

Gertraud Taenzer

The Dunhuang Region
during Tibetan Rule (787–848)

A Study of the Secular Manuscripts Discovered
in the Mogao Caves

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Maps:

Map I: Overview

Map II: The Dunhuang Region

Map III: Detailed Map of Khotan, Tshal-byi and Khva-cu ‘Khrom’ and ‘A-zha
Country

Plan I and II: The Irrigation Canals of Shazhou

Plates

Plates of Tibetan Texts:

Plate I: IOL Tib J 1486

Plate II: IOL Tib J 1414+ IOL Tib J 940

Plates of Chinese Texts:

Plate III S7060

Frontispiece

It is a detail of the left wall of Yulin Cave no. 25 situated on the left margin of a painting of the paradise of Maytreya. It stems from the time of Tibetan rule. The paintings of the cave were copied by order of the Dunhuang Academy and exhibited in 2009 in the Chinese Cultural Centre in Berlin. The detail was photographed and slightly modified for the frontispiece.

Signes critiques and Notes on Texts

Text

[abc]	Supplements: letters or phrases which are illegible or lost supplied by the author
# abc#	Deleted letters
---	Missing letters, number known, indicated by broken lines
+6	Approximate number of illegible letters or number of letters which are lost due to damage of the paper
abc	Insertions: word or phrase written below the line
(a?)	Ambiguous readings

Translation

[abc]	Supplements by the author
(abc)	Corresponding expressions in the original texts or translator's note

Roman Transcription of Tibetan

The Wylie system (Wylie 1959) with minor modifications is followed.

Roman Transcription of Chinese

Chinese is transcribed in Pinyin.

Classification of the Tibetan Handwriting

The script is classified in straight sutra style, transitional (plate II) and careless cursive (plate I). Early or late transitional does not refer to the time these manuscripts were written in but to the more or less relaxed style of writing. Early transitional is thus nearer to the straight sutra style.

Transliterations of the Tibetan Manuscripts

The transliterations of the Dunhuang manuscripts are according to the author unless otherwise stated.

The transliterations of the Miran and Mazar-tagh manuscripts are based on the readings of Thomas (TII) and/or Takeuchi (Turkestan) but were compared with the originals in facsimile or idp-website where possible.

Introduction

0.1 Introduction, Intent and Content

From the end of the 8th century to the middle of the 9th century the region of Dunhuang was administered by the Tibetan Empire. This period is almost completely covered by contemporary manuscripts found in cave number 17 of the Mogao caves near Dunhuang. These manuscripts consist mainly of Buddhist scriptures, but a number of them refer to secular matters. Due to lack of paper at the time, sheets of paper with only one side written on were kept to be later on pasted together to form scrolls to be filled with a sutra. Therefore most secular texts are found either on the back of a Buddhist scripture or on sheets of which the back is plain. Another source of information contain the sheets of paper belonging to individual scribes which were used by them as wrappers. They were called 'glegs tshas'. They contain draughts, copies of manuscripts or writing exercises mainly of a secular nature. Most often these entries are fragmentary. Occasionally sutras were reinforced whereby the patches were taken from secular manuscripts. Although most manuscripts discovered in the Mogao caves originate in the Dunhuang region a number of them were imported. As monks travelled they took scriptures and paper which was only used on one side with them.

To be able to understand the manuscripts better and finally to evaluate the economic situation of the area in the Tibetan period it seemed necessary first to clarify the administrative system of the area and to see whether the ethnographic composition of the people resident in the region had changed. Therefore this research was divided in three parts.

As the extant secular manuscripts naturally represent only a small fraction of texts written at the time and their selection being coincidental, there were in some instances not enough texts to be able to come to a definite conclusion and some chapters have not reached the length wished for. Due to a lack of material a chapter concerning the development of the size of the population could not be included. Instead a chapter about the development of the religious institutions is inserted. Although an increase in monks and nuns during the time of Tibetan rule not necessarily indicate population growth but together with the information that the administrative units were increased and the fact that the average family consisted of six members, it is likely.

In some cases information found in the finds from Khotan and Miran, which cover the same period of time, could be used.

As the manuscripts stem from a depot of Buddhist scriptures the question has to be asked whether they concern predominantly texts relating to the clergy. This is probably the case as far as contracts are concerned. The small amount of extant tax

related manuscripts is probably due to this fact as well, as of accounts of which type several thousands must have been written during Tibetan rule only one is extant.

