

Śāriputra Defeats the Six Heterodox Masters: Oral-Visual Aspects of an Illustrated Transformation Scroll (P₄₅₂₄)

INTRODUCTION

This justly celebrated illustrated scroll narrates the contest of supernatural powers between one of the Buddha's leading disciples, Śāriputra, and the chief representative of the six heterodox masters, Raudrākṣa. The various conjurations of the two protagonists are vividly depicted, as are

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A substantially different version of this article will be published as a chapter of a book presenting the major illustrated manuscripts from Tun-huang preserved in the Pelliot collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris). The book is being edited by Jean-Pierre Drège who kindly invited me to take another look at P₄₅₂₄ after having studied it off and on for nearly two decades. Had he not done so, I may never have discovered that the final scene was torn off, that the verses on the verso were added after the scroll was painted, and that the upside-down inscription at the beginning of the verso not only has relevance for dating the verses, but also includes information that is valuable for understanding other crucial aspects of the scroll's history. Therefore, I offer my deepest thanks to Dr. Drège, without whose encouragement this article would not have been written.

the king and his entourage who witness them. The present article describes each of the scenes on the scroll as well as the execution and the overall composition of the painting. It further discusses the textual sources for the narrative and examines artistic parallels of the pictures.

Of all the manuscripts found at Tun-huang, Pelliot no. 4524 is arguably the most important for the study of the oral-visual background of Chinese popular literature because it is the only one which includes paintings on the recto and corresponding verses on the verso. Since the verses are similar (with one very significant exception) – but far from identical – to the verse portions of the written transformation text (*pien-wen* 變文) which relates the same story, P4524 has enabled researchers to affirm a link between pictures and texts in the transformation genre that could only be surmised indirectly from other evidence. Illustrated texts are frequently encountered in the subsequent prosimetric tradition of fiction and the performing arts in China. Thus the existence of P4524 is of inestimable value in understanding the development of that tradition right from its apparent beginnings.

Because P4524 is universally recognized for its tremendous significance as a unique specimen of a T'ang dynasty storyteller's illustrated scroll, it has frequently been studied by competent art historians. There is no point in repeating their observations here.¹ Instead, the present article focuses on

¹ The reader is urged to consult their valuable works, a few of which I list here. Nicole Vandier-Nicolas, trans. and comm., *Śāriputra et les Six Maîtres d'Erreur*, Facsimilé du Manuscrit Chinois 4524 de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Mission Pelliot en Asie Centrale, Série in-Quarto, V (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1954). Akiyama Terukazu 秋山光和, *Heian jidai seizokuga no kenkyū (Secular Painting in Early Medieval Japan)* 平安時代世俗画の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1964). Akiyama, "Henbun to etoki no kenkyū (*Pien-wen* chinois et *Etoki* japonais – la peinture et la prédication)" 變文と納解きの研究, sect. 3 of idem, *Heian jidai seizoku-ga no kenkyū*, pp. 387–454 (French summary, pp. 30–32), part 1: "Perio-bon gōma-hen (Rōtakusha tōsei hen) gakan to Tonkō hekiga (La rouelle illustrée du 'Combat magique de Śāriputra et de Raudrākṣa' (Pelliot 4524) et son rapport avec les peintures murales des grottes de Touen-houang)" ペリオ本降魔變 (牢度叉闍梨變) 畫卷と敦煌壁畫, pp. 389–426; part 2: "Tonkō ni okeru henbun to eiga (Le *Pien-wen* et la peinture dans l'art de Touen-houang)" 敦煌における變文と繪畫, pp. 427–54. Akiyama, "Rōtakusha tōsei hen hakubō funbon (Pelliot Tibétain 1293) to Tonkō hekiga ('The Connections between the Scroll of Ink Line Drawings of 'The Magic Competition between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa' and the Wall-paintings at Tun-huang)' 牢度叉闍梨變白描粉本 (Pelliot Tibétain 1293) と敦煌壁畫, *Tōkyō Daigaku Bungakubu Bunka Kōryū Kenkyū Shisetsu Kenkyū Kiyo* [Reports of the Tokyo University Faculty of Arts Facility for Research on Cultural Exchange] 東京大学文学部文化交流研究施設研究紀要 23 (1978), ppl 1–28, English summary by Margaret Miller Kanada, pp. 27–28. Akiyama, "Tonkō-bon gōma-hen (Rōtakusha tōsei hen) gakan ni tsuite (A Scroll-painting, Illustrating the Pien-wen, about the Magic Competition between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa; Brought back by Paul Pelliot from Tun-huang)" 敦煌本降魔變 (牢度叉闍梨變) 畫卷, *Bijutsu kenkyū (Journal of Art Studies)* 美術研究 187 (July, 1956), pp. 1–35

the relationship between the verses recorded on the verso of P4524 and those recorded in the manuscripts of the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons" as well as in other types of contemporary written materials and in the cartouches on various genres of painting from the Tun-huang area. It also examines in detail an enigmatic inscription on the verso that offers a key to understanding the early history of the scroll. In this essay, I attempt to prove that the verses on the verso of P4524 must have been written *after* its sixth (and last) scene was torn off. The evidence presented here indicates that the painting and the verses were not executed simultaneously, but that the illustrations are primary and the text secondary.

PLOT

This animated, colorful scroll portrays the contest of supernatural powers between Śāriputra,² one of the Buddha's closest disciples who is renowned for his magical abilities, and Raudrākṣa, the chief of the six "heretical" masters. Śāriputra (She-li-fu 舍利弗 according to the Modern Standard Mandarin pronunciation of the sinographic transcription of his name), who is actually more famous for his *prajñā* ("wisdom") than for his magic, is often paired with another favorite disciple of the Buddha, Maudgalyāyana (Mu-lien 目連 in sinographic transcription), who is possessed of even greater supernatural powers. To a certain extent, all Buddhist saints are possessed of magical powers, and these frequently prove

(43–77), 1 pl., 12 illus., English summary. Akiyama, "Tonkō ni okeru henbun to kaiga – Futatabi Rōtakusha tōsei-hen (gōma-hen) o chūshin ni – (*Pien-wen* and Paintings at Tun-huang ... again with special reference to the 'Magic competition between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa [Chiang-mo-pien]') 敦煌における變文と繪畫 – 再び牢度叉闍梨變 (降魔變) お中心に –," *Bijutsu kenkyū* 211 (July, 1960), pp. 1–28, with 16 photos and English summary. For updated references to Chinese and Japanese scholarship on the contest of supernatural powers, see Jean-François Jarrige and Akiyama Terukazu, eds., with Jacques Giès, *Saiki Bijutsu: Gime Bijutsukan Perio Korekushon (Les arts de l'Asie Centrale: Collection Pelliot du Musée Guimet)* 西域美術: ギメ美術館ペリオ・コレクション (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993), 2, pp. 336–37.

² Śāriputra had long been the subject of performing arts in Indian-influenced Central Asian literature. E.g., fragments of *Śāriputra-prakarana* [Exposition of Śāriputra], a Sanskrit drama about the conversion of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana to Buddhism composed by the great 2d-c. Buddhist poet, Aśvaghoṣa, were recovered from the Tarim Basin. See Heinrich Lüders, "Das Śāriputraprakarana, ein Drama des Aśvaghoṣa," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 17 (1911), pp. 388–411, with 2 ppl. Tun-huang was situated at the extreme western edge of the Chinese empire, on the interface between China and Central Asia. It was in this geographical and cultural context that stories about Śāriputra entered Chinese literature and art.

efficacious in gaining converts.³ It is curious, particularly in the context of the story under discussion, that Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were themselves both Brahmanical students before being converted to Buddhism. The conflict between the newly emerging Buddhism and various Brahmanical, Jain, and other sects in India during the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. is a fact of history. As the Buddhists jockeyed for the favor of kings, ministers, and wealthy merchants, friction with other schools and sects (in particular those that were already solidly entrenched in Indian society) was unavoidable. The story of the building of the famous monastery garden (*vihāra*) of Prince Jeta is a skillful literary rendition of this historical conflict. The contest of supernatural powers between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa is the climax of the legend of the founding of Jetavana. A summary of that legend will enable the reader to understand more clearly the context and significance of the various scenes depicted on the scroll.

Summary of the Jetavana legend

Sudatta, a leading statesman of the ancient Indian kingdom of Śrāvastī, does not believe in the three jewels of Buddhism. He has an unmarried son for whom he has dispatched an emissary to find a suitable match in another country. The emissary comes to a place where he finds Ānanda, a disciple of the Buddha, begging for food. Just at that moment, a beautiful girl darts out of the house where Ānanda is begging and bows respectfully to him. The emissary inquires of the neighbors and is informed that she is the daughter of the Prime Minister, Humi.

Later, when Sudatta himself returns to arrange the marriage, he realizes through his acquaintance with Humi, who is a devout believer, the sublime power of the Buddha. The Buddha has his disciple, Śāriputra, return to Śrāvastī with Sudatta. His instructions are to construct a *vihāra* there so that the Buddha might come to preach the law.

Śāriputra and Sudatta search diligently for a suitable site but are unsuccessful until one day they journey to the south of the city and

come upon an extraordinarily pure and quiet location. Unfortunately, the land belongs to the Heir Apparent to the throne, Prince Jeta. Sudatta goes to the Heir Apparent and, acting as an agent, asks him to sell the land to an unspecified buyer. Prince Jeta is unwilling to part with such a premium property, but Sudatta tricks him into selling it by convincing him that the area is haunted. The Prince agrees to complete the transaction on condition that the buyer cover the entire ground with gold. Sudatta presents himself as the buyer and, after a certain amount of wrangling, so impresses the Crown Prince with his devotion that the latter actually helps him to decorate the garden.

On their return from the garden, Sudatta and the Prince encounter the Six (heretical [to the Buddhists] – they are actually Brahmanical) Masters. They are outraged that the Crown Prince has fallen under the influence of the Buddhists and complain to the King of Sudatta's role in what they see as a plot against the realm. The King has Sudatta and the Crown Prince brought before him. Sudatta takes advantage of the opportunity to praise the Buddha, whereupon the King asks him whether the Buddha is a match for the Six Masters. Sudatta replies that even the least of the Buddha's disciples can stand up to them.

The King then authorizes a contest of magical powers between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa, the leading representative of the Six Masters, to be held in his presence. The king declares that Sudatta will forfeit his life if Raudrākṣa wins. But if Śāriputra wins, the King vows that he will convert to Buddhism. This sets the stage for the electrifying contest between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa.

The day for the contest is determined and when it arrives the citizens of the country are called out to witness the spectacle. Alternating one with the other, each side displays their magical skills in a hotly pitched battle. After half a dozen (N.B.!) of his best creations are systematically destroyed by Śāriputra's transformational manifestations, Raudrākṣa finally admits defeat. The story ends happily with everyone, including the Six Masters, acquiescing in the superiority of the Buddha's power and, hence, doctrines.⁴

³ Victor H. Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 28 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Council on East Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 32 ff; Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets: A Study in Charisma, Hagiography, Sectarianism, and Millennial Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983).

⁴ Based on Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. 18–19.

SOURCES

The main canonical sources for the building of Jetavana Garden and the contest of supernatural powers between Śāriputra⁵ and Raudrākṣa are to be found in scroll 12 of the *Mahā-sammata-sūtra* 眾許摩訶帝經 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* [191] 3.967C-969A), in scroll 8 of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinayaśaṅgh-abhedakavastu* 根本說一切有部毗奈耶破僧事 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* [1450] 24.139C-142A), and in scroll 10 of the *Hsien-yü ching* [*Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*] 賢愚經 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* [202] 4.118B-121B). (See appendix 3 for details of these Sanskrit precedents.) The accounts of the contest are increasingly simpler, shorter, and more straightforward as we go backward in this group of three scriptures. The story is also to be found in other Chinese Buddhist canonical texts, such as scroll 39 of *Fa-yüan chu-lin* [*Pearl Grove in the Garden of the Dharma*] 法苑珠林 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* [2122] 53.591C-592A) and scroll 3 of *Shih-chia p'u* [*Chronicle of Śākyamuni*] 釋迦譜 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* [2040] 50.63B-65C), but these are all derived (often explicitly and admittedly so) from one or another of the three sources mentioned above, usually the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (hereafter *SWF*). The story is mentioned as well by the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang (602-664), in chapter 6 of his travel account where he states that he heard it in the course of his travels to India.⁶

Virtually all authorities accept the common claim that the Tun-huang transformation tale is based on the story in the tenth fascicle of the *SWF*. The latter is a well-known collection of Buddhist stories which was compiled by Chinese monks from Kansu (the same province in which Tun-huang is located) in the year 445 out of materials gathered in the distant Central Asian city of Khotan.⁷ Indeed, the account of the building

⁵ Noritoshi Aramaki recognizes the foundation of the Buddhist sangha under the leadership of Śāriputta (i.e., Śāriputra) already in the Pāli *sūtras*; "The Development of the Term 'Paṭimokkha' in Early Buddhism," *Premier Colloque Étienne Lamotte*, Bruxelles et Liège 24-27 septembre 1989, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 42 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain Institut Orientaliste and Peeters Press, 1993), 36 of pp. 33-49. It is most striking that the evidence for this identification is to be found in the Jetavana group of verse *sūtras* in the *Devatāsaṃyutta* of the *Sagāthavagga* in the *Samyuttanikāya*. Thus, already in a relatively early stratum of the Pāli canon, there is a close link between Śāriputra and the Jetavana Garden. The contest of supernatural powers was grafted on to this old Pāli account, apparently under Mahāyānist auspices.

⁶ See Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* (A.D. 629-645), 2 vols. (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1903-1905), vol. 1, p. 394.

⁷ See Mair, "Linguistic and Textual Antecedents of *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*" (bibliographical information in appendix 3 below) for a detailed account of the origins and

of Jetavana Garden in the *SWF* and that in the transformation tradition share certain resemblances (e.g., six scenes [we could also refer to them as "rounds" or "innings"] in the contest of supernatural powers as opposed to four scenes in the two other main canonical accounts cited above). In this essay, however, we shall call into question the conventional explanation that the transformation tale depicted on P4524 and related in the "Transformation [Text] on the Subduing of Demons" is necessarily derived from the *SWF*.

