

# **The Transformations of Vaiśravaṇa**

**----The Cult of Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan and Medieval China**

毗沙门天的演变

——于阗和中国中世纪时期的毗沙门天信仰

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts at the University of Macau.

Author: WANG Yuantian (王元天)

Student I. D.: MB041055

Supervisor: Dr. Tianshu ZHU

Department of History

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

University of Macau

May 2012

Copyright 2012 by  
WANG Yuantian (王元天)  
University of Macau



## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis represents my own work, except where the acknowledgement is made, and it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me during the writing of this thesis. I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Tianshu Zhu, for her valuable instructions and suggestions on my thesis.

I also owe a special debt of gratitude to all the professors in history department, from whose devoted teaching and enlightening lectures I have benefited a lot and academically prepared for the thesis.

Last but not the least, my gratitude also extends to my family who have been assisting, supporting and caring for all of my life. And I also owe much to my friends and classmates for their valuable suggestions and critiques which are of great help and importance in making the thesis in reality.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	II
<b>LIST OF FIGURE</b> .....	V
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY .....	6
EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan</b> .....	11
2.1 The identity and Function of Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan .....	11
2.2 The Visual Representations of Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan .....	21
2.3 CONCLUSION .....	25
<b>CHAPTER THREE Vaiśravaṇa: Deity of the State in China</b> .....	27
3.1 The Emergence of God of Warrior .....	28
3.2 From God of Warrior to the Protector of the state .....	37
3.3 Invasion of Mongols and the Decline of God of Warrior .....	44
<b>CHAPTER FOUR The Basic Form of Vaiśravaṇa in China</b> .....	49
4.1 Ghost Lord Vaiśravaṇa .....	50
4.2 Protector Vaiśravaṇa .....	54

4.3 Wealth God Vaiśravaṇa .....	65
4.4 CONCLUSION .....	69
<b>CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>FIGURES .....</b>	<b>92</b>



## LIST OF FIGURE

Figure	Page
Fig. 1.1 <i>The Offering of the Four Bowls</i> . Central Archaeological Museum, Lahore, Pakistan. Sikri, India. Kusana, ca. second century CE, 101 CE - 200 CE. Schist .....	92
Fig. 2.1 <i>XIV~c Relief sculptures, R. xix-R. xxx</i> , on inner south-east wall, Rawka stūpa court .....	93
Fig. 2.2 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . National Museum, New Delhi. Dunhuang, 890 CE. Manuscript .....	94
Fig. 2.3 <i>Khotan King Li Shengtian</i> . Mogao Cave No.98, Dunhuang. Five Dynasties .....	95
Fig. 3.1 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . National Library of France. Bao'en Temple. Manuscript .....	96
Fig. 3.2 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . National Library of France. Bao'en Temple, Five Dynasties (947). Manuscript .....	97
Fig. 3.3 <i>Heavenly Kings Hall</i> . Shuanglin Temple, Shanxi. Ming Dynasty (1499-1521) .....	98
Fig 3.4 <i>Mahākāla</i> . Baocheng Temple, Hangzhou. Yuan Dynasty (1322).Sculpture .....	99
Fig. 4.1 <i>The Heavenly King on the March</i> . <i>The British Museum</i> . Qianfodong, Dunhuang, ninth century. Silk .....	100
Fig 4.2 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . East Hall, Foguang Temple. Tang Dynasty. Mural Painting.....	101
Fig. 4.3 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . Cave 5, Beishan Grottoes, Dazu, Chongqing. 892 CE. Stone .....	102
Fig. 4.4 <i>Vaiśravaṇa</i> . The Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art. China, 14th century. Ink and color on silk .....	103
Fig. 4.5 <i>Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa</i> . Lhasa gTsub lag khang, 14th/15th century, Gilt copper. ....	104

Fig. 4.6 *Kubera*. Xanadu Gallery. Pala Period, 11th century. Black stone ..... 105

Fig. 4.7 *Vaiśravaṇa*. Chung Tai Museum. Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). ink and color on silk .... 106





## **Abstract**

Vaiśravaṇa is an important Buddhist deity from India to China. In China, the Vaiśravaṇa worship was once a very important belief from the Tang dynasty to the Yuan dynasty. This period of his popularity contributed a lot to his transformations towards his basic form in China. The key characteristics of his every aspect were roughly settled after this period. These characteristics derived from different aspects of his prototype in early Buddhism. To make clear the transformation tracks from his prototype to his Chinese basic form can provide great help to the understanding of his situation in China. This thesis focuses on the transformation of Vaiśravaṇa from Khotan to medieval China till the emergence of his Chinese basic form. In order to achieve this goal, it will be a comprehensive study referred to several regions as well as interdisciplinary sources.

**Key Words:** Vaiśravaṇa, Khotan, Medieval China, Transformations.