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The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*: An Introduction and Translation

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Abstract

This article introduces and translates the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (*Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經), a text likely composed in sixth-century China that claims to represent the words of the Buddha. The article traces the treatment of this text in Chinese catalogues, and analyzes its themes with regard to other works composed roughly contemporaneously. Particular attention is paid to notions of the "Evil Age of the Five Pollutions" (*wuzhuo eshi* 五濁惡世), "venomous arts" (*gu dao* 蠱道), "six spirits" (*liu shen* 六神), and to a reference to copying the text on "fine paper" (*hao zhi* 好紙). It shows how Chinese authors drew on indigenous techniques, cosmologies, practices, and materials to respond to threats said to face those living in an age after the Buddha's passing. The annotated translation is based on a manuscript from Nanatsu-dera, but it refers to the Dunhuang and *Fangshan shi jing* editions as well.

Keywords:

Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life, Chinese indigenous sūtras, Chinese Buddhist eschatology, Dunhuang manuscripts, Nanatsu-dera manuscripts

《救護身命經》之介紹與英譯

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摘要

本文介紹並英譯《救護身命經》，此經可能是成立於第六世紀的中國，宣稱描述佛陀的言說。本文探討此經在中國歷代經錄中的記錄，並藉由其他大約同時代成立的經典來分析此經的宗旨。特別討論所說的「五濁惡世」、「蠱道」與「六神」的概念，以及所提到要用「好紙」來抄經一事。此經顯示中國的作家如何利用當時本地已有的方法、宇宙觀、修行論與物資，來回應生活在佛滅後所會遭遇到的威脅。本文含註解的譯文是以日本七寺的寫本為底本，並參照敦煌與《房山石經》的寫本。

關鍵詞：

《救護身命經》、中國本土經典、中國佛教末世論、敦煌寫本、七寺寫本

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (*Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經) opens with an image that would have been familiar to most Buddhists in medieval China: “At one time, the Buddha was amidst the twin *śāla* trees.”¹ This establishes the setting as a nirvāṇa scene; indeed, the sūtra claims to contain teachings delivered by the Buddha shortly before his passing. The doctrines that follow, however, do not correspond to the famous philosophical concepts described in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. There is no mention of Buddha-nature, an eternal Buddha, or *icchantika*. Instead, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* outlines simple ritual techniques that promise protection to the pious from demonic and thaumaturgic attacks, which the Buddha predicts will plague humanity after his death.

Rather than accurately recording the final words of the Buddha—a feat that no text can truly claim—the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, a short work of one scroll in around five sheets of paper, preserves the words of a Chinese author: it was likely composed in China in either the late Six Dynasties period (220-589) or the very early Sui period (581-618).² The first mention of this text appears in the 594 CE *Catalogue of Scriptures* (*Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄), which establishes the *terminus ad quem* for composition. After its composition, the text circulated widely in China, Korea, and Japan and is preserved in manuscripts and print editions from each of these countries.³

¹ Nanatsu-dera, line 1; T 2865, 85: 1325a8. My translations are based on the Nanatsu-dera manuscript, but I have provided references to the Taishō edition, which is based on P 2340, for the roughly equivalent passages. The manuscripts are generally in agreement; I have noted relevant departures in my full translation of the text below. The full title of the text in manuscripts is the *Scripture Preached by the Buddha on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* (*Fo shuo jiuhu shenming jing* 佛說救護身命經), but I will use the abbreviated title that the text is commonly referred to in other sources throughout this essay.

² For more on the dating, see Masuo (1996, esp. 819-22), who compares it to several other Six Dynasties and Sui texts with similar themes. I will present additional evidence for dating the text to the Six Dynasties period below.

³ In Japan, the text commanded significant attention from the court. It entered the early Nara canons, and, on one occasion, was transcribed in one hundred copies at the request of Queen Consort Kōmyō, likely on behalf of her daughter. For this, see Lowe (2012, 282-349). For more on the various editions and the text’s reception in Korea and Japan, see Masuo (1996, 822-40). Masuo’s article is the best overview to date; he looks at the appearance of the text in catalogues, briefly points out some similarities with other indigenous sūtras, and assesses its popularity in Korea and Japan. However, Masuo’s discussion of Shōsōin

As Michel Strickmann and others have argued, indigenous sūtras are crucial to understanding Chinese Buddhism because “they have the most to tell us about what was centrally important to Chinese Buddhists...they represent the direct expression, in prose and verse, of Chinese hopes and fears, reflections on life and death, and wish-fulfillment through ritual” (Strickmann 2002, 59). The primary goal of this article is modest: I hope to introduce this indigenous text, which has received little attention in any language, to a larger audience through a translation. But I will also highlight the ways the sūtra responded to challenges facing Buddhists in a world without a Buddha, a situation Chinese practitioners found themselves in from their earliest encounters with the religion. Although the gradual disappearance of the dharma—a development that was expected to characterize the post-Buddha age—was generally understood to be one of the gravest threats facing the Buddhist community, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* focuses on more immediate concerns such as shortened lifespans resulting from the malefic attacks that were also thought to define this benighted era. The text, therefore, reveals a Chinese Buddhist response to eschatological narratives.

The ways in which these dark days after the death of the Buddha were imagined, and the tools that the authors advocated in response to these times, consciously or unconsciously drew on resources originating in China. For example, Chinese authors conceived of this period of decline as filled with sorcerers practicing an originally Sinitic form of spellcraft known as the venomous arts. And they proposed responses based on practices that originated in China, such as the recitation of names of gods with likely Daoist origins and the copying of sūtras on fine paper—a product unknown in India at this time—as appropriate means of protection from malefic attacks. A study of this sūtra, and what James Benn (1998, 297-298) has called the “apocryphal practices” that emerged in dialogue with it, highlight the ways Chinese Buddhists developed indigenous responses to local threats said to characterize a world without a Buddha.

documents regarding the sūtra’s reception in Japan should be referred to with caution, and readers are encouraged to consult my discussion cited above.

The Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life in Chinese Catalogues⁴

Chinese catalogues show that bibliographers regarded the origins of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* with suspicion, but they did not reject it outright, a position that may have allowed it to circulate widely. The earliest reference to this text appears in Fajing's 法經 (n.d.) *Catalogue of Scriptures*, where it is classified as dubious (*yihuo* 疑惑):

With regard to the above twenty-nine scriptures, in many cases, the colophons to the titles [giving the translator's name, etc.] are uneven and the various catalogues confused. The style and doctrine [of these texts] are also mixed up. [Their status] as genuine or spurious is still undetermined. The matter shall be further examined. For now, they have been appended to the catalogue of doubtful [scriptures].⁵

In short, Fajing treats the text with suspicion, but admits his findings are inconclusive. Later bibliographers, however, would assert that the scripture was in fact authentic. Fei Changfang 費長房 (n.d.), in the *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations* (Ch. *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀) from 597, credits the translation of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* to the fourth-century Central Asian monk known in Chinese as Zhu Tanwulan 竺曇無蘭.⁶ There is reason to be skeptical of this claim: it is well known that Fei Changfang made numerous questionable attributions as a means to respond to suspicions over the authenticity of the Buddhist canon as a whole (Tokuno 1990, 46-7).⁷ Regardless, the attribution to Zhu Tanwulan influenced several later catalogues, which all accepted his claim. These include the *Notes on the Illustrations to the Translations of Scriptures Past*

⁴ I have focused on the most relevant data from catalogues; for a more exhaustive analysis, see Masuo (1996, 816-18) and Suwa (1996, 530-34).

⁵ T 2146, 55: 138b9-10. My translation has benefited from consulting Kyoko Tokuno's work on part of this passage. See Tokuno (1990, 41). For convenience in cross-referencing, I have chosen to also follow Tokuno's translations of the titles of various catalogues discussed below.

⁶ T 2034, 49: 70a3-b19. I have kept Zhu Tanwulan's name in Chinese, because the Sanskrit version of his name is uncertain and contested. Sanskrit candidates include Dharmarājan, Dharmarakṣa, and Dharmaratna. For an overview, see Van Put (2008).

