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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STUDIES

Yu-lung TSENG: The Cross-border Perception of Bayising (Pansheng 板升) among Government Officials in Ming China	1
Tatiana FRANK: Some Cases of Official Corruption in the Yuan dynasty Based on Chinese Sources	31
Csaba OLÁH: Foreign Trade and Domestic Networks — A Few Remarks on the Organisation of Tributary Embassies to China in the Muromachi Period	57
Mária Ildikó FARKAS: Perceptions of Japan in Hungarian Turanism.....	87
Péter-Dániel SZÁNTÓ: Preliminary Notes on the <i>Mahāmudrātilaka</i> : Contents, History, Transmission	119
Gábor Péter BOROS: Different Religion, Same Meditation? <i>Meditation as the Heart of Christianity and Buddhism and the Basis for Dialogue in the Writings of Thomas Merton and Thích Nhất Hạnh</i>	141

REVIEWS

Dávid JÓNÁS: Exploring Saraha's <i>Dohākośa</i> . Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Péter-Dániel Szántó: <i>Saraha's Spontaneous Songs: With the Commentaries by Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta</i> . (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.) New York: Wisdom Publications, 2024.....	165
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CHRONICLE.....	169
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YU-LUNG TSENG

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The Cross-border Perception of Bayising (Pansheng 板升) among Government Officials in Ming China

Abstract

The Mongol Yuan dynasty in China officially came to an end in 1368 with the withdrawal of the Mongols from the capital city Daidu (Beijing) and their retreat to the steppes. Nevertheless, a protracted series of military campaigns and conflicts between the Ming court and the Eastern Mongols, Oirat Mongols, and various other Mongol tribes continued for about 200 years. This article examines the discourse surrounding Bayising, where a group of Chinese people settled on Mongolian territory and served the Mongols during the mid-16th and early-17th centuries. The primary population of Bayising consisted of Chinese individuals who had either fled from China or were captives taken by the Mongols from China in border raids. Bayising embodies a unique interaction between China and nomadic communities in a transitional zone between the steppe and agricultural land, where conventional trading and tribute systems encountered difficulties in establishment. After the signing of the 1571 peace treaty, Bayising gradually receded from the focus of the Ming court. Through an analysis of historical documents and records, this article unveils the perspectives held by Ming officials regarding Bayising. Additionally, it probes into how these perspectives influenced Ming China's foreign relations and national security policies concerning the Mongols. The emergence of Bayising was rooted in a distinctive historical context. Moreover, Bayising played an important role not only in shaping Sino-Mongol relations but also in facilitating cooperation between nomadic and agricultural communities in the absence of official trade channels. Neither repatriation nor military intervention proved to offer fundamental solutions to the Bayising issue in the ongoing confrontation between the Mongols and the Ming court. However, the establishment of normalised and stabilised trade, facilitated by a mutually beneficial peace treaty, emerged as a definitive solution that ultimately benefited both parties. This intricate interplay between geopolitical dynamics and cultural exchanges underscores the complexity of historical narratives, emphasizing the enduring impact of the Ming officials' perception of the Mongols on regional stability and economic prosperity.

Keywords: Bayising, Hohhot, Altan Khan, Jiajing, 1571 Peace Treaty, Sino–Mongol relations

Bayising (байисин) is a term frequently employed in contemporary Mongolian to mean ‘house’ or ‘building’. Nevertheless, both *bayising* and its Chinese counterpart, *pansheng* 板升, carry a distinctive connotation referring to a region of Mongolia that bordered China. During the mid- and late-Ming dynasty (1368–1644), this region became home to a community of Chinese individuals who sought refuge and lived under Mongolian leadership.¹ This region, known as Fengzhou 豐州, approximately corresponds to the present-day Hohhot city, the present provincial capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in northern China. Several Bayising settlements were established in this region prior to the official founding of the city of Hohhot (also called Kökeqota² in Mongolian), which means ‘Blue city’, in 1572. This region is situated within the current front Yellow River loop of Ordos (also known as the front Hetao of the Yellow River), and although it was reclaimed by the Ming court from the Mongol Yuan (1271–1368) during the early Ming period,³ it gradually fell once more under Mongol occupation in the mid-Ming era.⁴ In present-day Hohhot, traces of the term *Pansheng* persist in certain place names, where ‘pan 板’ serves as an abbreviated form. Some scholars suggest that the term *bayising* is a loanword originally from the Chinese term *baixing* 百姓,⁵ meaning ‘ordinary people’ or literally ‘a hundred surnames’. The semantic evolution of *bayising* 百姓 has transitioned from denoting ‘ordinary people’ to representing a Chinese-style dwelling on Mongolian land, distinct from the traditional Mongol yurt (*ger*). Moreover, in an early 17th century⁶ Mongolian manuscript, *The Jewel Translucent Sutra* (also referred to as *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orošiba*), which extols and details the accomplishments of Altan Khan⁷ (Altan Qayan, 1507–1582; also known as

¹ MS 327.8582. *The History of the Ming Dynasty* (Ming Shi 明史) describes Bayising as ‘In Fengzhou where Chinese people who fled China gathered. They erected walls for defence, constructed palaces, and cultivated farmland. The places were called Bayising, which means house in the Chinese language’. 時富等在敵，招集亡命，居豐州，築城自衛，構宮殿，墾水田，號曰板升。板升，華言屋也。

² Hyer, 1982:56–59, Kökeqota (Hohhot) was founded by Altan Khan in the 1500s and served as his headquarters in his challenge to China. Bayising people assisted Altan Khan’s campaigns against Ming China. Under Mongolian direction they constructed a walled city on the site of Kökeqota, with the most impressive buildings (*bayising*) that the place had ever seen.

³ DSYFYJY 61.2653. ‘In the early Ming, Li Wenzhong settled down in Datong, went west to manage Fengzhou, then was stationed in Dongshen of Shengzhou city and controlled the Hetao area.’ 明初李文忠定大同，西略豐州，遂即勝州城東勝，以統套內之地。

⁴ MSJSBM 58.887. ‘In January of Yingzhong Tianshun’s 6th year (1462), Maoli hai entered the Hetao.’ 英宗天順六年春正月，毛里孩等入河套。

⁵ Li–Li, 2007: 18–19. A similar case can be found in other Mongolian words, such as *taiji* (台吉 in Chinese records), which originally comes from the Chinese term *taizi* 太子.

⁶ Elverskog 2000: 21.

⁷ Surruys 1962:357–358. The name Altan Qayan is a title rather than a personal name. Altan, signifying ‘gold’, also carries the secondary meaning of ‘imperial’.

Anda 俺答/俺荅 or 諳達 in Chinese records), the term Bayising is also mentioned.⁸ Altan Khan, the descendant of Chinggis Khan (c. 1162–1227), emerged as the most influential leader among the 12 Tümed Mongol tribes in Ordos during the 16th century. He successfully unified and formed a tribal league between the Khalkha Mongols in the north and the Chahars in the south. Altan Khan became a significant national security concern from the north for the majority of the reigns of Ming emperors Jiajing (r. 1522–1566) and Longqi (r. 1567–1572).

Given the pivotal role played by the Ming officials' perspective on Bayising and its Chinese settlers in shaping the Ming court's foreign policy towards the Mongols, it becomes essential to explore how Ming officials perceive Bayising. Aiming to unravel the nuanced perspectives held by Ming officials regarding Bayising, this paper scrutinises memorials to the throne, essays, and historical records associated with the word Bayising (i.e., 板升 and 版升⁹) in the *Collected Writings on Statecraft of the Ming Dynasty*¹⁰ (*Huang Ming JingShi Wen Bian* 皇明經世文編), the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming Shilu* 明實錄), and the *Collected Memorials to the Throne During the Jiajing and Longqi Reigns*¹¹ (*Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao* 皇明嘉隆疏抄). These collections comprise a wealth of historical documents and records authored by Ming officials. Utilising the keyword search function of the Chinese Text Project (中國哲學書電子化計劃), all materials related to Bayising (板升 or 版升) in these three books were identified. Subsequently, the texts were meticulously cross-checked with their respective sources to mitigate the risk of potential errors. Within the *Huang Ming Jinshi Wen Bian*, 63 instances of Bayising (板升 or 版升) are discernible across 37 distinct memorials to the throne, essays, and letters. Authored by 24 individuals during the Ming dynasty, these instances are complemented by a singular occurrence found exclusively in the *Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao*. Significantly, all authors had successfully passed the *jishi* 進士 exam,¹² securing

⁸ Jurungya 2014: 209. In this book, 'Naiman yeke baising' was translated from Mongolian to Chinese language as 'bada Pansheng' 八大板升 ('eight large Bayising settlements').

⁹ 版升 is a variant of 板升 with the same pronunciation. It appears several times in the materials. Thus, it was added to the keyword search.

¹⁰ The *Huang Ming Jingshi Wen Bian* 皇明經世文編 is a compilation of memorials to the throne, letters, and political essays compiled by the late Ming scholars Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608–1647), Xu Fuyuan 徐孚遠 (1599–1665), and Song Zhengbi 宋徵璧 (?–1672). This book consists of 504 volumes plus four supplemental volumes. It constitutes nearly 3,000 memorials to the thrones, letters, and essays of 430 officials and scholars of the Ming period.

¹¹ The *Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao* 皇明嘉隆疏抄, compiled by Zhang Lu 張鹵 (1523–1598), is a compilation of memorials to the throne addressing domestic affairs, border security issues, and more during the Jiajing and Longqi reigns of the Ming dynasty.

¹² The *jinshi* 進士 exam was the highest-level imperial examination in ancient China. Individuals who passed the *jinshi* exam were awarded the title of 'Jinshi'. Achieving this status was a prestigious accomplishment and opened doors to high-ranking positions in the government.

high-ranking official positions. Some even occupied esteemed roles, such as Chief Grand Secretary 內閣首輔 (e.g., Zhang Juzheng 張居正 [1525–1582] and Gao Gong 高拱 [1513–1578]) or served as Minister of War 兵部尚書. Consequently, their perspectives on Bayising played a crucial role in shaping foreign policy towards the Mongols. Additional details about the 24 authors and their works related to Bayising can be found in Appendix 1.

Studies on Bayising

The exploration of issues related to Bayising in Ming China has captured scholars' attention over the past seven decades. Notably, Jyunpei (1955) investigates Altan Khan and Pansheng, and the relationship between Bayising and Guihua (歸化城; modern-day Hohhot) during Wanli's reign (1573–1620).¹³ Serruys (1959) offers a comprehensive study on the presence of Chinese in southern Mongolia during the 16th century.¹⁴ Cao (1980) investigates Altan Khan and the shift in land use within Fengzhou 豐州.¹⁵ Huang's (1995) study centres on social-economic change in the Suiyuan Guihua (綏遠歸化) area in Inner Mongolia from the mid-14th century to the early 20th century.¹⁶ Takumi (2001) examines the Chinese presence among the 'right wing' Mongols during the Longqi Peace Treaty of 1571.¹⁷ Xu (2012) delves into the social effects and historical influence of Bayising in the Ming dynasty.¹⁸ However, the perspectives of Ming officials on Bayising and their corresponding responses remain an under-researched area deserving of further exploration.

The timeframe and frequency of references to Bayising in documents from Ming China

Thorough scrutiny was applied to the memorials to the throne, historical records, essays, and letters within the *Huang-Ming JingShi Wenbian*, the *Ming Shilu*, and the *Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao* that encompassed the keyword Bayising (板升 or 版升). The earliest reference to this term dates back to the 25th year

¹³ Hagiwara 1955: 187–199.

¹⁴ Serruys 1959: 1–95.

¹⁵ Cao 1980: 132–143.

¹⁶ Huang 1995: 1–525.

¹⁷ Takumi 2001: 21–34.

¹⁸ Xu 2012: 23–26

of Jiajing Emperor (1546),¹⁹ a timeframe consistent with the entry found in the *Campaigns of the Wanli Emperor* (*Wanli wugonglu* 萬曆武功錄),²⁰ authored during Wanli's reign (1572–1620). The final mention of Bayising was in Tianqi's sixth year (1626) in the *Ming Xizhong Shilu*²¹ 明熹宗實錄. A chronological examination of the materials in the *Ming Shilu* reveals that the term Bayising (板升 or 版升) appeared eight times in records from the *Ming Shizhong Shilu* 明世宗實錄 from 1559 to 1565. Additionally, it surfaced nine times in records from the *Ming Muzhong Shilu* 明穆宗實錄 from 1568 to 1571 and 15 times in records from the *Ming Shenzhong Shilu* 明神宗實錄 from 1572 to 1618. Subsequently, in 1626, it was documented only once in the *Ming Xizhong Shilu*. Notably, there are no recorded instances of the term Bayising (板升 or 版升) predating the *Ming Shizhong Shilu*.

The timeframe and frequency of Bayising's references suggest that the matter of Bayising, which generated attention from the Ming court, persisted from 1546 to 1626, encompassing an approximately 80-year period during the late Ming dynasty. However, Bayising must have been established earlier. Records from the *Historical Events from the Ming Period in Their Entirety* (*Mingshi Jishi Benmo* 明史紀事本末) show that during the 1533 Datong mutiny, rebels fled to Altan Khan.²² Another Ming dynasty record from the *Investigation on Northern Barbarians of the Royal Ming* (*Huang Ming Beilu Kao* 皇明北虜考) indicates that several thousand rebels went north to join the Mongols in the mutiny.²³ As a matter of fact, during the Tianqi years (1621–1627), Bayising ceased to be a significant concern and threat to the Ming court, with the Manchu

¹⁹ See material 38 in Appendix 1. The memorials to the throne written by Shen Han 沈涵 (1541–?) mentioned that 'people who live in Bayising significantly have grown in numbers since Jiajing's 25th year (1546)'. 自嘉靖二十五年以來，板升漸多。

²⁰ WLWGL 7.422. In *Wanli wugonglu* 萬曆武功錄, it is recorded that 'in April of Jiajing's 25th year (1546), Altan Khan and his wife Usin-qatun constructed a city using bricks and initiated arable farming with cattle.' 嘉靖二十五年四月，俺答阿不孩及兀慎娘子見磚塔城，用牛二軋耕城約五六頃，所種皆穀、黍、蘿、秫、糜子。'It is evident that a substantial number of Chinese settlers inhabited in Altan Khan's territory, contributing their agricultural expertise in service to him.' The identity of Usin-qatun (兀慎娘子) in this record remains unclear. Notably, it cannot be Erketü qatun (三娘子 or 也兒克兔哈屯 or 忠順夫人 in Chinese records), as Altan Khan married her in 1558.

²¹ *Ming Xizhong Shilu* 72.3500.

²² MSJSBM 57.882. 'Datong mutineers looted the city, fled to the north of the Gobi Desert, and persuaded more than 10,000 of the Mongols of the little prince to invade China.' 大同叛卒大掠城中，潛出漠北，誘小王子數萬人大舉入寇。'In the Datong munity, many mutineers crossed the border and went north to Anda's tribes.' 大同之變，諸叛卒多亡出塞，北走俺答諸部。

²³ HMBLK 212. 'In the leap-year February of the 13th year, [the Ming court] sent officials to settle and pacify Datong, several thousand traitors went north to follow the Mongols.' 十三年閏二月，遣大臣振撫大同，叛者北走從虜幾千人。

emerging as its foremost threat. Furthermore, the most extensive discussions concerning Bayising likely transpired from the conclusion of Jiajing's reign to the midpoint of Wanli's reign. Refer to Appendix 2 for a comprehensive list of all records mentioning Bayising in the *Ming Shilu*.

Perception of Bayising in terms of geographical location, economy, population, and society

Given Bayising's location within the domain of the Tümed Mongols, situated along the border with China, visits from Ming officials were infrequent. Nevertheless, Ming officials have left various depictions of Bayising, shedding light on its geographical location, population, economy, and society. The subsequent list encapsulates such descriptions by Ming officials.

1. 倭有唐街與虜之板升相類。
There is 'Tang street' in Japan. It is like Bayising among the Mongols.²⁴
2. 逆黨板升等處，已成巢穴，鱗次邊疆，朝暮出入，得乘其便。
[There are] traitors in Bayising, which became their nest that borders China. They take advantage of the location's convenience to come and go.²⁵
3. 因河套之利，連年傷殘中國。
They take advantage of the Hetao and hurt China every year.²⁶
4. 豐州地多饒沃，先年虜雖駐牧，每遇艸盡，則營帳遠移，乃今築城架屋，東西相望，咸稱板升，其所群聚者，無非驅掠之民與夫亡命之輩也。
Fengzhou is a fertile land, once occupied by nomads who would relocate their tents when the grass became depleted. Today, settlers have established a city with constructed houses, and the region stretching from the west to the east is known as Bayising. The inhabitants here comprise captives and desperadoes.²⁷
5. 雲中北直虜庭，板升叛逆倚虜為患。
In the north region of Yungzhong, near the Mongols' base area, the traitors residing in Bayising rely on the Mongols and cause disturbances.²⁸
6. 西患在板升。
The disturbances in the west occur in Bayising.²⁹
7. 晉患自板升始也。

²⁴ See material 1 in Appendix 1.

²⁵ See material 4 in Appendix 1.

²⁶ See material 8 in Appendix 1.

²⁷ See material 15 in Appendix 1.

²⁸ See material 17 in Appendix 1.

²⁹ See material 16 in Appendix 1.

Shanxi's disturbance starts with Bayising.³⁰

8. 虜數萬仰食板升。

More than 10,000 Mongols depend on Bayising to produce food.³¹

9. 彼中荒旱飢窘，人思南歸。

Bayising endured a drought, leaving many people hungry and eager to return to China.³²

10. 全有眾萬人，騎五萬。

Zhao Quan³³ has 10,000 people and 50,000 horses.³⁴

11. 十萬板升。

[There are] 100,000 Bayising people.³⁵

12. 板升者華言城也，富等先年皆以白蓮教妖術誘虜。

Bayising in Chinese means city. In the previous year, Qiu Fu³⁶ and his followers used black magic from the White Lotus sect³⁷ to persuade the Mongols.³⁸

In line with these depictions, Ming officials perceived Bayising as a significant threat to the northwest region of China, which shared its border, emphasising its potential impact. Interestingly, Bayising was likened to a contemporary China-town in Japan. The Ming court felt uneasy about a substantial Chinese presence overseas, as Ming officials believed it could potentially lead to disturbances for China. Furthermore, by mid-16th century, Bayising had become a crucial agricultural production centre,³⁹ upon which the Mongols heavily depended. However, one record also shows that during periods of prolonged drought in

³⁰ See material 28 in Appendix 1.

³¹ Ming Muzhong Shilu 64.1533.

³² See material 16 in Appendix 1.

³³ Zhao Quan (趙全 in Chinese), one of the Chinese leaders among the followers of White Lotus sect, fled from China to the Mongols in 1554, causing considerable disruption with China.

³⁴ See material 30 in Appendix 1.

³⁵ See material 34 in Appendix 1.

³⁶ Qiu Fu (丘富 in Chinese), one of the Chinese leaders among the followers of the White Lotus sect, fled from China to the Mongols in 1549.

³⁷ The White Lotus sect, a syncretic religion stemming from the Pure Land tradition of Chinese Buddhism and incorporating concepts from Maitreya, Manichaeism, and even Taoism, has a rich developmental history in China. Throughout successive dynasties, the White Lotus society faced government persecution, primarily due to its rebellious tendencies.

³⁸ Ming Shizhong Shilu 486.8100.

³⁹ Jurungya, 2014: 52; Baddeley 1919: 73–77. This situation is corroborated by two external sources beyond Chinese records. Firstly, the previously cited Mongolian manuscript, *The Jewel Translucent Sutra* (*Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orošiba*), highlights Altan Khan's initiatives in cultivating grains, edible roots, and various fruits, aiming to introduce delectable and flavourful foods to Mongolia. Secondly, a 1619 Russian record mentioning Bayising indicates the cultivation of various types of grain plants, including millet, wheat, and spring-sown crops, along with fruits and vegetables.

Bayising, a considerable number of its residents expressed a desire to return to China for habitation. This suggests that Bayising's society remained susceptible. The population of Bayising reportedly reached 100,000, with Zhao Quan leading an impressive group of over 10,000 people and possessing 50,000 horses—a substantial figure, contributing agricultural products in service to the Mongols. Notably, some among them adhered to the White Lotus sect. According to the record in *Wali wugonglu*, this sect constituted 20% of the population in the Bayising settlements, surpassing the population of the Mongols, who made up a mere 5%.⁴⁰ The fact that significant numbers of Chinese individuals occasionally integrated with the Mongols and established settlements on the borderlands near China suggests a lax control by Ming border officials. Hence, it is reasonable to surmise that smuggling across the border might have been prevalent during the period of Bayising's existence. A record discovered in the *Translation of Language* (*Yiyu* 譯語), authored during the Ming dynasty by Su Zhigao 蘇志皋 (1497–1569), substantiates this suspicion. It explicitly mentions numerous corrupt practices taking place at the border, with allegations that border guards engaged in private trade with the Mongols.⁴¹

The emergence of Bayising: Ming officials' views

Bayising arose within a unique historical context. The following excerpts from Ming officials elucidate their perspectives on the factors contributing to Bayising's emergence.

1. 邊鄙日荒廢矣，一則官吏貪殘，軍民困苦，忍棄鄉土，甘從醜類。

The borderland became uncultivated and barren. One of the reasons is because of corruption and outrage among the border officials. Soldiers and people expe-

⁴⁰ WLWGL 8.454. '(During the Longqi reign) Those Bayising settlements, whether large or small, collectively housed approximately 50,000 Chinese residents. Notably, among them, around 10,000 identified as followers of the White Lotus sect, with an additional 2,000 being of barbarian origin. Each Bayising settlement was under the guidance of appointed leaders, overseeing populations ranging from a minimum of 600 to 700 individuals, and, in certain instances, extending to 800 to 900 people at most.' 大小板升漢人可五萬餘人; 其間白蓮教可一萬人, 夷二千餘人, 皆有酋長; 分部諸酋, 少者六七百, 多者八九百。

⁴¹ *Yiyu* 230. 'Lots of corrupt practices happen in the border, which cannot all be told. The most serious thing was that many border guards traded with the Mongols. They gave axes to the Mongols in exchange for fur coats; gave iron in exchange for shoulders of mutton; gave flowerlike earrings in exchange for horsetail, gave flints in exchange for lambskins.' 邊方夙弊不可勝言。其甚者墩軍多與零賊交易, 以斧得裘, 鐵得羊肘, 鈿耳墜得馬尾, 火石得羔皮。

rienced difficult and miserable living conditions. They had no choice but to give up their homeland and follow the ugly Mongols.⁴²

2. 俺答非但外集部落亦且內招我民如板升之屬是也。

Anda [Altan Khan] not only gathered their tribes, but also recruit our people, like those in Bayising.⁴³

3. 初趙全與丘富從山西妖人呂明鎮習白蓮教，事覺明鎮伏誅，丘富叛降虜，全懼召其弟龍、王廷輔、李自馨從富降俺答，侄邊外古豐州地居田作，招集中國亡命頗雜漢夷居之，眾數萬人名曰板升。

In the beginning, Zhao Quan and Qiu Fu learned the White Lotus from Lü Mingzhen, the Shanxi sorcerer. Later Lü Mingzhen was killed and Qiu Fu surrendered to the Mongols. Zhao Quan was afraid and called his brothers Zhao Long, Wang Tingfu, and Li Zhixin to follow Qiu Fu and surrender to Anda. They settled beyond the border in Fengzhou and cultivated land there. They recruited people who had committed crimes and fled China. More than 10,000 people lived with the Mongols in the place called Bayising.⁴⁴

4. 聞其黨多我中國人，方其去時，不陷於搶擄，則迫於逃亡，而非其樂也。I have heard that most of these people are Chinese. They went there either because they had been kidnapped by the Mongols or fled from China to save their lives. This was not what they were willing to do.⁴⁵

5. 今之板升，皆我中國之人或以亡命而自全，或以虜掠而忘反。

As for people in Bayising today, they are our Chinese people, either who committed crimes and fled China or had been kidnapped by the Mongols and did not want to come back.⁴⁶

6. 失業之民，往往有逃虜中者矣。

Jobless people often fled to the Mongols.⁴⁷

7. 其眾悉叛入虜中居板升大為邊患。

Most of the rebels fled to the Mongols and lived in Bayising. They became big trouble in the borderlands.⁴⁸

It can be inferred that the Chinese settlers of Bayising encompassed various groups, including Mongol captives, rebels, adherents of the White Lotus sect, the unemployed, and individuals with criminal backgrounds. Evidently, Ming officials were cognisant of pivotal reasons behind Bayising's emergence within the Mongol-controlled territory bordering China. The migration phenomena can

⁴² See material 2 in Appendix 1.

⁴³ See material 8 in Appendix 1.

⁴⁴ Ming Muzhong Shilu 52.1292.

⁴⁵ See material 3 in Appendix 1.

⁴⁶ See material 14 in Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ See material 34 in Appendix 1.

⁴⁸ Ming Shizhong Shilu 478.8003.

be elucidated through the push-pull theory, as articulated by Bagne (1969). The pull factors predominantly originated from Altan Khan's recruitment initiatives and the allure of fertile agricultural land in the front Hetao region where Bayising was situated. Conversely, push factors emanated chiefly from Ming court pressures on mutineers and White Lotus sect followers, coupled with challenging living conditions in the borderlands. These push factors impelled many individuals to cross the border, serving the Mongols and seeking a higher quality of life. Nevertheless, no author has highlighted that the inability to normalise and stabilise the trade dynamics between the Mongols and China during the Jiajing period could have been a primary catalyst for the emergence of Bayising. This is substantiated by the fact that Bayising, perceived as a threat to the Ming court, gradually receded from the historical forefront of conflict following a peace treaty between Altan Khan and the Ming court, coupled with the establishment of regular trading in 1571. Notably, the evolution of Bayising did not conclude in 1571; instead, it advanced to a subsequent stage of prosperity. As documented in the *Ming Shilu*,⁴⁹ responding to Altan Khan's request, the Ming Wanli emperor in 1575 consented to christen a new city as 'Guihua' 歸化 for Altan Khan, signifying 'return and transform' or 'naturalisation'. As a matter of fact, the inception of Guihua and the 1571 peace treaty marked the commencement of Hohhot's development,⁵⁰ subsequently assuming a pivotal role in facilitating trade between China and the Mongols.

Viewing Bayising settlers: Ming officials' perspectives

Upon my examination of the documents and records referencing Bayising, it becomes evident that the term 'Bayising' is frequently associated with negative terms or emotions, such as traitors, hatred, and disdain.⁵¹ To comprehend why

⁴⁹ Ming Shenzhong Shilu 43.971.

⁵⁰ Elverskog 2000: 81, 133. According to the Mongolian manuscript *The Jewel Translucent Sutra* (also known as *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orošiba*), the new city built by Altan Khan was called Kökeqota in Mongolian, intending to mimic the lost city of Daidu (大都). Some scholars propose that this city is none other than the city Hohhot, asserting that Kökeqota was the largest among the Bayising settlements. Others suggest that Kökeqota specifically referred to the initial construction of Mayidari juu in 1572. Based on the description from the aforementioned Mongolian manuscript, Kökeqota was situated on the south side of the Dalan Terigün Mountains (Daqing Mountains 大青山 in Chinese records). Nevertheless, both the several Bayising settlements and Kökeqota were situated in the front Hetao area of the Yellow River.

⁵¹ Examples include 'We should hate these people and kill them all.' 當切齒此輩，欲盡屠之，'Bayising traitors.' 板升叛逆，板升諸逆 by Zhang Juzheng. See materials 16 and 17 in Appendix 1.

Ming officials held such unfavourable views toward Bayising and its settlers, it is essential to delve into the behaviours of Bayising settlers perceived by Ming officials as contributing to this negativity. A substantial number of descriptions within the documents shed light on this animosity towards Bayising. The following are illustrative excerpts from Ming officials expressing such sentiments.

1. 與虜之板升相類與其甘為賊用。
They are like the Bayising with the Mongols. They are willing to serve the robbers.⁵²
2. 叛人背華向夷。
They turned to the Mongols and betrayed their home country.⁵³
3. 虜中板升諸處，相鄰伊邇，誘我人民，結聚彌多，凡近日奸細得於盤獲者，率我中國之人，為之向導。
There are several Bayising among the Mongols, which neighbour each other. They tempted Chinese people to go to Bayising, and lots of people gather there. Recently those spies detected and captured by us most likely are our Chinese people. They guide the Mongols to attack China.⁵⁴
4. 自全叛後，教虜左右疏計，課校人畜，益習攻取，圍困，掩襲事，而諸鎮疲於奔命矣。
Since Zhao Quan betrayed China, they taught the Mongols the tactics of arranging troops and logistics in the war. Moreover, they helped the Mongols learn how to conquer, capture, besiege, and launch surprise attacks. Thus, our garrisons are exhausted.⁵⁵
5. 自奸民丘富輩授以攻城之術，於是雲中四境邊堡蕭然無復有存焉者。
Since traitors like Qiu Fu taught the Mongols how to attack fortresses, the fortresses of the four border areas in Yunzhong have all been destroyed, and the areas are desolate now without any fortresses left.⁵⁶
6. 板升之眾，皆中國逋逃，築室耕樹，互市時與虜雜而入市，窺我之虛實動靜，日夜教虜以無厭之求，索無端之賄，要挾邊吏。
Those people who live in Bayising are the ones who fled China. They built houses and cultivated land there. They come with the Mongols when trading starts. They spy on us and day and night teach the Mongols to insatiably seek more. They will ask for bribes and blackmail the border officials.⁵⁷

⁵² See material 1 in Appendix 1.

⁵³ See material 22 in Appendix 1.

⁵⁴ See material 25 in Appendix 1.

⁵⁵ See material 30 in Appendix 1.

⁵⁶ See material 15 in Appendix 1.

⁵⁷ See material 32 in Appendix 1.

7. 嘉靖四十五年事也，板升李自馨等欲要率眾投降。
In Jiajing's 45th year (1566), Li Zhixin and his followers of Bayising wanted to come back to China and surrender.⁵⁸
8. 俺答每欲盜邊，必先置酒全家，計定乃行。全為俺答建九楹殿。
Every time when Anda wants to raid China's borderland, he will prepare a feast in Zhao Quan's home and discuss the tactics, then they will implement it. Zhao Quan built a nine-pillar palace for Anda.⁵⁹
9. 板升被鹵萬人，種田千頃，歲收可充眾食
Those 10,000 Bayising people who are captives from border raids cultivate and have more than 60 million square meters of agricultural land. They produce grain to feed many people.⁶⁰
10. 其板升諸逆，倡為流言，殊為可惡。
Bayising traitors spread rumours that are very hateful.⁶¹
11. 此輩甚不樂貢市，利在搶掠。
They do not like tribute and trading. Instead, they like robbery.⁶²
12. 虜人不知所謂礦，皆板升之徒導之，板升之人雖得礦亦不知煎取之法，又內地之人導之。
The Mongols do not know where the mine is. It is the Bayising people who told the Mongols where to get it. However, the Bayising people do not know how to extract although they know where to find the mine. The people in inner China guided them on how to extract.⁶³
13. 大小板升地方皆為中國人民，比屋而居，耕田而食。其雄桀者即為頭領以統之，而總隸於虜，故月錢行票悉其所為，此皆中外諱言，邊臣所不敢言者。
The people in small and large Bayising are all Chinese people. They live in houses next to each other, cultivate land, and feed themselves with their production. Those people who have exceptional ability are the leaders who manage the people in Bayising and report to the Mongols. So, it is known that the collection of a monthly protection racket for the Mongols is done by them. However, both China and Mongols do not want to speak of it, and the border officials dare not speak of it.⁶⁴
14. 上曰：逆賊背華導虜，擾害邊境，罪不容誅。
The emperor said that those traitors betrayed China and guided the Mongols to harass the borderland. Even death cannot atone for their offence.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ See material 6 in Appendix 1.

⁵⁹ See material 30 in Appendix 1.

⁶⁰ See material 13 in Appendix 1.

⁶¹ See material 21 in Appendix 1.

⁶² See material 21 in Appendix 1.

⁶³ See material 23 in Appendix 1.

⁶⁴ See material 26 in Appendix 1.

⁶⁵ Ming Shizhong Shilu 505.8334.

15. 板升之人久處夷地，狼子野心，終不可馴。

Those Chinese people who have lived in Bayising for a long time have become like sons of wolves with wild minds. These people cannot be tamed.⁶⁶

In the broader perspective, Ming officials perceived the people of Bayising as traitors who, by serving their adversaries, sought to strengthen the Mongols and guide them in attacks against China—an act that fuelled the deep-seated animosity of the Ming court towards them. Furthermore, the Bayising settlers were viewed as exploiting their strategic location to engage in espionage on behalf of the Mongols and were implicated in running a monthly protection racket. As a result, Ming officials nurtured a sense of distrust towards these individuals. Notably, the construction of a nine-pillar palace for Altan Khan by the Bayising people suggested their allegiance to Altan Khan as their leader rather than recognising the Chinese emperor. This sentiment is reinforced in *A Letter of Gratitude from King Shunyi of North Di (Beidi Shunyiwang Anda Xiebiao 北狄順義王俺答謝表)*,⁶⁷ a letter expressing gratitude from Altan Khan to the Longqi emperor of Ming China following the peace treaty and resumption of trading in 1571. In this document, Bayising leader Zhao Quan 趙全 is portrayed as the one who allegedly tempted Altan Khan to raid China and was consequently used as a scapegoat. The excerpt from *Beidi Shunyiwang Anda Xiebiao* serves as a poignant example of why the Ming court held a deep-seated animosity towards the people of Bayising.

每次因奸人趙全等誘引，入邊作歹，雖嘗搶掠些須，人馬常被殺傷。近年各邊時常調兵出搗，殺擄家口，趕奪馬匹，邊外野草盡燒，冬春人畜難過。實臣等罪惡自取，委因趙全等誘引。

Every time I [Altan Khan] was attempted by Zhao Quan, I entered China to engage in wrongful activities. Although I could seize some possessions, I also lost horses and people in the process. In recent years, each garrison has frequently dispatched troops to combat and kill our people, confiscating our horses. Across the border, all the grasslands have been ravaged by fire, making survival during winter and spring a formidable challenge, all attributable to my actions. I accept the consequences, but it's undeniable that Zhao Quan led me astray.

⁶⁶ Ming Shenzhong Shilu 141.2636.

⁶⁷ BDSYWADXB 1.21–37. This letter is certainly not the original composition in Mongolian by Altan Khan, and it has been translated into Chinese and rephrased to conform to the preferences of the Chinese authorities of that era. Nevertheless, it preserves crucial messages pertaining to the interactions and relationships between the Mongols and the Ming court.

Furthermore, the materials indicate that the Bayising leader Li Zhixin (?–1571) expressed a desire to return to China with his followers in 1566. It appears that the Bayising settlers, serving as labourers for the Mongols, encountered conditions that were different from what they had anticipated.

Addressing the Bayising issue: Perspectives of Ming officials

The emergence of Bayising suggests that neither China nor the Mongols possessed sufficient power to overcome their adversary. Nevertheless, given the Ming court's perception of Bayising as a substantial threat, Ming officials took responsive actions. Within the scrutinised documents, various proposed approaches are evident, with some evolving into policies that were eventually implemented. These approaches are delineated below.

1. 多方設法招回在虜人口，免其糧差，加意安輯。嘉靖末年多有邊民逃入虜中，若板升之眾是也。

Try many ways to call back those people who are with the Mongols, waive their taxes and labour requirements. Pay attention to arranging them. Many people living in the borderlands fled to the Mongols in the last few years of Jiajing's reign. These people are the Bayising people.⁶⁸

2. 一廣招降，此時板升之眾築城近邊故也，臣等議得虜營之兵，多半俱係漢人，豈無父母妻子之念。

Firstly, we should broadly call back these people, as now the Bayising people have built the houses and castles near the border. We discussed and concluded that more than 50% of the soldiers among the Mongols are Chinese people. How can they live without missing their parents, wives, and children?⁶⁹

3. 或購賞以擒渠魁，或遣間以離黨與，務使互相疑貳，莫敢近邊。

We can offer a bounty for the capture of Bayising leaders, or we can send spies to create factions among the people and make them suspect each other so that they dare not to go to the border.⁷⁰

4. 板升之眾亦有謀歸中國者，而以獨力謀，洩事不成者多有，若能用間以招之，當必有應者，復廣募間諜之士。

There are some people in Bayising who wanted to return China. They planned it independently but eventually failed due to information leakage. If we can segre-

⁶⁸ See material 2 in Appendix 1.

⁶⁹ See material 5 in Appendix 1.

⁷⁰ See material 2 in Appendix 1.

gate them to lure them back, there must be some people who respond. We should broadly recruit them as spies.⁷¹

5. 如仍畏避執迷，甘為虜中奴僕，或聽諸逆反役虜地耕納，人心已死，天道必誅。將來進兵，盡從剿殺。

If they insist and still want to serve the Mongols or listen to those people who betrayed China and work with the Mongols, their human hearts are dead. Heaven will punish them, and in the future, we are going to send troops to kill them all.⁷²

6. 請與我諸經籍以教虜，令習章句，通文墨，不數年大弱矣。

The Bayising people asked for various books from us in order to teach the Mongols. So, if we can teach the Mongols to learn Chinese characters and literature, the Mongols will become much weaker in a few years.⁷³

7. 夫板升者未易散也，而散之亦非計也。我有意化虜，即彼既為之兆也，又將為之前茅者也。

It is not easy to disperse those people gathered in Bayising, and dispersion is not a good idea. If we intend to change the Mongols, then these people not only can be an indication, but also can be the pioneers.⁷⁴

8. 責令俺酋將版升諸逆賊首趙全等生擒解送，被掠人口，悉放南歸，然後優加賞給。

Ask Anda to capture and send back the leaders of the Bayising people like Zhao Quan, etc. to China and return the captives. Then, we can offer premium rewards to the Mongols.⁷⁵

9. 或遣善事者，並皆詐逃其地，俾與逃叛人民雜處，務誘結叛民魁桀者，伺虜可乘，則磔取以獻功。虜不可乘，則盡約叛民願歸之眾以受賞，或叛民地方並胡虜巢穴有可陰擊，則設伏掩殺以振威武，使叛眾畏威來歸。或虜與叛民交結已固，尤宜遣最熟間諜，乘隙密間虜心，使之多殺逃叛，激其歸志，蓋虜地既多中國之民。

Or we can send some people who are good at their jobs, pretend that they fled China to live with those Bayising people who also fled China. We must try to connect with those leaders who betrayed China, seek opportunities to kill these people and make contributions. If there is no opportunity, then invite those people who want to return to China and come back for the rewards. Or when Bayising and the place where the Mongols live are defenceless, take the opportunity to kill them in an ambush and show our might, so that the Bayising people will fear for their lives and come back to China. Or in case the traitors have a firm relationship with the Mongols, it is better to send the best spies who are familiar with

⁷¹ See material 3 in Appendix 1.

⁷² See material 9 in Appendix 1.

⁷³ See material 36 in Appendix 1.

⁷⁴ See material 36 in Appendix 1.

⁷⁵ See material 11 in Appendix 1.

the situation to tear these traitors and the Mongols apart, so that we can make the Mongols kill more of the traitors. This can push more Bayising people to come back to China, as there are so many Chinese people among the Mongols.⁷⁶

10. 因而撫之，明示以聖朝不殺之仁，使之自生自養。

Comfort their minds and express the policy of no killing. Let them be independent and self-sufficient.⁷⁷

11. 開其生路、嘉其順志、因時撫處、輯其心而藉其力。

Make ways for them to survive. Encourage them to be obedient, and take advantage of their forces. We can use them one day when needed.⁷⁸

12. 此輩正宜置之虜中，他日有用他處，不必招之來歸。

These people should still remain among the Mongols. We need not call them back as we may need them one day.⁷⁹

13. 板升徒眾既多，在虜已久，許令照舊耕牧外，自納貢以後，我不受彼之降虜，彼勿納我之叛人。

So many people have already gathered in Bayising. They have lived among the Mongols for a long time. Let them cultivate land and tend to cattle as usual. In addition, since the tribute was re-established, we have not accepted the Mongols who wanted to surrender to us. The Mongols no longer accept our Chinese traitors who want to join the Mongols.⁸⁰

It can be deduced that the Ming court adopted two primary strategies as measures to address the Bayising issue: offering incentives to lure back the Bayising residents and deploying troops to eliminate them. Historical records affirm the implementation of both approaches. Notably, entries in the *Ming Shilu* document the recall of 1,640 Chinese individuals from Bayising in 1558,⁸¹ over 1,800 individuals in 1562,⁸² 1,980 individuals in 1563,⁸³ and 729 individuals in 1564.⁸⁴ Additionally, the records highlight an incident in 1565 where Li Zhixin, a Chinese leader in Bayising, expressed a desire to return to China with his group but faced challenges in doing so.⁸⁵ A memorial to the throne authored by Shen Han 沈涵 (1541–?) further attests that 2,422 individuals were recalled

⁷⁶ See material 26 in Appendix 1.

⁷⁷ See material 14 in Appendix 1. This material was written after reaching the peace treaty in 1571.

⁷⁸ See material 14 in Appendix 1. This material was written after reaching the peace treaty in 1571.

⁷⁹ See material 20 in Appendix 1. This material was written after reaching the peace treaty in 1571.

⁸⁰ See material 22 in Appendix 1. This material was written after reaching the peace treaty in 1571.

⁸¹ Ming Shizhong Shilu 469.7886.

⁸² Ming Shizhong Shilu 518.8497.

⁸³ Ming Shizhong Shilu 530.8543.

⁸⁴ Ming Shizhong Shilu 543.8779.

⁸⁵ Ming Shizhong Shilu 546.8818.

in 1568, 15 people in 1574, and 12 people in 1575.⁸⁶ Additionally, one of the memorials to the throne written by Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1541–1588), the Supreme Commander of Military Affairs and Director General of Supplies of Xuanfu-Datong, reports that 2,226 people returned to China from the Mongols in 1570.⁸⁷ A record from the *Ming Shilu* also records the return of 4,787 individuals to China in 1571.⁸⁸ Notably, the discernible decline in the number of people recalled in 1574 and 1575 compared to previous years can be attributed to the peace treaty reached in 1571. Given that the Bayising settlers played a crucial role in meeting the Mongols' food production requirements, the Ming court, upon the initial establishment of the peace treaty, hesitated to recall individuals, fearing potential conflict with the Mongols. Fang Fongshi 方逢時 (1522–1596), a key figure in securing the peace treaty, conveyed in his memorial to the throne that the repatriation of Chinese settlers of Bayising may lead to disturbances with the Mongols, jeopardising the newly attained peace.⁸⁹ Zhang Juzheng, in a letter to Fang Fongshi, echoed the sentiment, suggesting that these individuals should remain in Bayising, emphasising their potential future utility.⁹⁰ Wang Chonggu 王崇古 similarly advocated for minimising the recall of Bayising people to avoid provoking conflicts with the Mongols.⁹¹ Furthermore, the agreement between the Ming court and the Mongols specified that if the Ming court accepted Bayising residents, compensation was required to offset the Mongols' losses.⁹² This condition served as a pretext for Ming border officials to abstain from receiving individuals from Bayising.⁹³ Moreover, various authors highlighted the use of Bayising settlers as spies. Notably, a record in the *Ming Shilu* reveals that, before the peace treaty, two individuals residing in Bayising for an extended period received rewards from the Ming court. They facilitated communication with one of the Bayising Chinese leaders, attempting to persuade

⁸⁶ See material 38 in Appendix 1.

⁸⁷ See material 9 in Appendix 1.

⁸⁸ *Ming Shenzhong Shilu* 3.89.

⁸⁹ See material 14 in Appendix 1. 'Now that the Mongols have submitted, and we have an agreement with them, recalling people would signal our distrust and potentially lead to a quarrel with the Mongols.' 今虜服矣，與之約矣，而複招之，是自示以不信，而啟虜以乘釁之事也。

⁹⁰ See material 20 in Appendix 1.