First, just taking the contest of supernatural powers by itself, the order of episodes in the transformation tradition (including both written transformation texts [*pien-wen*] and the illustrated scroll [P4524]) is very different from that in the *SWF*. To grasp how radically dissimilar the order is, let us set up a simple table for comparison:

Table 1. Comparison of Scene Ordering

SCENE DESCRIPTION	OCCURRENCE IN <i>SWF</i>	OCCURRENCE IN TRANSE. TEXT/ILLUST.
tree vs. wind	1	6
pond vs. elephant	2	3
mountain vs. strongman	3	1
dragon vs. giant bird	4	4
buffalo vs. lion	5	2
demon[s] vs. Vaiśravaṇa	6	5

NOTE: See table 2 for greater detail concerning the contents of the individual scenes.

The most striking discrepancy in the two orders is that the position of the "tree vs. wind" scene is reversed. As a final scene, Śāriputra's wind blowing over Raudrākṣa's tree (together with the Six Heretics, their tent, and all of their followers) has far more potential for visual impact in the transformation tradition than does the final scene in *SWF*, namely Vaiśravaṇa's intimidation of the yakṣa demon (it becomes the fifth scene, with two demons, of the transformation tradition). Taking this and other factors discussed in the following paragraphs into consideration, one suspects that

compilation of this extremely important collection of Buddhist narrative literature. The entire legend entitled "Sudatta Raises a Monastery (Hsü-ta ch'i ching-she 須達起精舍)," the ostensible immediate source of the transformation text and the illustrated transformation scroll, is translated and annotated on pp. 38-61; contest of supernatural powers, pp. 46-47. Cf. translation Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. 53-55.

the transformation tradition preserves a more authentic oral-visual sequence. The *SWF* sequence, on the contrary, may have gotten jumbled during the complicated and prolonged process of translating and committing to writing the scores of tales in this collection which the eight Chinese monks who went to Khotan originally heard delivered orally in a non-Sinitic language or languages.

Second, the version of the story in the *SWF* is not written in prosimetric form whereas verse lies at the very heart of the transformation text. Since there are no verses at all in the story of the building of Jetavana Garden found in the *SWF* and yet they constitute the core of the transformation text as well as the only written material on the illustrated transformation scroll, we must ask where they came from. The sum total of the available evidence would seem to indicate that the verses derive from a separate oral tradition.* Below, I shall further suggest that there are grounds for believing that the oral-visual version of the tale was primary and that all written texts which relate it were in a sense secondary, hence derivative. The Kansu monks responsible for the compilation of the *SWF* may have heard a prosimetric account of the building of Jetavana Garden and other narratives when they were in Khotan.⁹ Being textually minded and commanding neither the language(s) nor the oral tradition and skills of the Central Asian and South Asian individuals who told these narratives, however, they simply omitted the verse portions or amalgamated the verse within the prose.

Third, the transformation version of the "Subduing of Demons" (both in its written textual form and as illustrated scroll) cannot be accounted for strictly in terms of "Sudatta Raises a Monastery" in the *SWF*. The transformation tale is much more elaborate than the story in the *SWF*. There is no justification in the *SWF* version for vast amounts of narrative detail that are to be found in the transformation tradition. One might wish to claim that this is so because the transformation tale is an amplification of the the story in the *SWF*. A comparison of the two versions together with a consideration of their socio-historical evolution, however, indicates that just the reverse is more likely: the *SWF* story may be a condensation (*sans* verse) of a more elaborate oral chantefable heard by the Chinese monks from Kansu while

they were in Khotan. By no means may we claim that the Tun-huang transformation tale was precisely what the Kansu monks heard in Khotan, for obviously the Tun-huang transformation tale is in Chinese while the stories the monks heard in Khotan were told in some other language or languages. Furthermore, the Kansu monks were reported to have acquired most of their materials from Indian and Central Asian monks resident in temples in Khotan, not from the sort of street entertainers who would have performed the forerunners of illustrated transformations.

Fourth, basic elements in the narrative construction of the transformation tale indicate that it could not have been fashioned from the *SWF* story because it is differently motivated. For example, upon the conclusion of the contest of supernatural powers, the transformation tale is at pains to divulge the psychological state of the Six Heretics, whereas the *SWF* says not a single word about their repentant attitude, describing instead the mass conversion to Buddhism of their followers.

Fifth, the transformation tale ends abruptly with Śāriputra's victory over the heretics and a brief, but very impressive, display of jubilation. The *SWF* story continues with the measuring and making of the monastery garden and a rather lengthy disquisition on dharma, including a quaint apologue about an ant that had lived in the garden eons ago. It is no accident that both the construction of the monastery garden and the apologue about the ant occur before the contest of supernatural powers in the transformation text. Evidently, the transformation storyteller wished to conclude his tale immediately after it had reached its climax. The *SWF* story, in striking contrast, finishes in a much more leisurely and drawn-out fashion. As a gripping narrative, the *SWF* story is less effective than the transformation tale; as scripture, however, it fulfills its purpose admirably. The transformation tale and the *SWF* story are from two different, yet interconnected, worlds. Both convey a message about the dharma, but the former is folkish and concerned primarily with entertaining, while the latter is monkish and more doctrinally oriented.¹⁰

¹⁰ In distinguishing between the relative folkishness of the transformation tale and the monkishness of the *SWF*, I by no means wish to imply that the common people were incapable of thinking about ideas. In this connection, I should also like to point out that the Buddhist canon contains a vast amount of narratives appropriated from secular or lay sources for religious and ecclesiastical purposes. Even many of the *jātakas* (stories about the Buddha in former lives) and metaphorical *aradānas* and *nidānas* about Buddhist saints have been demonstrated to derive from pre-Buddhist origins. See, e.g., Moriz Winternitz, *Geschichte des*

* This was already postulated, Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, p. 100.

⁹ Given the usual configuration of Indian and Indian-influenced narrative texts, it is highly likely that the stories the Kansu monks heard in Khotan were prosimetric in structure.

From our examination of the format of the scroll and its relationship to *pien-wen* below, we will discover other reasons why they represent a separate narrative tradition from that of the *SWF*. At this stage of our inquiry, we may characterize the *SWF* as a Chinese collection of classical Buddhist tales derived from a Central Asian tradition of religious storytelling with an unmistakable Indian background.¹¹ The Tun-huang transformation tale, on the other hand, belongs to an oral-visual prosimetric performance tradition that, even when written out in semi-vernacular language as a transformation text, retained close ties to its folkish forerunners. Nonetheless, it is clear from the overall presentation that there is a greater affinity between the transformation tale and the *SWF* story than between the transformation tale and the other canonical versions of the Jetavana legend. Both the transformation tale and the *SWF* story most likely go back to a common ancestral narrative that was elaborated in Central Asia, while the other canonical texts have much closer and more direct ties to India. Naturally, all versions of the legend of the building of Jetavana *vihāra* – including Śāriputra's key role – are ultimately related by virtue of having developed (albeit along different lines) out of the original account in the Pāli sūtras or, more accurately, the primitive oral verses that underlay them.

CONTENTS

What we see on the illustrated scroll P4524 are merely scenes of the contest of magical powers between Śāriputra and the Six Heretics led by Raudrākṣa. A complete set for the performance of the story of the construction of Jetavana would have required additional scrolls, but the one that has survived constituted the climax.

The scenes depicted on the illustrated Śāriputra scroll correspond closely to the incidents narrated in the matching transformation text entitled “Hsiang-mo pien 降魔變 [-wen]” [“Transformation (Text) on the Subduing of Demons”]. The transformation text is preserved on the following manuscripts: a long scroll formerly in the possession of Hu Shih

Indische Literatur, 3 vols. (Leipzig: C. F. Amelang) 2, pp. 124–16, where many *jātakas* showing clear traces of their extra-Buddhist heritage are discussed. In one (no. 241), the Bodhisattva even enjoins the people of Benares to eat the flesh of the jackal Sabbadātha and his animal army, then to dry what they cannot eat. Thus, as Winternitz puts it, the *jātaka* closes in a genuinely fairy-tale-like manner: “At that time, it is said, the drying of flesh started.”

¹¹ Mair, “Linguistic and Textual Antecedents.”

(now supposedly kept at an undisclosed location in China), excellent photographs of which are housed in the Library of Congress – this is the main scroll for the transformation text and includes all but the beginning which is to be found on Stein 5511, originally a part of the Hu Shih manuscript; a copy formerly owned by Lo Chen-yü (location also unknown); Stein 4398v; and Pelliot 4615.¹² Once again we may represent schematically the magical creations of Śāriputra and those of the Six Heretics in the transformation text and, except for the missing sixth scene, on the transformation scroll as well:

Table 2: Comparison of Elements in Corresponding Conjurations

CONJURATIONS OF SIX HERETICS	CONJURATIONS OF ŚĀRIPUTRA
mountain	warrior (<i>vajrapāni</i>) w/ <i>vajra</i> mace ^A
water buffalo	lion ^A
pond	white, six-tusked elephant [magnificent elephant sucks pretty pond dry with trunk]
poisonous <i>nāga</i> (dragon)	gigantic golden-winged bird (<i>garuḍa</i>) ^A
yellow-headed demons	Vaiśravaṇa Mahārāja [guardian of Buddhism, portrayed with precious stupa in out stretched palm of left hand, spear in right, and long sword hanging from his belt; his awesome presence alone is enough to defeat two <i>yakṣa</i> demons transformationally produced by Raudrākṣa]
tree	wind ^A

^A The action of these four scenes is self-evident; it is unnecessary to describe what happens in them.

FORMAT

To understand the purpose and function of P4524, it is necessary to describe at some length the arrangement of the paintings on the recto and their relationship to the verses and other features on the verso. First of all, it is essential to realize that, as used in performance, P4524 would have been unrolled – one scene at a time – like an Indonesian *wayang beber* picture

¹² This is an unusual manuscript consisting of a few selections from the transformation text and headings in larger characters followed by the tomb inscription of an important local official.

storytelling scroll.¹³ We should also be alert to the many subtle devices employed in the scroll for advancing the narrative in a controlled fashion. As we shall see, although the scroll possesses a fundamentally linear, unidirectional construction, the artist has skillfully ensured both that the viewer and the performer pause at the right places in the narrative and then move forward eagerly to the next scene. Without exaggeration, we may say that P.4524 anticipates the effect of film which is also a linear strip with numerous static scenes connected by movement from one scene to the next.

The organization of scenes on P.4524 is much simpler than that of Tun-huang wall-paintings which have a large, flat surface open and visible at all times. With wall-paintings the attention of the viewer must be attracted to specific portions of the surface as they are described or contemplated. The narrative sequence of a wall-painting is more free flowing than that of a transformation scroll. Compared with the complex pattern of interrelationships among various scenes and details on a wall-painting, an illustrated scroll like P.4524 has a fixed and unalterable narrative sequence.

Each of the scenes on the illustrated scroll consists of the following components:

1. On the far right we find Śāriputra seated upon his high lotus dais (*padmāsana*) in a posture of meditation (also called *padmāsana*). Hovering on a cloud trailing long, curly wisps over Śāriputra's head is a small protective figure that has been identified as an *apsara* (female deity) with hands joined in *añjali-mudrā*. In scene 5 there are two such figures flanking a canopy suspended in mid-air above Śāriputra. From one scene to the next, Śāriputra is surrounded by a group of seven to ten followers; they are monks with shaved heads and a couple of protective spirits. In some scenes, divine or semi-divine guardians are shown behind Śāriputra's company of monks; two of them wear crowns and the head of one is surrounded by a nimbus, while another appears to be a protective mountain spirit with deer horns and a rough-hewn club. Like Śāriputra, most of the monks look Chinese; this is, of course, historically inaccurate (it is particularly odd that Śāriputra himself is made to look Chinese!), but would have catered to the tastes of the

Chinese inhabitants of the area around Tun-huang. A few of the monks, however, are shown with long noses and deepset eyes; they probably are meant to represent specific Indian monks (e.g., the old saint Kāśyapa who is similarly portrayed in many statues and on banners from Tun-huang) or perhaps an occasional Central Asian for local flavor. Śāriputra and his monkish followers all wear patchwork robes (*kaśāya*) and one of them (usually, but not always, the one nearest the front) has the lines of the patches strongly accented. Also present among Śāriputra's attendants in the various scenes are a few guardian spirits of assorted character. Śāriputra is usually shown with the first two fingers of his right hand raised. In the second scene, Śāriputra holds a large *ju-i* 如意 ("as-you-like-it") scepter in his left hand, in scene three his left hand is raised in the *abhaya* ("have-no-fear") *mudrā* (hand gesture), and in the fifth scene his hands are joined in *añjali-mudrā*.¹⁴

It is important to observe that one of Śāriputra's followers looks straight ahead, somewhat abstractedly as though still wistfully attracted to the marvelous encounter of transformations in the previous scene and occasionally one of the followers actually does turn his head slightly backward to the preceding scene. Most of the members of Śāriputra's group, however, are absorbed in the current clash of transformations that is occurring in front of them. These skillful and sophisticated proto-cinematic techniques help to ensure the continuity of the narrative.

Just to the left of Śāriputra's group and toward the top of the scroll (i.e., in the background) is painted a Chinese-style monastery bell suspended from a wooden frame which is rung by a monk with a large wooden ringer to announce a victory by the Buddhists. In scene four, the bell and bell-ringer are moved nearer to the bottom (in front of the scene) to accommodate the large, feathery wings of the gigantic bird transformationally produced by Śāriputra that fill up the entire upper portion of the scroll.

2. The transformational manifestations produced by Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa occupy center stage. They are suitably spectacular.

¹³ See frontispiece and pp. 37-39 of Mair, *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation and Its Indian Genesis* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1988). This book (see preface and p. 131) was conceived with the intention of clarifying the purpose and function of P.4524. Much of the research presented in *Painting and Performance* involved the investigation of storytelling with pictures around the world to flesh out the skimpy record in China.

