

## **Buddhism and Apocalypticism in Conversation: An Early Tibetan Text on the “Cult of the Tempest”**

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*Among the earliest extant Tibetan writings from Dunhuang, there is a text, pressmark ITJ 733, that belongs to a cult that prays for the coming of an apocalypse known as the Tempest. This Tempest will put an end to the present Evil Age and usher in a new Good Age, at the beginning of which the believers and their ancestors will live again. The cult features a mixture of ostensibly Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, and Uygur cosmologies, mythologies, and practices that seem to have been drawn from early Tibetan religious traditions, Buddhism, Daoism, and Manichaeism. Despite the interest of tracing these various influences, it is ultimately a moot point whether this was a foreign cult that was deeply acculturated to a Tibetan milieu, or, conversely, a Tibetan cult that was deeply influenced by foreign eschatologies and rituals. Though the cult seems not to have survived, it was the target of a Buddhist polemic that railed against how the Tempest allowed people to escape the logic of karma. The cult's location in a murky middle ground between amoral and moral cosmologies marks it as representing an important, transitional phase in the Tibetan assimilation of the Buddhist moral cosmology of karma and rebirth.*