⁷ For more on Fei Changfang and his larger project and historical context, see Storch (1995).

and Present (Ch. *Gujin yijing tuji* 古今譯經圖記, 645), *The Great Tang Record of Buddhist Scriptures* (*Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄, 664), and the *Catalogue of Scriptures, Authorized by the Great Zhou* (*Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定衆經目錄, 695).⁸

But the most authoritative catalogue to be produced in medieval China, Zhisheng's 智昇 730 CE *Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings, Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄; hereafter *Kaiyuan Catalogue*), reintroduced skepticism over the origins of the text. For one, Zhisheng problematized the biography of Zhu Tanwulan and noted that many of the texts translated by him are questionable.⁹ And perhaps even more importantly, the *Kaiyuan Catalogue* placed the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* in a section entitled "Record of Dubious [Texts] to be Further Scrutinized" [Ch. *Yihuo zaixiang lu* 疑惑再詳錄]. Zhisheng advocated caution regarding these texts, suggesting that if their authenticity cannot be determined, there was no choice but to allow learned ones in later generations to decide.¹⁰ Although he was willing to admit that future scholars may determine the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* to be authentic, he was not convinced enough to include it within his list of canonical works. He was explicit about this, as the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* appears in a list of titles to be excluded from entering the canon (Ch. *bu ru zang* 不入藏). In theory, this banishment from the official canon should have functioned as a virtual death sentence for the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. In practice, however, we know that it continued to circulate in China and Japan for the next several centuries and in Korea through the early modern period. The authors' abilities to create a text that at least appeared Indic enough to receive some monks' and patrons' sanction as authentic, surely contributed to its circulation despite its position in the *Kaiyuan Catalogue*. Effectively writing an indigenous scripture required negotiating tensions: one needed to respond to particular Chinese concerns and avoid accusations of forgery. To fail to speak to a Chinese audience could cause the text to be ignored. But to make the intended audience and origins too obvious could raise eyebrows. The fact that the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is preserved today in numerous manuscript editions throughout East Asia suggests that it

⁸ See *Gujin yijing tuji*, T 2151, 55: 356b9; *Da Tang neidian lu*, T 2149, 55: 245c12; *Da Zhou Kanding zhongjing mulu*, T 2153, 55: 411c11.

⁹ T 2154, 55: 504b4-9.

¹⁰ T 2154, 55: 671b28-c11; for an analysis, see Tokuno (1990, 54).

succeeding in part by at once providing answers to local problems while at the same time appearing authentic, at least to some.

Combatting Demons and Sorcerers and Extending Lifespans in an Evil Age

As a text depicting the scene of the deathbed of the Buddha, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* calls attention to a problem faced by all Chinese Buddhists: how to respond to the challenges of a post-Buddha world. As is well known, traditional Buddhist cosmology predicts a gradual decline of the dharma after the passing of the Buddha.¹¹ Beyond the loss of Buddhist teachings, those living in a time of decline struggled with even more immediate crises: numerous texts point out that lifespans would shorten and demonic marauders would run rampant in the evil age to follow the Buddha's passing. In the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, the Buddha makes a point to remind his audience of these threats; he dramatically sits up on his deathbed (presumably he had previously been lying on his side as traditionally depicted in artistic representations) and warns his followers about an apocalyptic future, while also encouraging propagation of the scripture as a prophylactic:

I am about to enter *parinirvāṇa*. After I pass away, with regard to all sentient beings in the Evil Age of the Five Pollutions [*wuzhuo eshi* 五濁惡世], if there are evil devils and myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts that rob people of their vitality, seek to shorten their lives, or violently come to kill them, Ānanda, you must wholeheartedly propagate this scripture and make the sentient beings in this evil age be without illness, suffering, and untimely death and make the myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts all completely disappear.¹²

Here, the Buddha equates the era after his passing with the "Evil Age of the Five Pollutions" and promotes the sūtra as a way to counteract the sufferings associated with this inauspicious period. Canonical texts define the five pollutions of the age as (1) lifespan (Skt. *āyus-kaṣāya*; Ch. *ming zhuo* 命濁), (2) sentient beings (Skt. *sattva-kaṣāya*; Ch. *zhongsheng zhuo* 衆生濁), (3) afflictions (Skt. *kleśa-kaṣāya*; Ch. *fannaο zhuo* 煩惱濁 or *huo zhuo* 惑濁),

¹¹ The best study on Buddhist notions of decline remains Nattier (1991). Also see Hubbard (2001, 33-94) for more on the way these teachings were used in China.

¹² Nanatsu-dera, lines 3-8; T 2865, 85: 1325a10-15.

(4) views (Skt. *dr̥ṣṭi-kaṣāya*; Ch. *jian zhuo* 見濁), and (5) eon (Skt. *kalpa-kaṣāya*; Ch. *jie zhuo* 劫濁). The pollution of lifespan refers to diminishing longevity. That of sentient beings is characterized by feeble minds and bodies, as well as not being cognizant of one's parents and neglecting Buddhist practice. The pollution of afflictions is marked by immoral propensities. The pollution of views denotes deluded ideas. That of the eon is an age marked by warfare, disaster, and epidemics.¹³ These five pollutions were said to appear when eons or *kalpas* are in decline.¹⁴

Although many Indic texts assert that the Evil Age of the Five Pollutions is the time when Śākyamuni and other buddhas are born, in East Asia it became fairly common to claim that the present era, which was decidedly absent of a Buddha, was stained with these five contaminants. For example, as David Chappell has pointed out, Tanluan 曇鸞 (476-542?) defined the period of the five contaminants as one without a Buddha and cautioned that it is difficult to practice at these times.¹⁵ Others such as Jizang 吉藏 (549-623) and Daochuo 道綽 (562-645) made similar claims.¹⁶ Catalogues show that entire (no longer extant) works were composed in China about the Evil Age of the Five Pollutions, a fact that suggests this idea occupied a key place in Chinese eschatology.¹⁷ Since the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is delivered as a sermon on the Buddha's deathbed, it clearly places the Evil Age of the Five Pollutions in line with these Chinese ideas that understood the era as referring to the present one.

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, along with a number of other texts composed in China, highlights the threat of attacks by

¹³ This is one of the more common lists that appear in texts such as the *Abhidharma kośa*. I have referred to the entry on the five pollutions in Daoshi's medieval Chinese encyclopedia, the *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, 53: 1005a-c. For an overview in English, see Chappell (1980, 140-43).

¹⁴ *Kalpas* are divided into four kinds, which are further subdivided into twenty sub-*kalpas* (Skt. *antarakalpa*; Ch. *xiao jie* 小劫). Within a sub-*kalpa*, human lifespans go through cycles of growth and decline. It is during this period of decline of lifespan that the five pollutions are said to appear. For more on divisions of *kalpas*, see Nattier (1991, 15-17).

¹⁵ *Wuliangshou jing youpotishe yuansheng jie zhu*, T 1819, 40: 826b1-2. My discussion of medieval Chinese sources setting the definition of the age of the five pollutions as the present age without a Buddha relies on Chappell (1980, 142-43).

¹⁶ See *Guan wuliangshou jing yishu*, T 1752, 37:238c6, and *Anle ji*, T 1958, 47: 12b15 and 13c10 respectively.

¹⁷ For more on these works, see Hureau (2010b, 769-71).

demons and sorcerers as a central feature of this period of decline, often incorporating practices with Chinese origins into their eschatological narratives. As we have seen, the introductory passage identifies “myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts” as a particular threat. The term “venom” (*gu* 蠱) appears repeatedly in the text with the Buddha eventually promising that for those who recite the names of the buddhas of the past, “The various malefic practitioners of venomous arts will all extinguish and none will be able to encroach upon you.”¹⁸

Venom represents one of the most prominent forms of black magic in premodern Chinese culture.¹⁹ It was traditionally enacted by filling a vessel with poisonous creatures and letting them consume one another until a victor emerged. The surviving venomous creature would then be transformed into a powerful spirit capable of changing shape and following the commands of the sorcerer who created it. This type of sorcery had close links with demonology; those who practiced venom magic were said to enter pacts with demons to bewitch their enemies (Mollier 2008, 62). Venom is also commonly mentioned in eschatological writings, a connection that applies to the case of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.²⁰

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* repeatedly describes its own powers in preventing sorcery and protecting people from demons.²¹ The scripture portrays itself as a cure against these magical attacks, claiming that it functions as a medicine against evil poisons:

It is much like a subtle medicine able to cure poisonous illness, able to ward off poisonous vapors, and able to cut off evil poisons. If there is a person who holds it and practices it, even were evil poisonous insects and myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts to come and quarrel with and harm this person, then even a whiff of the vapors of this medicine against evil poisons will make them scatter in the four directions and not dare turn back. This scripture is also just like this.²²

¹⁸ Nanatsu-dera, lines 27-28; T 2865, 85: 1325b7.

