
Tibetan, Burmese and Chinese Inscriptions from

Bodhgayā in the British Museum

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Abstract

This article is concerned with four inscriptions found at Bodhgayā in the nineteenth century that are documented by records kept in the Department of Asia at the British Museum. Two Tibetan inscriptions, probably dating between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, are of special note because they provide the first archaeological evidence for Tibetans at the site. Chinese and Burmese records of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth century are also noted, that of the Song emperor Renzong (1022–63) being illustrated for the first time.

Given the rarity of stone inscriptions in the Tibetan language – there are only fourteen in the corpus published by Fang Kuei Li and W. South Coblin – any undiscovered or unpublished examples merit careful attention.¹ The inscriptions presented in this article, preserved as facsimiles in the British Museum, are especially noteworthy because they were found at Bodhgayā, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment in eastern India (Figures 1 and 2). The Tibetan records are given a degree of context by Burmese and Chinese records, copies of which are also in the British Museum. These are included here in Annex 1 and 2

Source of the material

Both of the Tibetan inscriptions presented here were found by Alexander Cunningham during his explorations in the nineteenth century. In his book *Mahābodhi*, Cunningham published a number of records in different languages including Burmese and Chinese.² Some of these were illustrated in his plates XXIX and XXX. The number of plates in *Mahābodhi* is 31 in total, but among the Cunningham papers in the British Museum are pages showing that he had planned further illustrations that were not included in the final publication. A mock-up for plate XXXV is of special note because it illustrates not only the long Burmese inscription discussed at length by Cunningham, but a dedicatory inscription

¹Fang Kuei Li and W. South Coblin, *A Study of Old Tibetan Inscriptions*, Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica, Special Publication no. 91 (Taipei, 1987). Re-edited and further examples in Kazushi Iwao, Nathan Hill and Tsuguhito Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Inscriptions* (Tokyo, 2009).

²Alexander Cunningham, *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya* (London, 1892), pp. 67–75.

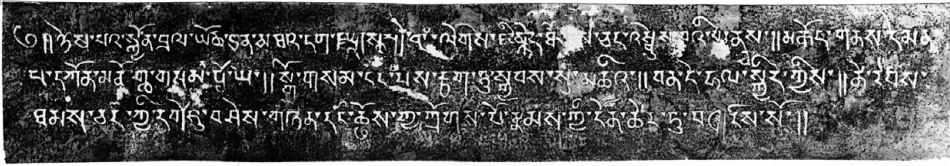


Fig. 1. Tibetan inscription from Bodhgayā. British Museum, Asia, 1897,0528,0.26b.

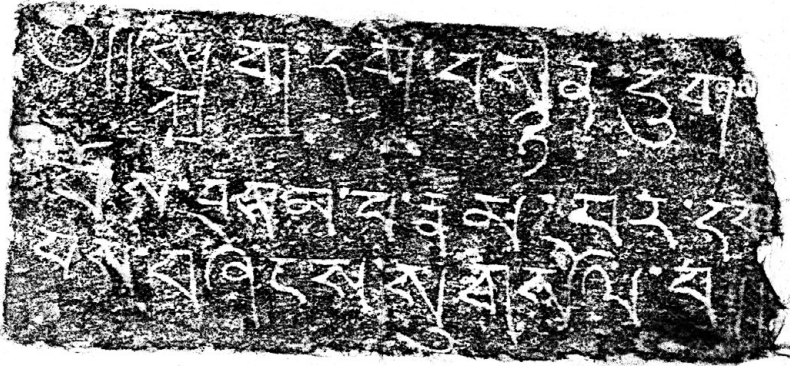


Fig. 2. Tibetan inscription from Bodhgayā. British Museum, Asia, 1897,0528,0.35.

in Tibetan (Figure 3).³ This mock-up shows that the Tibetan inscription was recovered at Bodhgayā, a fact not documented by other sources. Among the Cunningham papers there is also a rubbing of a second Tibetan inscription labelled ‘Maha Bodhi’ in Cunningham’s hand (Figure 2). Neither of these inscriptions was included in Cunningham’s monograph and neither has been noticed or published otherwise.⁴

After Cunningham retired from active service in India, he returned to London in 1885. As early as 1857 he had sold some Indian coins to the Museum, but his first major gift was a collection of antiquities in 1887. This included the small finds from Bodhgayā and other sites in north India.⁵ In 1892 he donated the residue of his archaeological material, while his coin collection came after his death in 1894.⁶ Throughout his time in London, Cunningham was in contact with A. W. Franks, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities at the Museum. Franks often acquired material from Cunningham personally, the most notable case being the Oxus Treasure. This came to Franks in 1887.⁷ Other material acquired personally by Franks included Cunningham’s Indian seals and his notes and photographs of Bodhgayā. The latter included residual material from the production of *Mahābodhi*. Franks also obtained a copy of the finished book in which he wrote his name; this copy is preserved in the library

³The date and reading of the Burmese inscription is taken up below.

