

불교의 영험과 치유

Buddhist Magic and Healing in Korea

Lecture 1

Conceptual Considerations: Terms & Definitions in Global Perspective

Prof. Sujung Kim



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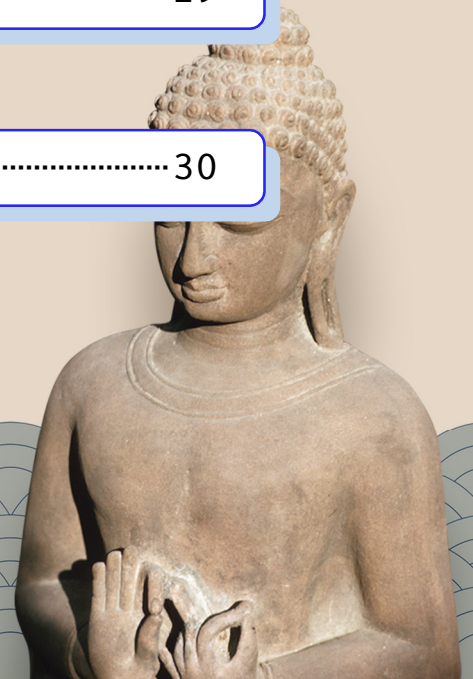
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I. 학습안내

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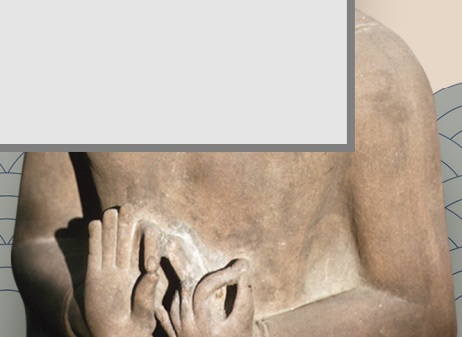
강의개요

This lecture presents the comprehensive history of the healing talismans in the East Asian Buddhism, starting from its Indian origins. While keeping both the global and local perspectives, most of the discussions will be dedicated to unpacking its historical development in Korea with a wide range of talismans used in healing and other Buddhist magic.

2

학습목표

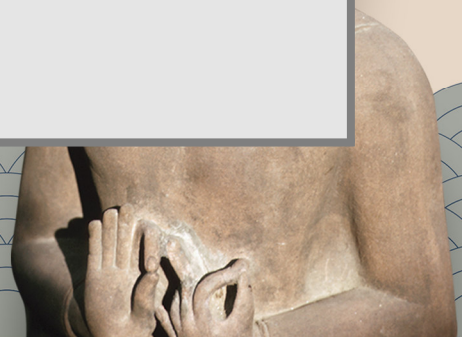
The students will gain a firm knowledge about what magic, healing, and talismans are in Buddhism, and they will be able to understand the centrality of talismans in the Buddhist tradition in Korea and beyond.



3

주차별 강의주제

1주차	Conceptual Considerations: Terms & Definitions in Global Perspective
2주차	Historiography on the Topic
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II. 강의

1-1

Course Orientation

Hello, everyone!

Welcome to ‘Buddhist Magic and Healing’ course. I’m your instructor, Sujung Kim.

In this class, I’m going to give you a course orientation.

In this class, we have three major goals.

The global and yet local-specific history of Buddhist healing talismans in India, China, Japan, and Korea. The emphasis will be on the Buddhist healing talismans used in premodern Korean Buddhism, especially Chosŏn period.

While historical development will be the focus, theoretical and conceptual discussions on magic, healing, and talismans will receive great attention throughout the course.

Let me introduce the course schedule.

Week one has five units, and the main focus will be conceptual considerations.

In this first week, we will cover terms and definitions of key concepts in this course from a global perspective.

Week two has six units, in this week, we will zoom in and look at the historiography on Buddhist magic and Buddhist healing.

Week three has also six units, in this week, we will examine more local development starting from Chinese Buddhism.

Week four has five units, in this week, our focus will be Japanese development of healing talismans.

From Week five to Week ten, we will examine Korean Buddhist healing talismans in a chronological order, from its earliest history all the way down to the contemporary period.

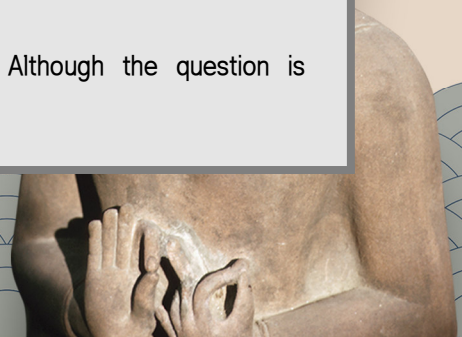
We have three major learning objectives throughout the course.

First, throughout the course, you will learn the global and local history of popular Buddhist practices, such as Buddhist magic and Buddhist healing in Buddhist Asia.

Second, you will understand the chronological development and historical significance of Buddhist magic and healing in Korean Buddhism.

Third, you will be able to articulate the complexity around these contested terms such as magic and healing in Buddhist Studies.

Let us start with this question, ‘How can we study talismans?’ Although the question is simple, the answer is quite complicated.



Many early European Buddhologists considered talismanic practice in Buddhism as a degenerated form of Buddhism that did not deserve any serious scholarly attention. This course wants to correct this earlier bias against talismans.

I also want to make sure that this course is about, not of, Buddhist magic and healing. In other words, this course is about the history of Buddhist magic and healing.

Lastly, I also want to emphasize that the exclusion of magical practices and healing powers from most discussions of Buddhism in the modern academic discourse that is partly due to the appropriation of Buddhism by Westerners as well as the effect of modernization movements within Asian Buddhism.

In this slide, what we see is different forms of Buddhisms. I use 'Buddhisms', instead of 'Buddhism', because Buddhism can not be summarized or reduced to one singular entity.

Although the division is not perfect, from this, we can see how Buddhism spread to different geographical and cultural areas in Asia, and formed different types of Buddhisms.

Often Buddhism is divided by its main doctrines, so that we have Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Vajrayana Buddhism.

But there are other ways to characterize. Some scholars like to use more geographical markers so that we have southern Buddhism, where Thai, Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos Buddhism can be collectively belonged.

In the eastern regions of Asia, China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam, shared common features of Buddhism.

And in northern Buddhism, sometimes we call it Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism, Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, and Nepal.

Let me show you the map here in a minute.

This map shows the different Buddhisms and their geographical expansions. Since Buddhism begun in northern India, it first spread to the rest of the Indian subcontinent, then Ceylon (or Sri Lanka) and then basically all possible directions with the movement of people, mostly through trade routes.

Other than geographical division, there are other ways to explain different forms of Buddhism, such as Exoteric Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism.

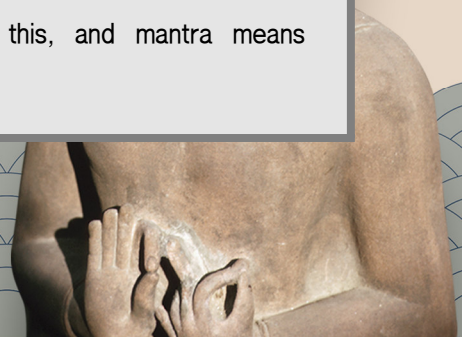
The main difference between the two is, esoteric tends to emphasize the higher status of its teachings, designed to be more advanced practitioners, and they believe that enlightenment can be achieved in this very body and in this very lifetime.