Nonetheless combining all manuscripts available to me it was possible to get a picture of the situation of the population of the Dunhuang region under the Tibetans.

0.2 The Manuscripts

0.2.1 Description of the Material Used

Paper Manuscripts

The majority of manuscripts examined are paper manuscripts which predominantly stem from the Mogao caves near Dunhuang. Among the Miran and Mazar-tagh finds are c.650 paper manuscripts of secular content. Some of these contain information which could be used for the present volume.

To determine the material the paper was made of a number analyses have been carried out. As the results varied depending on the method applied and the individual manuscript analysed no conclusive statement could be made. The general idea is that the paper was made either of fibre of the paper mulberry tree or of a mixture of hemp cloth and ramie¹.

According to Fujieda the size of a sheet of paper was 1X1.5 small 'chi' (c.26X39cm), 1X2 small 'chi' or 1X2 'chi' (c.30X60cm)². The paper of the 'glegs tshas' and a number of the Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā sutra is larger (26X76cm) and thicker, however³.

The material studied is generally of a secular nature; only for the compilation of the names of families subscribers of sutras have been looked into.

Wood-slips

Although almost all wood-slips discovered were found in the southern Tarim, reference had to be made to a number of them in order to be able to complete the research. Most of them measure between 22X2cm and 12X2cm. They were made of the wood of tamarisk or toghrak. All but one stem from Miran or Mazar-tagh.

The Miran site consists despite M.I. – the fort in which the wood-slips were discovered – of buildings which were mainly used for religious purposes, the sites M.II–M.XIII. Latter were dated by Stein⁴ as belonging to the Shanshan period (220–300). The fort (M.I.) was of irregular quadrangular shape. Inside the walls a number

1 Drège: 1986.

2 Fujieda: 66/67 part I, pp16.

3 Takeuchi: Contracts, pp53.

4 Stein: Serindia.

of buildings had been constructed⁵. The site was abandoned after the Tibetans had left.

Mazar-tagh is situated on a hill and has a watchtower. Stein discovered most of the wood-slips below the fort on the north-eastern slope. This area was divided in section a, b and c by him⁶. The site was destroyed by fire and was not used afterwards.

The wood-slips can be roughly divided in slips for the provisioning of soldiers – they contain the address and a certain number of notches and have a piece cut out on the bottom to be used as tally⁷ –, slips referring to the registration of fields and letters.

They were mainly used in the chapter on the administration of the occupied territories, the chapter on the ‘A-zha and the chapter on tax.

0.2.2 The Collections and Publications in Facsimile and Transcriptions of them

Paper Manuscripts

Most of the secular manuscripts are preserved in the Pelliot-Collection of the Bibliothèque National, Paris and in the Stein-Collection of the India Office Library in London. Some manuscripts can be found in the National Library of China in Beijing and in the Russian Collection. For the study of the names of families the subscribers of sutras of the above mentioned collections as well as the collection of the Tibetan manuscripts in Gansu were studied.

The Chinese manuscripts among them have been all published in facsimile⁸. Some manuscripts of the Stein collection can be viewed in the internet on “idp.bl.uk”. The majority of the important ones can be studied in facsimile and transcription in Ikeda: 1979, TTSEH and DSJ and Zhang (1995, contracts only).

A selection of the Tibetan manuscripts of the Pelliot-Collection and a few of the Stein-Collection have been published in facsimile in Choix I and II. The Royal Annals and other manuscripts concerning the history of the Tibetan Empire have been transcribed and provided with a syllabic index in Choix III. All of them have been filmed.

A large part of the Tibetan manuscripts of the Stein-Collection has been transliterated and translated by Thomas (TII). A selection of these is published in facsimile in TIII. All of the paper manuscripts of Miran and Mazar-tagh have been published in facsimile with a transliteration and syllabic index by Takeuchi

5 This is reflected in Stein’s registration numbers: M.I.x.2: M.: Miran, I: site number; x.: room number.

6 This is reflected in the registration number of the wood-slips, e.g.: M.Tagh.a.I.0021: M.-Tagh: Mazar-tagh; a.: section on the hill; i.: section 1.

7 Takeuchi (Military System, p51) called them ‘hill stationing (ri zug) slips’. He described their manufacture and use (ibid. pp51).