⁴Beni Madhab Barua, *Gayā and Buddha-gayā*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1931–34) is innocent of the Tibetan inscriptions.

⁵See Willis, ‘Sculpture from India’, in *A. W. Franks: Nineteenth-century Collecting and the British Museum*, ed. Marjorie Caygill and John Cherry (London, 1997), p. 259. These objects are registered in the series Asia 1887,0717.

⁶The antiquities are registered in the series Asia 1892,1103.

⁷John Curtis, ‘Franks and the Oxus Treasure’, in *A. W. Franks*, pp. 231–246. The letter from Cunningham to Franks (p. 246) is dated 26 June 1887, not 26 January 1897. The letter is with the Cunningham papers in the Department of Asia.

MAHĀ-BODHI.

PLATE XXXV.

1. TIBETAN INSCRIPTION



2. BURMESE INSCRIPTION - MAHANTS RESIDENCE.

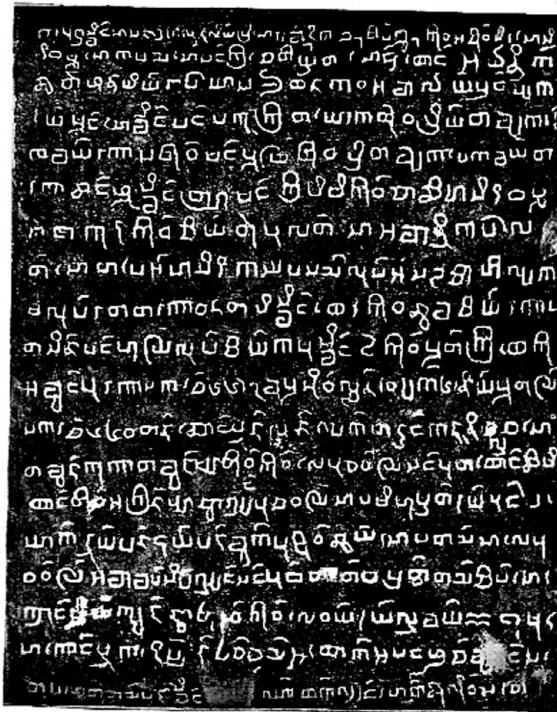


Fig. 3. Mock-up of plate XXXV for A. C. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, not included in the final publication. British Museum, Asia, 1897,0528,0.26a.

of the Department of Asia at the Museum. Exactly when the photographs and notes came to Franks is not recorded, but considering they include mock-ups for some of the plates in the book, we can surmise that it was after the publication of *Mahābodhi* in 1892.

Cunningham's photographs and notes were kept in boxes in the Museum and not closely studied until the second author of this article began to organise and catalogue the departmental archive. While the materials in the archive were once seen as minor supplements to the original antiquities, their importance has grown with time. This is especially true in the case of the Bodhgayā. Already in the nineteenth century the site was drawing the energetic

attention of the Burmese and in recent decades Bodhgayā has emerged as an active religious centre.⁸ The old photographs document many features that have vanished or been much reworked. Among the things that have disappeared, or are anyway not accessible, are the Tibetan inscriptions. The location of the originals is unknown to the present authors.

Significance and context

The significance of the inscriptions discussed in this article lies in the fact that they document the presence of Tibetans at Bodhgayā in the time of the Pāla kings (the dating is taken up below). We know very well from literary sources that Tibetans came to India to visit holy places and to study Buddhism. Marpa the translator (1012–97) is perhaps the most-celebrated case.⁹ Archaeological evidence for these visits is another matter. The inscriptions demonstrate that Tibetans were indeed in India – should we have any doubts in the matter – and that their presence was significant enough to merit permanent additions to the sacred precinct at Bodhgayā. To put the matter another way and in ethno-archaeological terms, those who stay at Bodhgayā for extended periods will be aware that many people visit during the year, that assemblies are organised on festival days and that sumptuous offerings are sometimes arranged for such events (Figure 4). However elaborate these things may be, little or nothing remains after the festivals are over. An apposite Tibetan case in this context is the pilgrimage of Ye shes dbang po who is reported to have come to Bodhgayā in the eighth century. His visit is briefly noted in the eleventh-century version of the *dBa' bzhed* (folio 5v, lines 3–5):¹⁰