This idea, called esoteric is also not unique to Buddhism. As a religious thought and movement, it is found in many other Indian religions and other monotheistic religions as well.

Esoteric Buddhism is also sometimes called Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism.

I often call its main practice 3M: 3M means Mudra, Mantra, and Mandala.

Mudra is a Sanskrit term meaning hand gestures, something like this, and mantra means incantations or spells.



Mandala is a geometric pattern that represents the world of the enlightenment.

And all of these three are applied for the esoteric practitioners to realize their goals.

They also believe that external helps from deities can facilitate their goal to realize their Buddhahood in this very life.

This esoteric Buddhism was popularized in Tibet and also Japan throughout the Buddhist history.

But Chinese and Korean Mahayana Buddhism also incorporated esoteric Buddhist elements.

Talismans are often found in Indian esoteric Buddhist literature, and Chinese indigenous texts, in particular, the dharani literature.

What you see here is the screenshot of the Tokyo University-based website in which the entire Buddhist canon, called the Taisho Buddhist canon is digitized.

In this digitized canon, we have numerous Buddhist texts written in Classical Chinese that are searchable and especially in the mikkyo section, we have many texts that contain talismans used in Buddhism.

In this website called International Dunhuang Project, we also can access countless Buddhist talismans once collected in a small cave temple in Dunhuang.

On this right side, you can take a glimpse of how talismans would look in this manuscript format.

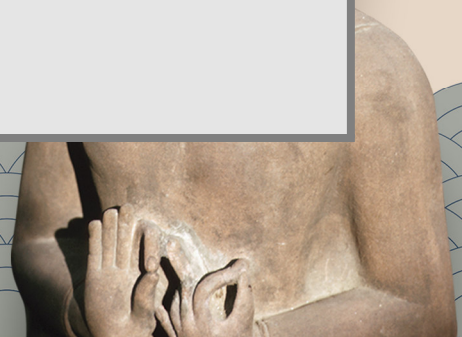
In this course, we will use this platform to examine ancient Buddhist talismans used both in China and beyond.

This orientation presented the overview of the course and course schedule.

We also discussed different traditions or forms of Buddhism, emphasizing the existence of Esoteric Buddhism.

We examined the places in which the talismans are found in both the canonical and non-canonical Buddhist sources.

We will examine the highly contested term ‘magic’ as a way to understand the significance and centrality of the magical practice in Buddhism in the next time.



1-2

Magic

Welcome back everyone. From this unit, we will dive into the major concept, starting with the term magic.

This unit has two learning objectives.

First, in this unit, you will learn the complexity of the term, magic in the history of Religion, and Buddhist Studies.

Second, by understanding this value-laden term, you will be able to reevaluate the term and know how to use the term in the study of Buddhist materials.

What you see in this slide is a diagram called a magic square, often found in the Islamic tradition.

In the smaller square boxes, what you see is Arabic numbers.

What makes a magic square is if the sums of the numbers in each row, column, and both main diagonals are the same.

Interestingly, this diagram is found in Indian religious context, even in Tibetan Buddhist tangka.

On your lefthand side, you see an 18th-century Tibetan tangka, a mandala that aided practitioner's advancement.

On the right hand side, you see an enlarged image of the wheel, in which we find a magic square in Tibetan rendering, surrounded by 12 zodiac signs representing the entire cosmos.

Here, we have two examples from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the city of New York.

Another example that comes from the Islamic world is a talismanic shirt on the left-hand side.

This sample shows that when soldiers and kings went to the battlefield, they needed spiritual protection to overcome their fear of death.

For that, sacred verses from the Quran were the best talismanic remedy for them to stamp on their shirt, and wear under their armor.

On the right-hand side, we have an example from Choson Korea.

In this 19th century example, we have a very similar concern.

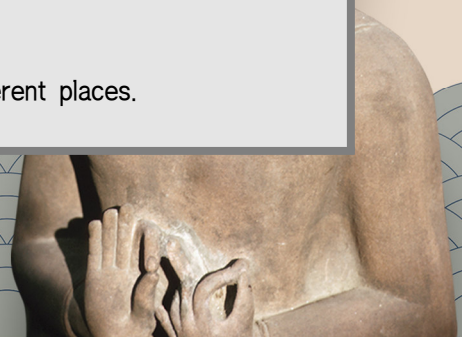
In this cotton armor, many layers of cotton which even blocked bullets is another prime example of how talismans provided peace of mind to the soldiers when they needed these talismans on their armor.

In this example, we have two talismans and five diagrams stamped from both Daoist and Buddhist traditions.

It is not easy to define the term magic.

First of all, it is hard to agree on one definition among scholars.

Also, it is difficult because the concept changes over time and in different places.



The term can be traced back to the Greek ‘mageia’ (or Latin ‘magia’) and beyond to the Persian ‘magos’ , meaning a priest or religious specialist.

The ancient Persian meaning also implies a secret tribe or society, who are individuals responsible for royal sacrifices, funeral rites, divination, and interpretation of dreams.

In ancient Greece, magic is viewed as a gift from the gods.

By the end of the sixth century in Greece, magic acquires negative connotations.

In ancient Rome, the magician performs two functions: healing and divination.

In time, divination is transformed into harmful practices intended to harm others.

Early Christianity used this term to define themselves and disparage their rivals.

Thus, magic was characterized as the work of evil demons.

For instance, the ‘miracles’ of Jesus and the Apostles had to be strongly differentiated from ‘magic’ , which is problematic.

The ancient Greek, Rome, and Christian churches’ characterization of magic as something foreign to religion is echoed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropological theorists in Europe, and this western intellectual’s prejudice continuously influenced the later academic study of magic.

For instance, the founding father of Anthropology, Edward B. Tylor wrote this book, called Primitive Culture in 1871, where magic is discussed in the evolutionary term.

Soon, James G. Frazer wrote another influential work, The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion in 1890.

In this book, he describes magic as the first, primitive stage in mankind’s attempt to understand and control the world.

Frazer thought magic evolved into religion, a more sophisticated system that relied on supernatural beings.

Religion, in turn, was superseded by science.

After Frazer, later European intellectual traditions known as anthropology and sociology also joined this attempt to distinguish religion from magic.

Emile Durkheim, the founding father of sociology, for instance, saw religion as a shared set of beliefs held by a social group; magicians on the other hand, were lone agents, whose important relationships were with their clients.

Thus, Durkheim famously concluded, ‘there is no church of magic’ .

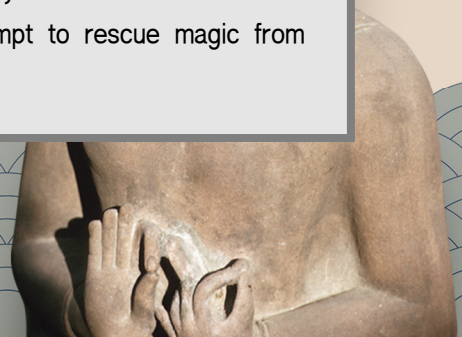
This claim basically denies any forms of magic in the religious setting.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of Psychoanalysis, saw magic in a similar vein.

