutra*,” see Benn 2008. The *Shoulengyan jing*, abbreviated title of the *Da foding rulai miyin xiuzheng liaoyi zhupusa wanxing shoulengyan*

reconstructed Sanskrit title for *Shoulengyan jing*. What is curious about the “Hero’s March Spell” is that even though a 427-term version in *Zenrin kaju*, for example, is chanted by Zen monastics, this version of the *dhāraṇī* is only appended to the end of the Taishō edition, apparently reproduced from the second Korean Koryō 高麗 edition (thirteenth c.) of the *Shoulengyan jing*; the version of the spell within roll seven of the Taishō edition is quite different and has 439 terms.

This essay explores both the problematical history of the “Hero’s March Spell” through several distinct transcriptions into Chinese from Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) China, and some possible reasons why this demon subjugating (Jp. *gōbuku* 降伏, or *chōbuku* 調伏; Skt. *abhicārika*) incantation remains central to Zen monastic training. In the first section I examine the role of the “Hero’s March Spell” in contemporary Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen discourse and practice, with special attention paid to a popular commentary attributed to the well-known modern Chan teacher Hsüan Hua (Xuanhua) 宣化 (1918–1995), distributed by the North American Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (Fajie Foijiao Zonghui 法界佛教總會). In the second section I investigate the textual history of the “Hero’s March Spell” and different recensions of it that have circulated in East Asia to demonstrate that this spell may very well have been written in China, based on a section from the widely known *Divyāvadāna*, rather than transcribed into Chinese from an original in Sanskrit or another Indic language (or even a translation into Tibetan). Finally, in the third section I address the complex and problematical distinction between so-called exoteric and esoteric Buddhist traditions in East Asia, which sometimes leads to the misconception that spell chanting practices are part of a separate and perhaps even singular Sino-Japanese esoteric (Ch. *mijiao/mizon* 密教/密宗; Jp. *mikkyō/misshu*) or tantric Buddhist ritual tradition, sometimes with a peculiar designation like “proto-Tantra.”⁷

Because this is a study of chanting practices of the “Hero’s March Spell” within the East Asian Zen Buddhist traditions, it may prove instructive to

jing 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經 (Jp. *Dai butchō nyorai mitsuin shushō ryōgi shobosatsu mangyō shuryōgon kyō*; T no. 945, 19) should not be mistaken for the *Foshuo shoulengyan sanmei jing* 佛說首楞嚴三昧經 (Jp. *Bussetsu shuryōgon sanmai kyō*; T no. 642, 15), translated by Kumārajīva (344–413). The *Shoulengyan jing* was first subjected to scrutiny as an apocryphon (Ch. *weijing* 疑經; Jp. *gikyō*) during the late eighth century in Nara, Japan. See Lin Min’s oeuvre on the subject: Lin Min 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011. One ought not forget that Demiéville (1952, pp. 43–51, n. 3) either raised these concerns first or was following Mochizuki Shinkō (1930, pp. 239–44).

⁷ The most oft-cited examples in the study of East Asian Buddhism are Strickmann 1996; Strickmann and Faure 2005, pp. 58–71; 2002, pp. 103–14.

say a few words about methodology and the sources I have examined. I agree with Gregory Schopen that the “mass of medieval Mahayana sutras and *dhāraṇīs* have been shamefully understudied,” but would add that what surprises me even more than the lack of scholarly attention to Mahayana *dhāraṇī* sutras in their medieval Indian—or Central Asian—context is the paucity of studies of spells continuously used by Buddhist communities in East Asia.⁸ Part of the reason for the general inattention to *dhāraṇīs* chanted by actual Buddhists, I suspect, lies with the unfortunate association between Mahayana Buddhist spell practices and tantric or esoteric Buddhism by many scholars in the West, as well as in Japan, Korea, and China. This is a regrettable connection because there is ample evidence to suggest that the doctrinal affiliation of these spells is quite distinct from tantric ritual manuals, and instead they belong with normative Mahayana scriptures such as the Prajñāpāramitā corpus, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the *Jingguangming jing* 金光明經 (Jp. *Konkōmyō kyō*; hereafter, *Sutra of Golden Light*), or “texts in which ‘the text or book as a source of sacred power’ is a fundamental preoccupation.”⁹ All of the spells used by Zen Buddhists fall into this genre of medieval Mahayana Buddhist texts that mostly advocate merit-making or non-meditational acts in order to obtain material or substantive rewards to offset the cosmological dilemma caused by the laws of karma. These spells do not, moreover, teach that only an initiated few can perform them, nor that one need seek the guidance of a guru to either understand or execute any esoteric or secretive rituals designed to result in liberation.¹⁰ Instead,

⁸ Schopen 2012, p. 276.

⁹ Schopen 1982, p. 106. See also Schopen 1975. For the *Sutra of Golden Light*, cf. T no. 664, 16: 395b5–402a22; T no. 665, 16: 403a3–456c25.

¹⁰ Schopen 1982, p. 105; Schopen, 1985, p. 147 (cited in McBride 2005, p. 87, n. 8), defines several criteria with which to enclose a useful definition of Tantra:

If by ‘Tantric’ we mean that phase of Buddhist doctrinal development which is characterized by an emphasis on the central function of the *guru* as religious preceptor; by sets—usually graded—of specific initiations; by esotericism of doctrine, language, and organization; and by a strong emphasis on the realization of the goal through highly structured ritual and meditative techniques, then there is nothing at all ‘tantric’ about these texts. . . . If ‘Tantric’ is to be used to refer to something other than this, then the term must be clearly defined and its boundaries must be clearly drawn. Otherwise the term is meaningless and quite certainly misleading.

An alternative view is presented in Shinohara 2014, and 2012, esp. pp. 257–65, discussing the *Dafangdeng tuoluoni jing* 大方等陀羅尼經 (Jp. *Daihōdō darani kyō*; T no. 1339, 21: 641a–661a6), an early compendium translated by Fazhong 法衆 (n.d.) circa 402–413, where how and why he reads esoteric Buddhist doctrinal or soteriological—as opposed to mundane (*laukika*)—motivations in *dhāraṇī* sutras are explicitly outlined.

these spells harness the power of a range of deities—buddhas, bodhisattvas, gods, demons, and spirits—to address concerns that afflict all classes of beings, rather than only those of a highly-trained, religious virtuoso.¹¹

If Mahayana Buddhist *dhāraṇī* sutras have received comparatively little attention, we can still be grateful that several Japanese scholars, including Kamata Shigeo (1986) and Matsuura Shūkō (1987),¹² compiled detailed studies of available premodern and contemporary sources of monastic scripture and spell-chanting practices in China, Korea, and Japan. Kamata and Matsuura focus on the genre of Zen Buddhist literature called “pure rules” (Jp. *shingi* 清規); T. Griffith Foulk has studied pure rules and Zen monastic ritual in English.¹³ Kamata, Matsuura, and Ibuki Atsushi’s (2001) history of Zen Buddhism highlight available sources—including *Zenrin kajū*—that we can use to assess the practice of Zen Buddhism in China and Japan. Yet we must be aware that some scholars may wish to assign the *Zenrin kajū* to either the Rinzai or Ōbaku Zen traditions in Japan. As an erudite Sōtō 曹洞 (Ch. Caodong) Zen abbot, Matsuura presents painstaking details from all manner of extant pure rule collections to focus on spell and scripture chanting within these three Zen traditions in Japan, but the bulk of Matsuura’s study underscores the wealth of monastic codes or related tracts produced in Japan from the time Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) travelled to China through 1970 (29 in total).¹⁴ It is clear from his research, however, that there is a

¹¹ Investigating Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang 敦煌 (e.g., IOL Tib J 316 and 711, or Pelliot tibétain 22, 23, 24), Dalton (2016) seems to suggest a middle road between Schopen and McBride on the one hand, and Shinohara on the other. Dalton posits that sometime during the ninth or tenth centuries, it appears that a three-fold ritual apparatus developed to use *dhāraṇī*-sutras to (1) invite mundane gods and spirits, (2) recite *dhāraṇīs*, and (3) close with a tantric-like series of praises and prayers that may have had soteriological or doctrinal objectives. I am grateful to Dalton because he also points out that in Tibetan materials—from Dunhuang and in Tibetan canonical Buddhist literature—“the story of the *heruka*-buddha taming the demon Rudra is the tantric myth *par excellence*” (Dalton 2016, p. 206). He also gives special attention to the fact that in some Dunhuang texts, and in almost all canonical *dhāraṇī* (Tib. *gzungs ‘dus*; Skt. *dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*) texts, we find *dhāraṇī-vidhis*, or ritual manuals: “In this sense, *dhāraṇīs* may not have been ‘proto-tantric,’ but ritual manuals truly were” (Dalton 2016, p. 216).

¹² See especially the chapter “Zenshū to ryōgonshu” 禪宗と楞嚴呪 (The Zen School and the “Hero’s March Spell”) in Kamata 1986, pp. 300–305.

¹³ See Foulk 2004, 2006, 2007.

¹⁴ Matsuura 1987, pp. 88–296, esp. pp. 89–90. Please note that even the designation of the Ōbaku tradition as a third, separate Zen school in Japan is an external category and has only been current since the last century; see Wu 2015, esp. pp. 3–5.

marked increase over time in terms of the number of ritual occasions when the “Hero’s March Spell” was recited within all three Zen traditions.¹⁵

Many of the sources I address in this study may appear to echo research by both Kamata and Ibuki, rather than Matsuura’s excellent, yet Sōtō Zen-orientated findings. This is because a short and erudite study of “Zen and Esoteric Buddhism” by William Bodiford in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras* (2011) deftly introduces the topic of Zen spells within a largely Japanese Sōtō Zen context. Bodiford describes Zen spells within the context of the common Japanese Zen sectarian dichotomy between meditative orthopraxis and philosophical orientation in terms of pure or strict (*junsui* 純粹) Zen, on the one hand, versus syncretic or dual-cultivation, or even mixed (*kenshū* 兼修) Zen, on the other, and assigns the introduction of “esoteric Zen” to Sōtō Zen master Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1268–1325); Bodiford mentions the “Hero’s March Spell” and the “Hero’s March Assembly” (Jp. *Ryōgon e* 楞嚴會).¹⁶ Rather than citing the pure rules attributed to Keizan (*Keizan*

¹⁵ Matsuura 1987, p. 43, lists six pure rules from China, all of which allege to derive from codes attributed to Baizhang 百丈 (d. 814): (1) *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Pure Rules from the Chan Gardens) in ten rolls, comp. Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗頤 (d. 1103) (X no. 1245, 111: 875a–942a17); (2) *Rirong xiao qinggui* 日用小清規 (Minor Pure Rules for Daily Use) in one roll, comp. Wuliang Zongshou 無量宗壽 (n.d.) ca. 1263 (X no. 1246, 111: 943a1–947b18); (3) *Jiaoding qinggui* 校定清規 (Checked and Established Pure Rules) in two rolls, comp. Weimian 惟勉 (n.d.) in 1274 (X no. 1249A, 112: 1a–55a9); (4) *Beiyong qinggui* 備用清規 (Reserve Pure Rules) in ten rolls, comp. Yixian 弋咸 (n.d.) ca. 1311 (X no. 1250, 112: 56a1–149a5); (5) *Huanzhu’an qinggui* 幻住菴清規 (Pure Rules for Huanzhu’s Hermitage) in one roll, comp. Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263–1323) ca. 1317 (X no. 1248, 111: 972a1–1012b18); and (6) the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 勸脩百丈清規 (Baizhang’s Pure Rules, Revised under Imperial Edict) in eight rolls, comp. Dehui 德輝 (n.d.) ca. 1338 (T no. 2025, 48: 1109c7–1160b15).