8 Dx, P.chin.facs., S facs..

(Turkestan I–III). All of them have been filmed. A part can be already studied in the internet on “idp.bl.uk”.

Wood-slips

The majority of the wood-slips are preserved in the Stein-Collection. Some stem from Chinese secondary excavations in Miran and are now in the Xinjiang Museum in Urumqi. A selection of the wood-slips of the Stein-Collection is transliterated and translated in TII and a selection has been published in facsimile in TIII. All of them are on view in the internet (idp.bl.uk). Wang (1986) has transliterated and translated into Chinese a selection of the wood-slips from the Chinese collection and all of those translated by Thomas. None of the wood-slips in the Chinese collection are available in facsimile.

0.2.3 Catalogues

Paper Manuscripts

A part of the Chinese manuscripts of the Pelliot-Collection has been catalogued (P.chin.cat. vols.I, III–V). The Chinese entries on the Tibetan manuscripts of the Pelliot Collection were also compiled (P.chin.cat vol.VI). P 2501–3000, 4107–4499, 5044–5521, 5599–6000 have not been described yet. A large part of the Tibetan manuscripts of the Pelliot-Collection are entered in Lalou: Inventaire I–III (Pt 1–2216). There is no catalogue for Pt 2217–4450, which constitute a collection of sutras.

Giles catalogued a large part of the Chinese manuscripts of the Stein-collection (Giles cat.) and Rong described some of its fragments (S6981–S13624). Valle-Poussin (1962) compiled a catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures from Dunhuang in the Stein-Collection. This catalogue and a large part of the Tibetan secular manuscripts from Dunhuang are included in the Toyo Bunko catalogue (Yamaguchi: Cat.), while a description of all of the paper manuscripts from Miran and Mazar-tagh can be found in Takeuchi: Turkestan II.

For the Russian manuscripts in Chinese a catalogue in Russian and one in Chinese has been compiled (DFNA and DX Cat. respectively). Huang (1982) compiled a catalogue of the scriptures of the collection of sutras in Gansu, while Savitzky (1984) did this for the Aparimitāyurjñāsutra in Tibetan of the Russian collection in the Oriental Institute in Petersburg. Apart from the index to Baozang and the index of the religious texts in Wang (ed.1962/1978) no catalogue exists for the manuscripts in Chinese Collections.

Apart from Rong’s catalogue the fragments in Chinese have not been catalogued in neither collection yet.

Wood-slips

No catalogue of the wood-slips has been compiled yet.

0.2.4 The Registration Numbers of the Manuscripts

The manuscripts of the Pelliot-Collection are designated with P for the Chinese manuscripts and Pt for the Tibetan manuscripts.

The manuscripts predominantly written in Chinese of the Stein-Collection of Dunhuang finds were included in the Oriental-Collection (Or) and bear S in this volume. They are designated Or.8210/S on the 'idp' website. The Tibetan manuscripts can be referred to under a number of designations partly due to their history⁹. All the manuscripts from Dunhuang have a location no. i.e. the number of the box in which they are preserved (vol.=volume, fol.=folio) and most of them have a Ch. number (Ch.=Qianfodong). As they were kept by the India Office Library they have an IOL registration number as well and can be found on 'idp' under IOL Tib J (IOL= India Office Library). The wood-slips and paper manuscripts from the southern Tarim are designated with M.Tagh when they were discovered on Mazar-tagh and M.I. when they were found in the fort in Miran. The wood-slips were registered with the India Office Library under IOL Tib N while the paper manuscripts have been reassembled and bear now new requisition numbers under Or.15000 as well.

The manuscripts of the Russian collection are designated DX.

The manuscript from the National Library of China in Beijing is designated Bei + the section¹⁰.

0.2.5 Present Stage of Research

As far as the research of the old Tibetan manuscripts is concerned apart from cataloguing the manuscripts and compiling indices a number of scholars have contributed to their understanding.