He saw it as a form of wish fulfillment, in which the desire is projected onto the magical act itself.

In this way, magic was relegated and reduced, and not worthy of study.

Only in recent years, a more critical scholarship emerged as an attempt to rescue magic from the problematic framing of magic in the previous generations.



Sam Van Schaik's work called 'Buddhist Magic is very relevant to our study' .

This is the first book that seriously engages with magic in Buddhism ever.

According to the author, as far back as we can see in the historical record, Buddhist monks and nuns have offered services including healing, divination, rainmaking, aggressive magic, and love magic to local clients.

Van Schaik, the scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, also argues in the book that magic and healing have played a key role in Buddhism's flourishing.

While Van Schaik's point is well proven, still some scholars are not willing to embrace the term, magic.

Some says it is even better if we abandon the word 'magic' altogether due to its contested nature.

But once again, it is useful to know that in the work of Van Schaik, magic is shaken off the previous negative connotations.

And in this newer context, magic is not something weird or irrational.

It is a phenomenon that is found virtually every religion and culture, from European Middle Ages to contemporary South Korea, as a crucial part of people's beliefs and practices.

Thus, we need to study magic.

So, is there magic in Buddhism?

Yes, there is. Plenty, actually.

It begins with Buddhism.

The life of the Buddha is full of magic, magical narratives and elements to attract followers and to sacralize the founder.

So again, we can make it clear that in this course, 'magic' no longer carries the baggage of the 19th century European criticism.

In other words, magic does not stand in opposition to religion.

Rather, magic and religion share more grounds than one might think, and magic was, in fact, at the heart of the rituals of Buddhist tradition, divinity worship.

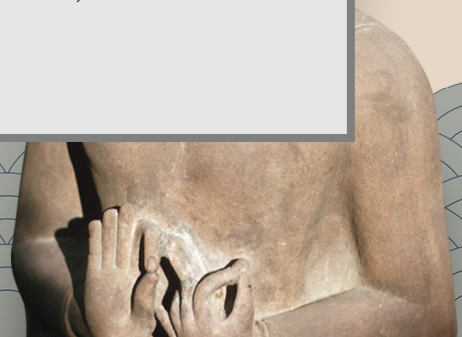
Magic was used for this worldly ends for the most part, but was also used to attain Buddhahood in Buddhism in the distant past and even now.

In this unit, we examined the complex layers of the term, magic, especially its religious and intellectual baggage in the Western world.

We also learned that when it comes to 'Buddhist magic' , this term 'magic' is rather positively defined as one of the main forces and elements in the Buddhist devotionism and ritualism.

In the following unit, we will delve into another key term, 'healing' in the Buddhist context.

Similar to the term 'magic' that we just studied, we will define, examine, evaluate and also contextualize what healing means.



1-3

Healing

Welcome back, everyone. In this third unit, we will study the term ‘healing’ .

We have two goals today.

First, at the end of this unit, you will understand the multi-layered meanings of the term ‘healing’ .

Second, you will be able to articulate what ‘healing’ means in Religious Studies in general, and Buddhist Studies in particular.

Let’s begin with a global perspective.

Across cultures, sickness and healing were thought to be closely related to religious or moral concerns.

Priests, shamans, or holy persons in the premodern society, therefore, often acted as healing agents.

These healers were regarded as specialists who can communicate with invisible beings such as demons or gods as their way to seek cures, and also performed rituals as someone who understood the link between morality, taboo, and illness.

Often the goal of these rituals was to establish a harmony lost by the sick person.

On the right hand side, we see an Ethiopian healing scroll used almost 2000 years ago.

Clearly, the angelic being in the middle depicts a weapon that was used to get rid of these disease demons.

Buddhism also actively incorporated healing strategies in its doctrine and practice from very early on.

In Indian Buddhist literature, the Buddha is often described as a doctor.

Among numerous Buddhas in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, we can see a Buddha called Bhaisajyaguru, meaning the Medicine Buddha.

One prominent example of the Medicine Buddha is depicted on your right-hand side here: a 17th century example from Japan stored at the Metropolitan Museum.

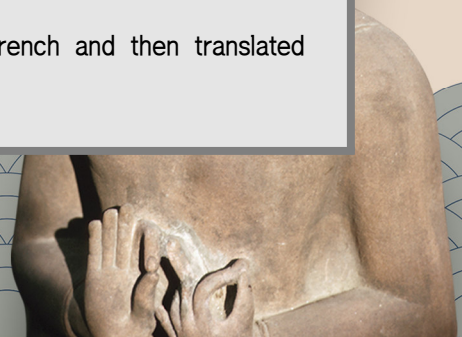
We can easily identify this Medicine Buddha, because he often holds a medicine jar in his hand, like this.

The long-standing Indian Ayurvedic medical system also was translated into Buddhism.

In the early history of Buddhism, we have ample examples of how Buddhist monastics also carried medicine and how Buddhist monasteries also functioned as proto-hospitals.

Several scholars have already written about the topic.

The most classic one is Paul Demieville’s work originally written in French and then translated into English.



In recent years, Pierce Salguero and Katja Triplett also studied ‘Healing and Buddhism’ in China, and Japan, respectively.

Other scholars also have worked on Tibetan and other Buddhist worlds.

But no one has not yet studied the Buddhist healing traditions in Korea in a monograph.

Only a few short articles exist.

What we want to know now is how Buddhist healing works.

In the premodern world, Buddhist masters were often straddling between the world of medicine and the world of magic.

They used incantations and talismans to cure.

But at the same time, as elite members of the society, they were also often well versed with herbs and medicine, known as ‘materia medica’.

They were also knowledgeable about what we call ‘alternative’ healing methods, such as using aroma, bathing, or sauna as their world was closer to the use of these natural ingredients and environment.

In Tibet, actually, Buddhist monastics were exclusively doctors.

With the trade routes and pilgrimage passages, Buddhist monastics gained medical knowledge from their trips and spread them to their local patients.

They studied plants and minerals, and wrote treatises in a book form.

On the right hand side, you see medical tools that were used by Tibetan Buddhist masters, currently this is stored at the Rubin Museum in New York.

According to Yoeli-Tlalim’s exciting new book, called ‘Reorienting Histories of Medicine’, she also uncovers this plum fruit called myrobalan was known in the Buddhist world and beyond as a cure-all substance.

This myrobalan was even ended up being depicted in the painting of tibetan Medicine Buddha.

Tibetan monastics enjoyed their systematic medical training and continued state sponsorship to preserve their knowledge.

The most well-known example is called ‘The Four Treatises of Tibetan Medicine’.

As you see in the 18th-century example, we can see that they reached a high-level understanding of the human anatomy and its function.

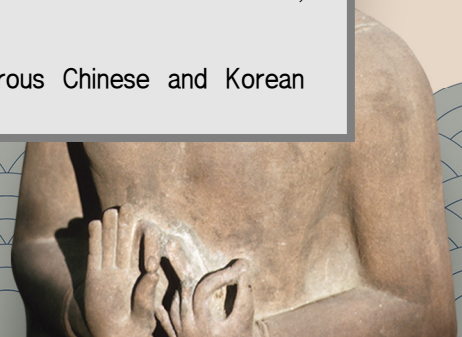
This text was originally composed in the 12th century, and even now they are considered the best medical work from Tibet.

