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WIVES AND PATRONS: UYGUR POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC INFLUENCE IN TENTH-CENTURY DUNHUANG

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This article studies the intercultural links between the Uygurs and Dunhuang in the tenth–eleventh centuries. Some of the biggest caves at Dunhuang show large-scale representations of Ganzhou Uygur brides as donors. It is argued that the marriage of a Chinese ruler of Dunhuang with the daughter of the Ganzhou Uygur *kaghan* acted as a catalyst for the formation of a new Sino-Uygur ruling class. A sketch and a painting from Dunhuang are examined in detail. Emphasis is on the appearance of new colours and decorative technologies such as applied gold leaf, iconography including the clothing of the figures and style, including facial features and mannerisms. It is concluded that Ganzhou Uygur brides as patrons played an important role in the formation of tenth-century Dunhuang art, and Uygur influence continued to grow in the eleventh century.

Key words: Dunhuang, Ganzhou Uygurs, Turfan, Buddhist art, patronage.

The tenth century was a period of multi-cultural activity on the Silk Road. Intermarriage, warfare and cultural links acted as catalysts for the exchange of religious scriptures and rituals and the production of artefacts and paintings. Often the large cultural centres on the Silk Road are studied in isolation, but a comparative approach can throw light on questions of dating and misidentified iconography, and is therefore very worthwhile to pursue. My research concentrates on Dunhuang 敦煌 in Gansu 甘肅 province at the Chinese end of the Silk Road, where the northern and the southern branches meet, and the Uygur art of Bezeklik, further west on the Northern branch of the Silk Road. The influence of the Uygurs on Dunhuang in the tenth century has not been studied before, even though there were close political links between the Uygur states and Shazhou 沙州 – as the area around Dunhuang was called then.[1]

Recent historical research conducted in China and Japan has proved that the Uygurs have played a far more important role in tenth–eleventh century Shazhou than

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[1] Dunhuang was located in Sha prefecture, Shazhou and was governed together with Guazhou throughout this period.

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hitherto assumed (Rong Xinjiang 1996; Moriyasu 1980). Only isolated attempts have so far been made to put the results of historical research into an art historical context. A number of eleventh-century caves in the Dunhuang area that had earlier been regarded as Tangut, were identified for the first time as Uygur by Liu Yuquan, but his results are not widely known in the West, or even in China (Liu Yuquan 1990).

The presence of the female Uygur donor figures in the tenth-century Dunhuang caves has been known for a long time, however the importance of Uygur donors in the formation of tenth-century Dunhuang art had not been investigated before. Dunhuang's art in the tenth century is usually considered overwhelmingly Chinese.

Elsewhere I have demonstrated that the increasing influence of Uygurs within the ruling class of Shazhou led to the patronage of some of the well-known banner paintings found in Cave 17 (Russell-Smith 2001). Today these paintings are in the Stein collection at the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum in London and in the Pelliot collection of the Musée Guimet in Paris. In this article I summarise some of the results of my comparative research.

Mogaoku 莫高窟 – or Qianfodong 千佛洞 is a large cave temple site, which was hewn out of the gravel hills near the oasis town of Dunhuang from the fourth century onwards. The Uygurs are a Turkic nationality whose centre of power in the tenth century was at Khocho known as Gaochang 高昌 in Chinese near today's Turfan (about 600 kms northwest of Dunhuang). After the Uygur Kaghanate in today's Mongolia was destroyed by the Kyrgyz in A.D. 840, two of the migrating Uygur splinter groups settled in Ganzhou 甘州 and in Xizhou 西州 thus the Silk Road east and west of Dunhuang came under the control of Uygur states.[2] The best examples of Uygur art were excavated in the Turfan area. Most of the wall paintings from a cave temple complex nearby known as Bezeklik were removed to Berlin, to be exhibited in the permanent galleries of the Museum für Völkerkunde during the thirties. Unfortunately during the Second World War many of them were subsequently destroyed by Allied bombing. Large colour reproductions of these wall paintings had been published by Albert von Le Coq in 1913.[3]

Cave 20 (Grünwedel's Cave 9) is one of the best known examples. Luckily portraits of Uygur donors have escaped the destruction and can be seen in the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin to the present day (Figures 1–2). Originally these murals occupied the walls of the inner sanctuary, which shows their extreme importance.[4] The image of the Uygur rulers is highly formalised, their features are repetitive, and simplified, and most importantly they look East Asian despite their exotic clothing.

[2] For a recent summary of Uygur history in the relevant period *v.*: Sinor – Geng Shimin – Kychanov (1998).

[3] Härtel (1957); Le Coq (1913), plates 16–35. These plates are repeatedly reproduced, often without reference to the origin of the reproductions, and without stating that many of these murals do not exist any more, especially in Chinese publications.

[4] Albert von Le Coq gave a detailed description of Bezeklik Cave 20 (1913, pp. 14–16). As part of the three-year Silk Road project organised by Valerie Hansen at Yale University, Denise Leidy has most recently undertaken to reconstruct Bezeklik Cave 20. Denise Leidy: "Bezeklik: Some Thoughts on Iconography and Practice", unpublished paper given at the Third Silk Road Conference at Yale University, New Haven, U.S.A. in July 1998.



Figure 1. Male donors from Bezeklik Cave 20 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Indische Kunst, MIK III 6876a)

The way they are depicted is a conscious statement to link them to Chinese Buddhist art, and yet their outfits, hairstyle, beard and headgear are decidedly non-Chinese.

It was Bögü *khagan*'s decision to convert to Manichaeism in the 760's, and it was once again the Uygur rulers' decision to adopt Buddhism. Therefore the rulers rightly saw themselves as the most important commissioners of religious art. As the initiators of the changes in religious orientation, in the hope of attaining salvation the Uygur donors wanted to be shown on a large scale, closely involved with the religious scenes represented (Figure 1).[5] They appear alongside important Chinese and Indian monks, who were responsible for the Buddhist scriptures used in the area.

Further important murals showing Uygur royal donors were found in the stupa at Beshbaliq, called Beiting 北庭 by the Chinese.[6] We know from historical sources

[5] To a lesser extent a similar process was also perceivable in Dunhuang: the positioning and the size of the donor figures became more and more prominent throughout the tenth century.

[6] Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo [The Institute of Archaeology Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)] (ed.) (1991), pl. 16/2; cf. also Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan



Figure 2. Female donors from Bezeklik Cave 20 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Indische Kunst, MIK III 6876b)

that even after the Uygurs settled permanently in the Turfan area, they continued to use their summer capital at Beshbaliq, about 150 kms north of Turfan. The stupa of Beshbaliq was not investigated by Aurel Stein and has only been excavated recently by a Chinese team. Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt is the first Western art historian who published a detailed study of the iconographic and religious program of the site (Shatzman Steinhardt 1999; 2001).