¹⁹ The classic study is Feng and Shyrock (1935). The best recent account is undoubtedly Mollier (2008, 55-99).

²⁰ For the connection between eschatology and venom magic, see Mollier (2008, 58-59).

²¹ Masuo Shin'ichirō highlights this feature in particular; see Masuo (1996, esp. 842-45).

²² Nanatsu-dera, lines 17-10; T 2865, 85: 1325a25-28.

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was not alone in promising protection from these attacks: a host of other Daoist and Buddhist texts centered on countering venomous poison (Ch. *gudu* 蠱毒) and attacks from malefic and evil demons (Ch. *xiegui egui* 邪鬼惡鬼) were composed at roughly the same time.²³

Beyond quelling demons and sorcerers, the sūtra's promise to "save and protect body and life" also relates to a number of other indigenous Chinese works on extending lifespans, a popular subject of religious texts from the Six Dynasties period.²⁴ For example, one text in this genre, the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* (*Yisuan jing* 益算經), to be discussed below, opens with the phrase: "The Buddha preaches the scripture on saving, protecting, and augmenting accounts of body and life and saving humans from illness and suffering calamities." This is the same subtitle, apart from the phrase "augmenting accounts," that appears in the Pelliot version of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*.²⁵ Here, we see a close textual connection between scriptures on increasing lifespans and saving and protecting body and life. These concerns with extended lifetimes responded both to Buddhist narratives of decline adopted in part from India and to concerns regarding demonology and thaumaturgy that likely developed on Chinese soil.

Recitation of Names and the Six Spirits

The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* suggests a number of methods to ward off malefic threats and augment one's lifespan. The Buddha highlights the recitation of the names of divine beings, such as the seven buddhas of the past, as a particularly efficacious technique.²⁶ People commonly recited the names of these seven buddhas in a confessional context in medieval China, a practice that surely influenced the composition of this text.²⁷ While this practice is well-known, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* also introduces the recitation of another group of lesser known deities called the "six spirits" (*liu shen* 六神) as a complementary practice to reciting the names of the seven buddhas:

²³ For more on these texts, see Mollier (2008, 55-99).

²⁴ Ibid., 100-33.

²⁵ For *Yisuan jing*, see P 3022; for *Jiuhu shenming jing*, see P 2340.

²⁶ Nanatsu-dera, lines 24-28; T 2865, 85: 1325b3-7.

²⁷ For the classic study, see Kuo (1995). Also see Hureau (2010b, 1223).

The Buddha finished preaching this teaching [of the seven names] and again told Ānanda, “I now take pity on sentient beings, so I will preach further on the names of the six spirits. The first is named Bonailuo 波奈羅. The second is named Jianailuo 迦奈羅. The third is named Chanzha[jia] 禪吒[迦]. The fourth is named Qinjia 憇迦. The fifth is named Motou 摩頭. The sixth is named Moqi 摩祁. These are the names of the six spirits. Ānanda, if there are sentient beings—regardless of whether they are male or female, exalted or base—if they suffer a calamity, they should recite the names of the six spirits, then the hardships they are subject to will be eradicated. The myriad illnesses and evil vapors will all be nullified without remainder.²⁸

Although their names are written using Chinese characters phonetically to replicate Sanskrit sounds, the deities do not appear in any other canonical texts as a group. Regardless, the cult gained some degree of prominence in medieval China, as an entire text of spells known as the *Scripture on the Spirit Spells of the Names of the Six Spirits* (Ch. *Liu shen ming shen zhou jing* 六神名神呪經), commonly attributed to Zhu Tanwulan, appears in the major medieval Chinese catalogues.²⁹ The deities also appear in Dunhuang manuscripts I will discuss below.

To understand the spirits’ appearance in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, it is necessary to trace their origins in other Buddhist and Daoist texts. While Buddhists promoted the cult of the six spirits in medieval China, the concept likely originated in Daoist scripture on extending lifespans, which contains references to figures known as the Generals of the Six *jia* (*liujia jiangjun* 六甲將軍). Daoist works, particularly from the Zhengyi tradition, describe each of these military deities and their entourages of officers, who guarantee long lifespans and protection to those who invoke them. These deities were closely connected to the sexagesimal calendar and, according to Christine Mollier (2008, 116), allowed Daoist practitioners to “slip across the calendrical interstices so as to pass beyond the time-space continuum.” Other texts claim that the six *jia* reside within humans, ensuring the proper function of human anatomy and combatting disease. In

²⁸ Nanatsu-dera, lines 28-34; T 2865, 85: 1325b7-13.

²⁹ For relevant references in catalogues, see *Zhongjing mulu*, T 2146, 55: 125c29; *Lidai sanbao ji*, T 2034, 49: 70b12; *Da Tang neidian lu*, T 2149, 55: 246b3; *Gujin yijing tuji*, T 2151, 55: 356c2; *Da zhou kanding zhongjing mulu*, T 2153, 55: 376a23; *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T 2154, 55: 503c23 and 634a4.

both cases, the deities played a key role in broader practices aimed at extending lifespans and protecting from harm.³⁰

Soon after the appearance of these powerful deities in Daoist scripture, Buddhist authors quickly adopted them in a text—the aforementioned *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts*—that almost perfectly mirrors a Daoist one with the exception of a few key alterations, a common practice that may have emerged as priests and monks competed with one another for patronage.³¹ The Buddhist version differentiates itself from its Daoist double by placing the six *jia* in collaboration with seven thousand buddhas, who work together to extend lifespans. Similarly, the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* associates the seven buddhas of the past with the six spirits by listing them in succession and pairing the recitation of the names of each as complementary practices. It is likely that the seven thousand buddhas referred to in the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* relates to the seven buddhas of the past from the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* and elsewhere, including a Dunhuang manuscript (S 4456) to be discussed below.³² While the Daoist texts place emphasis on naming each of the generals, in the Buddhist *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts*, the six *jia* remain nameless. Perhaps this is because, as Christine Mollier (2008, 120-21) reasons, the names sounded too Chinese—a problem to which, as will be argued below, another Dunhuang manuscript (S 5799) also responded.

The six named spirits of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* likely emerged from this concept of the six *jia* from Buddhist and Daoist texts on increasing lifespans. The six *jia* in both Daoist and Buddhist works, as summarized by Mollier, shared common functions that echo the role of the six spirits in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*: “The assigned role of the Generals of the Six *jia* is to supervise human destiny and to guarantee, thanks to the aid of their innumerable subalterns, the security and longevity of the faithful” (Mollier 2008, 114). Similarly, recitation of the

³⁰ For more, see Mollier (2008, 114-21).

³¹ See Mollier (2008, 106-13 and 131-33). James Robson (2008, 163-66), on the other hand, has proposed that the Buddhist versions of *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* may predate the Daoist ones.

³² Christine Mollier (2008, 123) writes that the seven thousand buddhas implicitly refer to the seven tathāgatas of Bhaiṣajyaguru, which are the six buddhas of the past and the Medicine Buddha (Yaoshi 藥師). Since our text, as well as another manuscript, S 4456 to be discussed below, explicitly refers to Śākyamuni as the seventh buddha, it seems likely that the seventh buddha of the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* is not Bhaiṣajyaguru but rather Śākyamuni.

names of the six spirits in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* promises to eradicate hardships and eliminate illness. Moreover, one of the full titles given to these six generals in the Daoist version of the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts*, “Spirits of the Six *jia* Governing the Account” (*Liu jia zhusuan shen* 六甲主算神), shows semantic similarity to the phrase “six spirits” of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*. The first and last characters (*liu* 六 and *shen* 神) of the Daoist designation translate to “six spirits” [*liu shen* 六神]; in other words, the name found in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is a possible abbreviation of the originally longer title.³³ Beyond the similarity in function, name, and number, the Daoist and Buddhist texts outlining the six *jia* date to roughly the same period.

