ABSTRACT

The cult of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (文殊信仰) in the Tang differed significantly from early Mahayana Buddhism (大乘佛教), namely in its being politicised by the Empress Wu Zetian (武则天) of the Great Zhou (690-705). This politicisation emphasised the cult's chief deity, i.e. Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's role as the protector of the Buddhist Cakravartin and his land (护王及护国). In the Emperor Tang Daizong (代宗)’s era, the esoteric (密教) monk Amoghavajra (不空金刚) further developed the Mañjuśrī cult in a systematic implementation of esotericed practices, corresponding to the political situation of that time.

The thesis discusses Amoghavajra’s development of the cult of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the Daizong era in three chapters: In the first chapter, I touch on the development of the Mañjuśrī cult before and during the Tang up to Daizong’s era. In the second chapter, I discuss the political background upon which Amoghavajra developed the Mañjuśrī cult for Daizong. Finally, the focuses of chapter three are on Amoghavajra’s background and an elaboration of his activities promoting the Mañjuśrī cult, accounting for Daizong’s correlation with the characteristic of ruler and state protection provided by the Mañjuśrī cult.