The depictions of donors in Beshbaliq and Bezeklik show the clothing of the Uygur ruling classes very clearly. Both the female and the male headdresses are characteristic, and became the most important way of signifying rank and Uygurness. As we have seen earlier the male headdress is a tall tiara secured by a red ribbon tied under the chin (Figure 1) and the most popular female headdress has a characteristic

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kaogu yanjiusuo Xinjiang gongzuodui [Xinjiang archaeological team of The Institute of Archaeology CAAS] (1983), pp. 618–623.



Figure 3. Female Uygur donor from Bezeklik Cave 14
(after Zhongguo bihua quanji bianji weiyuanhui [Complete edition of Chinese painting editorial board] (ed.) (1995, pl. 130)

water drop shape.[7] Within the headdress often the motif of a phoenix was shown (Figure 3).

An obvious influence of the Chinese on Uygur culture is the way high-ranking women are depicted. Their round faces, elaborate hairdos and make up seem to echo the eighth-century Tang fashions (Figures 2–3). Like Chinese ladies of that period they also appear plump, have finely-plucked eyebrows and tiny red lips. We know that in Tang China it was fashionable to have the lips painted much smaller than they really were to achieve a rosebud effect. We can see various combs and other decorations made of gold in their hair.[8] However, they wear a gown that appears much

[7] For the headdresses *v.* Gabain (1973, pp. 115–121). In an unpublished paper Jorinde Ebert has also described briefly the outfit of the lowest rank within the Manichaean society, that of the "Listener" (*Die Hörer*). Jorinde Ebert: Gedanken zur Hierarchie der Kopfbedeckung bei den Manichäern. Unpublished paper given at the Fourth International Manichaean Conference, Berlin, July 1997.

[8] Chinese hair ornaments made of jade and gold were exhibited at the "Gilded Dragons" exhibition at the British Museum, Michaelson (1999, pp. 64–67).

heavier than the usual Chinese fashions and has a wide embroidered collar, very different from that worn by Chinese ladies (Gabain 1973, pp. 117–119).

The faces of the female Uygur donors are depicted in a very formalised way: defined by a single continuous line, with only the chin indicated with another curve. The nose is fine and straight with a small wave to show the nostrils, the eyebrows are shaved off, and redrawn as a straight line, the mouth is shown as a small rosebud shape, the eyes are extremely narrow, and defined with only two lines. The hairline is straight (Figure 4). We can observe again the extensive use of gold ornaments and jewellery, especially decorating the extraordinary hairdo of ladies (called winged hairstyle: *Flügelfrisur* by Gabain), which must have been loosely based on Tang fashions, but seemingly tries to outdo the latter in elegance and the use of gold ornaments (Gabain 1973, pp. 117–119, Figure 106). Hairpins, a huge golden hair ornament and earrings complete the elaborate head decoration. The feet and hands are carefully tucked away.

The appearance of similar headdresses, hairstyles, facial features and stylistic details has drawn my attention to the importance of Uygurs in tenth-century Dunhuang art.

Historical background

Any change in the style of Dunhuang art was always a sensitive indicator of the area's cultural and political links in different periods. It has often been observed that during the Tang dynasty – especially in the seventh–eighth centuries – the style of secular paintings from Central China was followed with remarkable closeness in Dunhuang despite the huge distances. The Chinese Emperor's figure from Cave 220 is often quoted to illustrate this, due to its striking resemblance to the portraits of Emperors on the famous scroll today in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts painted by Yan Liben 閻立本 (Fraser 1996, pp. 18–19).[9]

In contrast, from the Middle Tang period, the time of Tibetan occupation (781–848), Shazhou developed closer links with the neighbouring territories than with Central China. The Tibetans remained settled in the area even after the recapture of Dunhuang by the Chinese in 848. The changes in the style of tenth-century Dunhuang painting, such as the repetition of subject-matter and the embellishment of popular compositions, have already been explained as being due to the isolation of Shazhou from the imperial centre. There was a shift from a China-centered, elite-based culture at Dunhuang to a multi-cultural society characterised by independence from central China. Patronage of commoners and of the ruling class alike reflected these changes.

The last decade of the ninth century was a time of unrest in Dunhuang. After long years of struggle the central power in China collapsed completely in A.D. 907, when the Tang dynasty came to an end. During the Five Dynasties (907–960) short-

[9] For a reproduction of Cave 220 *v.* DHMGK, vol. 3, pl. 33. Yan Liben's "Thirteen Emperors" scroll, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts is widely reproduced, e.g. in Wu Tung (1996, pl. 1).



Figure 4. Uygur lady (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Indische Kunst, MIK III 4798)

lived regimes united parts of Chinese territory, but there was no interest in retaking the Hexi 河西 corridor in the far west. All these events favoured the independence of the Ganzhou Uygurs, who became more and more aggressive. Eventually the Dunhuang forces could not resist the continuing attacks and a group of senior envoys had to be sent to the Ganzhou Uygur *kaghan* where they declared: 可汗是父天子是子 "[You], the *kaghan* are the father, [I] The Son of Heaven am your son", as a clear indication that Dunhuang's ruling family acknowledged the supremacy of the Ganzhou Uygurs.[10] However, Ganzhou could not permanently dominate the area either, so a kind of stale-mate developed. The isolation of Dunhuang from Central China is

[10] Rong (1996, pp. 14–15, P 3633); Zhang Zhong (1990, p. 110).

well illustrated with the fact that in the documents and on paintings alike the wrong nianhao 年號 was used in this period, as they were unaware that the Tang dynasty had come to an end.[11]

Ganzhou could block the Hexi trade routes linking Shazhou with Central China at will. Because of this dependence marriage links were soon established between the new ruler of Dunhuang, Cao Yijin 曹議金 (914–935) and the Ganzhou Uygur *kaghan*'s daughter, which led to a much closer relationship between Shazhou and Ganzhou (Rong 1996, p. 15. Beida tushuguan 102; P 3262, P 3781). From that year Shazhou regained partial access to the roads leading to Central China. In A.D. 926 the next Uygur *kaghan* married Cao Yijin's daughter. This proves that within the decade Cao's position became so strong that it was in Ganzhou's interest to request a bride from him.