Perhaps even more tellingly, the deities share cosmological traits that further support a possible connection. The identities of the six *jia* were equated with stars and planets in Daoist texts, a pattern that also appears in a Dunhuang manuscript (S 5799) related to the Buddhist tradition of the six spirits. This single sheet of paper, measuring 27 by 15 cm, lists the transliterated Sanskrit names of the six spirits and also provides Tang Chinese translations and courtesy names (*zi* 字) for each deity:³⁴

The first is named Boluonai 波羅奈,³⁵ in Tang language it means celestial duke (天公); the courtesy name is Dashi 大筮 (great divination stick).³⁶ The second is named Jianailuo 迦奈羅, in Tang language, it means sun; the courtesy name is Changsheng 長生 (long life). The third [is named] Chanzhajia 禪吒迦, in Tang language, it means moon; the courtesy name is Ziguang 紫光 (purple radiance). The fourth is named Qinjia 勤迦, in Tang language, it means northern [?]³⁷; the courtesy name is Changwen 長文 (long culture). The fifth is named Motou 摩頭, in Tang language, it means Great White (Venus); the

³³ DZ 650, 1b.

³⁴ I would like to thank Rob Campany for helping me identify these as courtesy names.

³⁵ Nanatsu-dera and the Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* all call the first spirit Bonailuo; it seems likely that this is simply a scribal error, though it could reflect different names circulating for the first of the six spirits.

³⁶ I would like to thank Imre Galambos for his help with this character variant.

³⁷ This character is illegible in the image on the International Dunhuang Project web page (<http://idp.bl.uk>).

courtesy name is Wenjun 文君 (cultured lord). The sixth is named Moqi 摩祁, in Tang language, it means New Moon to the East (Jupiter);³⁸ the courtesy name is Zuchang 祖常 (ancestral constancy).³⁹

The appellations chosen for the six spirits purportedly refer to celestial bodies, a feature in common with the six *jia*, who were identified with stars and planets. Names such as Chanzhajia may have been intended to replicate actual Sanskrit terms, as the Sanskrit *candra*, which Chanzhajia approximates, literally means the moon.⁴⁰ The Sanskrit referents of the other transliterations are less clear, but deserve further research.

While the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* may have omitted the names of the six *jia* to mask their Chinese origins, S 5799 goes one step further in bolstering the authenticity of these divinities by bestowing Indic names on each of the six spirits.⁴¹ In listing both names and translations, the text functions to further divorce the six spirits from their likely Chinese origins. At the same time, those responsible for this manuscript also aimed to domesticate the deities by providing them with Chinese courtesy names, thus integrating the (originally Chinese but depicted as foreign) divinities back into Chinese culture. In doing so, this manuscript can be understood as a strategy for solving the problems of authenticity that many Chinese Buddhists struggled with; as Stephen F. Teiser has summarized: “The issue of authenticity was never far from the minds of Chinese Buddhist apologists... Looking westward, Buddhists in China were compelled to demonstrate a living connection to India. Looking to the east, they had to explicate that foreign grounding in a style that was unquestionably Chinese” (Teiser 1994, 62). This manuscript navigates these tensions by giving what were likely originally Daoist deities both Sanskrit names and Chinese courtesy names.

The second relevant Dunhuang manuscript, S 4456, includes a short section on the six spirits and seven buddhas entitled “Names of the Seven

³⁸ Here, it seems that the text refers to the legend that the historical figure Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (a name that literally means New Moon to the East) was an incarnation of Jupiter. For more on Dongfang Shuo and Jupiter, see Campamy (2009, 126).

³⁹ S 5799.

⁴⁰ I would like to thank Stephen F. Teiser for pointing out the possible authenticity of the seemingly pseudo-Sanskrit with his suggestion of *candra* for Chanzhajia.

⁴¹ The use of Sanskrit sounding syllables in transcribing names of deities originating both in India and elsewhere is a common occurrence in Buddhist ritual texts. For a brief but insightful assessment, see Strickmann (2002, 136-37).

Buddhas and Six Spirits of the Scripture on Protecting the Body" [*Hu shen jing qi fo liu shen ming* 護身經七佛六神名]. This section is part of a longer six and a half foot long scroll containing several texts. The "Names of the Seven Buddhas and Six Spirits of the Scripture on Protecting the Body" subsection appears after another work, *Scripture on the Observer of the Sounds of the World, who Saves from Suffering* (*Jiuku guanshiyin jing* 救苦觀世音經), which itself follows the *Scripture on Prince Sudāna* (*Taizi Xudana jing* 太子須大拏經 [damaged and incomplete]).⁴² The final text is a short incantation entitled "Spell of the Seven Buddhas" (*Qi fo zhou* 七佛呪), which concludes with instructions encouraging the recitation of the spell for salvation from suffering. As before, the six spirits and the seven buddhas—again referring to the six buddhas of the past and Śākyamuni—represent a complementary set in this Dunhuang manuscript.

S 4456 also provides a clue that may explain a curious feature of the Nanatsu-dera manuscript, which ends with a verse praising the bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音, who does not appear elsewhere in the main body of the text.⁴³ Though more research is needed into the grouping of the texts on S 4456, it seems at least plausible that the fact that these six spirits follow a work on the salvific powers of Guanyin may imply a cultic connection also reflected in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript.

Transcription and Fine Paper

The text further combines Indic and Chinese practices related to manuscript cultures. The *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, like many Mahāyāna works, advocates the worship of the text itself as an empowered object:

Ānanda, this scripture is venerable and fierce; it has divine power to the extreme. I exhort the men and women of great clans to offer fragrant flowers, assorted silks, and burning lamps of continuous

⁴² *Scripture on the Observer of Sounds of the World and Saves from Suffering* appears to be an indigenous Chinese work that was intended to be recited. In fact, it is mentioned in a Chinese tale as a work that can bring salvation from tribulations through recitation. See *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu* T 2106, 52: 427a20-b2. For more on indigenous Chinese sūtras about Guanyin, see Yü (2001, 93-149). Prince Sudāna, a variant and popularly used name for Vessantara, should not be confused with Sudhana from the Avatamsaka Sūtra.

⁴³ Nanatsu-dera, lines 100-102.

illumination, and also to propagate and recite the Great Vehicle, [so that] all people will be saved from illness, suffering and calamities.⁴⁴

These statements regarding the power of the scripture and the need to worship it—examples of a phenomenon referred to by Gregory Schopen (2005, 25-62) as the cult of the book⁴⁵—are common in Buddhist literature, but the Buddha follows with more specific and unusual directions in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*: “Ānanda, the Dharma that I put forth should be copied with utmost concentration using *fine paper and fine ink* [emphasis mine]. From top to bottom, every verse and every phrase has been preached by the Buddha thusly. Not a single stroke or dot should be left out.”⁴⁶ Notably, the Pelliot and Fangshan versions add fine brushes to this list. The Beijing manuscript (BD 646) has “fine hand” after “fine paper and fine ink.” According to these manuscripts, simple worship and transcription are not enough—fine materials should be used to carry out the copying.

References to “fine paper” (*hao zhi* 好紙) are surprisingly limited in sūtra literature. A CBETA search only returned five hits in the sūtra section of the Taishō canon with all of the examples appearing in texts characterized by modern Japanese editors as esoteric (Jp. *mikkyō bu* 密教部). Each of these hits point to sources that likely originated, at least in part, in China. Three of the hits stem from identical passages in spells related to the demon deity Āṭavaka. Much like the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, these spells advocate scripture copying on fine paper. While Āṭavaka seems to be a deity with Indic origins, he only appears in Chinese texts and became particularly important in China in the sixth century, the same period when the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was authored. Since these spells include some Sinitic elements and may in fact have been wholly composed in China, it seems likely that the fine paper section of these spells would date to the sixth century or later.⁴⁷ Another hit derives from a text known as *Nāgārjuna’s Treatise on the Five Sciences* (*Longshu wuming lun* 龍

⁴⁴ Nanatsu-dera, lines 79-82; T 2865, 85: 1326a3-6.