⁹¹ *Ming Muzhong Shilu* 64.1533. 'Over 10,000 Mongols rely on Bayising for grain production. If we recall them too hastily, it might incite a conflict.' 虜數萬仰食板升收穫，若招徠太速恐啟戎。

⁹² SYCHZK 2.35.

⁹³ See material 38 in Appendix 1. 'The substantial variation in the count of repatriated individuals surely has underlying reasons. It is quite likely that the Mongol chief's requests for rewards will be wielded as a justification by the border officials.' 招降人數多寡懸絕如此，是可謂無其故哉？大抵邊臣每以中國收降虜酋索賞為詞。

him and his followers to return to China, despite an ultimately unsuccessful outcome.⁹⁴ These two individuals later returned to China, providing the court with a map detailing the Mongols' territory.

While the proactive recall of Bayising residents was an approach adopted by the Ming court to address the Bayising issue before the peace treaty, Ming officials observed instances where certain border commanders and soldiers allegedly killed returning Bayising individuals. These officials purportedly portrayed the victims as spies or enemies to claim rewards. In a memorial to the throne, Wang Chonggu expressed the following concern:

諸邊頻年招引人口，率皆中國被鹵奔命投歸，各該將官中間或有陰縱家丁悍卒，戮歸人以冒升賞者。有家丁悍卒，守墩出哨，通同擅殺，捏報將官，而將官反為庇護者。又有歸人叩邊，墩軍不在，或坐視而不肯引送，歸人出不得已，乘空而入，經過地方有司盤獲，因無左驗，誣為奸細而竟坐以斬者，傷天地之和，阻來歸之路。

Several garrisons continuously call back people every year. Most of them were captives who desperately wanted to come back to China. Some commanders secretly allowed their soldiers to kill those who wanted to come back and report that those people were spies or enemies in order to get rewards. Some soldiers killed those people who wanted to return when they were on duty to protect the base or on patrol. They falsely reported to the commanders, and their commanders concealed the truth. Some people returned to the border, but no guard was around, or the guards did not want to assist. Those people who wanted to return had no alternative but to take advantage of the gap to enter the border. Later, these people were captured by local authorities and could not show any documents. They were framed and viewed as spies and then were executed. This damages peace in heaven and on earth, as well as stops those people who wanted to return.⁹⁵

From this statement, it is imaginable how precarious it must have been for those Bayising individuals eager to return to China, faced with the dilemma that they encountered. Regarding the deployment of troops to eliminate Bayising settlers, the *Ming Shilu* records again provide insights into such occurrences. In 1560, Liu Han 劉漢 (?-?), the Datong regional commander, dispatched 3,000 soldiers to assail Bayising, resulting in the deaths of 83 individuals and the capture of 67. The military action led to the destruction of their palaces and houses, though Zhao Quan, a significant Bayising leader, managed to escape.⁹⁶ In one of Wang Chonggu's memorials to the throne, a proposal was made that, as a precondition

⁹⁴ Ming Muzhong Shilu 22.589.

⁹⁵ See material 9 in Appendix 1.

⁹⁶ See material 9 in Appendix 1.

before reaching a peace treaty with Altan Khan, Zhao Quan and other prominent leaders should be repatriated to China.⁹⁷ Remarkably, this proposal was accepted and transformed into policy by the Ming court. Consequently, in 1571, Zhao Quan and other Bayising leaders were sent back to the Ming court and subsequently executed.⁹⁸

Conclusion

The materials in the *Huang Ming Jinshi Wen Bian*, the *Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao*, and the *Ming Shilu* illuminate Ming officials' perceptions of the Chinese residents in Bayising, the underlying reasons for the emergence of Bayising, and the Ming officials' approach to the Bayising threat. Primarily, the Bayising residents, particularly the Chinese leaders of Bayising, were labelled as traitors aiding the Mongols. This accounts for the prevalent negative impressions towards those Bayising residents who were originally from China in the historical records of Ming China. Nevertheless, certain Ming officials expressed profound sympathy for the Chinese inhabitants of Bayising. Additionally, Ming officials considered Bayising and its residents a national security concern near the Chinese border. The disdain towards the Bayising Chinese inhabitants stemmed not only from their residence in Mongol territory but also from their actions against China. Following the 1571 peace treaty with the Mongols, bringing back Bayising people was no longer a primary focus for the Ming court in addressing the Bayising issue. Instead, the number of individuals returning to China significantly declined. After 1571, the Ming government acknowledged the advantages of allowing Chinese Bayising residents to remain in the region. This decision was driven by the anticipation of their potential future utility for the Ming court and the desire to maintain the newly established Sino-Mongol relationship, as the Mongols heavily depended on Bayising for food production. The materials also delineate the timeframe during which the Bayising issue notably concerned the Ming court: approximately 80 years, starting from 1546, though the establishment of Bayising likely predates this period. As Bayising gradually ceased to be a major concern for the Ming court after the 1571 peace treaty, it integrated into the subsequent tribute and trade system between the Mongols and Ming China. The Ming emperor's christening of the new city built by Altan Khan as 'Guihua' and granting permission for Bayising people to stay among the Mongols symbolised this transformative phase.

⁹⁷ Ming Muzhong Shilu 486.8100–8101.

⁹⁸ See material 11 in Appendix 1.

Furthermore, we observed that a significant number of memorials to the throne and letters from relevant officials, particularly Fang Fengshi, Wang Chonggu, and Zhang Juzheng, are highly aligned with the actual process and conditions of reaching the success of 1571 peace treaty. Notably, key examples include proposals urging Altan Khan to return Chinese leaders of Bayising to China as a precondition for the peace treaty. Another pivotal incident centred on the repatriation of Baya Ači (1552–1583, 把漢那吉 or 大成台吉 in Chinese records), which means ‘little or younger grandson’, also known as Daičing Ejei Tayiji,⁹⁹ Altan Khan’s grandson who sought refuge in China in 1570, serving as a diplomatic pawn to initiate peace talks and facilitate the exchange of Bayising Chinese leaders.¹⁰⁰ Reviewing these historical documents from Ming China that mention Bayising, we reveal a progression of shaping perceptions to formal proposals through memorials to the throne and letters, ultimately translating into implemented policies in the realm of foreign affairs with the Mongols.

In summary, the emergence of Bayising was grounded in a distinctive historical context. Additionally, Bayising played a crucial role not only in shaping Sino–Mongol relations but also in facilitating collaboration between nomadic and agricultural communities when official trade channels were absent. Neither the repatriation nor military intervention proved to be fundamental solutions to the Bayising issue amidst the ongoing confrontation between the Mongols and Ming court. However, the establishment of normalised and stabilised trade, following the mutually beneficial peace treaty, emerged as a definitive resolution benefiting both parties.

⁹⁹ Temule 2016: 125. According to *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orošiba*, his name was recorded as Daičing Ejei Tayiji.

¹⁰⁰ See material 11 in Appendix 1; *Ming Muzhong Shilu* 50:1252; *Ming Muzhong Shilu* 51:1277.

Appendix 1: List of the material and authors in the *Huang Min Jinshi Wen Bian* 皇明經世文編 and the *Huang Ming Jialong Shu Chao* 皇明嘉隆疏抄

Material code	Author name	Year of <i>jinshi</i> (進士) exam passed	Highest position held	Title/Source
1	Qian Wei 錢薇 (1502–1554)	1532	Supervising Secretary of the Office of the Scrutiny of Rites (Li ke ji shi zhong 禮科給事中)	<i>Yudangdao Chuwoyi</i> 與當道處倭議 HMJSWB 214.254.
2	Zheng Xiao 鄭曉 (1499–1566)	1523	Minister of Justice (Xing bu shang shu 刑部尚書)	<i>Huiyi Datong Xunan Shangyue Tibingxiang Shu</i> 會議大同巡按尚約題兵餉疏 HMJSWB 217.288.
3	Cheng Wende 程文德 (1487–1559)	1529	Zhejiang Provincial Administration Commission (Zhejiang cheng xuan bu zheng shi si 浙江承宣布政使司)	<i>Mielu Liushi Shu</i> 滅虜六事疏 HMJSWB 221.331.
4	Zhao Bingran 趙炳然 (1507–1569)	1535	Minister of War (Bing bu shang shu 兵部尚書)	<i>Tiwei Jinglüe Zhongzhen Bianwu Yijituanrang Dajishi</i> 題為經畧重鎮邊務以極圖安攘大計事 HMJSWB 253.688.
5	Yang Bo 楊博 (1509–1574)	1529	Grand Preceptor of the Heir Apparent (Tai zi tai shi 太子太師) Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Luzhong Xiangren Chuanbao Yiqing Shu</i> 虜中降人傳報夷情疏 HMJSWB 275.231.

6	Yang Bo 楊博 (1509–1574)	1529	Grand Preceptor of the Heir Apparent (太子太師) Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Fuxuanda Zongdu Jiangdongzhuoyi Bansheng Guizheng</i> 覆宣大總督江東酌議板升歸正 HMJSWB 276.249.
7	Gao Gong 高拱 (1513–1578)	1541	Chief Grand Secretary (Nei ge shou fu 內閣首輔)	<i>Luzhong Neifu Bianhuan Shaoning Qijishi Daxiubianzheng Yiyongtu Zhian Shu</i> 虜眾內附邊患稍寧乞及時大修邊政以永圖治安疏 HMJSWB 310.490.
8	Cai Runan 蔡汝楠 (1515–1565)	1532	Right Vice Minister of War (Bing bu you shi lang 兵部右侍郎)	<i>Shuyugyanbianqing Zanxiurang Yiguangshenwushishu</i> 攄愚個言邊情贊修攘以光神武事疏 HMJSWB 315.656.
9	Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1515–1588)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Hegongshi Gengshangge Yikai Guiminxianghua shu</i> 核功實更賞格以開歸民向化疏 HMJSWB 316.674.
10	Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1515–1588)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Yanchi shanxi Neijun Bingwu Zhuanzeren Yifalumou Shu</i> 嚴飭山西內郡兵務專責任以伐虜謀疏 HMJSWB 316.670.
11	Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1515–1588)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Weiyiqiu Kuansai Zhuoyi shiyi Shu</i> 為夷酋款塞酌議事宜疏 HMJSWB 316.676.

12	Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1515–1588)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Queyi Fenggong Shiyi Shu</i> 確議封貢事宜疏 HMJSWB 317.684.
13	Wang Chonggu 王崇古 (1515–1588)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Zhuoxu Luwang Qingqi Sishi Shu</i> 酌許虜王請乞四事疏 HMJSWB 318.701.
14	Fang Fengshi 方逢時 (1522–1596)	1541	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Weichen Bianwu Shenluqing Yi dingguoshi Yiyong Dajishi</i> 為陳邊務申虜情以定國是以永大計事 HMJSWB 321.20.
15	Huo Ji 霍冀 (1516–1575)	1544	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Yangzun Mingzhao Gongjin Jiubiantushuo Yibian Shenglanshi</i> 仰遵明詔恭進九邊圖說以便聖覽事 HMJSWB 323.35.
16	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Yujiliaozongdu Mouandabansheng Zhishi</i> 與薊遼總督謀俺荅板升之始 HMJSWB 326.80.
17	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dajizhen Fuyuan Wangjianchuan Lunjibian Wuhuan</i> 答薊鎮撫院王鑒川論薊邊五患 HMJSWB 326.79.
18	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Yuwangjianchuan Mouqu Bansheng Zhiluchuni Zhilu</i> 與王鑒川謀取板升制虜 HMJSWB 326.82.

19	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dawangjianchuan Jigongshi Lihai</i> 答王鑾川計貢市利害 HMJSWB 326.83.
20	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dajiliaozongdu Fangjinhu Jichubansheng Nizhong</i> 答薊遼總督方金湖計處板升逆種 HMJSWB 327.91.
21	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dafangjinhu</i> 答方金湖 HMJSWB 327.92.
22	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dashanxi Cuixunfu</i> 答山西崔巡撫 HMJSWB 327.99.
23	張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Daxuanfuzongdu Zhengfanxi</i> 答宣府總督鄭範溪 HMJSWB 328.110.
24	Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582)	1547	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dasanbianzongdu</i> 答三邊總督鄭範溪 MJSWB 328.115.
25	Zhang Lu 張 鹵 (1523– 1598)	1559	Chief Minister of Judicial Review (Da li si qing 大理寺卿)	<i>Xianyuzhong Yiyuchifangqiu Dajishu</i> 獻愚忠以預飭防秋大計疏 HMJSWB 364.524.
26	Wei Shiliang 魏時亮 (1529–1591)	1559	Nanjing Minister of Justice (Nan jing xing bu shang shu 南京刑部尚書)	<i>Tiweishengming Jiayilufang Gongchendaji Yishibayi Shu</i> 題為聖明加意虜防恭陳大計一十八議疏 HMJSWB 371.599.

27	Zhang Siwei 張四維 (1526–1585)	1553	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Yuwangjianchuan Lungongshi Dijiu Shu</i> 與王鑒川論貢市第 九書 HMJSWB 373.633.
28	Yu Youding 余 有丁 (1527– 1584)	1562	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Kuanlu Cewen</i> 款虜策問 HMJSWB 391.92.
29	Wang Jiaping 王家屏 (1537–1604)	1568	Chief Grand Secretary (內閣首輔)	<i>Dashidongquan Sima</i> 答石東泉司馬 HMJSWB 393.107.
30	Feng Shike 馮 時可 (1549–?)	1571	Right Administration Vice Commissioner of a Province (Bu zheng si you can zheng 布政司右參 政)	<i>Anda Houzhi</i> 俺答後志 HMJSWB 434.612.
31	Tu zongjun 涂 宗濬 (1555– 1621)	1583	Minister of War (兵部尚書)	<i>Subuchongbian Jiangling Fajiaomou Shu</i> 速補衝邊將領伐狡 謀疏 HMJSWB 450.86.
32	Chen Yidian 陳懿典 (1554–1638)	1592	Hanlin Academician Reader-in-waiting (Han lin yuan shi du xue shi 翰林院侍讀 學士)	<i>Choubianyigao Xu</i> 籌邊移稿序 HMJSWB 465.244.
33	Li weizhen 李 維楨 (1547– 1626)	1568	Nanjing Minister of Rites (Nan jing li bu shang shu 南京禮部 尚書)	<i>Jiubianjilüe Xu</i> 九邊輯略序 HMJSWB 466.260.
34	Song Yihang 宋一韓 (?–?)	1592	Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War (Bing ke ji shi zhong 兵科給 事中)	<i>Fuzhenqididanlu Qingchakan Yizheng Qijunfuguo zhizui Shu</i> 撫鎮棄地啖虜請查勘 以正欺君負國之罪疏 HMJSWB 467.263.

35	Song Yihang 宋一韓 (?-?)	1592	Supervising Secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War (兵科給事中)	<i>Bianfang Nanyu Xuanda Jiyu Jizhen Jingchenmoyi Yibei Sheng ming Caize</i> 邊防難於宣大急於薊鎮敬陳末議以備聖明採擇疏 HMJSWB 467.269.
36	Xu guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633)	1604	Minister of Rites (Li bu shang shu 禮部尚書)	<i>Furongce</i> 服戎策 HMJSWB 492.598.
37	Li Tang 李棠 (?-?)	1538	Right Vice Minister of Personnel (Li bu you shi lang 吏部右侍郎)	<i>Zecheng zhongchen Jishi Jinglüebianwu Shu</i> 責成重臣及時經畧邊務疏 HMJSWB BY1.687.
38	Shen Han 沈涵 (1541–?)	1571	Investigating Censor in the Investigation Bureau (Jian cha yu shi 監察御史)	<i>Tiwei Kubaobianguan ChoushiXiangren Yinhuaibianshi Kenqi</i> 題為酷暴邊官讎視降人陰壞邊事懇乞 HMJLSC 16.691.

**Appendix 2: Instances of words associated
with the term ‘Bayising’ 板升 / 版升 in the *Ming Shilu***

Instances	Year	Reign of Emperor	Source
1	1559	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 478.8003
2	1560	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 486.8100
3	1560	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 486.8100
4	1560	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 486.8100
5	1562	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 505.8334
6	1564	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 539.8732
7	1565	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 546.8818

8	1565	Jiajing 嘉靖	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 553.8905
9	1568	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 22.589
10	1568	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 22.597
11	1568	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 23.616
12	1570	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 50.1252
13	1570	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 51.1277
14	1570	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 52.1292
15	1570	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 52.1292
16	1570	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 52.1293
17	1571	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shizhong Shilu</i> 64.1533
18	1572	Longqing 隆慶	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 3.67
19	1576	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 52.1229
20	1577	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 67.1458
21	1582	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 129.2406
22	1583	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 141.2635
23	1583	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 141.2636
24	1583	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 143.2666
25	1583	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 143.2666
26	1583	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 143.2666
27	1586	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 172.3158
28	1586	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 172.3158
29	1587	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 189.3548
30	1591	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 238.4409
31	1611	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 485.9146
32	1612	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 503.9562
33	1618	Wanli 萬曆	<i>Ming Shenzhong Shilu</i> 576.10903
34	1626	Tianqi 天啟	<i>Ming Xizhong Shilu</i> 72.3500

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- MS: *Ming Shi* 明史 [The History of the Ming Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuji, 1974.
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Some Cases of Official Corruption in the Yuan Dynasty Based on Chinese Sources

Abstract

During the reign of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) in China, corruption played a significant role and had a serious impact on the stability of government and social life of the conquered. Corruption was widespread at all levels of administration, including among senior officials, high-ranking officials, and local authorities. This included both Mongol rulers and representatives of the *semu*, who were the core elements of the officialdom. Corruption exacerbated poverty among ordinary people, as funds allocated for public needs were often redirected to benefit corrupt officials, eroding public trust in the government and the legitimacy of authority. Such a phenomenon heightened anti-government sentiment and served as the main catalyst for social unrest and uprisings. Moreover, corruption resulted in the appointment and promotion of officials not based on their qualifications but rather on personal connections and bribes. This diminished the efficiency of governance, as it did not always ensure that the most qualified individuals occupied key positions. This article offers insight into the phenomenon of corruption during the Yuan dynasty. The author explores the unprecedented level of corruption among officials and its impact on the living conditions of ordinary people in China. The article delves into a considerable number of instances of high-ranking officials' malpractice taken from primary materials, providing a detailed analysis. This approach allows readers to gain an understanding of the social situation during Mongol rule in China and the role that corruption played in the overthrow of the Yuan dynasty. Social crisis was mostly caused by the employment of dishonest officials and the absence of the representative of the Chinese literati at the officialdom. It is worth mentioning that Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294) managed to unite the vast expanses of China due to the assistance of Confucian scholars who served him as valuable allies in propagating Chinese values, traditions, as well vital elements of the civil administration.

Keywords: Yuan dynasty, corruption, moral decline, Ahmad Fanakati, Sangha, Kublai Khan, *Yuanshi*, *semu*

It goes without saying that the Mongol invasion altered the course of the centuries-old history of China. The conquest of *tianxia* 天下¹ was not an easy task for the Mongolian army. Over a span of nearly seven decades, from 1211 to 1279, the Mongolian rule in China unfolded, presenting a complex narrative that defies simplistic assessments. A considerable amount of scholars claim that the Mongols were the unifiers of the vast expanses of China, which led to the cultural integration of many nations. John Dardess,² Thomas Allsen,³ Morris Rossabi,⁴ and A.Sh Kadyrbaev⁵ all share this point of view. These scholars consider that the contributions of the Mongols to world history and particularly to the development of Chinese civilisation were enormous because they facilitated cross-cultural connections and exchange, the encouragement of maritime trade, and the flourishing of science, medicine, and literature (e.g., the genre *zaju* 雜劇 reached its peak under Mongol rule in China).⁶ Moreover, the conquerors were famous for their tolerant attitude towards various religions.

On the other hand, we cannot deny that the Mongol conquests led to the termination of some histories, the transformation of others, and the creation of new nations, most notably the Mongols' own.⁷ The Mongols, unfamiliar with governance management, had to seek assistance from *semuren* 色目人⁸

¹ Literally meaning '(all) under Heaven', *tianxia* 天下 is a Chinese term for a historical Chinese cultural concept that denoted either the entire geographical world or the metaphysical realm of mortals and later became associated with political sovereignty.

² Dardess 2003: 120.

³ Allsen 2001: 211–212.

⁴ Rossabi 2020: 27.

⁵ Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 18–19.

⁶ *Zaju* 雜劇 is a synthetic genre of dramatic art, based on the coherent performance of arias (one after another), alternating with recitation and dancing. Bai Renfu 白仁甫 (1226–1306), Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (1210–1280), Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 (ca. 1250–1321), and Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖 (1264–?) were the most prominent representatives of the *zaju* genre. Bokschanin et al. 2010: 175.

⁷ Mote 1994: 617.

⁸ During the reign of the Mongols in China, society was divided into four groups: the Mongols were at the pinnacle of the power, the *semu* 色目 belonged to the second group, *hanren* 漢人 (Northern Chinese) were in the third category, and *nanren* 南人 (Southern Chinese) were in the fourth. Elizabeth Endicott gives the following statistics regarding the number of the ethnic groups after the final subjugation of China: Mongolian and *semu* households (around 400,000) comprised 3% of the whole population, the Northern Chinese (*hanren*) households approximately 2 million (15%), and the Southern Chinese (*nanren*) households 11 million (82%). Endicott–West 1989: 86. The *semu* referred to a special social class composed of people from Central and Western Asia as well as other non-Mongol and non-Chinese ethnicities. Central Asians included Uighurs, Turks and many others who were brought into the Mongol administration for their expertise in various fields, such as finance, administration, and trade. Western Asians and Middle Easterners comprised Persians, Arabs, and other people from the Islamic world. They brought with them advanced knowledge in fields such as astronomy,

to make their rule more effective and long term. Such a strategic course left a huge imprint on the daily lives of the Chinese, who were in most cases denied participation in the political life of their motherland. Charles O. Hucker emphasises that the Mongols called the Chinese the ‘dregs of the social ladder’,⁹ which undeniably exacerbated popular discontent with the Mongols in the country. Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936), a Chinese writer, negatively assessed the activities of the Mongols in China and condemned the unequal policy pursued in relation to various peoples living in the *tianxia* system. He also emphasised the support given by members of the *Guomindang* 國民黨 in the early 1930s for the activities of Genghis Khan (ca. 1162–1227), pointing out that ‘their ancestors were in slavery under the Mongol rule’.¹⁰

The collapse of the Yuan dynasty had several causes, such as various court intrigues, a disinterest in administration, weakening armies, natural disasters, and a deterioration of the court personnel. In my opinion, an unprecedented level of corruption in the country played a key role to overthrowing of the Mongol rule in 1368 by Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398). The abolition of the examination system significantly worsened the quality of the government apparatus and led to an unstable economic situation in China. The officials were mostly interested in self-enrichment and promotion, often neglecting their duties, and taking bribes. In the framework of the current article, I aim to explore the rich and plentiful assortment of primary and secondary sources in Chinese, English, and Russian regarding the impact of the vicious cycle of corruption on society during the reign of the Yuan emperors: Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294), Temür Khan (r. 1294–1307), Külüg Khan (r. 1308–1311), Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan (r. 1311–1320), Shidibala or Gegeen Khan (r. 1321–1323), Yesün Temür (r. 1323–1328), Ragibagh Khan (r. 1328), Jayaatu Khan (r. 1328–1329 and 1329–1332), Khutughtu Khan Kusala (r. 1329), Rinchinbal Khan (r. 1332), and Toghon Temür (r. 1333–1370). Such an investigation will help us to better comprehend the probable reasons of the collapse of the Yuan dynasty in 1368.

medicine, and engineering, and were often employed in these capacities within the Yuan administration. Tibetans were another important group within the *semu*, especially influential in religious and administrative roles. The Mongols’ interest in Tibetan Buddhism elevated the status of Tibetans in the Yuan court. Atwood 2004: 494.

⁹ Hucker 1978: 4.

¹⁰ Tihvinskij 1977: 16.

Review of primary sources

Yuanshi 元史¹¹ (*History of the Yuan Dynasty*) serves as an influential primary source in terms of the chosen topic. It contains a considerable amount of information regarding the phenomenon of corruption throughout the reign of the Yuan dynasty in China. During the writing of the current article, chapters (*juan* 卷) 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, 27, 28, 30, 35, and 205 were used, as they describe in detail the vicious cycle of corruption in China under the Mongol rule.

A valuable primary source *Caomuzi* 草木子¹² (*Master of Grass and Trees*) written by Ye Ziqi 葉子奇 (ca. 1327–1390), a scholar of the Yuan and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties played a crucial role in terms of analysing the phenomenon of corruption in China. The author, as an eyewitness to the events of the time, vividly describes the image of officials, as well as the social situation and ordinary people's vicissitudes of life during the reign of the Yuan dynasty.

Annals by historian Rashid al-Din Hamadani¹³ were also used when writing the current article. He describes the political activities of high court officials, such as Ahmad Fanakati 阿合馬 (1242–1282) and Sangha 桑哥 (?–1291).

Yuan Dianzhang 元典章¹⁴ (*Decrees and Regulations of the Yuan Dynasty*) contains unique information regarding the anti-corruption measures implemented by the Mongol rulers in China, especially the chapter 46.

Secondary sources

A monograph, *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200–1300)*, by Igor de Rachewiltz¹⁵ uniquely analyse the biographies of the high officials involved in taking bribes (e.g., Ahmad Fanakati and Sangha).

The works of Li Zhi'an,¹⁶ Elizabeth Endicott-West,¹⁷ A.Sh. Kadyrbaev,¹⁸ Morris Rossabi,¹⁹ and Christopher P. Atwood²⁰ are integral parts of the current

¹¹ Song Lian 1976: 105–124; 127–144; 175–193; 197–218; 333–354; 381–421; 447–472; 597–633; 667–687; 773–795; 4557–4588.

¹² Ye Ziqi: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=60418> last accessed: 30.12.2023.

¹³ Rashid-ad-din 1960: 187–192.

¹⁴ Chen Gaohua 2011: 1543–1578.

¹⁵ Rachewiltz 1993: 539–583.

¹⁶ Li Zhi'an 2006: 375–403.

¹⁷ Endicott-West 1989: 25–131.

¹⁸ Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 28–340.

¹⁹ Rossabi 1988: 53–206. Rossabi 1994: 414–489.

²⁰ Atwood 2004: 4–5; 488.

article. These scholars provide a lot of interesting details on the devastating role of corruption on society during the Mongol reign in China.

The main aims of the article are: 1) to explore the phenomenon of corruption during the rule of the Mongols in China and 2) to provide examples of the high-ranking corrupted officials at court taken from primary sources.

Cases of corruption during the reign of Kublai Khan

The phenomenon of corruption was one of the striking features of Mongol rule in China. Dishonest officials, bribery, as well as the embezzlement of funds prevailed widely during the reign of Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294). Wang Hui 王恽 (1227–1304), an official in charge of the discipline of public functionaries (*jiancha yushi* 監察御史), pointed out: ‘Corruption flourished in officialdom and officers were even not ashamed of taking bribes openly’.²¹

An interesting fact that should be mentioned is that the Mongol officials did not receive a salary for their services. They mainly lived on extorting the population before the ascension of the founder of the Yuan dynasty to the throne. The significant merit of Kublai Khan was the provision of paid salaries for the officials.²² The question is: how much were they paid? According to *Yuanshi*,

中書省：右丞相，俸一百四十貫，米一十五石；左丞相同。平章政事，俸一百二十八貫六錢六分六釐，米一十二石。郎中，俸四十二貫，米四石五斗。²³
Imperial Secretariat: the salary of *youchengxiang* (the grand councillor of the right) is 140 *guan*,²⁴ 15 *shi*²⁵ of rice; the same is for *zuochengxiang* (the grand councillor of the left). The salary of *pingzhang zhengshi* (the head of the Department of Political Affairs) was 128 *guan*, six *qian*,²⁶ six *fen*,²⁷ six *li*,²⁸ and 12 *shi* of rice. The salary of *langzhong*²⁹ was 42 *guan*, 4 *shi*, 5 *dou*³⁰ of rice.

²¹ Li Zhi'an 2006: 376.

²² Borovkova 1971: 14.

²³ Song Lian 1976: 2453.

²⁴ Chinese measurement: one *guan* 貫 was a string of 1,000 coins.

²⁵ Chinese measurement: one *shi* 石 was approximately 59,6816 kg.

²⁶ Chinese measurement: one *qian* 錢 was one tenth of a *liang* 兩. One *liang* was equal to 37.3 grams.

²⁷ Chinese measurement: one *fen* 分 was 0.5 grams.

²⁸ Chinese measurement: one *li* 釐 was 0.04 grams.

²⁹ *Langzhong* 郎中 was an imperial bodyguard.

³⁰ Chinese measurement: one *dou* 斗 was 9.49 litres.

Unfortunately, such a significant measure did not change the situation drastically, and corruption continued to flourish. Now it is crucial to focus our attention on testimonies of corruption taken from the primary source *Yuanshi*:

癸酉，山東廉訪使言：「真定路總管張宏，前在濟南，乘變盜用官物。」詔以宏嘗告李亶反，免宏死罪，罷其職，征贓物償官。³¹

In the year of *guiyou* [21 January 1265], the Shandong inspector said: 'The chief administrator Zhanghong of the Zhending circuit,³² who previously served as such in the circuit of Jinan,³³ took advantage of the unrest and embezzled government property'. It was ordered—in view of the fact that Hong had previously reported Li Tan's betrayal,³⁴ to exempt Hong from the death penalty [for the capital crime], deprive him of his position, take back the stolen goods, and compensate the government [the losses].

戊戌，大名路達魯花赤愛魯、總管張弘範等盜用官錢，罷之。³⁵

In the year of *wuxu* [4 August 1267], *darughachi*³⁶ Ailu of Hubei's Daming County, Chief Governor Zhang Hongfan, and others embezzled government funds, and they were dismissed [from the office].

戊寅，隆興府總管昔剌幹脫以盜用官錢罷。³⁷

In the year of *wuyin* [28 August 1270], the head of the Longxing residence, Xilawotou, embezzled government money and he was dismissed [from the office].

戊子，大名路達魯花赤小鈴部坐姦贓伏誅。³⁸

In the year of *wuzi* [8 February 1276], *darughachi* Xiaoqianbu of Daming County embezzled [government funds], and he was executed.

癸巳，順德府總管張文煥、太原府達魯花赤太不花，以按察司發其姦贓。³⁹

In the year of *guisi* [2 February 1278], Zhang Wenhuan, a governor of the Shunde Prefecture (Guangdong Province), and Taibuhua, *darughachi* of the Taiyuan Prefecture (Shanxi Province), were both impeached by the Department of Investigation for embezzlement.

³¹ Song Lian 1976: 105.

³² Zhending was in Hebei Province.

³³ Jinan is a sub provincial city and the capital of Shandong Province in northeast China.

³⁴ Li Tan's rebellion was in 1262 aimed at overthrowing the rule of the Mongols in China.

³⁵ Song Lian 1976: 115.

³⁶ *Darughachis* (Mong. *daruγači*) were appointed officials in the Mongol dynasty, whose responsibilities were included the collection of taxes and administration in the conquered territories.

³⁷ Song Lian 1976: 130.

³⁸ Song Lian 1976: 177.

³⁹ Song Lian 1976: 197.

乙卯，趙炳言陝西運司郭同知、王相府郎中令郭叔雲盜用官錢。⁴⁰

In the year of *yimao* [16 December 1279], Zhao Bingyan, salt business emissary of Shaanxi Province Guo Tongzhi, *langzhonglin*⁴¹ of Wangxiang residence, and Guo Shuyun embezzled government money.

These examples vividly illustrate that corruption had a tendency to flourish during that historical time period. The people involved in corruption were mostly representatives of the Mongols and *semu*. Another interesting fact that should be considered is that some Chinese adopted Mongolian names to get a promotion and become a core element in the government apparatus. Elizabeth Endicott-West gives the following example: only the Mongols or *semu* could be appointed to the position of *darughachi*; for the Chinese, especially the southerners, the path to this position was closed. Due to changing his name to the Mongolian 'Bayan', Huang Chucai, who was from Southern China, managed to take the position of *darughachi* in Nancheng County (located in Jiangxi Province). However, the ruse was exposed—after a thorough investigation, he was deprived of the post due to his ethnicity. In 1309, an edict was issued, according to which Chinese who assumed Mongolian names to become *darughachi* would be dismissed from their positions. From that point on, only Mongols could become *darughachi*. If there were none, representatives of *semu* (with aristocratic origins) could be appointed.⁴² Their duties were mostly to control provincial or district administration and to ensure that the proper amount of taxes would be provided to the Mongolian court. This situation clearly characterises the lowest social status of the conquered—in many cases the appointment was based on ethnicity.

After the conquest of the Southern Song in 1279, a considerable number of Mongols, *semu*, as well as Northern Chinese were sent to the southern part of China. It is important to emphasise that Northern Chinese officials acted as assistants of the Mongols in the administration of the dynasty (in many cases they were appointed to the secondary positions in the central institutions). This meant that these officials were closely associated with the Mongol rulers. Consequently, all these people were directly dependent upon 'the conquerors'. Why did the Mongols give privileges to Northern Chinese? In my opinion, it was because during the conquest of Northern China, the lands of the local landowners were confiscated by the Mongols, leaving the possession only to those who accepted the Yuan administration as legal and fair. The Chinese landowners acting as patriots escaped to the southern part of China, leaving their land and property. Some Chinese decided to stay in Northern China and help the Mongols

⁴⁰ Song Lian 1976: 217.

⁴¹ *Langzhonglin* 郎中令 was a head of the order for the protection of the palace gates in China.

⁴² Endicott-West 1989: 82–83.

to conquer Southern China. For such a devoted service, these Chinese earned new rulers' trust, and therefore they held more privileged positions in the established hierarchical ladder.

The Mongols, *semu*, as well as Northern Chinese were appointed as local officials in the southern part of China. In many articles these officials are described as thieves and robbers. For instance, Paul Smith states that the intentions of *semu* were insincere—they treated China, especially an abundant territory of Jiangnan,⁴³ like a colony for rape and plunder.⁴⁴ Paul Smith points out that in Jiangnan the level of corruption was extremely high—at every local post seven or eight positions were sold as bribes to 'butchers and wine peddlers, brokers and marketplace riffraff'.⁴⁵ Such incompetent officials were mostly interested in accruing personal wealth. It is worth mentioning that they were indifferent to the sufferings of the ordinary people, who were forced to give all they possessed to please the 'gargantuan appetites' of the officials.

Elizabeth Endicott-West indicates the following historical example in her monograph *Mongolian Rule in China. Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty*: Hu Zhiyu 胡祗遹 (1225–1293) emphasised the prevailing tendency of corruption that had a devastating effect on the quality of government personnel, with subsequent moral decline among the ruling elite:

Even if officials were subjected to physical punishment in the form of flogging every day, they would still not perform their duties properly. The question arises why? They were not afraid of being cursed, they would not object to being punished. As long as they received bribes, they were pleased. This was a common phenomenon among the local officials.⁴⁶

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, it is clear that corruption was one of the integral parts during the reign of Kublai Khan. To eradicate corruption in China, after his accession to the throne, the founder of the Yuan dynasty established an official salary, but after analysing the primary sources, we can conclude that this measure did not contribute a lot to the fight against corruption in the country. Now it is important to focus our attention on two cases of high-officials' corruption during the rule of Kublai Khan, those of Ahmad Fanakati and Sangha.

⁴³ The region of Jiangnan in modern day includes the city of Shanghai, the southern part of Jiangsu Province, the south-eastern part of Anhui Province, the northern part of Jiangxi Province and the northern part of Zhejiang Province.

⁴⁴ Smith 1998: 5.

⁴⁵ Smith 1998: 11.

⁴⁶ Endicott-West 1989: 108.

The case of Ahmad Fanakati

As we already found out in the previous sub-chapter, the embezzlement of public funds was a widespread phenomenon among high-ranking officials during the reign of Kublai Khan. Many *semu* took an active part in stealing government funds, including Ahmad Fanakati, a close associate of Kublai Khan who dominated in the state apparatus until his assassination in 1282. Why was the assistance of Ahmad Fanakati so important to Kublai Khan? The founder of the Yuan dynasty faced a lack of funds in the state treasury due to the financing of construction projects, annual rewards to his relatives, as well as various assaults. For the Mongol khans China was an abundant resource for maintaining their military campaigns aimed at establishing dominion over Japan, Burma, Indonesia, and Vietnam (most of which were unsuccessful and caused a serious depletion of the imperial treasury).⁴⁷ To solve such a significant problem and make expenditures more reasonable, Kublai Khan sought assistance from Ahmad Fanakati who was familiar with these issues.

The first thing that should be mentioned is that Ahmad Fanakati was a representative of the *semu* group (he was of Saracen origin).⁴⁸ In 1262 Ahmad Fanakati was appointed to the Central Secretariat.⁴⁹ According to the Italian merchant, explorer, and writer, Marco Polo (1254–1324), Kublai Khan was bewitched by Ahmad's black magic, and that is why he always went unpunished for his unrighteous deeds.⁵⁰ Many innocent lives were ruined by Ahmad, and as a result, he is described in many sources as a 'villainous character'.⁵¹

Ahmad also served as an expert in fiscal management—his duties included increasing the revenues of Kublai Khan's treasury.⁵² Mostly, he was responsible for trade promotion with Central Asia. Ahmad dramatically increased the government's income by tightening control over taxable households, tracking down Chinese who had escaped prior registration and increasing their number from 1,418,499 in 1261 to 1,967,898 in 1274.⁵³ Having seen such a devoted service, in the 1270s Kublai Khan did not control the activities of his close associate, entrusting him with important affairs of the state. Thus, Ahmad reached the peak of his power and had a complete control over the finances of China. John D. Langlois points out that the Mongolian emperors were mostly concentrated on not only the honesty but also the moral quality of their officials. For the

⁴⁷ Rachewiltz 1993: 548.

⁴⁸ Polo 1938: 215.

⁴⁹ Song Lian 1976: 100.

⁵⁰ Polo 1938: 215.

⁵¹ Rachewiltz 1993: 539. Polo 1938: 214–215. Rossabi 1994: 473.

⁵² Rachewiltz 1993: 539.

⁵³ Rossabi 1994: 474.

emperors, the most important indicator of effective work was an increase in treasury revenues.⁵⁴ Enjoying such a favourable attitude of Kublai Khan, Ahmad decided to take some measures to strengthen his position at court, giving his family members, as well as his allies, high positions in officialdom. According to *Yuanshi*:

杭州地大，委寄非輕，阿合馬溺於私愛，乃以不肖子抹速忽充達魯花赤。⁵⁵
The lands of Hangzhou are large, and the commission of duties is not an easy [task]. Ahema [Ahmad] was addicted to love and appointed his unworthy son Mosuhu *darughachi* [of Hangzhou].

又以其子忽辛為大都路總管，兼大興府尹。⁵⁶
He [Ahmad] also appointed his son Huxin the governor of Dadu (in modern-day Beijing, the capital of the Yuan dynasty) and concurrently the governor of Daxing Prefecture.

After the conquest of the Southern Song by a general, Bayan of the Baarin (1236–1295),⁵⁷ many reforms were carried out by Ahmad Fanakati. As we already found out, his son took the position of *darughachi* in the south and kept his father informed about the general situation there. Moreover, Ahmad Fanakati insisted on implementing the Yuan currency in the southern parts of China, where an extremely high exchange rate was established—50 notes of Song dynasty money were declared equivalent to one note of Yuan money of the same denomination.⁵⁸ It goes without saying that such an economic reform had a negative influence on the Chinese economy, causing resentment among the conquered people.

Another interesting point is that Ahmad Fanakati was also concentrated on the elimination of his political rivals, often slandering many court officials in front of Kublai Khan. For instance, he had a very complicated relationship with the Chinese Cui Bin 崔斌 (1225–1280). Being a witness to the innumerable crimes of Ahmad, including corruption and nepotism, Cui Bin tried to convey the truth about Ahmad's atrocities to the khan. Unfortunately, his attempts failed. Ahmad decided to investigate Cui Bin, and it was concluded that he and two other conspirators had stolen state grain—they were sentenced to death in 1280.⁵⁹ Of all his opponents, Ahmad was afraid only of Zhenjin 真金 (1243–1286), a son of Kublai Khan and a designated heir.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Endicott-West 1989: 110.

⁵⁵ Song Lian 1976: 4559.

⁵⁶ Song Lian 1976: 4561.

⁵⁷ Cleaves 1956: 186. Wilkinson 2013: 777.

⁵⁸ Atwood 2004: 5.

⁵⁹ Rossabi 1988: 182.

⁶⁰ Rashid-ad-din 1960: 189.

Zhenjin was hostile to Ahmad Fanakati.⁶¹ In order to better understand what caused this kind of hatred, it is essential to give a brief historical overview. Zhenjin had been brought up according to Chinese customs and traditions, and prominent Chinese scholars greatly contributed to his education—he could speak Chinese fluently. Zhenjin was passionate about Confucianism and its values.⁶² Having seen Ahmad's embezzlement, lawlessness, and nepotism, Zhenjin and his Chinese associates criticised his political activities. They sought Ahmad's dismissal from the state apparatus. Cui Bin was a close ally of Zhenjin and was highly esteemed by Kublai Khan's son. Having heard the news of Ahmad's conspiracy against Cui Bin, Zhenjin sent officials to save his friend from execution, but it was too late—the sentence had already been carried out. After this event, the relations between Ahmad and Zhenjin became increasingly worse.

Ahmad Fanakati was eventually punished for his innumerable atrocities—he was assassinated in 1282.⁶³ After Ahmad's death, Kublai Khan ordered an investigation into how honest his ally was. The results were overwhelming: a considerable amount of stolen wealth was confiscated, such as cattle, a luxurious residence, as well as a precious jade bowl from Kublai Khan's treasury.⁶⁴ According to *Yuanshi*:

乃命發墓剖棺，戮尸于通玄門外，縱犬啗其肉。⁶⁵

'[The emperor] ordered to open the grave of Ahmad, to dig up Ahmad's body from it, to decapitate the corpse and to give it to the dogs to be eaten'.

Rashid al-Din Hamadani mentioned that Ahmad Fanakati's two sons, Mosuhu and Huxin, were skinned alive for their innumerable crimes.⁶⁶

In conclusion, the political and financial activity of Ahmad Fanakati lasted for 20 approximately years. He was well known for his unprecedented level of corruption and his promotion of relatives who were incompetent in matters of governance. Thus, it is obvious that the phenomenon of corruption was widespread not only among petty officials but also among influential officials in Kublai Khan's court administration.

⁶¹ Atwood 2004: 5.

⁶² Rossabi 1994: 478.

⁶³ Tsai 2011: 91.

⁶⁴ Rossabi 1988: 183.

⁶⁵ Song Lian 1976: 4564.

⁶⁶ Rashid-ad-din 1960: 190.

The case of Sangha

Another example of corruption among high officials was that of Sangha who occupied a dominant position in the government apparatus. Chinese sources do not mention the nationality of Sangha. Rashid Al-din points out that he was of Uighur origin,⁶⁷ and Morris Rossabi and Christopher Atwood claim that he was Tibetan.⁶⁸ Sangha was extremely good at languages, including Chinese, Tibetan, Uighur, and Mongolian. This talent attracted the attention of Kublai Khan, who was searching for people being proficient in various languages. Consequently, Sangha became a government member, where he was mostly responsible for Tibetan and Buddhist affairs. Thus, we can conclude that Sangha's excellent abilities in foreign languages opened a new chapter in his life.