¹⁴ Description of the diverse assortment of *mudrās* displayed by all of the personages on the scroll would require separate and extensive treatment. See E. Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*, Bollingen Series 58 (New York: Pantheon, 1960; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

3. Squeezed over on the left side of the central arena are Raudrākṣa and the heretics seated on a large, round rug beneath a tent that is supported by columns or poles. The shape and decorations of the rug and tent change subtly from scene to scene. As expected, the heretics are six in number, but in scene four only four are shown. It is not obvious which of the Six Heretics is meant to be their leader Raudrākṣa. The corpulence of the heretics is openly exposed since most of them have naked upper bodies (except for a cloth slung over the shoulder[s]) and wear only a dhoti around their loins and hips. Without exception, the heretics are all foreign (to a Chinese) in appearance and are ironically probably meant to appear like South Asians, which – in terms of historical reality – is what all of the participants in the drama were. Some of the heretics sport grotesquely enormous beards. The first one shown even has canine teeth hanging far outside of his mouth like fangs.

As with Śāriputra's group, in several of the scenes one of the heretics looks straight ahead and one or more look forward to the next scene, though most concentrate on the current action in the center of the arena. The heretics gradually lose their composure until in later scenes a few of them are depicted as thoroughly agitated.

Next to the heretics on the left side and in the background is a drum, suspended like the Buddhists' bell from a wooden frame, which is beaten in the unlikely event that the heretics happen to win a round of the contest. Of course, they never succeed in besting Śāriputra, so the drummer should not be shown swinging away energetically with (one or) two sticks at the spot marked "X" on the drum; through artistic license, however, he is allowed to do so in order to contribute to the atmosphere of excitement.

4. To the left of the heretics and appropriately more toward the foreground is the royal party. The king is there with his entourage to witness and judge the contest. Seated alone on a square wooden platform, the king looks and dresses like a Chinese. This, too, is historically inaccurate in terms of the Indian antecedents of the story (the king in question was Prasenajit) but would have reflected the ethnic identity of the local rulers of Tun-huang at the time the scroll was painted. In most scenes, the king raises the first two fingers of his left hand, but in scene five he joins his hands together (*ho-chang* 合掌). On the king's cap is the character *wang* 王 for "king" so there is no mistaking who he is.¹⁵ He is surrounded by as many as twelve attendants and citizens

who represent a wide variety of ethnic types with different clothing, hairstyles, and physical features. They are Tibetans, Uighurs, Khotanese, Sogdians, Tokharians, and other peoples,¹⁶ reflecting fairly accurately the local population of Tun-huang as an international crossroads at the time the scroll was painted. The fact that this is a Chinese king and that all of these ethnic groups, including Tibetans, have been united under him indicates that P 4524 was most likely painted after Chang I-ch'ao 張議潮 reexerted Chinese control over the Kansu Corridor in the mid-ninth century.

As many as three or four of the king's entourage look forward to the next scene. Since they are the closest group to what follows, this is an efficient means for providing a transition to the following scene.

5. On the far left is a tree border which separates one scene from the next. In the center of the scroll, between rounds three and four, following the customary tree border comes a grand mountain with clouds and pines.

I suspect that the performer would have displayed this large divider while he/she took a break in the middle of the show. In any event, the use of trees and mountains as a technique for scene division has close parallels in another Indian-influenced picture storytelling tradition, that of Indonesian *wayang*.¹⁷ The three main groups (the Buddhists, the heretics, and the king with his entourage) are not just mechanically replicated in each scene but are varied in clever ways. As participants in and spectators of the lively contest, they react differently to what is going on. The drawing, design, and details of the paintings are much more carefully done in the early scenes, becoming increasingly hurried and sloppy in the later scenes of the scroll. This scroll was not an expensive item at the time of its creation.

Because of the recurring sequence of components in each scene, we can be absolutely certain that the scroll originally consisted of at least six scenes, not just the five that it now includes. We can make this claim with utter confidence even though less than one tenth of the last scene survives. What we see of the sixth scene are two of Śāriputra's followers, one holding

¹⁶ More research needs to be carried out by ethnographers and specialists in the history of costume and art in order to determine the precise identification of all the different figures on the scroll.

¹⁷ Mair, *Painting and Performance*, pp. 64–66, 72, 78, 90, 103, 115; cf. color pl. 1.

¹⁵ In the first scene, 王 is miswritten as 丰 and in the fourth scene as 三. One suspects that the artist was barely literate, if at all, in Chinese.

a *khakkhara* (mendicant monk's staff) and one holding a *pātra* (monk's begging bowl). The latter monk is looking toward the front (with a slight suggestion of narrative linkage to the previous scene) while the former monk is looking ahead to the next scene. All of this, plus the tree divider which precedes the monks, is perfectly in accord with the regular pattern of narrative progression for the rest of the scroll. The shoulders of two other monks are also visible. Judging from the order of manifestations in the matching transformation text, the last scene would have been the tree-wind confrontation.

Similarly, although approximately the first one fifth of the initial scene on the scroll is missing, enough remains (the right hand, hip, leg, and foot of Śāriputra's bell ringer) to enable us to affirm that Śāriputra and his followers were also originally pictured.

P.4521 deals only with the magic contest. Since the content of P.4524 corresponds to roughly one fifth or one sixth of the entire tale as it is recorded in the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons," we can estimate that a complete set of illustrated scrolls for the full performance of the transformation tale would have consisted of five or six scrolls.

VERSES AND INSCRIPTION: FUNCTION AND OWNERSHIP OF THE SCROLL.

Although the verses on the verso of P.4524 are similar to the corresponding verses in the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons," they are by no means identical. This implies that there must have been a fairly widespread tradition for the performance and transcription of this transformation tale in the Tun-huang area; the tale did not derive from a single, isolated storyteller or author. Sometimes the lines are totally different.¹⁸ Where there is a difference, the verses on the back of the illustrated scroll are often – but not always – to be preferred. For example, line 1623 of the transformation text has an extra eighth syllable, but the corresponding line on the verso of P.4524 is normally heptasyllabic. Or consider line 1736 of the transformation text which has elephant tusks "a hundred ten-foot measures" long,¹⁹ whereas the corresponding verse on

P.4524 more reasonably has "several tens of feet" in length. Elsewhere, the transformation text reads more smoothly. In particular, the verse for the fifth scene on the illustrated scroll becomes almost unintelligible near the end. Even when the verbal content of the lines on the illustrated scroll and in the transformation text are the same, the graphical variants are so profuse as to make it virtually impossible that one set of verses was copied from the other. Rather, we seem to be dealing with a situation in which there were multiple performers and multiple transcribers of a single well-known, well-established, and much-loved transformation tale.

We must now consider why the verses were written on the back of the scroll at all. By itself, this is an extraordinarily complicated problem; to answer it, we need to pose a whole series of subordinate questions. The first question to ask is why were only the verses written down on P.4524 and not the entire prosimetric text? The answer to this question alone is comparatively simple. Poetry (actually song as it is employed in performance) is the central, fixed core of prosimetric oral narrative in India and in literary traditions influenced by it.²⁰ The prose parts of the narrative were fleshed out extemporaneously. The same ineluctable emphasis on a stable set of songs as the framework upon which the narrative is hung was transferred, along with Buddhism, to China and other countries influenced by the Indian prosimetrum. This song-focused structure has remained a characteristic feature of many genres of traditional fiction and drama in China up to the present moment.²¹

The placement of the verses on the illustrated scroll is to the right side of the verso as it would have been opened to reveal the whole of each individual scene. The rationale for this placement is also relatively easy to determine, namely, the verses mark the left edge of the scene on the front. That is to say, they are positioned roughly behind the king and his entourage who – except for the tree border marking the end of the exposed

remain within the bounds of credibility, even for a supernatural transformation.

¹⁸ Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. 96–98. The ultimate authority and centrality of orally transmitted verse, not only for Buddhism but also for pre-Buddhist Indian religions and philosophical traditions, has been convincingly demonstrated by Paul Horsch, *Die vedische Gāthā- und Stōka-Literatur* (Bern: Francke, 1966). Virtually all of the great early Indian literary monuments are either wholly or largely in verse.

²¹ Mair, "The Contributions of Tang and Five Dynasties Transformation Texts (*pien-wen*) to Later Chinese Popular Literature," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 12 (August, 1989), and "The Prosimetric Form in China," forthcoming in a volume of essays on the prosimetrum worldwide edited by Jan Ziolkowski, Joseph Harris, and Karl Reichl, to be published by Boydell and Brewer (1997).

¹⁸ E.g., l. 1678 of the transformation text; see Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983), p. 77.

¹⁹ Slightly modified in my *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* as "several hundred feet high" to

scene and the beginning of the next – occupy the leftmost position of each scene as viewed by the audience. Published photographs of the scroll frequently show it with Śāriputra and his group visible to the right, the contesting conjurations in the middle, and the matching verse passage of the verso on the rolled-up portion of the scroll to the left. This is purely for purposes of modern display to show in one photograph the positional relationship of the illustrations and the verses. Such a method of display could not possibly have had any legitimate function either for public performance or private viewing, since it covers up both the heretics and the royal party as well as the tree border on the left, i.e., more than half of a given scene.

Our investigation of the verses on P₄₅₂₄ now enters a more difficult stage. As we develop our argument, it must constantly be born in mind that the illustrations (not visible to the performer) are on the recto of the scroll facing the audience and the verses (not visible to the audience) are on the verso facing the performer who stands (or sits) behind the scroll. Furthermore, it is essential to recall that the audience's left side is the performer's right side and vice versa. With these caveats, we may begin our discussion of the function of the verses on P₄₅₂₄.

If the verses had a performative function, they would – at the very least – have indicated which scene had been unrolled and when to stop unrolling since – as we have already remarked – they are on the right side of the verso opposite the king who is on the left edge of each scene on the recto. This, of course, assumes that the performers were at least partially literate, but that is a dubious proposition at best. The evidence presented in this essay and in my other published works shows that the performers of transformations were of low social status. This is typical of picture storytellers around the world.²² Indeed, most of the attestable transformation performers in China proper were females of low social status, which means that it would have been doubly difficult for them to acquire literacy.

²² See Mair, *Painting and Performance, Tang Transformation Texts*; "Anthologizing and Anthropologizing: The Place of Non-Elite and Non-Standard Culture in the Chinese Literary Tradition," *Working Papers in Asian/Pacific Studies* (Durham: Asian/Pacific Institute, Duke University, 1992), published in Eugene Eoyang and Lin Yao-fu, eds., *Translating Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1995), pp. 231–61; "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53:3 (August, 1994), pp. 707–51. Also see Anne Pellowski, *The World of Storytelling* (Bronx: H. W. Wilson, 1999, rev. and expanded version; New York and London: R. R. Bowker, 1977, 1st edn.).

There is some evidence that, in the far west of China and in Central Asia, the performers may have been males (see the discussion of Central Asian itinerants below in the next to last paragraph of this section; likewise, there is no positive evidence that they were female), but because of their low social rank, remoteness from the center of Chinese culture, and – in some cases – possible bilingual or multilingual background, even they would not have been expected to possess the sort of literacy to read or write the verses on the back of P₄₅₂₄. While the language of the verses on P₄₅₂₄, like the language of *pien-wen* and other Tun-huang popular literary genres in general, does contain a significant proportion of vernacular elements, it is still full of refractory, recondite classical expressions that would have been beyond the reach of someone who lacked the privilege of at least half a dozen years of schooling in the complicated Chinese script. Admittedly, these texts were not written by literary masters; they are fraught with orthographical errors and otherwise unknown vernacular expressions. All in all, they represent the work of individuals who typically were lay students in Tun-huang monastery schools.²³ Therefore, we must ask once again, now more insistently and pointedly, why there are verses of a moderately advanced literary level on the scroll of a performer who was in all probability illiterate.

As a matter of fact, the verses do not really belong on the verso of P₄₅₂₄ as it was originally conceived, executed, and employed. However, the palpable reality of the verses on the verso and the universal recognition that they were there for the performer to consult as a sort of prompt-script make it difficult for one to adopt a more critical stance. Only when one examines the physical characteristics of the scroll intensively and reads the verses closely does one realize for certain that they truly are not an integral part of the construction of the scroll but were added at a significantly long period of time after the paintings were created. The time gap could have been a month, a year, ten years, fifty years, or even longer (I shall argue below that it was longer than just a year or two). What is essential is that *the illustrations and the verses were not created together. The paintings were done first and the verses were added subsequently.* Of this there can be no doubt whatsoever and will soon become apparent to anyone who reads the verses carefully.

²³ Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts," *Chinoperl Papers* 10 (1981), pp. 5–96.

Scene i

Six Master²¹ was so enraged that his emotions were hard to quell,
 He conjured up a precious mountain that would be difficult to match;
 From peak to base it was all of a hundred leagues in height,
 There were purple creepers and golden vines which covered the ground.
 The mountain flowers and thick leaves formed an embroidered pattern,

From soaring crests made of golden rocks, blue-green clouds arose;
 On its top, there were the hermits Wang Ch'iao and Ting Ling-wei,²²
 In the recesses of this precious mountain, fragrant waters flowed.
 Flying immortals continuously scattered beautiful flowers,
 All of which filled the great King who looked on from afar with pleasure;

Śāriputra watched as the mountain came into the presence of the assembly,

But sat there self-composed and motionless, deep in meditation.

Instantaneously, he conjured up a great Diamond Deity,

With high brows, a broad forehead, and a body bulging with muscles;

In his hand, he held a diamond mace from which fire shot up to heaven,

Which caused the mountain of evil to break in pieces when he pointed at it.

The heretics sobbed and wailed till their voices became hoarse,

While the spectators swiftly and unanimously shouted their approval.

Scene ii

Angered, Six Master again struggled to take the lead,

So he conjured up a water-buffalo which was really impressive.

It leaped right into the middle of the arena, startling the spectators;

Sharpening its horns by digging them in the ground, its bellow reached to the heavens.

The heretics simultaneously called out, "Bravo!
 The citizens will now be made to transmit our doctrine."

Seated on his dais, Śāriputra was unperturbed,
 With good reason, since he expected that his sacred power would be hard to withstand;

He rearranged his clothing and, having collected his thoughts,
 Conjured up an imperial King of Lions.