⁴⁵ Also see Kinnard (2002). For more on the cult of the book in China, see Kieschnick (2003, 164-85) and Company (1991).

⁴⁶ Nanatsu-dera, lines 84-86; T 2865, 85: 1326a8-10.

⁴⁷ *Azhapoju guishen dajiang shangfo tuoluoni shen zhou jing*, T 1237, 21: 179a27; *Azhapoju guishen dajiang shangfo tuoluoni jing*, T 1238, 21: 180c11; and *Tuoluoni zaji*, T 1336, 21: 630a14. For an overview of this deity and texts about him, see Duquenne (1983). For the best study of T 1238, see Strickmann (2002, 143-51).

樹五明論), which was composed in China. This text may have drawn on some sixth-century materials from a no longer extant work entitled *Treatise on the Five Sciences* (*Wuming lun* 五明論), but it did not reach its present configuration until mid-Tang.⁴⁸ Notably, *Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Five Sciences* and the Āṭavaka works are all examples of spells. As Paul Copp (2005) has argued at length, materiality occupied a central place in Chinese spellcraft; here, the connection between fine paper and incantations further supports this claim. While the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* is not exactly a spell and is certainly not Tantric, it does serve a similar function in that it offers prophylactic protection from demonic attacks. The final case of "fine paper" in sūtra section returned by a CBETA search appears in the *Indian Astrology of the Nine Luminaries* (*Fan tian huoluo jiu yao* 梵天火羅九曜) compiled by Yixing 一行 (684-727). This reference does not actually mention sūtra transcription and instead refers to paper to be offered to the Original Spirit of Personal Destiny (*benming yuanshen* 本命元神).⁴⁹ The fact that texts mentioning fine paper all originate, at least in part, in China is not surprising, considering the Chinese origins of paper, a material that at this time is unlikely to have reached India.⁵⁰

Despite the limited references to fine paper in canonical literature, the practice of transcribing scripture on special materials gained traction throughout East Asia. Patrons from this period onward frequently copied sūtras using lavish materials such as indigo paper and gold and silver ink. In fact, when the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* was copied in one hundred volumes in Japan in 748, many scrolls were transcribed on colored paper, sometimes incorporating rare materials.⁵¹ The explicit concern with paper in the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*, therefore, points to a development enabled by advances in Chinese paper making practices. The cult of the book in East Asia literally took on a different form from its Indic origins. Buddhists advocated these newly emergent practices in

⁴⁸ T 1420, 21: 960c17. In the classic study on this work, Michel Strickmann (2002, 170) suggests the text may be from the sixth century, but Stuart Young (2014 forthcoming) has recently argued convincingly for a later date of compilation. Regardless of the precise date, the Chinese origins of this work are beyond dispute. I would like to thank Stuart Young for sharing his work-in-progress with me.

⁴⁹ T 1311, 21: 462a18. This passage has been translated in Mollier (2008, 142).

⁵⁰ Kieschnick (2003, 179) notes that paper was likely imported to India in the seventh century and did not become widespread there until the twelfth.

⁵¹ For this project see Lowe (2012, 300-7).

the sūtras they composed, thus providing textual support for an emergent East Asian cult of the book built on materials originating in China.

Finally, while not directly related to the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* itself, it is of note that other forms of writing practices were also connected to what may be called a cult of saving and protecting body and life. For example, a talisman bearing the title "Talisman to Save and Protect Body and Life" (*jiuhu shenming fu* 救護身命符) appears in the *Scripture on Augmenting Accounts* discussed above.⁵² Buddhists did not merely copy texts and recite names of deities to save and protect their bodies and lives; they also wrote, wore, and ingested talismans.⁵³ Both sūtra transcription and talismanic writing share a common feature in that they were often enacted on paper for protective purposes. Saving and protecting one's body and life was a decidedly material practice in medieval China.

Conclusion

This introduction to the translation of the *Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life* has traced references to the text in Chinese catalogues, placed the work within a broader context of eschatological visions of venom sorcery and demonic attacks, and explored unusual references such as the six spirits and fine paper. In doing so, I have firmly placed this sūtra within a cultic and material context of Six Dynasties China, when buddhas and spirits joined forces to protect patrons from demonic and thaumaturgic attacks and pious practitioners commissioned the transcription of texts on fine paper with the hopes of extending their lifespans in an age of diminished longevity.

We have seen that while many of the practices and beliefs—such as narratives of decline, the recitation of names, and transcribing scripture—have connections to Indic practices, the text also incorporates techniques, deities, and materials originating in China. Part of its success surely stemmed from its ability to provide Sinitic solutions to Chinese concerns alongside canonically accepted beliefs and practices with Indic origins. Many questions remain, but it is my sincere hope that the translation below will open the doors for future research on this text and others like it.

⁵² See T 2904, 85: 1446c3-5, which is based on S 2708. As Mollier notes, other manuscripts are more complete. For a full account of the various editions, see Mollier (2008, 106-7).

⁵³ For more on talismans in Chinese Buddhism, see Strickmann (2002, 123-93), Robson (2008), and Copp (2011).

Translation

This is the first English language translation of this indigenous sixth-century Chinese sūtra. I have followed the Nanatsu-dera manuscript reproduced in Suwa (1996), but I have also referred to two Dunhuang versions—P 2340 (likely tenth century) and BD 646—in the notes, as well as the *Fangshan shi jing* (F 248) edition. I have occasionally made alterations when these manuscripts aid in interpretation. P 2340 has some minor damage on the first sheet, but is largely complete. BD 646 has significant damage on the first and second sheet. The Fangshan edition appears to have been carved during the Tang dynasty and is generally legible. Of the extant manuscripts, Nanatsu-dera is most in agreement with BD 646, which suggests a common lineage.⁵⁴ Beyond these manuscript resources, I have also benefited from the notes and *kundoku* 訓讀 by Suwa Gijun, the Taishō edition based on P 2340, and the transcription of a Korean print edition prepared by Masuo Shin'ichirō (1996).⁵⁵ In general, I have only cited character variants when they have shaped my interpretation. A complete list of variants can be found in Suwa (1996), though he did not consult the Fangshan edition. In general, however, all of the manuscripts are largely in agreement on the basic narrative of the text. The main difference is that the Nanatsu-dera manuscript includes an extended verse section at the end that is absent from the other editions. I provide line numbers at the end of each paragraph for the relevant section in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript for easy reference.

⁵⁴ See Suwa (1996, 535-36).

⁵⁵ There is also a manuscript in the Kyoto National Museum from the Moriya collection, which may or may not be an authentic Dunhuang text. In Korea, the text reached some degree of popularity and both Chinese and *Hangul* editions are extant, though they are all relatively late (seventeenth century and later). For an overview and evaluation of the extant manuscripts with the exception of the Fangshan edition, see Masuo (1996, 822-24).

*The Scripture Preached by the Buddha on Saving and Protecting Body and Life*⁵⁶

At one time, the Buddha was amidst the twin *śāla* trees.⁵⁷ At the time when he was approaching *parinirvāṇa*, Śāriputra and Ānanda, as well as immeasurable great bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas*, great disciples, and all the heavenly beings came and assembled together. The Buddha returned to the correct sitting [position]⁵⁸ and told Ānanda, “I am about to enter *parinirvāṇa*. After I pass away, with regard to all sentient beings in the Evil Age of the Five Pollutions,⁵⁹ if there are evil devils and myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts⁶⁰ that rob people of their vitality,⁶¹ seek to shorten their

⁵⁶ P 2340 contains a subtitle of “Saving Humans from Illness and Suffering Calamities” [濟人疾病苦厄] that follows the title of the sūtra.

