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Dunhuang Manuscript Culture

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Dunhuang Manuscript Culture

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End of the First Millennium

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Contents

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Conventions

Chinese characters throughout the book are given in traditional (i.e. unsimplified) form. No attempt is made to reconstruct the original structure of non-standard variants (*suzi* 俗字), unless this is relevant to the discussion or the variants are easily recognisable (e.g. 与/與, 无/無, 丑/醜, 万/萬).

The full pressmark of Chinese manuscripts from the Dunhuang library cave at the British Library consists of the prefix 'Or.8210', followed by a forward slash, the capital letter S and a unique serial number (e.g. Or.8210/S.5531). For the sake of brevity, I omit the part before the S and write, for example, S.5531 instead of Or.8210/S.5531. Similarly, the capital letter P in pressmarks in this book indicates the Chinese manuscripts from the Pelliot collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the full pressmark of which begins with 'Pelliot chinois'. Thus, I write P.3932 instead of Pelliot chinois 3932. Both of these abbreviations are already in common use in Dunhuang studies.

The pronunciation of Chinese words is given according to the official Pinyin system. Phonetic reconstructions are given only when relevant, using Pulleyblank's system (Pulleyblank 1991).

Introduction

This book is about manuscript culture in Dunhuang 敦煌 at the end of the first millennium CE. Politically, this period overlaps with the Guiyijun 歸義軍 (Return to Allegiance Circuit, 851–ca. mid-eleventh century), a military governorship with an allegiance to the Chinese court. The fundamental argument at the core of the book is that Guiyijun Dunhuang had a unique culture quite different from the previous period when the region was under Tibetan dominance (786–848), and the Tang 唐 period (ca. 622–786) that preceded it.[1] When, as part of an ambitious expansion in the second half of the eighth century, the Tibetan Empire extended its control over modern Qinghai 青海 and Gansu 甘肅, including the so-called Gansu or Hexi 河西 Corridor, Dunhuang was no longer part of the Tang realm. The prolonged Tibetan presence in Hexi inevitably brought about significant changes in the cultural and ethnic makeup of local society, and the manuscripts provide evidence of these changes. The end of Tibetan imperial control six decades later, however, did not result in a restoration of the pre-existing conditions.

The book examines several groups of manuscripts from the Guiyijun period. The groups themselves function as typological categories chosen for their textual and non-textual characteristics. My aim was to identify clusters with shared patterns, which then could be analysed for clues to help explain why certain groups of individuals produced these manuscripts, and how they were used. The criteria for grouping involved palaeographic and codicological features, such as book forms, handwriting, layout, colophons and marginalia. Just as importantly, the types of texts and their combinations, including the scribble-like notes seen on the verso of some scrolls have been taken into consideration. My contention is that the shared patterns within the groups are indicative of a similar social and cultural background. Accordingly, one of this study's objectives is to gain as improved an understanding as possible of this background and shed light on the circumstances that led to the production of these manuscripts.

Although there are undeniably dozens of such groups that could be assembled based on different sets of criteria, the four groups in this book are, in effect, case studies meant to explore the social, religious and cultural dimensions of the Guiyijun period. The objective is not to identify all possible groups of manuscripts but to analyse several of them in more detail. Similarly, within each group the purpose is not to be comprehensive and list all relevant examples but to collect

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1 The dates of the Tang period here refer to the dynasty's control over Dunhuang and the Hexi region, which naturally differ to the dates of the dynasty itself (i.e. 618–907).

enough of them to identify additional patterns which in turn may tell us more about the people and the social and religious practices connected with the production of the manuscripts.

In addition to social and religious practices, some of the features in the groups also evidence the mixed cultural background of local society. As an oasis city at the westernmost end of the Hexi Corridor, Dunhuang lay at the intersection of Chinese and Central Asian civilisations, and its population was both multicultural and multilingual. This was the case even during the cosmopolitan age of the Tang Empire but perhaps even more so in the Guiyijun period. As most of the surviving manuscripts and inscriptions have been written in Chinese, Dunhuang is thought of as an essentially Chinese society. The written material from this period, however, exhibits features that point to extensive Central Asian connections even more pronounced than during the Tang period. The left-to-right direction of donor inscriptions is one such pattern, as is the sudden appearance of new book forms, such as the codex or the pothi. Such details attest to the palpable presence of Central Asian elements in the local culture of Guiyijun Dunhuang, which sets it apart from the situation during the Tang and earlier periods. The non-Chinese influences are detectable not only in the multitude of manuscripts written in other languages but also in the Chinese ones, which we would normally associate with a Chinese-speaking population.

Additional proof of how mixed local society was in the period is evidenced by the vast pool of personal names that survive in manuscripts and paintings. While the names display a striking disparity with personal names attested in transmitted literature, internally they share a number of patterns that attest to the unique naming practices in Guiyijun Dunhuang. Individual elements of this onomastic data connect segments of the local population with Central Asian cultures. Interestingly, the personal names in Dunhuang during this period are also noticeably different from those of earlier periods when the region was a part of the Chinese political realm (i.e. before 786). Once again, this underscores the unique cultural character of the population of Dunhuang during the Guiyijun period, suggesting that it was considerably less 'Chinese' than typically assumed.