After the death of Ahmad Fanakati in 1282, Sangha started to play a crucial role at the khan's court. Sangha was well known for a rigid control of financial management as well as for the prosecution of officials suspected of committing various crimes.⁶⁹ It is important to point out that Sangha, after obtaining high positions at court, was involved in a vicious circle of corruption. A clerk in the Censorate, Wang Liangbi 王良弼, was aware of Sangha's crimes and was planning to inform the khan about the serious violations. Having known about it, Sangha decided to take drastic measures to eliminate his political rival. Wang Liangbi was executed, and his family was enslaved. Another man—Uighur Tore—who was hostile to Sangha, tried to prevent the flourishing tendency of corruption and to convey the truth to the founder of the Yuan dynasty. He was also unjustly sentenced to death.⁷⁰

Below is an important testimony taken from *Yuanshi*, characterising the court activities of Sangha in detail:

甲辰，中書省臣麥術丁、崔彧言：「桑哥當國四年，諸臣多以賄進，親舊皆授要官，唯以欺蔽九重、朘削百姓為事，宜令兩省嚴加考核，並除名為民。」從之。要束木以桑哥妻黨為湖廣行省平章，至是坐不法者數十事，詔械致湖廣省誅之。⁷¹

In the year of *jiachen* [5 June 1291] the officials of the Imperial Secretariat Maizhuding and Cui Yu reported to [Kublai Khan]: 'Sangge [Sangha] held reins of government for four years, and most of the officials received [positions/promotions] by means of bribes. All relatives and old acquaintances were appointed officials [received influential posts], although this is such a thing when

⁶⁷ Rashid-ad-din 1960: 190.

⁶⁸ Rossabi 1994: 478. Atwood 2004: 488.

⁶⁹ Rachewiltz 1993: 563.

⁷⁰ Rachewiltz 1993: 574.

⁷¹ Song Lian 1976: 347.

the higher spheres are misled by deception. Both secretariats [Central Imperial and Supreme Council] should be ordered to conduct an additional and strict investigation, and the guilty ones should be equally excluded from the lists (of the bureaucracy), making them common people. [Kublai Khan] accepted this. Yao Shumu, being a relative of Sangge's wife, became a *pingzhang* [the head] of Hubei and Hunan Provinces, and by now had been arrested for several dozen cases that were illegal, followed by the highest decree to put in shackles (in stocks) and delivered under escort to Hubei and Hunan Provinces to execute him [Yao Shumu].

This evidence vividly characterises the political activities of Sangha, the core element of which was focused on a prevailing tendency of corruption, as well as the appointment of his close allies to the government apparatus.

Many Chinese did not like the court activities of Sangha because of his close supporter, the Buddhist monk Yanglian Zhenjia 杨琏真珈, who was a supervisor of Buddhist teachings in Southern China. His actions had a devastating effect on the preservation of the unique Confucian and Taoist temples. Yanglian Zhenjia was responsible for the renovation of many temples and monasteries in the southern part of China. In reality, he was mainly focused on the conversion of some Confucian and Taoist temples into Buddhist ones.⁷² His most humiliating action was the looting of the tomb of the Song royal family and desecration of their corpses. The looted valuables were mostly used for the construction of Buddhist temples, as well as for the purpose of gaining personal wealth. Such behaviour and the destruction of cultural relics became reasons for the hatred of the Chinese for Sangha and his close allies.

The management of key personnel was strictly monitored by Sangha. Neither promotion nor appointment could have been done without his approval. Moreover, obtaining high positions at court could only be received by means of purchase.⁷³ For example, the clerk Xiao attained a position as a district assistant in the Office of General Administration in Dadu, and he was caught taking bribes. Kublai Khan ordered the execution of the irresponsible official. However, Sangha provided assistance to the clerk, declaring to the khan that he possessed outstanding abilities and had successfully conducted an audit in the Imperial Treasury.⁷⁴ The khan agreed to forego the death penalty for a dismissal from office.

In 1291 justice prevailed. Many officials accused Sangha of taking bribes, and they informed the emperor of his atrocities. Sangha was executed in 1291.⁷⁵

⁷² Rossabi 1994: 479.

⁷³ Atwood 2004: 488.

⁷⁴ Rachewiltz 1993: 572.

⁷⁵ Atwood 2004: 459.

After an investigation, it was found out that there were many of Sangha's family members at the court who were also engaged in illicit activities. For instance, Sangha's brother-in-law was also sentenced to death. Many of his supporters were accused of corruption, including Yasmut, who had 4,000 *liang* of gold at his property.⁷⁶ He was executed in the same year. Nasr al-Din, a close associate of Sangha, was accused of stealing more than 130,000 notes of paper money from ordinary citizens. He was also sentenced to death. Fearing the death penalty, Sangha's younger brother, a pacification commissioner in Gansu Province, committed suicide.

After Sangha's execution, Yanglian Zhenjia lost his main protection. He was accused of bribery. According to Igor de Rachewiltz, there were 116,200 notes of paper money, 1,700 *liang* of gold, 6,800 *liang* of silver, and many more valuables at his estate.⁷⁷ Based on the above-mentioned cases, we can conclude that the level of corruption was overwhelming throughout the reign of Kublai Khan.

Cases during the reigns of Kublai Khan's descendants Throughout the reign of Temür Khan (1294–1307)

After the death of Kublai Khan in 1294, the Yuan dynasty faced high level of corruption and fell deep into a political and economic crisis. Confucian scholar Zhang Yanhao 張養浩 (1270–1329) mentioned:

During the reign of Kublai Khan, the officials were appointed according to their merits, but nowadays the situation has deteriorated—people are given high ranks and titles in violation of the law. During the rule of the founder of the Yuan dynasty, paper money was issued for fixed amounts, but now they are issued at any time and as much as required.⁷⁸

Such an eyewitness description of the Yuan empire characterises the weakest parts of the Mongol rule. Moreover, Zhang Yanhao emphasises the presence of incompetent officials at court who gained their positions by means of bribery.

Throughout the reign of Temür Khan (1294–1307), to eliminate the problem of corruption, the Imperial Inspection was established as a temporary anti-corruption measure to punish officials involved in corruption.⁷⁹ The main goals of this anticorruption campaign were mainly to conduct a clear investigation in China as well as to take punitive measures towards malicious violators. During

⁷⁶ Rachewiltz 1993: 576.

⁷⁷ Rachewiltz 1993: 577.

⁷⁸ Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 300.

⁷⁹ Li Zhi'an 2006: 392.

the reign of the Yuan emperors, such imperial inspections were commissioned only six times.⁸⁰ In *Yuan Dianzhang*, there is an important edict regarding the measures aimed at eradicating corruption in the country:

諸職官及有出身人等，今後因事受財，依條斷罪。枉法者，除名不叙；不枉法（官）〔者〕，須殿三年，再犯不叙。無祿（官）〔者〕減一等。以至元鈔為則。⁸¹
 Officials and clerks of all levels from now on will receive guilty verdicts for taking bribes according to the clause (of law). Those who circumvent the law will be dismissed from the [office] and [they] will not be reappointed; [officials] who do not break the law [those] should be demoted to low positions for three years. If they repeat the crime again, [such officials] should be dismissed. Non-salary officials should be demoted to one grade lower. The amount of money involved [in such a fraud] should be evaluated according to the value of the paper currency of Zhiyuan.

Another decree written in *Yuanshi* states:

諸職官犯贓，生前贓狀明白，虽死犹责家属纳贓。⁸²
 All the officials who took bribes, during their lifetime committed bribery and theft [such crimes were clear], and even though they are dead, their families should give back the stolen goods.

From these two edicts, it is obvious that the measures taken by the state to eradicate corruption in the country were serious. However, this was not enough; official corruption continued to flourish. The following examples illustrate the prevailing tendency of corruption in the country:

庚戌，京師犯贓罪者三百人。⁸³
 In the year of *gengxu* [22 November 1294], there were 300 officials who committed corruption crimes in Jingshi.⁸⁴

庚辰，札魯忽赤脫而速受賂，為其奴所告，毒殺其奴，坐棄市。⁸⁵
 In the year of *gengchen* [4 October 1297], Zhaluhuchi took bribes; his slave reported about it, [and the slave] was poisoned. A public execution was carried out [of Zhaluhuchi].

乙巳，行御史臺劾平章教化受財三萬餘錠，教化復言平章的里不花領財賦時盜鈔三十萬錠。⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Chen Gaohua 2011: 1544.

⁸² Song Lian 1976: 2612.

⁸³ Song Lian 1976: 388.

⁸⁴ Jingshi refers to Dadu, the capital of the Yuan dynasty.

⁸⁵ Song Lian 1976: 410.

⁸⁶ Song Lian 1976: 427.

In the year of *yisi* [5 April 1299], the Imperial Censorate accused the Grand Preceptor Jiaohua of accepting bribes totalling over 30,000 *ding*,⁸⁷ and Jiaohua further said that the Grand Preceptor Deli Buhualing was in charge of managing finances in his jurisdiction; he embezzled 300,000 *ding*.

On 18 February 1301, the minister of the censorship mentioned:

官吏犯贓及盜官錢，事覺避罪逃匿者，宜同獄成。雖經原免，亦加降黜，庶奸偽可中書平章伯顏、梁德珪、段真、阿里渾撒里，右丞八都馬辛，左丞月古不花，參政迷而火者、張斯立等，受朱清、張瑄賄賂。⁸⁸

Officials who take bribes and embezzle government funds, and those who think that they will be able to escape from punishment and hide should be sentenced to the same prison. Even if they were amnestied, they should be dismissed [from the office]. Those involved in fraud were political administrator Boyan, Liang Degui, Duan Zhen, Ali Hunsali, the official who was in charge of receiving petitions and issuing loans in money and grain (*youcheng*) Ma Xin, and Senior Assistant to the First Minister Yue Gubuhua and advisor and Assistant to the First Minister eunuch Mier, Zhang Silideng, were bribed by Zhu Qing and Zhang Xuan.

庚子，法忽魯丁輸運和林軍糧，其負欠計二十五萬餘石，近監察御史亦言其侵匿官錢十三萬餘錠。⁸⁹

In the year of *gengzi* [26 September 1303], Fahuluding transported army provisions to Helin. His debt amounted to more than 25,000 *shi* of grain. Recently an official in charge of the discipline of public functionaries said that Fahuluding embezzled government funds of more than 130,000 *ding*.

癸未，甘肅行省平章合散等侵盜官錢十六萬三千餘錠。⁹⁰

In the year of *guiwei* [11 July 1303], over 163,000 *ding* of official money were stolen by *pingzhang* Hesan and others in Gansu Province.

丁未，七道奉使宣撫所罷贓污官吏凡一萬八千四百七十三人，贓四萬五千八百六十五錠。⁹¹

In the year of *dingwei* [21 January 1304], 18,473 corrupt officials were dismissed by pacification commissioners in seven circuits; [their] bribes were 45,865 *ding*.

The provided testimonies from the primary source show only the recorded figures of corruption in the country. Presumably, these figures could have been several times higher than official statistics indicate. Elizabeth Endicott-West

⁸⁷ Chinese measurement: one *ding* 錠 was equal to 50 *liang* of silver.

⁸⁸ Song Lian 1976: 433.

⁸⁹ Song Lian 1976: 454.

⁹⁰ Song Lian 1976: 452.

⁹¹ Song Lian 1976: 456.

points out that favouritism and bribery were the main elements of the loss of virtue by the court officials.⁹²

Another significant problem, in my opinion, was the clemency of officials who committed corruption crimes. According to *Yuanshi*:

辛丑，浙西道提刑按察使弘吉烈帶阿魯灰受賂，遇赦免，復以為河西隴北道肅政廉訪。⁹³

In the year of *xinchou* [16 July 1294], the judge and inspector of the Zhexi circuit Gongjileidai Aluhui took bribes. He was pardoned and reappointed to the position of inspector in the Hexi Longbei circuit.

丁丑，大都路總管沙的坐贓當罷，帝以故臣子，特減其罪，俾仍舊職。⁹⁴

In the year of *dingchou* [3 December 1297], the governor of Dadu Shade took bribes and was dismissed from office. The emperor, considering [Shade's] past loyalty, leniently reduced his charges, allowing [Shade] to resume his previous position.

乙未，以洪君祥為中書右丞，監察御史言其曩居宥密，以貪賄罷黜，乞別選賢能代之，不報。⁹⁵

In the year of *yiwei* [25 March 1303], Hong Junxiang was appointed as *youxiang* of the Imperial Secretariat. Officials in charge of the discipline of public functionaries noted that before [Hong Junxiang] took bribes, which led to his dismissal from office. [Officials in charge of the discipline of public functionaries] requested the replacement of Hong Junxiang by a talented and virtuous person but received no response.

壬戌，前河間路達魯花赤忽賽因、轉運使術甲德壽皆坐贓罷。今忽賽因以獻鷹犬，復除大寧路達魯花赤。⁹⁶

In the year of *renxu* [19 August 1303], ex-*darughachi* of Hejian Husaiyin, and an official in charge of transportation Shujia Deshou committed corruption and were dismissed from office. Recently Husaiyin gave presents [to the authorities], falcons and dogs, and he was reappointed as *darughachi* of Daning.

壬寅，野理牙舊以贓罪除名，近復命為太醫使，臣等不敢奉詔。⁹⁷

In the year of *renyin* [15 November 1328], Yeliyaji was dismissed from office for taking bribes. His name was removed from the list, but right after that he was reappointed as imperial doctor. Officials dare not [refuse to obey] the decree.

⁹² Endicott-West 1989: 106.

⁹³ Song Lian 1976: 385.

⁹⁴ Song Lian 1976: 414.

⁹⁵ Song Lian 1976: 449.

⁹⁶ Song Lian 1976: 453.

⁹⁷ Song Lian 1976: 715.

甲申，遼陽行省平章哈剌鐵木兒，嘗坐贓被杖罪，今復任以宰執，控制東藩。⁹⁸

In the year of *jiashen* [18 October 1330], *pingzhang* of Liaoyang Hala Tiemur took bribes, [for which he was] flogged, but right after that he was reinstated as a governor and controlled Dongfan.

According to these examples, it is clear that anti-corruption measures were not efficient at all—corrupted officials after dismissal were reappointed again. Such a situation shows that high positions in officialdom were occupied by people interested only in self-enrichment.

Cases during the reign of Külüg Khan

When Külüg Khan ascended the throne in 1307, he granted 3.5 million *jin* to the officials, which comprised 75% of the amount of money received by the treasury during the year, and the action consequently aggravated the economic crisis in the country.⁹⁹ Moreover, important government positions became the subject of trade. During Külüg Khan's reign, over 880 people rose to high positions in one year, which seriously exacerbated social inequality in China.¹⁰⁰ People completely unfamiliar with government administration were easily appointed as high officials by means of bribery. They committed violations towards ordinary people, for instance collecting unlimited taxes. Wu Cheng mentioned that the court officials were used to the bribes; they were not different from robbers and thieves. There were only very few officials, probably one or two for every thousand, who performed their duties honestly.¹⁰¹

Another important point is that inflation was a popular phenomenon during the reign of Külüg Khan. Because of the innumerable gifts awarded to devoted court officials, the amount of paper currency was significantly increased. For instance, in 1261–1262 the total number of printed currency was 39,139 notes, in 1271–1272 it was 47,000, and in 1310–1311 it was 1,450,368.¹⁰² As we can see, the volume of printed paper money grew 37 times in 50 years, which had disastrous consequences for the economy of China.

⁹⁸ Song Lian 1976: 765–766.

⁹⁹ Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 305.

¹⁰⁰ Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 307.

¹⁰¹ Li Zhi'an 2006: 376.

¹⁰² Schurmann 1956: 142.

Other cases during the reigns of descendants of Kublai Khan

Another significant cause of the emptying of the state treasury was the giving of innumerable gifts to meritorious court officials and to relatives of the khans. According to the statistics in 1294, when Temür Khan ascended the throne that year, the members of his family got 120,000 *liang* of silver.¹⁰³ When Ayurbarwada became emperor in 1311, he also allocated significant sums for the coronation procedure as well as gifts for relatives, including 39,650 *liang* of gold, 1,849,050 *liang* of silver, and 223,279 paper notes, and relatives and princes got 472,488 lengths of silk.¹⁰⁴ Such generosity on the part of the Mongol emperors was due to the desire to gain the support of the Mongolian nobility as well as to strengthen their position. However, the giving of such an amount of gifts had a devastating effect on the economy of the Yuan dynasty and undoubtedly led to a financial crisis.

Temüder (?–1322), a grand councillor during the reign of Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan (r. 1311–1320), was accused of corruption and he was dismissed from his post.¹⁰⁵ It is important to point out that when Shidibala Khan ascended the throne in 1320, Temüder was reappointed as a grand councillor (mostly due to the help of Dagi Khatun (ca. 1262–1322)).¹⁰⁶ Firstly, he took drastic measures towards his political foes: Yang Doerji, Xiao Baiju, and Huo Sheng were sentenced to death because of their help in revealing his arbitrariness during the reign of Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan, which subsequently led to his dismissal from office. Secondly, the corruption problem deteriorated. The members of Temüder's family were given positions at court, and his close allies got high-ranking positions, such as assistant administrators of the right and the left of the secretariat. Temüder died in 1322, and his allies were accused of taking bribes as well as of official malfeasance.

Moreover, Shidibala Khan abolished the payment of annual awards to the princes; the khan wanted to avoid the depletion of the treasury due to such luxurious annual gift giving. Thus, in 1323, the supporters of Temüder, thirsty for revenge, and the princes deprived of annual gifts, assassinated the khan. From my point of view, the main reason for such a tragedy was the Sinification of Ayurbarwada and Shidibala, whose political courses were aimed at the eradication of corruption, the establishment of rule, and an administration system based on Confucian values and norms. It goes without saying that the interests of Dagi Khatun and her allies, the most vivid of whom was Temüder, were insincere and

¹⁰³ Hsiao 1994: 500.

¹⁰⁴ Hsiao 1994: 521.

¹⁰⁵ Hsiao 1994: 525.

¹⁰⁶ Dagi Khatun was a mother of Külüg Khan and Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan.

were aimed at gaining personal wealth. They tried to prevent the Sinification process of the Mongolian nobility, because such a ‘Chinese political course’ could have been a real threat to their influence and their hereditary political and financial privileges.

In *Yuanshi* there are many examples of a prevailing tendency towards corruption during the rule of Kublai Khan’s descendants:

壬辰，中書平章政事塔失海牙坐受贓杖免。¹⁰⁷

In the year of *renchen* [13 October 1321], the Head of the Department of Political Affairs of the Imperial Secretariat Tashi Haiya accepted stolen goods; beatings with a stick [as punishment] and dismissal [were implemented towards him].

庚子，刑部尚書烏馬兒坐贓杖免。¹⁰⁸

In the year of *gengzi* [13 February 1323], the minister of Punishments Wumaer took bribes, and he was flogged with sticks and dismissed [from office].

辛丑，戶部尚書郭良坐贓杖免。¹⁰⁹

In the year of *xinchou* [26 September 1326], Minister of Revenue Guo Liang took bribes, and he was dismissed [from office].

己亥，中書平章朵兒只，職任台衡，不思報效，銓選之際，紊亂綱紀，貪污著聞，恬不知恥，黜罷為宜。¹¹⁰

In the year of *jihai* [7 March 1330], *Pingzhang* of Imperial Secretariat Duoerzhi, who held a position of authority, neglected thoughts of contributing, causing disorder and confusion during the process of appointments and selections and disrupting the order and regulations. He was known for corruption; he did not have any sense of shame [due to embezzlement]. He should be dismissed from office.

甲申，遼陽行省平章哈刺鐵木兒，嘗坐贓被杖罪。¹¹¹

In the year of *jiashen* [18 October 1330], Hala Tiemu'er, *pingzhang* of Liaoyang Province, was prosecuted for taking bribes; he was punished with flogging with sticks.

辛巳，燕南廉訪使卜咱兒，前為閩海廉訪使，受贓計鈔二萬二千餘錠、金五百餘兩、銀三千餘兩、男女生口二十二人及它寶貨無算，雖遇赦原，乞追奪制命，籍沒流竄。¹¹²

In the year of *xinsi* [13 April 1331], Inspector of Yunnan Bu Zhan'er, visiting envoy of Yunnan Lian, who was formerly an inspector of Minhai [Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces], accepted stolen goods consisting of more than 22,000 *dīng*, more

¹⁰⁷ Song Lian 1976: 614.

¹⁰⁸ Song Lian 1976: 627.

¹⁰⁹ Song Lian 1976: 627.

¹¹⁰ Song Lian 1976: 752.

¹¹¹ Song Lian 1976: 765–766.

¹¹² Song Lian 1976: 778.

than 500 *liang* of gold, more than 3,000 *liang* of silver, and 22 captured men and women and their numerous valuables. Although he was amnestied and dismissed [from office], his property was registered and confiscated; [Bu Zaner] fled.

癸卯，御史臺臣劾奏工部尚書蘇炳性行貪邪，詔罷之。¹¹³

In the year of *guimao* [5 May 1331], the censor informed that the Minister of Public Works Subing was greedy and vicious; it was ordered to dismiss Subing from office.

壬辰，福建宣慰副使哈只，前為廣東廉訪副使，貪污狼籍，宜罷黜。¹¹⁴

In the year of *renchen* [20 December 1331], an assistant commissioner for the pacification of Fujian Hazhi, who was a deputy auditor of Guangdong Province before, should be dismissed for corruption and embezzlement.

As we already found out, the *semu* and the Mongols were swamped with unprecedented levels of corruption, and that is why majority of the Chinese were suspicious of the representatives of the first and second classes. This fact is vividly confirmed by an eyewitness of that time. Ye Ziqi stated, ‘In the last years of the Yuan dynasty, officials are corrupted. It is because the Mongols and *semu* people don’t know what shame is’ 元朝末年，官貪吏污，始因蒙古色目人罔然不知廉恥之為何物。¹¹⁵ Ye Ziqi also mentioned:

上下賄賂，公行如市。蕩然無復紀綱矣。肅政廉訪司官，所至州縣，各帶庫子檢鈔秤銀，殆同市道矣。¹¹⁶

At all levels [of officialdom] there was bribery, openly behaving like in a market. The country’s legal system vanished from the face of the earth [it was in decline]. In the subprefectures and counties to which the officials travelled, the heads of the department of inspectors [to ensure morally] clean management each brought along a treasurer who checked the paper money and weighed the silver, very similar to in a marketplace.

Another key reason for the rise of corruption was the sale of positions. Kong Qi reports that in 1345 the level of government positions being sold reached its peak—it was twice as high as it had been in previous years. The following historical situation vividly characterises this fact: Jalair Dorjibal, a chief administrator of Huguang Province,¹¹⁷ actively contributed to the distribution of ranks

¹¹³ Song Lian 1976: 781.

¹¹⁴ Song Lian 1976: 774.

¹¹⁵ Ye Ziqi: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=443067#p6> (last accessed: 11.12.2023.).

¹¹⁶ Ye Ziqi: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=443067#p6> (last accessed: 11.12.2023.).

¹¹⁷ Huguang Province was established in 1274 and existed during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Currently its location is in the territories of modern Hubei south of the Yangtze River and Hunan, Guizhou, and Guangxi Provinces.

to those who voluntarily provided grain.¹¹⁸ Most often, posts were bought by the wealthy houses of Jiangnan for grain. In 1355, the purchase of state ranks was also in high demand among the population. The uprising of the Red Turban troops, which was broken up in 1351, inflicted deep damage to the Mongol conquerors—supplying its army with provisions was vital to the government. Almost any resident of China could afford a position at court if they possessed an abundant harvest. Consequently, the number of incompetent officials in the state apparatus actively flourished. For instance, for 20,000 *shi* of grain it was possible to buy a position at court.¹¹⁹

Moreover, during the reign of Toghon Temür (1333–1368), the situation became worse. Corruption continued to flourish. The following touching folksongs vividly describes the vicissitudes of life of ordinary people:

九重丹語頒恩至，萬兩黃金奉使回。奉使來時，驚天動地；奉使去時，烏天黑地。官吏都懼天喜地，百姓卻啼天哭天。官吏黑漆皮燈籠，奉使來時添一重。¹²⁰

Coming with the Emperor's favour in a nine-folded red imperial edict, the imperial inspector returned with 10,000 *liang* of gold. When the imperial inspector comes, it frightens heaven and moves the earth. When the imperial inspector leaves, it is dark all over Heaven and Earth. All officials are highly delighted with Heaven and Earth, but ordinary people are crying and wailing at Heaven and Earth. Officials are like lanterns painted in black colour; it is gets darker when the imperial inspector comes.

Based on this folksong, we can feel the mood and vicissitudes of the lives of the ordinary people, who were hostile to the court officials. It was pointed out that people were afraid of meeting the inspectors—they knew that robbery was inevitable.

堂堂大元，姦佞專權，開河變鈔禍根源。惹紅巾萬千。官法濫，刑法重，黎民發怨。人吃人，鈔買鈔，何曾見？賊做官，官做賊，混愚賢。哀哉可憐。¹²¹

Oh, the Great Yuan. Under you, crafty and fawning people monopolised power. Rivers flooding and financial disasters were the root causes that provoked the rise of a myriad Red Turbans. Laws of government are inefficient and corporal punishments are severe. The common people are in resentment! People eat people. Paper money buys paper money. Never has been seen [such phenomena before]!

¹¹⁸ Dardess 1973: 112.

¹¹⁹ Smith 1998: 81.

¹²⁰ Tao Zongyi: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=488988&remap=gb#p6> (last accessed: 17.11.2023.). Li Zhi'an 2006: 392-393 (Li's translation was slightly modified by the author).

¹²¹ Tao Zongyi: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=654703&remap=gb#p16> (last accessed: 17.11.2023.).

Thieves became officials; officials became thieves! Wisdom and stupidity are mixed! How pitiful!

This passage also indicates a heavy burden on the ordinary people—corruption prevailed widely. In the middle of 1340s, severe famine swept across the territory of China; two out of three people had died by the 1350s. In these days of chaos, Yuan emperor Togon Temür embarked on the construction of a ship-dragon in the palace park, which required a considerable amount of money.¹²² Such a decision caused popular discontent and provided a solid basis for the Red Turban Rebellion, which officially swept across China in 1351. Local people could not continue being speechless, seeing injustice and the devastation of *tianxia*, and they decided to take drastic measures towards the ruling elite.

Conclusion

To sum up, from Chinese sources it seems that corruption was a prevailing tendency throughout the reign of the Mongols in China. As a part of this article, it was found out that many high-ranking officials during the reign of the Yuan dynasty were corrupt, including Ahmad Fanakati, Sangha, Temüder, and many *darughachi*, which mainly consisted of Mongols and *semu*. The purchase of ranks and the arbitrariness of officials prevailed widely during that historical period. As we found out, some of the officials were even not familiar with the procedure of the legal cases and the administrative work that significantly worsened the quality of the government apparatus. The unwillingness of the Mongol emperors, in particular, Toghon Temür, to improve the social situation led to the exacerbation of popular discontent in China. From my point of view, such a phenomenon became one of the main reasons for the decline of the Mongol ruling elite in the eyes of ordinary people, and presumably it led to the breakout of the Red Turban Rebellion in 1351 with the subsequent overthrow of the Yuan dynasty in 1368.

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¹²² Bokschanin–Kadyrbaev 2016: 330.

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Foreign Trade and Domestic Networks — A Few Remarks on the Organisation of Tributary Embassies to China in the Muromachi Period*

Abstract

The aim of this article is to rethink the connection between foreign trade and domestic economy in late medieval Japan. The article takes a look at the financial side of the tributary missions to Ming China, investigating how commodities for tribute and for trade were organised. In the 1970s, Sasaki Gin'ya was the first to criticise that research on foreign trade and research on the domestic economy were being conducted separately. He emphasised the importance of complex interdisciplinary research in order to reveal the connection between foreign trade and the domestic economy. Even though this issue had been previously raised, no research had been conducted with the explicit purpose of connecting foreign trade and the domestic economy during the Muromachi period until the past two decades. Contributions that have been made in recent years have aimed at revealing the connections between domestic commercial or religious networks with foreign relations, mainly focusing on the role of Zen monks in diplomacy and trade and on the import and distribution of commodities from China. In Western scholarship, this topic is still under-researched and provides potential for further investigations.

Thus, the paper tries to provide an inventory of case studies that help us imagine and understand what kinds of connections existed between domestic networks and foreign trade in medieval Japan that made the procuring of tribute items and commercial products for official trade in China possible. Being aware of networks in medieval society, such as the religious network—and also closely connected to that the commercial network—of Honganji or Tenryūji, can help us connect the scattered and loose information in the sources, in order to explain what contributed to the development of foreign trade. The paper argues that despite the weakening of shogunal power, tributary trade continued because the structure of ship management transformed. Tribute ships became part of commercial ventures backed by the flourishing late medieval Japanese economy, and the increase of capital led to an increase in investors who were ready to participate in trade with China. The way that products were procured shows different patterns that provide good examples to help us understand how local commercial, social, and religious networks were utilised for procuring Japanese commodities.

Keywords: Muromachi period, Ming China, tributary trade, Honganji, Gozan, Tenryūji, Boshin yūminki, folding fan, inkstone, agate

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Introduction

In Muromachi Japan, the right to send official diplomatic missions to Ming China was in the hands of the Ashikaga shoguns who bore the title ‘King of Japan’. The Chinese emperor invested foreign rulers with the title of ‘king’ (*wang* 王) during embassies as part of the Chinese tributary system (C: *cefeng*, J: *sakuhō* 冊封), and this investiture was officially conveyed by an imperial order. In the Muromachi period (1336–1573), tributary trade with China started in fact only after Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358–1408) received an investiture from Emperor Jianwen 建文 (1383–1402?) in 1402 and thus received the right to send official diplomatic (tributary) missions.¹ This was the beginning of almost 150 years of Sino-Japanese trade within the framework of the Chinese tribute system.²

For the Japanese, when organising tributary missions, the most difficult task was to put up the money and provide the necessary financial support to send the tribute ships bearing tribute items and trade commodities to China on behalf of the shogun. Officially the shogun provided the capital for the preparation of tribute ships, since they were sent in the name of the ‘King of Japan’, but the economic reality of the funding for the missions was more complex.³

All of the costs for the preparation of tribute items and trade commodities, and the organisation of ships and crew, had to be provided by the shogun as ship manager⁴ or, in later years as the shogunal family faced greater financial difficulties, by ship managers who represented religious institutions or warrior families. Because of these financial complexities we can only get a complete picture of foreign trade under the tribute system if we understand the domestic networks behind foreign trade and identify patterns that we can see in primary sources that reveal how domestic society and the domestic economy contributed to foreign trade.

¹ For a recent discussion on the investiture of the Ashikaga shoguns, see Murai 2018, Seki 2021.

² For an overview of Sino-Japanese relations in the Ming period, see Kobata 1969, Verschuer 2006, Olah 2009.

³ On the preparation and funding of Japanese tribute missions, see Suda 2012: 54–58.

⁴ They are called in modern historiography ‘managers’ (*keieisha* 経営者) or ‘main dispatchers’ (*haken shutai* 派遣主体) of tribute ships to China. This term is used for those who organised the ships for tributary missions and raised the capital necessary for organisation and preparation. On the organisation and commercial profit of tributary ships see Hashimoto Yū 橋本雄 1998. ‘Kenminsen to kenchōsen no keiei kōzō 遣明船と遣朝船の経営構造 [The structure of management of ships to China and Korea].’ *Haruka naru chūsei* 遙かなる中世 17: 34–58.

In the 1970s, Sasaki Gin'ya was the first to criticise that research on foreign trade and the domestic economy were being conducted separately.⁵ He emphasised the importance of complex interdisciplinary research in order to reveal the connection between foreign trade and the domestic economy, even though he was aware that it is difficult to find connections due to the scarcity of information in extant primary sources. Contributions that have been made in recent years have aimed at revealing the connections between domestic commercial or religious networks and foreign relations, mainly focusing on the role of Zen monks and Zen temples in diplomacy and trade and on the import and distribution of commodities from China.⁶ In order to get a sharper picture of the connection between foreign trade and the domestic economy, not only is it essential to have further case studies, but it is also necessary to re-evaluate primary and secondary sources in the field of foreign relations and economy history.

The aim of this article is to rethink the connection between foreign trade and the domestic economy in late medieval Japan and to provide some examples that will help us understand this question more clearly. The article will take a look at the financial side of the tributary missions, investigating how commodities for tribute and for trade were organised, and it will explain the individuals or institutions who contributed to the preparation of the tributary ships.

The Ashikaga shogunate and moneylenders

By the 1380s, in the midst of the Nanbokuchō War (1336–1392), the Ashikaga shogunate finally managed to establish its legitimacy in Kyoto, when aristocratic families and religious institutions accepted its presence and realised its necessity as an administrator and protector of Kyoto and the surrounding the Kinai area.⁷ Still, even if it became stronger in a political sense, it remained weak economically, with a rather modest income compared to the large estate owners of the *kenmon* 権門 blocks (i.e., aristocratical families and religious institutions).⁸ These families and institutions possessed large estates surrounding Kyoto and in remote provinces and thus exercised rights and interests over a large amount of land taxes.

The shogunate possessed, however, only a small number of estates. Moreover, its income from those lands was insufficient for maintaining its finances, because the transportation of the land tax from remote places was impossible.

⁵ Sasaki 1994: 3–22, 35–48.

⁶ Itō 2002, Seki 2014, Okamoto 2022.

⁷ Wintersteen 1974: 201–209.

⁸ On the *kenmon* theory, see Adolphson 2000: 10–20.

This was due to the fact that landholdings under the direct control of the shogunate (*kubō goryōsho* 公方御料所) were occupied by supporters of the Southern Court during the war or because the shogunate used its landholdings to reward loyal vassals.⁹

Recent studies emphasise, however, that among the landholdings that were directly controlled by the shogunate, there were larger landholdings with high income that were entrusted to members of the Ashikaga family, provincial warrior governors, or vassals. According to Yamada Tōru, previous studies underestimate the importance of such landholdings that should be considered as part of shogunal landholdings even if they were not under the direct control of the shogunate.¹⁰

Although this idea is fairly convincing, we have to consider that the Ashikaga shogunate also understood that maintaining control over landholdings was a fragile issue and that stable income could not be drawn from landholdings that were only under their loose or temporary control. Thus, in order to secure income, the Ashikaga turned to collecting commercial taxes from merchants, artisans, and moneylenders in and around Kyoto.

In 1393, the shogunate issued the law of ‘taxation on storehouse-keepers and sake-brewers scattering in Kyoto and its outskirts’ (*rakuchū hendo sanzai dosō narabi ni sakaya yaku jōjō* 洛中辺土散在土倉并酒屋役条々).¹¹ The shogunate prescribed that a tax in the amount of 6,000 *kan* per year must be paid by storehouse-keepers and sake-brewers, who were at the time generally exempted from other taxes.

The shogunate established the position (or according to some scholars an institution) of *nōsenkata* 納銭方, who was responsible for the collection and storing of taxes on behalf of the shogunate.¹² The shogunate selected the most wealthy and powerful sake-brewers and storehouse-keepers for the position of *nōsenkata*, who were expected to serve as treasurers or chamberlains of the shogunal storehouse (*kubō o-kura* 公方御倉). The *nōsenkata* not only collected taxes, but, as becomes obvious from sources about their later actual daily practice, they also provided space in their own storehouses for storing shogunal taxes and objects.

Over time, those who were selected to this position were responsible for the administration of shogunal finances, which included the collecting and storing of taxes and the supervision of incoming and outgoing payments on behalf of the shogunate. One of the further duties was also to store shogunal documents,

⁹ Kuwayama 2006: 92–125.

¹⁰ Yamada 2014: 32–57.

¹¹ *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 2: 60, Grossberg 1981: 82.

¹² Tanaka 2001: 651–683, Kuwayama 2006: 136–175.

precious objects, and commodities that the shogun received as gifts, and if the shogun needed those documents or objects, the treasurers had to send them to the shogun from the storehouse.

Further, if the shogun needed money but the storehouses were empty, it was also the duty of the treasurers to procure money, often by borrowing it from moneylenders. As it is obvious from the explanation above, the service provided by moneylenders were essential for the daily operation of the shogunate, and even if they received no payment in exchange for their services, the protection provided by the shogunate seemed to be sufficient compensation for continuing their activities.

The financial challenges of sending official tributary embassies to China would have been insurmountable if the shogunate did not have financial security from additional resources, such as the taxes paid by sake-producers and storehouse-keepers, who established themselves as moneylenders in medieval society. This was obviously the best solution for the shogunate to raise the income it needed to send tributary missions to China.

In addition to the moneylenders, the treasurers also played an important role in the tributary missions to China, since they were responsible for providing the capital for those missions as treasurers of the shogunate.

Tribute items and trade products of the shogun

The shogun, or as he was called in the Sinocentric world, the 'King of Japan', was expected, as a formal vassal, to send tributary commodities to the Ming emperor as a sign of his acknowledgment of the superiority of Ming China and as an expression of his admiration towards the Chinese emperor and the Chinese culture.

Tribute products were expected to be precious local commodities (*fangwu* 方物). In the case of Japan, the main tribute products included weapons (spears, swords), armour, handicrafts (including fans, folding screens, inkstones), horses, sulphur, sapanwood, and agate. Except for sapanwood, which was imported from Southeast Asia probably via the Ryukyu Kingdom, these commodities were procured from different places in Japan. Some of them were originally gifts to the shogun that were 'reused' as tribute commodities, while others were purchased by the shogun as the official manager of the shogunal tributary ships. Ship managers were responsible for organising the ships for the tributary mission and for raising funds in order to cover the necessary expenses. Thus, in this case, the shogun, as manager of the shogunal ships, was responsible for fundraising and for the preparation of local commodities as tribute items.

Historians agree that in the early decades of the 15th century, the treasurers, one of the most significant being the Momii 籾井 family, procured the tribute items by themselves at the request of the shogunate. According to a list in *Boshi nyūminki* 戊子入明記 that contains the prices paid for tribute commodities for the mission of 1432, the amount was 694 *kan* 980 *mon*.¹³ The list does not mention, however, who provided the money for purchasing the products or through what channels the shogunate procured them, and therefore another interpretation of the list is also possible: namely that the treasurers did not provide the capital and instead used the money of the shogun that was deposited in their storehouses to buy the necessary items, or that at least not every item was purchased and provided for tribute by the treasurers.

On the other hand, there is a list from the same year about the prices of commercial commodities that the shogun sent to China.¹⁴ These items were sent to China to be sold as part of official trade, but of course the Ming state had the right to refuse their purchase. For two of the seven items on this list—gold ingot and sapanwood—there is a comment on their value and another comment that explains that they were ‘provided from the [shogunal] storehouse’ (*o-kura yori idasu* 自御倉出).¹⁵ This can mean simply that the items were provided from the shogunal storehouse or that the shogun ordered the treasurer to provide the money from the shogunal storehouse to purchase the items. The list contains no reference to the price of another item, copper alloy. The shogun gave orders to four provinces (Tajima, Mimasaka, Bitchū, and Bingo) to send this item to Kyoto, and because it was not purchased but rather was provided on shogunal orders by leading warriors from those provinces, it is not listed with a price.

This would mean that the other four items without comments were paid for and procured by the storehouse-keeper, who filled the position of treasurer on behalf of the shogun. Based on the same logic, the tribute items could be also interpreted as having been purchased and paid for by the treasurer, since the items do not contain a comment about from where the money came. Thus, the model of financing the purchase of tribute commodities was based on the wealth of these treasurers—as long as they could continue their business as storehouse-keepers, there was enough profit in their storehouses that they could share with the shogunate and provide financial help in purchasing tribute commodities.

However, as described in the following record in *Boshi nyūminki*, during the preparations for the mission in 1468 the situation changed completely.¹⁶

¹³ Igawa 2007: 133–134.

¹⁴ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ For a detailed analysis, see Igawa 2007: 140–142.

Regarding tribute commodities, according to former precedents, it was the Momii [family] that used all their efforts to procure them, but they are now in financial difficulties and cannot afford anymore [to purchase tributary commodities]. Therefore, under the guarantee by Lord Ise, Shōbon agreed to make efforts to procure [tribute commodities].¹⁷

As this source shows, in the first decades of the 15th century, when a diplomatic mission was sent to China, the shogunate asked the storehouse-keeper Momii family, as shogunal treasurer, to purchase tribute commodities on behalf of the shogun. The description that the Momii were in financial difficulties and not able to procure commodities as before clearly indicates that they were expected to buy commodities on behalf of the shogun using their own resources. Otherwise, even if the Momii had been in financial need, the shogun could have provided the necessary money for purchasing the commodities, but that did not happen. The shogun, with the help of Ise Sadachika 伊勢貞親 (1417–1473), chief of the Administrative Board of the Shogunate (*Mandokoro shitsuji* 政所執事), was able to find another solution to this problem.

The Momii were possibly not the only storehouse-keeper family who worked for the shogun, but without any doubt they were the most important one. Still, because of their financial difficulties, the Momii family was not able to continue providing financial support for the shogun. The reason for the impoverishment of the Momii—and other moneylender-storehouse-keepers around the mid-15th century—was an increase of uprisings and attacks on moneylenders. These uprisings were led by debtors who borrowed money from moneylenders but could not pay it back, and in the uprisings the moneylenders often even lost the objects that they used as collateral. The debtors attacked moneylenders, tried to get back their collateral, and demanded debt cancellation from the government. The most significant of these was the Kakitsu uprising (1441), which had enormous effects on the business and financial affairs of moneylenders.¹⁸

It was not only the attacks and uprisings that caused great losses for the moneylenders. The debtors who demanded the cancellation of their debts forced the shogunate to take action in order to stop the turmoil and restore social order in and around Kyoto. Finally, after the Kakitsu uprising, the shogunate ordered the cancellation of debts, which made the lenders dissatisfied and led to a decrease in the number of moneylenders, because they could not continue their business after the attacks and they had suffered losses because of the decision of the shogunate about debt cancellation. The shogunate could not make both parties satisfied—tax income was of course important for the shogun but to keep

¹⁷ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

¹⁸ On uprisings and attacks, see Gay 2001: 128–148.

order in Kyoto and in the surrounding areas was given higher priority. Thus, finally the shogunate ordered debt cancellation, which made ordinary people satisfied but led to the decrease of moneylenders.

Even influential storehouse-keepers such as the Momii lost their wealth as a consequence of the attacks, and they had no surplus for financing the purchase of tribute commodities for the shogunate's diplomatic missions to China. The angry debtors even burned down storehouses, and thus many storehouse-keepers were not able to continue their moneylending activities.

At the same time, the income of the shogun from moneylender taxes rapidly decreased, but the shogun could not manage to acquire tax income from different sources. The decrease of wealthy moneylenders made the preparation of tribute products impossible.¹⁹

The situation of the shogunal storehouses is unknown because of the lack of an inventory, but it is quite likely that it did not contain enough copper coins for purchasing Japanese commodities for the China missions. In letters to the Ministry of Rites in Ming China, the shogunate often claimed that there was a lack of copper coins in Japan and that the shogunal storehouses were empty. This claim was often combined with a request to send more coins to Japan.²⁰ The greatest opportunity to receive copper coins was during official trade. If the Japanese claimed that the official prices for trade items were too low, the court may have decided to provide the Japanese embassy with additional coins.

Still, if we believe the diplomatic letters, then the shogunal storehouses were empty, and the shogunate really needed copper coins. It is possible that this statement displayed the reality, and in that case, it is highly possible that the Momii as shogunal storehouse-keepers used their own money to prepare tribute items and trade products for China, because the shogunal finances were not sufficient.

On the other hand, what we know is that the shogunal storehouse, already at the beginning of Muromachi period, was full of import commodities from China. Ichijō Tsunetsugu 一条経嗣 (1358–1418) praised both Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's karamono collection and the decoration of his rooms during his visit to Kitayama villa together with Emperor Gokomatsu 後小松天皇 (1377–1433) in 1408. He mentioned that the shogun had a collection of precious karamono that 'were even rare in China', including Chinese paintings, vases, incense burners, folding screens, and other items.²¹

¹⁹ Hashimoto 2013: 197–198.

²⁰ *Zenrin kokuhōki*: 198, 234, *Zoku Zenrin kokuhōki*: 266.

²¹ Harada 2011: 21–22.