Although the “Hero’s March Spell” is not listed in the *Chanyuan qinggui*, it is enumerated several times in the *Riyong xiao qinggui*. By the *Jiaoding qinggui*, nine ritual occasions are listed when the “Hero’s March Spell” is chanted. Although the *Beiyong qinggui* lists only seven occasions, the full title of the *Shoulengyan jing* as the source of the spell is listed. *Huanzhu’an qinggui* lists twenty-five events during the ritual calendar when recitation of the “Hero’s March Spell” is required. *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* lists ten events. See Matsuura 1987, pp. 45–82. The *Shoekō shingi shiki* (Pure Rules Procedures with Various Dedications of Merit; T no. 2578) lists more than ninety occasions, indicating how widespread recitation of the “Hero’s March Spell” had become by the sixteenth century; see Matsuura 1987, pp. 302–20. Also, Stevenson (2014, pp. 347–55 esp. p. 346, and p. 352, n. 28) provides an exceptional synopsis of the ritual calendar articulated in these codes.

¹⁶ See Bodiford 2011, pp. 924–25, where he contrasts the terms “mixed Zen” and “Esoteric Zen” with “Pure Zen.” Bodiford contends that because Sōjiji 總持寺 was previously a Shin-gon 真言 temple and Keizan critiqued the promotion by Yōsai 榮西 (alt. Eisai; 1141–1215) of the “Hero’s March Spell” as proof positive that Eisai, the putative founder of Rinzaï Zen in Japan, advocated for mixed—exoteric, esoteric, and buddha-mind (*kenmitsushin no sanshū*

shingi 瑩山清規, comp. ca. 1325), Bodiford liberally cites the *Shoekō shingi shiki* 諸回向清規式 (Pure Rules Procedures with Various Dedications of Merit; T no. 2578), compiled by the Rinzaï monk Tenrin Fūin 天倫楓隱 (n.d.) in 1566 (not implemented until 1657) to illustrate examples of when spells are chanted in Zen monasteries.¹⁷ Furthermore, Bodiford attributes the roots of Zen spell practice in China, and the “Hero’s March Spell” in particular, to Caodong 曹洞 master Zhenxie Qingliao 真歇清了 (1088–1151), who used it as a remedy to keep monastics awake during meditation.¹⁸ Because analysis of archaeological discoveries during the twentieth century of early Chan manuscripts or editions in China is still ongoing, it is nearly impossible to pin down when or where Buddhist monks in China first chanted the “Hero’s March Spell.” We do know, however, that Zhenxie Qingliao was almost certainly not the first to promote this spell. Juefan Huihong 覺範慧洪 (1071–1128), for example, a prolific advocate for teachings by masters of the Linji 臨濟, Yunmen 雲門, and Fayān 法眼 lineages, mentions that Huanglong Huinan 黃龍慧南 (1002–1069) recited the “Hero’s March Spell” to aid in or stimulate concentration (samadhi) during meditation.¹⁹

顯密心の三宗)—or combined Zen practice, discussed further below, Keizan established “esoteric Zen” in Japan.

¹⁷ *Keizan shingi*, T no. 2589, 82: 423c11–451c26; cf. Matsuura 1987, pp. 105–14, which lists seventeen ritual occasions when the “Hero’s March Spell” is recited. *Shoekō shingi shiki*, T no. 2578, 81: 624b7–687c8. Tenrin Fūin and the *Shoekō shingi shiki* are also mentioned in Foulk 2007, p. 52. Cf. Bodiford 2011, pp. 927–29.

¹⁸ Bodiford 2011, pp. 927–28. On the *Śūrangama* (alt. Pāli-derived spelling) spell, see *ibid.*, esp. p. 927, n. 5: “It is known as the ‘*Śūrangama*’ because it subsequently became embedded in another scripture titled *Śūrangama sūtra* (*Lengyan jing*; 10 fascicles, T. 945), a spurious work likely composed in China (see Luk, trans. 1966).” Bodiford refers to a (possible) translation of a version of the “Hero’s March Spell”—the *Baisangai zhou* 白傘蓋呪 (Jp. *Byakusankai shu*; “Spell of the White Canopy of the Buddha’s Topknot”; T no. 944A, 19: 100a3–102c20), discussed below—by Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong Jingang 不空金剛; 705–774), which he mistakenly suggests matches the spell in the pseudo-*Śūrangama Sutra*.

¹⁹ On Huanglong Huinan, Huihong’s grandfather-teacher in his transmission family, and the use of the “Hero’s March Spell” written during the spring in 1101, see “Ti Huanglong Nan heshang chao sanshou” 題黃龍南和尚抄三首 (On [Reading] a Copy of Huanglong [Hui]nan’s [Calligraphy]) in Yanagida and Shiina 2000, pp. 654–55, or Shi Huihong et al. 2012, vol. 2, p. 1491. According to Ch’oe (2005, p. 201) and my own previous research on Huihong, it appears that he saw a special connection between the *Shoulengyan jing* and the “Hero’s March Spell” with the teachings of Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975), ostensibly from the Fayān transmission family; see the hagiographical entry on Yanshou in the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* 禪林僧寶傳 (Jp. *Zenrin sōbōden*; Chronicles of the Sangha Jewel in the Chan Groves), X no. 1560, 137: 239c–241b.

The historian of East Asian religions has access to materials concerning premodern spell chanting practices that may or may not have been known by Satō Giei's rector (Jp. *inō* 維那). In the case of the Japanese Rinzai Zen tradition, one need only turn to the voluminous encyclopedia of Zen monasticism, the *Zenrin shōkisen* 禪林象器箋 (Notes on Images and Implements from the Groves of Zen; comp. 1715) composed by Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653–1744), which provides a section on Zen texts (Jp. *kyōroku mon* 經錄門) that records seven Buddhist spells.²⁰ It seems doubtful that Zen monastics would have read anything from such a large encyclopedia on a daily basis in the Sangha Hall (Jp. *sōdō* 僧堂). Instead it may have been the case that they turned to the *Zenrin kaju*.

The Longest Chinese Buddhist Spell and Zen Training in East Asia Today

Before proceeding with an investigation into this spell from an historical or philological perspective, I would like to address the question of how popular the “Hero’s March Spell” is today across East Asia. In 2012 I had an opportunity to interview several monastics in Japan, Taiwan, and in the Jiangnan 江南 region of China about their spell chanting practices in general, and the “Hero’s March Spell” in particular. I did not have the resources to undertake a comprehensive survey of anything resembling the majority of Zen or Chan monastics. Rather, my interviews took place with representatives from the following Zen temples in Kyoto: Manpukuji 万福寺, Shōkokuji 相国寺, and Myōshinji 妙心寺. In Taiwan, my interviews were limited to selected monastics from the Dharma Drum Lineage (Fagupai 法鼓派), Foguangshan 佛光山, and with nuns affiliated with the Buddhist Compassion Relief (Tzu-chi [or Ciji] 慈濟) Foundation at their university in Hualien 花蓮 City. On the continent, I located willing participants at two monasteries on Putuoshan 普陀山 Island (Pujisi 普濟寺 and Fayusi 法雨寺), as well as at Lingyinsi

²⁰ Yanagida 1979, pp. 599–604. The *Zenrin shōkisen* includes a laundry list of Zen texts—discourse records (Ch. *yulu* 語錄; Jp. *goroku*), public case anthologies (Ch. *gong’an* 公案; Jp. *kōan*), poetry (Ch. *jiesong* 偈頌; Jp. *geju*), eulogies (Ch. *zan* 贊; Jp. *san*), Dharma talks (Ch. *fayu* 法語; Jp. *hōgo*), and biographies of deceased masters (Ch. *xingzhuang* 行狀; Jp. *gyōjō*), to name several examples—and the spells of the tradition. The seven spells are: (1) the “Hero’s March Spell”; (2) the “White Canopy Spell;” (3) the “Great Compassion Spell;” (4) the “Spell to Ward off Calamities” (Ch. *Xiaozai zhou* 消災呪; Jp. *Shōsai shu*); (5) the “High Victory *Dhāraṇī*”; (6) the “Spell of the [Buddha of] Limitless Life [Amitāyus]” (Ch. *Wuliangshou zhou* 無量壽呪; Jp. *Muryōju shu*); and (7) the “Comprehensive and Penetrating Spell of Avalokiteśvara” (Ch. *Guanyin zongming zhou* 觀音總明呪; Jp. *Kannon sōmyō shu*). On Mujaku Dōchū, see App 1987.

靈隱寺 in Hangzhou 杭州, and at Xiyuan Jiezhuang Lusi 西園戒幢律寺 in Nanjing 南京.

I collected five brief points worth consideration from written surveys and verbal interviews with thirty-six monastics and nine lay followers. First, few interviewees knew much about the history of spell chanting in general and almost nothing specific about the “Hero’s March Spell.” Second, almost all of those I met with had chanted, recited, or listened to a recording of this spell over the previous two weeks. Third, within Chinese communities on the continent and in Taiwan, many of the interviewees admonished me not to read or recite this spell at night for fear that it would call up malevolent ghosts, phantoms, or demons who would surely impede my progress. Fourth, most of the interviewees knew that this long spell accurately transcribes an original Sanskrit *dhāraṇī* (though only the Japanese monastics used the term “*darani*”) that is intimately tied to the worship of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteśvara. Finally, nearly two-thirds of my informants were able to list at least five or more malevolent spirits—or demons—that could be addressed by chanting this spell. I will return to the names of these demons shortly.

I am grateful to Thomas Kirchner of the International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism at Hanazono University, who was willing to meet with me to discuss what my data might suggest with regard to contemporary Rinzai Zen monasticism in Japan. The “Hero’s March Spell” may be chief among those listed in the still utilized *Zenrin shōkisen*, but it is not, in fact, chanted during *chōka* anymore. It is chanted in its entirety at occasions such as retreats (Ch. *anju* 安居; Jp. *ango*) and during collective assemblies at training monasteries (Jp. *senmon sōdō* 專門僧堂), but definitely not on a daily basis as remains the case among Ōbaku monastics.²¹ All Zen monastics I interviewed in Japan assured me that lay followers do not chant and would not know anything about the “Hero’s March Spell.”