From A.D. 934 Cao Yijin started calling himself *dawang* 大王 (Great King), thereby emphasising Dunhuang's independence from Central China.[12] The direct and indirect influence of the Uygurs continued throughout the tenth century. After his father's death Cao Yuande 曹元得 (935–939), who had already held important official functions, came to power. Cao Yijin's Uygur wife styled *Shengtian gongzhu* 聖天公主 (Heavenly Princess) was given the honorary title *Guomu* 國母 (Mother of the Country).[13]

Diplomatic activity continued with Ganzhou and Xizhou during these decades, although with changing intensity (Moriyasu 1980, pp. 320–321).[14] It is very important from our point of view that in A.D. 980 monks from Ganzhou and Suzhou came to Dunhuang (Rong 1996, pp. 30–31. S 4884; S 5728; S 2474). This is a definite sign that at least some of the population of Ganzhou was Buddhist at this time. The study of the historical sources makes it clear that Dunhuang was the more important Buddhist centre at this time, and its temples provided Xizhou with scriptures.

In A.D. 956 Fabao 法寶, a monk of the *Sanjie* (Triple world) 三界寺 monastery in Shazhou, sent envoys to Xizhou. Among the objects they took with them, there were scrolls of scriptures (Rong 1996, p. 26, P 3051 V). In A.D. 966 Cao Yuanzhong and his wife went on a visit to the Mogao caves. In the Great King Cave (Cave 98, *Dawangku* 大王窟) they ordered the monks to copy the *Dafo mingjing* 大佛名經 (T 441) in seventeen copies, one for each of the sixteen great temples of Dunhuang, with an extra copy to be sent to Xizhou to complement their collection of the Tripitaka (Rong 1996, p. 29, Ch. 00207). This proves that at that time the religious literature of Dunhuang was valued in Xizhou, and most probably used as a model.

In the mid-twenties of the tenth century A.D. Cao Yijin was at the height of his power. Cave 98, one of the largest caves in Dunhuang was built during this time

[11] As discussed for Stein painting 14 by Whitfield (1982–1985, vol. 2, p. 301). Rong gives a detailed explanation and mentions that during the last six years of the Tang a different *nianhao* was used in manuscripts too: Rong (1996, pp. 51–52).

[12] Rong (1996, pp. 104–107). Later in the century Cao Yuanzhong and Cao Yanlu were also called *dawang*.

[13] Rong (1996, pp. 107–110); for Cao Yuande, p. 21 (cave 100 inscr., S 4245).

[14] There is only one mention of the bilateral relations for 943: Rong (1996, p. 23, P 2992 V–1, cf. also pp. 18–20).

between A.D. 923–925 (Ma De 1996, p. 115). There are more than two hundred donor figures shown, many of them larger than life-size: this is political propaganda on an unprecedented scale. They represent the political alliances of Cao Yijin and symbolise his power (Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo [Dunhuang Cultural Research Institute] ed. 1986, pp. 32–49). On the southern and northern wall of the corridor Cao Yijin and his predecessors are represented. On the east wall of the main hall, on both sides, the wives of Cao Yijin are depicted.

The Uygur wife called Li leads the procession, followed by the Chinese wives Lady Suo and Lady Song (Figure 5). Also represented are Cao's son-in-law and daughter, Li Shengtian 李聖天 the King of Khotan and his queen. The women relatives of Cao Yijin, bearing the names of leading families from Guazhou and Shazhou follow them, emphasising that Cao had extensive power links in the area. This cave established an important precedent, and throughout the tenth century large-scale donor figures are shown in some of the biggest Dunhuang caves. The Uygur wives and their attendants appeared wearing Uygur costume and headdress in several of these.[15]

In Cave 61, built between 947–951, part of the original section of the northern part of the south wall was repainted over two decades later, possibly to celebrate Cao Yanlu's marriage to a Khotanese princess. This addition of yet another generation of women wearing Khotanese and Ganzhou Uygur dress to the long row of female donors, is proof that they remained some of the most important patrons of art throughout the century in Dunhuang.[16]

According to historical sources Chinese Princesses who had married the Uygur *kaghan* in the times of the steppe empire had to adapt to Uygur customs and wear Uygur clothing.[17] In contrast in Dunhuang Uygur princesses continued to be represented in their Uygur outfits even after marrying the Chinese governors, whilst other women are shown wearing a combination headdress unique to Dunhuang that resembles the Uygur waterdrop shape, but is usually shaped like a phoenix (Figure 5 on the left). Whilst in the eighth–ninth centuries clothing in Dunhuang followed remarkably closely the fashion of Tang China, in the tenth century the prominence of Uygur clothing and the unique Sino-Uygur headdress are a reliable sign of the cultural independence of Dunhuang from the Chinese successor states.

The clothing of these Uygur brides and their attendants provide evidence for the closeness of the Xizhou and Ganzhou branches of the Uygurs. The headdresses worn by the Uygur females represented in the Dunhuang caves are very similar to the waterdrop-shaped headdress associated with high-ranking Xizhou Uygur ladies often depicted in Bezeklik (Figure 3) (Gabain 1973, Figure 106). In both Xizhou and Ganzhou this decoration was worn over an elaborate hairdo further decorated with hairpins. The forehead was probably shaved, leaving a characteristically straight hairline.

[15] For illustrations of Cave 98 *v.* DHMGK, vol. 5, pl. 1–19.

[16] DHMGK, vol. 5, pp. 220–221. Also cf. Duan Wenjie in Li Xianlin (ed.) (1998, pp. 63–64). Only the two women dressed in red on the left remain in this section from the original row of donors.

[17] For example Princess Taihe in A.D. 822 had to give up her Chinese clothing, and be dressed as an Uygur *khatun v. Jiu Tangshu,* 195.12a, Mackerras (1972, pp. 120–121).



Figure 5. Ganzhou Uygur donors from Dunhuang Cave 98,
including Lady Li, Cao Yijin's wife on the right (after DHMGK, vol. 5, pl. 12)

There is only one painting at present known to me from Dunhuang which depicts the same headdress. Found by Pelliot it is a sketch which is today in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (Figure 6). Painted on paper in black ink with light colouring it had been published in Jao Tsong-yi's *Dunhuang baihua* in 1978, but has only attracted the interest of researchers since it was displayed in the Sérinde exhibition in 1995.[18] I first spoke about this image as one of the Uygur-influenced group of paintings at the ICANAS Conference in Budapest in July 1997, where Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner also presented material with regards to this sketch.[19] Two seated females are shown holding various attributes: the one on the left, who is seated on a rectangular throne supported on a row of simplified lotus petals,

[18] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: BNF Pelliot chinois, 4518, 24, Giès – Cohen (eds) (1995, pp. 293–294); Jao Tsong-yi (1978).