When it roared, the lion's eyes darted like lightning or stars,
 Its tapered teeth and sharp claws cut as sharply as frost;

Waving its tail so as to display its heroic mettle.

It went forward and directly caught the water-buffalo, injuring it.

The buffalo soon dissolved under the ripping and slashing of the lion,
 Even its bones were devoured so that the buffalo completely disappeared.

In both of the first two rounds, the Buddhists were victorious,
 The heretics were so chagrined that their mouths were parched.

Scene iii

The banks of his pond were made of the seven types of jewels,

Cornelian and coral competed in lustrousness;

Fish leaped above the pond, crisscrossing everywhere,

Tortoises, turtles, terrapins, and water-lizards scrambled chaotically everywhere.²³

The lotus blossoms in the water glistened with a brilliant light,

None there were among the spectators who did not feel surprised:

The heretics boastfully sighed, "It's really marvelous!

Just wait and see if we don't show 'em who's who in this round!"

Śāriputra raised his eyes and looked off toward the south,

Then conjured up a huge, six-tusked elephant which emitted a fragrance;

As it walked along, its appearance was similar to a snowy mountain in motion,

Its body was so enormous that it would have been difficult to measure.

From out of its mouth, there burgeoned six sharply jagged tusks,

And each one of the tusks was several tens of feet high.

On top of every tusk there were seven lotus blossoms,

²¹ The odd English translation of *liu shih* 六師 as "Six Master" is intentional and is meant to reflect its shifting referent in the Chinese text where it sometimes indicates the Six Masters as a group, and at other times signifies Raudrākṣa (their chief), and at still other times it is not clear whether the group or their chief is intended.

²² Two Taoist transcedents. For fuller annotations on technical and linguistic matters, consult the notes to the translation of the transformation text in Mair, *Tan-huang Popular Narratives*.

²³ The identical unusual character 競 (= 競 "compete, strive") as that used to write the same (fifth) syllable of the previous line, but there probably with the intended meaning "thoroughly, completely"; cf. 競 which the Hu Shih manuscript has in the first of these two successive lines.

Inside the blossoms were maidens of incomparable beauty;
 They plucked zithers and lutes and sang to their own string accompaniment,
 Their elegantly refreshing voices echoed harmoniously.
 Together they hymned the paradise of Amida Buddha,
 Hand in hand, they merely encouraged men of like mind to go there.
 The elephant then waded into the middle of the pond,
 It trampled and trod east and west and on the banks as well;
 With its trunk, it sucked up the water until the pond was completely dry,
 Causing Six Master to choke with the vexation which filled his breast.

Scene iv

That day, Six Master gradually became more and more frustrated,
 Bitterly resentful and not knowing what to do, he had nowhere to turn;
 Although he forced himself to go on putting up resistance,
 He had a premonition that he would surely lose in the end.
 Again, he conjured up the body of a poisonous dragon,
 Clouds of smoke billowed from its mouth and its breast was full of ire;
 Thunder rumbled and roared – the sky was darkened by haze,
 The sound of the rising²⁷ claps and peals was like that of a fiery explosion.
 Those in the arena were so frightened that they gasped with alarm,
 In groups of twos, they looked at one another and simultaneously called out “Bravo!”
 Śāriputra observed the arrival of the poisonous dragon,
 Then brought about the appearance of a golden-winged bird with rare plumage.
 It was no trouble at all for the bird to rip and slash the dragon from head to tail,
 When it started to consume, it began by pecking out the brains;
 Blood flowed all over the ground until it formed mud –
 In an instant, the bird devoured the dragon.

Scene v

Six Master, repeatedly the weaker, was ashamed at heart,

So he conjured up yellow-headed monsters in the midst of the assembly;

Their appearance was of a strange sort and their carcasses were ugly –
 They gazed toward the people on the four sides, filling them with dread.

Śāriputra, his countenance peaceful, was filled with endless joy,²⁸
 For he confidently knew that he would certainly be stronger than the other side;

“Even if you have a hundred or a thousand different transformational manifestations,”²⁹

You cannot avoid submitting and becoming disciples of the Buddha.”

In the middle of the arena, Śāriputra conjured up a great Heavenly King,

Awesome and splendiferous, he was of extraordinary mettle;
 On his body he wore golden armor that shone to the triple heaven,³¹
 From the precious sword at his waist, a frosty glitter emanated.

The precious pagoda³¹ in his hand emitted a spiritual light,
 His long spear sparkled with a bluish-green glimmer;
 With an angry look, the Heavenly King briefly rolled his eyes,
 Which so stupefied the two monsters that they fell to the ground.
 That day, the heretics were an army of defeated demons.³²

Six Master was so flustered that he was completely at wit's end;
 Whereas Śāriputra, who put his trust in the Compassionate One, said,
 “I'll just let you off so as to fulfill my spiritual power.”³³
 When an ass or a mule with a heavy load sets out on a distant journey,
 It begins to wonder whether it can be compared to the scale of a

²⁸ This line has a hypermetrical eighth syllable.

²⁹ This line also has an extra eighth syllable.

³¹ Or “was as dazzling as the Three Gods” (*san t'ien* 三天, Skt. *Trimūrti*: Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahma).

³¹ *Pao-t'a* 寶塔, Skt. *ratna(-naya)-stūpa*.

³² Strictly following the syntax, this line should be rendered as “That day, the heretics defeated the army of demons (i.e., Māra's legions).” But the transformation storyteller could not possibly have meant that. It is most intriguing that, in spite of all the differences between the verses in the transformation text and the verses on the illustrated scroll, they both share this syntactically very strange line.

³³ *Wei-shen* 威神, Skt. *prabhāva* (“awe-inspiring majesty”).

²⁷ 揚 → 揚 → 揚, as on the Hu Shih manuscript.

dragon;¹¹

The Six Masters, expressing their remorse, were deeply ashamed,
 "Day after day, without reason, our duties¹² increased," they said.
 "Forgetting hunger and neglecting thirst, we toiled on year after year,
 The whole day long we scurried about¹³ in service of the Fire Spirits;¹⁴
 Carrying firewood on our shoulders and straw on our backs, we
 experienced suffering,
 Vainly did we throw ourselves into this labor, we toiled for nought.¹⁵
 We filled iron basins and cleaned out toilet pots,
 We chafed against our iron collars until they broke and our wooden
 bars crumbled to dust;
 Once we confessed our errors and took refuge in the Three Jewels,¹⁶
 No longer were our minds made idiotic by attachment to the old sect.
 All cunningness¹⁷ we now totally abandon,
 As for our remaining stupidity, we have encountered¹⁸ the Dharmic
 Grace.

Scene vi (missing)

Even in translation, it is immediately obvious that the fifth and final set of verses is irregular. In the first place, it is disproportionately long – 34 lines in comparison with the other verse passages which respectively have 18, 18, 24, and 16 lines. This discrepancy alone should give cause for suspicion. Second, the contents of the fifth and final set of verses differs radically from its counterpart in the transformation text, unlike the other four sets of verses which differ only in relatively minor details. Third, the

latter part of the fifth set of verses is almost unreadable. They give the impression of having been written by someone who is floundering. Fourth, the problematic last twelve lines are completely unrelated to the fifth scene which they are ostensibly supposed to be explicating! Herein lies the main proof that the verses on the verso of P.4524 were not written at the same time as the illustrations were painted. *When we analyze the supernumerary lines of the fifth set of verses, we swiftly realize that they were cobbled together to serve as a makeshift ending for the entire transformation tale.* The heretics submit, lamenting – as in the conclusion of the transformation text *after* their defeat in the sixth and genuine final round – that they had wasted their energy in service to the pre-Buddhist fire gods. This means that these extra lines were added to the scroll *after* it had been damaged by the loss of its sixth and quondam final scene. Thus either all of the verses on the verso of P.4524 were added subsequent to the loss of its sixth scene or at least the latter part of the fifth stanza was added later. Since the calligraphy throughout the fifth set of verses appears to be perfectly consistent with that for the other sets, it is logical that all of the verses were added to the verso after the sixth scene was lost.

Aside from the uniformity of the calligraphy, there is other evidence that all of the verses on the verso of the illustrated scroll were written at some point in time subsequent to the loss of the sixth (originally final) scene. In the transformation text, the fifth set of verses concludes with the following couplet:

Only, because his mind was confused, he strayed off on a minor
 by-way,
 And had to be converted so that he could take refuge inside the gate
 of Buddhism.

The author of the pseudo-ending on P.4524 ignores these two lines and forges ahead with the suspect twelve lines. That is to say, he consciously eschews the normal sectional conclusion to make way for his clumsily assembled ending for the entire tale because he was painfully aware that the sixth scene was missing. This, too, indicates that all of the verses on P.4524 were written at some point in time subsequent to the loss of the sixth scene.

Given that the verses on the verso of P.4524 were demonstrably not

¹¹ We should perhaps read "scale of a dragon" (*lung-lin* 龍麟) as "Draconic Unicorn" (*Lung-lin* 龍麟) the name of a famous horse from Kucha in Central Asia. See also the notes to I. 1853 in Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, p. 220, and Hsiang Ch'u 向楚, ed. and annot., *Tun-huang pien-wen hsuan-chu* [Selected and Annotated Tun-huang Transformation Texts] 敦煌文選注 (Chengtu: Pa-Shu shu-she, 1989), p. 375, nr2.

¹² 任 = 任.

¹³ 馳 = 驅馳.

¹⁴ Of which there are 44 in the Vedic pantheon. Previous editors have misread this as "Great Spirit."

¹⁵ 枉 = 枉.

¹⁶ *San-pao* 三寶, Skt. *triratna* or *ratnatraya* ("the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha [community of monks]").

¹⁷ 點 = 點.

¹⁸ 禮 = 禮.

part of the scroll when it belonged to its original owner, almost certainly a transformation performer, we must now consider who would have written them on the scroll, for what purpose, and upon what occasion. In order to do that, we need first to discuss at some length a faint and extremely difficult-to-decipher inscription that is to be found on the verso of the scroll. The inscription (very poorly written, almost subliterary) and the verses (mediocre calligraphy with some mistakes and corrections [usually interlinear additions, but also a few overwritings]) were definitely written by two different hands. This mysterious inscription appears near the beginning of the scroll and upside-down in relation to the verses on the verso and also to the paintings on the recto. The placement and orientation of this enigmatic inscription are of extraordinary importance in understanding its implications for explicating the history of the scroll.

The inscription is to be found exactly where we find it for a number of very good reasons. First of all, the right end of the scroll (the beginning of the narrative) is heavily soiled and severely worn. The scroll has been used so extensively that parts of the opening section have literally crumbled away. The person who wrote the inscription chose the first solid and relatively undamaged space he could find on the verso. This means that, like the verses, the inscription was added to the scroll after its creation, although not necessarily at the same time as the verses. (As we shall see later in this section, the removal of the end portion of P₄₅₂₄ was intentional, whereas the loss of the opening portion of the scroll was gradual.) Even assuming that the scroll had been actively used by a transformation performer, in the normal course of his occupation it would have taken years for it to deteriorate to the degree that it had before the inscription was written on it. Secondly, there is a simple explanation for the inverted orientation of the inscription: the person who wrote it placed the scroll on a table or other flat surface and, holding the unrolled portion steady with his left hand, penned the inscription with his right hand. If he had tried to keep the scroll upright and steady it by holding his left hand down on the fragile beginning, at the same time having to contend with the bulky unrolled portion to his right, he would not only have risked causing further damage but would have failed to keep the scroll from moving around while writing his inscription. The inverted orientation of the inscription is thus a natural consequence of the physical condition of the scroll at the time the inscription was written.

The damage caused to the end of the scroll is of an entirely different order from that sustained by the beginning. Even with a protective wrapper and pasted-on leader margin, it is always the opening portion of a scroll that sustains the greatest damage through repeated usage. In comparison, the end of a scroll is well protected by all of the paper that is wrapped around it. Yet P₄₅₂₄ has lost only one fifth of its first scene through obvious wear and tear, whereas it is lacking almost the whole of the sixth scene. Furthermore, the damaged edge at the beginning of the scroll is rough and irregular, just as we would expect it to be from prolonged usage. The damaged edge at the end of the scroll, conversely, is straight and regular; it was torn away on purpose. The purpose of tearing away the sixth scene is not hard to imagine: someone wanted the *pièce de résistance* of the transformation scroll, Sāriputra's wind blowing over Raudrākṣa's tree. If that someone were a wealthy and influential patron who wished to sponsor a cave chapel and have it decorated with a wall-painting showing that scene (a very common occurrence in the Tun-huang area, as we shall see in the next section), it would have been almost impossible for a lowly transformation performer to refuse him if he requested that part of the scroll as a model for the wall-painting he wished to donate or if he merely said that he liked that scene of the illustrated scroll and wished to purchase it. In any event, the scroll was already damaged beyond repair at the beginning. It is customary for picture storytellers the world over to destroy (usually by burning or throwing in a body of water and often to the accompaniment of certain rituals) their illustrations when they are no longer usable. Perhaps someone had heard that the owner-performer of P₄₅₂₄ had ceased to use the scroll because the beginning was missing and, fearing that the entire scroll would be destroyed, offered to buy the final scene. Regardless of the reason or the time, we may be sure that the end of the scroll (the sixth scene) was deliberately and neatly removed.