The data from Taiwan and China provided me with a far more complex picture of devotion to the “Hero’s March Spell.” On the one hand, male and female monastics informed me that they recited from the list of spells I located in *Zenrin shōkisen*, but they did not do so according to any regular

²¹ The interviews with Japanese and Taiwanese monastics also confirmed that some members of Zen communities see themselves as preserving the traditional Chan/Zen monastic codes. For a list of times when the *Zenrin shōkisen* authorizes recitation of the “Hero’s March Spell” see T no. 2025, 48: 1113b–c, 1114b–c, 1115a, 1116a, 1118a. See also the translation given in Ichimura 2006, pp. 9, 18–19, 20, 24–25, 34, 52, 57, 60. Cf. Matsuura 1987, pp. 74–84, which lists ten ritual occasions for recitation of the “Hero’s March Spell.”

timetable or ritual calendar (for example, following the pure rules). On the other hand, when monastics recite from the list of spells in *Zenrin shōkisen*, they begin with the “Hero’s March Spell.” Lay followers present a far more curious perspective on the “Hero’s March Spell.” In Taiwan and in China, again and again, lay followers and several monastics handed me copies of a small booklet—with accompanying DVD—devoted to studying and cultivating this spell.

Prepared and distributed by the North American Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, which ministers to Chinese-speaking communities in China, Taiwan, and across the Chinese diaspora, this booklet contains the teachings of Chinese Chan Master Hsüan Hua about the “Hero’s March Spell.” Although it does not encompass what may be considered normative teachings about the “Hero’s March Spell” within a geographical area as diverse as East Asia, it may provide some insight into how our spell is understood by Chinese-speaking monastics and lay devotees today. Furthermore, I encountered a small community of lay devotees in Beijing who demonstrated their daily practice of the “Hero’s March Spell” according to the instructions provided by the booklet containing Hsüan Hua’s teachings. These two communities also recite the “Great Compassion Spell” according to Hsüan Hua’s instructions.

Full consideration of Hsüan Hua’s booklet could comprise an interesting study on its own. But for the purpose of providing an overall perspective about contemporary attitudes towards the “Hero’s March Spell,” I will restrict my treatment of Hsüan Hua’s views to how the “Five Great Heart Spells” (Ch. *Wuda xinzhou* 五大心呪) and the “Heart Spell of the ‘Hero’s March Spell’” (Ch. *Lengyanzhou zhouxin* 楞嚴呪心) are specifically tailored to subjugating demons and acquiring benefits in this world. It is noteworthy that the booklet also contains the invocation for the “Hero’s March Assembly,” which Zen monastics hold in hand when reciting an invocation with twenty-five seven-character phrases that begins by inviting the buddhas and bodhisattvas to the assembly, followed by a description of how the “Hero’s March Spell” was spoken by a brightly-illuminated emanation of Śākyamuni Buddha seated on a precious lotus blossom with a thousand petals emerging from the topknot (Jp. *nikkei* 肉髻; Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*) on his head.²² This invocation is certainly recited in Chinese monasteries and Zen temples

²² Shamen Shi Longdao 2011, pp. 3–5; Xuanhua et al. 2010, pp. 14–15. While the invocation and invitation cannot be found in any scriptural source, the description of how the “Hero’s March Spell” was spoken agrees with the seventh roll of the *Shoulengyan jing*: T no. 945, 19: 133c21–26.

in Japan, and can be found in the *Zenrin shōkisen*. The “Hero’s March Assemblies” may date back to the Wuyue 吳越 (907–978) kingdom in China.²³ They are held to chant the “Hero’s March Spell” during monastic retreats to produce merit for a wide variety of reasons and can also be occasions for lay people to receive the bodhisattva precepts (Ch. *pusa jie* 菩薩戒; Jp. *bosatsu kai*).²⁴

²³ DDB, s.v. “Lengyan hui” (Accessed April 30, 2016).

²⁴ On the bodhisattva precepts and the indigenous Chinese scriptures used to confer them in East Asia, see Groner 1990 and Getz 1999. The invocation to the Hero’s March Assembly in Xuanhua et al. 2010, pp. 14–15, is lifted from the end of the third volume of the *Shoulengyan jing* and says:

I take refuge in the Hero’s March Assembly and praise the buddhas and bodhisattvas. [I take refuge in the] wonderfully deep *dhāraṇī* of Acala. [I take refuge in the] rare king of this world and of the Hero’s March, who dissolves my one hundred million kalpas of perverse views so I will not pass through innumerable (*asaṃkhyā*) [lifetimes] and obtain the dharmakāya [in an instant]. Now I vow to obtain rebirth as a precious king who returns to save as many beings as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges. With my whole heart I shall serve all beings throughout the myriad worlds. This is called requiting the Buddha’s beneficence. I prostrate and ask the Bhagavat to testify. Before I vow to enter the five turbid realms, if one being has not yet become a buddha, I shall abandon nirvana. Oh great hero, powerful and compassionate one, I hope you will dispel my last delusions so I quickly attain supreme enlightenment and sit in the practice hall of the ten directions. Should even the *śūnyatā*-nature entirely melt away, the powerful (*śakra*) mind will remain unmoving. I take refuge in the eternal buddhas of the ten directions. I take refuge in the eternal Dharma of the ten directions. I take refuge in the eternal sangha of the ten directions. I take refuge in Śākyamuni Buddha. I take refuge in the Hero’s March [from the] Buddha’s topknot. I take refuge in Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. I take refuge in Vajragarbhā Bodhisattva. (*Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 119b12–20)

On reading *shuojialuo* (Jp. *shakara*) as *śakra* and not *cakra*, see Junko Matsumura, s.v. “槃迦羅” (DDB) [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E7%88%8D%E8%BF%A6%E7%BE%85](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E7%88%8D%E8%B F%A6%E7%BE%85) (Accessed March 15, 2018). The stage is then set for recitation of the Sanskrit spell in Chinese transcription:

At that time, one hundred gleaming rays of light ushered forth from the Bhagavat’s *uṣṇīṣa*, and a lotus blossom with a thousand petals came from the rays. The Tathagata’s *nirmāṇa*-[*kāya*] sat upon the precious blossom, and from the topknot of his head, one hundred brilliant rays shone forth in ten sinews. Each and every ray of light illuminated the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi with a force ten times as numerous as the grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges, who held up a mountain with a [*vajra*] mallet in the empty sky. Everyone gazed in the air, and with respect, admiration, and universal appreciation, they sought compassion from the Buddha. They listened single mindedly to the Tathāgata who had shone from the invisible mark on the Buddha’s topknot declare the divine spell. (*Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 133c21–27)

Hsüan Hua's discussion of the "Hero's March Spell" in the small booklet is perhaps best expressed in the section called "Efficacious Writing of Heaven and Earth [in the] 'Hero's March Spell'" (Ch. *Tiandi lingwen lengyan zhou* 天地靈文楞嚴呪). This piece extolls a lengthy list of the benefits of chanting the "Hero's March Spell." But the point of his description most germane to the relationship between this spell and the subjugation of demons concerns the "Five Great Heart Spells." Five practices—or ways of approaching the "Hero's March Spell"—follow the "Five Great Heart Spells," which, in turn, destroy heretical and evil spells with results to be enjoyed in this world.

On a cosmic scale, the "Five Great Heart Spells" correspond to the five directions and their associated buddhas.²⁵ Then Hsüan Hua adds: "There are five divisions because there are five huge demonic armies in the world. Because there are five demon armies, the buddhas cover the five directions to suppress them."²⁶ Corresponding to the buddhas of the five directions and the demon armies they subdue are, according to Hsüan Hua, five methods to the "Hero's March Spell." Among these are the "method to pacify disasters" (Ch. *xizai fa* 息災法), which explains how to use the spell to avoid calamities such as drowning; the "method for hooking and convening" (Ch. *gouzhao fa* 鈎召法), which explains how the spell can be used to catch goblins, demons, and strange ghosts (Ch. *yaomo guiguai* 妖魔鬼怪); and in "subduing," we learn of the "Five Great Heart Spells."²⁷

Hsüan Hua's "Five Great Heart Spells" are: (1) *chi tuo ni* 叱陀儻; (2) *a jia la* 阿迦囉; (3) *mi li zhu* 蜜唎柱; (4) *bo li dan la ye* 般唎怛囉耶; and (5) *ning jie li* 寧揭唎. These five spells correspond to the end of lines 80–82 of the "Hero's March Spell" in the *Shoulengyan jing*.²⁸ Following Kimura Tokugen's analysis of (late) Sanskrit editions of the *Sitātapatra-buddhōṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī* and seven different editions in Chinese of our spell, which I translate below, the instructions that Hsüan Hua provides in Chinese about these five spells are somewhat different from, and provide more context than, a direct translation from the Sanskrit terms. Hsüan Hua explains how these "Five Great Heart

²⁵ Akṣobhya is in the east, head of the Adamantine section (Ch. *Jingang bu* 金剛部); Ratnasambhava is in the south, head of the Jewel Producing section (Ch. *Baosheng bu* 寶生部); Śākyamuni is in the center as the Buddha; Amitābha is in the west, head of the Lotus section (Ch. *Lianhua bu* 蓮花部); and [Amogha]-siddhi is in the north, head of the Karma division (Ch. *Jiemo bu* 羯磨部).

²⁶ Xuanhua et al. 2010, p. 93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–96.

²⁸ *Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 139b24–25.

Spells” can specifically destroy all spell techniques (magic) taught by Māra and heretical doctrines. The first spell, *chi tuo ni*, can “cut nets [produced by] others’ spell techniques and release one from the hindrances of violent death due to calamities.”²⁹ One can also be saved from all injustices and suffering as a result of karmic conditions. The second, *a jia la*, “comprises language that imprints unsurpassed great compassion directly upon the mind—equal to all the [good, Dharma protecting] deities in the Lotus section to the west.”³⁰ The result is that one can avoid the destiny defined by heaven. *Mi li zhu*, the third, signifies the protection and support from the retinue of guardian deities under the command of the Adamantine-storehouse Bodhi-sattva (Ch. Jin’gangzang pusa 金剛藏菩薩; Skt. Vajragarbha) to the east. *Bo li dan la ye*, the fourth “Great Heart Spell,” summons the precious wish-fulfilling gem from the retinue of the south to cause the spells and curses that emanate from all manner of malevolent spirits and demons (Ch. *chimei wangliang* 魑魅魍魎) to turn to stone when uttered. The final spell, *ning jie li*, taps unyielding wisdom of the mind of enlightenment.³¹

If the “Five Great Heart Spells” and their correspondences with the buddhas of the five directions and their retinues seem to suggest that Hsüan Hua advocated taking an esoteric, or even tantric, approach to the “Hero’s March Spell,” one need only read the following admonition: “If you understand the ‘Hero’s March Spell,’ then there is no need to study the esoteric tradition’s (*mizong*) white teaching, black teaching, yellow teaching, or red teaching: what needless teachings to study.”³² Rather than encouraging practitioners to chant the “Hero’s March Spell” as the means to enter into a set of elaborate ritual practices with some sort of teacher with special initiations, Hsüan Hua exhorts his audience to be mindful of the consequences of reciting such a powerful spell on their own:

The buddhas and bodhisattvas are compassionate and merciful and would not harm living beings or injure them out of anger. But their attendants—the Dharma Protectors, gods, dragons, ghosts, and spirits—possess strong temperaments. When these evil demons and evil deities see someone cultivating this spell while still committing offenses, they will bring disaster and harm down upon them,

²⁹ Xuanhua et al. 2010, pp. 118–19.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 119–20.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 125–29.