[19] Haesner drew attention to a painting on cotton from the Turfansammlung in Berlin, which is proof of the popularity of similar iconography among the less wealthy too. Her argument has most recently been published in the new catalogue of the Uygur Buddhist material in Berlin, Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner (2003, pp. 35–38) and Cat. No. 113.



Figure 6. "Sogdian Deities" Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
(after Giès–Cohen 1995, Cat. No. 223)

holds a foliated cup and a tray with a dog seated on it. The lady on the right is seated on a wolf, and has four arms, the upper two support the sun and moon disks, the lower two arms are holding a scorpion and a snake.

Both women have a characteristic hairstyle, of the type that I have identified as Uygur, complete with tall water-drop-shaped headdresses that are probably made of metal, shown through the use of a scale pattern and a lozenge grid. The headdresses and hairstyle of the two figures on this painting are very similar to Uygur examples. This painting also stands out within the Dunhuang material as all other examples of figures holding up the sun and the moon from Dunhuang are well-known from Chinese Buddhist iconography, such as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara or the *asura*s. Here the iconography is completely different, and therefore points to outside influence.

Exactly the same iconography can also be found in the Xizhou Uygur material. In Bezeklik the fragments of an Uygur lady with a wolf was found (Figure 7) (Grünwedel 1912, Figure 516, p. 243). In Cave 18 in Bezeklik a pair of Uygur ladies appeared on the two sides of the entrance. The better preserved figure was reproduced by Grünwedel (Figure 8) (Grünwedel 1912, Figure 531, p. 255, *v* also Figure 516, p. 243). The standing female wears a dress similar to the one worn by the seated



Figure 7. Female figure with wolf from Bezeklik Cave 16
(after Grünwedel 1912, Figure 516)

deity on the right of the Dunhuang sketch, and her hair is in a very elaborate Uygur chignon. She has four arms, and with the upper one was probably holding up the sun and the moon. The other two are holding *cintāmaṇi* jewels. There is a dog or wolf-like animal behind her identical to the one in Dunhuang painting. On the right in a cloud a snake appears. In a cartouche the deity's name was inscribed in Chinese characters, but unfortunately the copier could obviously not read Chinese, and rendered the characters in an illegible way.

Frantz Grenet and Zhang Guangda quoted Zoroastrian and Sogdian Manichaean sources in order to identify the two figures prompted by similarities with Sogdian wall painting, especially the tray with the dog in the hand of the figure on the left. It is well known that there was a Sogdian community in Dunhuang from early times, however none of the quoted texts match the iconography of the Dunhuang painting exactly (Grenet – Zhang Guangda 1998). Grenet and Zhang Guangda do not mention the Uygur connection, even though the Sogdians were the single most important source in the formation of Uygur iconography both in Manichaeism and in Buddhism.

In my view the clothing of the figures is not remarkable. In another cave a row of female figures was originally shown, two of which have been reproduced (Grünwe-



Figure 8. Female figure with wolf, snake and holding the sun and moon
from Bezeklik Cave 18 (after Grünwedel 1912, Figure 531)

del 1912, Figure 554, p. 239). One of the ladies is dressed in long robes, whilst the other one wears similar clothes and adornments to those of the figure on the left of the painting, with the exception of her headdress and a belt on her waist. All the examples on murals were found in a securely Buddhist context, mostly on either side of the entrances to a cave temple. Such a function would be in accordance with their attributes, the fruits or *cintāmaṇi* jewels and the sun and moon disks.[20]

[20] Most recently Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner has suggested that a painting from Turfan (MIK III 7243) showing a similar figure was painted by a person who is not from Turfan and reflects non-Buddhist iconography influenced by local Buddhism. The female holds the sun and moon and a snake and is shown with two dogs or wolves behind her, but has six arms not four (Bhattacharya-Haesner 2003, p. 35). In my opinion the presence of some important elements of this iconography in the Bezeklik caves proves the popularity of this local cult regardless of the varying quality of the paintings. As the figures appear in a Buddhist context it is probable that a popular deity was represented in a subsidiary role as part of the worshippers of a Buddha or bodhisattvas. Hindu deities were often shown in Buddhist cave temples, for example in Dunhuang. The Turfan painting, which was published for the first time, shows interesting similarities with our example from Dunhuang, but differs in important ways. Bhattacharya-Haesner's book arrived too late to discuss these issues in detail here.

Having established the Uygur links, the next question to be answered was whether our piece could originate from outside Dunhuang. It has to be acknowledged that no exact parallels can be found within the Dunhuang material at this moment. Despite its frequent depiction on murals this type of headdress appears only on this portable painting from Dunhuang. Uygur ladies represented in the caves normally wear robes with heavy collars and much jewellery as we have seen. However, looking at this example the paper and the brushstrokes, as well as the facial features and the way the animals were represented in my opinion this piece is extremely closely related to the tenth-century Dunhuang style, which is evidence of local manufacture.[21]

The Uygur headdress and the similarities in the iconography make it clear that the source of the deities on this sketch was in fact the Turfan area. Its existence in the Dunhuang material shows that the taste of Uygur patrons was influencing the Buddhist art of Dunhuang not only in a technical and stylistic way, but also in the adoption of religious iconography. This provides indirect evidence that close religious and artistic links existed in the tenth–eleventh century between Xizhou and Shazhou.

Detailed comparative study of the stylistic links

In the case of most other Dunhuang paintings we cannot rely on Uygur headdresses or similar easily recognisable attributes to select the Uygur-influenced works. For this reason we are confined to stylistic observations. On stylistic grounds within the Dunhuang material a group of paintings can be identified as Uygur in style. These works also often differ in their iconography from the rest of the tenth-century Dunhuang paintings. Their importance cannot be overlooked, as several of these paintings are of very high quality.

One of our key paintings for the study of Uygur influence in Dunhuang is a painting of the "Five Buddhas of the Vajradhātu mandala" (henceforth "Five Buddhas") now in Paris (Figure 9).[22] This painting used to be considered an example of early Tibetan art. In the seventies it was included into the study of early Sino-Tibetan art by Heather Karmay (1976, p. 9, Figure 3). It was also one of only a handful of Dunhuang paintings selected by Deborah Klimburg-Salter for the "The Silk Route and the Diamond Path" exhibition held in 1983 in Los Angeles, New York and Washington in the United States, which made it well known among specialists.[23] It was then assumed that the "Five Buddhas" reflected the iconography and style transmitted during the Tibetan period of Dunhuang.

However, in more recent studies on this subject the "Five Buddhas" has been excluded, probably due to our better understanding of stylistic processes in early Tibet. Jane Casey Singer, who most recently pointed to Dunhuang as the place for the

[21] For a detailed comparative study on Dunhuang style and Uygur style *v.* Russell-Smith (2001, pp. 90–96).