Moving our gaze to Japan, we have a 10th-century text, titled ‘Ishinpō’, or the ‘Core Medical Prescriptions’.

Compiled by Yasunori Tamba in 984, the text captures the state-of-the-art medical knowledge, theory, techniques, and practices of the time.

Various topics were covered including sexual diseases, dental issues, or even women’s health, which was a rare topic then.

In the Edo period, even illustrations were made as you see numerous Chinese and Korean



medical texts no longer exist, including the Silla Pobsa pang(신라법사방), or Prescriptions of Silla Buddhist masters, which was compiled during the Unified Silla period.

So, it is a highly valuable source for the study of Japanese Buddhist medicine, but also Chinese and Korean medicine and healing.

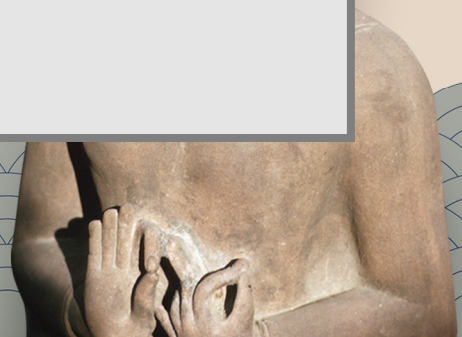
In this unit, we unpacked the convoluted concept, healing.

We tackled the term from various angles with an array of examples from Buddhist Asia.

We also studied the Buddhist monastics' role in shaping the development of Buddhist Medicine across Asia.

In the following unit, we will continue our close examinations on crucial terms for this course, which is talismans.

We will untangle various meanings of the term in different times and spaces.



1-4

Talisman

Welcome back. In this unit, we will finally jump into the term ‘talisman’ .

This unit examines one of the core terms of our course, which is the talismans.

After this unit, students will be able to discern the historical development of the term.

Students will be also able to gain solid knowledge about the significance of talismans in Buddhist healing tradition.

Family resemblance is a philosophical concept popularized by Wittgenstein.

I think it is relevant to our problem here because we have so many terms around talisman that belong and not belong in the same group at the same time.

Talismans are often interchangeably used with similar terms such as amulets, charms, writs, or seals.

In the following, we will unpack these terms to understand what talisman means and why we continue to use this term ‘talismans’ in this lecture series.

Let me begin with the term ‘amulet’ .

The English word ‘amulet’ comes from the Latin ‘amuletum’ , whose etymology has been traced back to the Arabic noun ‘hamalet’ , meaning an object, not necessarily textual, worn on the body, especially around the neck, as a ‘preservative’ against a host of actions.

Often it contains religious verses, and names of saints or angels to be thought to have some magical properties.

How about charm?

A charm is a small ornament worn as a necklace or as a bracelet.

Now, we know that a talisman is no different from an amulet.

This word ‘charm’ is often used in the more ancient context, such as this example from ancient Egypt that contains names of deities, beneficiaries of the protection.

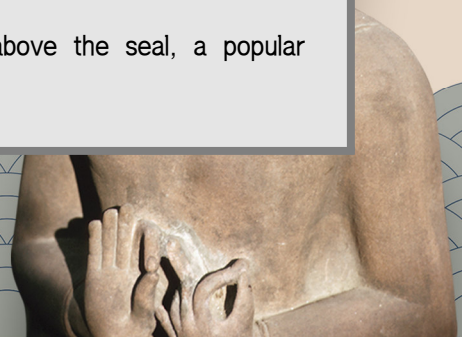
As you can see here, this papyrus charm was folded into a small package and worn on a string around a neck.

A seal has an ancient origin as well, roughly originated from Mesopotamia around 6000 B.C.E.

Unlike the personal nature of an amulet, or a charm, a seal was more public or social, functioning as securing closure, asserting identity, marking property, and guaranteeing commitment;

Widespread methods of reproducing and using in different circumstances such as affixed to documents, attached to relics, stamped on goods, given as gifts, worn for apotropaic purposes, or deposited in tombs.

In this talismanic seal, we see Kufic script in Islamic tradition and above the seal, a popular diagram, known as Solomon’s seal is stamped to make it more official.



A writ is another official document.

It refers to a legal document from a law court that tells you that you will be involved in a legal process and explains what you must do.

In the Chinese culture, one of the first uses of what we call ‘talisman’ is in fact related to the legal and imperial command.

Also, in Daoist talismans, often the efficacy relies on summoning or commanding deities to do something and often call them Daoist writs.

Some believe that the term ‘talisman’ comes from another ancient term ‘tally’.

A tally is basically something that you see here in this image.

An object can be split into two sides and used to verify the identity or to command an imperial order in ancient China.

But some other cultures used the term differently.

In the Christian European tradition, talismans often were embedded with astrological signs and knowledge.

Obviously talisman is an English translation.

In the Chinese tradition, often ‘fu’ in Chinese or ‘pu(부)’ in Korean were used to refer to those objects used for protection.

It does not have to be involved with astrological knowledge.

Two major principles of using ‘fu’: to ward off evil spirits and to bring good luck for both the living and the dead.

All of these terms, one way or the other, have one common purpose, that is an object to communicate with the invisible beings and to manipulate the given situations for the interest of the holder.

While some are also more social and others are more private in nature, these terms have been used without much distinction in the previous scholarship.

Perhaps it would be helpful then to define and streamline.

Throughout this course, I define a talisman as any tangible object regarded to possess some magical and spiritual qualities, and among all the possible forms that talismans can assume, we will focus on paper talismans often in two-dimensional.

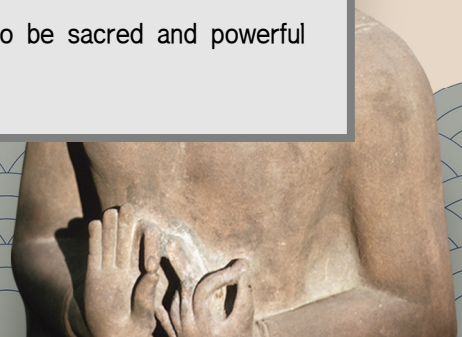
I may use the term amulets sometimes, but often an amulet refers to three-dimensional objects which functioned the same as talismans in essence.

Here, I laid out the common aspects of all the talismans found across culture.

Regardless of the religious or cultural tradition that it belongs, all these objects were created and consumed for immediate protection from disease, demons, and death.

Various materials, such as metal, wood, paper, skin, cloth, etc., were used in a wide range of formats.

Carefully arranged images such as symbols and diagrams considered to be sacred and powerful were embedded with/without texts.



Often talismans invoke names of deities, excerpts from the sacred texts, and sometimes include the names of beneficiaries.

Mode of production differs as well.

Often talismans were scribed, drawn, and printed.

In terms of printing technology, which is closely associated with the history of talismans, the technology spread from East Asia to the Islamic world, and again from the Islamic world to Europe.

In the last two decades, newer generations of scholarship shed new light on talismans or amulets, reconfiguring the outdated framework of ‘primitive superstition’, but still, not so much development in the scholarship.