Organisation of tribute items and trade products in the Ōnin period

The shogunal storehouse was filled with imported commodities, but copper coins were lacking, and the capital for furnishing tribute ships to China was not sufficient. Originally, it was the shogun who had to organise and send tributary ships, but the financial situation of both the shogunate and the shogunal treasurer around the Ōnin period (1467–1469) made the preparation of tribute commodities impossible. Still, the sending of Japanese tribute ships in the name of the King of Japan continued even after the Ōnin period.

The organisation of tribute ships during the Ōnin period marked an important turning point when the role of the shogun, who formally dispatched the tribute ships, was separated from the role of the ship manager, who had de facto control over preparing the tribute ship. The shogun formally remained the dispatcher of shogunal ships, but it was the manager who made the decisions regarding the management of the ship.

Since tribute was essential for a mission to be accepted in China as an official tributary embassy, the Japanese continued to send ships loaded with tribute commodities that were presented to the Chinese emperor in the name of the King of Japan. The preparation of tributary commodities despite the lack of sufficient capital was only possible because *kenmon* power blocks (i.e., religious institutions and warrior clans) occasionally took over the costs of financing those commodities at the request of the shogunate. This was the secret for how the shogun was able to send ships in his own name without providing any capital for them. The shogun still served formally as the ship manager of the shogunal ship, but representatives of *kenmon* power blocks became the de facto ship managers. The tribute items that were sent in the name of the King of Japan were in fact collected and paid for by wealthy ship managers and not the shogun.

After this change in the financial organisation of the embassies, the profit of the shogun was quite scarce. Since the shogun received from the Ming government the tallies that were necessary for official tribute ships to be acknowledged in China, only he could decide on their distribution. Since the shogun received the tallies for free and distributed them for an average of 300 *kanmon* in copper cash, he profited extremely well from tribute trade with China: with zero investment he received Chinese commodities and the fees for the tallies.²²

It was then the responsibility of the ship managers to provide funding not only for the necessary costs for chartering and sending a ship but also for covering the procurement costs of the tribute items. The ship managers used the revenue from boarding fees and cargo charges that were paid by traders in order

²² Suda 2012: 55–56.

to prepare the tribute items, but the procurement costs for tribute items were fairly high. When Ōuchi Masahiro 大内政弘 (1446–1495)—influential provincial lord from Suō Province—once planned to participate in the tribute mission of 1483 with his own ‘Ōuchi-ship’, the shogun asked him to donate money for the purchase of tributary products. This was the reason for why he finally refused to participate in the mission and abandoned his plan of sending a ship under his name at that time.²³

The Ōnin-Bunmei War (1467–1477) made the sending of tribute ships difficult, but it was a good opportunity for wealthy *kenmon* groups to participate in and profit from the venture. As mentioned in the previous source, the shogun could no longer rely on moneylenders, but Ise Sadachika then recommended Shōbon 紹本, a monk of Tenryūji temple (and head of the temple office, *tsūsu* 都寺),²⁴ who took over the function of ship manager backed by the wealth and broad commercial network of Tenryūji.

Tribute commodities were acquired from different places via different channels. Some of them were donated (*shinjō* 進上) to the shogun by leading warrior families, which means that the shogunate did not need to pay for those items that they then used as tribute products or in some cases as shogunal trade products. For example, in the case of the Ōnin tributary ship, armour was sent by the Toki 土岐 family, sulphur was provided by the Ōtomo 大友 and Shimazu 島津 families in Kyūshū, and horses were sent by warrior families from the Kinai region.²⁵

A regular tribute item—20 pieces of agate

For the same tribute ship, 20 pieces of agate were also donated to the shogun for tributary purposes.²⁶ Five of them were donated by the Togashi 富樫 clan, a warrior family from Kaga 加賀 Province, whose members had acted as governors of Kaga Province for generations. It was not a coincidence that agate was provided by the Togashi family since minerals such as agate, opal, and rock crystal were produced in the Enuma 江沼 district in Kaga Province. As we know from later sources, when Ōuchi Yoshitaka 大内義隆 (1507–1551) was preparing tributary ships in the name of the Muromachi shogunate in the Tenbun period (1532–1555), he asked Honganji monk Shōnyo 証如 (1516–1554) to obtain agate. In 1536, Shōnyo contacted Natadera 那谷寺 in the Enuma district,

²³ Hashimoto 2010: 123, Suda 2011: 61.

²⁴ On the officer-monks in Zen temple communities, see Collcutt 1996: 236–243.

²⁵ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and the latter sent the requested agate to Shōnyo, who then sent them to the Ōuchi in 1537.²⁷

The Togashi were an influential warrior family of Kaga Province, and the power of the Honganji temple of the Jōdo Shinshū sect gradually became enormous in the region. Honganji did not always have a peaceful and harmonious relationship with other Buddhist sects there. After the sons of Ren'nyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), the founder of Honganji 本願寺, moved to Kaga and established their own temples, Honganji started to exercise its religious and political control in the region. Shōnyo could preserve the influence of Honganji and the religious connection to other sects and played an important role in Kaga Province.²⁸ Since Shōnyo had his network and influence in Kaga, he could ask Natadera for help in acquiring agate for Ōuchi Yoshitaka. Procuring commodities for tribute or trade depended not only on commercial networks but also on religious networks, which was also true for Shōbon, who earlier used the religious network of Tenryūji and Gozan Zen temples to procure tribute items or commercial products at the request of the shogun.

Some tribute items or commercial commodities of the shogun were delivered by religious institutions during the preparation of the tribute ship during the Ōnin period. For example, among the 20 pieces of agate that were sent to China in the name of the shogun as tribute item, 12 were delivered by the shogun's attendant chief priest (a Zen priest who closely served the shogun) on behalf of the network of Gozan temples.²⁹

The title 'attendant chief priest' refers to Kikei Shinzui 季瓊真蘂 (1401–1469), chief abbot of Inryōken 蔭涼軒 (a sub-temple of Shōkokuji 相国寺 in Kyoto), who also confirms the sending of 12 pieces of agate to the shogunal official Inoo Mototsura 飯尾元連 (1431–1492) in the official diary of the Inryōken. As he explains, the shogun gave the order to deliver the pieces of agate, in order to bring them to China, because there was a precedent.³⁰

What he means is that there was a precedent for the shogun to send agate to the Ming emperor as tribute. In fact, we find the same amount of agate on

²⁷ *Tenbun nikki*, 1536 (Tenbun 5), 12/24, 12/28.

²⁸ On the religious activities of Shōnyo in Kaga Province, see Hayashima Yūki 早島有毅, 'Sengoku bukkyō no tenkai ni okeru Honganji Shōnyo no rekishiteki ichi 戦国仏教の展開における本願寺証如の歴史的位置 [The historical role of Shōnyo from Honganji in the development of Buddhism in the Sengoku period].' In: Kusano Kenshi 草野顕之, Hayashima Yūki 早島有毅 (eds.) *Taikei Shinshū shiryō* 大系真宗史料. *Monjo kiroku hen* 文書記録編 8. *Tenbun nikki* 天文日記 I. Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2015, 485–531.

²⁹ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

³⁰ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1465 (Kanshō 6), 1/30.

the existing lists of tribute items to China from both 1432³¹ and 1492.³² Also, later in the Tenbun period, the Ōuchi clan took great efforts to procure agate. It seems from these examples that the sending of 20 pieces of agate as tribute had become a regular custom in Sino-Japanese tributary relations already from the early beginnings.

Now, we may suppose that Kikei Shinzui did everything to procure the necessary number of pieces of agate, having received the order from the shogun. Finally, the 12 peices of agate were donated by two powerful head temples of the Rinzai Zen sect (Shōkokuji and Kenninji 建仁寺); three sub-temples of Rinzai Zen head temples (Inryōken, Rokuon'in 鹿苑院 [Shōkokuji], and Seishin'in 栖真院 [Nanzenji 南禅寺]); four temples and sub-temples related to the Tenryūji lineage of the Rinzai Zen sect founded by Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (Tōjiji 等持寺, Tōji'in 等持院 [also called Kita Tōji 北等持], San'nein 三会院 [Rinsenji 臨川寺], and Saihōin 西芳院 [Tenryūji]); and one Sōtō Zen temple called Gyokusenji 玉泉寺. Rokuon'in and Gyokusenji provided two pieces of agate each and the other temples one piece each. Tōjiji and Tōji'in were temples with the family graves of the Ashikaga clan, and this may explain why they became involved in the sending of agate and other tribute items, which will be discussed later. The deep involvement of Tenryūji is also clear from the list, which is not surprising since the manager of the ships was the Tenryūji monk Shōbon.

We may assume that Kikei Shinzui and Shōbon used their contacts with the Zen network and this proved to be useful. Due to their co-ordination and organisation, the necessary items were procured and Kikei Shinzui was able to provide them to the shogun as ordered. Similar to the aforementioned Togashi clan that used its connections to Kaga Province, Shōbon and Kikei Shinzui also relied on their network with other Zen temples. When the author of *Boshi nyūminki* mentions that the shogun's attendant chief priest Kikei Shinzui 'provided [agate] from the Gozan [temples]' (*sho gozan yori kore wo idasu* 自諸五山出之),³³ he clearly refers to the network of Gozan temples, including both the five main Kyōto Gozan temples and further Zen temples that belonged to the Zen Buddhist temple network in the broadest sense of the word.

Even so, it seems that collecting the necessary number of agate pieces was not possible. Adding the number of pieces of agate donated by the Togashi clan and the Zen temples, only 17 pieces could be collected. In order to prepare the proper amount of agate, three pieces were purchased,³⁴ supposedly by the manager of the ship. Moreover, regarding other items as well, it is obvious that

³¹ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

³² *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1492 (Entoku 4), 2/6.

³³ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

for commodities that could not be procured by donation, the managers had to purchase them, probably from artisans or merchants, for money.

Inkstones

At the time, during the Ōnin period, Gozan temples were also ordered by the shogun to provide inkstones for tribute.³⁵ ‘Our Lord [the shogun] ordered that the Gozan [temple network] should donate five hundred Jakuōji inkstones in order to send [them] to China’ (*Taitō ni tsukawasu beki tame no Jakuōji sekiken, sho gozan yori gohyaku men shinjō su beki no yoshi ōseidasaru nari* 為可使于大唐釈王寺石硯、自諸五山五百面可進上之由被仰出也).³⁶ Shogunal officials Ise Sadachika and Inoo Mototsura, who also served as the administrator for China-bound ships (*kara bugyō* 唐奉行 or *karabune bugyō* 唐船奉行), advised the shogun that instead of desperately focusing on sending this large amount, the shogun should give an order to find inkstones that were really valuable. The administrators emphasised that the quality of inkstones was more important than their quantity.³⁷ This warning shows that Japanese shogunal administrators were aware that the Ming court had the right to refuse items if, for example, their quality was not sufficient. The shogun followed their advice and gave an order to announce it to the temples.

In *Boshi nyūminki*, we find the item of Jakuōji inkstones on the list of commodities prepared for the shogun’s tributary ship. It contains, written below this item, the remark ‘*shōbaigata* 商買方’, which can be interpreted as ‘for commercial use’. Another list of shogunal commercial products recorded in the same source clearly shows that these inkstones were used for commercial purposes and not as tribute.³⁸

The reason why shogunal administrators emphasised quality over quantity so much may lay in the fact that Jakuōji inkstones were supposed to be sold in China during official trade as commercial items of the shogun and not to be delivered to the emperor as tribute items. The profit from the inkstones depended on their quality.

It is interesting to note that the shogun in his order specified that the donated inkstones must be made of stone from Jakuōji Mountain 石王寺山 in Tanba

³⁵ Igawa 2007: 123.

³⁶ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1464 (Kanshō 5), 6/15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ A few items on the list contain the same remark. If we compare the list of donated items with the list of shogunal trade products, then it becomes clear that a great part of the donated or purchased commodities were intended to be sold during official trade and were expected to be bought by the Ming court. *Boshi nyūminki*: 348, 354.

Province. Black inkstones with white or silver streak patterns and made of stone from Jakuōji Mountain were famous and were regarded as a precious and elegant type of inkstone in Japan.³⁹ It is not surprising that because of the inkstones' fame and location—being in the vicinity of Kyoto—the shogun decided to send them to China. Following the advice of shogunal administrators, the shogun made the decision that the inkstones were of good enough quality to sell in China.

Kikei Shinzui, again, was expected to co-ordinate the collection of inkstones from Gozan temples, but, similar to the case of the agate, we may assume that the shogun was referring in this case to the broad network of Gozan temples. The temples followed the order, and in the end 180 inkstones were collected from different Zen temples, a much lower number than had been originally sought.⁴⁰

One of the temples that provided the shogun with inkstones was Tōjiji temple, which had also sent agate, as mentioned before. On the 15th day of 6th month, 1464, the shogun visited Tōjiji temple where he participated in a ceremony relating to the former shogun Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 (1305–1358), who was buried there. Since the request of the shogun concerning the donation of inkstones had already been promulgated, we may understand this visit as both a religious occasion and also as part of a visit organised for collecting the required inkstones. In fact, as part of this visit, the shogun received 12 inkstones donated by Tōjiji temple. Similar to the pieces of agate, it was Inoo Mototsura who was appointed to receive the inkstones.⁴¹

The shogunal tactic was brilliant. The procuring or securing of a donation of Japanese commodities was ordered by the shogun to Zen temples, and they were ready to follow the order. In addition to this, temples in general always welcomed—or at least tried to show that they welcomed—the shogun, who appeared for an official visit (*onari* 御成). On the occasion of these visits, the temples always provided precious gifts (e.g., Japanese and Chinese goods) to the shogun to celebrate his coming and to show their acknowledgment of his shogunal power.

The reason behind this was that the shogun was regarded as the protector of Buddhism and Buddhist religious institutions. The shogun often visited Zen temples and temples of other sects as well. Moreover, depending on the occasion, he asked Buddhist priests to pray or to organise religious ceremonies. Religious leaders of different sects visited the shogun at the beginning of the year to deliver their greetings to him on the occasion of the New Year. Religious institutions of all existing sects acknowledged the political power of the shogun, and that is why they maintained close ties to the shogun during ceremonies

³⁹ Shimofusa 1996: 32–33.

⁴⁰ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

⁴¹ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1464 (Kanshō 5), 6/15, 6/19.

throughout the year.⁴² Over time, however, the number of such official visits increased, and even though shogunal visits to temples became a burden, the temples continued to provide gifts to him.

What happened to the inkstones in China? Even though the inkstones were considered as precious tribute gifts to the Ming emperor, there is an interesting case where one of them was refused by the emperor and returned to Japan. According to the inscription on the back of the inkstone, it was a stationary utensil that originally belonged to the sub-temple San'ne-in (Rinsenji). This inkstone was common property (*jōjūmotsu* 常住物) of the temple and was used on a daily basis by the monks. As mentioned before, the shogun ordered Zen temples of the Gozan network to deliver inkstones to be used as commercial items, and it seems evident from the sources that, following the shogunal order, San'ne-in of Rinsenji, a Zen sub-temple of the Tenryūji lineage, decided to provide the property of the temple for the shogun. The inkstone was sent to China during the Ōnin mission, but the Chinese court did not purchase it during official trade. Finally, it was given back to San'ne-in. The person who wrote this short inscription on the back of the inkstone, in the 8th month of 1468, was Shōbon. He contributed to the preparation of the shogunal ship (*kubō-sen* 公方船) as ship manager, representing Tenryūji, then travelled to China with the tributary embassy and acted as *koza* 居座 (monk administrator or monk official) on the same shogunal ship.⁴³

Folding fans to China and folding screens

Japanese folding fans, used as tribute or trade products, were also occasionally donated by Zen temples.⁴⁴ For example, *mina-eribone* fans (*mina-eribone sensu* 皆彫骨扇子), which were folding fans decorated with carvings on both the guards and sticks, and 300 *mon* fans (*sanbyaku mon sensu* 三百文扇子), which had the value of 300 *mon* copper coins, were originally donated to the shogun on the occasion of the New Year's ceremony or official visits to Zen temples. Since these were the most expensive fans and the shogun possessed a great amount of them, he decided to use some of the donated fans as tribute items and the rest as trade items to be sold as part of official trade.

The shogun's storehouse was filled with not only Chinese commodities but also Japanese commodities that were presented as gifts to the shogun on the occasion of visits or audiences. It was quite usual that the shogun redistributed

⁴² Sueki 2010: 276–277.

⁴³ *Daikakuji shōgyō mokuroku*: 733.

⁴⁴ *Boshi nyūminki*: 348.

gifts that he received; it was a common act in medieval society in general. This example also indicates that the shogun stored commodities that were regularly donated by Zen temples or others, such as fans, in his storehouses and redistributed them as tribute as necessary, which represents a refined system for preparing tribute ship and tribute items, together with commercial items, without investing the shogun's own money.

Different from agate and inkstones that were donated by temples on the order of the shogun, in the case of fans the donation took place—at least on the surface—voluntarily, without an order from the shogun. Still, as pointed out by Sakurai Eiji, the temples were aware of the fact that their fans donated to the shogun might be used as tribute fans to China. That is why they ordered fans before the shogun came to visit with the purpose of sending them to China. When they ordered the fans, they always paid attention to their quality. They were careful to order them from craftsmen who were able to deliver good quality fans.⁴⁵

The awareness of the monks is also clear from the fact that they call the fans 'fans to be sent to China' (*kentō sensu* 遣唐扇子) or 'fans to China' (*kara-sensu* 唐扇子). When the shogun visited several sub-temples and buildings of Shōkokuji in 1459, he received 10 pieces of 'fans to China' at each stop.⁴⁶ Official visits to religious institutions not only were not only important for religious purposes or for facilitating conversations about Chinese art objects or topics with Zen monks, but they were also beneficial because of the gifts that could be redistributed in Japan or China. Japanese fans were popular in China, often used as gifts for Chinese officials or literati.

Here we see the connection of Gozan Zen temples and the shogunate. Since the shogunal ship in the Ōnin period was managed by Shōbon, it is not surprising that Gozan temples used their networks and helped Tenryūji to acquire the products. If we look at the donations, we also see that not only Zen temples donated commodities to the shogun; on the list there is Sanbōin 三宝院, a sub-temple of Daigoji 醍醐寺 (Shingon sect) that provided a folding screen as a tribute product to China. Sanbōin was a temple where the head priests were originally of aristocratic lineage. In the Muromachi period, Mansai 満済 (1378–1435), who originally served for the wife of shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and established close ties with Yoshimitsu, became the adopted son of Yoshimitsu. Shortly after that, in 1395, he was appointed as head priest of Sanbōin and at the same time as chief abbot of Daigoji temple. The practice that the head priest of Sanbōin acted also as chief abbot of Daigoji temple would later be inherited, and just like Mansai, the subsequent head priests would serve as protector monks of

⁴⁵ Sakurai 2017: 104–108.

⁴⁶ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1459 (Chōroku 3), 1/18–1/19.

the shogun.⁴⁷ The head abbot of Sanbōin during the preparation of the Ōnin ships was Giken 義賢 (1399–1468), the son of Ashikaga Mitsuakira 足利満詮 (1364–1418), younger brother of the third Muromachi shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. His close relationship may explain why he also included a folding screen in the donation.

Looking at the inventory of commodities from 1433 selected as tribute or trade products in the name of the shogun, it seems that the ship managers basically tried to prepare the same items in the same amounts for the Ōnin ship in 1468, and later data from 1492 also supports this assumption.⁴⁸

The preparation of tribute items and trade products through donation by temples and provincial warrior lords reflects an important characteristic of the financial system of the shogunate, which relied entirely on the practice of gift-giving. This system and its practice connected the shogunate to the world of artisans and the world of distribution and created a circulation of commodities both in Japan and as part of foreign trade.⁴⁹

Problems with the quality of tribute items and return gifts

The basic principle of Ming China regarding trade within the framework of the tribute system was ‘giving generously, taking slightly’ (*houwang baolai* 厚往薄来). This is why, in the early decades of the Ming period, roughly until the 1430s or 1440s, the Ming court basically accepted all kinds of tribute commodities and provided precious Chinese products—more valuable than the tribute commodities—as return gifts (*huici* 回賜) in exchange for tribute.⁵⁰

This was a sort of trade that was highly profitable for members of foreign tribute missions. Still, maintaining the tribute system and receiving an increasing number of tributary embassies caused a severe financial burden on the Ming court. It became inevitable for the court, on the one hand, to lower the costs for return gifts and, on the other hand, to drastically decrease the amount of commercial commodities purchased during official trade. They also tried to reduce the prices of foreign commercial products and, in that way, to force foreigners to abandon selling them to the court. From the second half of the 15th century, this led to an increase in the importance of private trade.⁵¹ Still, the reaction of the foreign ‘barbarians’ was very different. Some of them completely stopped send-

⁴⁷ Mori 2004: 32–52, 53–59.

⁴⁸ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1492 (Entoku 4), 2/6.

⁴⁹ Sakurai 2017: 87–88.

⁵⁰ Olah 2009: 38–39.

⁵¹ Olah 2022: 299–304.

ing tribute, while others, like the Japanese, continued sending tribute missions but increased the number of members and the amount of lower quality commodities, attempting to sell them privately during officially allowed and supervised private trade. Private trade, even supervised by the state, caused many troubles, however, and foreigners were sometimes deceived by Chinese broker-traders.⁵²

The quality, quantity, and variety of return gifts for the King of Japan were also affected by the financial straits of the Ming state. We can explicitly see the obvious tendency of the state to gradually reduced both the amount and variety of items for return gifts, which was presumably linked to the trend of the shrinking trade volume that characterised official trade after the Jingtai period (1450–1457). If we examine the existing lists (*beppuku* 別幅) of return gifts from the Ming emperor, recorded in *Zenrin kokuhōki* 善隣国宝記 and *Zoku Zenrin kokuhōki* 続善隣国宝記, it is obvious that, for example in 1433, the amount and variety of return gifts was abundant and included different utensils, silk fabrics, and other precious Chinese commodities. If we add to this the amount of copper cash that was paid by the state for official trade commodities sent by the King of Japan, it is doubtless that the Ming state bore high costs in order to maintain the tribute system. From 1436 onwards, however, the wide range of variety of return gifts was gradually reduced, so that by 1478 the Ming court sent almost only silk fabrics as gifts, which gives the impression that the amount of gifts basically decreased.

As mentioned before, certain tribute items from Japan were not accepted by the Ming court. Using this as a reason, the court reduced the number of Chinese commodities as gifts. Interestingly, there were cases when Chinese officials tried to convince the court to refuse Japanese tribute. This was the situation when Yang Shouchen 楊守陳 (1425–1489), a native of Ningbo, submitted a letter in 1477 to the Chief Official of the Bureau of Receptions (*zhuke langzhong* 主客郎中), an office under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Rites that was responsible for foreign tributary embassies, and proposed that Japanese tributary ships should be refused in the future.⁵³ Yang Shouchen had just been selected as an apprentice at the Hanlin Academy after passing the *jinshi* 進士 grade in the state examination, and he was working on an edition of official historical works.

He claimed that swords and fans as tribute products from Japan were not necessary items for Ming China. In his reasons for refusing Japanese tribute, he mentioned that the products were expensive and the court had to invest a huge amount of money for the preparation of return gifts, which in this situation was a waste of money. A further reason for the refusal was that for transporting Japanese commodities of tribute-bearing embassies from Ningbo to Beijing, local

⁵² Olah 2014: 23–39, Olah 2015: 39–48.

⁵³ *Shuyu zhousilu*: 62–64.

officials in Ningbo had to borrow people from Zhejiang to work as labourers, which became a huge burden for the people.

He also emphasised quite harshly that accepting Japanese tribute would encourage the arrogance of Japanese people and damage the Ming state financially. It is not clear why Yang Shouchen was so opposed to Japanese tribute. One possible reason could relate to a previous Japanese embassy from 1453 when the Japanese had brought a huge number of commodities to sell during official trade and had started negotiations with the Ministry of Rites on the prices, because the ministry had not been ready to purchase those commodities for the same price as before. Yang Shouchen was concerned that Japan would increase the number of commercial products and continue to request high prices for them during negotiations with the Ministry of Rites. In his opinion, refusing Japanese tribute would have no effect in China, since Japanese commodities were useless for the Chinese state, and the refusal would eliminate the chance of possible conflicts. In the end the Ministry of Rites rejected his request.

The recognition that Japanese tribute commodities contained nothing necessary for China is mentioned in later Ming sources. For example, when the author of *Ribenguo kaolüe* 日本国考略 referred to Japanese tribute products, such as folding fans decorated with gold leaf or gold lacquerware, he belittled the value of those commodities saying that ‘even if it is cold we cannot wear them, even we are hungry we cannot eat them’. He further emphasised that China had plenty of goods that were sufficient to meet the needs of people; thus, it was unnecessary to bring commodities from Japan that were not even necessary.⁵⁴

In contrast, however, other Chinese sources mention that Japanese fans were popular in China, especially precious and high-quality fans whose sticks were made of ebony wood, an import from Southeast Asia, and whose leaf was gold painted. Korean fans were also imported to China, but their quality was far inferior to that of Japanese fans, and their price was also only a tenth of that of Japanese fans. Japanese fans were not cheap, but they still became popular among Chinese people.⁵⁵

Japanese tribute items were sometimes rejected, or lower prices were offered for them because of their low quality. In fact, the quality of Chinese return gifts that the shogun received from the Emperor also decreased over the years. According to a diary account from 1492, when Kisen Shūshō 亀泉集証 (1424–1493), head monk of Inryōken, and the shogun talked about gifts from China, Kisen explained to the shogun that he inspected the return gifts from China and he discovered that the quality of gifts had decreased. The following is part of the recorded conversation:

⁵⁴ *Ribenguo kaolüe*: f. 21-v.

⁵⁵ *Wanli yehuobian*: 663.

Then I [the head monk of Inryōken, Kisen Shūshō] said [to the shogun]: ‘I was there before when the imperial gifts from China were inspected in the house of Ise [Sadamune, *bugyōnin* of the shogunal government]. I saw that, compared to the past, the number of Chinese gifts decreased and [their quality] also became inferior. After that I asked Shukugen [Jugen], the abbot of the sub-temple Tengen’in [about this]: “This time the Chinese imperial gifts are different from those in the past. Their number decreased and [the quality of] many of them became inferior. What is the reason for that?” [Shukugen of] Tengen[‘in] said: “You are absolutely right. It is strange, as you say, but China is not wrong. The gifts sent by our court [i.e., the *bakufu*] as tribute are of extremely low quality. Therefore, the Chinese court also reduced the quality of its gifts in retaliation.” [He mentioned as examples that] the shafts of *yari*-spears were made from the waste material of wood and scrap paper that was used for the lining of the golden folding screens. [The Japanese tribute gifts were] such low-quality!’⁵⁶

According to this, Kisen discussed the problem of tributes with Shukugen Jugen 肅元寿嚴, who served as monk administrator on a tribute ship during the Hōtoku period, but Shukugen said that the decreasing quality of Chinese gifts can be explained by the fact that Japanese tribute items were low in quality. As Shukugen said, the Chinese court just wanted to take revenge, and that is why the court sent low-quality items. When the shogun heard this explanation, he said that ‘it is shameful for Japan’ that Japanese commodities of such bad quality were sent to China.⁵⁷ It is obvious that there was a tendency of decreasing quantity and quality during these years. The reason for this change can be explained by the shift in ship organisation from the shogun to merchants, warriors, and religious institutions. Ship managers tried to keep down the costs, but it led then to a decrease in quality.

Profit and investment

Those who decided to take on the organisation of ships to China as part of the tribute mission and who were engaged in preparation and supervision of the process were the ship managers. Originally, as mentioned above, the shogun was also a ship manager who provided capital—with the help of storehouse-keepers who acted as shogunal treasurers—for sending tribute ships. Then, when the shogun was not in strong enough of a financial situation to send tribute ships and the treasurers could not provide the necessary capital for preparing the tribute

⁵⁶ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1492 (Entoku 4), 6/6.

⁵⁷ *Inryōken nichiroku*, 1492 (Entoku 4), 7/6.

commodities, private merchants offered their services and became managers of the shogunal ship, and they, instead of the shogunate, procured the tribute products. Since those managers provided capital for the ships, the profit from trade done by merchants and others on their ships belonged to them as well.

Ship managers were responsible for providing the tribute ships with a crew and the necessary equipment. Ships sent to China were generally rented in ports along the Seto Inland Sea or ports in Kyushu, mainly in Hakata. The costs for the rent and the equipment, including the costs of repairs for damages and the repair or replacement of damaged equipment before returning the ship to its owner, were—under certain conditions—to be paid by the manager who borrowed the ship.⁵⁸ It seems from the sources that the average rental fee for one ship that was used as a tribute ship was 300 *kanmon* copper cash, and to pay for the ship's repair costs and equipment, the managers appropriated another 300 *kanmon* in cash.⁵⁹

Those who travelled to China to engage in private trade, often representatives of religious institutions, wealthy merchants, or members of the warrior clans, had to pay for the travel and for the space they used for their products. This was an important source of income for the ship managers who provided capital for tribute ships.

In a conversation with Jinson 尋尊 (1430–1508), chief monk of Daijōin 大乘院 (Kōfukuji 興福寺) in Nara, Kusuba Sainin 楠葉西忍 (1395–1486) emphasised the importance of the deputy officials (*gekan* 外官) and their attendants (*jū* 従) on tribute ships to China who were selected and sent by the ship manager.

The secret [of a successful mission] is to fill the positions of the deputy and the attendants with wealthy merchants [*utoku no shōnin* 有徳之商人]. [...] [The positions] are not for people who are financially in a difficult situation [*keikai no jin* 計会之仁].⁶⁰

Even in this case, Sainin talks about a special situation when a tribute ship was sent by 13 individuals and religious institutions (i.e., the ship had 13 ship managers and each of them had the right to send one deputy official). In this way, the managers shared the costs necessary for the preparation and divided the profit according to the amount of their invested capital. We cannot overlook how much Sainin emphasises the importance of the financial strength of those who represented the ship managers during the preparations and then in China. Only wealthy merchants could provide sufficient capital to prepare tribute ships and procure Japanese commodities that they could sell in China.

⁵⁸ On the rules for shipping in medieval times, see Sumita 1942: 62–66.

⁵⁹ *Boshi nyūminki*: 353, *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*, 1483 (Bunmei 15), 1/24.

⁶⁰ *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*, 1483 (Bunmei 15), 1/24.

According to the practice at the time, ship managers had the right to take a 10% levy (*chūbunsen* 抽分銭) from the merchants after they came back to Japan. After the arrival, managers inspected and evaluated the imported commodities that merchants brought back from China on the tribute ships, put a price on each of them, and took 10% of the entire value as levy. This 10% of levy represented the actual profit of a ship manager.⁶¹

This is why Kusuba Sainin also emphasises that taking wealthy merchants and their attendants was also essential for doing profitable business in China, because their individual profit determined the profit of the entire ship and, in the end, the profit of the ship managers.

A new financial model—Sakai merchants and the ‘guest merchants’

From the Bunmei period (1469–1487) onwards, the collecting of a 10% levy based on the calculation of the value of imported goods was substituted by another system. In this new model merchants from Sakai offered to ship managers that they undertake the organisation of the tribute ships and provide the capital necessary for the preparations for dispatching the ships. Merchants made a contract with the managers in advance based on the amount that they would pay after returning from China, and thus they also received the right to collect fees for the travel and the cargo from the merchants before departure and to collect a levy from merchants after they returned to Japan. The significant change from the previous system was that they promised in advance that they would pay a certain amount of money irrespective of the actual profit of the ships. This was risky for the merchants, but it seems that they were confident that they could collect enough money to exceed the original expenses and thus make a profit. Still, they took a risk that could have led to their earning not so much money or even not attaining a balance between the amounts of investment and profit.

Sakai merchants, who represented a powerful commercial group in late medieval Japan, started to participate in the organisation and management of tribute ships and commercial activities in China based on this new model, from the Bunmei period onwards. They were closely connected to the self-governing body of the free-city Sakai that was under the direction of the association of Sakai merchants (*egōshū/kaigōshū* 会合衆).⁶²

It was in 1476 that the first tribute mission departed from Sakai with the proactive participation of Sakai merchants in the preparation of the tribute ships. This was also the first time that Sakai merchants made a contract on the amount

⁶¹ Suda 2004: 91.

⁶² Fujimoto 2017: 14–16.

of the levy that they would pay after their return to Japan. Details of this contract, however, are not known.⁶³

Compared to the early stage of the tributary trade, when the shogun and later the ship managers of religious institutions and warriors organised the tribute ships to China, sending their own representatives—often warriors or Buddhist priests, sometimes moneylenders or merchants—to oversee the organising process, by the Bunmei period we see the development of the half-professional group of investors—coming from the Sakai merchants—who were ready to take over the organisation of the tributary ships and to provide capital for outfitting the ships and participating in trade in China with their own merchandise. Parallel to this new development, we see that a certain group of merchants appear in the sources from around the Ōnin period, the so-called ‘guest merchants’ (*kyakushu* 客衆, *kyakunin shu* 客人衆).

To better understand who they were, it is useful to look at the only existing list with names of guest merchants who travelled on the shogunal ship *Izumi maru* 泉丸 during the Ōnin period.⁶⁴ Among those guest merchants we can find representatives of religious institutions, merchants, and moneylenders being divided into two groups. The first was the group of ‘guest merchants of the ship *Izumi maru* with a portion of 1000 *kan*’, and the second was the ‘group [of guest merchants] with 500 *kanmon* on the same [*Izumi maru*]’. The amount of copper cash refers to the total sum that these guest merchants had invested for preparing their own trade commodities that they intended to sell in China.⁶⁵ This means that the 36 members of the two groups invested 1,500 *kanmon* copper cash in total for their commodities, including the costs for the shipment of the cargo to China. Among the 36 members, we can find, among others, Zen monks representing the Shōkokuji or other Zen temples, representatives of several Hakata merchant clans, Kyoto moneylender-traders, and wholesale merchants from Hyōgo. It is interesting to note that beyond the merchants and moneylenders, there was a quite high number of Zen monks on the list. They were probably selected as representatives of Zen temples for the mission to China, because they were experienced in finances and commercial activities of their own temples.⁶⁶

It is fairly true to say that without the participation of these guest merchants, who represented religious institutions, merchant groups, or moneylenders with great financial power, influence, and commercial networks, it would not have been possible to prepare the tribute ships.

⁶³ Izumi 1981: 94–95, 114–116.

⁶⁴ *Boshi nyūminki*: 354.

⁶⁵ Kobata 1969: 246–47.

⁶⁶ Takeda 2007: 150, Olah 2016: 86–102. On Zen monastic economy in general, see Collcutt 1996: 253–289.

A diary from the 16th century, *Tenbun nikki* 天文日記, provides a short explanation of these guest merchants in one of its entries. The diary refers to guest merchants from the estates Minami no shō 堺南荘 and Kita no shō 堺北荘 in Sakai who participated in the last two tribute missions organised by the Ōuchi clan, and it describes them as ‘a group [of merchants] that contributes to the preparations of the travel to China’ (*totō no gi aimoyōsu shū nari* 渡唐之儀相催衆也).⁶⁷ We can interpret this short and general explanation as a statement emphasising that these merchants were indispensable for dispatching the tribute ships. In fact, they participated in the preparation of dispatching the tribute ships in different ways, helping to outfit the tribute ships, prepare the necessary equipment, and also participate in the operation of the ships.⁶⁸ The backup role played by Sakai merchants shows that the role and existence of Sakai merchants had become increasingly important.

In 1486, Sakai merchants were selected for organising and managing two shogunal ships. This was the second time that Sakai merchants were involved in the organisation of tribute ships. The shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimasa, asked a monk named Shuryū 取龍 from Sakai to act as ship manager for both of the shogunal tribute ships.⁶⁹ He decided to entrust the formal ship management to Shuryū, probably because he had high expectations that Shuryū would use his personal connections to Sakai merchants, who had proven to be skilful traders in the previous mission. The de facto organisation and management of the shogunal ships was finally entrusted to the Sakai merchants. We may suppose that Shuryū believed that the Sakai merchants could keep their promises and would pay the amount of money they had agreed upon in advance; that is why he entrusted to them the management of the two shogunal ships.⁷⁰

This was the second time that Sakai merchants made a contract in advance on a fixed amount of levy. They promised to pay 4,000 *kan* copper cash as a levy after each ship returned to Japan, but after their return it turned out that they were not able to keep their promises. The merchants claimed that they were not able to pay 4,000 *kan* but were ready to pay 3,000 *kan*, which was significantly less.⁷¹

The details are not elaborated in the diary *Rokuon nichiroku* 鹿苑日録, but the most plausible explanation seems to be that Sakai merchants could not make as much profit with the tribute ships as they had originally expected. One possible cause of the low profit could be that not as many merchants had travelled

⁶⁷ *Tenbun nikki*, 1538 (Tenbun 7), 1/17.

⁶⁸ Okamoto 2022: 55–61.

⁶⁹ Itō 2002: 36–50.

⁷⁰ Murai 2015: 10–11.

⁷¹ *Rokuon nichiroku*, 1499 (Meiō 8), 8/6.

on the ships to China or that the merchants had brought fewer commodities to sell in China. A more convincing explanation would be that trade opportunities in China had changed. Official trade, when the Ming state purchased the foreign commodities, was not as profitable as before, and the prices went through drastic changes. If we compare the prices paid by the court for Japanese commodities during official trade in 1433 and in 1453, we find a decrease in the prices of between 40% and 80%. The chief ambassador, Tōyō Inpō 東洋允澎 (?–1454), complained to the court in 1453 that the amount of copper cash that they received for their commodities was only one-tenth of the amount that they had received in 1433.⁷²

It turned out quite clearly that this kind of ship management of Sakai merchants was too risky and hazardous. Another possible problem, which may explain why they could not fulfil their promises, might have been that they were not aware of the situation of the trade environment in China. The fact that Chinese official trade was shrinking because the court was not ready to purchase foreign commodities during official trade showed its clear signs already in the 1450s. Japanese tribute missions also experienced the changes and the drastic decrease of profit. Southeast Asian rulers, for example, stopped sending tributary missions because of the decreasing profit from official trade. Indeed, the port of Canton saw a decrease of tribute missions from the mid-15th century onwards from Southeast Asia.

The fact that the Sakai merchants refused to pay the amount agreed on before is an obvious sign that their profits had been much lower than expected. It seems that Sakai traders did not understand the situation in China and did not consider the changes in the tributary trade system. No concrete data exists about this mission, but from the situation it seems to be highly possible that the Sakai merchants had miscalculated their mission and had made decisions based on old data about official Chinese prices. They made the mistake of believing that profitable trade would continue as it had before. Japanese merchants were, we have to assume, ignorant about the changing situation in China.

This ignorance led to a conflict with ship manager Shuryū, who did not want to accept such a change of the amount the merchants had agreed to. He discussed this problem with the Sakai merchants, who finally agreed to pay the original amount of 4,000 *kan*. This incident clearly showed the problems and risks of the management of the tribute ships based on this method of agreeing on a levy in advance.

⁷² Olah 2022: 301–302.

Conclusion

After providing a short description about the financial situation of the shogunate, this article has tried to provide an inventory of case studies that help us imagine and understand what kind of connections existed between domestic networks and foreign trade in medieval Japan that made the procuring of tribute items and commercial products for official trade in China possible. The fragile financial situation of the shogun was an important reason for why the organisation and management of tribute ships after the Ōnin period were transformed into a different structure.

It should be also emphasised that the word ‘network’ in this context is not limited to commercial networks. It may include political, social, and religious networks that helped individuals prepare for tribute missions to China. Including a few details from primary sources, the article has tried to give examples—some of which have already been discussed separately in previous research—of how sources can be re-evaluated by looking at simple records from more complex perspectives. Being aware of networks in Medieval society, such as the religious network (and also closely connected to that the commercial network) of Hōganji or Tenryūji, that were discussed in this article can help us connect the scattered and loose information in the sources, in order to explain what contributed to the development of foreign trade. The giving and receiving of gifts, very trivial actions that we often see in the sources, can help us understand how commodities circulated in society.

Despite the weakening of shogunal power, tributary trade continued because the structure of ship management transformed. Ship managers and merchants became important investors who provided capital. Tribute ships became part of commercial ventures backed by the flourishing late medieval Japanese economy, and the increase of capital led to an increase in investors who were ready to participate in trade with China.

The way that products were procured shows different patterns that provide good examples that help us understand how local commercial, social, and religious networks were utilised for procuring Japanese commodities. We may suppose that, in the case of preparing commercial products, participants on the ships also used connections to their own networks to procure items for tribute or finally purchase the necessary items.

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Perceptions of Japan in Hungarian Turanism

Abstract

The lively Hungarian interest in Asian cultures and Japan before 1945 had several motifs, one of them being the idea of Turanism, which was formed around the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural relation of the Turanian (Ural-Altaic) peoples (including Hungarians) in the late 19th century and affected public thinking until 1945 in Hungary. The secondary literature on Turanism seems to have increased in volume in the past decades with a notable emphasis on Hungarian Turanism, and some new research has examined the issue of Japanese Turanism, making a connection with Hungarian Turanism as well. As Hungarian Turanism is regarded as a significant promoter and mediator of Turanism to other regions, too, it is important to analyse the manifold nature of this phenomenon with comprehensive approaches.

The paper focuses on the Hungarian background of the Japan-related Turanist ideas with a multifaceted examination and interpretation of Hungarian Turanism based on original research of the contemporary sources (including publications, archival documents of Turanist and Japan-related associations, newspaper articles, and reports on Japan-related events) and the available secondary literature. The paper also aims to examine what perceptions of Japan appeared in the ideas of Turanism, to present why and how Japan was attributed a special significance in Hungarian Turanism, and to analyse the origin, meaning, and the contemporary importance of this outstanding role. In the course of research, new aspects have arisen for examination: the perceptions impacted by the Japanese development of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and by the notion of the situation of Japan ‘between East and West’ as similar to that of Hungary; the debate on modernisation; the isolation of Hungary after the World War I; and the cultural achievements of Hungarian Turanism. Examining the complexity of the Hungarian historical, cultural, and political context of the early 20th century in connection to the perceptions of the East of that time in Hungary may provide a more complex interpretation and deeper understanding of the formation of Turanist ideas.

Keywords: Hungarian Turanism, Japanese image, Hungarian–Japanese relations, Oriental interest in Hungary, Hungarian Turan society, Japanese studies in Hungary

Hungarian interest in ‘the East’ and in particular in Japan has a tradition dating back to the late 19th century and originating from different cultural, historical, and political sources, which were determined by a distinctively Hungarian context. In Hungary, until 1945 lively interest in Japan resulted in an outstanding number of publications of popular and scholarly works about Japan.¹ The reason for this special attention paid to Japan in Hungary can be explained partly by the effect of *Japonisme*, the increased Western European artistic and cultural interest in the late 19th century and later by the successful modernisation of Japan at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, but these still do not seem to give a satisfactory explanation for the flourishing Japan-related literature in the interwar period (1918–1945). It is true that *Japonisme* had a significant impact in Hungary, too, though a little later, at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries.² However, at the same time the growing interest in Asian cultures and Japan were partly motivated by the appearance of the ‘Turanian idea’ or ‘Turanism’ in Hungary, which was formed around the ethnic, linguistic, or cultural kinship of the Turanian (Ural-Altaic) peoples (including Hungarians) in the late 19th century and affected public thinking until 1945. Scholarly interest in Turanism seems to have been increased in the past decades, with a notable emphasis on Hungarian Turanism.³ Some new research has examined the issue of Japanese Turanism, too, connecting it with Hungarian Turanism.⁴

However, in providing an overview of Hungarian Turanism, papers may overemphasise its political concept and influence on Hungarian government

¹ A bibliography compiled in 1943, listing the publications regarding Japan published in Hungary until 1943, contained 822 items, which can be called outstanding in the region. See Lévai 1943. A bibliography published in Japan in 1982 covering the relevant literature about Japan in Eastern Europe up to the 1980s listed the striking number of works published in Hungary compared to other countries of the region: the Hungarian bibliography list is 42 pages long with 433 items, while the Bulgarian is 14 pages long, the Polish is 11 pages long, the Czechoslovakian is 8 pages long, and the Romanian is 6 pages long. See Umemura 2006, 59. Also *Nihon to Tō-ō* 1982, 376–417.