[22] Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17780.

[23] Pl. 68 in the accompanying catalogue: Klimburg-Salter (1982).

existence of the earliest Tibetan works of art, selected only narrow, painted banners on cloth, the style of which could be compared to other early examples of Tibetan art (Kossak – Singer 1998, p. 28; Singer 1996). She has emphasised the strong Indic associations of the banners in the Tibetan style from Dunhuang, which we cannot observe in the case of the Guimet "Five Buddhas". On another occasion Casey Singer refers to a mandala from Dunhuang also in the Indo-Tibetan style (Figure 10) in the context of its early irregular arrangement.[24]

In her major monograph on Tabo Klimburg-Salter makes no further mention of the Guimet "Five Buddhas", despite the fact that she deals extensively with the importance of the Vajradhātu mandala and Vairocana. Instead she draws attention to the general problems when dealing with the Tibet-related paintings from Dunhuang (Klimburg-Salter 1997, p. 209). With the opening up of Tibet, the new excavations by the Chinese and the studies of the Western Tibetan temples now located in India published, much more early Tibetan material has become available for study in the last decade. The evidence presented by recent research is that the style of early Tibetan art was overwhelmingly influenced by Eastern Indian and Kashmiri art.[25] Several paintings and fragments found in Dunhuang are close to this Indo-Kashmiri style and can therefore be securely linked to the Tibetan period, like the "Mandala of the eight deities of the Lotus Section" (Figure 10).

The style of the "Five Buddhas" is at variance with this early Tibetan style, which remained influential up to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. This painting shows absolutely no evidence of Indian influence, in fact in every stylistic detail it differs. Instead of voluptuous bodies that suggest volume, there is a tendency towards the flattening of the figures, presenting them as decorative patterns. This is further emphasised by the artists' interest in surface patterns, such as the ornaments on the thrones and the mandorlas. We can therefore conclude that despite the iconography, which follows Tibetan prototypes this painting could not have been painted by Tibetan or Tibetan-influenced artists or workshops.

In contrast the "Five Buddhas" shows many features that can be compared to Uygur art. For example the extensive use of applied gold leaf decoration is characteristic of the Uygur influenced paintings within the Dunhuang material. It is perhaps the most beautiful example for the masterly use of this technique. Applied square-cut golden leaves decorate the outfits and represent the metallic objects, the details are meticulously drawn with fine black and red lines (Figure 11). This is very similar to the methods of gilding used in Manichaean art (Figure 12). Zsuzsanna Gulácsi has drawn attention to the geometric pattern on Uygur rugs on the so-called Bema scene, one of the most famous Uygur Manichaean fragments (Gulácsi 1996). Even if not identical, the carpets shown on several of the Uygur influenced Dunhuang paintings

[24] Mandala of the eight deities of the Lotus Section (Padmakula), second half of the 8th century (Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, EO 1131), Singer (1994).

[25] Klimburg-Salter believes that paintings executed in Phase II in Tabo (eleventh century) reflects "true Indo-Tibetan style". Klimburg-Salter (1997, p. 208). Also cf. S. Kossak's discussion (1998, pp. 29–38).

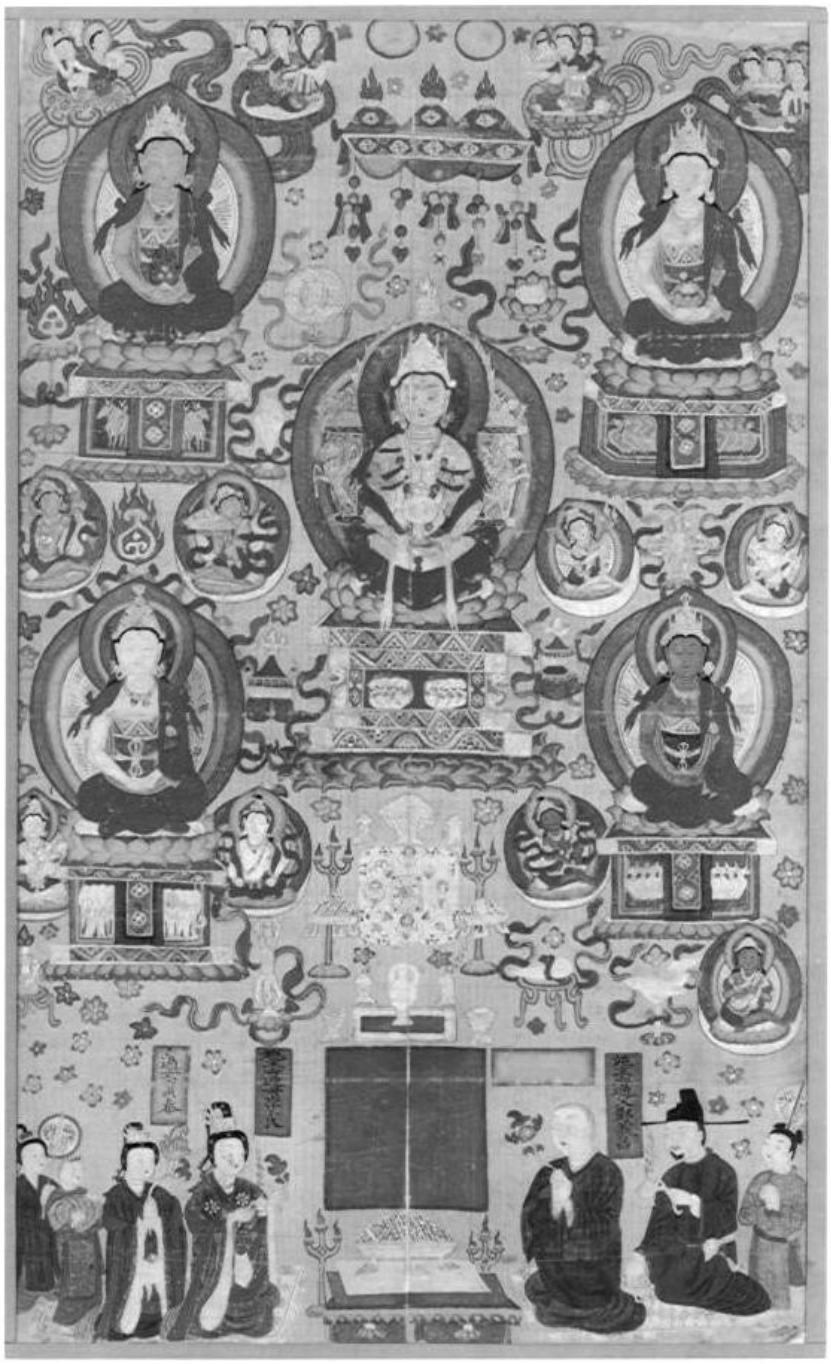


Figure 9. Five Buddhas of the Vajradhātu mandala
(Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17780)



Figure 10. Mandala of the eight deities of the Lotus Section (Padmakula),
second half of the 8th century (Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, EO 1131)

including the Paris "Five Buddhas" are very similar in their colouring and geometric scheme: a red and green lozenge pattern on a white base. In Dunhuang this type of carpet cannot be found on any other type of painting, usually the rugs are undecorated or have a floral pattern.