⁵⁷ Twin *śāla* trees 娑羅雙樹. This sets the scene as the deathbed of the Buddha, where he was surrounded by double-trunked *śāla* trees in each of the four directions, as described in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. See *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, 12: 365c7. This setting establishes the text as the final teachings of the Buddha before his passing. Nanatsu-dera mistakenly transcribes 娑 as 婆.

⁵⁸ Returned to the correct sitting [position]. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript gives 還改座 (using a character variant for 改), but all other extant manuscripts list 還正座. The phrase 還正座 also appears later in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript. I have followed 還正座 here. I take this to mean that the Buddha sat upright in the lotus position. He would have been previously lying on his side on his deathbed.

⁵⁹ Evil age of the five pollutions 五濁惡世. For an analysis of the five pollutions, see above. This phrase is absent from F 248.

⁶⁰ Myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts 衆邪蟲道. *Gudao* 蟲道, literally paths or ways of venom, refers to the techniques of sorcery that are discussed in detail above, but also points to the sorcerers themselves, a usage attested to in Morohashi (1985, 10: 117) and one that fits the way the term is used in this text. I have chosen to treat the phrase 衆邪 as an adjectival clause modifying the noun venomous ways. Masuo (1996, 840) takes it as two noun phrases, which could be translated as “myriad wraiths and practitioners of venomous arts.” Both translations are defensible, as these usages appear in other Buddhist texts. Michel Strickmann has shown how wraiths 邪 were closely connected to Chinese Buddhist demonology and pathology. See Strickmann (1980, 225; 2002, 241). P 2340 replaces these four characters with 惡鬼燒擾, which would translate as “evil demons torment.” Judging from the P 2340 manuscript, these four characters seem to be a later repair, so we do not know how the original appeared.

lives,⁶² or violently come to kill them, Ānanda, you must wholeheartedly propagate this scripture and make the sentient beings in this evil age be without illness, suffering, and untimely death and make the myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts all completely disappear. [lines 1-8]

Ānanda, the things I have transmitted to you are only in this scripture. If there are sentient beings, regardless of whether they are male or female, who are able to recite even a single phrase or a single verse of this scripture, the myriad malefic evil demons will not be able to trespass upon [them]. Whether they are in a barren field or in the midst of an unforeseen calamity, or in a great fire, or in a great flood, they should constantly recite this scripture. [By doing so] they will be able to completely eliminate [these misfortunes]. Why is it so? This is because the scripture has a great authoritative and divine power and as such you should constantly read it. If you cannot read, then you should carry it in your heart⁶³ and give your full attention to receiving and upholding it.⁶⁴ This scripture holds the divine power of the buddhas of the past, present, and future. If you are going to go on a long trip, then you must always take it with you.⁶⁵ At every village you reach, you should single-

⁶¹ Rob [people] of their vitality 奪精氣. The character 奪 is illegible in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript but is clear in BD 646, which shares a common lineage with the Nanatsu-dera manuscript, and is also clear in F 248. In P 2340, it is 吸精氣. These are all likely references to demons known in Sanskrit as *ojohāra* or *ojāhāra*, who are said to devour or steal a being's vitality.

⁶² Seek to shorten their lives 求人短. The more common reading of this phrase would be to criticize a person's shortcomings. Since the rest of the passage has to do with vitality and death, I have chosen to translate 短 as a shortened lifespan, a meaning that is attested to elsewhere. P 2340 gives 求人長短, which may mean "seek out strengths and weaknesses," but this reading does not seem to fit the context of the passage. Another possibility would be "seek to make the longevity of men short."

⁶³ Carry it in your heart 著懷. Literally, to fix to your bosom. P 2340 adds that you should "copy it" and fix it to your bosom. It is possible that the text could refer to physically affixing the manuscript as an amulet. There is precedent for such a practice. See Campany (1991, 37-40).

⁶⁴ Receiving and upholding 受持. I have followed F 248, P 2340 and BD 646 manuscripts here to read the phrase I have translated as "uphold." Nanatsu-dera has "to receive and acquire" 受得. The characters 受持 mean literally "to receive and grasp" and often are used in the context of memorization and contemplation or possession of scripture with great devotion. For an overview, see Teiser (1994, 139-41).

⁶⁵ P 2340 adds "[by doing so] the various evil poisonous beasts will not be able to approach you" [諸惡毒獸無能近者].

mindedly preach it to others. Those that are able to hear it even for an instant⁶⁶ will attain whatever they wish. [lines 8-16]

Ānanda, the Buddha does not [speak] empty words. This scripture, as the hidden crux of the Buddha's [preaching], is extremely difficult to attain. It is much like a subtle medicine able to cure poisonous illness, able to ward off⁶⁷ poisonous vapors, and able to cut off evil poisons. If there is a person who holds it and practices it, even were evil poisonous insects and myriad malefic practitioners of venomous arts to come and quarrel with and harm this person, then even a whiff of the vapors of this medicine against evil poisons will make them scatter in the four directions and not dare turn back. This scripture is also just like this. If there is someone suffering from illness, he should purify and wash while single-mindedly reading and reciting [the scripture] so that the myriad illnesses will be completely eradicated." [lines 16-21]

The Buddha told Ānanda, "If there are evil devils or practitioners of venomous arts that do not follow my words, I will make these devils meet⁶⁸ the various malefic practitioners of venomous arts and, just like pressing oil, calamities will be completely extinguished without remainder." [lines 16-24]

The Buddha then gave the names of seven buddhas: "First is Vipaśyin Buddha, second is Śikhin Buddha, third is Viśvabhū Buddha, fourth is Krakucchanda Buddha, fifth is Kanakamuni Buddha, sixth is Kāśyapa Buddha, seventh is Śākyamuni Buddha. If there is suffering of calamity or illness, then you should immediately recite these names of seven buddhas. The various malefic practitioners of venomous arts will all extinguish and none will be able to encroach upon you." The Buddha finished preaching this teaching and again told Ānanda, "I now take pity on sentient beings, so I will preach further on the names of the six spirits.⁶⁹ The first is named Bonailuo, the second is

⁶⁶ Instant 須臾. In the critical edition for the Nanatsu-dera manuscript, Suwa provides 申 for the Dunhuang manuscripts. A close examination, however, shows that both P 2340 and BD 646 actually use a common character variant for 與 that closely resembles 申 and agrees with Nanatsu-dera and F 248.

⁶⁷ Ward off 辟. I have followed F 248, P 2340 and BD 646 here to read this as 辟. The character is being used as a substitute for 避. Nanatsu-dera has 群, which appears to be a transcription error.

⁶⁸ Reading 曹 as 遭 in accord with P 2340.

⁶⁹ Six spirits 六神. I have used Chinese transliterations, because the Sanskrit referents are not always clear and may be invented.

named Jianailuo, the third is named Chanzha[jia],⁷⁰ the fourth is named Qinjia,⁷¹ the fifth is named Motou, and the sixth is named Moqi. These are the names of the six spirits. Ānanda, if there are sentient beings—regardless of whether they are male or female, noble or base—if they suffer a calamity, they should recite the names of the six spirits, then the hardships they are subject to will be eradicated. The myriad illnesses and evil vapors will all be nullified⁷² without remainder.” [lines 24-34]

The Buddha told the innumerable and boundless bodhisattvas and *mahāsattvas* along with the heavenly divine kings and all the heavenly beings, “After I pass away, if there are any who uphold the Dharma that I have entrusted to you, you all should constantly protect [them] day and night and make them attain peace and tranquility.”

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, after you have passed away, I will lead twenty-five bodhisattvas to the place where this scripture is recited in the evil age. We will protect these people on all sides day and night. The myriad malefic apparitions⁷³ will not be able to come near. We will make these people be at peace when asleep and when awake. We will carry out this excellent Dharma.”

The Buddha praised Mañjuśrī: “How excellent, how excellent. You can protect those who cultivate the mind of *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi* for one hundred, one thousand, and ten thousand *kalpa* as I did.” [lines 35-43]

⁷⁰ Chanzha[jia] 禪吒[迦]. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript only gives 禪吒 but all other extant manuscripts have 禪吒迦. As noted above, this may be an effort to transcribe *candra* or moon.