² Dénes et al. 2020.

³ After 1945, the new hegemonic ideology in Hungary condemned the whole of Turanism as an extreme nationalist (or even racist) ideology, so it was officially banned in any form, and even research on the ideology was obstructed until the regime change in 1989. Moreover, even if it was mentioned, it was heavily condemned. Fortunately, since then several publications of new research have been issued, so a more thorough and objective picture is beginning to emerge about Hungarian Turanism as a means of ‘thinking about the East’ in Hungary (Ablonczy 2016: 14). See Farkas 1993, Farkas 2001a, Farkas 2001b, Ablonczy 2016, 2021, 2022. There have been significant scholarly books and papers published on Turkish, Hungarian, and even Japanese Turanism in the past few years in English, too, so a new discourse has started about this complex issue. Demirkan 2000, Nizam 2005, Levent 2016, Levent 2011, Levent 2021, Ablonczy 2021, Ablonczy 2022.

⁴ Levent 2011, Levent 2021.

policy or public thinking before 1945. As a matter of fact, Hungarian Turanism usually remained outside official policymaking circles. It was not a homogeneous ideology (if it can be called an ideology at all) in any way. Across various time periods, there were great differences in its appearance, social and political groups, aims, and interpretations. Moreover, if it is understood as just political thought, the most important dimension would be completely lost in the assessment of Turanism: its cultural horizon. Not taking cultural achievements of Turanism into consideration can inevitably lead to some generalisations and simplifications of the complex phenomenon. The author of the present paper started to research Hungarian Turanism about 30 years ago and summarised it in their PhD thesis.⁵ This paper, on the one hand, tries to provide insight into the complex issue of Turanism, focusing on ideas concerning the 'relation to the East' in Hungary and the cultural achievements of Turanism and emphasising the possibility of various interpretations with more nuanced assessments. On the other hand, the paper aims to present why and how Japan was attributed a special significance in Hungarian Turanism and to examine the origin, meaning, and contemporary importance of this outstanding role.⁶ The analysis of the perceptions of Japan in the ideas of Turanism may provide a more nuanced understanding of the motifs of Hungarian Turanism, the nature of interwar relations between Hungary and Japan, and the role that the image of Japan could play in the Hungarian public opinion. Examining the complexity of the Hungarian historical, cultural, and political contexts of the early 20th century in connection to the perceptions of Japan of that time may provide a more complex interpretation and deeper understanding of the formation of Japanese images in regions other than Western Europe.

Turanism in Hungary until 1918

The growing interest in Asia resulted in the emergence of academic research and the establishment of Oriental studies by the middle of the 19th century, though it was largely influenced by the imperialist attitude of the Western powers.⁷ The

⁵ Farkas 2001a. For this paper, besides the secondary literature on Turanism, the author used mainly her own research on Turanism (presented in her PhD thesis in 2001), based on contemporary Hungarian texts from books, journals, newspapers, and archive sources of the Turan societies. Some parts of the PhD thesis were published. The cited contemporary texts from books, articles, letters, and documents are translated by the author.

⁶ Farkas 2001b, Farkas 2009, Farkas 2022.

⁷ As Edward W. Said interpreted 'Orientalism' in his book in 1979, it was a colonial concept reflecting Western superiority and mainly referred to a British and French overseas colonial ideology most easily traced in academic, scientific, and artistic 'high culture'. Said 1979.

growing field of Oriental studies as an academic discipline and the ‘Oriental fashion’ in art popular at that time among the public in Europe certainly affected Hungarian artists and scholars, too. However, above and beyond the Orientalism found in Europe, Hungary had its own unique reason for taking an interest in the East, which was the tradition of the Asian origin in the Hungarian national consciousness. The Oriental aspect had always played a role in the question of Hungarian national identity,⁸ but in the 19th century, with the forward march of modernisation and the necessary reformulation of identity, its importance increased immensely. The supposition that Hungarians had their roots in the East, supposedly in Asia, had a particular effect on the nation’s interest in Asian cultures in the second half of the 19th century, as they were believed at the time to be relatives of ancient Hungarian culture.

Based upon the supposed Asian origin of the Hungarian people, in the last decades of the 19th century, a romantic nationalist cultural movement was formed around this idea, which was called ‘Turanism’. The ethnic and linguistic kinship and relations between Hungarians and the so-called Turanian peoples were interpreted from the then prevailing Ural-Altaic linguistic theory.⁹ As Hungarians (and the Hungarian language) were regarded part of the Turanian group of peoples (and languages; now known as Ural-Altaic), the aim of Turanism was to carry out research into Asian peoples (those considered as being Turanian in origin) and to foster closer ties with them.¹⁰ Turanism began as and was first considered a scientific movement, aimed at the research of the history and cultures of Asian peoples with a special relevance to Hungarian culture. This was an impressive motivation behind the archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, and geographical explorations and investigations undertaken around that time by some exceptional Orientalist experts, who laid the foundations for the outstanding scientific Orientalism carried out by Hungarians.¹¹

Turanism could also be interpreted as being aimed at the cultural, economic, and political cooperation with the Turanian (Ural-Altaic) peoples, trying to counter the effects of the Romantic European Pan-movements (Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism), which were thought to be dangerous for the Hungarians living ‘alone’ (i.e., without ‘ethnic relatives’) between these two great ethnic

⁸ For a summary, see Farkas 2001a: 13–35.

⁹ The old definition is given in a 19th century Hungarian encyclopaedia, *A Pallas Nagy Lexikona*. Budapest, 1893–1897. <https://www.arcanum.hu/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-pallas-nagy-lexikona-2/u-1A520/ural-altaji-nepek-1A70B/> (last retrieved: 15 September 2019).

¹⁰ ‘Bevezető’ [Introduction], *Turán* I, no. 1 (1913): 1; ‘A szerkesztők beköszöntője [Foreword from the editors]’, *Turán* III, no. 1 (1918): 1.

¹¹ Csaplár-Degovics 2018.

and linguistic families.¹² On the other hand, Turanism was also able to appear as a ‘modern’ phenomenon as it could be connected to European artistic movements (e.g., Art Nouveau) and scholarly interest in Oriental cultures as well. It grew into an ideology (though not homogeneous in any way) that, in various ways and to various degrees, significantly influenced the Hungarian public and even in some cases the political, social, and cultural (academic and art) elite.

The idea of Turanism offered an extremely wide range of different and often completely contradictory interpretation possibilities. Contemporary Western ideas of ‘the East’ (i.e., Orientalism); emerging European and American cultural, artistic, and economic interest in Asia; and a changing international situation (i.e., European expansion into Asia, imperialism) all had an impact on Hungarian ‘thinking about the East’ and mixed with ‘traditional’ Hungarian concerns about its position in Europe (including an awareness of the possible dangers of pan-ideas) and its cultural heritage (including the tradition of the Asian origin).¹³ This mixture of influences of different but still intertwined thoughts, theories, and ideologies of the contemporary trends of that time resulted in a complex, incoherent, and diversified circle of ideas called Turanism.

Turan Society until 1918

The Turan Society was founded in 1910, with the main objective of conducting scientific research into the East, which involved investigating the economic and cultural features of those peoples believed to be Turanian in origin and building up economic and cultural links with them.¹⁴ At the same time, following English and German examples, the society aimed to act as the forerunner of a ‘large-scale economic programme gravitating through Turkey towards Asia’,¹⁵ which clearly aligned them with the expansionist ambitions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The Turan Society held lectures on the Turanian peoples, had lan-

¹² In *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind) in 1792, ‘Johann Gottfried Herder had considered the possibility that the Hungarian language, and thus the Hungarian nation, might disappear. The fact that this language was a minority language in Hungary itself prompted intellectuals to reflect on its place and, above all, on its kinship and affinity with other ethnic groups’. Ablonczy 2021: 225–248, 227.

¹³ Farkas 2001a: 32–42.

¹⁴ The history of the Turan Society was researched with the Documents of the Turan Society. Hungarian National Archives, MNL OL P section, fond 1384. Farkas 1993: 863; Farkas 2001a: 110–130, 151–180. Farkas 2001a: 56–75, Ablonczy 2022: 39–71.

¹⁵ Official request, dated 16 January 1912, submitted by the Turan Society to the Minister of Commerce, applying for their annual grant. Documents of the Turan Society, MOL P 1384, bundle 1, item 2, 1/1912.

guage courses teaching Turanian languages, and also organised and supported expeditions to Asia Minor, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia, resulting in significant ethnographic and linguistic research.¹⁶ The society also aimed to introduce Turanian (Asian) cultures and peoples to the Hungarian public with educational lectures, articles, and books, and in accomplishing these goals they had a major share in making Oriental cultures known and even popular in Hungary.¹⁷ The society published a journal titled *Turán* beginning in 1913 that was edited by well-known scholars.

Several ideas existed side by side within the Turan Society regarding its goals. The Orientalists expected a boost in scientific research on the model of the Asiatic societies that were being formed around the world, while others planned an 'imperialist' advance in the East.¹⁸ In addition, some supporters of Turanism hoped for a period of flourishing Turanism with the cultural and in some views possibly a political cooperation of the Turanian peoples. Even the name 'Turanian' was not completely clear, since one interpretation meant the Ural-Altaic 'family' (according to which the Hungarians belong to the Ugric branch of the Ural peoples),¹⁹ but other opinions also regarded Altai peoples' distant relatives.²⁰ As a result of these differences in perception, the interpretations regarding the main ideas of Turanism naturally also differed from each other. Turanism emerged as a complex phenomenon appearing on several levels, in which the different forms of appearance often existed independently of each other. The fragmentation of the Turanian thoughts was intensified after the First World War (1914–1918) and especially the Treaty of Trianon with its tragic consequences for Hungary in 1920.

Japan in Hungarian Turanism until 1918

Japan held a distinguished significance among the Asian countries and peoples in Hungary.²¹ By that time, Japan had the image of a modernising country alone among the nations and cultures of Asia to a level that matched the most advanced powers in the West, achieving success by carefully balancing modern development with preserving cultural heritage (and national identity).

¹⁶ Farkas 2001a: 61–63. MNL OL P szekció 1384 fond 14. csomó 12. tétel.

¹⁷ Farkas 2001a: 56–75, 110–130, 151–180.

¹⁸ Csaplár-Degovic 2018: 15.

¹⁹ Thus, the Finno-Ugric (i.e., Finnish, Estonian, Zurjen, Votjak, Cheremisiz, Mordvin, Lapp, and mainly Ostjak and Vogul) and Samoyed were considered closely related to Hungarian language and people, as linguistic and ethnic relations were not definitely distinguished.

²⁰ Turkish-Tatar, Mongolian, Tungus, Manchu, Japanese, Korean. Bán 1940: 55–57.

²¹ Farkas 2001a: 211–216.

The Japanese example proved that modernisation as a Western type of progress could be achieved without sacrificing national identity or cultural heritage.²² This was a current topic in discourses on modernisation in Hungary as well, and the Japanese model proved that preserving national culture and identity were not enemies of modernity, which is how they were often portrayed in Central European debates on modernisation.²³ Japan was considered an outstanding example for all the Turanian peoples to follow, so the Turanian people could become modernised and could rise to the level of the independent and powerful states as Japan had.

In 1913, Alajos Paikert (1866–1948), one of the leaders of the Turan Society (Turáni Társaság), in an article on ‘The Future of Asia’ in the journal *Turán* emphasised the rapid and successful development of Japan. He set Japan as an example to the other Turanian peoples and designed the tasks of Japan and Hungary as ‘the easternmost and westernmost nations of the Turanians’ to help the Turanian peoples of Asia in this process:

We all know the epoch-making development of Japan from a closed island country at the end of the world to a considerable empire even among the greatest powers of the world. [...] The country of the Rising Sun, who was looked down on so much by the powerful European neighbours, suddenly showed the world remarkably how strong and serious world power it became from a shy, small country. [...] Owing to her position, this easternmost branch of the Turanian family of peoples aspires to the same place in the East as England has in the West. The extraordinary intelligence, diligence, courage, and political sense of the Japanese enable them to play significant role in the future world history, and we, Hungarians, the westernmost representatives of the Turanian peoples in the heart of Europe, are intended the same task here as the Japanese in the Far East: to strive and work, not against other nations, but for all of us, for the unitary and friendly progress of the whole mankind.²⁴

The idea that Hungarians and the Japanese, the ‘westernmost and easternmost Turanian nations’, have the joint task and mission of helping the other Asian Turanian peoples’ development and of functioning as a kind of bridge between East and West became a steady and established argument in Hungarian Turanism for the next decades.

²² Farkas 2020.

²³ Jedlicki 1973: 63.

²⁴ Paikert 1913: 8.

Turanism in the interwar period

After the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was disintegrated in 1918, and for Hungary, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon marked the end of the war and the official establishment of the new borders. (Embassies between Japan and Hungary were set up only in 1938.²⁵) After the trauma of the lost war and the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty that reduced the area of Hungary by two-thirds, Turanism gained new momentum, and new motives emerged in its ideology. Although Hungarians saw themselves as a people possibly originating from Asia, but one who had settled in Europe and adopted Christianity in the 10th century, they became part of Western civilisation and became the defenders of Europe against the attacks coming from the East.²⁶ Having a strong self-image of being the ‘defenders of Christianity’, Hungarians felt that with the Treaty of Trianon Europe had betrayed Hungary and left her without any allies or friends. Hungary—as the argument went—‘had better now turn off from the West, face East again, and try to find friends, relatives, and allies in Asia’.²⁷ A new idea of Turanism emerged as the ideology of the desperate and reflected the frustration of Hungarian society and its disappointment in the West, with the hope and intention of finding friends or supporters among the Turanian peoples.

The supporters of different interpretations of Turanism formed separate associations. A society for academic research, the Kőrösi Csoma Society (Kőrösi Csoma Társaság), was founded by Orientalist researchers.²⁸

In 1920 a radical Turanian association, the Hungarian Turan Alliance (Magyarországi Turán Szövetség) was established.²⁹ The aims did not differ significantly from the basic principles formulated by the Turan Society (e.g., becoming acquainted with the Turanian peoples, establishing cooperation with them), but the association’s members were more radical in their interpretation and tools.³⁰ With explicit anti-Westernism, they proclaimed the superiority of

²⁵ Wintermantel 2016: 18–19.

²⁶ Balogh 2022.

²⁷ Farkas 1993: 864.

²⁸ The aim of the new scholarly society was clearly stated in their new journal: ‘Our programme is the field of Oriental research, which especially interests the Hungarians by virtue of their ancient history and geographical situation’. Ablonczy 2022: 85. ‘Olvasóinkhoz,’ *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* 1: 1 (1921), 1.

²⁹ *A Magyarországi Turán Szövetség vázlatos története, alapszabálya és általános ismertetése* [The history, charter, and general description of the Hungarian Turan Alliance], Turán füzetek I/5–7., Budapest 1938. Farkas 2001a: 87–94. The documents of the Turan Alliance in the Hungarian National Archives: MNL OL P szekció 1366 fond, ‘Turán Szövetség iratai’.

³⁰ One of the main differences between the two Turanian associations was the attitude towards the Jews: the Turan Alliance had anti-Semitic ideas, whereas the Turan Society did not support anti-Semitism. MNL OL P 1384 11.csomó (Turáni Társaság iratai) 1942. február 15.

the Eastern (i.e., the Turanian) culture, the need for an Eastern orientation in Hungarian foreign policy, and the development of the consciousness of Turanian ethnicity among Hungarians. By 1923, the alliance had disintegrated (the police banned their meetings, too, which shows the government's attitude to radical Turanism). An attempt was made to revive the alliance between 1931 and 1933 and later in 1937 and 1938.³¹ It is important to note that the radical Turan association could only exist for a few years in Hungary and had a very limited support base. These extreme ideas did not have much in common with the cultural activity of the Turan Society focusing on European—and mainly Finno-Ugric—peoples, which made up the biggest part of the activities of the society and 'mainstream Turanism' in the interwar period.³²

The Turan Society continued to operate with a largely unchanged programme focusing on cultural and educational work with some support from the government.³³ They also emphasised their task related to the restoration and development of national consciousness, which was battered after the defeat in the war and its consequences.³⁴ They represented the conservative and national political direction of the interwar period in Hungary, so their Turanism can be called the 'mainstream Turanism' of that time in Hungary.³⁵ It is important to note that they rejected and distanced themselves from radical Turanism, racism, neo-pagan trends, unscientific theories, and the orthodox Turanism.³⁶ They advocated cooperation mainly with the European Turanian peoples (i.e., Turkey, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Finland) in the interwar period.³⁷ The society was therefore one of the cultural and educational social associations of that time. Only a minor part of its lectures and reading sessions were about Turanism, while the majority dealt with the culture of the peoples considered relatives, especially the European related peoples. Turanism never became part of the official policy of the Hungarian political elite; however, it was used by the government as an

'Turmezei László levele Gergelyffy Gábor igazgatónak, Budapest, 1942. február 15.'

³¹ In a new work, the author presented the history of Anti-German Hungarian racism, and he included some Turanist associations in his assessment. Bartha 2023.

³² Finno-Ugric relations in the interwar period. Ablonczy 2022: 108.

³³ MNL OL P szekció 1384 fond 12. csomó 7. tétel (Finance)

³⁴ Farkas 2001a: 110. A Turáni Társaság alapszabálya [The charter of the Turan Society]. MNL OL P szekció 1384 fond 10. csomó 1939. 02. 10.

³⁵ 'Mainstream' refers to the Turanism perception of the interwar period Turanian Society, which was tolerated and sometimes supported on a small scale by the government, supported by some prominent members of the political elite, had some support from the society with a steady membership of around 300 or so people, and had a rich and the most-widespread publishing activity, so it seems to be the most common and influential Turanism interpretation in the interwar period in Hungary.

³⁶ Farkas 2001a: 110–130, 151–170.

³⁷ Farkas 2001a: 196–203.

informal tool to break the country's international isolation, build connections, and help rapprochements and cooperations with different countries, for which mentioning some relations (like Turanian relations) could be seen as elements arousing interest and friendly approach.

Japan in Hungarian Turanism in the interwar period

Japan's 'special place' in Hungarian Turanism helped to maintain public interest in Japan even after Japonisme in Europe started to decay.³⁸ The Japan-related literature in the interwar period in Hungary frequently emphasised the significance of the Japanese development and success in lectures and writings about Turanism, underlying that this could be the possible future for the Turanian peoples: 'Japan today is tendentious, successful, and with its development it sets an example to the other Asian peoples and countries'.³⁹ This image of Japan reflected a generally favourable and positive picture in Hungary, even when the image of Japan became less favourable in the West.⁴⁰

In 1936, the Turan Society celebrated its 25th anniversary.⁴¹ In his opening speech, Archduke József Ferenc (1895–1957), the honorary president of the society, speaking about the importance of educational work in raising the awareness of national sentiments, referred to the Japanese example: 'Let's look at the military work, strength, training, and education of the Japanese nation. That's why they are so strong and able to create because they are imbued with the national idea'. Alajos Paikert, the director of the society, spoke about the possibilities of the Turanian peoples in the future, especially from a Hungarian perspective, but also mentioning the example of Japan.

The future of Turan is best shown by the example of today's Japan, which, taking over the most important and useful achievements of the West, but also retaining old national traditions, is currently the most advanced, best organised and educated in Asia, and at the same time also its strongest superpower. [...] As Japan developed simultaneously and before our eyes from the most remote, completely medieval, secluded state into one of the most modern and powerful nation, so other Asian states will soon follow this successful example.⁴²

³⁸ Farkas 2001b: 28–33; Farkas 2022. For a new interpretation of Japonisme (i.e., an appreciation of Japan and its culture) see Dénes et al. 2020; Farkas 2020.

³⁹ Paikert 1934.

⁴⁰ About the image of Japan see Wilkinson 1990. About the image of Japan in East Central Europe, see Dénes et al. 2020.

⁴¹ A Turáni Társaság negyedszázados jubileuma [The quarter-century anniversary of the Turan Society]. MOL P 1384 9. csomó 1937. 01. 31. *Turán* 1936. I–IV. 1–18.

⁴² Paikert 1936a.

The supporters of Turanism as a political idea had the dream if Turanian peoples united and organised themselves, they could grow into a powerful force and even one of the governing factors of world politics. In order to help this Turanian development, the two developed Turanian nations were expected to join their efforts: ‘The Hungarian nation in the West and the Japanese in the East have the mission to contribute to the exploration, arrangements, and organising work’.⁴³ As the idea suggested, Turanian peoples should follow the path that Japan had taken: ‘Today, Japan sets an example to other Asian nations and stands out with its successful and independent progress’.⁴⁴

Japan showed what a distant, at that time still small, and seemingly backward nation could accomplish in a short time. At that time, Japan organised its army and navy under the leadership of European instructors, learned the methods of industrialisation from Western peoples, the methods of scientific research, and much more, and today, not only in the East, but also in the world, the Japanese army and navy, Japanese factories, universities, and scientific institutes seriously and in a well-earned way can compete with the first similar institutions in the world.⁴⁵

This development of the Turanian peoples needed guidance and assistance. Therefore, Hungary hoped to still play an important role in the East—and this way in global politics—together with Japan, as they could be the initiators and contributors to the modernisation of the Turanian peoples.

We can notice a remarkable element in the articles about Japan: some authors emphasised that it was due to the previous high level of education that Japan was able to adopt European culture, technology, science, and art so well and succeeded in further developing them.⁴⁶ According to these opinions, Japan could be regarded as unique: ‘No exotic people were able to adopt the tools and methods of European education to such a large extent as the Japanese’.⁴⁷ It was stated that Japan became so successful in studying and adopting Western achievements that by that time it had all the elements of the Western civilisation and did not need the help of Westerners. In this way, the Japanese could combine the achievements and values of the West and the East, and with this they could become a serious, almost invincible competitor for the countries and peoples of both the West and the East. ‘Technical progress has made the Japanese a danger-

⁴³ Paikert 1936a.

⁴⁴ Paikert 1934.

⁴⁵ Paikert 1936a.

⁴⁶ Cholnoky 1934: 22.

⁴⁷ Cholnoky 1934.

ous competitor'.⁴⁸ The authors shared the general opinion that 'Japan will have a great role in the development of Asia in the near future'.⁴⁹

The Turan Society and the Hungarian–Japanese relations

The most significant activity of the Turan Society was the regularly held lectures about the Turanian peoples, with many lectures dealing exclusively with Japanese topics.⁵⁰ A large number of Japanese-related articles were published in *Turán*, covering almost all areas of Japanese culture and issues of contemporary Japan, too.⁵¹ The lectures given by the Turan Society usually attracted an audience of about 100–200 people, but since the texts of the lectures were published in the journal *Turán*, and even some newspapers briefly described the content of the lectures, we can assume that a much wider audience became familiar with the topics. Radio broadcasts provided greater publicity and recognition for the Turan Society, as from January 1928, once a month, the society had the opportunity to give a 25-minute-long lecture on Turanism. The series of lectures held by the Turan Society on the radio also featured Japanese topics: in 1928, Imaoka Jūichirō 今岡十一郎 (1883–1973) spoke about Japanese flower art and

⁴⁸ Cholnoky 1934.

⁴⁹ Paikert 1934.

⁵⁰ 1925. Róbert K. Kertész: 'Japanese architecture', 1926. Tihamér Turchányi: 'History of Japan', Vilmos Pröhle: 'Japanese literature', Benedek Baráthosi-Balogh: 'Japan's industrial, economic, and commercial relations'. 1927. Dezső Bozóky: 'Bushido'. 1928. Imaoka: 'Japanese festivals, tea ceremony, and Japanese flower art'. Baráthosi-Balogh: 'Wanderings in Japan'. 1930–31. Alajos Paikert: 'Hungarian opportunities in the East', István Mezey: 'Hungarian–Japanese relation', Jenő Cholnoky: 'Japan and its people'. 1934. Alajos Paikert: 'Asia Awakening', Jenő Cholnoky: 'The geographical, climatic, and economic conditions of Japan', 'The anthropology, customs, and lifestyle of the Japanese people'. 1935. István Mezey: 'The Path of the Japanese People', 'Japan and the Turanian Movement', Frigyes Fellner: 'Transitions in the Far East'. 1937. István Mezey: 'The East Asian Conflict', Jenő Habán: 'Japanese folklore'. 1938. Jenő Habán: 'Masterpieces of Japanese Poetry', Vilmos Pröhle: 'The 2600-year Japanese Empire', Jenő Habán: 'Meiji Tennō'.

⁵¹ 1937–38: Habán Jenő: 'An outline of Japanese history', Paikert Alajos: 'Review of the Japanese edition of *History of the Hungarian nation* by Nándor W. Metzger'. 1939: Virányi Elemér: 'Review of the book *The past, present and future of Japan* by Edgár Lajtha'. 1940: Isoyuki Hatta: 'The international cultural relations of Japan', Pálos György: 'The modern Japan'. 1941: Benkő István: 'The 2600-year-old Japan', . Mezey István: 'The Japanese soldier', Somogyi József: 'The Land of the Rising Sun', Sonkoly István: 'The main features of Japanese music', Török László: 'The Turan Society and the Hungaro-Japanese relations', Zsuffa Sándor: 'The Japanese military virtues in history'. 1942: Bódis Rózsa: 'The Japanese writing', Cholnoky Jenő: 'Japan, Japanese', Máté-Törék Gyula: 'Japan', Zsuffa Sándor: 'Japan and China', Zsuffa Sándor: 'The sword of the Japanese officers'.

Vilmos Pröhle (1871–1946) about the Japanese people, and in 1930 Vilmos Pröhle introduced Emperor Mutsuhito as a poet.

The Turan Society was the first in Hungary to provide the public with a free opportunity to learn Japanese language, among other languages regarded as Turanian (e.g., Turkish, Finnish, Chinese). The first Turanian language course started in 1926, and a year later there were 20 students with Imaoka as the teacher. In 1928 there were 28 students, and the next year, after Imaoka returned to Japan and Tihamér Turchányi (1874–1930) took over the Japanese course, 32 students enrolled. After his death, due to the lack of a teacher, teaching Japanese was suspended for several years. In the 1936–1937 school year, in addition to the three languages (i.e., Finnish, Turkish, Chinese), the Japanese course started again with Jenő Habán as teacher. A total of 102 students enrolled for the four languages: 22 for Finnish, 25 for Turkish, 43 for Japanese, and 12 for Chinese.⁵²

The society registered the official (e.g., businessmen, politicians, and experts) and unofficial (e.g., artists, scientists, and those on a study trip or simple tourist travel) Japanese guests arriving in Hungary, and they assisted in their travels, programmes, and accommodation. Japanese specialists coming to Hungary were usually received by representatives of the relevant ministry, sometimes by the ministers themselves, and these events were widely reported in the press.⁵³ The visits of Prince Takamatsu and his wife in 1931 and Prince Kaya and his wife in 1934 in Hungary were presented in the Hungarian press in detail, with frequent mentions of the friendship of the two nations.⁵⁴

Organising Hungarian–Japanese relations also became the task of a separate society, the Hungarian Nippon Society, which was founded in 1924, with the aim of building and developing Hungarian–Japanese relations, popularising Japan and Japanese culture in Hungary, and encouraging research on Japan.⁵⁵ The Nippon Society envisaged cultural activities, to strengthen closer contacts between the two peoples, to build and nurture cultural relations, to promote scientific research, to hold informative and scholarly lectures and organise social events, and to publish and distribute similar publications. With its activity, the society was the most important organiser and promoter of Japanese culture and art in Hungary between the two world wars.⁵⁶

The members of the Nippon and Turan Societies engaged in widespread publishing activities, introducing and promoting Japan and Japanese culture in Hungary. The common feature of the books published about Japan by Hungar-

⁵² MOL P 1384 9.cs. 1937. Ápr.14.

⁵³ Török 1941.

⁵⁴ Wintermantel 2016:21.

⁵⁵ Farkas 2022.

⁵⁶ Farkas 2022.

ian authors in the interwar period was that, in addition to presenting the old and the modernised Japan in detail (including everyday life, customs, and culture), they also emphasised that a large part of the perceptions of Japan abroad were wrong.⁵⁷ One of their goals was to disprove the stereotypes formed in the West and present the ‘real Japan’, which is also indicated by the titles: *The Real Japan* (*Az igazi Japán*), *The Unknown Japan* (*Az ismeretlen Japán*), and *Two Faces of Japan* (*Japán két arca*). These titles gave a very positive picture of the Japanese, who by that time were no longer clearly viewed favourably in the West. The authors seemed to be driven by the intention to understand Japan and to interpret the Japanese people, traditions, and the country within their own cultural settings and not to judge the Japanese based on the Western concepts and customs.

In this respect, one of the main proponents of Japan in Hungary was Benedek Baráthosi Balogh (1870–1945), who was one of the most important promoters of cultural Turanism at the same time.⁵⁸ His two-volume book about his travels in Japan, illustrated with his own photographs, was a great success in the early 20th century in Hungary, playing a significant role in shaping a favourable and attractive picture about Japan.⁵⁹ His personal relationship with Imaoka Jūichirō, although sometimes controversial, definitely had a great impact on Imaoka’s views on Turanism and this way on Japanese Turanism.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Pröhle 1922, Balázs 1929, Baráthosi Balogh 1930, Geszty 1935, Mécs 1942, Keöpe 1943, Mezey 1939, Cholnoky 1942.

⁵⁸ Benedek Baráthosi Balogh (1870–1945) was originally a teacher who considered it his task to research the origins of the Hungarians, and therefore he travelled to East Asia several times, with little support from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, mostly on his own money. He collected artefacts, everyday items, and linguistic materials along the Amur, in East Siberia, and in Japan, to study the Manchu-Tunguz peoples and also the Ainu people, about which he was one of the first European researchers. His ethnographic collection, especially the Ainu collection, with his photographs and sketches, was also of outstanding importance in the world. (Most of it is in the Ethnographic Museum, Budapest.) He became one of the most important promoters of the Turanian movement, publishing more than 20 volumes titled *Turanian Books*, which were, with some ‘Turanian history books’, mainly introductions to other peoples’ cultures: travelogues and cultural and literary introductions to Turkish, Japanese, Finnish, Estonian, Mongol, Mandsu, Buryat, Bashkir, Tartar, Bulgarian, Chinese, Korean, and even ‘our smaller Finno-Ugric brothers’ (i.e., Lapp, Ostyak, Zuryen, Mordvin, Cheremis, Votjak, Vogul, and Samoyed) and ‘our smaller Turkic brothers’ (i.e., Yakut, Uzbek, Turcoman, Azerbaijan, and Chuvash) culture. His lifetime achievement was neglected until the 1990s because of his Turanian views. His work as an ethnographer has been beginning to be recognised again in recent decades. See: Hoppál 1996.

⁵⁹ Baráthosi 1906.

⁶⁰ His role in introducing and spreading Turanism in Japan has been researched by Sinan Levent in his works about Japanese Turanism. See Levent 2011, 2016.

The scholarly works dealing with Japan published at that time represented the rising scholarly field of East Asian and Japanese studies in Hungary, too. The authors of these works played a great role in developing East Asian studies. In 1936 and 1937, with the help of the Mitsui Foundation, the Nippon Society could launch its quarterly magazine, *Távol Kelet* (Far East), a journal dedicated exclusively to Japan (which was the first and has so far been the only journal of this kind in Hungary).⁶¹ A bibliography of works published in Hungarian dealing with Japan was also compiled, containing 822 titles of books and articles.⁶²

Scientific works can also be found in a growing number, signifying the founding and developing the new academic discipline of Japanese studies.⁶³ The internationally renowned geographer Jenő Cholnoky (1870–1950) dealt with Japan in several books and writings, and he not only presented the country from a geographical point of view but also characterised Japanese customs and people.⁶⁴ Recognised art historian Zoltán Felvinczi Takács (1880–1964), the founder and first director of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Art, was one of the first experts in Hungary to write about Japanese and Chinese art.⁶⁵ He reported on his study trip to Japan (as a scholarship researcher) in a two-volume book, which was at the same time a readable travelogue full of descriptions and praises of Japanese art.⁶⁶ Vilmos Pröhle wrote a summary on Japanese literature, which was the first book in Hungary to review the history of Japanese literature.⁶⁷ Catholic

⁶¹ *Távol Kelet* (Far East) 1936–37.

⁶² Lévai 1943.

⁶³ Umemura 2006: 64–65.

⁶⁴ *Japán, a felkelő nap országa* [Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun] (1942), 'Japán és Európa [Japan and Turan]' (*Turan*, 1934), *Japán földrajza* [The geography of Japan] (1941). Jenő Cholnoky (1870–1950) was an outstanding geographer and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Turan Society, had several publications on Turanism, and was the president of the Turan Association 1920–23.

⁶⁵ 'A Kelet művészete [The art of the East]', 'Kínai és japán képek [Chinese and Japanese paintings and drawings]' *Nyugat*, 1914. I: 729–743. 'Hangok a Távol-Keletről [Voices from the Far East]' *Nyugat*, 1914. II: 260–262. Zoltán Felvinczi Takács (1880–1964) was an outstanding art historian, the first scholar in Hungary scientifically dealing with East Asian art, and thus the founder of the scientific research of Oriental art in Hungary. He was also an important organiser; he arranged the Oriental art collections of different Hungarian institutions into one separate Oriental museum between 1919 and 1923 (i.e., the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asian Art) and was the first director of this museum (until 1948). Meanwhile he was one of the founders and a vice president of the Hungarian Nippon Society (1932–1944), one of the editors of the *Turan* journal, and a member of the Turan Society, writing about Turanism (in a cultural sense) several times. About Felvinczi, Takács Zoltán: Bincsik 2010.

⁶⁶ Felvinczi 1939.

⁶⁷ Pröhle 1937. Vilmos Pröhle (1871–1946) was a pioneer in the study of Chinese and Japanese language and literature in Hungary. Originally, he studied Turkish languages (he was a disciple of Arminius Vámbéry) and made several study trips to Turkey and Central Asia and then to Japan. The East Asia Institute was established in 1924 at Budapest University (today

priest Béla Zsigovits (1888–1955) went to Japan to study the work of the Christian missions, but in the end he wrote not only about Japanese Christianity but also about the religious life of the Japanese, Shinto, and Buddhism, and in this context he also explained the Japanese worldview and values.⁶⁸ Translations of Japanese works also began to appear during this period, but most of them at that time were translated from intermediary languages.

These are excellent examples of the often-neglected face of Turanism: its cultural horizon, the work and results of scholars and educators with valuable cultural contributions to the research of Japan, the foundation of Japanese studies in Hungary, and the introduction and popularisation of Japanese culture to the Hungarian public.

‘Japanese sympathy towards Hungary’ in the interwar period

An interesting feature of the Japan-related news, articles, and books in the interwar period in Hungary is the frequently mentioned ‘goodwill and sympathy’ of Japan towards Hungary after World War I. In relevant Hungarian literature, these reports about the sympathy of the Japanese towards the Hungarians were treated with reservations and were regarded as exaggerations aimed at boasting feelings of fellowship with Japan in Hungary. However, even if the events that these contemporary reports referred to may have been of minor importance, they still represented some kind of relationship that had not existed before between Japanese and Hungarian people, and in the time of political isolation for Hungary, they may have appeared to be small, encouraging cases for the Hungarian public. New research of these actual events and activities of certain Japanese persons in favour of Hungarians can provide a more nuanced and balanced picture about this issue.

ELTE) with his leadership. From 1924, the Japanese government appointed him head of the Japanese Consulate in Budapest. He wrote the first (and for almost 60 years, the only) overview of Japanese literature in Hungarian, with his own translations of Japanese literary works (directly from Japanese). He was an enthusiastic proponent of Turanism, a member of the Turan Society, one of the editors of *Turán*, and a founding member of the Hungarian Nippon Society. His lifetime achievements (in Turcology and East Asian studies) were neglected until the 1990s because of his right-wing political views. See Ormos 2012.

⁶⁸ Zsigovits 1937.

'Japanese supporters of Hungary'

The society placed great emphasis on building personal relationships in the hope of drawing attention of the Japanese political circles to Hungary. As Nándor Metzger (1894–1987), a correspondent of the Hungarian Press Agency in Japan and a member of the Turan Society) wrote in his letter to the society from Japan in 1935,

We poor Hungarians do not have money for expensive newspaper advertising, so the only way to arouse attention and sympathy for Hungary here is by building personal relations to support the Hungarian interests, be it of a spiritual or material nature.⁶⁹

The supporters of Hungarian–Japanese friendship often referred to the activity of some Japanese persons advocating rapprochement of the two countries or promoting Turanism and the Turanian relation of Hungarians and Japanese. The most important person in this respect was Imaoka Jūichirō (1883–1973), who played an outstandingly important role in Hungarian–Japanese relations, introducing and promoting Japanese culture in Hungary and later Hungarian culture in Japan (including propagating Turanism).⁷⁰ He had relations to several significant Hungarian artists, writers, and poets; he also held many lectures and published numerous articles and a book about Japan in Hungarian, and this way he undeniably had an effect on the favourable image of Japan in Hungary. He wrote that Japanese people could feel the friendliness of the Hungarians when coming to Hungary and about the signs of Japan's benevolence towards Hungarian claims in international negotiations.⁷¹ Besides him, Adachi Mineichirō 安

⁶⁹ Letter of Nándor Metzger 1935. MOL P szekció 1384. Turáni Társaság iratai 8. csomó.

⁷⁰ Umemura Yuko's significant monograph on Imaoka: Umemura 2006. See also: 梅村 2013, 梅村 2010. Imaoka was one the most important promoter of Turanism in Japan. Levent 2011, Levent 2016. Imaoka Jūichirō 今岡十一郎 (1883–1973) spent nine years in Hungary as a scholarship holder between 1921 and 1930, and during these years he was very active in introducing and promoting Japanese culture. He held numerous lectures on Japan throughout the country (e.g., from May 1926 to May 1927 he gave 37 lectures in Hungarian, in various cultural associations, in Budapest and in the countryside) about a wide range of Japanese topics (e.g., fine arts, women's issues, folk customs, music, architecture, and philosophy). His lectures and articles were published in the Hungarian press, and in 1930 a book titled *Új Nippon* (New Nippon) containing his collected articles was published by the prestigious Hungarian publishing house, Athenaeum. That year, Governor Miklós Horthy honoured Imaoka with a high Hungarian award for his services in the rapprochement of the two nations.

⁷¹ Imaoka 1930: 241–242.

峰一郎 (1869–1934)⁷² and Aibara Susumu 粟飯原晋 (1900–1931)⁷³ were often mentioned in reviews of Japanese friendship towards Hungary. István Mezey

⁷² Adachi Mineichirō 安達峰一郎 (1869–1934) was a Japanese legal expert (later President of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, 1931–1934). In 1917, he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Belgium and participated in the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. As a permanent member of the Supreme Allied Council of the Peace Conference, Japan acted as a neutral arbitrator in the negotiations of international disputes, including the case of the Hungarian optants. Dr Adachi Mineichirō was appointed as the speaker of the issue, and he tried to take a neutral position. He supported the Hungarian position, and when he could not enforce his opinion, he resigned from his post. Later, as one of the presidents of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, he ruled in favour of Hungary in a lawsuit. His activities were often mentioned in Hungary as evidence of Japan's sympathy for the Hungarian people and as proof that this sympathy can be of actual benefit to Hungary in international politics. See: Geöcze 1936.

⁷³ Aibara Susumu 粟飯原晋 (1900–1931) was a Japanese Esperantist and official of the Tokyo branch of the League of Nations Secretariat. He studied Esperanto, and in 1921 he founded an Esperanto group at Keio University and presented to the university a final thesis on the Baha'i movement with a summary in Esperanto. He was a member of the committee of the Japanese Esperanto Institute and became the honorary secretary of the Esperanto section of the Japanese Association of the League of Nations and the head of the Esperanto Group of Keio University. He wrote many articles about Hungary for the Japanese, and he was an honorary member of the Hungarian Turan Society. According to the Hungarian reports of the time, he was one of the first pioneers of the pro-Hungarian movements in Japan after the First World War. See: Mezey 1939: 138–141. After the war, as a young journalist he started to study the situation in Europe, dealing with the issue of war responsibility and peace treaties. In 1924, as a university student he wrote a letter to the Hungarian Esperanto Institute in Esperanto asking for information about Turanism. (MOL P 1384 8. csomó. 1924. nov. 12. Letter of Aibara Susumu in Esperanto to the Hungarian Esperanto Institute, which was translated into Hungarian and forwarded to the Turan Society.) The Esperanto Institute forwarded the letter's Hungarian translation to the Turan Society, and this way Aibara Susumu came into contact with the leading figures of the Hungarian Turanian movement. In this letter, Aibara Susumu wrote about the Hungarian–Japanese kinship, justifying his interest in Hungary: 'Many Hungarians often spoke and wrote about the kinship of our nations, but not many Japanese know about this [...] Yes, we Japanese and Hungarians are indeed relatives and brothers. Japanese people who visited Hungary [...] really admired and praised Hungary and its hospitable people'. Aibara Susumu wrote that since the Hungarians were also an Asian people, they should cooperate with the Japanese people: 'We Orientals should come into direct contact, make friends with each other, and unite'. Finally, he asked for information about the Hungarian Turanian movement: 'I heard that there is a League of Turanian Peoples in Budapest and that its pioneers came to Japan a few years ago, that one of the committee members is the director of a girls' school in Budapest. Could you write me their addresses? Can they understand our common language? Is the League developing successfully in your country? And I heard that a Japanese man, Mr Imaoka, is now living in Budapest for the sake of the League. Do you know him? [...] Are there books in Esperanto or translated into Esperanto about Hungary's economic situation and other topics? Are they available?' The Turan Society responded to this letter, and they remained in contact until Aibara's death. Aibara asked for publications in order to promote Hungary in Japan, and in 1927 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the help of the Turán Society, sent him publications introducing Hungary. Until his death in 1931,

(1895–?) expressed the importance of these relationships as follows: ‘The role that Japanese politicians play in international forums is getting bigger and bigger’.⁷⁴ As a result of this, the part of the Hungarian public that turned to Japan with interest believed that Hungary could count on support from Japan, as this case recorded by Imaoka shows:

Many Hungarians have already asked me: [...] When will Japan fight for Hungary? To this I replied that in the treatment of the Hungarian prisoners of war in Siberia, at the meetings of the border adjustment committees, at the committee reviewing the atrocities committed in Transylvania, at the Hungarian-Romanian border incident, or at any international conference or meeting of the League of Nations, where Hungary had to be protected against ill will, Japan never forgot that he was a friend of Hungary and made every effort to reach an impartial and fair decision.⁷⁵

These relations were sometimes used by the Hungarian official foreign policy as references to prove the Japanese sympathy for Hungary. The society often received letters from the Hungarian embassies in Japan, Turkey, or Finland, which forwarded the requests of the governments for lists of Hungarians dealing with that country and its people.⁷⁶ Moreover, they specifically requested English and German language books dealing with Turanism.⁷⁷

The newspaper *Turán*, and István Mezey in particular, frequently published ‘evidence’ (i.e., Hungarian-related events and articles published in Japan) that Japan showed special interest and friendship towards Hungary, sympathised with the Turan Society, and even understood Hungarian revisionist efforts.⁷⁸ These minor events could only appear significant and important due to the isolation of Hungary, especially in the eyes of a group promoting friendship with Japan. However, it is true that there existed a certain level of connection between the societies and organisations of the two countries. There were some

Aibara Suzumu wrote articles (e.g., in the Tokyo newspaper *Miyako*) about the injustices of the Treaty of Trianon, showing the maps of the Revision League. See Mezey 1939: 138–141.

⁷⁴ Mezey 1929.

⁷⁵ Imaoka 1930: 241–242.