Stylistic features also link the "Five Buddhas" to Uygur Manichaean illuminated manuscripts. The figures appear very much like a "cutout" design, lacking volume, with some overlapping. In the case of the "Five Buddhas" a certain spatial ambiguity is characteristic of each figure: the Buddhas are outlined with extremely fine even brush strokes. Their garments are coloured in bright reds with a floral edge, the folds of the robes are shown with further extremely fine black lines, which suggest a decorative flatness. At the same time the lotus petals are shaded to suggest volume and the faces too are modelled with fine darker shades (where the top layer of paint has not come off). All these characteristics point to an intimate knowledge of the Uygur methods of representation. How can this unique combination of Tibetan iconography and Uygur style be explained in the context of tenth-century Dunhuang art?

Identity of the donors of the "Five Buddhas"

Even though the exact hair ornament worn by the females on the Guimet "Five Buddhas" is not known to me at present from Turfan banners the similarities to the hairstyle of Uygur female donors described earlier is striking. The hairline of the women represented on the "Five Buddhas" is straight, and the rest of the hair is arranged in a square shape, not popular with the Chinese. Incidentally, this fashion is also very different from the way Tibetan female women were represented at around the same time. Their hair is long, and falls loosely on the shoulder.[26]

The gown worn by these women also differs from the usual Chinese outfit worn with a scarf. Here we can see a dark red gown decorated with golden florets in the case of the first lady donor. The headdress worn by these female donors most probably represents a local fashion favoured by Ganzhou Uygur women, who were not of royal descent, but still of high rank. A variant of the Uygur hairstyle involving loops of hair can also be seen on a fragment from Sengim (MIK III 6761, Härtel – Yaldiz 1987, Cat. No. 47). This figure has a zig-zag hairline with the rest of the hair arranged in loops richly decorated with golden ornaments.

Even though gold was frequently used by Chinese women too to decorate their hair, these were usually hairpins, combs and ornamental decorations, or in the ninth to early tenth centuries metal wires holding up the elaborate coiffure. None of them show the loop style arrangement. Therefore I conclude that the hairstyle of the female donors on the "Five Buddhas" is not Chinese but Uygur.

The flower in the hand of the male donor is almost identical to that in the hands of the Uygur princes in Berlin in Bezeklik Cave 20 (Figure 1) (MIK III 4920b, Härtel –

[26] As for example seen in Tabo: Goddess and female attendants, Tabo, 11th century (Ham-Aglaja Stirn 1997, p. 81).

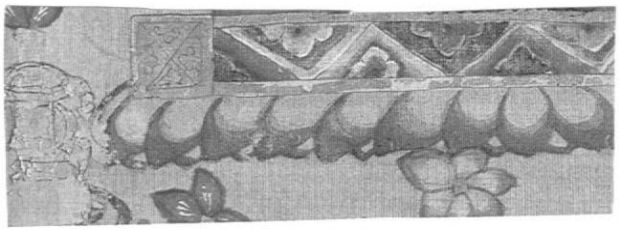


Figure 11. Detail of gilding on the Five Buddhas of the Vajradhātu mandala (cf. Figure 9)



Figure 12. Applied gold leaf decoration
(Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Indische Kunst, MIK III 4979 verso, detail; after Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (1998, pl. 45))

Yaldiz 1987, Cat. No. 67). The facial type of the donor figures kneeling on the Uygur style rugs in the lower section of the "Five Buddhas" is different from the standard tenth-century Dunhuang-style as described by Whitfield, Giès, Duan Wenjie and others.

As a comparative example for the Dunhuang style I selected another painting from the Pelliot collection: a "Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara" composition, dated to A.D. 943. In the lower left section of this painting, separated from the main composition by a line as usual, the donor of the picture, a lady dressed in white robes is represented (Figure 13).[27] In comparison with the Tang style her face appears flat, as it is painted white with only her cheeks picked out in red. However contrasted with the female donors of the "Five Buddhas" her facial features are far more emphasised. The black outline varies very slightly in width and is made up of short, broken strokes, as we can best observe on the scarf falling off her shoulders. Her left hand is shown in a convincing spatial arrangement behind the incense burner, from which decorative black swirls rise depicting the smoke.

She has strong, arched eyebrows, and elongated eyes, with three separate lines defining the eyelids and eyeballs. Most characteristic is the mouth for this standard tenth-century style, as defined by Whitfield: a straight line runs between the two lips, and ends on both sides in a hook.[28] Similar stylistic mannerisms can be observed on the representation of the male donor of another "Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara" composition, dated to A.D. 981 (Figure 14).[29] In his case the eyebrows, the moustache and beard are executed with parallel, short thin lines, resulting in a thicker eyebrow of changing width. A fourth line under the eyes gives further definition to the eyes – this too was a common feature in the second part of the tenth century in Dunhuang painting. Both on the male and female donor portrait the line of the nose is joined with one of the eyebrows.

None of these features can be observed on the "Five Buddhas" painting. First of all the donors occupy the main area of the painting, and are not separated from it by a line, as usual on Dunhuang paintings. The different artistic approach is readily apparent if we compare the male donors kneeling in the lower right part of the picture to the above example (Figure 9). The second figure wears almost identical Chinese clothing and headgear to the standing man on the "Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara" composition. He also has a moustache and beard and holds an incense burner in his hand. However, all details are rendered in a strikingly different way: the man on the "Five Buddhas" has a very round, flat, pink face, outlined in an extremely thin and even, red line. His eyebrows are thin and small, his eyes are small and wide apart, painted with two even red lines, with a single black line only used for the lower eyelid. The eyes are not elongated like commonly seen in tenth-century Dunhuang painting. The mouth is the small rosebud shape.

[27] Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17775.

[28] Whitfield has very detailed observations on similar features on facial types from tenth-century Dunhuang paintings in the British Museum collection (Whitfield 1982–1985, vol. 1, pp. 14–15).