To return to more solid ground and our discussion of the inverted inscription, let us now attempt to translate the graphs which appear to read approximately as follows:

We gave up on young Master So at his seat. (?) 丟却索師兒坐
Yuan-ch'ang sought for but couldn't get [this]. 眞豈(兒)不得也

Wen-pin took care of the matter.¹² 文斌料事

The grammar is bad and the calligraphy is atrocious.¹³ Furthermore, because of the ambiguous wording, our translation must remain tentative, except for the last sentence which is relatively clear. Nonetheless, the inscription harbors a wealth of clues for understanding the early history of P4524. Aside from the fact that he carries the surname of one of the old, leading families of Tun-huang, I do not know who "young Master So" was, nor am I sure who Yuan-ch'ang was (perhaps the same person as the Yuan-ch'ang who inscribed P2633),¹⁴ but there is reason to believe that Wen-pin may very well be the same Ma Wen-pin 馬文斌 who wrote a letter and a poem on S2973. In the title of that manuscript, he is identified as "Chief Escort of the Military Commissioner and Overseer of Copyists, Ma Wen-pin." It reads as follows:

I, the aforementioned Wen-pin, was accompanying Your Honor [the Military Commissioner] while you stopped in this village when I saw a bejewelled elephant on a colorful wall-painting. Although I am not talented, I immediately composed a short poem made up of heptasyllabic verse with four rhymed couplets. I hereby respectfully present it to you with this letter, begging that you will favor it with your kind consideration when you read it. Respectfully I record the poem on this letter and present it to you in the form of previous respectful communications.

¹² The translation of the second line of the inscription, by far the more important of the two lines for understanding the history of the illustrated scroll, is on fairly solid ground since only the sixth and last of its graphs are partially in question. Furthermore, the various possibilities for these two graphs does not materially affect the overall meaning of the line. The translation of the first line, the less important of the two, is tentative.

¹³ Aside from its overall clumsiness and poorly formed individual graphs, the inscription even miswrites the 斌 of Ma Wen-pin's name as 斌!

¹⁴ Yuan-ch'ang's name, written in a poor hand, appears several times on this scroll of popular literary texts ("Ya-k'e hsin-fu [The Headstrong Bride] 醉臥河新婦文, "Chiu fu [Rhapsody on Wine] 酒賦, etc.). In one place he states that he is presenting a text "up" to someone. Practice characters, some related to Buddhist ceremonies, are written on the verso of the scroll. The sum total of the written evidence on P2633 points to a milieu of popular literature, the acquisition and presentation of such texts, and a striving for literacy in the context of the Buddhist community. All of this would seem to be relevant to Yuan-ch'ang's abortive efforts to acquire P4524.

Letter of the Chief Escort of the Military Commissioner and Overseer of Copyists, Ma Wen-pin, on the ...th day of the eighth month of the year 970.

The rare, bejewelled elephant is a king among beasts,
Throughout the world, there is no match for his fierce valor
and heroic heart;
His four legs are planted as jade pillars,
His pair of tusks are sharp as the tip of a steel sword.
As he stands surveying the steep crags, he becomes a mountain,
When he moves, his swaying form terrifies the beholder;
Let his name alone be announced to evil types,
And they would not dare henceforth to create trouble.¹⁵

The third scene on P4524 depicts just such an elephant, as do P4518.11 (cf. also P6001.1) and Stein silk painting no. 62 (Ch. IV. 002) which will be discussed below. It is quite clear that Ma Wen-pin had an intense attraction for precisely the type of powerful Buddhist art such as that on P4524 and that he was ready to praise it in heptasyllabic verse strikingly like that employed in all genuine transformation texts. What is more, as overseer of copyists, he surely had under his supervision exactly the sort of former lay students for whom there is documentary evidence of having transcribed some of the transformation texts from Tun-huang that are still extant.¹⁶ Thus we are not without justification in surmising that it was indeed the Ma Wen-pin of S2973 who is referred to in the inverse inscription of P4524 and, further, that he was directly involved in the procurement of the illustrated scroll for another party who wanted it badly enough to dispatch two or three individuals, including the Chief Escort of the Military Commissioner and Overseer of Copyists, to obtain it. Note also that Ma Wen-pin refers to himself on S2973 in the first person and in a fairly good hand, whereas Wen-pin is referred to at the end of the P4524 inscription in the third person and in a terrible hand. In S2973 Ma Wen-pin proclaims his own devotion to popular Buddhist art, while in the P4524 inscription Wen-pin is apparently acclaimed by someone else for his ability

¹⁵ For the Chinese text of S2973 and a fuller investigation of this important manuscript, see Mair, "Lay Students," pp. 39–40, item 207.

¹⁶ Ibid.

to obtain it.

We learn more about Ma Wen-pin and the sort of circles he moved in from S₃540. This is a pledge by sixteen men, including Ma Wen-pin, to ensure the maintenance of the cave-temples of Tun-huang. As was frequently the case with lay societies in the Tun-huang area, the group was organized by a monk.¹⁷ Ma Wen-pin's associates in this endeavor appear to be laymen of good standing in the community who took an active interest in the promotion and preservation of Buddhist art. The dating of the pledge to March 25, 970, is consonant with other available evidence concerning Ma Wen-pin and P₁524.

Slight damage to the paper underneath the inverted inscription on P₁524 and additional soiling on top of it indicate that the scroll continued to be handled after Wen-pin's involvement and before the time that it was sealed up in cave 17 around 1035, although far less extensively than it had been before his association with the scroll. These facts concerning the inscription also attest that the inscription was surely not added in this century after the Tun-huang manuscripts were discovered. Since no other texts, documents, or practice characters are to be found on P₁524, the probability is strong that this inscription – like everything else on the scroll – refers to the scroll itself rather than being some casual, extraneous scribble or stray, miscellaneous record.

We may hypothesize that the new owner of the damaged scroll (lacking the initial one-fifth of the first scene and nine-tenths of the sixth and final scene), himself not a professional transformation performer, still wanted to show off the scroll in the manner of the picture storyteller, presumably in small, private gatherings. Since he was not a professional

storyteller and was thus incapable of reciting the verses of the transformation from memory, he had them written on the back of the scroll. Judging from the quality of the inverted inscription, he himself did not possess sufficient literacy to write the verses of the transformation, so he hired a scribe, someone who was familiar with transformation texts and who was probably responsible for writing out other exemplars of that genre. My impression is that the new owner of P₁524, though not highly literate, was a man of some stature and authority because he tried to enlist the aid of young master So (from one of the most distinguished, old Chinese families in the Tun-huang area), had another man named Yuan-ch'ang (who had a penchant for popular literary texts and who was willing to present them to his superiors) attempt to get it, and at last successfully obtained it through the good offices of Wen-pin (Chief Escort of the Military Commissioner and Overseer of Copyists). Perhaps the new owner was the Military Commissioner himself.

Aside from the illustrations, the verses, and the inscription, the only other mark on P₁524 that I am aware of is a small round circle near the top edge of the scroll on the verso to the right of the verses for scene five. The circle is located exactly opposite the tree forming the left border of scene five on the recto. It may have been used for centering by the amateur transformation teller because the verses for scene five were so long that he could not use them effectively to gauge the left (to him, but right to the audience) border of the scene. Or the circle may have been drawn to indicate where it was safe to tear off the sixth scene without damaging the fifth one.

Although P₁524 came into the hands of an aficionado of transformations who was also a dignitary with apparent connections to local officialdom (before it ended up in cave 17 and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale of France), it doubtless started out – *sans* verses – as the property of a transformation performer. As to what sort of people they were, we may even have pictorial representations of a number of them. One of the most common (and also one of the most puzzling) types of painting found at Tun-huang is a portrait of a scruffy Central Asian itinerant wearing a backpack with sets of scrolls in it. These ninth-tenth-century portraits (of which there exist about a dozen) are usually identified as Hsüan-tsang (602–664), the famous Chinese pilgrim who went to India to retrieve scriptures. Although the Tun-huang portraits of Central Asian itinerants

¹⁷ For numerous examples of such lay societies at Tun-huang, especially in relation to the copying of manuscripts, see Mair, "Lay Students." The organization and activities of these societies have been studied in Chikusa Masaaki 吉久正明, "Tonkō shutsudo 'sha' bunsho no kenkyū (A Study of Documents from Tunhuang concerning 'Club') 敦煌出土「社」文書の研究," *THGH* 33 (March, 1963), pp. 215–88, with 16 illus.; and Naba Toshisada 那波剛貞, "Tōdai no shayū ni tsukite ('On 'Shayū,' an Intimate Union of Masses, in the Days of Tang Dynasty)" 唐代の仕込に就きて 1–3, *SR* 23.2 (April, 1938), pp. 15–57; 23.3 (July, 1938), pp. 71–110, plus 2 ppl.; and 23.4 (October, 1938), pp. 93–157, plus 2 ppl. The three parts of Naba's article have been republished with the English title "On the Shē-i (Voluntary Associations) in the T'ang periods" in his *Tōdai shakai bunka shi kenkyū (Historical Studies on the Society and Culture of Tang China)* 唐代社會文化史研究, Tōyōgaku sōsho (Oriental Studies Library) 東洋學叢書 8 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1971), pp. 159–571. For Lionel Giles' entry on S₃150, see his *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1957), p. 190A, no. 6525.

eventually – through a very convoluted process – did evolve into the commonly accepted iconographical form of Hsüan-tsang, they cannot themselves possibly be meant to depict Hsüan-tsang for numerous reasons. Among these are the obvious fact that the itinerants are patently not Chinese and the fact that they are carrying sets of scrolls instead of Indian palm leaf (i.e., flat) manuscripts. On the other hand, there is a substantial amount of evidence that these figures may actually have represented transformation storytellers.³⁸ One of the most compelling is that the Central Asian itinerants are usually shown carrying several sets of four, five, or six scrolls wrapped up in bundles. This is precisely the number of scrolls that would have been required for the full performance of the “Transformation on the Subduing of Demons” and is comparable to the number of scrolls necessary for a *wayang bebèr* performance. Since their repertoire would probably have consisted of more than a single story, this would account for their carrying several bundles of five or six scrolls.

Transformation performers would have been as ubiquitous in Central Asia as *paṭ* and similar performers in pre-modern India, *bänkelsängers* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany, *kamishibai* in Japan before World War II (there were tens of thousands), and all the other many kinds of picture storytellers who once flourished throughout Eurasia. The transformation performer was the equivalent of T’ang dynasty movies.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ARTISTIC GENRES

Sooner or later, the problem of whether or not P.4524 should be considered as a *pien-hsiang* 變相 (“transformation tableau”) must be confronted. *Pien-hsiang* was a well-known genre of religious (mostly Buddhist, but also adopted by Taoists and others) art during the T’ang period.³⁹ Although *pien-hsiang* were widespread, there is no solid evidence that they were regularly used for picture recitation. Indeed, the available evidence indicates that they were employed more for purposes of devotion and even, like *maṇḍalas*, for meditation. Furthermore, there is abundant histori-

cal evidence that *pien-hsiang* were sponsored by wealthy patrons, both lay and clerical.⁴⁰ Contrarily, P.4524 originally belonged to a performer from the lower classes, as did the whole tradition of oral-visual transformation tales. Transformation texts were written and owned by individuals from a bourgeois social stratum between the aristocratic sponsors of transformation tableaux and the poorer transformation picture storytellers.

In *Tang Transformation Texts*, I distinguished between two major systems for demarcating the stages in the progression of a Buddhist narrative, whether artistic or literary. One system is characterized by the use of *shih* 時 (“the time when...”) and the other by the use of *ch’u* 處 (“the place where...”). We may refer to *shih* as specifying the “narrative moment” when something occurs and *ch’u* as specifying the “narrative locus” where something occurs. Even though *ch’u* ostensibly has a spatial function, in actual practice as marking the progress of a narrative it too has a temporal effect. Only stories told in the transformation tradition consistently utilize the narrative marker *ch’u* in their formulaic language, whereas wall-paintings and several other genres of popular Buddhist narrative found at Tun-huang display a marked – almost exclusive – preference for the narrative marker *shih* in their formulaic language or in the inscriptions of their cartouches.⁴¹ Genres which use *shih* as their narrative marker would appear to have a closer affinity to textual and doctrinal sources, whereas those which use *ch’u*

³⁸ Aside from the materials presented in the article cited in the previous note, another item is directly pertinent to our investigation – the “Lao-tu-ch’ia tou-sheng pien-hsiang [Raudrākṣa’s Contest for Authority]” 牢度叉闍梨變相 mentioned by the well-known Sung period art critic, Kuo Jo-hsiū 郭若虛, in fascicles 3 and 6 of his late-11th-c. *Tu-hua chien-wen chih* [An Account of Things Seen and Heard about Paintings] 圖畫見聞誌. Painted on the walls of the important Hsiang-kuo ssu (Kingdom-Protecting Monastery) 相國寺 in the imperial capital by noted artists, it is obvious that this was a thoroughly highbrow work of art.

³⁹ Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. xvii, 41, 78, 80–83; Akiyama, *Heian jidai sezokuga*, pp. 122–26; Li Yung-ning 李永寧 and Ts’ai Wei-t’ang 蔡偉堂, “Hsiang-mo pien-wen” yü Tun-huang pi-hua chung te ‘Lao-tu-ch’ia tou-sheng pien’ (The Dunhuang Manuscripts *Vanquishing Mara* and the Dunhuang Mural *Raudrākṣa Combating Śariputra* – Including Comparisons between the Manuscripts and the Inscriptions in Cave 9 of Mokaoku) [sic] [Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons] and the ‘Transformation on Raudrākṣa’s Contest of Supernatural Powers’] 《降魔變文》與敦煌壁畫中的“牢度叉闍梨變相” in Tunhuang wen-wu yen-chiu-so [Tun-huang Research Institute] 敦煌文物研究所, ed., 1983 *nien ch’uan-kuo Tun-huang hsüeh-shu t’ao-lun-hui lun-wen-chi. Shih-k’u • i-shu pien (shang ts’e)* (Collected Works on Dunhuangology Presented at the 1983 National Academic Symposium, *Grottoes • Art*) 1983 年全國敦煌學術討論會文集石窟·藝術論(上冊) (Lanchow: Kansu Jen-min ch’u-p’an-she, 1983), pp. 190, 196–233 of pp. 165–233; Wu Hong, “What Is *Bianxiang* 變相? – On the Relationship between Dunhuang Art and Dunhuang Literature,” *HJAS* 32.1 (June, 1992), pp. 177–89 of pp. 111–92.

³⁹ Mair, “The Origins of an Iconographical Form of the Pilgrim Hsüan-tsang,” *Tang Studies*, 1 (1986), pp. 29–11, plus 7 ppl. This view has been accepted and elaborated upon by Jung Hsin-chiang 榮新江, *Kuei-i chün shih yen-chiu: Tang-Sung shih-tai Tun-huang li-shih k’ao-so* [Studies on the History of the “Returning to Righteousness Army”] 歸義軍史研究 – 唐宋時代敦煌歷史考察 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi ch’u-p’an-she, 1996), p. 382.

