

Chinese Sources on Divākara (613-688)

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In terms of chronology, Divākara 地婆訶羅, outstanding importer and translator of Buddhist texts, comes after Xuanzang 玄奘 (d. 664) and before a remarkable group of late 7th and early 8th century translators such as the Indian Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (d. 727), the Khotanese Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 (652-710), and Yijing 義淨 (635-713).

In this paper I will present: (a) a general discussion of the available sources on Divākara’s biography; (b) a summary of the biographical information found in these sources; and (c) some problems resulting from the attribution to Divākara of two or three versions of the very popular religious text called *Dhāraṇīsūtra of the High Victory of the Buddha’s Sinciput* (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經, Sk. *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇīsūtra*) and of his involvement in the so-called Buddhapālita version.

Some of the literary material on which we rely as evidence for Divākara’s biography is based on at least one epigraphical source. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the original funerary inscription that must have been engraved for Divākara’s tomb at Longmen in 688, and further, this is not mentioned in any of our sources. There is trace, however, of an inscription carved between 690 and 705. Its text might have been written by Wu Sansi 武三思, nephew of Empress Wu and promoter of the construction of the Xiangshansi 香山寺 monastery around the octagonal pagoda containing the remains of Divākara at Longmen. These sources and their comparative value will be discussed in order to reconstruct as correctly as possible the existing biographical information on Divākara.