[29] Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17659.



Figure 13. Female donor from a "Thousand-armed Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara", dated A.D. 943 (Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17775)



Figure 14. Male donor from a "Thousand-armed Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara", dated A.D. 981 (Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, MG 17659)

The monk kneeling in front of him and the lady donors on the left share the same characteristics: their faces too appear flat, round and pink, they have very high eyebrows that gives their faces a surprised expression. Their noses are shown as simply a curved line, far from the eyebrows, their mouths are not outlined and are a mere rosebud shape, with only a small black line defining the parting of the lips. I conclude that these features in the representation of the donors appear to correspond to Uygur mannerisms.

On Dunhuang paintings there is often an inscription in the lower part of the composition in the centre, but in the case of the "Five Buddhas" the green square placed between the representation of the offering tables has not been filled in. There are three cartouches inscribed arranged in the usual vertical way, and interestingly a horizontal cartouche has also been added above the head of the kneeling monk on the right, but is left empty. The inscriptions have been translated by Soymié as: "Deng Yichang, deceased father of the donor" 施主亡過父鄧義昌, "Lady Li, deceased mother of the donor" 施主亡過母李氏 and "Yuantai, their deceased daughter" 亡過女貪泰.[30]

Soymié dates this painting to the tenth century. As he convincingly argues, Deng Yichang and Yuantai, two of the donors named in the cartouches have identical names to two people mentioned in the Dunhuang manuscripts.[31] Even though to date works of art on the basis of certain names appearing in manuscripts is not an infallible method, as the identity may be coincidental, here two names only a few years apart have been found, thereby reducing the risk of drawing false conclusions.

In my opinion Soymié's dating is in accordance with the growing Uygur influence in the second half of the tenth century, and also with the stylistic and technical characteristics of the painting, as I have discussed. Elsewhere I have also referred to the similarity of the mandala arrangement on the "Five Buddhas" to examples of early Tibetan art as seen at Mang-nang and Tabo and on a *tangkha* (Russell-Smith 2001, pp. 160–161). Therefore a tenth-century date is likely to be correct.

The "Five Buddhas" is inscribed in Chinese with Chinese names, and so Soymié concluded that consequently it must have been commissioned by Chinese. However, other nationalities often took a Chinese surname in Dunhuang. This was for example the case with the Tibetans, according to Tsuguhito Takeuchi: "many of the people found in these [Tibetan] contracts have a Chinese family name with a Tibetan or a Tibetan and Chinese mixed given name…" (Tsuguhito Takeuchi 1995, p. 19).

Li was in fact the surname of Cao Yijin's Ganzhou Uygur wife.[32] I have already observed that she is represented in Cave 98, one of the largest caves of the mid-tenth century in Dunhuang. Her political importance as the first wife of Cao

[30] Michel Soymié in Giès (1996, p. 70).

[31] "A person called Deng Yichang is mentioned in the manuscript P.2985 V° 2, along with the date 972 A.D. Moreover, in another manuscript (P.3489), dating, it seems to 968 A.D., we learn of a certain Yuantai, a member of a woman's association. If, as it seems likely, these works do indeed refer to the figures known from the inscriptions of the painting, then – since it was executed after their deaths – it must date after 972 A.D." *ibid.*

[32] The surname Li was given to the Uygur *kaghan's* family by the Tang Emperor in gratitude for Uygur military help during the An Lushan rebellion. *v.* Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo [Dunhuang Cultural Research Institute] (ed.) (1987/1990), vol. 5, pp. 211–212.

Yijin cannot be doubted there. Due to the importance of the Ganzhou Uygur women as donors in tenth-century Dunhuang, the most likely argument is that "The Five Buddhas" was also commissioned by Ganzhou Uygur ladies. What is the explanation for the appearance of Tibetan-influenced iconography in a uniquely Uygur style in Dunhuang in the tenth century?

Ganzhou's links with Tibet

The Tibetan iconography represented in an Uygur style can be explained with the Ganzhou Uygurs close links with the Tibetans. Due to the lack of written sources specifically devoted to this issue, all our evidence has to remain indirect at present. During the ninth century the Uygurs captured Ganzhou from the Tibetans, who withdrew further south.[33] Tibetan territory continued to surround Ganzhou's territory from the south and from the east (Tutsomu Iwasaki 1993, p. 17).

In recent years more evidence has come to light that suggests that the Tsong-kha region was very important in the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism during the years of persecution in the central areas. Amy Heller has drawn attention to the importance of the trade routes in the Kokonor region and its cultural role. She became aware of the area's importance due to her research of the Dulan tombs, which are located in the vicinity of the Kokonor lake (Heller 1998). Elsewhere she stresses that this was one of just two areas where Tibetan Buddhist art could survive the persecutions. The Kokonor area became a traditional stronghold of Tibetan Buddhism from the eighth century onwards (Heller 1999, pp. 49–52).

It is important to note the strong links between the Tibetans and the Ganzhou Uygurs. Géza Uray discussed the continued use of Tibetan as a chancery language in Central Asia, among others by the Ganzhou Uygurs and the Hexi Tibetans.[34] In the first half of the tenth century the Amdo Tibetans sent a joint embassy to China with the Ganzhou Uygurs. As Luciano Petech says "As a rule the new kingdom [of the Tibetans] followed a policy of friendship with the Chinese emperor as well as with the Uighur ruler of Kan-chou" (Petech 1983). These and other pieces of indirect evidence make it probable that by the ninth–tenth century there was a strong Tibetan element in the Buddhism in these areas.

Uygur art in Ganzhou and Shazhou

The dating of Uygur Buddhist art has been much debated in recent years. It appears that the traditional dating to the 8th–9th centuries used by Le Coq and Grünwedel can be called into question. At the same time some authors have began to argue for

[33] For the Tibetan gains in Hexi still held in the early ninth century *v* Beckwith (1987, p. 5).

[34] Uray (1981; 1984). I would like to thank Philip Denwood for drawing my attention to these articles.

the eleventh century as the starting point of Uygur Buddhist art.[35] My evidence of Uygur influence on Dunhuang art makes it clear that by the tenth-century Uygur Buddhist art existed in a fairly mature form, but at the same time, this is likely to have been a period for experimentation and close exchanges with Manichaean art. A tenth-century date for the "Five Buddhas" painting fits in well with this historical evidence.