⁷⁶ Hollós Ödön japán császári konzul levele Móricz Péter ügyvezető társelnöknek 1935. ápr. 18., MOL P 1384 8. csomó. ‘The Japanese government is contacting us with the request that we provide them with the names of Hungarian writers, poets, newspaper editors, and otherwise all those who are literarily active with Japanese or East Asian issues in general, or who only occasionally deal with similar issues in the context of individual lectures or in newspaper articles’.

⁷⁷ The ‘Great Japan Turan Young Mens’ Association’ asked for books and publications about Turanism. 1935. jan. 22., MOL P 1384 8. csomó

⁷⁸ The actual relations of the Hungarian and Japanese Turanian associations will be the topic of another essay.

Turanist associations in Japan, too, that paid attention to Hungary, though the interpretation of Turanism was different in the two countries.⁷⁹

Hungarian POWs in Siberia

During the First World War, Russia captured (and held in camps) an estimated more than 2 million prisoners of war (POWs) in Russia from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (with ethnic Germans and Hungarians each constituting around one quarter and Slavic people constituting the other half).⁸⁰ The Russian POW camps were taken by the Japanese army between 1918 and 1920 during the Japanese Siberian expedition, and the repatriation of the prisoners started with the help of the Red Cross and with the cooperation of the Japanese officials.⁸¹ The repatriation of the prisoners progressed very slowly because of the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) and organisational and financial problems of Germany and the successor states of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, so the process took years, being completed in 1922.⁸² Hungarian POWs got home after several years of harsh ordeals after the Japanese authorities had agreed to help them repatriate in cooperation with the Red Cross.⁸³ This was the first time in history that Hungarians came into contact with Japanese soldiers in a large number. The head of the Hungarian Red Cross mission, Géza Dell'Adami (1888–?),⁸⁴ later wrote a book about the mission's activities, in which he thanked the Japanese authorities for their favourable treatment of the Hungarian POWs and for their helpful attitude to the efforts of the mission. Dell'Adami wrote:

⁷⁹ Levent 2011, Levent 2016, Farkas 2001a: 218–237.

⁸⁰ According to the Hungarian Defence Ministry, 6,557 Hungarian prisoners had returned home by May 1920 (Wintermantel 2016: 14.), but the repatriation of Hungarians lasted until 1922. Géza Dell'Adami, the leader of the Red Cross mission to repatriate Hungarian prisoners, wrote about 8,000–10,000 Hungarians. His data were said to be based on the statistics of the International Red Cross, and it stated that approx. 13,000 Hungarian prisoners of war boarded between 1920 and 1921, of which approx. 8,200 people returned home to Hungary, while approx. 4,800 former Hungarian citizens were repatriated by the successor states. (Dell'Adami 1925: 178.) According to the new research and relevant literature in English and German, the data given by Dell'Adami do not seem to be an exaggeration.

⁸¹ Jones 2014, Leidinger – Moritz 1997. The Japanese Army took over the Pervaya Rechka and Nikolsk Ussuriysk camps and later Krasnaya Rechka (Khabarovsk) from the Americans, too. According to the information of the Red Cross in November 1919, 2,062 Hungarian and Austrian, 4 Romanian, and 505 Turkish POWs came under Japanese rule. Mezey 1939: 102.

⁸² Nachtigal – Radauer 2014.

⁸³ Research on the Austrian-Hungarian prisoners of wars in Siberia: Bonhardt 1985, Kovács 1987, Kondo 2009, 近藤正憲 2006. New research by Márton Mati: Mati 2022a, Mati 2022b.

⁸⁴ Dell'Adami was also a POW in Krasnoyarsk until 1917, when he could escape and could go home.

Before we sailed, there was a farewell party in the Japanese camp in Nikolsk [...] Around the white table there were officers of three fraternities, Japanese, Hungarians, and Turks. After a few cordial greetings, Lieutenant Tanaka explained in a clever speech the need to unite the Turanian peoples and toasted to the development of the three leading valiant Turanic races.⁸⁵

The mention of a Turanian relationship in the Siberian camps may have been the result of the ideas and activity of one of the most important supporter of Japanese relations in Hungary (and the main founder and organiser of the Nippon Society) in the interwar period, Dr István Mezey, lawyer and former officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the First World War.⁸⁶ He assisted in the repatriation of Hungarian POWs as a contact officer for the Japanese commander of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysk camp. As he had been in contact with the Turan society, we have good reason to assume that the camp commander obtained information about Turanism from him.

New research results are presenting a more and more detailed story of the Hungarian POWs in Siberia.⁸⁷ Memoirs and diaries of the former Hungarian POWs contain valuable information about the improved life conditions and favourable situation in the POW camps under Japanese rule and the warm feelings of the Hungarians regarding the Japanese army.⁸⁸ The POWs had high hopes for the Japanese and American presence. They believed that the representatives of the two nations would be the ones who would rescue them from the chaos of Russia.⁸⁹ In his paper, Mati cites an event from one of the diaries (i.e., that of Ferenc Vándor). When the camp was taken over by the Japanese, the commander of the Japanese expeditionary army addressed a letter to the POWs in a way different from the Russian or American attitude:

Japanese Lt Col. Takashima greeted the prisoners of war. He reassured us that he would try everything he could do for us so that we should not feel the burden of

⁸⁵ Dell'Adami.

⁸⁶ István Mezey (1895–?) was a lawyer, but because he was interested in Turkish culture, he learnt Turkish, and he came into contact with the Turan Society (he corresponded with the Turan Society about the compilation of a Turkish dictionary before the First World War) and presumably with Turanism. He was on a study trip to Turkey when the First World War broke out. He became a lieutenant in the army, was taken as a POW by the Russians, and was transferred to Siberia, from where he fled to Japan (where he learnt Japanese). He assisted in the repatriation of Hungarian POWs as a contact officer for the Japanese commander of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysk camp. Mezey later devoted a chapter about the POWs in his book on Japan, emphasising that the Japanese approached Hungarians in a friendly way, regarding the Hungarians relatives. Mezey 1939: 95–130.

⁸⁷ Mati 2022b: 181–204, Mati 2022a.

⁸⁸ Mati 2022b: 197–200.

⁸⁹ Mati 2022b: 193.

being POWs. He regarded us as heroes. Now that peace was close, he hoped that we would be transported home soon.⁹⁰

The good relations of the Hungarian POWs and the Japanese soldiers were corrupted in the Krasnaya Rechka camp, when the Japanese shot to death three Hungarians who tried to escape captivity.⁹¹ Apart from this unfortunate event, the overall perception of the Japanese command of the POW camps still remained favourable in the later memories.⁹² The good memories of the Hungarian POWs about the Japanese army in Siberia were later often referred to by supporters of the Hungarian–Japanese rapprochement, and all overviews discussing the history of relations mentioned the helpful and friendly behaviour of the Japanese towards the Hungarian POWs as an important starting point of the friendly relations.

The Siberian situation still needs to be thoroughly researched, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the reports and memories of the survivors reflected the true feelings of the captives. They suffered hard in the Siberian camps without proper—or even acceptable—housing, clothes, food, and health care. They struggled with extreme cold, hunger, and serious illnesses, and many of them never got out of there. Comparing the attitude of the Japanese army (cooperating with the Red Cross and providing the prisoners with food, clothing, and medical aid) with the unbearable circumstances under the Russian forces understandably led the prisoners to appreciate the Japanese conduct and to be grateful for the humane treatment. Also, the Japanese officials were willing to help the work of the repatriating missions, and they cooperated with them and thus with the Hungarian mission, too.⁹³ The contemporary assessments of the Hungarian–Japanese relations and friendship in the interwar period written by the proponents of the rapprochement (with a notable bias, of course) of the two nations all referred to these events as evidence of Japanese benevolence towards Hungarians.

Japan and the Treaty of Trianon

In the relevant literature, the contemporary reports about the favourable treatment and understanding attitude of the Japanese officials towards the Hungarian claims and petitions during the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Trianon

⁹⁰ Mati 2022b: 197.

⁹¹ Mati 2022b: 199–200. Kondo 2009.

⁹² Mezey 1939: 95–130.

⁹³ Wintermantel 2021: 34–36.

were also treated with reservations and regarded as exaggerations. However, the newest research of the Japanese archives and diplomatic documents proves that the contemporary reports did have some actual basis for their undoubtedly biased accounts.⁹⁴ Japan participated among the victorious powers in the Treaty of Versailles negotiations that ended the First World War. However, since it had no interest in European affairs, the Japanese delegation showed a rather passive attitude. Nevertheless, the Japanese delegates participated in the negotiations and committee works and sent reports about them to Tokyo. Besides, the Japanese senior officers assigned to the Hungarian border establishing committees directly and actively participated in the procedure of determining the exact location of the new border that was only roughly prescribed in the peace treaty.⁹⁵ Their reports provide valuable and interesting information about the actual work of these committees and contain the personal opinions of Japanese senior officers frequently condemning unjust decisions towards Hungary. Two scholars (Yuko Umemura and Peter Wintermantel) researched the reports and telegrams sent to Tokyo by the Japanese general officers (now available in digitised form on the online interface of the Center for Asian Historical Resources of the National Archives of Japan).⁹⁶ The Japanese committee members not directly interested in European political affairs could remain unbiased observers in the process of negotiations, so their reports can be considered as authentic information about what exactly happened during the establishment of borders. The Japanese delegates often spoke very critically about these processes, about the tensions between committee members, and even about corruption.⁹⁷ A total of 15 Japanese commissioners worked in the commissions, and although most of them considered the new borders to be unnatural and unfair, and they may have expressed objections, in the end they usually did not confront the delegates of the Great Powers and accepted the decisions. For Hungary, their activities had minimal results,⁹⁸ but for Hungarian society at the time, they seemed to represent the only power that tried to observe the establishing of new borders somewhat objectively.

Most of the Japanese commissioners considered the new border to be unjust, and they often expressed their sympathy with the Hungarian side. Especially Major Andō Rikichi, who worked on the Hungarian–Czechoslovak border establishment committee, and Captain Sanō Mitsunobu, who worked on the Romanian committee, sympathised the most with Hungary. Since Andō also

⁹⁴ Umemura – Wintermantel 2021.

⁹⁵ Umemura – Wintermantel 2001: 7.

⁹⁶ Japan Center for Asian Historical Records www.jacar.go.jp

⁹⁷ Documents nos. 31 and 35.

⁹⁸ Péter Wintermantel indicates in his study an area of 700 km². Umemura – Wintermantel 37.

gave interviews to the Hungarian press, his views in favour of Hungary became known to the Hungarian public as well, and they were often cited by the Hungarian press as proof of Japanese sympathy. As a result of the new research, the limited reality of cases that have been classified as ‘urban legends’ cannot be denied. As the scholars stated,

In Hungary between the two world wars, public opinion believed that the members of the Japanese delegation to the peace negotiations were friendly towards Hungarians. Until now, we did not have precise information about the nature of this sympathy, but the historical sources uncovered in the context of this research support this fact without any doubt.⁹⁹

Of course, the favourable opinions and activities of the Japanese commissioners towards Hungary were greatly overestimated by pro-Japanese associations and individuals, and the personal opinions of Japanese officials were presented with an important political significance.¹⁰⁰ In the time of political isolation, it is quite understandable that the Hungarian public tried to look for friends or possible supporters. Proponents of Hungarian–Japanese friendship knew that actual benefits would only come to Hungary if Japan took on the support of Hungarian interests in its foreign policy, but they believed that personal connections and social and cultural relations could arouse the interest of official circles as well. These ideas became ‘central elements of the pro-Japanese folklore between the two wars’.¹⁰¹ However, Japanese sympathy for the Hungary may have been seen in private opinions and conversations but did not represent an official Japanese political position.¹⁰² Hungarian hopes had no basis, as Japan did not want to interfere in any form in European political relations, which were of no interest to her. At the end of the 1930s, official friendly relations between Japan and Hungary took place under completely different political conditions.

From the late 1930s, cultural relations, which were originally non-political in nature, became increasingly influenced by politics. The events in world politics (e.g., the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact by Germany and Japan in 1936, with Hungary joining in 1939) also played a role in this, as Japan for Hungary (and Hungary for Japan) could have been seen as part of an evolving political vision. It was not yet an official political direction; however, proponents of the Japanese relationship no longer thought and referred to the Turanian kinship or the need for cultural unity among the Turanian peoples but to the similarity of political goals (to change the status quo of the contemporary global order) and

⁹⁹ Umemura – Wintermantel 202.

¹⁰⁰ Farkas 2022; Farkas 2009.

¹⁰¹ Umemura – Wintermantel 47.

¹⁰² Wintermantel 2016: 21–23.

the need of political unity. The Hungarian–Japanese Treaty of Friendship and Cultural Cooperation in 1938, in addition to the cultural agreement, contained a treaty of friendship.¹⁰³ The articles and reports praising the treaty contained the familiar arguments of the supporters of the Hungarian–Japanese relationship: Japan’s special attention to Hungary, Hungary’s special position between East and West, and the resulting role of a ‘bridge’ for the renewal of a culturally ‘aging’ Europe.¹⁰⁴ It was possible to reach and to establish relations with Japan through Turanism and the cultural activity of the Nippon Society, but once the political and diplomatic relationship had been established, these were no longer needed as maintainers, just as ‘reinforcers’ for ideological purposes only. With the strengthening of the German–Japanese alliance, the Japanese orientation became more and more inseparable from the German orientation in Hungarian foreign policy, and thus it lost its cultural character. During World War II (1939–1945), the Hungarian–Japanese relationship lost its cultural character and became politicised, and as a consequence after the war any contact with Japan, including cultural relations, were lost, and most books on Japan were banned, with all other publications possibly connected to Turanism.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to clarify views and explanations of Hungarian Turanism that have been increasing in the secondary literature and to provide more nuanced approaches and interpretations. On the other hand, it also sought to examine the perceptions of Japan in Hungary and to try to explain why a very distant country could be popular and endowed with serious importance. The research was primarily based on contemporary sources: scientific, informative, and promotional publications (i.e., books and articles), newspaper reports, documents of Turanian societies (i.e., archive documents, data, and correspondences), as well as the statements of important and well-known persons who could have an impact on public opinion (i.e., scientists, writers, and politicians). Of course, the secondary literature on the subject was also taken into consideration. In order to examine the research material in the work, the historical, cultural, ideological, and social conditions and contexts of the era had to be analysed in order to properly interpret and evaluate the subject. The results may enable a more accurate and nuanced approach to understanding the relationship between Hungarian Turanism and perceptions of Japan between the two world wars.

¹⁰³ Umemura 2018: 119–132.

¹⁰⁴ Nagy 1943: 121–123.

It is important to highlight some aspects worth further consideration. In the overview of the history of Turanism, papers may overemphasise its political significance and its influence on government policy or public thinking before 1945. However, Turanism rarely, and even so, only partly became government policy in Hungary, did not have the support of the majority of the society, could not have a mass base, and usually remained outside official policy making circles. For the most part, Turanism remained an unclear, irrational circle of ideas, and in various time periods there were great differences in its concept, social and political groups, aims, and interpretations. Turanism never became part of the official policy of the Hungarian political elite, but it could be used by the government as an informal tool in their efforts to break the country's international isolation and build alliances, for which mentioning some relations (such as Turanian relations) could be seen as elements possibly arousing interest and friendly approach.

The undeniably valuable legacy of Turanism can be seen in its cultural interpretation. The scholarly works dealing with Japan published at that time represented the rising scholarly field of East Asian and Japanese studies in Hungary. The cultural aspect of Turanism provided a valuable contribution to Hungarian culture: the huge amount of scientific and cultural achievements of Hungarian scholars, teachers, writers, and researchers who were initially or partly influenced by the cultural ideas of Turanism but whose works ultimately significantly contributed to the development of Oriental studies in Hungary or who carried out extensive educational work to introduce and popularise the culture of the related peoples among the Hungarian public.

Turanism played a role in the formulation of Hungarian identity, especially during times of intense conflicts and political and social crises (e.g., modernisation at the end of the 19th century, war defeat, loss of territories, and international isolation in the interwar period), when the Hungarians' self-evaluation and concept of their position in Europe were seriously challenged. In times of a need to re-define identity, the supposed Oriental roots of the Hungarian people were more emphatically considered as part of Hungarian historical heritage and cultural traditions. Therefore, the research of these roots (and the contemporary Oriental cultures as well) was followed with attention by the Hungarian public.

Turanism could also be connected to the modernisation debates of the 19th–20th centuries of Hungary. Japan's development appeared in Hungarian Turanism as an example of the successful development of an Asian people, with an emphasis on achieving rapid and Western-style modernisation with a strong national consciousness based on the traditions and cultural heritage of Japan. The special situation of Japan 'between East and West' could be interpreted as similar to that of Hungary's situation, which made it possible to make compar-

isons and draw parallels between the development, situation, and task or even mission of the two nations, even without any reference to any kind of ethnic kinship. The idea that Hungarians and the Japanese, the ‘most westerly and most easterly Turanian nations’, have the joint task and mission of helping the other Asian Turanian peoples’ development and of functioning as a kind of bridge between East and West became a steady and established argument in Hungarian Turanism from the beginning of the 20th century until 1945.

After the First World War, Japan was among the victorious powers and the only country of them that had no interest in the process of arbitrament of the new state borders in Central Europe. Although the official Japanese position did not contradict the decisions made by the Great Powers, in their informal statements the Japanese diplomats often voiced their criticism of the incorrect events and verdicts experienced in settling the Hungarian borders. All of this was gratefully received by the Hungarian public, and the significance of these private statements were magnified, which of course increased sympathy for Japan. On the way leading to World War II, Japan became an ally of Hungary, which determined the public discourse about Japan.

The relationship between Hungary and Japan changed drastically after World War II. Japan and East Central Europe became parts of the sphere of influence of the USA and the Soviet Union, respectively, which defined the relations (or the lack of relations) between them, as they belonged to the opposite sides of the newly formed world order. Ideology in Hungary was also Sovietised in all areas: all levels of society and intellectual life were defined by Marxist ideology, and all elements of the pre-war regime having been labelled as imperialist and fascist were banned, including Turanism and works and news related to Japan available in Hungarian from the interwar and war periods. It also meant that for decades after the Second World War, Turanism and also Hungarian–Japanese relations were hardly studied in Hungary (or with a strong ideological bias), and only the regime change of 1989–1990 brought about a significant change in this area.

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Preliminary Notes on the *Mahāmudrātilaka*: Contents, History, Transmission

Abstract

This short essay is an introduction to the study of the *Mahāmudrātilaka* ('An Ornament of the Great Seal'), an important Buddhist tantric scripture of the Hevajra cycle. The text is a so-called *uttaratantra* (ancillary scripture) of the *Hevajratantra*. This cult emerged around ca. 900 CE in Eastern India and quickly rose to a position of prominence. In order to illustrate this point, first I discuss some historical references to the Hevajra cult: a lexicographical work, inscriptions, and testimony in Śaiva exegesis. I then contextualise the *Mahāmudrātilaka* among the Hevajra ancillary scriptures and share some notes on the purpose of such texts. I argue that such scriptures were meant to update a cult's ritual and doctrinal palette in order to keep up with developments seen (and thought desirable to have) in rival schools. In the next section, I present the only known Sanskrit manuscript of the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz Orientabteilung Hs. or. 8711, a late Nepalese copy dated 1827 CE, which can be shown to be a copy of a Vorlage dating to 1204 CE. Next, I compare the text transmitted therein to the Tibetan translation, Tōh. 420, and identify them as two recensions. I then proceed to discussing exegesis on the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, the works of *Gambhīravajra and *Prajñāsīgupta; these texts are for now available only in their Tibetan translation. I also identify some testimonia of the *Mahāmudrātilaka*. Using all this evidence, I argue that the text cannot be much earlier than the late 11th century. Next, I present an overview of the text by means of examining selected passages and their most significant features, with special focus on the differences and similarities with the *Hevajratantra*, the internal references to other scriptures, and the text's significant parallels with the *Vajramālābhīdhāna*. I argue that the text is unapologetically antinomian and gnostic. In the second half of the paper, styled as an appendix, I select five blocks of verses, which I edit and translate: the first deals with the relationship between initiating master and disciple, the second provides some insights into the attitudes of tantric practitioners towards orthodox Buddhists, the third contains detailed instructions on how to gather the antinomian substances known as 'nec-tars', the fourth deals with communal worship in a rite known as the *gaṇacakra*, and the final one describes a somewhat rare and rather gruesome ritual meant to bestow the power of flight.

Keywords: Tantric Buddhism, Sanskrit manuscripts, Hevajra, *Mahāmudrātilaka*, *yoginītantras*, antinomian religious practices

The aim of this essay is to give a general introduction to a hitherto unstudied Buddhist tantric scripture, the *Mahāmudrātilaka* ('An Ornament of the Great Seal'). This is an important text of the cycle arranged around and inspired by an emblematic Vajrayāna scripture, the *Hevajratantra*. The essay is based on a talk I delivered *in absentia* at the 2015 World Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok, Thailand. I wish to thank, and in the same breath apologise, once again for my absence to the organiser of the panel, Prof. Judit Törzsök, for her kind invitation and for agreeing to read my paper aloud at the conference. Various other obligations prevented me from submitting a written-up version for the proceedings volume; I have therefore decided to do so here. The *Mahāmudrātilaka* is currently being edited and translated by Peter Alan Roberts for the 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha project. I hope that he will find some of these notes useful, and I wish him all the best for his work. It is also my pleasant duty to acknowledge the input of Dr Samuel Grimes, who provided useful suggestions and corrected some phrasings of a non-native speaker.

The text's place in the *Hevajra* corpus

The rise of the *Hevajratantra* can be confidently conjectured to around ca. 900 CE, and current scholarly consensus holds that its place of birth was, as in the case of most late tantric waves of revelation (if we discount Nepalese developments), Eastern India. This text and the cult that it promoted became of critical importance to the final stages of Sanskrit Vajrayāna. The *Hevajratantra* held sway as the most important esoteric Buddhist scripture until the disappearance of the religion from what is today India. It was transmitted to Nepal, where its importance and influence is acknowledged to this day. The same can be said about its importance with regards to Buddhism in Tibet, through which it was transmitted to the Yuan (Mongol) court (1269–1368). It was during this period that it gained traction in China, in spite of the fact that the text had already been translated into Chinese in the Song period.¹ Finally, the cult of Hevajra was also successful in various parts of Southeast Asia, as indicated by the large number of material remains.²

As a short aside, I would like to mention (or reiterate) some little-known facts about the influence of the *Hevajratantra*. The 11th-century Sanskrit lexicographer Puruṣottamadeva, in his appendix to the *Amarakośa* called the *Trikāṇḍaśeṣa*, mentions Hevajra in what can be termed as an updated list of Buddhist deities. In the edition consulted by me, the name is written as 'Heramba' (one of Gaṇeśa's

¹ See Willemen 1983.

² See for example Lobo 1994 and Griffiths 2014.

names). However, this must be a mistake, as the names of the two other gods mentioned next, ‘Heruka’ and ‘Cakrasaṃvara’, surely warrant an emendation to ‘Hevajra’.³ The deity Hevajra is the only one among late, truly-esoteric deities to be mentioned on a Sanskrit inscription dated to 1194 CE and established on the order of the king of Khasa, Aśokacalla, who was apparently a devotee.⁴ An inscription dating from the same year—however, this time on the Southeast Asian subcontinent and in old Čam—states that the future king Sūryavarman, at that time called Vidyānandana, celebrated his victory over a Khmer expeditionary force by building a *śrīherukaharmya*, a Heruka temple.⁵ The Heruka mentioned here is probably the same as Hevajra. The young Vidyānandana had plenty of opportunities to become a devotee during his time at the Khmer court, where the cult of the deity was well-established. However, it could also be that the identity of this Heruka is that of the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinī-jālaśaṃvara*.⁶ In his commentary on Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka*, Jayaratha (fl. 1213–1236 CE) quotes the text without naming it and with expressed approval of its contents at least thrice.⁷ To sum up this short excursus, to my knowledge no other late tantric Buddhist scripture can boast such a prestigious list of testimonia outside the self-referential exegetical literature, where, needless to say, the presence of the tantra is overwhelming. Scarce are the authors who could afford to ignore the *Hevajra* after the beginning of the 10th century.

The *Mahāmudrātilaka* is a so-called exegetical scripture, an *uttaratantra*. The *Hevajra* has several such satellite scriptures: the *Ḍākinīvajrapaṇjara* (Tōh. 419), the **Jñānagarbha* (Tōh. 421), the **Jñānatilaka* (Tōh. 422), and the **Tattvapradīpa* (Tōh. 423); other titles are mentioned in the literature, but these texts are now completely lost. The *Ḍākinīvajrapaṇjara* survives in the original in the People’s Republic of China, although it is currently inaccessible. Fortunately, we have some exegesis in Sanskrit preserved in Nepal.⁸

³ *Trikāṇḍaśeṣa* 1.1.23ab: *Vāgīśvaro ’tha Herambo Herukaś Cakrasaṃvaraḥ* |.

⁴ See Vidyavinoda 1913–1914.

⁵ See Finot 1904.

⁶ For this text, see Griffiths–Szántó 2015.

⁷ See his commentary to *Tantrāloka* 3.94ab–95ab, 5.27cd–28ab, and 29.101cd.

⁸ Next to a sizeable chunk of Mahāmati’s commentary, the *Tattvaviśadā* (folio 1 in Kaiser Library, Kathmandu no. 134 = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project reel no. C 14/4, folios 2–15 in National Archives, Kathmandu = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project reel no. A 47/17, and the last folio in National Archives, Kathmandu 5-23 = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project reel no. A 47/18; the Tibetan translation is Tōh. 1196), we have an anonymous collection of glosses titled *Ḍākinīvajrapaṇjaraṭippati* in Kaiser Library, Kathmandu no. 230 = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project reel no. C 26/3, now published in *Dhīh, Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research* 55: 121–134. Both manuscripts are from the scriptorium of Vikramaśīla Monastery. This material is studied in Yokoyama 2016 and in his previous and later, shorter publications.

The *Mahāmudrātilaka* is, therefore, the only *uttaratantra* of the Hevajra cycle that can be consulted in full in the original at the time of writing.

An *uttaratantra*, according to the emic model, is a scripture that is revealed subsequently to the basic tantra (*mūlatantra*) in order to clarify issues that remain obscure, to elaborate on teachings that were only alluded to previously, and to settle controversial tenets of doctrine and practice. However, if we examine *uttaratantras* with a critical eye, it soon becomes apparent that they do much more than that. For example, the entire pantheon established in the *mūlatantra* can be modified or even completely changed and new doctrines can be introduced. From a historical perspective, the most plausible motive for composing an *uttaratantra* is that followers of the cult already established in a *mūlatantra* attempted to update their own teachings to remain relevant according to new trends and to widen their ritual and doctrinal palette.

The only known Sanskrit manuscript

Until very recently, the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, when it was studied at all, was consulted in its Tibetan translation (Tōh. 420). The original Sanskrit text of the *Mahāmudrātilaka* survives in a single manuscript; this is Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz Orientabteilung Hs. or. 8711. Here I must thank Prof. Alexis Sanderson for pointing this out to me some years ago; he also very kindly lent me a black and white photostatic copy from his collection. Since then, I have gained access to colour images thanks to the good offices of the aforementioned library. I do not know how the manuscript came into the German State Library's possession, but it was acquired in 1983.

The manuscript is a complete, rather late copy on 57 paper folios. Although the handwriting is clumsy, the text preserved is more correct than what would be expected from a late Nepalese witness. Scribal and readers' corrections abound, and lacunae in the exemplar are also carefully noted. Some of the scribal practices are quite noteworthy, but they will not be addressed here.

The text of the colophon starts in poor Sanskrit and towards the end switches to Newar. The scribe identifies himself as *śrīvajrodbhavācāryarājamānasimha*, an inhabitant of the *śrītalumulamahāvihāra* (spelled thus). The first proper name presents several problems. What the scribe means to say with the first part is that he is a *vajrācārya*, which, in the Nepalese context, is both a title and a caste, but this is—at least to me—unusually phrased as ‘born from the *vajra*’ (*vajrodbhavācārya*). The word ‘king’ may qualify *ācārya*, therefore ‘king of officiants’, but it could also be part of his proper name, which was thus either *Rājamānasimha* or *Mānasimha*. The toponym can be identified with some

degree of certainty: it must be the Tarumūlavihāra, that is to say the Sikhamu Baha, a now small institution with a rather illustrious past, situated on Kathmandu's Durbar Square about halfway between the Kumārī Palace and what was until very recently the regretted Kāṭh Maṇḍap (Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa, whence the Nepalese capital has its name).⁹

The colophon has two dates, given in both nouns with numeric values (*bhūtasamkhyā*) and numerals proper. The first is the date of copying; in *bhūtasamkhyās sāgara-yuga-durgati* (9-4-7), which, once converted from the Nepal Year, corresponds to 1827 CE. The second, given in the Newar part is *yuga-netra-bhuvana* (3-2-4); this gives the date of the scribe's exemplar, 1204 CE. Interestingly, both years fall into periods of increased Buddhist scribal activity in the Kathmandu Valley. The earlier was probably caused by the destruction of several great monasteries in the Gangetic Plain and the subsequent influx of learned refugees. The circumstances of the latter are a matter of debate, but this does not concern us here.

Two recensions

When comparing this *codex unicus* to the Tibetan translation, it is very clear that there are at least two recensions of the *Mahāmudrātilaka*. The differences between the text of the *codex unicus* and that of the Tibetan translation (Tōh. 420) are too significant to be attributed to changes due to translation techniques or simple misunderstandings, although examples for these two are to be found in abundance.

Exegesis on the text

Before I present a short overview of the contents, I would like to say a few words about the exegesis of the text. The Tibetan Canon preserves two commentaries, that of *Gambhīravajra (Tōh. 1200) and that of *Prajñāśrīgupta (Tōh. 1201).

The first is a text that will amply reward close study, as the commentary is very rich in quotations and references to *siddha*-type authorities. I find it particularly significant that these authorities are at times grouped together into geographical regions; thus, the varying opinions of *paṇḍitas* from Oḍḍiyāna (the Swat Valley), Jalandhar, Kashmir, and Bengal are mentioned. In other words, by studying this text carefully, one could gain precious information about regional

⁹ Locke 1985: 258–263. The Kāṭh Maṇḍap has since been rebuilt.

doctrinal and practical differences, something that has been barely dealt with in Buddhist tantric studies.

The second, *Prajñāśrīgupta's work, is also quite informative from a historian's viewpoint, in spite of the fact that the commentary deals only with the opening part of the tantra. This author claims that his master's master was the famous (but little-studied) 11th-century Kashmiri master, Ratnavajra, also known as Sūkṣmāvartabhaṭṭa, in my view a man of paramount importance.¹⁰ An important feature of this text for those interested in the production of exegesis is that in the introduction the author claims that he wrote the commentary for the person who also became the Tibetan translator, Rin chen rgyal mtshan. However, another passage suggests that the text was written for the author's Indian disciples, and yet another suggests that the text is merely a collection of *aide-mémoire* notes. *Prajñāśrīgupta's person is important from the viewpoint of dating as well, since the Tibetan colophon of the *Mahāmudrātilaka* states that the two, otherwise rather obscure, Tibetan translators worked in his presence. This gives a *terminus ante quem* of the late 11th century CE. The only referenced quotations in surviving Sanskrit literature, which are in Abhayākara Gupta's *Āmnāyamañjarī* and Raviśrījñāna's *Guṇabharaṇī*, come from about a half a century and a century later, respectively.¹¹

Contents

As for the contents of the text, I find it tedious and pointless to describe all 28 chapters in a preliminary essay such as this, so I shall limit myself to those passages that I find particularly significant.

The text opens without the traditional etiology *evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye* etc. Instead, the entire first chapter contains a list of questions addressed to the Lord (*bhagavat*) by his consort, the goddess.

A significant part of the tantra addresses issues that relate to what is usually termed as 'subtle body practices' in secondary scholarship, for example the nature and mutual relationship of tubes (*nāḍī*), discuses (*cakra*), and vital energies that the initiate should master. This is the subject of chapters 3–6, 17–18, 21, and 26. I will not deal with these passages here, since my understanding of the subject is very meagre. In fact, I think that this topic has not yet been dealt with by any competent scholar, in spite of the fact that it is a rich area of study with plentiful material available, for example our very text. It would be

¹⁰ See Szántó 2020.

¹¹ See Sferra 2000: 88 and Tomabechi 2018 (the fifth chapter of the *Āmnāyamañjarī* quotes the text with attribution four times).

very important to understand what kind of empirical observations may have led to postulating such an intricate system generally and how and why it was adopted by tantric Buddhists in particular. It seems to me that after an initial—and seemingly aborted—attempt to introduce such concepts by *Guhyasamāja* practitioners, most likely in the early 9th century, there was a revival kickstarted by the *Hevajratantra*, possibly paralleled in various texts of the *Śaṃvara* cult, and developed to astonishing complexity in the *Kālacakratantra* in the following two centuries. This rather late appearance in esoteric Buddhism leads me to think that, as so many other elements, these motifs too were adaptations from outside sources. The similarity between ‘Hindu’ and Buddhist practices of this type were already pointed out by classical authors, such as the learned 13th-century Tibetan scholar, Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251 CE), who wrote the following in an open epistle:

For one who understands it correctly, the inner-heat meditation is a technique for developing Gnosis. Done incorrectly, inner heat generates mere heat, but that is not Gnosis — that belongs to the Indian non-Buddhist systems, not ours. Brahmanical¹² and Buddhist presentations of the vital airs and yogic exercises also resemble each other; if one is not familiar with them, it is difficult to distinguish brass from gold.¹³

A second major motif of the tantra is interaction with *yoginīs*, both supernatural beings and human females who were seen as manifestations of the former. The signs (*lakṣaṇa*) by which the initiate would recognise such females are described in chapters 15 and 23—the latter also includes a passage on how to interact with them if they appear during group worship (*gaṇacakra*). The hand-signs (*sāṅketa*) and code-words (the much-misunderstood *sandhyābhāṣā*) by means of which one should communicate with them are taught in chapters 13 and 14.

In the following, I would like to say a few words about chapters that I found particularly noteworthy.

Chapter 2 (with some elaboration in chapter 19) deals mostly with matters related to initiation (*abhiṣeka*): if this is not performed and one begins to teach the tantra, even if such a teacher is already in possession of some supernatural accomplishments, both disciple and teacher will go to hell after death. Moreover, before establishing what is essentially a feudal-cum-spiritual relationship, master and disciple should examine each other carefully. The text promotes a peculiar system of 12 rites of initiation, which can be reduced to four. This might seem like a minor point, but in fact the 10th and 11th centuries witnessed a very serious doctrinal battle between those advocating for three *abhiṣekas* and

¹² Lit. *tīrthikas*, pagans. My note.

¹³ Translation from Rhoton 2002: 247.

four *abhiṣekas*. The second and third initiations are unapologetically described as consisting of ritual copulation with a consort (or perhaps one for each initiation), who should be 12, 13, or 20 years old—the last being the absolute limit of age. The chapter closes stating that there is no other method than this for obtaining Buddhahood.

Chapter 10 outlines the main philosophical-practical points. The initiate should not worship external deities and should not perform external rituals. Other passages, such as chapter 11, suggest that all these rituals, including *homa*, are to be internalised. However, here we see some discrepancy, as chapter 22 teaches an external food-offering rite (*bali*), and chapter 23 gives an elaborate description of group worship (*gaṇacakra*). Nevertheless, the present chapter advocates that the practitioner should worship his own body, which is the locus of the deity, inasmuch as it is the ultimate form of one's consciousness. He should not respect the idea of caste, nor should he discriminate between prescribed and forbidden diet or between allowed and forbidden women. Interestingly, here we also find a ban on interacting with *śrāvakas*, that is orthodox monastic Buddhists and their followers. A substantial amount of secondary literature maintains that tantric Buddhists were fully inclusivist—that is they accepted what they saw as lower layers of revelation as valid but temporary—but in fact I have found a mounting body of evidence (to be presented elsewhere) that shows that the so-called Hīnayāna was not part of this scheme, certainly not doctrinally, but something to be disregarded altogether.

Chapter 12 has an unusually extensive description of how the practitioner should obtain the so-called five nectars (*pañcāmṛta*), the antinomian substances identified with the five *tathāgatas*, which are to be used in his rituals. These are blood (here menstrual), semen, human flesh, urine, and faeces. Consumption of these substances is meant to break purity rules, more precisely, as the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary famously states, 'to rid oneself of the pride of one's pedigree' (*kulābhimānahānaye*). The presence of these five substances in late Buddhist tantras is overwhelming, but there are precious few descriptions about how to obtain them. According to this text, the initiate should build a hut (*āgāra*) that looks ordinary from the outside but which in fact has two levels, one subterranean. Here he should meditate until he obtains a dream of the deities, who order him to take a consort. He does just that and enjoys her sexually until her menses manifests. He is to continue and collect the menstrual blood as well his own ejaculate with his mouth. Then he should obtain urine and faeces. All substances are placed in a skull-bowl for safekeeping. Lastly, he should find a corpse that is 'seven-times born' (*saptajanma*), that is a Brahmin for the last seven lifetimes. He worships the corpse then splits the head open and fashions another skull-bowl. It is presumably from here that he obtains meat. This maca-

bre motif is repeated in chapter 24, where a substance called *rocana* is extracted from a similar corpse, by the consumption of which one is said to obtain the power of flight.¹⁴

Chapter 20 contains an account of the practitioner's post-initiatory observance (*caryā*). The initial procedure is again meditation, obtaining a vision of the deities and taking a consort. The initiate should then behave in a variety of contradictory ways, essentially feigning madness: sometimes being licentious and sometimes abstinent, sometimes eating little and sometimes feasting, sometimes acting like a king and sometimes like a beggar, sometimes wailing in grief and sometimes laughing with joy, sometimes imitating a *kāpālika* or a *caṇḍāla*, and sometimes preaching the doctrine or listening to it in a dignified manner. He should change his clothing and imitate a child, an old man, a prostitute, a lover, and so on and so forth.

Differences and similarities

Generally speaking, the *Mahāmudrātilaka* stays close to the teachings of the *Hevajratantra*, but it also contains a number of significant differences.

For example, this text teaches a system of six *cakras* and not four. Whether this is an influence of the Śaiva Kubjikā cycle, I cannot state precisely. It is nevertheless significant to note that the Kubjikā corpus had a major presence in the Pāla domains at this time, and I think that there is some compelling evidence to suggest that Kubjikā *ācāryas* were active in the court of Rāmapāla, the last great Pāla emperor, who was possibly an initiate of the cult as well. The source I am referring to is the still unedited *Nityakaumudī* of Gaṅgādhara, a commentary on the *Nityaparakāśa* of Vīracandra, which has not been studied in secondary scholarship either.¹⁵

The *Mahāmudrātilaka* has its own system of mantras, which are somewhat unusually given both openly (chapter 27, although note that the Tibetan translation spells the mantra-syllables backwards) and in a system of encoding-decoding (*mantroddhāra*; chapter 21).

There is also a difference in iconography: the main deity is the 16-armed, eight-headed, four-legged ectype of Hevajra, but he has a new set of implements in his hands, and his retinue consists of 32 *yoginīs*, which is a major overhaul of the Hevajra pantheon. Its system of pilgrimage sites (*pīṭha*, *upapīṭha*, etc.) is also updated.

¹⁴ See also Gray 2005.

¹⁵ See National Archives, Kathmandu 4-324 = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project reel no. B 35/26, and also reel no. A 963/4's colophon from the online catalogue.

Internal references

A last issue I would like highlight is that of internal references to other texts. It is perhaps unusual for a scripture to do this, since these texts are supposed to be timeless revelations, but it does happen. This is most fortunate for the historian, since it provides data for relative chronology. Four known tantras are named: the *Guhyasamāja*,¹⁶ the *Vajramālā* (a *Guhyasamāja* exegetical scripture),¹⁷ the *Śaṃvara*, and the *Hevajra*.¹⁸ Two further titles are given that cannot be traced. The first is the *Mahākūṭatantra*,¹⁹ about which we know nothing, and the second is the *Jñānagarbha*.²⁰ The latter matches the title of an already-mentioned *uttaratantra* of the Hevajra cycle, but the contents alluded to here are not seen in the Tibetan translation. This is therefore another lost text. Lastly, in the introduction there is mention of the mythical Ur-text, the *Hevajra* in 500,000 verses styled *Jñānasāgara*.²¹

Conclusion

To conclude, the main points were the following. The *Mahāmudrātilaka* is to date the only exegetical scripture of the *Hevajratantra* that we can consult in the original. It survives in a single manuscript, a late Nepalese copy now kept in Berlin. The text of this *codex unicus* does not match the Tibetan translation exactly; there were therefore at least two recensions of the text. There is no evidence that would place the production of the text any earlier than the late 11th century. The text can be shown to have been influential in East India, its presumed place of birth, as well as in Kashmir, Nepal, and Tibet. Although claiming to be an *uttaratantra* of the Hevajra cycle, its teachings go well beyond the orbit of that text. Its main innovation is what may be called ‘subtle body’ practices, of which it presents a new and updated system. The tone of the text is unapologetically antinomian and gnostic. Sexual practices and a calculated

¹⁶ 6.17ab: *samājādīni tantrāṇi gopitaṃ surateśvari* |.

¹⁷ 5.7cd: *vajramālāmahātantre pūrvaiva kathitaṃ mayā* ||. The *Mahāmudrātilaka* and the Tibetan translation of the *Vajramālābhīdhāna* share large passages. This has been pointed out by Sugiki (2016: 172–181), while Kittay (2020) seems to be unaware of this important instance of intertextuality.

¹⁸ 6.18ab: *saṃvare vātha hevajre na kvacit saṃprakāśitam* |.

¹⁹ 4.2: *mahākūṭe mahātantre prāk sarvaṃ prakāśitam* | *ihāpi cakraṣṭkaṃ ca kathayāmi samāsataḥ* ||.

²⁰ 15.last verse: *dākinīnām kulaṃ cihnaṃ rūpaṃ saṃkṣepato mayā* | *kathitaṃ vistare ’nyatra jñānagarbhādi sundari* ||.

²¹ 1.12ab: *pañcalakṣātmake tantrā hevajre jñānasāgare* |.

transgression of standard purity rules abound; external rites are taught, but the practitioner is exhorted towards internal meditation.

Although the text is noteworthy and certainly merits a more in-depth study, I doubt that at this point a critical edition not profuse with cruces of desperation could be produced. The transmission is quite faulty, the Tibetan does not always mirror helpfully, and the commentators skip entire blocks of text. I nevertheless hope that such an edition and study will be published in the near future.

Appendix: Some noteworthy verses

In this appendix, I shall provide five sample passage from the text so that the reader may form an idea about the contents of the text, its style, and the state in which it is transmitted. While I have kept an eye on the Tibetan translation, I do not point out the numerous differences between the two recensions. My conjectures are somewhat bold, and the translation is in places highly tentative.

The following editorial conventions are used: Ms denotes the manuscript; r and v mark the folios' recto and verso sides, respectively; Ms(pc) and Ms(ac) denote the reading of the manuscript after and before (usually scribal) correction, respectively; *corr.* means correction; *em.* means emendation; and *conj.* means conjecture. The verse numerations are mine; the letters a, b, c, d, e, and f in bold typeface mark verse quarters. Some scribal conventions (gemination, degemination, homorganic nasals) are standardised silently. Due to constraints of space, I have not discussed the features of this peculiar, 'tantric', register of Sanskrit (otherwise styled *aiśa* or *ārṣa*).