⁷¹ Qinjia 勤迦. The Nanatsu-dera manuscript and F 248 have 勤迦. P 2340 lists 勤迦. BD 646 gives 勤迦吒.

⁷² The Nanatsu-dera manuscript reads “will not be nullified” (不盡), but I follow Suwa to view the negation as a mistakenly inserted character (Jp. *enji* 衍字). It also may be that the Nanatsu-dera manuscript is corrupt here, as F 248, P 2340, and BD 646 all add the phrase “[not] be able to approach and will all be nullified...”

⁷³ Apparitions 魍魎. These were said to occupy various natural spaces including trees, rocks, and bodies of water. For an overview, see Mochizuki and Tsukamoto (1963, 10: 650-51). For the phrase “myriad malefic,” all three Dunhuang manuscripts have *zhongxie* 衆邪. Nanatsu-dera and F 248 give 耶 instead of 邪. This substitution is common in Buddhist manuscripts.

At that time, the four heavenly divine kings bared their right shoulders and put their right knees to the ground.⁷⁴ They single-mindedly joined their palms together and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, after the Thus Come One’s extinction, we will each lead our entourage to patrol the realm. If there are those who recite or copy or uphold this scripture, our entourage and we will constantly come and shadow these people. Day and night we will protect them and make it so that they do not encounter evil. Should these people go to a barren field, we will constantly shadow them front and back and will diligently protect them. If these people hunger or thirst or have a longing, we divine kings will provide them with whatever they wish and there will be nothing they still lack.⁷⁵ Why would it be so? It is because these people propagate this scripture, practice the excellent Dharma, make offerings to the three treasures, and do not allow them to perish.” [lines 44-51]

At that time, the *gandharva* king, *asura*, *garuḍa*, *kiṃnara*, and *mahoraga*, human and non-human, each knelt before the Thus Come One, single-mindedly joined their palms, and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, we heavenly beings will constantly fly around during this evil age. If there are those who recite, or copy,⁷⁶ or uphold this scripture, our entourage and we heavenly beings will together go to the place where these people reside. As for those who listen to and receive the dharma of this scripture, we will constantly guard and protect them day and night and never leave⁷⁷ [their side]. We will protect these people on all four sides so that myriad devils and evil demons are unable to encroach upon them and unable to steal their vitality. They will be unable to violently come and snuff out the root of life. They will be unable to violently come and inflict harm. They will not be able to seek to shorten

74 Bared their right shoulders and put their right knees to the ground 偏袒右肩右膝著地. These are Indic rituals of respect that typically appear before addressing the Buddha.

75 This is a somewhat tentative translation. Each of the manuscripts differs subtly on this line.

76 Reading 晝寫 as 書寫. All other extant manuscripts agree on this reading. 晝寫 appears to be a transcription error. The character 晝 appears two lines over and it is likely that the scribe mistakenly wrote this character here.

77 The character is illegible here, but I am following the other extant manuscripts to read it as 離.

[people's lifespans]. They will not be able haunt [people].⁷⁸ We will make it so their poisons do not work. [lines 52-60]

Our entourage will constantly come to the sky [above] the place where these people reside. Should these people encounter a great fire, our entourage will follow these expedient means to save and protect their bodies so they are not burned. Should they encounter a great flood and get swept away in the raging currents, our entourage will immediately come from the sky to take these people with our hands so they do not drown. Then we will return to stop [the waters] to save the people from flooding. Should they encounter strong bandits, we will save and protect these people from the four sides and change the hearts of the bandits so that instead of raising swords and staves, they give rise to compassionate minds. Should these people encounter official laws [that result in them] being bound and shackled undergoing anguish and suffering day and night, from the sky our entourage will make the officials' hearts give rise to joy, sparing [the prisoners] from being killed⁷⁹ and liberate all. Our entourage will single-mindedly save and protect them. We will not let others bring disorder and will make sure that this scripture is always remembered for boundless *kalpas*. Why is it so? This scripture is the Dharma kindly entrusted by the World Honored One, so we will propagate it for evermore." [lines 60-70]

The Buddha again praised these heavenly beings: "How excellent, how excellent. Your entourage has already for *asamkhyeya kalpa* met disciples for hundreds and thousands, and tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousand of *kalpas*⁸⁰ and enabled them to propagate this Dharma. Recitation and transcription expediently save and heal. [Those who do these practices] will not encounter evil and will constantly cultivate good minds." At that time, the *gandharvas* and [other beings] together with their entourages prostrated

⁷⁸ Haunt 觸厭. This is a tentative translation. I am drawing on the associations of necromancy and curses with the character 厭 in my translation. Nanatsu-dera, F 248, and BD 646 give 觸厭. P 2340 has 觸犯.

⁷⁹ Save them from being killed 放殺. I am tentatively following the Nanatsu-dera manuscript here. P 2340 has "release" 放流. BD 646 and F 248 have "pardon" 放赦. The various manuscripts share a basic understanding that prisoners will be released from punishment.

⁸⁰ There may be an omission here. Other manuscripts all describe the entourage meeting buddhas of the past and protecting their disciples; Nanatsu-dera simply has the entourage meeting the disciples of the past.

themselves at the feet of the Buddha and single-mindedly received and carried out [these teachings]. [lines 70-74]

The Buddha told Ānanda, “I take my right hand and stroke the top of your head.⁸¹ You shall pay close attention for what I have entrusted to you is only in the teachings of this scripture.⁸² Ānanda, propagate this Dharma with a diligent mind and make all sentient beings be able to hear it and know it completely. Ānanda, you are the disciple closest to my heart. The Dharma that I have put forth has been completely transmitted to you. It is because I now take pity on all sentient beings that I wish for them to be liberated.” [lines 74-79]

[The Buddha] returned to the correct sitting [position] and entrusted this Dharma: “Ānanda, this scripture is venerable and fierce; it has divine power to the extreme. I exhort the men and women of great clans⁸³ to offer fragrant flowers, assorted silks, and burning lamps of continuous illumination, and also to propagate and recite this Great Vehicle,⁸⁴ [so that] all people will be saved⁸⁵ from illness, suffering, and calamities. Their present [lives] will be tranquil and auspicious⁸⁶ and, in a future [life], they will be born in the Realm of Immeasurable Lifespan⁸⁷ on lotus blossoms with bodies of golden color and the bodily marks fully endowed,⁸⁸ wise, knowledgeable, courageous, and strong⁸⁹ just like the highest class.⁹⁰ As such, the merits will be incalculable.” [lines 79-84]

81 Stroke the top of your head 摩汝頂. The compound 摩頂 is often used to refer to the act of the Buddha stroking a disciple’s head while conferring the Dharma or a prophesy.

82 Teachings of this scripture 經法. All of the other manuscripts simply have “scripture” 經.

83 Great clans 族姓. People of good birth; often used to refer to followers of the Buddha.

84 Great Vehicle 大乘. These characters are absent from P 2340 and F 248. Here it is being used metonymically for the text.

85 The character for “save” (救) is not fully visible in the Nanatsu-dera manuscript but appears in all other manuscripts.

86 Reading 吉 for 告. The other manuscripts agree on this reading.

87 Realm of Immeasurable Lifespan 無量壽國. The Pure Land where Amitabha resides.

88 Bodily marks fully endowed 身相具足. These are the thirty-two marks that adorn superior beings such as buddhas.

89 Reading 健 for 捷. The other manuscripts support this reading.

“Ānanda, the Dharma that I put forth should be copied with utmost concentration using fine paper and fine ink.⁹¹ From top to bottom, every verse and every phrase has been preached by the Buddha thusly. Not a single stroke or dot⁹² should be left out. Ānanda, it is because I pity sentient beings that I have entrusted this Dharma [to you]. Make each and every kind of being with form able to fully hear and know [of this teaching]. With opened minds and liberated intellects, may they cultivate excellent minds.” [lines 84-88]

At that time, Ānanda single-mindedly joined palms before the World Honored One. The hairs on his body all stood on end as he trembled with awe. Having single-mindedly listened to the words of the Buddha with great care, he dared not forget a single phrase or verse. With tears streaming, he said, “World-Honored One, I will diligently uphold what you have entrusted to me. I will propagate it widely.” Ānanda then added, “I have received the teachings honored in the heavens.” He prostrated himself at the Buddha’s feet and single-mindedly received and carried out [these teachings].⁹³ [lines 89-92]

Cultivate merit to receive pleasant recompense.
Whatever you want will come to be spontaneously.
You will overcome the seas of birth and death
And ascend to the quiescence of nirvāṇa.