³² Ibid., p. 106.

will make them feel very ill at ease, will cause them to encounter grave troubles, or cause them to experience all sorts of misfortune or even a series of retributions. This is really no joking matter!³³

The point is further refined when Hsüan Hua clearly explains that the “Hero’s March Spell” is fundamentally about subduing demons, rather than any esoteric or tantric set of initiations:

From the buddhas of the ten directions to the Avīci Hell, the four kinds of sages and six types of common people revere and consider the “Hero’s March Spell” important. Of those within the ten realms, none are beyond its scope. All types of demons, deities, Dharma protectors, gods, *śrāvakas*, *pratyeka*-buddhas, up to and including those who [practice] the Buddha’s paths, are subsumed within the “Hero’s March Spell.” This spell contains the names of demon and spirit kings. When the names of those leaders are recited, all the ghosts and deities in their retinues become, one by one, subdued and sincere, following all the rules: they dare not behave maliciously. Reciting the “Hero’s March Spell” every day causes goblins, demons, and strange ghosts to be sincere and refrain from harming people. The whole substance and great function of the “Hero’s March Spell” contains all of Buddhism’s teachings and doctrines.³⁴

Hsüan Hua was obviously committed to advocating for recitation of our spell. There is, of course, a long tradition of spell practices within Chinese—and Indian—religion that predates the advent of Buddhism. For several key reasons that I address in a later section of this essay, this aspect of daily ritual performance remains comparatively understudied because spells have been correlated with esoteric or tantric Buddhism. From both an institutional and sectarian perspective, particularly within the context of Japanese Buddhism and the rich interreligious discourse on the continent, nothing could be further from the truth. Hsüan Hua’s criticism of an esoteric or tantric reading of the “Hero’s March Spell” may also reflect his acrimony toward Tibetan Buddhism, which was in his day, and remains today an institutional rival of Hsüan Hua’s Dharma Realm Buddhist Association in Taipei (Taiwan). It is well beyond the scope of this study to address the many reasons why, primarily because of a presumed fealty to Sanskrit in

³³ These are Hsüan Hua’s words. See Xuanhua et al. 2010, p. 109.

³⁴ Xuanhua et al. 2010, p. 105.

Tibetan translations, Tibetan Buddhism was considered more authentic than Chinese by several key twentieth-century intellectuals in China such as Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989). Suffice it to say here that our spell and the *Shoulengyan jing* play a key role in these debates, which also rage in Japan (such as the *hihan bukkyō* 批判仏教 debate) and Korea.³⁵

I have been unable to find any premodern textual source matching these “Five Great Heart Spells.” As stated before, the “Hero’s March Spell” is a long—perhaps the longest—spell in the Sino-Japanese Buddhist canon, which comprises 427 (or 439) terms in the canonical versions of it. Hsüan Hua apparently followed this version of the “Hero’s March Spell,” as have generations of Zen monastics in China, Korea, Japan, and throughout the Chinese diaspora. But the “Five Great Heart Spells” do not form the heart of the “Hero’s March Spell.” Following in the well-trodden footprints of the considerable Chinese commentarial tradition concerning the *Shoulengyan jing*, Hsüan Hua taught that the “Heart Spell” consists of the last ten terms:

Duozhita 哆姪他 (1) *an* 唵 (2) *anali* 阿那隸 (3) *pisheti* 毗舍提 (4)
pila 鞞囉 (5) *bashela* 跋闍囉 (6) *tuoli* 陀唎 (7) *pantuo pantuoni* 槃陀
 槃陀你 (8) *bashela bangni pan* 跋闍囉謗尼泮 (9) *huhong duluyong*
pan 虎吽都嚧甕泮 (10) *suopohe* 莎婆訶.³⁶

Hsüan Hua was apparently fond of writing the Sanskrit letters for this section of the “Hero’s March Spell” in the Lantscha script. These say, in translation: *tadyathā* (chant as follows) *oṃ anale* (fire) *viśade* (brilliant) *vira-vajradhare* (fierce-vajra-wielder) *bandha-bandhani* (bound, bound up) *vajrapāṇī phatṣ oṃ drūṃ (trūṃ) phatṣ svāhā*.³⁷

³⁵ On *hihan bukkyō*, see the chapters in the edited volume by Hubbard and Swanson 1997. On Lü Cheng and his particular disapproval of the *Shoulengyan jing*, see Lü 1991.

³⁶ Xuanhua et al. 2010, p. 110.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Cf. *Shoulengyan jing*, vol. 7: T no. 945, 19: 141b11–13. There are several reliable Sanskrit reconstructions, such as: Kimura and Takenaka 1998, pp. 98–100; Kimura 2006, pp. 82–84; and Noguchi 2007, pp. 146–48. As is the case with nearly all Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, because Khotanese and Tibetan translations are much earlier than Nepalese editions, when we have no Sanskrit manuscripts or fragments from India (e.g., Gilgit), Afghanistan (e.g., Bāmiyān / Hadda), or Chinese central Asia, scholars offer variant reconstructions such as *drum* (*trūṃ*). It should be noted that, following the precedent by Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit scholars in Japan, my sources do not provide Sanskrit reconstructions using Indic scripts; Kimura, for example, uses Roman letters with diacritical marks.

Canonical Versions of the “Hero’s March Spell,” Demons, and Dākīnī

Exactly how his followers are expected to practice the heart spell of the “Hero’s March Spell” seems far less clear in the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association’s booklet of Hsüan Hua’s teachings than the expectation that they chant the “Five Great Heart Spells” described above. But these five spells—or lines seemingly lifted from obscurity from the front of the long “Hero’s March Spell”—appear to reflect the division of the full spell into five sections most likely attributable to the prominent Ming dynasty (1368–1644) Chan cleric Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623). The heart spell seems to have been quite well known in premodern East Asia, and brings us to the figure most often credited with popularizing the *Shoulengyan jing* and the “Hero’s March Spell” in the first place: the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) Huayan 華嚴 exegete and lecturer Changshui Zixuan 長水子璿 (964–1038), who compiled the *Shoulengyan yishu zhujing* 首楞嚴義疏注經 (Commentary on the Meaning of the *Shoulengyan jing*).³⁸ There, we learn two things about the “Hero’s March Spell,” which do not correspond with contemporary Chinese accounts of it. First, despite the fact that the version of the long “Hero’s March Spell” to be recited according to Hsüan Hua’s instructions features exactly the same Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit terms as the one recorded in Zixuan’s eleventh-century commentary, the number of terms is quite different. Many contemporary versions of the “Hero’s March Spell” have 554 terms, whereas, to the best of my knowledge, Chinese and Japanese monastics who have chanted this spell have used the version with 427 terms. In the 427-term version, the “Heart Spell” or, as Zixuan referred to it, the “True Spell” (Ch. *zhengzhou* 正呪) just discussed is eight lines, from 419 to 427, and breaks in a manner that allows for the meaning of the underlying Sanskrit to be more readily deciphered. Needless to say, this was probably not something the vast majority of monastics or lay Buddhist followers in East Asia would have been able to understand in either a 427- or 554-term edition of Sanskrit sounds transliterated into Chinese.

Most of what Hsüan Hua had to say about the benefits of reciting the “Hero’s March Spell” concerning subjugating goblins, demons, and strange ghosts is actually deftly paraphrased from portions of the sixth, seventh, and eighth rolls of the *Shoulengyan jing*, available in printed or hand-copied manuscript editions. Yet what stands out when comparing summaries of the sections of the scripture that outline demons and malevolent beings which can be subjugated using the “Hero’s March Spell” is that the 427- (or 554-) term

³⁸ *Shoulengyan yishu zhujing*, T no. 1799, 39: 823a2–967c21.

transcriptions do not necessarily match one another. To put it another way: the transliterations in the *Shoulengyan jing* do not correspond with the “Hero’s March Spell” used by Zen monastics and some lay Chinese Buddhists. This is because there is a significant discrepancy between the version of the “Hero’s March Spell” in the *Shoulengyan jing* and the one which I have been discussing thus far. There seems to be little doubt that Zixuan and the other sixteen commentators on the *Shoulengyan jing* in China—leading up to Hanshan Deqing in the early seventeenth century—read and commented upon the version of the “Hero’s March Spell” with 427 terms.³⁹ In the Taishō edition of the *Shoulengyan jing*, however, the 427-term “Hero’s March Spell” is attached to the end of the seventh roll as if this was an afterthought. With no footnote or clarification provided, the narrative within the scripture in the Taishō canon surrounds and discusses another transliterated—and translated, in parts—version of the “Hero’s March Spell” with 439 terms.

Given the significance of the “Hero’s March Spell” to Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen Buddhists, it may not be surprising to find several transliterations of it. Six versions of our spell can be found in the Sino-Japanese Taishō Buddhist canon.⁴⁰ Ch’oe Changsik has completed a methodical study of the Dunhuang editions, which brings our total to seven editions.⁴¹ Leaving aside the question of Tibetan or Sanskrit manuscript fragments found in Chinese Central Asia for another project, I will point out two more editions in Chinese

³⁹ There is no authoritative list of all the commentaries to the *Shoulengyan jing*. I have simply followed Ming, and later Japanese, commentators and looked at all extant editions of the Chinese Buddhist canons.

⁴⁰ The six are: (1) fascicle seven of the *Shoulengyan jing* with two versions of the spell: one with 439 terms at T no. 945, 19: 134a–136c15; and (2) another with 427 terms at T no. 945, 19: 139a14–141b13; (3) an alternate translation attributed to Amoghavajra (T no. 944A); (4) a transcription of our spell in Siddham script, translator unknown, from the library of Reijunji 靈雲寺 in Tokyo (T no. 944B, 19: 102c24–105b22); (5) a Tibetan version by Zhwa lu pa (Ch. Shaluoba 沙羅巴) during the Yuan 元 dynasty (1271–1368; T no. 976, 19: 401a22–403c28); and (6) T no. 977, 19: 404a2–407b10, which was translated by Zhenzhi 眞智 (n.d) during the Yuan dynasty. On the two versions in T no. 945, fascicle 7, see Ch’oe 2005, pp. 149, 354–57; and Kimura 2006, pp. 87–112.