A.H. Francke wrote a survey of the Tibetan manuscripts of the Stein-Collection already in the beginning of the last century. In the first half of the last century Lalou, F.W. Thomas, L. Bacot, Tucci were the pioneers. They were followed by Beckwith, Richardson, Uebach, Uray, Yamaguchi, among others, who contributed greatly to the understanding of the early history of Tibet by using the only other contemporary texts – the pillar inscriptions – as well as the study of later sources, which contain partly preserved contemporary material, as reference. Thus they also tried to elucidate terms, the meaning of which had long been forgotten. Uray was the first to discover that a number of Tibetan letters of the Dunhuang finds stem from the post-Tibetan period. At the end of the 20th century Takeuchi took this study further and could determine that Tibetan had become the lingua franca in central Asia by then. Besides transcribing, describing and providing a syllabic index of the paper manuscripts from Mazar-tagh and Miran he also made inroads by establishing the

9 Takeuchi: Turkestan II, ppxix gives a description of the reasons and the process of the registration.

10 The manuscripts are numbered according to the Qianziwen 千子文. 100 manuscripts are under each character.

formulae of the Tibetan contracts and letters, thus enabling one to identify and make use of fragments.

As the Chinese manuscripts cover not only the period of Tibetan rule but also the time of the rule of the Tang before it and the time of Guiyijun rule after it and as they moreover can be compared with the Turfan finds which go further back in time up to the Gaochang period, references to the Chinese administrative system can be studied and thus the number of scholars interested in them necessarily was greater. The researchers of the Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang include Chavannes, Naba, Niida, Demiéville, Gernet, Fujieda, Yamamoto, Dohi, Ikeda, and recently Trombert just to name a few. Only Fujieda and Ikeda included Tibetan manuscripts in their research whereby they had to rely on what was published and translated at the time.

The problem for all scholars was that until recently it was difficult to get access to the material as only a selection of the manuscripts had been published. Still now the lack of catalogues in some sections makes the research a time-consuming enterprise.

0.2.6 Prospect of this Volume

The work found in this volume is insofar an attempt not yet made as it uses Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts as well as fragments of manuscripts alike to shed light on the circumstances in Dunhuang under Tibetan rule. This is of major importance as in some areas of research the information found in Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts comes from different sources. In tax-related manuscripts, for example, the Chinese manuscripts reflect the bookkeeping of the lower ranking officials, while the Tibetan manuscripts deal with the communication between the Tibetan administrators of the area and the Chinese local officials. Moreover, especially as far as the chapter on economy is concerned, many manuscripts which have not been studied before are included. These are combined with the manuscripts already known to clarify our understanding of the life of the inhabitants of Dunhuang during this period of time.

0.3 The Structure of this Volume

Part I starts with a brief survey of the administrative system of central Tibet. This is followed by a chapter on the boundaries and the administrative system of the occupied territories north-east of Tibet. To get a basic idea this chapter is headed by a synopsis of the administrative system supplied with a diagram of the administrative bodies. For a deeper understanding a section containing a commentary to each term supplied with a letter in brackets is added. Where necessary extracts from originals are included. The last chapter of this part is a treatise on the 'Mthong-khyab' military units deployed in the border regions.

Part II commences with a compilation of the names of the Chinese families resident in the Dunhuang area before and during Tibetan rule. This is supplemented

by lists of families of the Tibetan confederation and a discussion of names of non-Tibetan families appearing in the manuscripts. A whole chapter is dedicated to the 'A-zha, the Tuyuhun of the Chinese manuscripts, as they seem to have been the people most dominant in the region beside the Chinese. This chapter starts with a synopsis their history followed by a commentary to each point. Then a list of the 'A-zha names and toponyms is supplied.

This part is concluded by a chapter concerning the development of the ecclesiastical institutions.

Part III deals with the economy of the region. It starts with a chapter concerning the produce of the land and the distribution of fields. As not many manuscripts are extant these are included in the main text.

The chapter on tax and other dues as well as the chapter on contracts is divided into two sections. In the first section as far as the chapter on tax and other dues is concerned the terms and regulations dealing with taxation are discussed and clarified. Considerations on the consequences of this system for the population are added. The first part of the chapter on contracts primarily deals with the different types of contracts, their evaluation in number and content and considerations concerning the economic situation of the participants. Evaluations are presented. The second part is a text section in which a selection of manuscripts is translated and discussed.

This is followed by a list of the measures used at the time.

A conclusion taking into consideration the finds of all three parts rounds it off.

The appendices contain a concordance on a selection of toponyms of the 8th to the 9th century in Tibetan and Chinese and modern times, a concordance of the manuscripts used, a bibliography and a set of maps and plans.