If there are people who make many blessings
The heavenly deities will spontaneously protect them.
Whatever they wish will come to be on its own accord.
The myriad demons will not be able to destroy them.

Merit is thin and delusions are many.
Blessings can extinguish the myriad misfortunes.
Blessings of merit are already strong and secure.

⁹⁰ Reading 輩 for 章. The other manuscripts agree on this reading. Here the term likely refers to the highest of the various classes of births in the Pure Land.

⁹¹ P 2340 and F 248 insert “fine brushes” between fine paper and fine ink. BD 646 lists “fine hand” after fine paper and fine ink.

⁹² Reading 治 as 點. F 248, P 2340, and BD 646 give 點 instead of 治, although the order of the list is reversed for BD 646. BD 646 has 書 instead of 畫.

⁹³ F 248 ends here.

Soon they become fixed steadfastly.

Through birth in a heaven, one receives happiness and pleasantry.
Departure to [the Pure Land] is completely spontaneous.
It is in accord with blessings of merit
That those in the human path are able to attain freedom.⁹⁴

It is in accord with expedient means of blessings,
That one is forever separated from the sufferings of birth and death.
To be able to reach Nirvāṇa
Means no more death or rebirth.⁹⁵ [lines 89-97]

*Namo*⁹⁶ to the rise of the immeasurable fine blessings of the Buddha!
Namo to the brightness of the immeasurable wisdom of the Dharma!
Namo to encountering the good friendship of the Saṃgha!
Namo to the Buddha!
To have a karmic connection with a Buddha realm
Is to have a karmic connection with a Buddha.
To have mutual karmic connections with the Buddha and the Dharma
Is to realize permanence, bliss, self, and purity.⁹⁷

In the morning, contemplate the Observer of the Sounds of the World.

⁹⁴ The second and fourth lines of this stanza are reversed in P 2340.

⁹⁵ This entire section of verse appears to have been adopted largely from the *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya*. See *Mohe sengqi lü*, T 1425, 22: 276b19-28 and 306c22-307a2. As Funayama Tōru has noted, this *vinaya* remained influential, particularly in the north, into the sixth century and possibly beyond. See Funayama (2004, esp. 104 and 114). This may imply that this text was composed in the north, though further research into this question is needed.

⁹⁶ This entire section, beginning with these two characters and continuing to the end of the text, is absent from the Dunhuang manuscripts and only appears in the Nanatsu-dera version. The fact that it comes before the final title implies that it is intended to be read as part of the text rather than a colophon. But its absence from other manuscripts suggests that this section could have been composed in Japan.

⁹⁷ Permanence, bliss, self, and purity 常樂我淨. The four positive attributes of enlightenment outlined in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

In the evening, contemplate the Observer of the Sounds of the World.

Karmic connections arise in accord with what is contemplated.

Contemplate the Buddha separate from your mind.

Namo to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha!

Namo to the Observer of the Sounds of the World!

All dharmas emerge from conditions.

May the Buddha Dharma constantly protect the body,

So that one's body is forever removed from suffering and calamity

And crosses over the border to Nirvāṇa.

The Scripture on Saving and Protecting Body and Life

Proofread once by Eishun 榮俊.

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Abbreviations

- BD Beijing Dunhuang manuscript. Housed in the National Library of China. Reproductions in *Guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang yishu* 國家圖書館藏敦煌遺書, 146 vols. Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005-2012.
- DZ *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏, 60 vols. (plus a single-volume index). Reprint. Taipei: Xinwenfeng 1985-1988.
- F Fangshan Stone Sūtras. Reproductions in *Fangshan shi jing* 房山石經, 30 vols. Beijing: Huaxia chu ban she.
- P Pelliot Manuscript. Housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France with digital editions on <http://idp.bl.uk>.
- S Stein Manuscript. Housed in the British Library. Reproductions cited below as used.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1932.

Manuscripts

Bibliothèque nationale de France (Pelliot Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts)

- P 2340 *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Verso contains name of monk Daozhen 道真 and character 界 signifying 三界 monastery. 6 sheets. Reprod. IDP web site, <http://idp.bl.uk>.
- P 3022 Two texts in succession: (1) *Foshuo jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救拔焰口餓鬼陁羅尼經 (slight damage on first sheet), (2) *Foshuo qiqian fo shenfu jing* 佛說七千佛神符經 (end damaged). Verso: (1) *Jiu xiang guan shi* 九想觀詩, (2) *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhen wen du ren ben xing miao jing* 太上洞玄靈寶真文度人本行妙經 (end damaged). Reprod. IDP web site, <http://idp.bl.uk>.

British Library (Stein Collection)

- S 2708 *Foshuo qiqian fo shenfu jing* 佛說七千佛神符經 (missing beginning). Reprod. IDP web site, <http://idp.bl.uk>.
- S 4456 Four texts in succession: (1) *Taizi Xudana jing* 太子須大拏經 (end only, rest damaged), (2) *Jiuku guanshiyin jing* 救苦觀世音經, (3) *Hu shen qi fo liu shen ming* 護身七佛六神名, (4) *Qi fo zhou* 七佛呪. About 600 CE. Reprod. *Baozang* 36: 203-205.

S 5799 *Liu shen mingzi* 六神名字. One sheet; lists transliterated names of six spirits, their translated meanings in Chinese (Tang), and courtesy names. Reprod. IDP web site, <http://idp.bl.uk>.

Fangshan Stone Sūtras

F 248 *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Reproduced in *Fangshan shi jing* 房山石經 3: 557.

Kyoto National Museum

Moriya 247 *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Colophon reads 禪定持誦. 4 sheets. Beginning missing. Cataloged in *Kokyō zuroku: Moriya Kōzō-shi shūshū*, 55.

Nanatsu-dera (Nagoya)

Jiuhu shenming jing 救護身命經. Late Heian. Reprod. *Nanatsu-dera koitsu kyōten kenkyū sōsho* 七寺古逸經典研究叢書, 2: 504-512.

National Library of China (Beijing Dunhuang manuscripts)

BD 646 (cf. 日 046; PK 8298). *Jiuhu shenming jing* 救護身命經. Dated seventh-eighth century (Tang dynasty). 5 sheets. First 2 sheets damaged. Reprod. IDP web site, <http://idp.bl.uk>.

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Azhapaju guishen dajiang shangfo tuoluoni shen zhou jing 阿吒婆拘鬼神大將上佛陀羅尼神呪經. T vol. 21, no. 1237.

Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經. T vol. 12, no. 374.

Da Tang neidian lu 大唐內典錄. T vol. 55, no. 2149.

Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu 大周刊定衆經目錄. T vol. 55, no. 2153.

Fan tian huoluo jiu yao 梵天火羅九曜. T vol. 21, no. 1311.

Fayuan zhulin 法苑珠林. T vol. 53, no. 2122.

Foshuo qiqian fo shenfu jing 佛說七千佛神符經. T vol. 85, no. 2904.

Guan wuliangshou jing yi shu 觀無量壽經義疏. T vol. 37, no. 1752.

Gujin yijing tuji 古今譯經圖記. T vol. 55, 2151.

Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu 集神州三寶感通錄. T vol. 52, no. 2106.

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Kaiyuan shijiao lu 開元釋教錄. T vol. 55, no. 2154.
Lidai sanbao ji 歷代三寶紀. T vol. 49, 2034.
Longshu wuming lun 龍樹五明論. T vol. 21, no. 1420.
Mohe sengqi lü 摩訶僧祇律. T vol. 22, no. 1425.
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