De nas sngar ma zhang gyis lha chos bgyid du mi gnang ba'i lung yang bcag nas rgya gar yul du ma hā bo ddhi dang shi na len dra la mchod pa bgyis. Yon phul nas dgun zla 'bring po la char bab. Ma hā bo ddhi byang chub kyi shing la lo 'dab byung.

Then breaking the earlier prescription forbidding the practice of the holy *dharma* made by Ma Zhang, [Ye shes dbang po] performed *pūjā* at Mahābodhi and Śrī Nālandā in the land of India. Having presented donations in the middle of winter, rain fell. On the Bodhi tree at Mahābodhi fresh foliage sprouted.

Worship performed by visitors is therefore one thing, the making of buildings, sculptures and inscriptions yet another. Monumental additions constitute a different register of activity requiring visitors not only to have significant resources but sufficient time and contacts for their monuments to be sanctioned by the authorities and installed on the site.

⁸The Burmese activities in the nineteenth century are noted in Alan Trevithick, “British Archaeologists, Hindu Abbots, and Burmese Buddhists: The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, 1811–1877”, *Modern Asian Studies* 33, 3 (1999), pp. 635–656.

⁹Jacques Bacot, *La vie de Marpa le “Traducteur”, suivie d’un chapitre de l’Avadāna de l’Oiseau Nīlakaṇṭha* (Paris, 1937); Marpa’s biography was written by Gtsang smyon he ru ka (1452–1507) in about 1505 and has appeared in translation as *The Life of Marpa the Translator: Seeing Accomplishes All*, translated from the Tibetan by the Nālandā Translation Committee, under the direction of Chogyam Trungpa (Boulder, 1982, second. ed., Boston, 1995).

¹⁰The text is published in Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed* (Vienna, 2000). The manuscript was reproduced photographically but the Tibetan has neither been transcribed nor the text critically edited. The date of the text and its chronological strata are taken up in M. Willis, “From World Religion to World Dominion: Trading, Translation and Institution-building in Tibet”, in *Trading Religions: Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West*, eds. P. Wick and V. Rabens, Dynamics in the History of Religions (Leiden, 2013), pp. 141–157.

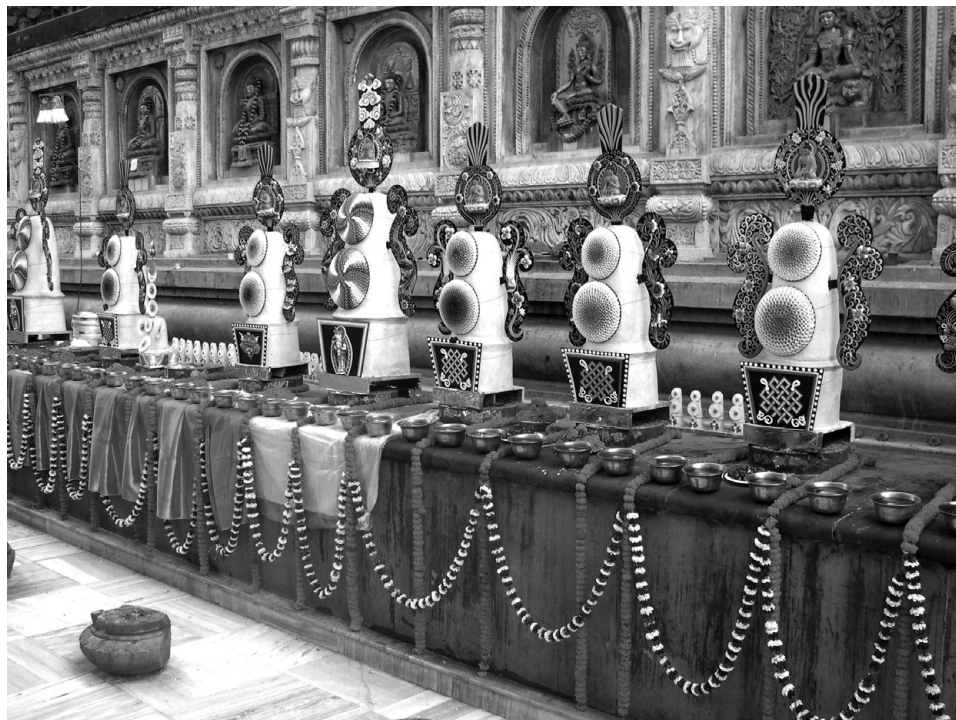


Fig. 4. Tibetan offerings placed on the Jewel Walk at Bodhgayā on the occasion of the festival marking the 2550th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment in 2006.