Talismans are not visually elite enough for the art historians to study, and also not so appealing to religious scholars whose scholarship often prefers religious doctrines, texts, and more clearly defined religious practices.

Now, we finally arrive at the section where we term ‘Buddhist’ talismans.

This term is used in Buddhist settings throughout history.

But also among scholarly communities, sinic or Chinese Buddhist talismans were understood as borrowing from Daoism.

Extant examples and recent scholarship say, however, otherwise.

The earliest mention of talismans in Daoism comes from the sixth century, while the earliest mention of talismans in Buddhism comes from the fifth century in China.

In other words, there are many reasons to believe that there were mutual borrowings between the two.

Although the form differs from Chinese ‘fu’, talismans have an Indian origin.

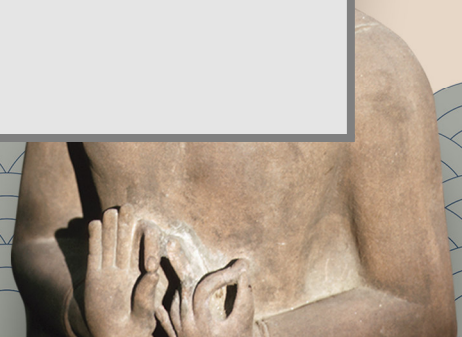
But as we still study here, the Korean talismanic tradition had huge influences from the Chinese, rather than the Indian ones.

To sum up, this unit examined the term ‘talisman’ as a way to establish further discussions on the topic.

There are several similar and yet different terms around the term, although each term was embedded and evolved within specific historical moments.

Among these terms, we will use the term ‘talismans’ in this course, and we will continue to unpack what ‘Buddhist talisman’ means in different parts of Buddhist Asia.

In the following unit, the last unit of the first week, we will delve into the term ‘dharani’ from its beginning in Indian all the way to the Korean Buddhist context.



1-5

Dharani

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to ‘Buddhist Magic and Healing’ class.

Today is the last unit of our first week.

In this last unit, we will examine the term ‘dharani’.

In this unit, we will examine the complexity of the term ‘dharani’.

This unit also explains the relationships between dharanis and talismans, the two most well-established magical components in Buddhism.

After this unit, you will be able to understand what dharani-talismans are, and their place in the Buddhist healing tradition.

Dhāraṇī, or mantra, or sometimes in English incantation, or sometimes even the word ‘spells’ are used, and this is a religious practice found in nearly all Indic religious traditions and beyond.

Between dharani and mantra, in the Buddhist context, these two are interchangeably used, and between the two terms, dhāraṇī are more commonly used.

The etymology says it originally means ‘to support’ or ‘to hold’.

In other words, it supports or holds the great capaciousness of the bodhisattva, and bodhisattva’s capacity to remember and understand the teachings and his skill in applying them, as well as brief texts that served as mnemonic devices and contemplative objects.

The efficacy of dhāraṇīs is usually said to inhere in their correctly pronounced syllables, rather than in the meanings, a feature that is salient in Indian religions where orality is more highlighted.

The dhāraṇīs in their inscribed forms, that is ‘dhāraṇī-talisman’, achieved great popularity in Buddhist practice, especially within Esoteric Buddhism.

As I mentioned earlier, in Indian religion, the oral components are more emphasized.

For a long time, the Vedas were orally transmitted, and so did Buddhist texts.

They believe in the power of sound, and see human letters as more secondary.

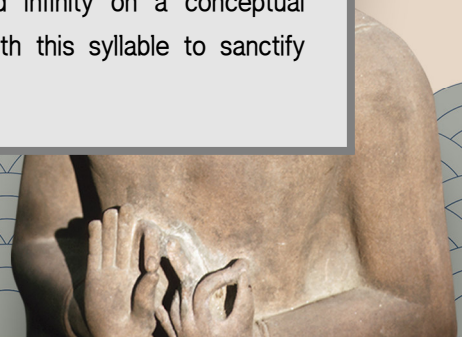
Om is a good example of such.

In the Indian ancient belief, there was a sacred sound at the beginning of everything, and the sound was om.

Om represents everything, the beginning and the ending of the entire cosmos.

It comprises of three syllables, A+U+M or [a+u+m], and each syllable represents a particular moment or movement that repeats endlessly.

Om is the most sacred sound and letter, it signifies the origin, and infinity on a conceptual level, and later became a custom for any sacred incantations to start with this syllable to sanctify the following words.



As you see here, the sound eventually turned into the letter, or you might call it orality to literacy, which was a common pattern in the ancient world.

The script that Indians and later East Asian Buddhists preferred to write as the sacred language was the siddham script.

Siddham means ‘accomplished’ or ‘perfected’ in Sanskrit.

It flourished between 600 to 1200 Common Era, as a script.

This medieval script was commonly used to write Sanskrit liturgical texts.

And later Esoteric Buddhist traditions in Japan in the Middle Ages used this script in various devotional contexts.

In China, as well as Korea, especially Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, this script was also the most popular one among many other Indian scripts.

What you see here is one example of Siddham from Chosŏn, Korea.

For the Korean Buddhists, three languages were used to recite the powerful dharani such as this one, called the Crown Dharani.

What you see here is a three-fold structure.

First Siddham, then Korean transliteration, and then Chinese transliteration were put side by side.

Using Korean was one advantage for those people who couldn't read Siddham and Classical Chinese.

So, this dharani was very likely popularized among the women and the lower social circles in the Koryŏ or Chosŏn society.

Another popular use of dharani was to materialize it.

So, people stamped on various surfaces.

Here, you see one of the popular dharani, such as known as the wish-fulfilling dharani.

It was very popular in the Tang period in Chinese history, but also became a vogue in Korea in the Choson period.

Often in a very short form, dharani promotes all sorts of mundane benefits, pretty much everything you wish for.

This particular dharani says, if you wear it on your body, the benefits will be even more augmented.

For this reason, this particular dharani was often used for funerary rituals, often stamped on the funerary items for the benefit of the deceased.

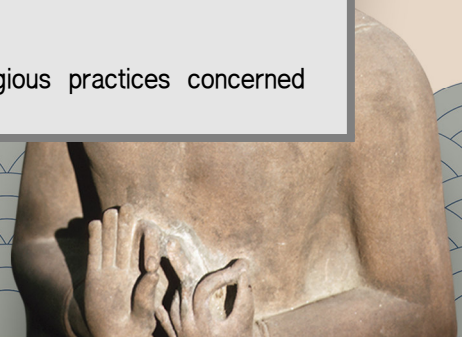
As we have discussed so far, dharani initially possess a sonic quality.

But later people wanted to use it as a talisman to capture the sacred sound and to materialize in a more concrete and repeated way.

It thus came to be used as talismans, and I call this ‘Dharani-talisman’ from now on.

In this unit, we explored the concept of dharani in Indian religions.

While the term ‘dharani’ engaged with a particular mode of religious practices concerned

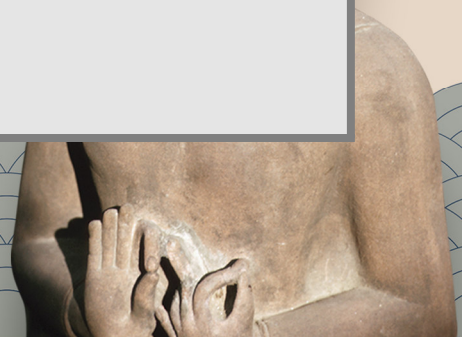


with the sound in East Asian Buddhism, followers of Buddhism also attempted to materialize these sounds and used them as talismans.