⁴⁰ Mair, “Records of Transformation Tableaux (*pien-hsiang*).” *TP* 72 (1986), pp. 3–13.

as their narrative marker seem to be based more on illustrations and the oral tales that accompanied them. While *shih* is by nature more abstract, the impact of *ch'u* is more immediate and visual – it does not require the intermediary of a text.

Aside from their formulaic and structural differences, these two large categories of Buddhist narrative at Tun-huang may be distinguished by their socioreligious affiliations: in general, the *shih* ("time when...") type belonged to the religious and their patrons, while the *ch'u* ("place where...") type belonged to the folk. Constructing and decorating a chapel, whether inside a cave or in a building, was a costly undertaking; it inevitably called for the best artists, artisans, and materials that money could buy. Preparing a paper transformation scroll for the entertainment of the laity was a low budget item; the success of a transformation performance depended more on the talent of the storyteller than on the sumptuousness of his or her scroll. So long as the pictures on the scroll were sufficiently suggestive and animated, the rest could be left to the skill of the performer and the imagination of the audience.

For the *shih* ("time when...") type of narrative art, we not only have the numerous wall-paintings and other types of high (by Tun-huang standards) artistry, many of them explicitly labeled with dozens of cartouche inscriptions ending in *shih* ("time when..."), we also have access in the Tun-huang manuscripts to numerous lists of "moments" to be incorporated in such narratives. For the *ch'u* ("place where...") type of narrative art, we have only P.4524. It is to be expected that the rate of survival would have been hugely disproportionate: we are exceedingly fortunate to have P.4524 at all.³²

For the reasons mentioned in the preceding four paragraphs and other reasons given in the following paragraphs, I would be cautious about referring to P.4524 as a *pien-hsiang*. Instead, I would prefer to call it a *pien-chüan* 變卷 ("transformation scroll"), although this term has not yet been attested from contemporary sources.

³² Of course, there were other genres of folkish art (on scrolls, booklets, and other media) at Tun-huang, such as the sets of pictures for the *Sutra on the Ten Kings of Hell*. These, however, are not narratives but apocryphal scriptures and texts providing doctrinal, geographical, or other types of instruction. The definitive study of the "sūtra" on the ten kings of hell and its pictures is that by Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 9 (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1994).

The building of Jetavana Garden and the contest of supernatural powers between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa is one of the most frequently depicted in Tun-huang wall-paintings. Indeed, it occurs nineteen times on wall-paintings in caves of the Tun-huang area at Mo-kao-k'u 莫高窟 ("Caves of Unexcelled Height"), Hsi Ch'ien-fo Tung 西千佛洞 ("Western Caves of the Thousand Buddhas"), and Yü-lin-k'u 榆林窟 ("Elm Grove Caves"), also called Wan-fo Hsia 萬佛峽 ("Cliffs of the Ten Thousand Buddhas") at An-hsi 安西.³³ The oldest of these wall paintings is in cave 10 of the Western Caves of the Thousand Buddhas and dates from the mid-sixth century or slightly earlier. The next wall-painting after that which depicts the magic competition between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa is to be found in Mo-kao-k'u cave number 333 (Pelliot number 149) and dates to sometime before 686. Throughout the latter part of the ninth century and up to the end of the tenth century, wall-paintings depicting the magic competition were among the most popular of all subjects to be portrayed in the Buddhist caves of the Tun-huang area.

Within the larger framework of the legend about the construction of the Jetavana monastery garden, the magic contest is indisputably the favorite segment. Within that segment, the scene of Śāriputra's gale uprooting Raudrākṣa's tree which reached to heaven was the most beloved of Tun-huang painters, particularly during the late ninth and tenth centuries when depictions of it became even more fantastic than they had been before. The rest of the story is barely or minimally touched upon in the wall-paintings, yet the contest constitutes only approximately one-fifth of the entire narrative as it is related in the *SWF* and less than a fifth of the transformation text. The tree/wind scene counts for but one-sixth of the magic contest, hence but one-thirtieth of the entire tale.

The contest of supernatural powers between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa is undeniably the most exciting episode of the story, the one which would serve best to capture the attention of listeners and viewers. Throughout the heyday of Buddhism in Tun-huang, up to around the end of the tenth century, the wall-paintings of the contest grew increasingly elaborate and imaginative. Much clever energy was expended in showing how pathetically humorous, indeed ridiculous, the heretics were in defeat. The Tun-huang

³³ For lists, see Akiyama, *Heian jidai seizokuga*, p. 138; Li and Ts'ai, "Hsiang-mo pien-wen," p. 170.

wall-paintings of this scene are full of small details around their edges, some of which are barely alluded to in the transformation text or not mentioned at all.

In striking contrast to the ornate and exquisite wall-paintings of the ninth and tenth centuries, the composition of the illustrated scroll is decidedly simple, one is tempted to say more primitive. What is more, the illustrated scroll is merely the visual component of an oral-visual narrative tradition. Without the oral prosimetric transformation tale that it was designed to accompany, the illustrated scroll somehow, though suggestive, remains strangely silent. (Together, the oral and visual components of a transformation performance – like a chemical reaction – could be as electrifying an experience as any available to Tang and Five Dynasties audiences.) The wall-paintings, on the other hand, are designed to hold their audience through a combination of artistic ingenuity and painterly skill. They are a type of religious art that was designed for the purpose of contemplation and devotion.

There exists irrefutable proof of the tremendous forethought and high artistry that went into the making of the Tun-huang wall-paintings of the contest between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa. Also to be found in the Pelliot collection (catalogue number 1293) are sketches of figures that were directly incorporated into specific scenes of identifiable wall-paintings at Tun-huang. For example, the alluring postures of the beautiful women in the heretics' camp as they are being buffeted by the wind, even down to the angles of their arms and their long sleeves which extend from them, are replicated in certain caves (especially Mo-kao-k'ü cave 196, dated 892–894) at Tun-huang.⁵¹ The sketches, which date from the late eighth century or the first half of the ninth century during the Tibetan occupation of Tun-huang (787–848), are superb drawings in their own right. They are of an wholly different order of artistry than that which went into the making of P.4524. Conversely, other details enable us to affirm that P.1293 is not in

the same tradition as that of illustrated transformation scroll (e.g., the sturdier and more complex quadrangular wooden bell and drum frames of the former as compared with the simple triangular frames of the latter).

A fine ninth-century painting from Tun-huang done in ink and colors on silk and preserved in the British Museum is Stein no. 162 (Ch. lv. 002).⁵² Although fragmentary, enough of the painting survives to indicate that this was once part of another format for the depiction of the contest of transformational manifestations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa, namely, a set of silk hanging-scrolls. The inscriptions in the cartouches are badly damaged, but there is no doubt that this painting belongs to the narrative tradition which focused on “moments” rather than on “loci”: “...precious flowers with thousands of petals were growing in the pond...” 水池中生千葉[宝]花; “the moment when the [Six Heterodox Masters] were bowled over...” 倒臥時; “the moment when they beat their breasts and called out loudly...” 持(?)胸大喚時; etc. The high quality, non-linear arrangement of scenes, and narrative technique all link this painting with that of the wall-paintings in the Buddhist caves at Tun-huang. Nonetheless, the iconographical similarities between this excellent painting on silk and the more folkish and at times crude illustrated paper scroll (P.4524), for example, the resemblances between the elephant portrayed in both (lotus stem held in trunk, representation of the six tusks, position of the legs, etc.),⁵³ assure us that there was plentiful borrowing among the various types of paintings at Tun-huang which presented the contest of transformational manifestations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa.

Thus, iconographically and in terms of narrative content, all of the painting genres that portray the celebrated contest of supernatural power are related. Yet there remains a visible difference in the painterly quality of the more elegant wall-paintings, sketches for the wall-paintings, and paintings on silk in comparison with the cruder illustrated scroll which belongs to a lower social stratum: art of the potentates versus art of the people.

⁵¹ See Akiyama, “Hakubyō funbon,” for a thorough description and discussion of the sketches on P.1293; also available in Jao Tsung-yi, Pierre Ryckmans, and Paul Demiéville, *Peintures monochromes de Dunhuang (Dunhuang Baihua)*, École française d'Extrême-Orient, Mémoire archéologique 13 (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1978), ppl. 11–15, frontispiece. Portions of this scroll are also reproduced in Jarrige and Akiyama, eds., *Saiki Bijutsu*, figs. 46–49. For a study of the sketches of the contest between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa, together with their relationship to various wall-paintings at Tun-huang, see Sarah Fraser's chapter in the forthcoming volume on Tun-huang illustrated manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale edited by Jean-Pierre Drège.

⁵² Roderick Whitfield, *Saiki bijutsu (The Art of Central Asia)* 西域美術, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982–1984) 1, color pl. 21; notes on p. 315.

⁵³ Various details attest that the borrowing among these various painting genres was not direct copying. For example, the shapes of the ears of the elephant on P.4524 and the elephant on the fine silk painting are noticeably different, the stems of their lotus blossoms twist in different directions, and so forth.

RELATIONSHIP TO TRANSFORMATION TEXTS

P₄₅₂₄ is intimately related to a written Buddhist popular narrative that was also discovered at Tun-huang. This is the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons" (*Hsiang mo pien-wen* 降魔變文)³⁷ already referred to several times above. This transformation text is not to be confused with "The Destruction of the Transformations of Demons" (*P'o mo pien* 破魔變) which is preserved on P₂₁₈₇. "The Destruction of the Transformations of Demons" belongs to an entirely different literary genre and tells a completely different story than that which is related in the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons" and on P₄₅₂₄. Before coming to grips with the exact nature of the relationship between the illustrated transformation scroll and the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons," we must first become briefly acquainted with the form and historical significance of the genre to which the latter belongs.

For two main reasons, *pien-wen* 變文 ("transformation texts") and, to a lesser extent, several related popular Buddhist literary genres preserved among the Tun-huang manuscripts (e.g., *yüan-ch'i* 緣起, "circumstances" or "causal/karmic origins"; and *chiang-ching-wen* 講經文, "sutra lecture texts") are of extraordinary importance in the history of Chinese language and literature: they are the earliest extended vernacular (actually semi-vernacular) texts and they are similarly the earliest prosimetric (alternating between prose and verse) narratives.³⁸ After their appearance, the direction

of development in Chinese language and literature was permanently altered.

To comprehend the meaning of the term *pien-wen* ("transformation text"), it is helpful to realize that *pien* is a shortened form of *shen-pien* 神變 (Sanskrit *prātihārya*, *ṛddhi*, *vikurvana*, *nirmāna*, etc.), i.e., "spiritual transformation." A *pien-wen*, then, is fundamentally a text about manifestations and conjurations.³⁹ In this sense, the "Transformation Text on the Subduing of Demons" is the quintessential transformation text because it is about the repeated production of such transformational manifestations by two opposing sides.

As we have seen in the preceding discussion, the verses on the verso of P₄₅₂₄ are close, but far from identical, to the corresponding verse portions of the transformation text.⁴⁰ It is obvious that the illustrated scroll and the transformation text were intimately related, but the precise nature of that relationship has been the subject of much speculation. After careful analysis of the physical features of the scroll together with the content and placement of the the inscription and the verses on the verso, we now know that the latter were originally not part of the scroll at all. Therefore, the

utmost significance for the study of popular religious literature, language, society, and culture during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods, they are not as crucial as *pien-wen* for the history of Chinese literature in general for the following reasons: 1. they deal strictly with religious themes, whereas *pien-wen* also treat secular themes; 2. pictures are not an essential feature of these genres whereas *pien-wen*, by its very nature, integrates the verbal and pictorial components of the oral-visual tradition of performing arts in China; 3. *chiang-ching-wen*, *yüan-ch'i*, etc. were the property (the "stock-in-trade," as it were) of monks who employed them in the context of religious services, whereas *pien-wen* were customarily told by lay performers outside of monastic settings; 4. the doctrinal and scriptural (especially in the case of *chiang-ching-wen*) aspects of these genres receive relatively greater emphasis than the narrative *per se* whereas in *pien-wen* the opposite is true. The performative contexts and socio-religious significance of *yüan-ch'i* and closely linked genres are being intensively investigated by Neil Schmid, a Ph.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania, while Daniel Cohen, another graduate student there, is writing a dissertation which will do the same for *chiang-ching-wen*. For a description of *pien-wen* and an assessment of its relationship to other genres of popular literature discovered at Tun-huang, see Hua-wen Pai, "What Is 'Pien-wen' 變文?" trans. and annot. Victor H. Mair, *HJAS* 44.2 (December, 1988), pp. 493-511. For a survey of recent studies on Tun-huang popular literature, see Mair, "Chinese Popular Literature from Tun-huang: The State of the Field (1980-1999)," in Alfredo Cadonna, ed., *Turfan and Tun-huang, the Texts: Encounter of Civilizations on the Silk Route*, Orientalia Venetiana 1 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1992), pp. 171-249.

³⁹ After becoming secularized, the *pien* ("supernatural/spiritual transformation[al manifestation]") of *pien-wen* came to mean "marvelous happening(s)" and then simply "extraordinary event(s)."

⁴⁰ Compare the translations given here with those in Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, p. 75, lines 1613-1630 (scene 1), pp. 76-77, ll. 1671-1688 (scene 2), p. 78, ll. 1723-1746 (scene 3), p. 80, ll. 1790-1807 (scene 4), p. 81, ll. 1841-1856 (scene 5).