Our Tibetan records (given here as inscription A and B) mention particular donors but provide no further details. To understand the personal circumstances that surrounded donations to Bodhgayā, we can turn to a Chinese inscription documenting the erection of a shrine to the north of the Bodhi tree. The inscription was reproduced in the 1881 volume of this journal, making re-illustration here unnecessary.¹¹ The date corresponds to 1021 CE and the text opens as follows:¹²

I, monk Yunshu, having come from my far distant fatherland to gaze upon the territory of the Buddha and then, having seen with my eyes the miraculous footprint, was I not to offer respectful homage in glorification of my deity? I therefore collected together what money I could spare and, some thirty paces to the north of the Bodhi tree, I raised a stone to the ten thousand Buddhas.

This inscription was one of three Chinese records found by Cunningham in the Mahābodhi precinct.¹³ They document a group of Chinese monks in India during the second decade

¹¹S. Beal, "Two Chinese-Buddhist Inscriptions Found at Buddha Gayā", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, 4 (1881), pp. 552–572. The text is given in Chinese with an abstract of the contents, pp. 554–556.

¹²Borrowing from the translation of Giles given in Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 69.

¹³Cunningham's account of these records is muddled: he reports two of the Chinese records as being found *in situ* to the south-east of the temple and the third on a cenotaph of a Mahant: These "must have been close to the others" (*Mahābodhi*, p. 68). But the text of the inscription tells us that it was placed 30 paces north of the Bodhi

of the eleventh century, that is, during the reign of the Indian king Mahīpāla (c. 995–1043). Slightly later in Mahīpāla's reign is a Chinese inscription of 1033 recording the construction of a shrine by another monk at the request of the Song emperor Renzong (1022–63). This inscription, not illustrated hitherto, is shown here in figure 5.¹⁴ Of immediate interest for the present study in this record is the fact that this documents the building of a shrine by a monk named Huaiwen “beside the *bodhimaṇḍa*, the diamond throne”. So although the tablet was found by Cunningham in the walls of the Mahant's residence (some distance to the east of the temple), it was certainly set up in the Mahābodhi precinct like the other Chinese records. Also found in the Mahant's residence is the most important inscription of the period, illustrated here in the lower part of Figure 3. This tells of a series of restoration campaigns by the Burmese at Bodhgayā culminating in a mission that completed repairs to the Mahābodhi in 1298.¹⁵ It seems likely that this work left the temple largely as it appears in early photographs, i.e. before the wholesale restoration by the British. A second and much shorter Burmese inscription on a copper-gilt umbrella was excavated to the west of the temple. It is dated 1293–94.¹⁶

These inscriptions are important because they show that additions to Bodhgayā by foreign visitors were located close to the Mahābodhi temple and that they involved, in the Burmese case, work on the building itself. So although the find-spot of the Tibetan inscriptions is not recorded, it seems very likely that they were originally set up near to the Bodhi tree. As far as the date is concerned, the Tibetan epigraphs furnish no direct evidence. The monk named in Inscription A is not known from any other source. Inscription B mentions a group of lay-followers but does not give any names. This absence of data makes dating difficult, the problem being exacerbated by the fact that the records, especially Inscription A, appear to have been engraved in India by people who did not know Tibetan. This makes palaeographic comparisons basically meaningless. Nevertheless, the overall history of Bodhgayā in medieval times suggests the inscriptions probably pre-date the decline of Buddhism that coincided rise of the Tughluq dynasty in the fourteenth century.¹⁷ An early date in the Tibetan dynastic period, that is, in the eighth or ninth century, is ruled out by the absence of old letter forms such as reversed vowels and the use of the *visarga* as a punctuation mark.¹⁸ Of course these features appear frequently in later times, but the complete absence of reversed vowels tends to give the inscriptions a later appearance. Moreover, Inscription A is metrical, suggesting a post-dynastic chronological horizon. So the inscriptions probably date after the decline of the Tibetan empire in the mid-ninth century but before the rise of the Tughluqs in the fourteenth century. In this period of four hundred and fifty years, the most likely time is the eleventh to thirteenth century. As just noted, Burmese and Chinese pilgrims made

tree, not to the south-east. Moreover in his text the references to the illustrations are confused. Part of the problem may have arisen from the reduction in the planned number of plates as the book went to press.