Among the various dharanis, we also examined the Wish-fulfilling dharani as the best example to understand the presence of the dharani-talisman in East Asian Buddhism.

In the next unit, we will move on to the historiography of the talismans.

By examining major scholarship on this very topic, we will arrive at a better understanding of what talismans are, and how they have been studied in the Anglophone scholarship so far.



1-6

Bodhisattva

Hello, everyone!

In this unit, we will examine this important term ‘bodhisattva’ as a way to build a foundation for our later discussions.

We have two goals.

In this unit, students will study key ideas of Mahayana Buddhism, and especially the role of the bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism, to which Korean Buddhism belongs.

After this unit, students will be able to articulate how Mahayana Buddhism differs from other Buddhist traditions, and why the bodhisattva became such a prominent figure in the tradition, and the significance of the bodhisattva in the Mahayana Buddhist soteriology.

Mahayana Buddhism is where Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Buddhism belong.

Thus, before we study more about the talismanic culture in these areas, we may want to know the characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism.

Shakyamuni Buddha is, as you may know, the key figure of the entire Buddhist tradition.

According to tradition, he lived in the 6th century Before Common Era in India, and after 80 some years of career, he passed away.

But after he died, his followers developed different ideas about who he really was.

Previously, especially in the South and South-Asian Buddhist tradition, Shakyamuni Buddha was seen as a merely human teacher, just like one of us.

But he found the path of liberation, and therefore, as his human followers, we just simply have to follow his footsteps, and this was the previously held idea.

However, about 500 years after the demise of this teacher, his Indian followers began to wonder whether he really was a human teacher.

Some came up with a brilliant idea that he did not actually die.

In this tradition, Shakyamuni Buddha was never a human being, but a cosmic being that does not experience what humans experience, such as birth, aging, sickness, and death.

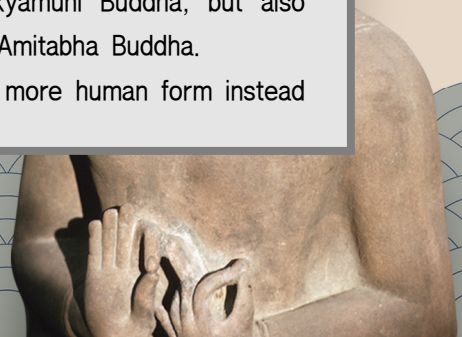
As a skillful means, this cosmic being manifested in the human form in certain time and space in India to teach his teachings to his human followers.

So, we call this tradition the Mahayana tradition, and this Mahayana tradition developed this idea of cosmic Buddha even further.

So, there are more than one Buddha depending on the roles.

So, in the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon, we have this cosmic Shakyamuni Buddha, but also other Celestial Buddhas, such as Vairocana Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, and Amitayus Buddha.

And interestingly this is the time when the Buddha was depicted as a more human form instead



of the previous tendency that avoided to visualize the Buddha, which often is called aniconism.

In this expansion of the Mahayana pantheon, we now have other celestial figures such as the bodhisattvas, other celestial gods called deva gods, and countless numbers of protective deities that were incorporated into this new cosmic world order.

Bodhisattva means literally a being who is orientated towards enlightenment.

By definition, this celestial being is the embodiment of the spiritual ideal of Mahayana Buddhism because bodhisattva postpones his or her enlightenment to save other human beings.

So, this embodiment of the spiritual ideal of Mahayana Buddhism is drastically contrast with the earlier model which is Arhat who was more interested in his or her own salvation.

Bodhisattva dedicates his or her efforts to the salvation of other beings, therefore they were elevated or they were thought to be even higher than Arhat.

And the ideal is inspired by the lengthy career of the Buddha before he became enlightened, as described in Jātakas literature, a set of narratives in which was devised to justify how the prince Gautama eventually became the Shakyamuni Buddha.

Let's see this image.

We see a very interesting folding screen in this, and what you see is the Heart Sutra.

So, how the bodhisattva gained a strong identity and prominence is through the doctrines and through the scriptures.

And one of the famous texts in this group is called the Heart Sutra.

And on this slide, you see that the Heart Sutra is inscribed in this particular form.

The Heart Sutra is one of the most famous and well used texts in the Mahayana Buddhism.

And this particular image that you see is done by the calligrapher Kim Tae-seok, and the entire script is written on the folding screen in the talismanic font.

So, let me explain a little bit more about the Heart Sutra as a way to understand the bodhisattva.

This is the most popular ritual text in Mahayana Buddhism, and even in the contemporary periods all over in East Asia, this text is always recited in virtually every ritual conducted at the temple.

The main idea is to teach the perfection of wisdom called 'Prajnaparamita'.

According to a careful scholarly investigation, this text is a Chinese invention.

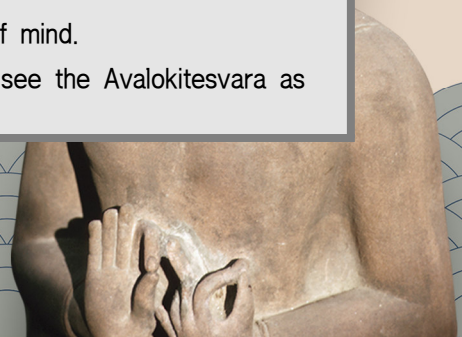
In Chinese, the text contains only 260 Chinese characters, and as you can see, how short the text is.

Although I mentioned that the text is used in the ritual context, it is also a condensed contemplation manual.

In other words, when you engage with a text, it does not necessarily mean that you read or recite a text.

Rather, it allows you to arrive at a calmer and more collected state of mind.

Most Buddhists memorize this text by heart, and in the text, we also see the Avalokitesvara as



the key bodhisattva who promotes the importance of wisdom.

Since the text is not that long and very important, let's look at the sutra closely line by line, and see how Avalokitesvara appears in the text.

And this particular rendition is the translation by Edward Conze.

So, let's look at the text together, and let me read.

It starts with the title, 'Om' which is the sacred sound, any Buddhist text starts with this kind of sacred sound, 'Om Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom the Lovely, the Holy!'

Avalokitesvara, now we see the bodhisattva here, the Holy Lord and Bodhisattva, was moving in the deep course of the Wisdom which has gone beyond.

He looked down from on high, he beheld but five heaps or five skandhas, and he saw that in their own-being they were empty.

So, this is the main idea, and this idea is, like, repeatedly present with different sets of elements.

Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness.

So, it appears to be almost like a pun, but basically, it tries to deconstruct every constructed human conventional wisdom by saying that everything is empty, even empty is empty.

Whatever is emptiness, that is form, the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness.

Here, O Sariputra, all dharmas, teachings are marked with emptiness; they are not produced or stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete.

Therefore, O Sariputra, in emptiness there is no form nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness.

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind; no sight-organ element, and so forth, until we come to; no mind-consciousness element.

There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so forth, until we come to.

There is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death.

There is no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path.

There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.

Therefore, O Sariputra.