³⁷ Translated into English by Mair in *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, pp. 31-84, notes on pp. 174-223. Translated into Japanese by Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高 (with Matsuo Yoshiki 松尾良樹) in Iriya Yoshitaka, Furuta Kazuhiro 古田和弘, and Andō Tomonobu 安藤智生, trans. and eds., *Bukkyō bungaku shū* [Collection of Buddhist Literature] 佛教文學集, Chūgoku koten bungaku taikai [Chinese Classical Literature Series] 中國古典文學大系 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975) 60, pp. 25-53; and by Fukui Fumimasa (Bunga) 福井文雅, Mori Yuria 森山由里亞, and Nikaidō Yoshihiro 二階堂淳弘 in Fukui Fumimasa and Matsuo Yoshiki, trans. and eds., *Daijō butten* [Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts] 大乘佛典, Chūgoku, Nihon hen [China and Japan] 中國・日本篇 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1992) 10, pp. 6-79, notes on pp. 319-71. The Chinese text is in Wang Chung-min 王重民 et al., eds., *Tun-huang pien-wen chi* [Collection of Tun-huang Transformation Texts] 敦煌變文集, 2 vols. (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-shue, 1957) 1, pp. 361-91; Pan Ch'ung-kuei 潘重規, ed., *Tun-huang pien-wen chi hsün-shu* [Newly Edited Collection of Tun-huang Transformation Texts] 敦煌變文集新書, 2 vols. (Taipei: Chung-kuo wen-hua ta-hsüeh Chung-wen yen-chiu-so, 1983-1984) 1, pp. 609-45. An annotated Chinese text is given in Hsiang Ch'u, *Tun-huang pien-wen hsün-chu*, pp. 186-379.

³⁸ Most scholars of Tun-huang popular literature throughout the world still loosely lump many separate popular literary genres discovered at Tun-huang under the broad category of *pien-wen*. Depending on their form, function, and content, I make a sharp distinction among these genres. While *chiang-ching-wen*, *yüan-ch'i*, and similar Tun-huang literary genres are of

assertion that they were intended for reference by the (almost certainly illiterate) transformation performer is fallacious.

The usual explanation for the *raison d'être* of transformation texts is that either they were the scripts (prompt-books) for the performers or the record of their performances. Let us duly consider these assertions. If the only known transformation scroll in existence (P.4524) originally lacked the verses (much less the prose portions) of the narrative where they would have been most easily consulted (viz., on the verso of the scroll itself), it is still less likely that the performer (again, in all likelihood illiterate) would have felt the need or taken the time to refer to the full prosimetric written transformation text during his/her performance. Hence, we may safely reject the old claim (a claim which still has its fervent adherents) that transformation texts were prompt-books or scripts for transformation performers.

It is not so easy to dispose of the equally common assertion that transformation texts were the records of transformation performances. It is both obvious and irrefutable that transformation texts share an intimate affinity with transformation performances: the hallmarks of derivation from or simulation of prosimetric picture recitation are to be found everywhere in them. We must be skeptical, however, when it comes to the claim that a given transformation text was some sort of stenographic transcription of a specific transformation performance. From colophons on the transformation texts themselves and other documentary evidence to be found among the Tun-huang manuscripts, we know that the bulk of the datable extant transformation texts were copied by lay students during the latter part of the T'ang and the Five Dynasties periods, yet transformation performances were already going on by the mid-T'ang or earlier. Therefore, at least the later transformation texts represent the work of aficionado-scribes, not records based on simultaneous transcriptions of performances or records made immediately after original performances. Furthermore, the existence of multiple copies of several of the transformation texts, the nature of the orthographical errors in them, and various notations on the scrolls all verify that the scribes were often copying from each other. In other words, Tun-huang transformation texts by and large belong to a local written tradition that existed apart from and was not directly dependent on specific individual transformation performances. Finally, linguistically transformation texts are written in a semi-vernacular semi-classical style that is actually

more classical than vernacular. A truly verbatim rendering of a translation tale would have contained far more vernacular elements and far fewer classical elements; if not, it could never have been understood by common people who constituted its primary auditors. The vernacular elements of transformation texts, which are so remarkable because they stand in such stark contrast to the basically literary matrix in which they are embedded, I view as vestiges of what surely were thoroughly vernacular performances.

Neither the prompt-book claim nor the record-of-performance assertion is a satisfactory and sufficient explanation for the existence of written transformation texts, since they are not born out by the historical evidence or by the evidence of the texts themselves. We must accept the transformation texts simply for what they are: exemplars of a genre of *written* (one cannot stress "written" too heavily) popular literature that had its roots in an oral-visual performance tradition. As for the oral-visual tradition itself, only P.4524 gets us close to the actual moment of performance. It is supremely ironic that even this *sui generis* illustrated transformation scroll, miraculously preserved among the Tun-huang manuscripts, was retroactively coopted by the strong tradition of writing in China when the verses were added to it. At that moment, its capacity for illuminating the true nature of the folk oral-visual performance tradition of the mid-T'ang period was very nearly destroyed.

ANOTHER GENRE, ANOTHER TRADITION

We have already observed that P.4524 was not the only type of pictorial genre that presented the contest of magical transformations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa. Nor was the transformation text the only literary genre at Tun-huang which related the legend of the building of the Jetavana *vihāra*. P.2344 and P.3784 (contains lines 40-50 of P.2344) are two manuscripts of an unusual work entitled *Ch'i yüan yin-yu chi* 祇園因緣記 [Record of the Origins of the Jetavana Garden] or *Ch'i yüan t'u chi* 祇園圖記 [Record of Scheming for (?) the Jetavana Garden]. This is a very interesting text, but one whose study is fraught with numerous difficulties. First and foremost is the problem of the titles which appear on the manuscript. Both the head title and the end title are written faintly in red ink and can only be deciphered with the aid of infrared photography. Akiyama has read them

as given above.⁴¹ Because of the sinograph *t'u* in the end title, Akiyama assumes that the text was used in connection with the explanation of pictures about the building of the Jetavana *viḥāra*. Yet there is no evidence in the text itself that it has anything to do with pictures. Furthermore, it is possible to interpret *t'u* in the end title as either “scheming” or “measuring.” Indeed, the graph is used within the text itself to mean “planning/aiming for” (*Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, p. 407, line 3) which is precisely what Anāthapindika does to obtain the garden from Prince Jeta. In the *SWF* version of the story (*Taishō Tripitaka* [202] 4.420C.26), *t'u* is used to express the idea of “measuring” the *viḥāra*. Other factors render both of the titles suspicious. Not only are they written in different ink, they are also written in a different, inferior hand. There can be little doubt that they were added to the scroll by someone other than the original scribe after the “Record” was composed and are therefore not to be taken as integral to the text. This suspicion is confirmed by their placement on the scroll and the phrases which accompany them. The head title strays off to the right of the text and is followed by these words: *i-shang huang chih nei* 已上黃紙內 (“the above is within the yellow paper”). While the intent of this phrase is not fully comprehensible, it indicates a sense of detachment from the text itself. Similarly, the end title is squeezed in interlinearly between the last two lines and is preceded by *i-shang* 已上 (“the above [is]”) which makes better sense than the phrase which follows the head title. Nonetheless, it still leaves one with the feeling that the title is somehow detached from the “Record” itself.

Setting aside the highly problematic front and end titles, what is most curious about this “Record” is that it is unmistakably based on scriptural accounts of the legend (see the section on “Sources” above) in which there are only four rounds in the contest of supernatural transformations. As recounted by the “Record,” the order of the scenes in the contest is: 1. tree vs. wind, 2. pond vs. elephant, 3. dragon vs. golden-winged *garuḍa*, 4. resurrected corpse (Skt. *vetāla*, Pali *bhūta-vijjā*) vs. Śāriputra’s spiritual power. Both the order and the content of the four scenes are the same as those in the *Mahā-sammata-sūtra* and the *Mūlasarvastivādinayasāṅghabhedakavastu* accounts of the contest, but the language and the style of this text are rather independent of the canonical sources. Furthermore, certain telling details suggest that the author of this “Record” also must have consulted or

otherwise been influenced by the *SWF* version of the story. For example, the heretics’ dragon is described thus: “some say it had seven heads, some say it had ten,” the latter number being given in the *SWF* and the former number in the *Mahā-sammata-sūtra* and in the *Mūlasarvastivādinayasāṅghabhedakavastu*. P 1524 and the transformation text, in striking contrast, make no mention of the dragon having multiple heads. The general tenor of the “Record” is somewhat pedantic; it is replete with historical notes and scholarly glosses on terms. My impression is that it belonged to a fairly learned monk who used it in his sermons. The fact that it is written in classical prose with only a few vernacular elements also further separates it from the transformation text. Although the “Record” undeniably coexisted with the transformation tale (both in the form of the illustrated scroll and as a written prosimetric text) at Tun-huang, it obviously belongs to an entirely different socioreligious tradition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HISTORY OF CHINESE LITERATURE

Much Chinese folk and popular literature has perished over the centuries due to the virtually complete neglect (and often active repression) of the literati. Largely to the extent that it survived in libraries outside of China and is now being archeologically or otherwise recovered from the deserts surrounding China and at unexpected locations within China have we been able to reconstruct the lineaments of pre-modern folk and popular literature. Since folk and popular culture was the culture of the majority, studying it is *ipso facto* valuable, but learning more about folk and popular culture also helps us to understand better the elite culture of China because the former ceaselessly nourished and enriched the latter, even while the latter attempted to suppress the former.

Chinese and foreign scholars of Chinese literature alike have lamented that China allegedly had no epics. There undoubtedly were epics in China, but as epics the world over were originally transmitted orally by bards (often blind and usually illiterate or preliterate, witness Homer, the prototypical epic bard), they were not likely to be perpetuated by the fiercely textually-minded Chinese literati. In contrast, India was the land of countless epics, the massive *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* being only the two that are best known. P.4524, in this sense, is a collateral offspring of the

⁴¹ Akiyama, *Heian jidai seizokuga*, pp. 434–35.

Indian epic impulse that spread across Asia (in this case along with popular Buddhism), an impulse whose main thrust was effectively repulsed at the cultural borders of China – but not entirely (the *Rāmāyaṇa* did sneak through in a much diluted and much disguised mini-version!).¹²

Chinese elite culture evinced a persistent bias against the spoken word in favor of the written text. In India, just the opposite was true. This repeatedly led to awkward situations where Indian Buddhist masters of various scriptures who came to China would sorely disappoint their hosts because they brought no written texts with them: the lengthy, memorized scriptures existed only in their minds.¹³ In the great gulf that existed between India and China, Central Asia was the transitional ground where what was Indic became Sinitic, where what was oral took on written form. P4524 was created in the multicultural, multiethnic mixing bowl that was Central Asia. To comprehend the significance of this illustrated scroll and its implications for the history of Chinese literature, it is necessary to grasp the reality of its place of production. Central Asia (vaguely referred to as Hsi-yü 西域, “The Western Regions,” by the Chinese) was the arena in which India and China met and mingled. During the early medieval period, this Sino-Indian dialogue was carried out chiefly through the auspices of Buddhism and with the assistance of Tokharians, Sogdians, Khotanese, Tibetans, Uighurs, and other peoples.

P4524 was undoubtedly a scroll designed and created for use during actual performance in Tun-huang, which lay at the eastern edge of Central Asia and at the western extremity of the long Kansu Corridor leading to the central plains of China. It is the sole transformation performance scroll that has survived the ravages of time and man. Consequently, P4524 is precious beyond calculation because, together with comparative material from other Indian-influenced picture storytelling traditions, it gives us a good idea of what this flourishing genre must have been like in actual practice.

Coming from the other direction (viz., from China in the east), we can only dimly perceive the outlines of the oral-visual world of transformation tales as it has been perpetuated in book form. There we find genres such as

p'ing-hua 平話 (“expository / plain tale”) and many other types of illustrated narrative and dramatic texts in which pictures occupy the upper portion of the page (usually approximately one third). Those scenes strung out across the tops of the pages of such Chinese popular literary genres are essentially transformation scrolls unrolled and printed out in woodblock cuts. The scenes are presented one at a time and with the appropriate text written below instead of on the back as with P4524, thus removing the illustrations a step further away from the public world of entertainment where the performer sits or stands before his/her audience and into the room of the private reader who confronts the illustrated text by him/her-self. Despite the changed circumstances, genres such as *p'ing-hua* are a living memory of the importance of the oral-visual tradition that undergirded them. If we want to comprehend *p'ing-hua* and similar genres, we must come to grips with the primacy of the illustrations and the spoken word in their evolutionary background.¹⁴

Students of Chinese folk and popular literature owe a great debt to a few exceptional editors like Feng Meng-lung 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) who published many tales and much lore that would otherwise have been lost forever. This was usually done pseudonymously because it was widely regarded as a disreputable occupation. In one of the stories collected by Feng, entitled “Chang Tao-ling ch'i shih Chao Sheng” [“Chang Tao-ling Seven Times Tests Chao Sheng”] 張道陵七試趙昇,¹⁵ there is an episode which is unmistakably based upon the contest of transformational manifestations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa. Superficially, this is a Taoist story, but none of the Taoist sources for the story include this episode, nor is there any good reason why they should because the episode is quite extraneous to the plot. Where, then, did Feng get it? Because many of the details and sequencing of the episode are far removed from the canonical sources of the legend, including that in the *SWF*, it would seem impossible that Feng lifted the episode from them. There is also a significant distance between Feng's version of the contest and that in the “Transformation Text

¹² Mair, “Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat? The Progress of a Scholarly Debate,” *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology*, Section on Literature (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), pp. 659–752.

¹³ Tanya Storch, “Chinese Buddhist Historiography and Orality,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 37 (March, 1993), 16 pages.

¹⁴ I have already suggested this for medieval Chinese literature; see *Tang Transformation Texts*, p. 102. The work of Barbara Ruch and her colleagues abundantly confirms the vital importance of the visual and oral in medieval Japanese literature. See, for example, Ruch, “Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature,” in John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds., *Japan in the Muromachi Age* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1977), pp. 279–304.