It is also clear that Uygur patronage became increasingly important in Dunhuang in the late tenth and the eleventh centuries. In the historical sources Shazhou and Ganzhou are referred to together on several occasions. As early as A.D. 965 the Uygurs of Ganzhou, Shazhou and Guazhou sent a joint tribute to the Song court (Pinks 1968, p. 26). In A.D. 976 or 977 during the reign of Taizong (976–998) an official was sent to Ganzhou with an imperial edict, in which the Emperor said that he presented the *kaghan* of the Uygurs of Ganzhou and Shazhou different objects and silk. He asked to be sent jade and horses in return. According to Yang Fuxue this is the first reference to the Shazhou Uygurs (Yang 1994, pp. 84–85; Pinks 1968, pp. 26–27; Moriyasu 1980, p. 326).[36] As there also exists a very similar text from A.D. 980 Pinks draws the conclusion that "Sha-chou understand zu dieser Zeit offenbar der Oberhoheit Kanchous." [At this time Shazhou was evidently under Ganzhou's rule.] (Pinks 1968, p. 127, Note 84)

Moriyasu, however has convincingly refuted these statements and says: "During the above periods no historical records indicate that Dunhuang was under direct Uygur rule."[37] Even so Moriyasu acknowledges too that at this time the influence of Ganzhou Uygurs deeply influenced the politics of Shazhou (Moriyasu 2000, pp. 33–34). The second half of the tenth century was undoubtedly a period of strengthening Uygur influence. Uygurs and other Turkic people started settling in Shazhou, and may have aspired for political control in the region. The rulers of Dunhuang started calling themselves Shazhou Huihu 沙州回鶻 soon after the beginning of the eleventh century (Moriyasu 1980, p. 327).

The complete independence of the Shazhou and Ganzhou regimes from the Chinese states is proved by the fact that Shazhou and Ganzhou kept regular contact with the enemies of the Chinese: the Qitan regime of the Liao.[38] The links between the Liao and the Uygurs are very important, as the Xiao clan within the Qitan Liao empire was in fact of Uygur origin, their importance is proved by the fact that the Liao Empresses came from that clan.[39] Good relations continued, as in A.D. 940 joint Uygur–Shazhou envoys arrived at the Liao court (Rong 1996, p. 22, *Liaoshi* 4, 54). This shows that at least in their dealings with the Liao the Uygurs and Shazhou pursued a joint foreign policy from the first half of the tenth century.

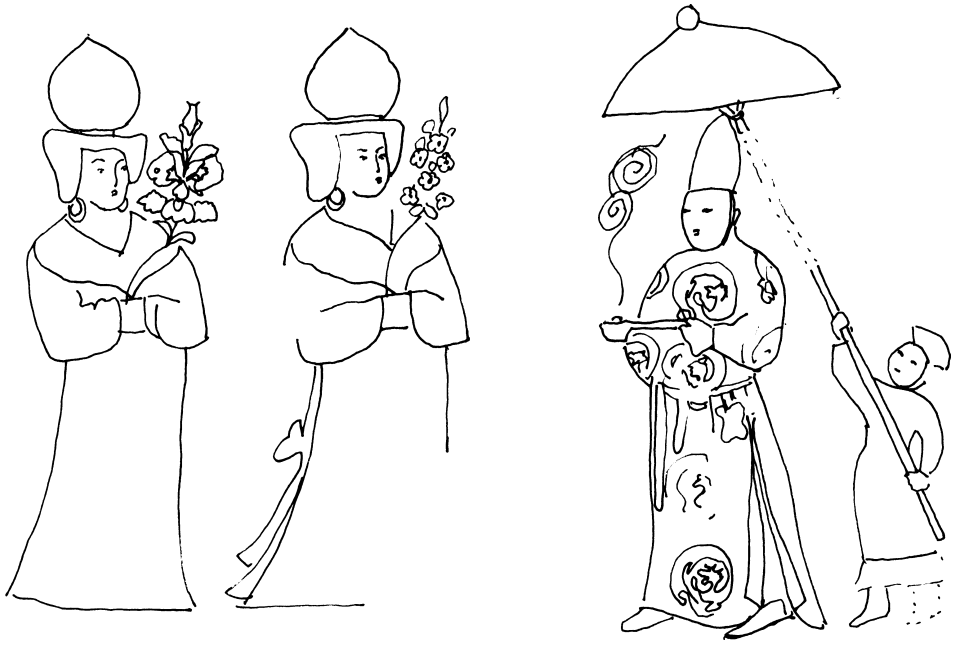
[35] For a discussion about the problems of dating *v.* Russell-Smith (2001, pp. 96–102 and 274–276).

[36] In different historical sources the dates are given alternatively as A.D. 976 or 977.

[37] [Quote translated from the Japanese] Moriyasu (1980, p. 327).

[38] In A.D. 935 the Liao Empress received the Uygurs, it is interesting that Dunhuang also sent envoys at the same time. Rong (1996, p. 21), (*Liaoshi* 3).

[39] Wittfogel – Feng Chia-sheng (1949, p. 93). The importance of these marriage links for art has been pointed out by Gridley (forthcoming).



Figures 15–16. Male and female donors from Dunhuang Cave 409
(after DHMGK, vol. 5, pls. 134–135)

This further shift in power and the increasing dominance of the Uygurs is also reflected in the art of Dunhuang. Proving their important position Uygur royal donor figures were represented in the eleventh-century cave numbered 409 in Dunhuang (Figures 15–16).[40] Although the colour of his robe is black in almost every other respect the male donor figure is dressed the same way as donors shown in Bezeklik (Figure 2). He wears a similar high tiara fastened with a ribbon under the chin, and we can compare the round neckline, the belt with utensils hanging down and the same opening of the garb that reveals the boots. The extreme similarity of the donor's clothing to the Bezeklik example identifies him as an Uygur ruler.[41]

As we have seen in the tenth-century caves the Uygur wives of the Chinese ruling family were shown as important donors. The tenth century was a period of intermarriage, when these Uygur wives may have commissioned some of the best quality paintings such as the Guimet "Five Buddhas" and other important works.[42] As the domination of Uygurs grew in the eleventh century in Dunhuang in Cave 409 the Uygur male and female donors were depicted as patrons in their own right with no reference to Chinese rulers. This agrees well with the historical argument outlined

[40] Reproduced in DHMGK, vol. 5, pl. 135.

[41] Authors in earlier publications used to identify these figures as Tangut, but by in recent literature authors agree that he is an Uygur prince. For a further discussion *v.* Russell-Smith (2001, pp. 266–274).

[42] A full list is given in Russell-Smith (2001, p. 147).

above and makes it clear that Dunhuang was under increasing Uygur domination in the tenth–eleventh centuries. The visual evidence draws our attention to the importance of this question and continuing research will no doubt add much to our understanding this late phase of Dunhuang art.

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