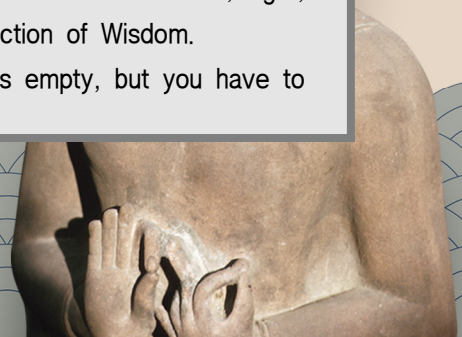
This is the last page.

It is because of his non-attainments that a Bodhisattva, through having relied on the Perfection of Wisdom, dwells without thought-coverings.

In the absence of thought-coverings he has not been made to tremble, he has overcome what can upset him, and in the end he — Avalokitesvara — attains Nirvana, the enlightenment.

All those who appear as Buddhas in the three periods of time fully awake to the utmost, right, and perfect wisdom, enlightenment because they have relied on the Perfection of Wisdom.

So, at this part, you kind of see that they really promote everything is empty, but you have to



rely on the wisdom which is ‘everything is empty.’

Therefore you should know the prajnaparamita, which is the perfection of wisdom, as the great spell, the spell of great knowledge, the utmost spell, the unequaled spell, allayer of all suffering, in truth — for what could go wrong?

By the prajnaparamita has this spell been delivered.

It runs like this, so this is sort of the ending mantra, ‘gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha’ which means ‘Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O, what an awakening, all-hail!’

Now, let’s unpack this somewhat enigmatic text.

The whole verse is a dialogue, and as you see, Avalokitesvara is the main interlocutor who teaches this higher teaching to Sariputra, he represents older tradition, Arhat tradition.

So now, Mahayana is claiming that ‘Let me teach you something.’

So, Sariputra is the name of the historical Buddha’s disciple.

But he does not really get what is higher wisdom, so Avalokitesvara though the Heart Sutra teaches the main concept of the bodhisattva acts.

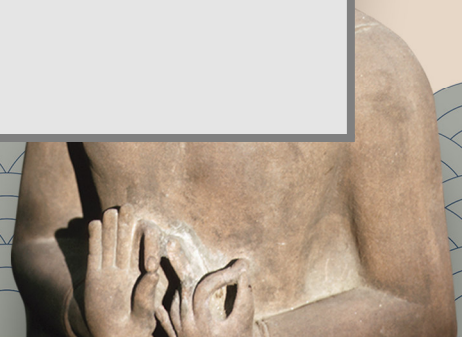
So, the very last line is a mantra or incantation, which has to be repeatedly made to aid concentration in contemplation.

In this unit, students learned about who bodhisattva is, and how this particular bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara was featured in the seminal Mahayana Buddhist text, the Heart Sutra.

According to the text, Avalokitesvara is the embodiment of the Mahayana Buddhist wisdom, which is the wisdom of emptiness.

And in this way, the bodhisattva was celebrated as the most popular divinity in the later Buddhist tradition.

In the next unit, we will unpack Avalokitesvara one more to see how the bodhisattva became the major divinity in the later East Asian talismanic culture.



1-7

Avalokiteśvara

Welcome, everyone!

In this unit, we will look at one last term ‘Avalokitesvara’.

In this unit, students will learn about Avalokitesvara, one of the highly revealed Buddhist divinities in the history of Buddhism.

As we will study in the later units, this bodhisattva was responsible for numerous talismanic scriptures, and he/she was central in the early development of the Sinitic talismanic culture, which had a tremendous influence on Korean talismanic practice.

Originally this deity was from the Indian Buddhism, but became very prominent in the later Mahayana Buddhism, especially in China.

Also, as we talked about this in the previous unit, Avalokitesvara prominently appears in major Buddhist text such as the Heart Sutra.

He also appears in other texts such as the Lotus Sutra, and also in the Amitabha Sutra, and in fact, almost virtually all major Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, you always find this bodhisattva as the spokesperson of the Mahayana ideal.

Indeed he/she attests her strong presence in the later Buddhist tradition through these scriptures.

Avalokitesvara, or known as Guanyin in Chinese or Kwanŭm(관음) in Korean, this deity was depicted in numerous art forms, both paintings and sculptures.

Also, he/she was the main figure of numerous other indigenous Chinese texts and often he/she is the deity who provides immediate rewards for his/her believers, including his/her role as the guardian of talismans.

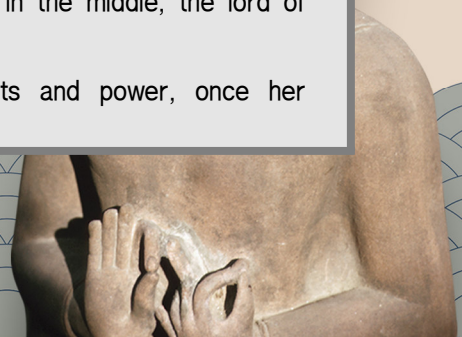
In this very example from Chosŏn Korea, we see the rather gender-neutral depiction of the bodhisattva, but in fact, sometime around the 14th century or so, in China, this Indian prince-like looking male bodhisattva underwent a significant gender change.

So, basically this bodhisattva was perceived as a male divinity but became a female bodhisattva, although in theory, bodhisattva doesn't have to have a gender.

So, I would use a gender pronoun ‘she’ from now on. She was worshipped individually but also often was venerated with her connections to the Pure Land worship. So, sometimes she also appears along with Amitabha Buddha.

And in this particular example, the bodhisattva is wearing a crown, and in the middle of the crown, you don't see that well in this, but there is the Amitabha Buddha in the middle, the lord of the Pure Land.

Avalokitesvara is known for her almost unlimited number of benefits and power, once her



devotee recites her name with the utmost sincerity, then she will come to you.

So, there are numerous Avalokitesvara dharanis that were devised, such as the six-syllable dharani, which we will keep encountering in the following weeks.

After her gender change, the bodhisattva also became the protector of the children and also the mothers.

In China, where male heir was very important to keep family legacy, her role as the child-giving deity became even more pronounced after the Ming period.

And this was also one of the key factors why this bodhisattva garnered so much popularity by both male and female followers.

As we will see later, she is also the one who ensures safe childbirth as an extension of this well-established role as a child-giving deity.

Numerous miracle tales were also composed to attest and to verify her power, and countless places were also thought to be her dwelling places, so that followers of her made a pilgrimage to these sacred sites to have more direct engagement with the bodhisattva.

Her saving powers are countless, and each sutra equally emphasizes a total devotion to her.

For instance, according to the Lotus sutra, if one recites her name, he or she will be saved from fire disaster, flood, or attacks from evil spirits.

She has the ability to get rid of people's anxieties, and helps sentient beings to remove Three Poisons — this is a technical term in Buddhism, the cause of our suffering — and also she guarantees an offspring.

As you see in this Met example from the Met Museum, numerous artisans imagined her to be a princely appearance in the beginning, but as we talked about, and later we'll also see Guanyin or Avalokitesvara in various forms including very similar to Maria.

So, at some point, this bodhisattva became even more popular than the Buddha.