¹⁵ In fasc. 13 of *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo* [Stories from Yesterday and Today] 古今小說, also known as *Yü shih ming yen* [Illustrious Words to Instruct the World] 喻世明言.

on the Subduing of Demons" and, in any event, Feng would not have had direct access to the latter. Rather, what seems to have happened is that the oral-visual tale which began (for the Chinese) in Central Asia kept on evolving after the apparent demise of the T'ang and Five Dynasties periods transformation text and that Feng acquired it at an advanced stage of development. Recognizing it as "a good read," he ingeniously grafted it onto his otherwise wholly Taoist tale.¹⁴

Starting from around the same time when Feng Meng-lung was active, during the late-Ming and continuing into the Ch'ing period, *pao-chüan* 寶卷 ("precious scrolls") flourished in China. They were among the prosimetric progeny of transformation texts. Many of them were illustrated in the manner of the printed *p'ing-hua* described above. Contemporaneous accounts (e.g., in the novel *Chin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅, *Gold Vase Plum*) of *pao-chüan* being delivered orally before small groups of women by nuns are available. Even after the degradations of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and innumerable other official and semi-official indignities, in the mid-eighties, I stumbled upon a living tradition of *pao-chüan* performances that had retreated into the remote foothills of the mountains lining the Kansu Corridor, not far from the birthplace of P.4524. The police would arrest the performers if they ventured into the larger cities and sometimes even searched for them out in the hills.

Historians of Chinese literature are prone to accept, as an article of faith, the priority of the written word over the spoken word. Whenever a tale exists in China in both written and spoken versions, the assumption is almost automatically made that it filtered down from the literate levels of society to the illiterate society. Similarly, historians of Chinese narrative tend to adopt the view that, where there exist both artistic and textual versions of the same narrative, the textual version is prior. Both of these governing assumptions about narrative reflect a literati bias that has existed since at least the Western Han period more than two thousand years ago. Because of the extreme veneration for the sinographs and for texts written in them, there was (and still is) a perennial downplaying of the oral-visual in favor of the written-textual.

¹⁴ For a complete translation of the episode, discussion, and references to previous scholarship, see Mair, "Transformation Performances, *The Heart Sūtra*, and *The Journey to the West*: A Buddhist-Taoist Potpourri Presented to the Hall of Harmonious Wind," in a forthcoming *Festschrift* for Professor Liu Ts'un-yan.

In China, archeologically recovered narrative art is frequently deemed unvalidated until a textual source is discovered to account for it; this is a trap into which art historians themselves are sometimes prey to fall. I would like to turn this unfortunate paradigm on its head and point out that not only does narrative art (like all art) have a language of its own, but as often as not narrative art may provide essential clues to the understanding of otherwise opaque and unsubstantiated narrative texts.

Admittedly, the interplay between the oral-visual and the written is exceedingly complex, and it often happened that after the establishment of written texts of various scriptures they, in turn, influenced future oral-visual accounts. What I wish to emphasize here is that the importance of the oral-visual realm in the initial creation of narratives and scriptures is often entirely overlooked in the all-consuming search for textual sources.

There were many foci of narrative creativity in China, both among the educated elite and the illiterate folk. This study of P.4524 demonstrates the existence and importance of centers of creativity that have often been overlooked and even, in some cases, denounced.

CONCLUSION

The legend of the building of Jetavana *vihāra* (especially the contest of supernatural transformations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa) was much appreciated at all levels of society in the Tun-huang area. It was depicted dozens of times in sketches, in wall-paintings, and on silk hanging-scrolls; it was written about in canonical scripture, in monkish prose accounts, and in prosimetric transformation texts. Of all these forms of the legend that have come down to us over a thousand years, none reveals more about the life and culture of the masses of China during the T'ang and Five Dynasties periods than P.4524.

The verses written on the back of this illustrated scroll, in effect, symbolize an attempt to capture (and hence, in effect, to control) the oral-visual cultural tradition by the realm of writing. (See the last paragraph of the section entitled "Relationship to Transformation Texts" above.) Judging from the historical record, unruly and unpredictable transformation performances eventually died out under aggressive government pressure – but that is only what the historical record tells us. The descendants of transformation tales and scrolls survived underground and continued to

infuse Chinese culture with excitement and imagination. Above ground, they lived on in the guise of *p'ing-hua*, *pao-chüan*, and other types of illustrated popular literature. To be sure, their legacy was maintained in the entire prosimetric tradition of performing arts, from *chu-kung-tiao* 諸宮調 ("medleys") to shadow and puppet plays to fiction and drama.¹⁷ P 1521 is an encapsulization of hard evidence that informs us whence this mighty river of popular literature flowed: from the Indian oral-visual fountainhead of Buddhist narrative, through the polyglottic sands of Central Asia, and into the heartland of the Chinese written world.

APPENDIX ONE: Dating and Chronology

Although P 1521 carries no date, it is possible to determine the rough outlines of the history of the scroll. A brief chronology of a few dates pertinent to P 1521 is as follows:

445

The primarily Indian stories of the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*, including "Sudatta Raises a Monastery," are heard by eight Chinese monks in Khotan and brought back to Liang-chou (in Kansu, the far northwest of China) for translation.

Sixth Century

Around the middle of this century, the contest of transformational manifestations between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa is first depicted on a wall-painting in the Tun-huang area (cave 10 of the Western Caves of the Thousand Buddhas).

Before 718

Creation of the prototype illustrated scroll upon which P 1521 was modelled.

748-49

The "Transformation on the Subduing of Demons" is composed sometime between June 13, 748 and July 23, 749.¹⁸

Late-8th c. to first half of 9th c.

Drawing of P 1293 — fine sketches of figures for incorporation in Tun-huang wall-paintings of the contest between Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa.

¹⁷ Mair, "Contributions."

¹⁸ From internal evidence, we know that the "Transformation [Text] on the Subduing of Demons" was almost certainly originally composed sometime between June 13, 748, and July 23, 749. See Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, pp. 10-11, 33, and *Tang Transformation Texts*, p. 33. Therefore, an illustrated transformation scroll upon which it was based and from which P 1521 was descended must have existed from at least that time, if not before.

After 818

P 1521 painted subsequent to Chang I-ch'ao's retaking of Tun-huang from the Tibetans.

9th-10th c.

Portraits of Central Asian itinerants who may be transformation performers.

Late 9th-10th c.

Copying of the extant manuscripts of the "Transformation [Text] on the Subduing of Demons." Akiyama¹⁹ dates P 1615 to c. 890-c. 900.

970

In the eighth month of this year, Ma Wen-pin writes a letter and a poem expressing his admiration for Buddhist art of the sort depicted on P 1521. Around the same time, he is involved in the upkeep of the cave temples at Tun-huang.

Late-10th to Early-11th c.

Writing of the inverted inscription at the beginning of P 1521; tearing off of the sixth scene; trimming of the top and bottom of the remaining portion of the scroll; addition of the verses on the recto.

1030

Not long after this date, the Tun-huang manuscripts are sealed up in cave 17 of the Grottoes of Unsurpassed Height.

1899-1900

"Taoist" Wang Yüan-lu 王圓箴 (同龢) discovers the Tun-huang manuscripts.

1908

Paul Pelliot takes P 1521 to Paris for preservation.

APPENDIX TWO: Physical Characteristics

P 1521 measures 27.1 cm high by 571.3 cm long (approximately 10 13/16 inches by 16 feet 5 inches). The scroll presently consists of 12 sheets of paper pasted together to form a single strip. There is no correlation between sheets and scenes, inasmuch as the scenes are painted without concern for where the sheets of paper are joined. Frequently a seam is situated in such a way that it passes right through a person's face, but they are so well made as to be barely noticeable. The end of the scroll is torn off in a nearly straight line leaving about four-fifths of the twelfth sheet. Except for crumbling at the top and the bottom, almost the whole of the first sheet (as the scroll is now constituted)

¹⁹ *Heian jidai seizokugō*, p. 431

survives, but there would have been one more sheet at the beginning which showed Śāriputra and his group of Buddhist disciples and protectors. The original first sheet must have been so badly worn over the course of time that eventually it fell off entirely, rendering the scroll useless for performance (this accounts for the possibility of its acquisition by a non-performer later on). Each scene on the scroll takes up an average of a little bit less than two and two-thirds sheets. Therefore, scene six would have required three more sheets for a total of sixteen sheets. Given that the average length of each sheet of the scroll is 18.3 cm, the length of the original, undamaged scroll would have been around 772.8 cm.

The scroll has been trimmed across the entire length of the top and the bottom. This is evident when we examine the paintings, for various objects (e.g., drumstands, platforms, etc.) are abruptly cut off in a manner that is inconsistent with the work of an artist. The purpose of the trimming was undoubtedly to "rejuvenate" the scroll by removing the badly frayed edges, some of which are still present where the wear was particularly deep. Considering that there would have been top and bottom margins to the scroll when it was first painted, we can estimate that approximately one centimeter has been removed from both the top and the bottom, hence the scroll would originally have been closer to 30 cm in height than 27.1 cm in its present condition.

The scroll consists of ordinary beige paper.⁷⁰ The height of the paper is characteristic of the mid-eighth century or earlier, but – as explained in the previous paragraph – it was almost certainly cut to this size from later paper of larger size. Both the calligraphy and the outlines of the paintings were presumably done with a wooden pen.⁷¹ If true, this means that the scroll must have been created during the ninth or tenth century when brushes were not readily available from central China. Soiling is readily noticeable on the back of the beginning of the scroll where the performer and subsequent owners would have touched it most often. Some of the soiling has penetrated through to the front but it is most evident on the back. Foxing is also evident on the back of the first sheet because that is the part that would have received the most exposure to the elements. In general, the scroll is exceptionally well preserved, especially considering the fact that it was used for performance and thus would have received much rough handling. Certainly, enough of the scroll remains for us to gain an excellent idea of the nature of its production and function. As we have seen, even the missing parts at the end and the beginning offer valuable keys to understanding the history of the scroll.

⁷⁰ For a more detailed description of the scroll's paper, ink, colors, and so forth, see *Catalogue des manuscrits de Touen-houang*, Fonds Pelliot Chinois de la Bibliothèque Nationale 5.1–2, (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995), tome 1, pp. 163–164.

⁷¹ Fujieda Akira, personal communications of December 21, 1995, and January 4, 1996.

APPENDIX THREE: Sanskrit Precedents for Chinese Scriptural Translations

It is not too difficult to trace the Sanskrit precedents for the Chinese scriptural translations. For example, the *Jetavanapratigrahāvādāna* in the *Avadānakalpalatā* has Anāthapiṇḍada building a monastery in Jetavana against opposition by heretics. They try to block him, but three miracles occur: 1. they put a pond on the spot where the monastery is to be built, but it is drained by an elephant; 2. their seven-headed serpent is subdued by a *garuḍa*; 3. they evoke a demon but it turns against them. See Leslie Grey, *A Concordance of Buddhist Birth Stories* (Oxford: The Pāli Text Society, 1990), p. 195. Also see Jayanti Chattopadhyay, *Bodhisattva Avadānakalpalatā – A Critical Study* – (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1991), pp. 127–129, where – instead of Raudrākṣa – Śāriputra's chief opponent among the Tīrthikas is called Raktākṣa. For the Sanskrit text of the *Jetavanapratigrahāvādāna*, see P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Avadānakalpalatā of Kṣemendra*, *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts*, 22 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1959), no. 21, pp. 153–158. We are fortunate that portions of the Sanskrit text of the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra* have been preserved among the Gilgit manuscripts. Nearly identical accounts of the building of Jetavana Garden, together with the contest of supernatural powers, are actually presented in two different parts of the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra*, in the *Śāyanāśanavastu* (the fifteenth and sixteenth sections) and in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (the seventeenth section). Raniero Gnoli, ed., *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Śāyanāśanavastu and the Adhikaravastu: Being the 15th and 16th Sections of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, Part 1: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente; Department of Archaeology of Pakistan. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1978), pp. 11–24. Gnoli, Raniero, ed. with the assistance of T. Venkatacharya, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu: Being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, Part 1: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente; Department of Archaeology of Pakistan (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977), pp. 166–178. The contest of supernatural powers is to be found on pp. 21–23 of the former and on pp. 171–177 of the latter. Detailed philological notes on the Gilgit manuscripts for these sections of the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra* are to be found in Klaus Wille, *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung des Vinayavastu der Mūlasarvāstivādin*, *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, Supplementband 30 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990), pp. 115–126. See also Jampa Losang Panglung, *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya Analysiert auf Grund der Tibetischen Übersetzung*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, Monograph Series, 3 (Tokyo: The Reiyukai Library, 1981), pp. 78–79, 90 for synopses and bibliographical information and Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. 55–56 for a close analysis of the Sanskrit terms for "transformation" used in these sections of the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra*.

The dates of the Chinese translations of the three main scriptural accounts of the building of Jetavana *vihāra*, respectively c. 985–994 for the *Mahāsamāla-sūtra*, around 700–711 for the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśāstra*, and 443 for the *Sūtra*

of the *Wise and the Foolish*, are of no help in establishing their sequence in Sanskrit and Prakrit. In fact, the original texts were probably composed in the opposite order of their Chinese translations. The filiation of the three scriptures is, furthermore, extremely complicated. We may not conclude that there exists a straight line of development from any one of these texts to the next. This is certainly the case with the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* which, although based on primarily Prakritic materials gathered in Khotan, was first assembled in its present form by the Chinese translators and compilers. See Mair, "The Linguistic and Textual Antecedents of *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (Hsien-yü ching)," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 38 (April, 1993), 93 pages. An abbreviated version of this paper, under the title "The Khotanese Antecedents of *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (Xianyu jing)" will appear in *Buddhism Across Boundaries: Chinese Buddhism and the Western Regions* (1997?) edited by John McRae and Jan Nattier. See also Mair, "Central Asian Buddhism as a Conduit for the Transmission of Indian Literature to China," paper presented at the XIVes Rencontres de l'École du Louvre: "La Sérinde: terre d'échanges art, religion, commerce du premier au dixième siècle" (February 13-15, 1996), to be published in the conference volume and Sylvain Lévi, "Le sūtra du sage et du fou dans la littérature de l'Asie Centrale," *Journal Asiatique* 207.2 (October-December, 1925), 301-332.

Inverted inscription; located near beginning of scroll (Pelliot 4524), on verso.

Fifth (and longest) section of verses on P 4524 (sixth section missing); located on verso.



Pelli
Touen houan

Illustration located at beginning of P4524 scroll, recto.



Illustration located at end of P4524 scroll, recto.