Master and disciple examine each other

Ms 2v–3v; cf. *Vajramālābhīdhāna* ch. 2.

vinābhiṣekeṇa phalasya siddhir nāsty ambumanthād iva sarpir astu |
tathābhiṣekeṇa vinātra tantram prakāśayet siddhiyuto 'pi garvāt || 2.5 ||
sa yāti satyaṃ hi guruḥ saśiṣyo vipattimātrān narake sughore |
anu prayatnād abhiṣekahetoḥ sa prārthanīyaḥ kila dhīdhanena || 2.6 || [...]
yathā hiraṇyaṃ tāpādyair yathā ratnaṃ jalādikaḥ |
yathā satyavatī kanyā tathā śiṣyaṃ parīkṣayet || 2.10 ||
tasmāt sarvātmanā bhāvād anyonyaṃ ca parīkṣaṇam |
kartavyam anyathā doṣaṃ bhaved dūreha siddhayaḥ || 2.11 ||
viṣaṃ mantrādibhir yadvat śodhyamānaṃ rasāyanam |
tadvat sekādibhiḥ śiṣyaṃ aśuddhaṃ śuddhimad bhavet || 2.12 ||

Critical notes: **5b** °manthād] *em.* (Tomabechi), °marthanād Ms; **5b** iva] *conj.*, iha Ms; **5d** garvāt] *em.*, gurvāt Ms; **6a** saśiṣyo] *em.*, saśiṣyor Ms; **6b** narake] Ms(pc), tarake Ms(ac); **6c** °hetoḥ] Ms(pc), °hotoḥ Ms(ac); **10c** satyavatī] Ms(pc), savatī Ms(ac); **11b** parīkṣaṇam] Ms(pc), parīkṣaṇam Ms(ac); **12a** viṣaṃ] *em.*, viśan Ms; **12d** bhavet] Ms(pc), bhāvet Ms(ac); **12** verse quoted in the *Guṇabharāṇī* (Sferra 2000: 88)

Without initiation, there is no achievement of the fruit, just as there is no butter from churning water. Thus, whosoever reveals the tantra in this world out of pride, even if [some] supernatural attainments have been realised, that guru, along with his disciple, will go to a most terrifying hell immediately after death. Therefore, a clever man should petition him (i.e., the master) for initiation.²² [...] Just as gold is tried by heating and so on, just like a jewel by water and so forth, just like a maiden whether she's faithful—so should [the master] examine the disciple! Then, with all the attention they can master, they (i.e., master and disciple) should examine each other. Otherwise, there will be sin and there will be no accomplishment. Poison purified by mantras and so forth becomes [the alchemists'] elixir [of gold]. Just so, the disciple purified by initiation etc. from being impure becomes pure.

Against orthodox Buddhists

Ms 17v.

udāragambhīrataraṃ cittaṃ kuryād analpakāḥ |
śrāvakāṇāṃ samaṃ cittaṃ na kartavyaṃ kadācana || 10.10 ||
yasmād abhavyā loke 'sminn ajñānatamasāvṛtāḥ |
tasmād ālāpamātraṃ tu teṣāṃ naiva pradāpayet |
na cāpi bhartsanaṃ teṣāṃ namaskāraṃ tathaiva ca || 10.11 ||

Critical notes: **10c** śrāvakāṇāṃ] *em.*, śāvakāṇāṃ Ms(pc), śāvakāṇāṃ Ms(ac); **11b** °āvṛtāḥ] *em.*, °āvṛtā Ms; **11c** bhartsanaṃ] *conj.* (cf. Tibetan *smad par*), bhūṣaṇam Ms

This worthy one should make his mind most vast and profound, but he should never spare a thought for *śrāvakas*. For they are unworthy in this world, enveloped by the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, one should not grant them a single word, but nor should one scold them, nor should one praise them.

²² This couplet is also quoted by Sa skya Paṇḍita, see Rhoton 2002: 245.

Gathering the nectars

Ms 21r–22v, cf. *Vajramālābhīdhāna* ch. 61.

kramam pañcāmṛtasyeṣṭam kathayāmi samāsataḥ |
vairocanas tathākṣobhyo 'moghasiddhis tathāgataḥ |
amitābhaś ca ratneśaḥ pañcaite jñānalakṣaṇāḥ || 12.1 ||
ratneśo raktam ity uktam amitābhaḥ śukram ucyate |
amoghasiddhir mahāmāṃsam akṣobhyaṃ kuliśodakam |
vairocana ghanam proktam etat pañcāmṛtam param || 12.2 ||
ekānte vijane ramye sarvāyāsavivarjite |
tatrāgāram prakurvīta dvipuṭam dvārasaṃyutam || 12.3 ||
pātāle ekapuram kuryān mūrdhni tasyaiva cāparam |
yathaikaṃ jñāyate loke tathābhijñēna kārayet || 12.4 ||
sādhakas tāvat subhagas tantrajño 'matsaro rjuḥ |
kṛpārasenātividdho viśayāvaraṇojjhitaḥ || 12.5 ||
mahodāro yathā buddhas tathā cottarasādhakāḥ |
rāgavairāgarahitaś codyogī lobhavarjitaḥ |
akrodhī sādaro bhīrur astikaś ca bahuśrutaḥ || 12.6 || [...]
tatas tryakṣaram mantram japen maunasādhakāḥ |
svapne tu tatksaṇā paśyēd yoginīgaṇamaṇḍalam || 12.9 ||
tad dadāty api cādeśam grhāṇemām sukanyakām |
kuru sattvārtham atulam yathā vajradharaḥ svayam || 12.10 ||
kanyāṃ bhavyāṃ viśālākṣīm rūpayauvanamaṇḍitām |
sarāgacittām nirlobhām suratāsavaghūrṇitām || 12.11 ||
śyāmām pīnakucām ramyām nirvikalpām bahuśrutām |
tāvat tām kāmāyēt kanyāṃ yāvad ṛtumatī bhavet || 12.12 ||
punar apy anayā sārḍham samyak suratam ācāret |
tāvad anucāret saukhyaṃ yāvad rajavatī bhavet || 12.13 ||
tatas tu mukhapadmena grhṇīyā dinasaptakam |
sthāpayed ratnavat raktam padmabhāṇḍe sulakṣaṇe || 12.14 ||
dīnatrayasamam yogam abjam vaktreṇa cumbayēt |
punar apy ārabhed yogī prajñopāyātmakam sukham || 12.15 ||
pravṛttibodhakaṃ hṛdyaṃ pātavyam ghanasaṃyutam |
athavā khecaraiḥ sārḍham peyaṃ nityam ajāpayatḥ || 12.16 ||
ahorātram akāṭhinyāt kuryān manthānam uttamam |
yāvac chukravatī kanyā bhavati ratikātarā || 12.17 ||
tāvat ṣkāmān vajreṇaḥ grhītvāmṛtam uttamam |
suvyakte nirmale sthāne sthātavyam padmabhāṇe || 12.18 ||
kṛṣṇapakṣe caturdaśyām aṣṭamyām vā prayatnataḥ |

dhvajenāthavā śastreṇa varṇamadhyād yathāhataḥ || 12.19 ||
nirvyādhikaḥ sukhī śuddhaḥ sukānto yauvanānvitaḥ |
sādhakas tādṛśaṃ yatnāt saptajanmānam ānayet || 12.20 ||
nānāpūjopahāreṇa pūjayet taṃ samāhitaḥ |
tasyottamāṅgam utkr̥tya kārayet padmabhājanam || 12.21 ||
tatraiva pātre madanaṃ pāyayet prajñayā saha |
ghanaṃ kiṃcit svarūpeṇa bhoktavyaṃ siddhihetunā || 12.22 ||
kiṃcit sthāpyaṃ prayatnena padmabhāṇḍe surakṣitam | [etc.]

Critical notes: **1f** pañcaite] *em.*, pañce te Ms(pc), pañce Ms(ac); **3b** °vivarjite] *em.*, °vivarjitam Ms; **5a** sādhas] *em.*, śrāvakas Ms; **5a** subhagas] Ms(pc), subhagaḥ Ms(ac); **5c** °ātividdho] *em.*, °ātividdhau Ms; **6a** °vairāga°] *em.*, °vairāgā° Ms; **6c** bhīrur] *em.*, bhīrūr Ms; **9a** tryakṣaram] *em.*, tryakṣara° Ms; **10a** cādeśaṃ] *em.*, vādeśaṃ Ms; **10b** sukanyakām] *em.*, svakanyakām Ms; **10d** vajradharaḥ] *em.*, vajradhara Ms; **14c** sthāpayed] *em.*, stāpayed Ms; **14c** raktaṃ] *em.*, ratnaṃ Ms; **14d** °bhāṇḍe sulakṣaṇe] *em.*, °bhāṇḍeṣu lakṣaṇe Ms; **15d** prajñopāyātmakaṃ] Ms(pc), praśnapāyātmakaṃ Ms(ac); **16a** °bodhakaṃ] *em.*, °bodhikaṃ Ms; **18c** suvyakte] *em.*, savyakte Ms; **19c** dhvajenāthavā śastreṇa] *em.*, dhvajenātha śastre Ms(pc), vajrenātha śastre Ms(ac); **22c** ghanam] *em.*, ghana Ms

I shall now explain in brief the desired method regarding the five nectars: Vairocana, Akṣobhya, the *tathāgata* Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha, and Ratneśa. These five are characterised as gnosis. Ratneśa is taught to be blood, Amitābha is said to be semen, Amoghasiddhi is great (i.e., human) flesh, Akṣobhya is the water of the scepter (i.e., urine), Vairocana is taught to be faeces—these are the supreme five nectars. In a solitary, unpopulated, lovely area, one free of any affliction, [the initiate] should build a hut with two enclosures and a door. One level should be underground, with the second on top of that, but the clairvoyant one should build it in such a way that people see only one. The practitioner is fortunate, an expert of the tantra, selfless, straightforward, imbued in the zest of compassion, free of the obscuration of the sense objects, generous, and clever²³—and so is his assistant: free of passion and dispassion, zealous and without greed, without anger, respectful, bashful, a believer, and a learned man. [...] Then the practitioner should recite the triple mantra [otherwise] keeping a vow of silence. Soon he will see in a dream the *maṇḍala* of the coven of *yoginīs*.²⁴ And they order him: ‘Take this beautiful

²³ I understand that buddhas here to stand for budhas for metrical reasons.

²⁴ Note that in the parallel text of the *Vajramālābhīdhāna* it is Samantabhadra who appears.

maiden and perform the boundless benefit of sentient beings just like Vajradhara himself!’ The maiden is fortunate, wide-eyed, adorned with beauty and youth, with a passionate heart, but not greedy, drunk with the zest of lovemaking, dark-skinned, with full breasts, enchanting, without [inhibiting] conceptualisations, and learned. He should make love to that girl until her menses arrives. Once again he should make love to her and pursue bliss until her menses flows. Then he should extract [it] with his lotus-mouth and for seven days guard the blood as if it were a precious jewel in a lotus-vessel (i.e., a skull-bowl) with good traits. For three days he should copulate and kiss the lotus and then resume the bliss of Wisdom and Means. He should drink wonderful awakener of the mind (i.e., liquor) mixed with faeces; or he should drink goat’s milk mixed with *khecara* (?). Day and night he should gently perform the supreme churn until the maiden, full of semen, becomes weary of lovemaking. Then [...] taking the supreme nectar, he should place it in a lotus-vessel in a luminous and spotless place. On the 14th of the waning fortnight, or else, on the 8th, the practitioner should bring forth the [corpse of] a seven-born from among the [higher] castes, one killed by a lance or a sword, not by disease, one who had a pleasant life, was pure, handsome, and youthful. Equiposed, he should worship it with various articles of worship. Then he should cut off his superior limb (i.e., the head) and make it into a lotus-vessel. Out of that vessel he should drink liquor in the company of his Wisdom (i.e., the consort). He should also consume a little bit of actual faeces for the sake of accomplishment. He should keep a small portion diligently, well protected in the lotus-vessel. [etc.]

The gaṇacakra

Ms 47r–49r, cf. *Vajramālābhīdhāna* ch. 62.

athānyaṃ gaṇacakrasya vidhānaṃ śṛṇu sundari |
yad rahasyaṃ ca rāmyaṃ ca tatra cakraṃ pravartate || 23.1 ||
sarve ekasamayāḥ sarve saṃkalpavarjitāḥ |
gurubhaktāḥ samādhīstās tyāgādiguṇālaṃkṛtāḥ || 23.2 ||
upāyāḥ sudrśāḥ śuddhā gaṇacakre praveśayet |
anyathā bhaved doṣaś cakraṃ cāpi na sidhyati || 23.3 ||
prajñā-m-upāyasāmānyāḥ sukāntāḥ suvicakṣaṇāḥ |
pañcaviṃśativarṣasthāḥ śeṣāś ca parivarjayet || 23.4 ||
upāyasya prati prajñā anekāḥ sarveṣu śasyate |
prathamam manoharam rāmyam bhāvayet puṣpamaṇḍalam || 23.5 ||

tasyaiva vidhinā pūjāṃ kārayet susamāhitaḥ |
nāyakaṃ sarvabhāvena pūjayet siddhaye khalu || 23.6 ||
gaṇaṃ ca pūjayet paścāt samatādr̥ṣṭibhāvakaḥ |
nāyakas tiṣṭhate yāvad gaṇaṃ cāpi tathaiva ca || 23.7 ||
śāstrādivihitaṃ yatnād ānayed ardharātrake |
saṃpūjyācāryanāthasya āsanopari dāpayet || 23.8 ||
tadyathāhaṃ herukākāraṃ mahāmudrāsamanvitam |
tathaiva vajrācāryaṃ ca mantavyaṃ surateśvari || 23.9 ||
ganacakre kathālāpaṃ vivādaṃ vacanaṃ tathā |
śleṣmādicchoraṇaṃ hāsyāṃ pādādīnāṃ prasāraṇam || 23.10 ||
paunaḥpunyena cothhānaṃ na kuryāt siddhibhājani |
mudrāsanketabhāṣādyaiḥ kuryāt kāryanivedanam || 23.11 ||
vinājñayā nṛtyagītaṃ na kuryād gaṇamaṇḍale |
nāyakasyāgrataḥ pātraṃ ekakhaṇḍaṃ sulakṣaṇam || 23.12 ||
tadabhāvāt trikhaṇḍaṃ ca nānāpuṣpādipūjitaṃ |
vidyābodhakasaṃpūrṇaṃ dhaukayet susamāhitaḥ || 23.13 ||
gaṇasyāpi prthak pātraṃ puṣpādyaiḥ paripūritaṃ |
prathamaṃ mahābaliṃ deyaṃ nānākhādyena saṃyutam || 23.14 ||
tat kuryāt tādr̥ṣaṃ pānaṃ yenānandaṃ na naśyati |
muḥur muḥur namaskṛtya mudrāṃ baddhvā tu pāyayet || 23.15 ||
tataḥ khādyāni sarvāṇi śodhya saṃcārayed gaṇe |
omkārahākārahūmkārair jvalanaṃ bodhanaṃ kramāt || 23.16 ||
śodhanaṃ cāmṛtasyādau kuryāc chāntyādiyogataḥ |
kuṅkumaṃ candanaṃ vīraṃ himaṃ mrgamadaṃ tathā || 23.17 ||
etat pañcāmṛtayutaṃ bhakṣyādyeṣu cārayet |
tadanu krameṇa saṃsthāpya caturdhā parikalpayet || 23.18 ||
anāmāṅguṣṭhayogena vīravīraṃ anukramāt |
āhartavyaṃ svajihvāntaṃ vīraṃ madhye 'pi sarvadā || 23.19 ||
vaktre 'pi vīraṃ vinyasya kuru pūjāṃ manoharāṃ |
ity āha bhagavān śāstā samaya saṃvyavasthitaḥ || 23.20 ||
padmakarṇikayor madhye vīrāṇāṃ āsanaṃ smṛtam |
yadi viro na jānāti vīrāṇāṃ arthanirṇayam |
tasya cakraphalaṃ devi na sidhyati kadācana || 23.21 ||
evaṃ krameṇa yat kiṃcit tad bāhyādhyātmyam ācaret |
tena siddhir bhavet cānyaṃ dākinyā saha darśanam || 23.22 ||
kadācit kṣudradākinyāḥ prekṣārthaṃ praviśanti tāḥ |
tatra tāvad vivādaṃ ca na kuryāt sarvadā budhaiḥ || 23.23 ||
nālāpamātraṃ dātavyaṃ mudrayā svāgataṃ bhavet |
tatrācāryas tu yat kiṃcit kurute bhāṣate svayam || 23.24 ||
athavā sarvakāryāṇi karmavajrī samācaret |

yasmāt svayaṃ vajrasattvaḥ karmavajrī na cāparaḥ || 23.25 ||
nānārūpeṇa yoginyaś cāgacchanti punaḥ punaḥ |
na tatra skhalitaṃ kuryād vīravat kāryaṃ ācaret |
niśiddham apy ācared yaḥ patate tasya vighrahaṃ || 23.26 ||
athānande samutpanne ājñāto nṛtyaṃ ācaret |
tac ca vajrapadaīḥ kuryād yāvat tuṣyanti devatāḥ || 23.27 ||
mātā bhaginī putrī pūjām abhyarthayanti vai |
prajñopāyavidhānena dhaukayed avikalpataḥ || 23.28 ||
āsāṃ prapūjanāt siddhir labhyate nātra saṁśayaḥ |

Critical notes: **1c** ca ramyaṃ] *conj.*, rahasyaṃ Ms; **2b** sarve] Ms(pc), sarva Ms(ac); **2b** °varjitāḥ] Ms(ac), °parivarjitāḥ Ms(pc); **3a** upāyāḥ sudṛśāḥ] *em.*, upāyās ca dṛśāḥ Ms; **4b** sukāntāḥ] *em.*, svakāntāḥ Ms; **5a** prati prajñā] Ms(pc), pratiññāpra° Ms(ac); **5b** sarveṣu] *em.*, sarveṣū Ms; **6c** °bhāvena] *em.*, °bhāveṣu Ms; **6d** siddhaye] Ms(pc), siddhiye Ms(ac); **7c** nāyakas] *em.*, nāyakaṃ Ms; **8cd** °nāthasya āsano°] *em.*, °nāthasyāsano° Ms; **10a** kathālāpaṃ] Ms(pc), kalālāhāpaṃ Ms(ac); **11a** paunaḥpunyena] *em.*, paunaḥpurnyena Ms; **11b** kuryāt] *corr.*, kuryān Ms; **13a** tadābhāvāt] *em.*, tadā bhāvāt Ms; **15b** na naśyati] *conj.*, pranaśyati Ms; **19a** anāmā°] Ms(pc), anā° Ms(ac); **23a** kadācit kṣudra°] Ms(pc), kadācirccūdra° Ms(ac); **23d** budhaiḥ] *em.*, būdhaiḥ Ms; **24a** dātavyaṃ] Ms(pc), dātadyaṃ Ms(ac); **24c** °ācāryas] *em.*, °ācāryan Ms; **25b** karmavajrī] *em.*, karmabīja Ms; **26c** skhalitaṃ] *em.*, khalitaṃ Ms; **27d** devatāḥ] *em.*, devata Ms; **28c** °opāyavidhānena] Ms(pc), °opāyamahāvidhānena Ms(ac)

And now for something else, o beautiful one; hear the rite of the *gaṇacakra*! The circle is to be organised in a place that is secret and pleasant. The Means (i.e., the males) who should be introduced into the *gaṇacakra* all abide by the same pledge, all are without [inhibiting] conceptualisations; they are devoted to the master, stable in meditation, adorned with munificence and the rest, handsome, and pure. Otherwise, there will be sin and the circle will not succeed. The Wisdoms (i.e., the females) should be similar to the Means, enchanting and skilful, twenty-five years old [at most]; the others should be avoided. It is recommended everywhere that each means should have several Wisdoms. First, one should make an enchanting and pleasant *maṇḍala* of flowers. With the same method, equipoised, one should perform the worship. Truly, for the sake of accomplishment, one should worship the Hero (i.e., the central officiant) with full dedication. Then one should worship the assembly cultivating the view of equanimity. The assembly shall remain together as long as the Hero is present. At midnight, one should diligently bring

forth that mentioned in the Teaching etc. (i.e., the mixture of the nectars), and after having worshipped it, one should put it on the throne of the Protector. Just like I, in the shape of Heruka, am together with the Great Seal, so should one view the *vajra*-master, o mistress of amorous play! O receptacle of accomplishment! One should avoid in a *gaṇacakra* idle chit-chat, arguing, recitation, expectorating phlegm etc., laughter, stretching the legs and [arms], as well as getting up again and again. Business should be conducted with gestures, secret code-words, etc. In the *gaṇamaṇḍala*, one should not dance or sing unless instructed so. One should offer in front of the Hero a vessel (i.e., a skull-bowl) made of a single piece with [all] the good traits—or if such is not available, then of three pieces—which should be worshipped with various flowers, etc. and filled with the awakener of consciousness (i.e., liquor). And for all those in the assembly, a vessel [each], filled to the brim with flowers, etc. First, one should offer a great *bali* sacrifice with various kinds of food. Then, one should only drink as much so that his ecstasy is not affected. Bowing to her again and again, one should embrace the consort and give her drink. Then, one should distribute in the assembly all kinds of food that has been well prepared. Enflaming and awakening should be performed with the syllables ‘om’, ‘āḥ’, and ‘hūm’. One should also purify the nectars first, by means of the last and the first (i.e., ‘hūm’ and ‘om’?). Saffron, camphor, hero,²⁵ snow, and musk—these five nectars one should mix into the comestibles, etc. Then, gradually arranging them, one should divide it into four parts. From hero to hero in turn, one should consume it by joining the thumb and the ring-finger, with the tip of the tongue. The Hero in the middle should do likewise. ‘Place hero on the mouth and perform an enchanting worship!’ Thus spoke the Lord, the Teacher, abiding by the pledge. The seat of the heroes is taught to be between the lotus and the filament. If the hero does not know what heroes should (?), o goddess, the fruit of the circle will never come about. Whatever is prescribed in this method, one should perform both within and without. One will obtain accomplishment; moreover, he will meet *ḍākinīs* face to face. Should minor *ḍākinīs* enter to view the proceedings, the wise one should never argue with them. Nor should he speak to them but signal welcome with a gesture. Now, the master acts or speaks himself, or all duties are performed by the *karmavajrin* (i.e., the senior assistant), since the *karmavajrin* is no other than Vajrasattva himself. As for the *yoginīs* in various guises that come there again and again, one should not commit lack of decorum towards them but to everything befitting a hero. As for he

²⁵ ‘Hero’ is a code word for meat, see 13.3b (Ms 24r): *vīraṃ piṣitam ucyate*.

who does something that is forbidden, may punishment be levied against him. If ecstasy arises and one dances—if instructed so—then it should be done with the *vajra*-steps, so that the deities will be pleased. If a mother, a sister, or a daughter wishes to be worshipped, then one should offer it [by uniting] Wisdom and Means, without any [inhibiting] conceptualisation. By worshipping these women, accomplishment is obtained—of this there is no doubt.

The rocana ritual

Ms 51r–52r.

athānyad rocakarmākhyam pravakṣyāmy ādarāc chr̥ṇu |
yena prāśitamātreṇa āśu siddhiḥ pravartate || 24.1 ||
susnigdhaś ca sugandhāṅgaḥ sugandhasvedamaṇḍitaḥ |
satyavādī salajjātmā nimeṣati ciraṃ sadā || 24.2 ||
kṛpāparaḥ kṣāntiyutaḥ mandavādī nirāśrayaḥ |
saptajanmā trijanmā vā yatnenāsau gaveṣayet || 24.3 ||
punyakukto yadā kaścit tasya hastagataṃ bhavet |
prāśyam asyaiva hṛdayāt samastaṃ rocanaṃ śubham || 24.4 ||
grhītvā vidhānena kṛpāṇaḥ puṣṭe madhyagam |
kṛtvā herukamantreṇa kuryāt tilakam uttamam || 24.5 ||
koṭijojanavistāram ūrdhvam utpatate kṣaṇāt |
tena prāśitamātreṇa trailokyajñānavān bhavet || 24.6 ||
yojanānām koṭīśataṃ divārātrau nivartayet |
indravad balavān sāksād divyakāyo bhaven naraḥ |
darśanād drāvayet kāntāḥ sarpiś caiva yathāgninā || 24.7 ||

Critical notes: **1a** °ānyad roca°] *conj.*, °ānyañcraka° Ms; **1d** āśu] *corr.*, āśu | Ms; **2b** nimeṣati] *conj.* (cf. Tibetan *mig ni mi 'dzums pa*), niveṣati Ms; **3b** mandavādī] *conj.* (cf. Tibetan *skad tshig 'jam par smra ba*), satyavādī Ms; **3d** yatnenāsau] *conj.* (cf. Tibetan *'bad pa yis ni*), tasya nāsau Ms; **4c** prāśyam asyaiva] *em.*, prāśya matsyaiva Ms; **5a** vidhānena] Ms(pc), viśuddhena Ms(ac); **7c** drāvayet] *conj.*, bhāvayet Ms; **7c** kāntāḥ] *em.*, kāntām Ms

And now for something else; I shall explain the ritual called *roca*. Listen respectfully! This, as soon as eaten, brings forth supernatural accomplishment. [The initiate] should search diligently for a seven-born or a thrice-born—well-fed, of pleasant body odour, adorned with fragrant sweat, truthful, bashful, blinking only very rarely, compassionate,

enduring, soft-spoken, unattached. If such a meritorious man may come into his hand, [the initiate] should eat all the auspicious *rocana* out of his heart. Taking it into possession according to the rule, placing it in the middle of two †skull-bowls(?)†, empowering it with the mantra of Heruka, he should make a forehead-ornament out of it. He will leap upwards a crore leagues. As soon as he eats it, he will become a knower of the Triple World. He will travel in a day 100 crore leagues; strong as Indra himself, a man will assume a divine body. He will make women melt like butter in the fire—all it takes is a single glance.

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Note: Tibetan canonical translations are marked by the Tōhoku (abbreviated as Tōh.) catalogue number in Ui et al. 1934.

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Different Religion, Same Meditation?
*Meditation as the Heart of Christianity and Buddhism
and the Basis for Dialogue in the Writings
of Thomas Merton and Thích Nhất Hạnh¹*

Abstract

The practice of meditation has become popular in Western countries during the last decades as an Eastern, and predominantly Buddhist, exercise. However, when properly compared, Christian contemplation and Buddhist meditation show numerous similarities. This paper sets out to determine the extent of comparability between these practices of the two traditions and how they are embedded in their respective theoretical frameworks. Additionally, as a further step, it aims to demonstrate how contemplative practice can act as a basis for Buddhist–Christian dialogue. The research centres around the works of two eminent monks of the 20th century, the American Trappist Thomas Merton and the Vietnamese Thiền master Thích Nhất Hạnh. Their work provides an ideal target of analysis, since both were not only widely appreciated members of their respective traditions but also deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue, and thus they had a proper understanding of each other’s tradition. In this paper, the author will first analyse and compare the works of Nhất Hạnh and Merton written on contemplation during approximately the same time to determine what exactly they understand by the terms ‘meditation’ and ‘contemplative prayer’, respectively. Then, their works regarding the other monk’s respective religious tradition will be discussed and compared to see what the two authors select as main avenues of comparison. The main conclusions of the article are that the concepts of meditation and contemplation in Buddhism and Christianity denote strikingly similar exercises, which aim to achieve similar goals despite differences in theoretical formulation. For Merton, Christian contemplation aims to reconnect the believer to God with whom the initial unity was lost through the Fall of Man and the establishment of the ego-self as an entity separate from God. Such contemplation needs to happen in interior solitude and involve a complete self-emptying of the believer to become one with God. Since separation from God through the ego is the fundamental problem of humans, reconnecting to God through contemplation is seen as the highest form of prayer and, indeed, life. In a similar vein,

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for Nhất Hạnh, the fundamental problem of humanity is the misconception of a permanent self, which results in dividing the world into different, separate entities. Thus, for him, similarly to Merton, the goal is to reach a supreme unity beyond distinctions and duality. Moreover, the way to such unity is precisely meditation, which can best unify body and mind and thus bring forth Buddhahood. Then, as the second step, the article presents how Merton and Nhất Hạnh draw parallels between Christianity and Buddhism on the basis of similar contemplation. Merton points to, among others, the connection between God and the absolute Void of Zen, *kenosis* and *śūnyatā*, whereas Nhất Hạnh points to similarities between *nirvāṇa* and the Kingdom of God as well as mindfulness and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the paper provides a thorough analysis of the similarities of meditation practice in Christianity and Buddhism, as practiced by Thomas Merton and Thích Nhất Hạnh, and how these similarities can provide a basis for dialogue between the two religions in modern times.

Keywords: meditation, contemplative prayer, Buddhist–Christian dialogue, interreligious dialogue, mindfulness, Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism, Thomas Merton, Thích Nhất Hạnh

Introduction

Meditation and mindfulness have gained substantial popularity during the last decades in Western, traditionally Christian countries. Part of the populace embraces the practices with curiosity and open arms, while another views them with immense suspicion. No matter the attitude, however, there seems to be an agreement about the ‘Eastern’, mostly Buddhist origin of the practices. This is especially significant in cases of opposition, where one of the most crucial reasons is their embeddedness in an ‘alien religion’. Nevertheless, if one takes a closer look at the Christian practice of contemplative prayer, it quickly becomes evident that in terms of concrete methods of practice, there exists a stark resemblance between it and Eastern meditation practices. Therefore, this paper aims to dive deep into the question of parallels between Buddhist meditation and Christian contemplative prayer to determine if the similarities are indeed substantial, and if so, how the two traditions incorporate a similar practice into their different theoretical frameworks. Additionally, to take the issue a step further, it also explores how the practice can act as a basis of dialogue between the two traditions.

To answer these questions, the research analyses the writings and attitudes of two 20th century monks, the American Trappist Thomas Merton and the Vietnamese Thiền² master Thích Nhất Hạnh. These two monks are ideal targets of

² Thiền Buddhism is the Vietnamese branch of Chinese Chan 禪 Buddhism, which was introduced into the region around the middle of the first millennium CE and has had a unique and complex history since (Soucy 2022: 29–39). It draws its origin from the early Chinese Chan patriarchs and engages in the same key practices as the Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen

analysis, since both were eminent members of their own traditions, while they were also open to dialogue with other religions. Through their travels and personal encounters, they established a deep and proper understanding of the other's tradition, which enabled them to form valid assumptions regarding the other. Moreover, despite the numerous similarities within their approach to contemplation, which will be discussed in detail in the subsequent parts of this paper, it cannot be said that these similarities merely stem from their influence upon each other. In fact, the two monks only met once, in 1966, before which they had no correspondence,³ and the vast majority of Merton's works on contemplation had been written before this meeting. Additionally, as Christopher Pramuk points out, the fundamental sources of Merton's contemplative journey were the Desert Fathers of 3rd–4th century Egypt, along with Russian Orthodox 'sophiology' even before and along with his engagement with Zen Buddhism.⁴ Furthermore, even this engagement was primarily conducted through correspondence with D.T. Suzuki—not Nhất Hạnh. On the other side, the same can be said of Nhất Hạnh's approach to meditation, which was formed by his early years in a Thiền monastery in Vietnam completely rooted in Buddhist tradition. Additionally, his later understanding of Christianity was significantly more formed by other Christians, such as Daniel Berrigan S.J. and cardinal Jean Daniélou S.J. among others, than by Merton. Thus, a comparison of Merton's and Nhất Hạnh's views, which were not tainted by early mutual influence, is warranted.

Certainly, given the eminence and popularity of the two monks, several scholarly works have been written on their respective views and teachings. However, these works mostly focus on either of the two authors and on topics more broad or different than contemplation. Larry Fader provides a thorough analysis of Merton's engagement with Zen presenting all the different ways in which he encountered the religion and wrote about it. Necessarily, Fader touches upon several topics, which will be discussed also in this paper. Nevertheless, he presents them from completely different angles, given his focus on Merton's approach to Zen and the teachings of D.T. Suzuki.⁵ John Dadosky provides a similarly crucial account of Merton's engagement with Zen; however, he places

schools. Drawing on these connections, Thích Nhất Hạnh is often referred to as a Zen master, since Zen became the most widely used term in English literature to denote this tradition of Buddhism. This choice is understandable, especially since Nhất Hạnh himself was significantly influenced by Japanese Zen teachers. Nevertheless, besides keeping the core practices, Chan Buddhism evolved in unique ways in these different countries. Thus for the sake of accuracy, this paper refers to the Vietnamese tradition and its practitioners as Thiền, to the Japanese as Zen, and to the Chinese as Chan.

³ King 2003: 9.

⁴ Pramuk 2008: 67.

⁵ Fader 1979: 230–254.

his focus on the ongoing academic debate involving John Keenan, Robert Sharf, and others, who criticise Merton's understanding of Zen Buddhism through questioning the legitimacy of D.T. Suzuki in conveying the true essence of Zen to the West.⁶ After a thorough analysis, he reaches the conclusion that although neither Merton nor Suzuki would claim a complete understanding of and authority regarding Zen, at the time of their writings, and their postulations of Zen as a living and ever-changing tradition, their views can certainly be accepted as legitimate and their success in interreligious dialogue appreciated. Additionally, the works of Lipski and Pramuk need to be mentioned as well among the significant analyses of Merton's views. Lipski provides a broad account of Merton's engagement with Asia including his encounter with Hinduism along with Buddhism.⁷ Moreover, Pramuk presents a thorough and convincing analysis of how the understanding of Sophia within the works of Russian Orthodox writers influenced Merton's contemplative journey and approach to Zen.⁸ However, all these works focus exclusively on Merton with only occasional mentions of Nhất Hạnh and thus have a scope different than that of the present paper. Works that in parallel discuss both authors number a mere handful. Of these, Robert H. King's seminal book *Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh: engaged spirituality in an age of globalization* stands out in its scope and depth. The book provides a thorough analysis of the life and work of the two monks, focusing on the interplay of contemplation and social action in their. However, its explicit aim is not to objectively analyse the two monks' writings but rather to present a personal take on their work and their influence on King's own practice and spirituality.⁹ Therefore, despite that the topics of the present paper have mostly been touched upon in earlier works, its analysis is unique in two major ways. First, it examines how the practice of contemplation is nested within the theoretical frameworks of the two religions, and second, it explores how the two monks employed similarities in contemplative practice to lay the foundation of engagement with the other religion. Thus, it hopes to augment existing scholarly research along these lines.

The subsequent chapters are organised as follows. First, the paper will provide an analysis of Merton's view on contemplative prayer and its role and place in Christian worship. Then the view of Nhất Hạnh on meditation will be elaborated and a comparison drawn between the two. Afterwards, the views of the two monks on Buddhist–Christian parallels, dialogue, and understanding will be demonstrated and finally a conclusion presented.

⁶ Dadosky 2008: 53.

⁷ Lipski 1983.

⁸ Pramuk 2008: 67–71.

⁹ King 2008: 1–3.

Merton on contemplative prayer

Despite the widespread contemporary impression that meditation is alien to the Christian faith, for Merton it is the very heart of Christian religiosity. Moreover, throughout his works on the topic, he provides a clear demonstration that it is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition.¹⁰ Before turning to his specific views, however, one issue of terminology needs to be clarified. In the present paper, the terms ‘meditation’ and ‘contemplative prayer’ will be used almost interchangeably. The reason for this lies in the fact that this terminological difference stems from choices of translation. Meditation in English and other Western languages became used as the translation for the Sanskrit *dhyāna* and the Chinese *chan* 禪. At the same time, however, the Latin *meditatio* in the Christian tradition denotes a practice different from the meaning of the above terms, namely one concerned with rational discursive thinking, pondering on a particular text or idea. On the other hand, the Latin term *contemplation* and the English terms ‘contemplation’ and ‘contemplative prayer’ refer to a practice or state of mind, highly similar to *chan*, as we will see in the subsequent parts of this essay. Therefore, during the course of this paper, meditation will be used to refer to the Buddhist practice, whereas contemplative prayer will be used to refer to the Christian practice, but they will be regarded as synonyms.

If we then turn to Merton’s understanding of contemplative prayer, as said above, he regards it as the very heart of Christian practice and life. What he understands as contemplative prayer is a direct experience ‘of God’ not mitigated and distracted by any movement of the rational mind. He describes the concrete practice as something happening in ‘interior solitude’. Interior solitude can be achieved next to other people, but physical solitude is something which can facilitate its attainment. As he quotes Matthew 6:6, ‘[b]ut thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret [...]’.¹¹ Moreover, in this solitude, an arduous journey begins, where the believer has to go through a *kenosis*, a self-emptying, in order to experience true contemplation, which is the direct experience of God. For Merton, the journey of contemplative prayer starts with proper theological and biblical knowledge, since Christianity is fundamentally based on the revelation of God. Therefore, to properly start a journey towards God, one needs to be familiar with this revelation. However, an equally significant and potentially even more difficult part of the contemplative way is that the believer needs to supersede the sphere of words and concepts, in fact to supersede their own self, in order not to ‘think

¹⁰ Merton 1996; Merton 1972.

¹¹ Merton 1972: 81–82.

about God' or relate to an 'idea of God' but to experience a connection to Him directly.

Furthermore, this connection should be considered as not even to Him, but rather with Him, in Him, because the reason for why one needs to completely empty or lose oneself in order to experience God is that one can only truly *know* God through Himself. In order to be able to know God through Himself, one has to become one with Him, to lose oneself to the point where, in the words of St Paul, '[i]t is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me'.¹² Alternatively, or even more so, one must lose oneself to the degree that the dual nature of subject and object (i.e., of I and non-I, of I and God) ceases to exist, and every experience arises in the unity of the believer and God. To illustrate this notion, Merton quotes St John of the Cross.

In thus allowing God to work in it, the soul (having rid itself of every mist and stain of creatures, which consists in having its will perfectly united with that of God, for to love is to labour to detach and strip itself for God's sake of all that is not God) is at once illumined and transformed in God, and God communicates to it His supernatural being in such wise that the soul appears to be God Himself, and has all that God Himself has. [...] All the things of God and the soul are one in participant transformation; and the soul seems to be God rather than the soul, and is indeed God by participation.¹³

Therefore, contemplation is inevitably the highest form of prayer, since at its fulfillment it means direct contact, or rather complete unification, with God.

Theological background of contemplation

This view of prayer, and the ultimate goal of a believer during this lifetime, rests within Merton's understanding of humanity, the world, and the history of Salvation. Therefore, to properly understand it, one needs to see these views. For Merton, humans 'have' two distinct selves: an external 'ego-self' and an internal 'deep transcendent self'.¹⁴ This duality, then, lies at the heart of all problems that humans face on Earth, since it appeared with the Fall of Man. In Merton's view, the original state of Adam and Eve in Eden was in complete unity with God. They accepted the world as created, a complete gift of God, and in this reality, it also 'belonged' to them in their unity with God. Then, acquiring knowledge of good and evil was primarily not a moral choice but the very moment of division

¹² Merton 1972: 5. Quoting St Paul's letter to the Galatians 2:20.

¹³ Merton 1968: 119.

¹⁴ Merton 1972: 7.

from God. The Fall essentially means the establishment of the 'ego-self', which can reflect on itself and relate to the 'objects' of the world from the point of view of a 'subject', and in so doing, it casts itself out from the original unity with God.

Now all the problems of humanity arise from the fact that humans were created to live in unity with God and therefore crave this unity and a return to the original paradisaical state, where the inner transcendent self is one with God and thus 'eternal' and 'real'. However, instead of trying to return to God through finding and uncovering the transcendent self, humans aim to render the ego-self real and unchanging. This, however, is a completely futile endeavour, since by nature it is only an illusion, and therefore no possessions or worldly attributes can make it real.

Hence, for Merton, contemplative prayer is essentially a '[r]ecovery of Paradise'.¹⁵ It aims to let the illusory ego-self go through tedious work in internal solitude and, after a complete emptying of the ego, to let God reach out to the transcendent self and unite it back to the state of oneness with God. This would not yet be the state of Heaven, which would be a new creation, but the recovery of the initial state of man on Earth, completely united with God, which is the highest form of living this life.

Finally, what needs to be highlighted regarding Merton's view of contemplation is that at its basis it is one particular form of prayer, one separate activity in the life of the believer. However, its fulfilment is a 'contemplative life' a 'life of prayer', where the whole life of the practitioner is lived in the state of contemplative unity with God in all their daily activities.

Contemplation in Church history

A feature that immediately stands out in Merton's treatment of contemplative prayer is the long ecclesial tradition within which he situates the question. All of his analyses, and especially the *Contemplative prayer*, which is a systematic discussion of the issue, are full of quotations from earlier saints and Church Fathers. Clearly, at the time of writing, 'mystical' or contemplative religiosity was not regarded as mainstream in Christian faith, and thus situating it within Church history provided legitimation for the practice. Additionally, for a later reader, it also provides clarity regarding the practice, since it highlights the inspirations for Merton's own analysis. Therefore, a short overview of his sources is warranted.

¹⁵ Merton 1968: 117.

Merton dates the inception of solitary prayer from the instances in which Jesus ascended mountains alone to pray to God. Afterwards, Merton highlights practitioners of this tradition throughout Church history. From the Apostles, he frequently quotes St Paul saying that it is no longer he that lives but rather that it is Christ that lives in him, or St Peter and St John, highlighting that through Christ humans can take part in the divine nature.¹⁶

Following the Apostolic age, his most important early sources of contemplative prayer are the Desert Fathers of 3rd–4th century Egypt, especially Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian. Their writings are relevant to Merton's argumentation in two ways. First the essential goal and second the concrete methods of prayer are both highly similar to Merton's understanding of contemplative prayer. When talking about the Desert Fathers, Merton introduces a concept that he draws from the mystics of the Eastern Church but relates to the Sinai tradition as well. It is the 'prayer of the heart', which expresses the essence of contemplative prayer and meditation. In his words, '[b]y "prayer of the heart" we seek God himself present in the depths of our being and meet him there by invoking the name of Jesus in faith, wonder and love'.¹⁷ Here one can already find the themes highlighted above, namely that this kind of prayer is 'meeting' God and meeting Him within the depths of our own being. Then, from the Desert Fathers' texts, Merton quotes their description of this kind of prayer. Here, the most important themes are silence and superseding the senses on the journey of meeting God. Merton quotes Father Ammonas on silence.

Behold, my beloved, I have shown you the power of silence, how thoroughly it heals and how fully pleasing it is to God. Wherefore I have written to you to show yourselves strong in this work you have undertaken, so that you may know that it is by silence that the saints grew, that it was because of silence that the power of God dwelt in them, because of silence that the mysteries of God were known to them.¹⁸

Then, regarding the journey of meeting God within oneself, Merton quotes Evagrius.

[W]hen the understanding, in ardent love for God, begins bit by bit to go forth from the flesh and casts aside all thoughts that come from the senses, the memory or the temperament, while at the same time being filled with respect and joy.¹⁹

¹⁶ Merton 1968: 39–40.

¹⁷ Merton 1996: 30–31.

¹⁸ Merton 1996: 42.

¹⁹ Merton 1996: 48.

Thus, one can see that for two of the most important aspects of contemplative prayer, silence and overcoming the knowledge of senses, the Desert Fathers are already a significant source for Merton.

Then, after the Desert Fathers, followers of the neo-Platonic line of thought provide crucial references for Merton. St Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite are some of his most-quoted thinkers on the approach that the journey towards 'meeting' God has to go through a 'night', which is darkness for the senses but is the true light of God.²⁰

Following the early Middle Ages, the next important group of quoted authors are the Rhineland mystics of the 13th–14th century, especially Meister Eckhart but also his student Johannes Tauler. The notion that Merton quotes from them is complete self-emptying, 'complete poverty', which the believer has to attain in order to fully let God act in him. In the words of Eckhart,

If it is the case that man is emptied of all things, creatures, himself and god, and if god could still find a place in him to act. . . this man is not poor with the most intimate poverty. For God does not intend that man should have a place reserved for him to work in since true poverty of spirit requires that man shall be emptied of god and all his works so that if God wants to act in the soul he himself must be the place in which he acts. . . . (God takes then) responsibility for his own action and (is) himself the scene of the action, for God is one who acts within himself.²¹

Finally, the last group of ecclesial authors on whom Merton draws in his analysis are the Spanish mystics of the 16th century, St John of the Cross and Teresa of Ávila. He quotes the views of St John of the Cross on the night of senses, similarly to the texts of Eckhart, but also on the concrete experience of 'meeting' God in self-emptying as a flame of love.