¹⁴The translation is given in Annex 1.

¹⁵The text and translation are given in Annex 2.

¹⁶Luce, “Sources”, p. 39.

¹⁷Hartmut Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India* (Leiden, 2002), p. 150, places the destruction of Nālandā between 1197 and 1206.

¹⁸Sam van Schaik, “A New Look at the Tibetan Invention of Writing”, in *Old Tibetan Documents Monograph Series*, vol. 3, eds. Yoshiro Imaeda, Matthew Kapstein and Tsuguhito Takeuchi (Tokyo, 2011), pp. 45–96.

important donations at this time, some at the behest of foreign potentates. This period was also a time when Buddhist missions travelled from Tibet to India.

Inscription A

This inscription is written in three lines (Figure 1). It is registered in the British Museum under the number 1897,0528,0.26b. The context of the record is not given by Cunningham but it seems likely from the layout that it was incised on the pedestal of an image. This, in addition to the site itself, explains why the Buddha is understood but not named directly in the text. The script looks unusual, indeed just what we might expect of a Tibetan record made in India by somebody with no knowledge of Tibetan. In addition to a number of letters with aberrant shapes, there are superfluous letters and vowel marks. The palaeography is therefore difficult to judge chronologically, but for the reasons noted above it can be placed between the mid-ninth and early fourteenth century. If nothing else, this inscription shows the difficulties a Tibetan could expect from a medieval engraver in India. A contrast can be drawn with the Chinese record illustrated here in Figure 5. While the Tibetan inscription seems to have been composed and prepared on the spot at Bodhgayā, the Chinese record looks as if it was carefully copied from a scroll carried from China expressly for the purpose. And we know from examples in China proper that monks themselves cut inscriptions of Buddhist texts.

The monk's name in the Tibetan inscription is *hal pa skyid pa*. This is a peculiar name and while a satirical title is not impossible, it is more likely that *hal* is an abbreviation for *ha la ha la*, an esoteric name for Mañjuśrī or Mañjughoṣa (Tib. 'jam dpal, 'jam dbyangs).¹⁹ The name might be rendered in Sanskrit as Guhyamañjughoṣakṣema. The names of some Tibetans who travelled to India are known, for example Chag dgra bcom (1153–1216) and Chos rje dpal (1197–1263/4). Both visited Bodhgayā and details of their experiences at the Mahābodhi are recorded in the *Blue Annals* and the *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*.²⁰ For the moment, however, Ban de hal pa skyid pa, under that name or assorted synonyms, has eluded identification. The text is metrical, with nine syllables in each line.

Annotated Text

|| nyes pa'[i*] skyon bral yon tan²¹ mtha' dag rdzgas²² ||
 [d*]ge²³ legs ji snyed tho(m)s²⁴ cad 'sbues²⁵ ba'i gnas ||
 mchod gnas dam²⁶ pa dkon mchogch²⁷ gs[u*]m²⁸ po²⁹ ya³⁰ ||

¹⁹Sarat Chandra Das, *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (Calcutta, 1902, reprint. ed. 1998), s.v.

²⁰*Biography of Dharmasvāmin (Chag lo tsa-ba Cho-rje-dpal), A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*, trans. George Roerich with introduction by A. S. Altekar (Patna, 1959). The *Blue Annals* have been searched using a digital copy circulated by Dan Martin.

²¹The *ta* has a strange shape but what is being attempted is shown by *tu* at the end of line 3.

²²Read: *rdzogs*. The vowel sign *o* is missing and one of the letters is written sideways.

²³The letter *ga* is poorly shaped and the *anusvāra* above is superfluous.

²⁴Read: *thams cad*.

²⁵Read: *'byung* or more probably *bsdus*. The idea is that the sculpture embodies the qualities.

²⁶The letter *na* added at the end of the line is superfluous. Could it be understood as a correction of the badly written *na* in the word *yon*? The apparent vowel *e* above is probably just a scar on the stone.

²⁷The *ch* below is superfluous.

²⁸The *anusvāra* above that is superfluous.