⁴¹ Peking 7417, 7418, and 7433 in Huang 1981–86, vol. 106; Pelliot 2349 and 2152 (International Dunhuang Project. <http://idp.bl.uk/>, Accessed March 15, 2018); F [φ] 092 and 093 from the Russian collections comprise the versions of the “Hero’s March Spell” in the *Shoulengyan jing* found in the Library cave (no. 17) at Dunhuang (Ch’oe 2005, pp. 314–83). But only the French and Russian editions have the complete roll seven. The Dunhuang editions closely resemble the 439-term (or 434-term) version of our spell, but the total is 426 terms.

that have come to light only in recent years. Thanks to Ochiai Toshinori at the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies in Tokyo, who has spearheaded the Japanese Old Buddhist Manuscripts Project, we now know that four additional versions of roll seven and its spell from the *Shoulengyan jing* have been preserved in Japan. All four Japanese manuscript editions can be dated to the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.⁴² But these manuscript editions may very well be copies of Nara-period (710–784) originals, which could mean that these editions predate the Dunhuang manuscripts by several hundred years.⁴³

What we have, therefore, in terms of distinct versions of our spell in Chinese transcription, are four separate types. The one used by Zen monastics with 427 terms closely matches the Dunhuang editions. The manuscript editions from medieval Japanese temple libraries closely match the version with 439 terms in the Koryō and Taishō canons. Finally, there are the two transcriptions from Tibetan, and one attributed to Amoghavajra (Ch. Jin’gang Bukong 金剛不空; 705–774), with its *siddham* complement from Reijunji temple in Tokyo. From my own investigations into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Zen Buddhist sources, I have never seen these last editions ever mentioned, except for one case that may hold the key to a rather pressing question: Where does the 427-term version come from?

The earliest actual reference we have for the 427-term edition of the “Hero’s March Spell” is in Zixuan’s commentary, which can be dated to 1038.⁴⁴ Although the chronology fails to match up by fifteen years, an entry from the *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 參天台五臺山記 (Record of Travels to Mt. Tiantai and Wutai), the diary of the Tendai 天台 monk-pilgrim Jōjin 成尋 (1011–1081) to Song China, presents evidence of a retranslation or retranscription of our spell in a postscript that Jōjin copied with a date of the twenty-ninth day of the fourth month of 1053.⁴⁵ The postscript was written by an official named Miao Zhen 苗振 (n.d.), who was serving as a Vice Chamberlain of Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo 宁波), and reports that two Buddhist

⁴² On Japanese manuscript canons, see Keyworth 2016. Except for some rare exceptions, Buddhist texts were not printed in Japan before the Ōbaku canon in the Edo period. See Wu 2016.

⁴³ See Lin 2008; Ch’oe 2005, pp. 415–20. I have not yet accessed the fourth edition from the Matsuo 松尾 Shrine canon. The spell from the Kongōji 金剛寺 canon has 434 terms, the spell from Chūsonji 中尊寺 has 442, and the one from Kōshōji 興聖寺 matches the Taishō with 439.

⁴⁴ Ono 1988, p. 261.

⁴⁵ *San Tendai Godaisan ki*, DBZ, vol. 72, no. 577A.

monks from Nālandā named *Jñānaśrī (Ch. Zhijixiang 智吉祥; d. 1072) and *Devaśrī (Ch. Tianjixiang 天吉祥; d. 1095?) visited him in his twenty-ninth year when he was serving in the city of Suzhou 蘇州. In the postscript copied out by Jōjin, Miao Zhen makes several assertions worth consideration:

When the *Shoulengyan jing* was translated during the Tang dynasty, the chief translator was *Pāramiti from west India.⁴⁶ The translators [who worked with him] were also from Uddiyāna (Wuchangguo 烏長國), an area of India two thousand five hundred *li* northwest from central India. The people there are not the same as those from central India, and they cannot understand the language of central India. Moreover, the other chief translator at this time, Tripiṭaka Master Amoghavajra, was from Kucīna (alt. Kucha; Ch. Qiuci 龜茲), who once traveled to central India, but was [also] unable to understand the language of central India. Until now, there have been the two versions [by *Pāramiti and Amoghavajra] that have many aberrant, superfluous, or omitted words. Regarding the edition to be translated by *Jñānaśrī and his partners, they are all from central India, of the *ṣatriya* (Ch. *chadili* 刹帝利) caste,⁴⁷ and descendants of pure rice-eating kings. They left central India sixteen years ago and traveled through ten countries along their voyage. I now petition you to establish the correct Sanskrit text to amend to the Tang sutra with the “White Canopy Spell.”

*Pāramiti’s version of this spell has 427 terms, which is missing 274 phrases. The beginning section is missing the Sanskrit invocation for taking refuge (Ch. *guiyi* 歸依) three times. As for Amoghavajra’s translation, it stops at 481 terms, which is also short two hundred. Both previous versions lack the sections regarding the characteristics of the ten directions of the ocean of the Buddha’s teachings, the characteristics of the sun and moon, the ten auspicious gods (*devīs*), and the six supernormal powers (*abhijñā*). Furthermore, the division to be recited regarding the perverse (*viparyaya*) views is not repeated. Presently, using this Sanskrit manuscript from central India to make the corrections and to

⁴⁶ Fujiyoshi 2006, p. 382.

⁴⁷ The text reads *zhongzu* 種族 (Jp. *shuzoku*), which usually means “ethnic group,” but in this case probably translates as “caste.”

organize the previous errors, if we take into account the total number of mistakes, the total should number 701 divisions.⁴⁸

What happened to the retranscription submitted by Miao Zhen? If we can trust that Jōjin correctly copied this postscript and that a retranscription of the spell was, in fact, submitted to the Song state in 1053, then we need to rethink how we understand the extant editions of roll seven from the *Shoulengyan jing* and the “Hero’s March Spell.”

Another possibility is that two versions of the “Hero’s March Spell” in the *Shoulengyan jing* were produced during the eighth century in China. One contained the 427-term spell, the other was one with either 439 or 434 terms. Such a hypothesis has recently been suggested by Lin Min, who argues that the earlier version is, in fact, the longer edition (that is, 439/434 terms), which was brought to Japan from China by 739, the date on an edition of the *Shoulengyan jing* preserved in the Shōsōin Bunsho 正倉院文書. Dōji 道慈 (d. 744), a Sanron 三論 monk who sojourned in China from 702 to 718, is given credit for bringing this scripture to Japan. Lin thinks this version of the “Hero’s March Spell” was probably translated by Śubhakarasiṃha (Ch. Shanwuwei 善無畏; 637–735). The second version of the *Shoulengyan jing* with the 427-term “Hero’s March Spell” was brought to Japan by another monastic pilgrim, Fushō 普照 (n.d.), a monk from Kōfukuji 興福寺 who was in China from 727 to 754. In Lin’s opinion, it is this version that Zixuan’s eleventh-century commentary to the *Shoulengyan jing* is based upon.⁴⁹

Lin Min’s carefully crafted argument about two early editions of the *Shoulengyan jing* and the “Hero’s March Spell” neither addresses why there are so many editions of our spell in medieval China or what reasons there might be to explain its apparent use for subjugating demons. If reciting the name of a ghost, goblin, demon, or other malevolent deity subdues them, then how is a reader of Chinese supposed to know what transliterated terms to recite? Only the 439- or 434-term version of the “Hero’s March Spell” provides a translation of the transliteration for every term. This is simply not the case with the far more popular 427-term version of our spell. Nor do I think that translating transcriptions was a common practice. Table 1 provides examples

⁴⁸ The *San Tendai Godaisan ki* is arranged chronologically. This quotation comes from fascicle 5, dated the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth month of the fifth year of the Xining 熙寧 era (1072): DBZ, vol. 72, no. 577A, pp. 272c–273b. See also Fujiyoshi 2011, pp. 129–39.

⁴⁹ Lin 2010, pp. 673–74. Fushō was also joined by the Kōfukuji monks Genrō 玄郎 (n.d.) and Genhō 玄法 (n.d.), who were in China from the fifth to the fourteenth years of Tenpyō 天平 (733–742).

of how the “Five Heart Spells” are transcribed in three Chinese editions: the 427-term so-called Ming edition; the translation ascribed to *Pāramiti in T no. 945 with 439 terms; and a manuscript edition from Kongōji with 434 terms. Both the Kongōji and *Pāramiti editions provide translation in Chinese of the transliterated Sanskrit terms. The term numbers in table 1 correspond to how the spell was broken up into sections by the translation teams and reflect how Hsüan Hua and other East Asian Buddhists have separated the utterances into sections that can be chanted. For example, in order to chant the Sanskrit sounds for *para-vidyācchedanī*, the Ming edition provides the characters *ba luo* for *para*, *bi di ye* for *vidyā*, and *chi tuo ni* for *chedanī*. Apart from several slight handwriting simplifications, as in *ni* 你 instead of *ni* 爾, the *Pāramiti and Kongōji editions are nearly identical.

Table 1. Comparative Examples of Transcriptions of the Five Heart Spells considered by Hsüan Hua⁵⁰

1. Ming ed. (427 terms) nos. 80–82	Sanskrit reconstruc- tion	2: *Pāramiti ed. (439 terms) nos. 72–74	3. Kongōji ed. (434 terms) nos. 70–73 (<i>sic</i>)
跋囉恣地耶叱陀儂	<i>para- vidyācchedanī</i>	波囉微地也掣陀儂 (能斷他呪)	波囉微地也掣陀你 (能斷他呪)
阿迦囉 蜜喇柱	<i>ākāla-mṛtyu-</i>	阿哥囉微哩駐(橫死)	阿哥羅微里駐(橫死)
般喇怛囉耶 儂揭喇	<i>paritrāyana-kārī</i>	波喇怛囉耶那揭喇 (救取)	蘇婆利怛羅耶那揭利 (救取)

If we simply read the translation from either the 439- or 434-term versions, then we learn that Hsüan Hua’s “Five Great Heart Spells” can be understood in the following way: 1) *chi tuo ni* means to cut off alternate—apparently heretical—spells; 2) *a jia la* and (3) *mi li zhu* prevent the possibility of a violent end; and, (4) *bo li dan la ye* and (5) *ning jie li* rescue the person intoning these sounds from all manner of ills and misfortunes. I am not prepared to speculate about why Hsüan Hua chose these terms from the “Hero’s March Spell” when, as reviewed above, traditionally it is the final

⁵⁰ The Kongōji edition is only available in digital PDF format at the library of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies. My thanks to Professor Ochiai Toshinori for providing access to the Old Buddhist Manuscripts in Japanese Collections. The Ming and *Pāramiti editions are in T no. 945, cited in n. 41. Sanskrit reconstructions follow Kimura and Takenaka 1998, Kimura 2003, Kimura 2006, and Noguchi 2007.

eight lines from the 427-term edition—the “true” or “heart” spell from the “Hero’s March Spell”—that have been considered most potent.⁵¹