The reason is this: whereas the Buddha was too lofty and too high, to attain the Buddhahood seems too unimaginable, this bodhisattva, however, was thought to be always around us, response to our needs, therefore people developed more affinity and more veneration to this bodhisattva.

The bodhisattva appears in numerous visual forms, and one popular manifestation is this one, ten thousand Avalokitesvara, meaning she has ten thousand arms, in Korean we call it 천수관음.

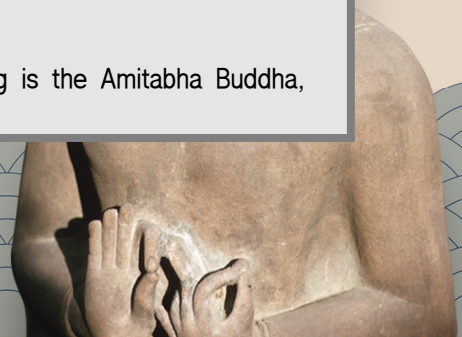
And this bronze statue of Avalokitesvara is from the Chosŏn period, and in the sculpture, often unlike its name, it's almost impossible to have ten thousand arms, so often reduced numbers are depicted.

But interestingly, each arm represents her dedication to save all sentient beings.

And each arm has an attribute which symbolizes her different functions. And as you see on this zoomed image, close-up image, you see a stamp being held in one of her arms.

On the surface of the stamp, we see that a talisman is inscribed, and her association with talisman can be confirmed from this kind of iconographic details.

Avalokitesvara is often paired with other divinities. One common pairing is the Amitabha Buddha,



and with Amitabha Buddha often she is more presented as retinue, a little bit lower than the Buddha.

But other bodhisattva, such as Kshitigarbha, is paired with Avalokitesvara, and that particular pair is often found in Korean Buddhism.

And Kshitigarbha is another bodhisattva who made a vow to save all the sentient beings who are stuck in the hell.

Starting from Koryŏ or so, we have numerous paintings that feature Avalokitesvara, which is known as one of the finest examples although many of them are currently in Japanese museums.

But as you see from this, we have this Koryŏ painting, and she is the main deity who endorses talismans, especially healing because not in this portrayal but often the bodhisattva holds attributes such as a water bottle or a willow tree, all of which have to do with curing people.

So, the association between the bodhisattva and healing was well established, and that allows her later career as the guardian of the talismans.

Other than talismans, another esoteric power of the bodhisattva is also detected with the influence of Daoist practices such as divination.

Known as 'Kwanŭm Yŏngwa', a text whose woodblock edition is extant at Hwaŏmsa temple in Korea, the deity played a central role in foreseeing the future of her devotees.

With five coins that represent the five cardinal directions, one can throw the coin up, and depending on how it falls, you can tell your destiny.

And the bodhisattva Guanyin or Kwanŭm oversees this whole entire process. The text was initially popularized in the Qing China, but it seems somehow it got introduced to Korea in the late Chosŏn period.

And all of this suggests her various mundane benefits, her power to ensure those benefits, as well as constant amalgamation between Buddhist and Daoist practices.

Let me summarize our discussions. In this unit, we have studied various aspects of Avalokitesvara from her doctrinal basis to visual characteristics.

Starting from India, the deity took several major transformations, and notably, on Chinese soil the deity became to be perceived as a female deity, which is a rare case in Buddhist pantheon.

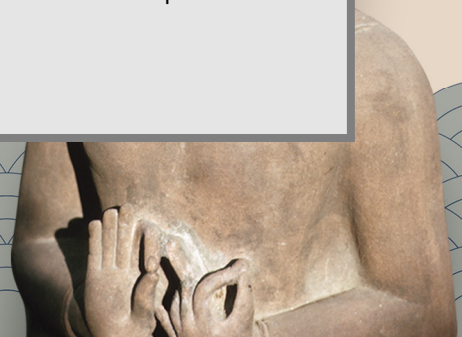
As the goddess of mercy, she enjoyed a wide range of sponsorship and was the subject of numerous tales, art forms, rituals, and pilgrimage.

In Korea, she also enjoyed unparalleled attention and popularity because of her role as the major patron of mundane benefits including her talismans.

So, we are going to talk more about these in the next unit.

In the next week, we will be moving on to the historiography of the talismans.

By examining major scholarship on this very topic, we will arrive at a better understanding of what talismans are and how they have been studied in the major Anglophone scholarship so far.



III. 퀴즈

1. OX퀴즈

문제: There is only one form of Buddhism, thus we should call the tradition just “Buddhism.”

정답: X

설명: There are different forms of Buddhism, so “Buddhisms.”

2. OX퀴즈

문제: Esoteric Buddhism is also called Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism.

정답: O

설명: Correct statement.

3. OX퀴즈

문제: An Islamic magic square is also found in Tibetan tangka.

정답: O

설명: Various examples exist.



4. OX퀴즈

문제: Frazer is the one who described magic as primitive stage of religion.

정답: O

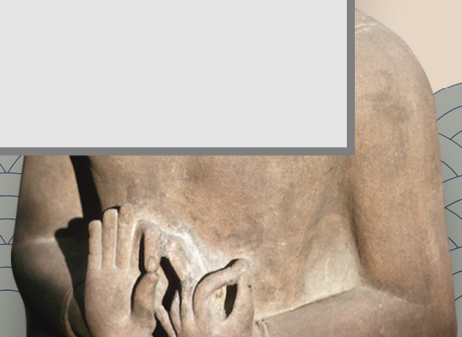
설명: Yes, he did this in his book, the Golden Bough.

5. OX퀴즈

문제: In the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha was not regarded as a doctor.

정답: X

설명: No, he was often considered as a doctor.



IV. 토론

□ 다음에 대해서 생각해보자.

1.

-Why there are so many different forms of Buddhism? Why can't we just call Buddhism?

-What's the major differences between exoteric and esoteric Buddhism?

2.

-We discussed about the initial negative connotations around the term, "magic." Explain how this term gained a more positive meaning and what it mean to say "Buddhist magic."

-Why do you think cross-cultural analysis is important in studying material objects?

3.

-Buddhist Healing methods include incantation. Do you think why this sonic aspect is linked to healing? Any specific examples that you can think of?

-Why did Tibetan Buddhism develop medical traditions in the Buddhist milieu so much? Any pros and cons?

4.

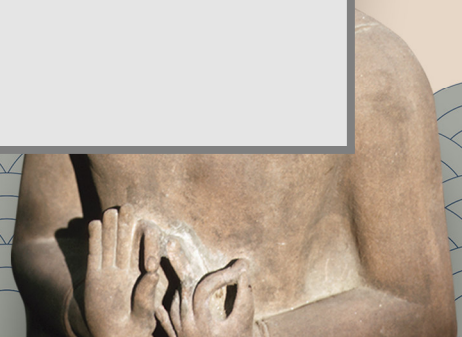
-Identify what are the other major terms that were interchangeably used with the term "talismans." And discuss what are the major differences between these terms.

-The origin of talismans seem to be social and political rather than religious. Do you think what would be the factors that bring about the change from socio-political use to religious use of talismans?

5.

-Wish-fulfilling talismans were very popular all over buddhist Asia. Can you think of the reasons?

-Dharani used to be focusing on the sonic aspects of Buddhist worship. Why do you think people begun to use it as talismans in the materialized form?



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