

Mi la ras pa's Representation in Mang yul Gung thang Xylographs: Preliminary Remarks on the Stylistic Changes of “the Laughing Vajra”*

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L'argomento di questo articolo deriva dalle ricerche svolte per due progetti correlati – *Tibetan Book Evolution and Technology* e *Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies* – basati al Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit (Università di Cambridge) tra il 2010 e il 2015. L'articolo è incentrato sulle illustrazioni di Mi la ras pa (1040-1123) trovate nelle xilografie stampate nel regno del Mang yul Gung thang (Tibet sud-occidentale) nel XVI secolo. Lo studio analizza sedici immagini dello *yogin* realizzate in quattro diverse stamperie del regno tra il 1540-1541 e il 1581 e le suddivide in due tipologie stilistiche, la prima delle quali è a sua volta suddivisa in due sottotipi. Le immagini sono esaminate singolarmente e poi comparativamente, attraverso l'analisi di alcuni elementi ricorrenti.

INTRODUCTION

This paper stems from two correlated projects—*Tibetan Book Evolution and Technology* (TiBET) and *Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies* (TTBBC) hosted at the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit (University of Cambridge). These projects had several objectives, such as: 1) to assemble and study extant early xylographs from Southwestern Tibet; 2) to build an online database with information on the different aspects of prints; 3) to build a map of printing houses of that area; 4) to study the production of Tibetan xylographs and their use; 5) to identify the characteristic stylistic features, that is to say front page, layout, *ductus*, orthographic peculiarities and woodcut illustrations, in order to locate the provenance of prints.¹ Research on the last objective, and on woodcut representations in particular, led to the subject of this paper.²

* The figures 1-16, 19-21 are a courtesy of the AHRC Project *Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies* (AH/H001 599X/1).

¹ Information on the Marie Skłodowska Curie Project TiBET awarded to Michela Clemente can be found at <https://www.miasu.socanth.cam.ac.uk/projects/tibetan-book-evolution-and-technology>. Information on the AHRC Project TTBBC led by Uradyn Bulag and Hildegard Diemberger can be found at <https://www.miasu.socanth.cam.ac.uk/projects/transforming-technologies-and-buddhist-book-culture-introduction-printing-and-digital-text>. For further details, see Clemente 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2021b; Clemente, Lunardo 2017; Clemente et al. 2021; Diemberger 2016a; 2016b; Diemberger, Clemente 2013; Diemberger, Elliott, Clemente 2014; Ricciardi, Pallipurath 2016; Boesi 2021; Chilvers, Clemente 2021; Lunardo 2021.

² This paper was first presented at the 15th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, which took place in Paris (July 2019).