²⁹The *pa* is shaped in the Indian fashion and the loop below like the vowel *u* is superfluous.

³⁰For *ya* read *la*.

sgo gs[u*]m dang pas³¹ rtag tu skyabs su mchi' ||
 bande hal ba³² skyid gyis || tshe rabs³³ thams³⁴ cad³⁵ kyi dge'u bshes gnyen³⁶ dang³⁷ chous³⁸ kyi
 grogs po rnnams kyi don ched tu bzhengs so ||

Corrected Text

|| nyes pa'i skyon bral yon tan mtha' dag rdzogs ||
 dge legs ji snyed thams cad bsdu ba'i gnas ||
 mchod gnas dam pa dkon mchog gsum po la ||
 sgo gsum dang bas rtag du skyabs su mchi'o ||
 bande hal pa skyid gyis || tshe rabs thams cad kyi dge ba'i bshes gnyen dang chos lugs kyi grogs
 po rnams kyi don ched tu bzhengs so ||

Translation

I shall always go for refuge with utmost devotion through the three avenues [of body, speech and mind] to the three jewels [namely the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha], objects of worship because he [the Buddha] is the perfected embodiment of all virtue and the source of all possible goodness free from the faults [of desire, anger and ignorance].

It was commissioned by the monk Guhyamañjughoṣakṣema. Erected for the sake of the welfare of my teachers and *dharma*-friends in all my past lives.

Inscription B

This inscription is written in three lines (Figure 2). It is registered in the British Museum under the number 1897,0528,0.35. The context of the inscription is not recorded, but the wording “it was commissioned” (*bzhengs su gsol ba*) is often encountered in dedications. The shape and size suggest the inscription was put on a paving stone like a number of medieval votive inscriptions, some of them still in the floor of the Mahābodhi temple. The purpose of the inscription is to record a dedication by six lay followers (*upāsaka*): *dge bsnyen drug pas*. This shows that a group of six people came from Tibet and made this as a collective offering. They are qualified by the word *skrag*. Judging from practices that are still current among Tibetans, this refers to a constellation and indicates that the six individuals undertook a pilgrimage to Bodhgayā to redress the influence of an inauspicious period in their lives.

Text

|| skrag dge bsnyen dug³⁹ bos⁴⁰ bsam pa rnam par dag bas⁴¹ bzhengs su gsol ba ||

³¹Read: *bas*; the *anusvāra* above at the beginning is superfluous.

³²The *ba* is added above the line; for it read *pa*.

³³The marks above the letters may be simply scars on the stone.

³⁴The *anusvāra* above is superfluous.

³⁵There is a mark above, perhaps reflecting the pronunciation which, in modern Tibetan at least, is *ced*.

³⁶Read: *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*. The vowel on the last word is faintly visible.

³⁷The vowel above is superfluous.

³⁸Abbreviation for *chos lugs*.

³⁹Read: *drug*. The word *skrag* should read *skag*, so the ‘r’ appears to have migrated away from *dug* by mistake.

⁴⁰Read: *pos*.

⁴¹Read: *pas*.