Among East Asian communities today, perhaps the best known example of how the “Hero’s March Spell” can be used as a glossary to determine how malevolent Indian, Chinese, and Japanese deities correspond with one another so that they can be subjugated or controlled for alternate ends is the case of the fox cult in Japan. The association between foxes and *dākinī* (Jp. *dakini ten* 荼枳尼天) can be traced to the thirteenth-century *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄 (Anthology of A, Sa, and Va) composed by Jōchō 承澄 (1205–1282), an encyclopedia of Taimitsu 台密 (Tendai esoteric) Buddhism. This medieval encyclopedia explains how fox deities (*inari* 稲荷 or *kitsune* 狐) can be viewed as jackals (Jp. *yakan* 野干; Skt. *śṛgāla*) and as personifications of the *dākinī* group (Jp. *dakini shu* 荼枳尼衆) within the assembly of Mahākāla-deva (Jp. Daikoku ten 大黒天) of the Womb Realm (Jp. *taizōkai* 胎藏界) described in the *Da piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (Jp. *Dai birushana jōbutsu jinben kaji kyō*; hereafter, *Dainichi kyō*, T no. 848).⁵² Because he was an accomplished preceptor (Jp. *ajari* 阿闍梨; Skt. *ācārya*) and encyclopedist, perhaps we may presume that Jōchō was familiar with the commentary composed by Yixing 一行 (683–727) about this seminal esoteric Buddhist scripture. Yet, one wonders why he credits the “Hero’s March Spell” (lines 367–68 in the Taishō and 361–62 in the Kongōji editions) as the source for the connection between foxes, *dākinīs*, and jackals.⁵³

Because we know that the “Hero’s March Spell” is considered to be a powerful tool for expelling and subjugating demons, and is accessible to an audience far wider than that restricted to esoteric Buddhist preceptors, and that by reciting the names of malevolent demons they can be controlled, let us now turn to what *dākinīs* are and how are they measured within an East Asian context. One question that arises when considering or discussing East Asian

⁵¹ In his *Zenrin shōkisen*, Mujaku Dōchū has this to say concerning the “True Spell”: “If one takes refuge in the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the assembly of worthy sages, and they chant this spell by making a vow to shatter malevolent demons and illnesses (*kabi* 加被), they should begin with line 419, which reads as follows: *tojitō* 哆姪他 (419) *en* 唵 (420) *onori* 阿那隸 (421) *bishachi* 毗舍提 (422) *birahojaratorī* 鞞囉跋闍囉陀唎 (423) *hodohodōnī* 槃陀槃陀你 (424) *hojarāhoni han* 跋闍囉謗尼泮 (435) *kukitsuryoyō han* 虎吽都嚧毘泮 (426) *sōmōkō* 莎婆訶 (427)” (Yanagida 1979, pp. 599–601). See the *Shoulengyan jing*, vol. 7: T no. 945, 19: 141b11–13. Cf. Kimura and Takenaka 1998, pp. 98–100; Kimura 2006, pp. 82–84; and Noguchi 2007, pp. 146–48.

⁵² For the *Asabashō*, see ch. 154, p. 321, which is no. 432 in vol. 5 of DBZ. See also *Piluzhena chengfo jingshu* 毘盧遮那成佛經疏, ch. 16, T no. 1796, 39: 744a29.

⁵³ See *Hōbōgirin*, vol. 8, p. 1100, s.v. “Dakini.”

demons presented in Buddhist scriptures—or spells—allegedly translated from Sanskrit originals is: Should we follow the Buddhist studies philological paradigm and cite Sanskrit names such as *dākinī*, or give the analogous Chinese terms with indigenous East Asian connotations? Thankfully, we do not have to choose if we turn to the 439- or 434-term editions of the “Hero’s March Spell.” Two specific examples should shed light on the question of *dākinīs* within an East Asian context. An edition of our spell translates the transcribed Sanskrit terms to inform us that *dākinīs* are bedeviling and attractive female “*mei*” demons (Ch. *mei nūgui* 魅女鬼). There are also male *daka*, enchanting male demons. And jackals—or *apasmāra-grahā*—are angry sheep-like demons, similar to wild foxes. Had any East Asians who read the translation of *abosuomola jelahe* 阿波娑摩囉揭囉訶 also been familiar with Sanskrit, they may also have known that *apasmāra-grahā* are demons that seize the mind and can cause epilepsy and falling sickness.⁵⁴

Table 2. Example of *Dākinī* in the “Hero’s March Spell”

1. Ming ed. (427 terms) nos. 359–360	Sanskrit reconstruction	2: *Pāramiti ed. (439 terms) nos. 367–368	3. Kongōji ed. (434 terms) nos. 361–362
阿播薩摩囉揭囉訶	<i>apasmāra-grahā</i>	阿波娑摩囉揭囉訶 (羊嘖鬼鬼如野狐)	阿婆娑摩囉揭囉訶 (羊嘖鬼鬼如野狐)
宅祛革荼耆尼揭囉訶	<i>dāka-dākinī-grahā</i>	佉迦荼祁尼揭囉訶 (魅鬼魅女鬼)	佉迦荼祁尼揭囉訶 (魅鬼魅女鬼)

Zen Buddhist monastics in Japan, Taiwan, and China today follow precedent and break the “Hero’s March Spell” into five separate sections, which may explain why Hsūan Hua presented the “Five Great Heart Spells.” After reading through Sanskrit editions of the *Sitātapatra-buddhōṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī*, all the Chinese translations provided in the 439-term transcription in T no. 945, and the translations into Japanese prepared by Kimura and Noguchi, I have come to know something about the meaning of the sections our spell is broken into when recited by Zen monastics. The first section is devoted to paying homage to a litany of Mahayana Buddhist figures and Indian deities including, in order, Brahmā, Indra, Umā, Rudra, Nārāyaṇa, Mahākala, and Mātṛgaṇa, the Noble Mother; and then the buddhas and their retinues of the five directions as previously described by Hsūan Hua. Next we learn the name of the deity

⁵⁴ Monier-Williams, Leumann, and Cappeller 1899, p. 1314.

that emerged from the Buddha's topknot, Pratyāṅgirā (*boluodiyangqiluo* 般囉帝揚歧囉)—a manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion with a Thousand Arms (Ch. Qianshou Guanshiyin Pusa 千手觀世音菩薩; Jp. Senjū Kanzeon Bosatsu)—who tells how her spell can pulverize an inventory of evil demons using the force of Tārā. Section two is short but contains Pratyāṅgirā's syllables (*bīja*) for conquering the demons: *hūṃ* (*huhong* 呼吽) and *drūṃ* (*duoluhong* 咄嚕吽). *Hūṃ* produces good fortune, *drūṃ* pulverizes demons. Section three, which we will soon examine more closely, lists all the demons controlled by this spell. Section four pulverizes, rips, and cuts off all sorts of Indian demons using the three syllables *hūṃ*, *drūṃ*, and *phaṭ* (*pàn* 泮). And section five introduces a long litany of maladies this spell can cure.⁵⁵

It is in the third section where we find a rather exhaustive list of demons that can be subjugated with this spell. The *Shoulengyan jing* provides some fruitful context worth consideration. Immediately after the recitation of the “Hero's March Spell” by Pratyāṅgirā, the Buddha instructs Ānanda how to best use this spell:

Ānanda, if there is a being living in any kingdom or land, in any of the various worlds, who wishes to copy out in writing this spell, then they should use whatever grows in their kingdom or land, whether it be birch bark, *pattra* leaves (Ch. *beiye* 貝葉; Jp. *baiyō*), plain paper, or white cloth, and store it in a perfumed sachet. If a person's mind is confused, and they are unable to recite this spell from memory, then they can wear [the sachet] on their body or keep a copy in their house, and even to the end of their days, no sicknesses or poisons will be able to harm them.⁵⁶

Next, the Buddha tells Ānanda about the many benefits to be accrued from reciting it as follows:

If there are people in the final age after my nirvana who can recite this spell themselves, or can teach others to recite it, then you should know that those who chant and grasp it will be impervious to burning by fire, drowning by water, and they will remain unscathed by either serious or minor poisons. They will also be guarded against other maladies involving dragon kings (*longtian* 龍天), ghosts and spirits (*guishen* 鬼神), spirits that carry away the

⁵⁵ *Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 136c15–137a11; for the spell see 134a1–136c14.

⁵⁶ *Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 137a12–15.

vital breath (*jingqi* 精祇), demons and disease-spreading spirits (*momei* 魔魅), and all evil spells. None of them will be able to reach people who retain this spell, and their minds will attain samadhi (*zhengshou* 正受) so that all curses and sleep demons (*yan* 魘) [will not cause harm]. If swallowed, venomous infestations (*gu* 蠱), poisonous medicines, gold or silver poisons, or even grasses, trees, insects, snakes, or anything else among the myriad things that can be poisonous will taste like sweet dew (Ch. *ganlu* 甘露; Skt. *amṛta*). All the inauspicious stars that align with the ghosts and spirits with ugly hearts who poison people will be unable to cause evil in people [who retain this spell]. Moreover, Vināyaka and the wicked demon kings, together with their entourages, will all be guided by deep benevolence and constantly confer protection upon people who retain this spell.⁵⁷

Ānanda, you should know that a vast number—as many as a *koṭī* of eighty-four thousand *nayuta* of grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges—of members of the Vajra-bodhisattva-treasury-kings family (*gotra*), each one of whom has a Vajra gathering of their own assembled, from dawn until dusk, attends to this spell. Even though there are beings whose minds are deluded and scattered, and do not fix their minds (attain samadhi), if they remember and chant this spell, these Vajra kings will constantly keep an eye on them. As for sons of good families, how much more so the case for those who have fixed their minds upon *bodhi*? These Vajra-bodhisattva-treasury-kings will meticulously protect them and quickly stimulate their divine consciousness. When this happens, these people will be able to remember events of their past lives as far back as through eighty-four thousand *kalpas* and as many grains of sand as there are on the banks of the Ganges, which they will accomplish without any hesitation. From the time of the first *kalpa* until their most recent incarnation, their births will not have included wicked places where there are *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*, as well as *pūtanas* and *kaṭapūtanas*, *kumbhāṇḍas*, or even *piśācas*. . . . If these sons of good families read, recite, write out, copy, wear, store, or make various offerings [to this spell], then for *kalpa* after *kalpa*, they will not be born as poor, needy, or low-status people, or

⁵⁷ The inauspicious or malevolent stars refer to the twenty-eight lunar mansions (Ch. *ershiba gong* 二十八宮).

in any objectionable place. And even if these living beings have never accrued any auspicious karma of their own, the tathāgatas of the ten directions will complete these people with their own merit and virtue. Because of this, during as many indescribably and inexpressibly *asaṃkhyā-kalpa* as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges, due to their limitless merit, these people will always be born in a place with one of the many buddhas. . . . Those who do not adhere to vegetarianism will become vegetarians. . . . If someone has committed the five heinous crimes, or any serious offense that results in being sent to Avīci hell, or if one is a fully ordained monk who has violated the four expulsion offenses, or a fully ordained nun who has breached the eight heavy rules, if they recite this spell, then their serious offenses will be expunged like a fierce wind that has blown away a sand dune so entirely that not even a single piece of sand remains.⁵⁸

This lengthy translation from the *Shoulengyan jing* demonstrates where Hsüan Hua most likely found inspiration for his summary of the benefits to be incurred by those who recite it. But what concerns us here is the extensive list of malevolent demons that can be subjugated with this spell. Despite the fact that we are dealing with an eighth-century Chinese Buddhist scripture and spell, the deities invoked here as causing all matter of calamity and misfortune would not be out of place in a contemporaneous Daoist scripture: there is equivalence between indigenous Chinese and Indian demons in the “Hero’s March Spell.”⁵⁹

It may be worthwhile to pay close attention to the list of Indian demons delineated above to see how they are translated in the “Hero’s March Spell.” In section three of the “Hero’s March Spell” there are more than forty different dangerous Indian deities whose transliterated-into-Chinese Sanskrit names are translated in the 439- or 434-term versions of our spell with results that may surprise those with knowledge of traditional Indian religious literature. Kings Caura, Agni, Udaka, Viṣa, Chastra, Paracakra, Durbhikṣa, Aśani, and Akāla cause disasters triggered by pillory, fires, water, poisons, knife wounds in battle, soldiers, times of famine when grain is expensive

⁵⁸ *Shoulengyan jing*, T no. 945, 19: 137a17–27. For the “five heinous crimes” (Ch. *wu wujian ye* 五無間業; Jp. *go muken gō*), see Buswell and Lopez 2013, p. 1073; Nakamura et al. 2002, p. 376b. Both *koṭī* and *naṃyuta* are Sanskrit terms that refer to an extremely high number.