How can we say that this flame wounds the soul, when there is nothing in the soul to be wounded, since it is wholly consumed by the fire of love? It is a marvelous thing: for, as love is never idle, but is continually in motion, it is continually throwing out sparks, like a flame, in every direction; and, as the office of love is to wound, that it may enkindle with love and cause delight, so, when it is as it were a living flame, within the soul, it is ever sending forth its arrow-wounds, like most tender sparks of delicate love, joyfully and happily exercising the arts and wiles of love. [...] Wherefore these wounds, which are the playing of God, are the sparks of these tender touches of flame which touch the soul intermittently

²⁰ Merton 1996: 81.

²¹ Merton 1968: 9.

and proceed from the fire of love, which is not idle, but whose flames, says the stanza, strike and wound my soul in its deepest center.²²

Thus, we can see that for Merton the most central ideas of contemplative prayer (i.e., silence, solitude, the arduous journey through the night of senses, self-emptying, and experiencing God through transcending the everyday self) fit neatly into the long tradition of Christian mystics and constitute a perfectly orthodox and central aspect of Christian religiosity, even if at the time it was regarded as being far from mainstream. In the subsequent chapter we will see Thích Nhất Hạnh's notion of meditation, compared to the understanding of Merton.

Nhất Hạnh's understanding of meditation and its comparison

After introducing Merton's view of contemplation, the most natural way to turn to Nhất Hạnh's understanding is through comparison. Certainly, when comparing the two approaches, we have to see the differences in the backgrounds of the two authors, such as the time and the audience when and for whom they were writing. Merton wrote his books on contemplative prayer during the late 1950s and 1960s, when both progressive and conservative Christians were more focused on active rather than contemplative sides of their faith. Therefore, when introducing contemplation, he had to write an apologetic work, which could prompt acceptance for the practice within the Church. Therefore, his treatment of the topic is focused predominantly on theology. Through quoting eminent members of Church history, he aims to provide an acceptable basis of understanding for skeptical readers. For similar reasons, he is exceedingly precise in terminology and conscious about formulating arguments that can be widely accepted. Consequently, he does not aim to provide concrete methods of contemplation either. Within his books on the topic, he provides only one mention of meditation methods, solely to state that there are other books that deal with these questions.

Thích Nhất Hạnh, however, was in a markedly different situation when he wrote about meditation. As a Thiền master, for him, or his audience, it was never a question that meditation is something completely essential to religious practice. Additionally, as he was a Thiền master, the *experience* of meditation was more central to his arguments about the usefulness of the practice than any theoretical argumentation. Finally, the time of writing can also be regarded as essential. Nhất Hạnh died more than 50 years later after Merton, passing in

²² Merton 1996: 86.

2022. Therefore, the way he approached the issue and even the topics handled were markedly different from those in Merton's books from the 1950s, given the difference in social and political environments. Nevertheless, to mitigate this distinction, this paper focuses on his first book in English, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, which was published in 1975, relatively close to the publishing of Merton's works.

However, even these few decades of distance already mean a changed environment regarding knowledge of contemplation and meditation. Coupled with the fact that as a Thiền master Nhất Hạnh never had to justify his focus on meditation, in his works, we do not find extensive quotations of eminent monks to support his argument, as we have seen in the case of Merton. At the beginning of *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, he refers to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*,²³ in which the Buddha explains how to use concentration on one's breath to achieve mindfulness, and then simply proceeds with methods and guidance.²⁴

Thus, there exist multiple differences in the two monks' approaches, but there are also several similarities, which will be highlighted in the subsequent parts of this chapter. The most evident differences are Nhất Hạnh's concrete suggestions for meditation practice. In the tradition of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, his main teaching is to use breathing to achieve mindfulness.

Our breath is the bridge from our body to our mind, the element which reconciles our body and mind and which makes possible one-ness of body and mind. Breath is aligned to both body and mind and it alone is the tool which can bring them both together, illuminating both and bringing both peace and calm.²⁵

He provides multiple methods, including counting one's breath, breathing deeply while lying down, and counting breaths while walking.

As for similarities, they appear chiefly among the theoretical considerations of mindfulness. As Nhất Hạnh claims in the sole clearly theoretical passage of his book,

Dispersed mind is also mind, just as waves rippling in water are also water. When mind has taken hold of mind, deluded mind becomes true mind. True mind is our real self, is the Buddha: the pure one-ness which cannot be cut up by the illusory divisions of separate selves, created by concepts and language. But I don't want to say a lot about this.²⁶

²³ Throughout the present paper, Indic Buddhist terms are provided mostly in Sanskrit. However, in certain cases when other versions are more relevant, those are given. In his book, Thích Nhất Hạnh refers explicitly to the Pāli version of the text, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, so that is mentioned here as well.

²⁴ Thích Nhat Hanh 2008: 7.

²⁵ Thích Nhat Hanh 2008: 23.

²⁶ Thích Nhat Hanh 2008: 42.

Apparently, he does not find elaboration on theoretical issues useful within the framework of the book. However, when compared to Merton's writings, even this short passage provides useful insights for comparison. Additionally, one can also find theoretical points scattered in other parts of the book as well, so a broad framework can be pieced together.

The first similar point is the question of a real self, in relation to mind and body. As highlighted earlier, for Merton, ego-self and transcendent self are on a different axis than soul/mind and body. Therefore, both selves can be related to both body and mind and need to be understood beyond them. If we look at the last two quoted sections of Nhất Hạnh, we can discern a similar perception. When mind and body are united through breath, that is the moment when mind takes hold of mind and becomes true mind. This 'true mind[, then,] is our real self, is the Buddha'.²⁷ Thus, for Nhất Hạnh, similarly to Merton, when we become our true self, we become the Buddha, and he interprets this true self as 'pure one-ness', just as Merton interprets this true self as complete unity of the believer and God. Finally, in this short passage, Nhất Hạnh describes this oneness as something that 'cannot be cut up by the illusory divisions of separate selves, created by concepts and language', which is strikingly similar to Merton's understanding of the final contemplative experience beyond words, where all problems created by the duality of the Fall cease to exist.

If one turns to other sections of Nhất Hạnh's book, even more similarities appear. He writes that:

[T]hus mindfulness is at the same time a means and an end, the seed and the fruit. When we practice mindfulness in order to build up concentration, mindfulness is a seed. But mindfulness itself is the life of awareness: the presence of mindfulness means the presence of life, and therefore mindfulness is also the fruit.²⁸

This is exactly how Merton describes contemplation, as both the way and the end itself.

Finally, the perception of individual self is strikingly similar in the works of the two authors as well. Both of them regard it as the fundamental source of suffering in the world.

People normally cut reality into compartments, and so are unable to see the interdependence of all phenomena. To see one in all and all in one is to break through the great barrier which narrows one's perception of reality, a barrier which Buddhism calls the attachment to the false view of self. Attachment to the false view of self means belief in the presence of unchanging entities which exist

²⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh 2008: 42.

²⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh 2008: 14–15.

on their own. To break through this false view is to be liberated from every sort of fear, pain, and anxiety.

We have to strip away all the barriers in order to live as part of the universal life. A person isn't some private entity traveling unaffected through time and space as if sealed off from the rest of the world by a thick shell. [...] In our lives are present a multitude of phenomena, just as we ourselves are present in many different phenomena. We are life, and life is limitless.²⁹

These views resemble Merton's understanding of the Fall of Man and the establishment of the ego-self, as well as his view on how one necessarily needs to become closer to fellow humans on the way to God, since if God lives in all persons, then to be completely one with God the person has to become one with all other humans as well. Certainly, other parallels could be highlighted as well between the books on meditation, but after this initial part, it is time to see how the two monks themselves compare Buddhism and Christianity in their works.

Views on the other religion

After discussing how Merton and Thích Nhất Hạnh understands meditation, we can now turn to the second part of the paper to see how the two eminent monks aim to establish a dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism on the basis of their deep understanding of meditation and contemplative prayer. Given their openness to other traditions, both monks wrote at least one book discussing the compatibility of Buddhist and Christian thought. Merton's *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* is partly a set of his own essays and partly the accounts of his correspondences with D.T. Suzuki on the topic, and the result is a stunning text in which both authors aim to draw parallels between the very essence of the two traditions. Moreover, Nhất Hạnh's *Living Buddha, Living Christ* is an equally stunning account that touches upon some of the theoretical points raised by Merton's book, but it is unique in terms of the ease with which Nhất Hạnh connects the two traditions from a practitioner's point of view.³⁰ The subsequent part of this essay will be an analysis of the two books, organised on a thematic basis.

First, what has to be highlighted here again is the difference of circumstances in which the two books were published. *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* was published in 1968, only a few decades after D.T. Suzuki's first books in English, which presented the Zen tradition in a truly authentic and accessible way for the first time in the West. Therefore, Merton's in-depth response to Suzuki's work constitutes an early discussion of the topic from a Western monastic author, and

²⁹ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2008: 48–49.

³⁰ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2007.

it is therefore highly cautious and precise in its terminology and approach. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, on the other hand, was published in 1995, at a time when analyses of Buddhist–Christian relations had already developed a history and Nhất Hạnh himself had been living in a Christian environment for multiple decades.

Second, when discussing the comparative approach of the two monks, it has to be highlighted that Buddhism upholds a tendency to incorporate elements of other religions in its argumentation when engaging them, if they can be useful to expound its own insights, as amply demonstrated by Makransky's 2003 article.³¹ Conversely, for a Christian monk, it would be less conventional to adopt such an approach. Therefore, besides the different environments, this traditional tendency has also certainly influenced Nhất Hạnh's way of comparing the two religions, rendering it significantly more free to the point that he drew parallels with striking ease. Despite these differences, however, or maybe because of them, a comparison might indeed prove to be fruitful.

Comparison of approaches

After the previous discussion about the centrality of meditation and contemplation for both authors, it is no wonder that in their treatment of the comparability of the two religions, their contemplative essence comes to the fore. Merton's description of this choice is entirely illuminating. He highlights that both Christianity and Buddhism can be understood in multiple ways. The first, most evident one is to approach them as the institutional and cultural forms that they developed during the numerous centuries of their existence. In this sense, we could compare rituals, architecture, art, and many other paraphernalia of Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity with those of Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhism, which would be further complicated by specific geographical and temporal occurrences. However, as Merton claims, this would only lead to confusion and the highlighting of differences that are due to cultural specificities and are less the essence of the two traditions.

Therefore, what Merton proposes to do is to start a dialogue in a field that can relevantly be compared. He considers three options.

First, on the plane of mysticism and mystical experience. This may at first sight appear the most fruitful, but it is complicated by theological problems on the Christian side and by an absence of theological content which would offer material for comparison on the Buddhist side. Second there is the ethical level: Buddhist

³¹ Makransky 2003: 334–361.

compassion is compared with Christian charity. But since Christian charity is a theological virtue, the same problem arises again here—the discussion takes place on two levels which fail to meet. Finally there is the plane of metaphysics. Here it would seem that a meeting is possible.³²

Thus, in Merton's view, mystical experiences, despite at first sight exhibiting similarities, are difficult to compare given the different theological languages in which they are being expressed. The degree of similarity holds true for ethics as well. However, metaphysics, especially the notion of *nirvāṇa* related to Christian concepts, can be a proper field of comparison. As we will see later, Merton also engages in comparing the first two categories, but his preference for metaphysics warrants the discussion to start by examining the similarities with that topic. At the outset, it is instrumental to also highlight that Merton chooses to examine the concept within the auspices of Zen, which he conceives as a method to reach ultimate reality beyond concepts and which thus can be a proper object of interfaith comparison.

Nirvāṇa from a Christian point of view

For Merton, *nirvāṇa* can be very easily interpreted in line with Christianity through the works of Christian mystics, who were also quoted above. He interprets it in close relation to his understanding of the Fall of Man in Christianity. As he states,

Buddhism and Biblical Christianity agree in their view of man's present condition. Both are aware that man is somehow not in his right relation to the world and to things in it, or rather, to be more exact, they see that man bears in himself a mysterious tendency to falsify that relation, and to spend a great deal of energy in justifying the false view he takes of his world and of his place in it.³³

In Christianity, this false view is the notion of ego-self, which distorts the relationship between humans and God. In Merton's view, *nirvāṇa* points to a similar direction. Described through Buddhist terminology, humans are in a state of ignorance (*avidyā*) about the true nature of reality and themselves and particularly of the impermanence of all phenomena. This ignorance, which treats impermanent things as permanent, causes the state of suffering (*duḥkha*). This suffering is at a deeper level than that which one could rationally grasp, since it stems from the idea of a permanent self. Therefore, even if the self *desires*

³² Merton 1968: 80.

³³ Merton 1968: 82.

to reach *nirvāṇa*, it continues to suffer, because the very act of *desiring* by an 'illusory' ego is the root cause of suffering. Merton connects this to St Paul's notion of the ultimate powerlessness of the person without God.

I desire to do what is right and yet what I do is wrong. I cordially agree with the Law of God in my inner self, but I find another law in my members which contradicts the law of my mind and makes me a prisoner to sin (untruth, brokenness, wilful delusion, culpable distortion of values). [...] Unfortunate wretch that I am, who will liberate me from this living death? God, by His grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord.³⁴

From a Buddhist standpoint, to attain *nirvāṇa*, one has to supersede any activity of the ego-self. This is the cessation of thirst (*taṇhā*) and attainment of *nirvāṇa* in the realisation that it is not a 'place' 'somewhere else' but the right understanding of reality, in which *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are the same. In Merton's view, this understanding is very close to the Christian notion that the Kingdom of God can be experienced in this world, if one is united in contemplation with God. This parallel understanding of the state of man and the nature of a solution provides a solid foundation in Merton's view for further dialogue. As he puts it,

When the purity of this Buddhist metaphysic has been duly appreciated, there may be grounds for a serious discussion, with Buddhists, of the idea of God—when Absolute Reality is also Absolute Person (but never object).³⁵

Contemplation as connection for Merton

Following the above metaphysical groundwork, Merton proceeds to highlight similarities in the field of the broad topic of this paper, namely contemplation. Within this field, he highlights two similarities. The first is the question of 'who is having the transcendental experience?' and the second, relatedly, the superseding of the ego-self. As for the first, Merton shows that for both traditions, the final stage of spiritual journey is transcendent unity. From a Christian point of view, it is participation 'in the mind of Christ'. As Merton describes it,

[i]t is a kenotic transformation, an emptying of all the contents of the ego-consciousness to become a void in which the light of God or the glory of God, the full radiation of the infinite reality of His Being and Love are manifested.³⁶

³⁴ Merton 1968: 84.

³⁵ Merton 1968: 85.

³⁶ Merton 1968: 75.

Here, Merton deliberately uses terms that are close to Buddhist terminology as well. The mind of Christ resembles the mind of the Buddha, and kenotic transformation is *emptying* to become *void*, which are both central notions of Zen descriptions. Subsequently, he also quotes Meister Eckhart, to phrase it 'in perfectly orthodox and traditional Christian terms'. 'In giving us His love God has given us His Holy Ghost so that we can love Him with the love wherewith He loves Himself. We love God with His own love; awareness of it deifies us'.³⁷ Then, he says that this description was quoted with approval by D.T. Suzuki and comparable to *prajñā* wisdom in Buddhism.

Subsequently, when discussing the same notion in Buddhism, he states that the practitioner's aim is to realise itself as the enlightened Buddha mind, where there is no separate self, since as long as one has a notion of having crossed to the other shore, one has crossed nothing, because in the 'Absolute Ground-Consciousness of the Void, [...] there are no shores'.³⁸ Therefore, he draws a conclusion of parallel understandings.

Thus the Buddhist enters into the self-emptying and enlightenment of Buddha as the Christian enters into the self-emptying (crucifixion) and glorification (resurrection and ascension) of Christ. The chief difference between the two is that the former is existential and ontological, the latter is theological and personal.³⁹

As for the point of superseding the ego-self, it follows directly from the first. In Merton's words,

This explains why in all these higher religious traditions the path to transcendent realization is a path of ascetic self-emptying and 'self-naughting' and not at all a path of self-affirmation, of self-fulfillment, or of 'perfect attainment'.⁴⁰

Finally, what highlights even more the breadth in which he regards contemplation as the basis for connection between the two traditions is his analysis of Zen art. He finds the ultimate meaning of, and way to connect with, Japanese art in its nature deeply integrated with Zen contemplation. As he puts it,

In particular, it is the function of the beautiful to be, so to speak, an epiphany of the Absolute and formless Void which is God. It is an embodiment of the

³⁷ Merton 1968: 75.

³⁸ Merton 1968: 76.

³⁹ Merton 1968: 76.

⁴⁰ Merton 1968: 76.

Absolute mediated through the personality of the artist, or perhaps better his 'spirit' and his contemplative experience.⁴¹

Here again, he draws the parallel between the 'Void' and 'God', which can be reached through contemplation. Additionally, he interprets the tea ceremony as 'almost liturgical', where the spirit of host and guest become one, and 'art, spiritual experience and communal, personal relationships enter together into an expression of God in His world'.⁴² Together with its simplicity (*wabi* 侘), which Merton highlights as parallel to the purity and simplicity of early Cistercian architecture, he claims that these Japanese art forms can be of interest to monastics everywhere through their insights into contemplation and purity.

Contemplation as connection for Nhất Hạnh

Similarly to Merton, contemplation, or the direct experience or 'touch' of ultimate reality, serves as the most significant basis to connect the two religions for Thích Nhất Hạnh as well. Due to its size and later publication, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* encompasses more areas of comparison than *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. Nevertheless, there are numerous similar points to be found. Therefore, this chapter will first highlight the parts that are closely related between the two books and then elaborate on the parts that are unique to Nhất Hạnh's analysis.

The central point of Nhất Hạnh's book, as its title also highlights, is the perception that at the heart of the two religions, there exist the living Buddha and the living Christ and that the essence of religious practice lies in maintaining a connection to the ultimate reality of Buddha and Christ and manifesting that connection in the way we live on this Earth. To refer to this connection to the transcendent, and in an attempt to provide a name to that 'transcendent experience' that is also crucial for Merton, Nhất Hạnh coins the term *touch*, giving it a new meaning. He talks about *touching* the living Buddha and the living Christ in our own self, when he refers to the experience of direct connection to the transcendent beyond rational comprehension. This new term, then, enables him to talk about the practice of this experience and its benefits in very natural ways. Overall, what one has to highlight about this book (and about Nhất Hạnh's works in general) is its striking simplicity, directness, and practicality, which aim to achieve results in its audience and not establish complex theories.

⁴¹ Merton 1968: 90.

⁴² Merton 1968: 90–91.

Certainly, these are the texts of a peace activist and Thiền monk who above all focuses on the essence.

Consequently, then, the book consists of short, one-to-two-page-long essays on specific questions, which range from mindful eating to the Eucharist and the *dharmakāya*. The first essays are more practical, whereas the later ones are more theoretical, so the present analysis of Nhất Hạnh's arguments will follow a reverse order in order to relate to Merton's points more easily.

The first, foundational insight, similar to Merton's notion of the unity of the believer and God, is the nonduality of ultimate reality. After elaborating the meaning of 'the other shore' and *nirvāṇa*, Nhất Hạnh draws a parallel with the Kingdom of God.

Jesus pointed to that same reality of no-birth, no-death. He called it the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not something distinct from God, whom he called Abba, 'Father'. Just as the concept 'other shore' can create the misunderstanding that the other shore is not this shore, the concept 'Father' can also be misleading. For instance, feminists in our time ask why 'Father' and not 'Mother'? Eternal life is the kind of life that includes death. In fact, eternal life without death is not possible. It is like two sides of a coin. Eternal life is the whole coin. Noneternal life is just one side of the coin. Once you choose eternal life, you choose death as well, and both are life. But if you want to take only one side of the coin, you have no coin.⁴³

As a logical next step, he again highlights the need to supersede concepts. 'Things cannot be described by concepts and words. They can only be encountered by direct experience'. Moreover, in a Christian context, '[t]heologians have spent thousands of years talking about God as one representation. This is called onto-theology, and it is talking about what we should not talk about'.⁴⁴

However, similarly to Merton, he also points out that 'direct experience' can lead to *nirvāṇa* or the Kingdom of God here and now.

Some waves on the ocean are high and some are low. Waves appear to be born and to die. But if we look more deeply, we see that the waves, although coming and going, are also water, which is always there. [...] Enlightenment for a wave is the moment the wave realizes that it is water. At that moment, all fear of death disappears. If you practice deeply, one day you will realize that you are free from birth and death, free from many of the dangers that have been assaulting you. [...] Smiling, you will understand that you do not have to abandon this world in order to be free. You will know that nirvana, the Kingdom of Heaven, is available here and now.⁴⁵

⁴³ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 143.

⁴⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 139–140.

⁴⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 138.

He also adds that we can find God and the Buddha within ourselves. ‘We hear repeatedly that God is within us. To me, it means that God is within our consciousness. Buddha nature, the seed of mindfulness, is in the soil of our consciousness’.⁴⁶ Here again, he speaks about God and Buddha nature as closely similar concepts with ease.

Expanding on this similarity, he highlights that ‘direct experience’ and letting the ‘seed of mindfulness’ grow is completely possible. Moreover, the way to it is contemplative practice, which is at the heart of both traditions. ‘Christian contemplation includes the practice of resting in God, which, I believe, is the equivalent of touching nirvana’.⁴⁷ Thus, Nhất Hạnh arrives to the same conclusion as Merton that at the fundamental level beyond concepts, unity with God and attaining *nirvāṇa* can be conceived of as equivalent notions. Then, from this point, it is possible to speak about meditation and contemplation as parallels.

Hence, at other parts of the book, he introduces Buddhist and Christian meditation practices as parallels. One of the first such practices is the ‘Recollection of the Buddha’ (Buddhānussmṛti), where ‘invoking these holy names, the practitioners’ minds should be filled with the wholesome qualities of these Buddhas and bodhisattvas’.⁴⁸ Right after this, he draws the parallel with reciting the name of Jesus.

Saint Macarius said, ‘There is no other perfect meditation than the saving and blessed name of our Lord Jesus Christ dwelling without interruption in you’. This practice is called by Christians ‘interior recollection’ (equivalent to the Sanskrit anusmṛti, and the Pali anussati).⁴⁹

As for stillness, as a prerequisite to ‘touching’ ultimate reality, and the way it is possible beyond the self, he again draws parallels.

In the Psalms, it says, ‘Be still and know that I am God’. ‘Be still’ means to become peaceful and concentrated. The Buddhist term is samatha (stopping, calming, concentrating). ‘Know’ means to acquire wisdom, insight, or understanding. The Buddhist term is vipasyana (insight, or looking deeply). ‘Looking deeply’ means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 155.

⁴⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 154.

⁴⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 163.

⁴⁹ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 166.

⁵⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 10–11.

What is even more striking, however, is the ease with which he draws parallels among seemingly diverging concepts. The first such parallel is between mindfulness and the Holy Spirit.

To me, mindfulness is very much like the Holy Spirit. Both are agents of healing. When you have mindfulness, you have love and understanding, you see more deeply, and you can heal the wounds in your own mind. The Buddha was called the King of Healers. In the Bible, when someone touches Christ, he or she is healed. It is not just touching a cloth that brings about a miracle. When you touch deep understanding and love, you are healed.⁵¹

This comparison, again, is close to the notion of contemplation. In Christian terms, the point of contemplative practice is exactly to prepare the practitioner to be able to let God work in them through the Holy Spirit. From a Buddhist standpoint, '[m]indfulness is the substance of a Buddha', the essence of meditation.⁵²

The second such comparison is between the Eucharist and mindful eating.

In Christianity, when we celebrate the Eucharist, sharing the bread and the wine as the body of God, we do it in the same spirit of piety, of mindfulness, aware that we are alive, enjoying dwelling in the present moment. [...] When a priest performs the Eucharistic rite, his role is to bring life to the community. The miracle happens not because he says the words correctly, but because we eat and drink in mindfulness. Holy Communion is a strong bell of mindfulness. [...] If we allow ourselves to touch our bread deeply, we become reborn, because our bread is life itself. Eating it deeply, we touch the sun, the clouds, the earth, and everything in the cosmos. We touch life, and we touch the Kingdom of God. When I asked Cardinal Jean Daniélou if the Eucharist can be described in this way, he said yes.⁵³

Here again, the connection between the two religions is contemplation, being present to the reality of God within the Eucharist in the practice of eating mindfully.

Hence, given all of these connections that can be established between the two religions in the view of Nhất Hạnh, it is no wonder that he closes *Living Buddha, Living Christ* with a strong call to appreciate both traditions and engage in dialogue.

Buddhists and Christians alike, in dialogue, want to recognize similarities as well as differences in their traditions. It is good that an orange is an orange and a

⁵¹ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 14–15.

⁵² Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 15.

⁵³ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 30–31.

mango is a mango. The colors, the smells, and the tastes are different, but looking deeply, we see that they are both authentic fruits. Looking more deeply, we can see the sunshine, the rain, the minerals, and the earth in both of them. Only their manifestations are different. Authentic experience makes a religion a true tradition. Religious experience is, above all, human experience. If religions are authentic, they contain the same elements of stability, joy, peace, understanding, and love. The similarities as well as the differences are there. They differ only in terms of emphasis. Glucose and acid are in all fruits, but their degrees differ. We cannot say that one is a real fruit and the other is not.⁵⁴

Conclusion

To conclude, the paper aims to demonstrate that meditation and contemplative practice can be found within both traditional Buddhist and Christian religiosity. In Buddhism, especially its *Thiền* school, the presence of these practices is clear. However, Thomas Merton's work highlights that they can be regarded as a central part of Christian religiosity as well. Additionally, as the analysed writings of the two monks demonstrate, despite stark differences in theoretical formulation, the practice of contemplation and its main goals share numerous similarities within the two traditions.

The need for contemplative practice arises from the assessment of humans' state in the world, which is perceived as deeply flawed by both traditions in their clinging to an illusory 'ego'. For Merton, this is formulated in a theological language, stating that the Fall of Man cast out humans from their original state of unity with God through establishing a self-reflective ego that perceives itself as separate from God and other 'objects' of cognition. This results in a brokenness of human life, which people aim to mend through 'wrapping' the illusory ego into fame and possessions to make it appear real and unchanging. Nevertheless, for Merton, the only way to truly solve the problem is to 'return' to unity with God through the person's deep transcendent self and, in this unity with God, experience true realness and eternity of the person. Moreover, the central way to achieve this unity is contemplative practice where the believer aims to experience a direct connection with God beyond concepts and duality. Thus, for him, contemplation is the essence of Christian life and the highest form of prayer, since it does not aim to intellectually relate to an 'idea of God' but to experience a direct connection to Him in Him.

⁵⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh 2007: 194–195.

For Thích Nhất Hạnh, as a Thiền master, meditation naturally lies at the heart of his religious practice. In his view, humans' fundamental problem is to understand the ego as a real and unchanging entity separate from all other entities of the world. This view prevents people from realising the underlying unity of the world, self and others, life and death, and saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The realisation of this unity is the attainment of Buddhahood, to which the best practice is meditation and mindfulness, especially through using breath to unify the body and mind. Thus, for Nhất Hạnh, just as for Merton, the final goal of the practitioner is the attainment of an ultimate unity.

Finally, drawing on these similarities regarding the central religious practice, the two monks themselves mapped out avenues to draw parallels between the two traditions and start a deep dialogue. For Merton, such avenues are connections between God and the absolute Void of Zen, the self-emptying of the practitioner on their way to unity exemplified in the concepts of *kenosis* in Christianity and *śūnyatā* in Buddhism. As a Thiền master centred on practice, Nhất Hạnh identified even more such places of connection. Besides drawing parallels between *nirvāṇa* and the Kingdom of God, he also connected mindfulness and the Holy Spirit, as well as mindful eating and taking the Eucharist.

Thus, based on the analysed works of Thomas Merton and Thích Nhất Hạnh, it can be said that the practice of contemplation can be regarded as a central part of both religions, and it may act as a bridge between Buddhism and Christianity despite the different theoretical formulations through which it is nested within each tradition. Furthermore, following the approach of the two monks, walking on that bridge might be worthwhile.

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Exploring Saraha's Dohākośa

Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Péter-Dániel Szántó: *Saraha's Spontaneous Songs: With the Commentaries by Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta.*
(Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.)
New York: Wisdom Publications, 2024

Saraha—one of the eighty-four tantric Buddhist masters known as *mahāsid-dhas*—advocated immediate access to liberation through spontaneous songs (*dohā*). His legacy has deeply influenced diverse meditation traditions within Tibetan Buddhism, with modern *mahāmūdra* masters continuing to draw upon his teachings. The most significant collection of Saraha's spontaneous songs is the *Dohākośa*.

In their seminal work, *Saraha's Spontaneous Songs: With the Commentaries by Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta*, Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Péter-Dániel Szántó emphasise the significance of delving into Saraha's spontaneous songs, prompting an earnest examination, as both scholars and practitioners are deeply fascinated by these poetic compositions. The collaborative effort of the authors is dedicated to the edition and translation of Advayavajra's commentary. Szántó meticulously handles the critical edition of Indic materials, while Mathes assumes responsibility for the standard Tibetan root text and Mokṣākaragupta's commentary. Together, they intertwine translations to offer profound insights into these texts. Accordingly, their work comprises three main parts, namely the commentaries of Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta as well as the root text.

However, amidst the rich tapestry of publications and discussions surrounding Saraha's songs, the authors draw attention to core issues within the corpus that remain unresolved. The primary question revolves around whether Saraha truly existed. While there is a strong indication that Saraha was a real individual, what we know about him has been significantly embellished by tradition, portraying him as a figure of legendary proportions. Another unsettled aspect of his life pertains to when he lived. It is doubtful that Saraha lived in some

ancient past, such as the seventh century, as some theories suggest, given that the earliest concrete evidence for his work is the so-called Bagchi's Manuscript from 1101 CE.

The authors provide a detailed overview of contemporary Saraha studies, tracing their origins back to Haraprasād Śāstrī's 1916 edition and translation, which itself relies on a single manuscript of Advayavajra's commentary that has since become lost. The first comprehensive scholarly analysis emerged in 1928 with Muhammad Shahidullah's work in French, which was later translated into English by Pranabesh Sinha Ray in 2007. In 1938, Prabodh Bagchi unveiled a new manuscript of Advayavajra's commentary, now re-edited by Mathes and Szántó in their work. Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana's 1957 study in Hindi, based on a manuscript discovered near Sa skya Monastery in Tibet, marked another significant contribution. David Snellgrove's pioneering English translation in 1954 was followed by translations by Roger Jackson in 2004 and Kurtis Schaeffer in 2005. Despite these endeavours, the complete text of Saraha has remained elusive until recently, when two previously overlooked manuscripts filled this gap, marking a significant breakthrough in the field of Saraha studies by Mathes and Szántó.

Familiarity of the two manuscripts, before being presented for the first time in this book, had been limited to only the cataloguers who had handled the texts. These manuscripts, namely the Tokyo manuscript and the Göttingen manuscript, are identified by their respective origins—the former is housed at the Tokyo University Library, and of the latter the authors obtained photographs from the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Göttingen. The two documents serve as sources for the root texts edited and translated in the authors' book.

Despite its shorter length compared to other known recensions, the Tokyo manuscript holds considerable historical significance. This is particularly evident in the identification of verse 45, where a toponym differs from that found in more widespread transmissions. The manuscript refers to the Somanātha temple located in present-day Gujarat, rather than Jamuṇā river. Consequently, the authors do not dismiss the possibility that parts of the verses may have originated in Western India.

The Göttingen manuscript is distinctive due to its completeness, consisting of ten palm-leaf folios. However, the final folio stands out as it is written by a distinctly different hand. Mathes and Szántó note that '[t]he primary scribal hand is Old Newar, probably from the eleventh century, whereas the additional folio is in an eastern hand, or a Nepalese imitation thereof, and is clearly much later, probably from the twelfth or thirteenth century' (19). The authors express

uncertainty regarding whether the last folio was intended to complete an incomplete copy or if it was obtained from another manuscript.

Mathes and Szántó regard Advayavajra's commentary on Saraha's *dohās* as the most important document in Saraha studies, yet it presents several challenges. One issue is the notable differences between the Tibetan translation and the texts found in the two manuscripts. Additionally, doubts arise regarding the authorship of the commentary. Both the language and style used, as well as the doctrinal positions, suggest that this Advayavajra may not be the same individual who was active in the first half of the eleventh century.

A significant philological analysis of Advayavajra's commentary was done by Mathes and Szántó. While the text is in Sanskrit, the authors note that 'it is nowhere near classical usage, nor is it grammatical Sanskrit with the license we would grant to Buddhist authors without hesitation. Instead, it is a thoroughly unique, extremely loose register of the language. Of course, it could be the case that the two manuscripts of the commentary are extremely corrupt' (23). They try to discern whether the unconventional language usage is intentional, as it is not uncommon in tantric texts. Such deviations may serve to protect the secrecy of teachings. The authors also discovered that despite Advayavajra writing in Sanskrit, his use of grammatical constructions suggests he was thinking in a vernacular. This revelation led them to speculate that Advayavajra might have been Newar.

While Advayavajra's commentary consists of 110 verses, Mokṣākaragupta's commentary contains 133. This suggests that the collection of Saraha's spontaneous songs expanded to 133 verses as it was transmitted to Tibetan. Unlike for Advayavajra's commentary, the authors have not found a corresponding Sanskrit original for Mokṣākaragupta's commentary. Nevertheless, they note that the authorship of Mokṣākaragupta is not a matter of dispute in the case of this commentary, as he is identified as the possible author.

The book of Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Péter-Dániel Szántó meticulously examines the collection of Saraha's spontaneous songs, presenting critical editions and translations of the root text and the commentaries by Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta. Through detailed philological analysis and historical contextualisation, the book offers valuable insights into the rich tapestry of Saraha's teachings, making it an indispensable resource for Saraha studies. The sole contradiction lies in the title—*Saraha's Spontaneous Songs*—which implies that liberation can be achieved *spontaneously*. However, the authors clarify that '[i]n the eyes of both Advayavajra and Mokṣākaragupta, Saraha propagates an immediate access to the coemergent as the only possible means of liberation' (35). Thus, he uses the term *sahaja* in Sanskrit. The explanation continues: 'The term *sahaja* is often translated as "inborn", "innate" or "inherent"' (*ibid.*). While the

authors ‘have decided to render it literally as “coemergent”’ (*ibid.*) in English to convey this concept, the title still retains the word *spontaneous*, which, from my perspective, is not aligned with the meaning of *sahaja*.

In summary, the book of Mathes and Szántó not only serves as an essential reference for Saraha’s spontaneous songs but also offers an extensive and insightful presentation of philological analysis and critical editions of Indian and Tibetan works. The translations provided, along with the informative notes accompanying them, make this book an invaluable resource for any scholar conducting research in Buddhist studies.

A Century's Worth of Chinese Culture and Language Education in Hungary *A Celebratory Event in ELTE's Aula Magna* **20 November 2023**

A hundred years ago, in November 1923, the Institute of East Asian Studies was founded at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), marking the beginning of university-level education in Chinese language and culture in Hungary. A centennial celebration was held in the ELTE Aula Magna, attended by government and higher education leaders, diplomats, and representatives of Chinese businesses operating in Hungary.

During the event, László Borhy, Rector of ELTE, reflected on the institute's history, praising key figures who played significant roles in advancing Hungary's relationship with China. He mentioned Vilmos Pröhle and Lajos Ligeti, leaders of the first generation of Hungarian sinologists. He also highlighted the work of Sándor Józsa and Endre Galla, who in the 1950s were among the first Hungarian university students to study in China on scholarships and who later worked as teachers to elevate the Chinese language programme to new heights. Borhy also acknowledged Ferenc Mártonfi's contributions to scientific language learning. The institute's mission of establishing and maintaining relations with China has also faced hardships, as the economic difficulties of the 1990s also affected higher education. In 2002, the Chinese language programme at ELTE gained new momentum under the leadership of Imre Hamar. Currently, the Chinese faculty has 182 students in the BA, 14 in the MA, and 18 in the PhD programmes.

The next speech was delivered by Tao Gong, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China. He praised ELTE's reputation and the significance of its researchers, among whom can be found several Nobel Prize winners. The ambassador emphasised the importance of ELTE's international connections and the value of its educational relations with China.

Other speakers included Ádám Stifter, Deputy State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations, who is responsible for Eastern relations; Orsolya Pacsai-Tomassich, President of the Hungarian Diplomatic

Academy; Wangjing Rao, Deputy Director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS); Dezhong Jia, Deputy Rector of the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BSFU); and Imre Hamar, Deputy Rector of ELTE responsible for international affairs, Head of the Institute of East Asian Studies at the ELTE Faculty of Humanities, and Head of the Department of Chinese Studies.

The speeches underscored the importance of the close relationship between ELTE and China, highlighting student exchange programmes, economic and cultural collaboration, and future opportunities.

The celebration concluded with a colourful cultural show featuring Chinese and Hungarian musical performances, as well as demonstrations of Chinese martial arts, offering the audience a glimpse into Chinese culture and traditions.

Enikő Gájász, Gábor Rusznák

International Buddhology Symposium 15–17 December 2023, Ōtani University, Kyoto, Japan

In December 2023, researchers of Buddhism from Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) attended the International Buddhology Symposium titled *Enlightenment, Wisdom, and Transformation in the World's Religious Traditions*. This is the second time that ELTE has been invited to Ōtani University in Kyoto and the fourth instalment in the International Buddhology Symposium series, which is jointly organised by the two universities, since 2013. The symposium was long overdue—there had been a three-year delay due to Covid-19 restrictions, which were lifted in Japan only in the middle of 2023.

From ELTE Faculty of Humanities the presenters were Prof. Dr Imre Hamar, Vice Rector of ELTE, Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies and the Budapest Centre for Buddhist Studies; Prof. Dr Ferenc Ruzsa and Dr Péter-Dániel Szántó, former and current heads of the Department of Buddhology and Tibetology; Dr Mónika Kiss, assistant professor of the Department of Japanese Studies; and Péter Boros, a student in the Sinology doctoral programme.

Previous International Symposia

- 2013 *Faith in Buddhism*, Budapest, ELTE University (papers published in 2016; URL: https://tavolkeletiintezet.elte.hu/buddhistcentre/downloads/hamar_faith_in_buddhism.pdf)
- 2016 *The Buddha's Words and Their Interpretations*, Kyoto, Ōtani University (papers published in 2021; URL: <https://www.otani.ac.jp/news/2021/u10fi9000000q5jn-att/nab3mq000008ctlv.pdf>)
- 2018 *Buddhism in Practice*, Budapest, ELTE University (papers published in 2023; URL: <https://ojs.elte.hu/tkt/issue/view/583>)

The Program of the 2023 Symposium

Enlightenment, Wisdom, and Transformation in the World's Religious Traditions

An International Symposium Hosted by Ōtani University's

Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute

In Collaboration with Eötvös Loránd University's Institute of East Asian
Studies

December 15–17, 2023

December 15 (Friday)
Opening Ceremony 9:30~9:50 (Kōrukan 3 rd Floor Media Hall)
Session 1 10:00~12:00 (Kōrukan 3 rd Floor Media Hall) (1) Who invented enlightenment? <i>Ferenc Ruzsa (Eötvös Loránd University)</i> (2) Self-Understanding, Selfless Action and Transformation (Yoga in the Bhagavadgītā: Exhibiting a Liberated Man in Hinduism) <i>Godabarisha Mishra (Nalanda International University)</i> (3) GLADDENING LIGHT: Wisdom as folly, theophany, inebriation and transfiguration <i>Thomas Plant (Rikkyō University)</i> Respondent: Michael Pye (Marburg University)
Lunch 12:00~13:30

Session 2 13:30~15:30 (Media Hall)

- (1) Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Wisdom of God
Tsunoda Yuichi 角田佑一 (*Sophia University*)
 - (2) “Wisdom” in East Asian Mahayana Buddhism
Paul Swanson (*Nanzan University*)
 - (3) Enlightenment, Wisdom, and Transformation in Islam
Mark Sedgwick (*Aarhus University*)
- Respondent: Domingos Sousa (*Nanzan University*)

Coffee Break 15:30~15:50**Keynote address 15:50~17:00 (Media Hall)**

Shinran’s Understanding of Birth in the Pure Land: What Is the ‘Company of the Rightly Settled’?
Hase Shōtō 長谷正當 (*Kyōto University/ Ōtani University*)

December 16 (Saturday)**Session 3 10:00~11:30 (Media Hall)**

- (1) Remaining in Suffering and Walking Ahead: The Shift in the Meaning of Life in Buddhism
Minoura Akio 箕浦暁雄 (*Ōtani University*)
 - (2) The Wisdom to Become Buddhist: Arguments for Lay Conversion in Late Antique Indian Buddhist Homiletics
Péter-Dániel Szántó (*Eötvös Loránd University*)
- Respondent: Kigoshi Yasushi 木越康 (*Ōtani University*)

Lunch 11:30~13:00**Session 4 13:00~15:00 (Media Hall)**

- (1) Enlightenment through meditation in 20th century Buddhist and Christian thought
Péter Boros (*Eötvös Loránd University*)
 - (2) Light, Visions, and the Name: Medieval Japanese Pure Land Approaches to the True Nature of Reality
Nasu Eishō 那須英勝 (*Ryūkoku University*)
 - (3) Shinran’s Understanding of the Pure Land as “The Land of Immeasurable Light”
Michael Conway (*Ōtani University*)
- Respondent: James Heisig (*Nanzan University*)

Coffee Break 15:00~15:30
Session 5 15:30~17:30 (Media Hall)

- (1) The place of mystical wisdom in Judaism: The controversy between M. Buber and G. Scholem
Ono Fumio 小野文生 (*Dōshisha University*)

- (2) The Emergence of the ‘Human Buddha’ in the Nineteenth Century Europe and the Prejudice of the Enlightenment: Focusing on Ozeray and Burnouf

Nitta Tomomichi 新田智通 (*Ōtani University*)

- (3) Unbreaking the Broken Commandment: A Buddhist Reading of Hakai

Ama Michihiro (*Ōtani University*)

Respondent: Fujieda Shin 藤枝真 (*Ōtani University*)

December 17 (Sunday)
Session 6 9:30~11:30 (Media Hall)

- (1) The Enlightenment and Transformation of King Ajātaśatru according to the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*

Inoue Takami 井上尚実 (*Ōtani University*)

- (2) To discipline or to forget: The idea of the self and ethical conduct in Sufism and Zen through the writings of al-Ghazālī and Dōgen

Yazaki Saeko 矢崎早枝子 (*Glasgow University*)

- (3) ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ [Ps. 82.6]: Deification and Perfection in Medieval Mystical Thought

Louise Nelstrop (*Oxford University*)

Respondent: Tōnaga Yasushi (*Kyōto University*)

Lunch 11:30~13:00

Session 7 13:00~15:00 (Media Hall)

- (1) Versatile Samantabhadra: The Many Forms of Fugen Bosatsu in Japan
Mónika Kiss (Eötvös Loránd University)
 - (2) ‘Illumination Wisdom’ for Achieving Enlightenment in the Book of *Red Wisdom* by Suhrawardī
Sepideh Afrashteh (Ōtani University)
 - (3) Enlightenment and its Path: The Tantric Way of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara Cult in Tibetan Buddhism
Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 (Jinghua University)
- Respondent: Robert Rhodes (Ōtani University)

Coffee Break 15:00~15:30**Session 8 15:30~17:00 (Media Hall)**

- (1) ‘Universalism’ as a Topic of Controversy in both Buddhism and Christianity: “Original Enlightenment” (本覺) and Apocatastasis (ἀποκατάστασις)
Robert Gimello (Notre Dame University)
 - (2) The Process of Enlightenment in Yogācāra and Huayan Buddhism
Imre Hamar (Eötvös Loránd University)
- Respondent: Dake Mitsuya 嵩満也 (Ryūkoku University)