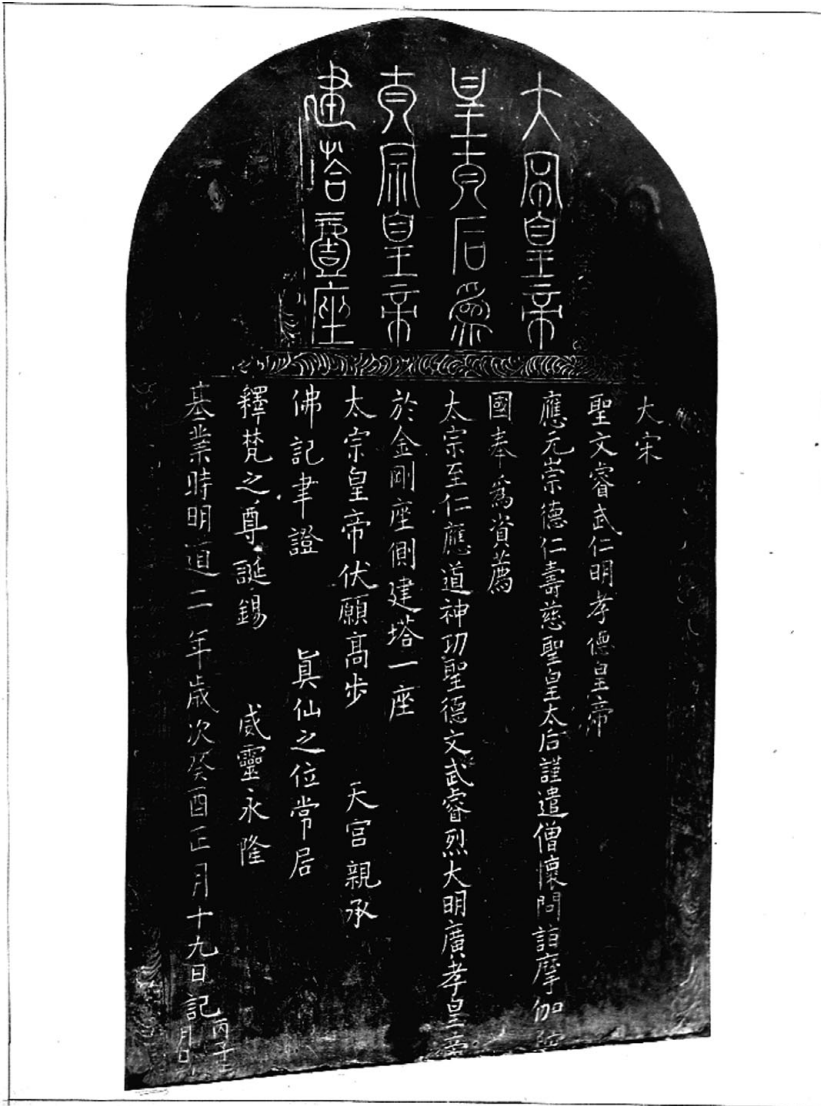


Fig. 5. Chinese inscription of the Song emperor Renzong from Bodhgayā. British Museum, Asia 1897.0528.0.30

Translation

This was commissioned with pure intent by the six lay followers [under the influence of the constellation] *skrag*.

Annex 1: Chinese inscription of the Song emperor Renzong (1022–63) from Bodhgayā.

The translated text of this record, illustrated here in Figure 5, was published by Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 72–73. Although an imperial Chinese record, it does not seem to have drawn

attention subsequently.⁴² The translation below is that of H. A. Giles given by Cunningham, slightly modernised. As pointed out by Giles in his commentary, the term Taizong belongs to the titles bestowed on emperors after their decease and so provides no evidence about the identity of the ruler. Near the end of the record, however, a date in the second year of *mingdao* is given, a phrase used by the fourth Song emperor to designate his reign after 1032. The designation remained in use for two years only, just long enough to be used in the current record which should therefore belong to 1033.

Translation

This shrine was erected by the emperor and empress of the great Song dynasty in memory of his imperial majesty Taizong.

By command of his imperial majesty, our divinely enlightened, most glorious, most virtuous, most filial, sovereign of this the great Song dynasty, and of her imperial majesty, our most gracious, more virtuous and most compassionate empress, I the Buddhist priest Huaiwen, have been humbly commissioned to proceed to the country of Magadha and to erect, on behalf of his departed imperial majesty Taizong, the humane, the orthodox, the deserving, the divinely virtuous, the wise, the supremely filial, a shrine beside the diamond throne. For his imperial majesty, Taizong, was humbly desirous of passing aloft to *devaloka*, the mansions of the blest, there to receive the word of the Buddha himself, to witness the ranks of the immortal saints, and be enrolled forever among the ranks of the faithful, hoping thus to secure the house of Song divine protection through all generations. Recorded this 19th day of the 1st moon of the 2nd year of *mingdao*.

Annex 2: Burmese inscription from Bodhgayā dated 1295 and 1298.

This record was published by Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 76–77 with the dates corrected in J. F. Fleet, “The Dates in the Burmese Inscription at Bodh-Gaya”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1913), pp. 378–384 (I am grateful to T. Phelps for bringing this article to my attention). As Fleet notes, the Burmese inscription records repairs to the Mahābodhi begun in Sakarāj year 657 on Pyatho waxing 10 (= 16 December 1295) and completed in Sakarāj year 660 on Tazaungmon waxing 8 (= 13 October 1298). A corrected reading and translation are given in G. H. Luce, “Sources of Early Burma History”, in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D. G. E. Hall*, eds. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (London, 1976), p. 41. In view of the relative rarity of this publication, and the frequent reference made to sources that Luce shows to be incorrect, it seemed worthwhile to reproduce the text and translation here.