⁵⁹ For a general discussion of how Buddhist and Daoist spell texts and ritual manuals can mirror one another, see Strickmann 1996; Mollier 2008.

[or damaged by] hail, and when death sneaks up on you (terms 173–181).⁶⁰ Calamities that occur while on the road are caused by *Ulkāpāta*; *Rājadaṇḍa* is the king who causes one to incur legal penalties (terms 184–185). Of course *nāgas* are scary dragons (term 186) and *Vidyud* causes lightening to strike (term 187). Somewhat surprisingly neither *yakṣas* nor *rākṣasas* require translation (terms 189–190), but *pretas*—hungry ghosts—do (term 191). *Piśācas* are apparently demons of the latrine, *bhūtas* is a designation for all sorts of demons, *kumbhāṇḍas* are feminine demons who guard the home, *pūtanās* are equivalent to a demonic earthly, or *po* 魄, soul, which means that *kaṣa-pūtanās* are even stranger malevolent *po* souls (terms 192–195). *Unmādas* are blistering demons, *chāyās* are phantom demons, and *revatīs* are demons who scheme (terms 197–200). Finally, there are demons who consume fetuses, blood, flesh, fat, marrow, vital breath (*qi* 氣), the life account, and even one’s wind (terms 201–209). Please bear in mind that the names I have provided are Sanskrit reconstructions that would be nearly unintelligible without the translations in the 439- or 434-term editions of the “Hero’s March Spell” in roll seven of the *Shoulengyan jing*.

The “Hero’s March Spell,” and Exoteric and Esoteric Mahayana Buddhism

The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism defines esoteric Buddhism (Ch. *mijiao*; Jp. *mikkyō*) in East Asia as “a term used to describe a large body of literature and practices that included both Mahayana rituals introduced from India and Central Asia into China beginning in the third and fourth centuries CE, as well as more specifically ‘tantric’ teaching translated into Chinese in the eighth century.”⁶¹ The entry on “tantra” exposes the problem at hand:

The term is thus used to name a manual or handbook that sets forth such arrangements, and is not limited to Buddhism or to Indian religions more broadly. Beyond this, the term is notoriously difficult to define. It can be said, however, that tantra does not carry the connotation of all things *esoteric* and erotic that it has acquired in the modern West. In Buddhism, the term “tantra” generally refers to a text that contains *esoteric* teachings, often ascribed to *Śākyamuni* or another buddha. Even this, however, is problematic:

⁶⁰ For these examples I use the translations in the 434-term edition in the Kongōji canon, only available at the Research Institute for Old Japanese Manuscripts at the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies in Tokyo. The text is no. 0502–007a and b.

⁶¹ Buswell and Lopez 2013, p. 540.

there are esoteric texts that do not carry the term *tantra* in their title (such as the *Vajraśekharasūtra*), and there are nonesoteric [*sic*] texts in whose title the term *tantra* appears (such as the *Uttara-tantra*). Scholars, therefore, tend to define *tantra* (in the textual sense) based on specific sets of elements contained in the texts. These include *mantra*, *maṇḍala*, *mudrā*, initiations (*abhiṣeka*), fire sacrifices (*homa*), and feasts (*gaṇacakra*), all set forth with the aim of gaining powers (*siddhi*), both mundane and supramundane.⁶²

I added emphasis to the term “esoteric” above because it seems like *tantra* both is and is not esoteric, presuming that in the second instance, the term refers to either *mijiao* (alt. *mizong*) or *mikkyō*, or both. The entries on *mikkyō* and *mijiao* agree that, whatever the “*Mahāyāna* rituals introduced from India and Central Asia into China beginning in the third and fourth centuries CE”⁶³ may be, they have nothing to do with the transmission of esoteric Buddhist texts used in rituals in Japan by monastics and lay patrons of the Shingonshū 真言宗 and Tendai-shū 天台宗 lineages as early as the Heian period (794–1184). Proponents of esoteric lineages in early and medieval Japan were particularly concerned with translations of ritual manuals (Skt. *kalpa* or *vidhi*; Jp. *giki* 儀軌) either completed under the direction of—or attributed to—three translators: Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi (Ch. Jīngāngzhī 金剛智; 671–741), and Amoghavajra. Little is known about these translators’ disciples or their impact in China,⁶⁴ but “eight Japanese pilgrims to Tang China” (*nittō hakke* 入唐八家), including particularly Kūkai 空海 (Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師; 774–835) and Enchin 圓珍 (Chishō Daishi 智証大師; 814–891), established lineages of *ācāryas* we can fruitfully call esoteric Buddhist.⁶⁵

What concerns me much more than the fascinating world of esoteric Buddhist ritual in East Asia here are the “*Mahāyāna* rituals introduced from India and Central Asia into China beginning in the third and fourth centuries CE,” alluded to above. Following both a considerable body of secondary studies on the topic of esoteric Buddhism in Japanese, and some in Chinese

⁶² Buswell and Lopez 2013, pp. 893–94. I restrict analysis here to the study of Buddhism, particularly in East Asia. Italics added to the word “esoteric.”

⁶³ Buswell and Lopez 2013, p. 540.

⁶⁴ The study of esoteric Buddhism on the continent during the late Tang period (post 846) into the Song is an area of considerable study today.

⁶⁵ The eight monk-pilgrims to Tang China are: Saichō 最澄 (767–822) from 804 to 805; Kūkai from 804 to 806; Ennin 圓仁 (794–864) and Jōgyō 常曉 (d. 867) from 838 to 839; Engyō 圓行 (799–852) from 838 to 839; Eun 惠運 (798–869) from 842 to 847; and, Enchin and Shūei 宗叡 (809–884) from 862 to 865.

and Korean, as well as perhaps the editors of the Taishō canon, who fabricated a bibliographical section for esoteric Buddhist texts (*mikkyōbu*, vols. 18–21) for the first time in the history of the Buddhist canon in East Asia,⁶⁶ scholars such as Michel Strickmann and others in the West have opted to use the term “proto-Tantra” to refer to ritual texts with *dhāraṇīs* and mantras that are clearly neither esoteric nor tantric. An excellent example of an early ritual text that imparts spells—the translation of which predates the third century—is the thirty-third text in the early Sanskrit *Divyāvadāna*, which is an early compendium of Buddhist miracle tales.⁶⁷ The story in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* (The Tale of Śārdūlakarṇa; Ch. *Modengnu jing* 摩鄢女經; Jp. *Matōnyo kyō*; T no. 551) concerns an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*) girl named Prakṛti, who falls in love with Ānanda when he takes a drink of water from her. She asks her mother, a sorceress, to bring him to her. Because of the mother’s incantations, Ānanda comes to see Prakṛti. Seeing what was going on apparently due to his omniscience, the Buddha intervenes with his own spell—perhaps the first Buddhist *dhāraṇī* according to Burnouf, who translated most of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*—with the result that Ānanda is freed from his own lust, and Prakṛti, after meeting with the Buddha and begging to see her would-be boyfriend, becomes the first outcaste nun.⁶⁸ A rather rough version of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* was translated into Chinese by the Parthian An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168), which means the story of how the Buddha saved lascivious Ānanda from Prakṛti with a spell or *dhāraṇī*—the same overall narrative as in the “Hero’s March Spell” in the *Shoulengyan jing* with Prakṛti now referred to as a woman of the Mātanga caste—was in China long before the rise of anything resembling esoteric or even tantric Buddhism in South Asia.

Dhāraṇī sutras are among the earliest to have been translated in China. Paul Harrison studied two translations of the *Drumakinnararājapariprechā* (T nos. 624 and 625), which were translated during the second century by Lokakṣema (Ch. Zhiloujiachen 支婁迦讖; ca. 168–172) and Kumārajīva

⁶⁶ An example of a particularly well-read study is Sakauchi 1981. On canon formation, see Wu 2016, and on the content of canons, see Deleanu 2007, p. 627.

⁶⁷ The *Divyāvadāna* is an early collection of tales in Sanskrit that some scholars think may have originated in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* texts. Yijing’s translations (T nos. 1448–1459) are notoriously incomplete when compared with extant Tibetan translations; see Clarke 2006, esp. p. 12. See also Huber 1904, p. 709, and Lévi 1907, p. 105. Only some of the stories contained in the *Divyāvadāna* were translated into Chinese.

⁶⁸ See Vaidya 1959, pp. 607–8; Burnouf, Buffétrille, and Lopez 2010, pp. 155, 222, 494. Also mentioned in Strickmann 2005, pp. 111–17 and p. 171, n. 32.

(Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什; ca. 402–409) during the fifth.⁶⁹ Considerable debate surrounds their application in early Mahayana Buddhism, but one thing is clear about *dhāraṇīs*: they are an essential part of Mahayana Buddhist practice, which means that they cannot be esoteric.⁷⁰ I am not the first to cite Arthur Waley’s remarks about *dhāraṇī*-sutras. While studying the Dunhuang finds at the British museum, Waley wrote:

Just as European writers have tended to connect the practice of *dhyāna* solely with the establishment of a separate Dhyāna sect, so they have also tended to connect the use of *dhāraṇī* (magic-word formulae) only with the esoteric doctrines of the Vairocana sect, which did not become established in China until so late as the eighth century. In fact, however, scriptures centering round the use of spells figure very early in the lists of works translated in Chinese, even as early as the second century A.D.⁷¹

Waley aptly noted the arrival in China of “a fresh and very large crop of such spell-sutras in the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries,” but “[a] hundred years later these formulae, instead of being translated begin to be left in their original corrupt Sanskrit form, transliterated as closely as possible into Chinese sounds.”⁷² Waley furthermore pronounced that:

The use of *dhāraṇī* had another side; it brought Buddhist practice into line with pagan folk-lore, and formed a basis for propaganda. . . . Out of this literature grew what we may call Dhāraṇī Buddhism, represented by the formulae of the *T’o-lo-ni Chi Ching* (completed of 6 May 654). Typical of this phase are the cults of the Thousand-armed, Eleven-headed and Cintāmaṇi Avalokiteśvaras; and of the Four Devarājas, as prescribed in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*, particularly as translated by I-ching in the early eighth century. The Buddhism of Tun-huang, then, as reflected in its paintings and manuscripts is compounded of these two elements: (1) the cult of the Paradises, and (2) the *dhāraṇī* cults.⁷³

Waley’s remarks are instructive. Just as all meditation cannot be deemed

⁶⁹ Harrison and Coblin 2012.