Text

- 1) || || purhā skhiñ sāsanā 218 lwan liy pri so akhā nhuik | caṃputip klwan kuiw acuiw (mi) ra so si-
- 2) ridhammasoka mañ so mañkri ceti yhat soñ 4 thoñ a(thai) nhuik

⁴²R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization* (Stanford, 1972), p. 58, seems to provide an incorrect reference to this record when he refers to the Chinese mission of the seventh century “commemorated by inscriptions at Rājagṛha and Bodhgayā”.

- 3) chwa[m] tau phun (ph)iy rā pāyā[sa]i than kuw akhā liy mlañ pyak
- 4) ruy [p]lañ so skhiñ pañsakū krī ta yok thuiw priy ta khyak pya-
- 5) k khay rakā satuiw mañ plu e| thuiw pri ta khyak pyak khay tuṃ
- 6) rakā chañ phlu skhiñ tryā mañ kri mimi kuiwcā chirya siri dhamma-
- 7) rājākuru kuiw ciy t[au]mu lat so akhā nhuik pā la-
- 8) t so tape' sā siri kassapa sañ lu[p] aṃ [sa] uccā hi lyak
- 9) ma lup ra tat rakā wanawāsi skhiñ thera kuiw chwaṃ khaim ciy rakā pu-
- 10) tasin mañ hu e| lup ciy kamu skhiñ nai kuiw mlat krī the kuiw
- 11) akhwañ mū rakā sakarac 65[7] khu plasuiw 1 = chan 10 ryak 6 niy plu tu[m]e|
- 12) sakarac [6]60 tanchonmhun 1 = chan 8 ryak tanhañkanū ni [lha]ce so
- 13) taṃkhwan kukā taṃkhwan myā tuiw kuiw le pucaw e| sañput th[o]ñ chi mi
- 14) th[o]ñ tuiw akrin myā cwā lhya[ñ] pucaw e| sā sami hu mhat ruy suñai 2
- 15) yok rhuy pan ñuy pan khwak pu[ch]uiw chway so patañsā le pu-
- 16) caw e| akhā khapsim lhyañ sañpu[t] wat [m]a prat tañ cim so
- 17) kroñ mliy kywan nwā tuiw kuiw le way ruy lhu khay inā[m]u
- 18) so koñ mhu kā nippan paccañ athok apaṃ phlac khyāñ sa-
- 19) te || myattañ purhā skh(i)ñ . . . lakthak ihyañ rahantā chu luiw sate

Translation

After 218 [years] of the Lord Buddha's dispensation had elapsed, on amongst the 84,000 *ceṭī* of the king called Siri Dhammasoka, ruler of the Island of Camputip [Jambudvīpa] – the one site of the giving of alms of milk-rice (*pāyāsa*) fell into ruin through age and stress of time. It was repaired by a senior *pañsaku* monk [i.e. wearing rags from the dust heap, *pāṃśukūla*]. Thereafter, when it had once more fallen into ruin, the king of the law [*tryā manikri* = *dharmarāja*], Chañ-phlu-skhiñ [lord of the white elephant] sent, by his proxy, his teacher [*chirya* = *ācārya*] Siri Dhammarājākuru, who took with him his pupil (*tape' sā*) Siri Kassapa. With the funds they had for doing the work, they were unable to do it. So on the occasion of the giving alms-food to the lord Thera Vanavāsi, Putasin Mañ [i.e. Prince Buddhasena] granted permission to the junior monk [i.e. Kassapa] and the venerable Thera [i.e. Dhammarājākuru] [declaring]: “Do whatever is needed” [*lup ciy kamu*]. On Friday the 10th waxing of the month of Pyatho in the year 657 s. [Friday, 16 December 1295] they resumed the work. When the dedication was made on Sunday, the 8th waxing of the month of Tzaungmon on the year 660s [Sunday, 12 October 1298], there was offering of many flags and flag-streamers, many offerings, time after time, of rice-alms by the thousand, oil lamps by the thousand; also to children styled as ‘son’ and ‘daughter’; the offering also of a patañsā [i.e. *kalpavṛkṣa*] hung with gold and silver flowers, with cups and garments. In order that rice-alms may be offered without a break forever and ever, land, slaves and cattle were also bought and dedicated. As for this good deed done by me, I want it to be a means and support for the attainment of Nirvāṇa. At the time when Myattañ [Maitreya] [comes] as the Lord Buddha, I pray for the boon of sainthood. Mwillis@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.

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