⁷⁰ Please note that I do not follow Jan Nattier’s definition of *dhāraṇī* in early Mahayana scriptures as being principally mnemonic devices. Nattier 2003, pp. 291–92, n. 549. See also Copp 2008.

⁷¹ Waley 1931, p. xiii.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. xiii–xiv.

Zen, not all *dhāraṇī* sutras can be considered esoteric. He establishes a fruitful distinction between two types of Buddhism evident from the cache of Dunhuang texts (and especially their colophons): *dhāraṇī* Buddhism and another type often called “state protection Buddhism,” which may or may not be associated with Vairocana Buddha. Waley clearly states that no evidence can be found at Dunhuang for the esoteric Buddhism that developed later in Japan. This forms a separate transmission from the state protection Buddhism found either at Dunhuang or in Japan. Earlier, I used a mantra-*dhāraṇī* spoken by Sarasvatī in the scripture that Waley refers to as the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (Ch. *Jingguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經; Jp. *Konkōmyō saishō ō kyō*; Sutra of Golden Light, T no. 665) to provide an example of how terms (*ju*) are translated from Indic languages into Chinese. Several scriptures used to protect the state in Japan and found at Dunhuang include: (1) chapter twenty on the annihilation of the Dharma (Ch. *Famiejin pin* 法滅盡品; Jp. *Hōmetsujin hon*) from section fifteen of the Moon Treasury Compendia (Ch. *Yuezang feng* 月藏分; Jp. *Gatsuzō bun*) of the *Dafangdeng daji jing* 大方等大集經 (Jp. *Daihōdō daishū kyō*; Great Collection Scripture, T no. 397);⁷⁴ (2) the *Renwang huguo bore boluomi jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜經; Jp. *Ninnō gokoku hannya haramitsu kyō*; Book of Benevolent Kings, T no. 245); (3) the translation of the *Yaoshi liuliguang rulai benyuan gongde jing* 葉師琉璃光如來本願功德經 (Jp. *Yakushi rurikō nyorai hongan kudoku kyō*; The Merits of the Original Vows of Amitābha, Shimmering like Glass, T no. 450) by Xuanzang 玄奘 (c. 602–664); and (4) the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama*. I prefer the term “kingdom” to “state.”⁷⁵ All four are renowned in East

⁷⁴ *Yuezang fen*, in T no. 397, 13: 374c28–381c11.

⁷⁵ On these four protection scriptures, see esp. Nakao 2008, pp. 72–75, where Nakao investigates the manuscript *Rishō ankoku ron* 立正安國論 composed by Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282). Nichiren provides some later context because he separately criticizes adherents of esoteric Buddhism, Zen, Vinaya, and the Pure Land for failing to properly single out the *Lotus Sutra*. William Deal (1999) addresses how “state protection” teachings were certainly not the sole purview of esoteric Buddhism.

See *Hōbōgirin*, s.v. “*Chingo kokka*” 鎮護國家 and “*Chinju*” 鎮守, vol. 3, pp. 322–29. See also Orzech 1998. “State” in “state protection” Buddhism remains a problematical term, not only because of the European context for the term “state” in English, but also because *guo* 國 (Jp. *kuni*) may not have meant a “state” in premodern China or Japan. In Nara or Heian Japan, for example, *kuni* meant something much closer to “province.”

The entry on “*Chingo kokka*” in *Hōbōgirin* asserts that *dhāraṇī*, particularly from the *Nimō kyō* (e.g., T no. 245, 8: 829c29–830a4 and T no. 245, 8: 834c25) or *Konkōmyōkyō* (e.g., T no. 663, 16: 341b13–c3; T no. 664, 16: 382c3–21; and T no. 665, 16: 427c6–27), formed a key component to state protection rituals.

Asia for their spells, and, coincidentally, for providing protection from evil curses, sleep demons, and even venomous infestations.⁷⁶

From the perspective of East Asian Buddhist institutional history, the incantation and copying of *dhāraṇī* sutras was never restricted to any one sect. Nor was, of course, printing them. Although we do not have nearly as impressive archeological evidence for the distribution of the “Hero’s March Spell” as we do, for example, for the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* 無垢淨光大陀羅尼經 (Jp. *Mukujōkō dai darani kyō*; Sutra of the Great Spell of Unsullied Pure Light, T no. 1024), which was deposited in a stupa at Pulguksa 佛國寺 temple (Korea) sometime between 706 and 751, and distributed throughout Japan between 764 and 770 by Empress Shōtoku 聖德 (Kōken 孝謙; 718–770, r. 749–770) in a campaign that has been popularly known as the distribution of the “million stupas” (Jp. *hyakumantō darani* 百萬塔陀羅尼), our spell is of the same type.⁷⁷ In tenth century China, copies of another, related *dhāraṇī*-sutra, the *Yiqie rulaixin mimi quanshen sheli baoqieyin tuoluoni jing* 一切如來心祕密全身舍利寶篋印陀羅尼經 (Jp. *Issai nyoraishin himitsu zenshin shari hōkyōin darani kyō*; Dhāraṇī of the Seal on the Chest with the Secret Relics of the Complete Body of the Mind of All Tathāgatas, T nos. 1022A, B), were distributed following the same pattern of patronage by royal and aristocratic lineages as during the eighth century. Even though the translation of this text is attributed to Amoghavajra, and this may be considered a reason to classify it as an esoteric sutra, it would fall into the class of non-esoteric texts mentioned previously.

In terms of doctrine, these *dhāraṇī* sutras and the “Hero’s March Spell” fit Gregory Schopen’s inimitable description of a body of texts well within the mainstream of Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhist literature, which provide “blessings” and “benefits” above all else. Specifically focusing on the attainment of the recollection of *jāṭismara* across an astonishingly wide array of Mahayana Buddhist literature, Schopen says:

First, we should note that the obtainment of *jāṭismara*—like rebirth in *Sukhāvati*—occurs over and over again in more or less standardized lists of “blessings” or “benefits” stipulated to follow from a wide variety of merit-making activity. In addition

⁷⁶ See for example T no. 450, 14: 406a28–b5.

⁷⁷ For a thorough discussion of printing in China and Korea with copious notes, see Barrett 2008, pp. 93–112. See also Sewall 2003. For other printed *dhāraṇī* sutras across Asia—and India and Indonesia—see Chavannes and Lévi 1894 (cited in Schopen 1982, 108, n. 13).

to the obtainment of *jātismara* and rebirth in Sukhāvati, such lists also promise freedom from sickness (*Suvarṇabhāsottama*, *Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Bodhimaṇḍalalakṣa*), avoidance of rebirth in the hells or other unfortunate destinies (*Suvarṇabhāsottama*, *Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Aparimitāyurjñāna*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, *Samantamukhapraveśa*), a favorable rebirth (*Samghāta*, *Buddhabalādhāna*, *Saptabuddhaka*), an auspicious death (*Tathāgatānāmbuddhakṣetraguṇokta*, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālamkāra*), the “purification” or “exhaustion” of the obstructions due to past karma (*Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, *Nārāyaṇapariṣcchā*, *Bodhimaṇḍalalakṣa*, *Samantamukhapraveśa*, *Prajñāpāramitā-nāma-aṣṭaśatakā*), etc., and these lists occur almost everywhere, not just in medieval, but in early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature as well.⁷⁸

Schopen’s investigation of the obtainment of *jātismara* takes him through a range of Sanskrit and Tibetan translations of scriptures from the possible time of Nāgārjuna (second century CE), to Asaṅga and Maitreyaṇātha (third–fourth century CE), the cache of manuscripts found at Gilgit, as well as manuscript remains found in central Asia from the sixth to twelfth centuries, subsuming the birth and flourishing of Mahayana Buddhism in India.⁷⁹

That the Chinese produced their own, carefully tailored *dhāraṇī*-sutras, such as the *Shoulengyan jing* with the “Hero’s March Spell,” which may or may not retain an actual Sanskrit *dhāraṇī*, ought not surprise anyone conversant with the notion that Chinese religious practices are habitually devoted to controlling demons or addressing a time-honored problem that Stephen Bokenkamp calls “infection from beyond the grave” within the context of medieval Chinese Daoism.⁸⁰ From one point of view, perhaps it makes sense that the most Chinese-oriented tradition of East Asian Buddhism, the Zen school, would make effective ritual use of *dhāraṇī* sutras and the *Shoulengyan jing* in particular. From another perspective, it also stands to reason that what makes the “Hero’s March Spell” relevant still today in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean monasteries—as well as among innovative lay Buddhist societies on the mainland who follow Hsüan Hua—is the exhaustive list of demons that can be subjugated by reciting this spell. Let us not disregard

⁷⁸ Schopen 1983, p. 134.

⁷⁹ Schopen 1975, pp. 172–74.

⁸⁰ Bokenkamp 2007, p. 197.

the fact that an orientation toward addressing all manner of merit-making activities—including obtaining *jāṭismara* and rebirth in Sukhāvātī, freedom from sickness, avoidance of rebirth in the hells or other unfortunate destinies, and even the elimination of the obstructions due to past karma—is an essential result of chanting, copying, and distributing many Mahayana scriptures.⁸¹ Even within a strictly institutional context such as Zen monasticism, inappropriate connections between spell practices and tantric or esoteric Buddhism by many scholars in the West and in East Asia have rendered the ritual side of East Asian Buddhism opaque. This is particularly disappointing because there is not only ample evidence to suggest that the doctrinal affiliation of these spells is quite distinct from tantric ritual manuals, but also because the subjugation of demons seems to be of special significance to Chinese and other East Asian Buddhists.

ABBREVIATIONS

- DBZ *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書. 100 vols. Ed. Suzuki Gakujuutsu Zaidan 鈴木学術財団. Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujuutsu Zaidan, 1970–73.
- DDB *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. Ed. Charles A. Muller. <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.
- Hōbōgirin* *Hōbōgirin* 法寶義林: *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les Sources Chinoises et Japonaises*. 8 vols. Ed. Paul Demiéville, Hubert Durt, Sylvain Lévi, Jacques Gernet, Jacques May, Takakusu Junjirō, and Watanabe Kaigyoku. Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1929–2003.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32.
- X *Shinsan dainihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本統藏經. 90 vols. Ed. Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan. 1975–89.

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⁸¹ Schopen 2012, p. 276.

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