(i)   The Dunhuang manuscripts

The Dunhuang corpus is the largest body of manuscripts that survives from medieval China. The material was discovered in 1900 in a sealed-off cave, which had been closed in 1006 or shortly after.[2] When first opened, the cave contained tens of thousands of manuscripts stacked up to the ceiling.[3] The material was written in nearly twenty languages and scripts, attesting to the multicultural nature of local society during the centuries leading up to the sealing of the cave, but particularly in the last 150 years. Manuscripts in Chinese were by far the most numerous, followed by those in Tibetan, but there were also many in languages such as Old Uighur, Sanskrit, Khotanese and Sogdian. Some of the languages were written in more than one script.

The manuscripts recovered from the library cave are predominantly Buddhist in content. We do not know whether they had once belonged to a monastic library or were simply the result of a gradual accumulation of manuscripts no longer in use, but one thing is certain, they were connected with the life of the Buddhist community in Dunhuang during the ninth and tenth centuries. Only a relatively modest quantity of manuscripts, amounting to approximately 5–10% of the total number, contain non-Buddhist texts. Though small in comparison with the entire corpus, this part is also substantial. It includes copies of the Chinese Classics, scriptures related to other religious traditions (e.g. Daoism, Manichaeism, Christianity), histories, encyclopaedias, literary texts (e.g. Tang poetry, anthologies, popular literature), dictionaries, primers, divination manuals and medical treatises.[4] It also contains a sizeable body of documents related to administrative and economic matters, such as contracts, bills, census records and official dispatches.

Due to the orientation of China scholarship during much of the twentieth century, research commenced with the study of non-Buddhist texts, in spite of the library cave's overwhelmingly Buddhist content. This preference was manifest

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2 For a summary of scholarly views on the reasons behind the sealing of the cave, see van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 18–28.

3 The discovery was made by Abbot Wang 王道士 (i.e. Wang Yuanlu 王圓籙, 1851–1931), the self-appointed caretaker of the caves, who discovered a side chamber in the corridor leading to one of the caves while clearing away the sand. This side chamber came to be known as Cave 17, or the 'library cave'. For the first reports of the discovery, see Pelliot 1908 and Stein 1909b, 245–248.

4 Naturally, there is an overlap between the categories, and it is not easy to classify each text as belonging to a single genre. A case in point are the so-called transformation texts (*bianwen* 變文), popular narratives that usually revolve around Buddhist topics but may also include secular themes. On transformation texts, see Mair 1983 and 1989; for an early translation of such texts from the Stein collection, see Waley 1960.

from the start, when Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) selected the thousands of manuscripts he eventually shipped to Paris.[5] Although M. Aurel Stein (1862–1943) was the first foreigner to inspect the contents of library cave in 1907, his inability to read Chinese forced him to depend on his Chinese secretary when making his selection from the enormous hoard of manuscripts.[6] He collected material that was in good condition or looked interesting. By contrast, Pelliot, a sinologist by training, selected manuscripts he deemed valuable from the point of view of traditional Chinese philology and history. He chose non-Buddhist texts and those that looked unfamiliar or were in different languages. When considering Buddhist scrolls, he was primarily interested in those that had dated colophons. As a result, his collection was more valuable from the perspective of sinological scholarship, a point noted with admiration by Chinese and Japanese researchers in the decades following.[7]

In a brief paper on Dunhuang studies, for instance, Zhou Yiliang 周一良 quotes Ikeda On's 池田温 statistics on the percentage of different types of texts in the four major collections (Table 1).[8]

Tab. 1: The types of texts in the four major collections of Dunhuang manuscripts.

	Beijing	Paris	London	Leningrad
Buddhist texts	99.7%	62%	84%	85%
Daoist texts	0.3%	6.1%	1.9%	1.2%
Confucian texts	0.0%	4.5%	0.8%	0.7%
Administrative documents	0.4%	20%	6.2%	6.5%
Dated texts	0.5%	19.1%	4.3%	1.4%

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5 By all accounts, Pelliot was a scholar of exceptional linguistic and intellectual abilities, who made a lasting impact on the development of Dunhuang studies. On his scholarship and significance, see Drège 2008 and Drège and Zink 2013.

6 A brilliant linguist himself, Stein was a specialist of Indian and Iranian languages and did not read Chinese at the time. He seems to have learned enough to communicate orally but, in his own words, these were but 'the rudiments of conversational practice'; Stein 1909a, 12. See also Mirsky 1998 and Whitfield 2004. For an assessment of the phenomenon of foreign achaeologists—such as Stein and Pelliot—removing manuscripts and antiquities from Western China at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Jacobs 2020.

7 For example, Hu Shih 胡適 (Hu and Cao 2001, v. 4, 342) notes this effect in a diary entry in 1926. See also Imaeda 2008, 82, Rong 2013, 104–105. Fang Guangchang 1999, 15, however, points out that Pelliot's unfamiliarity with Buddhism made him overlook some important manuscripts among those that remained after Stein's visit.

8 Zhou Yiliang 1985, 56–57; cf. Ikeda 1975. In his memoirs, Zhou Yiliang talks about meeting Ikeda and other Japanese Dunhuang scholars while he was in Japan; Zhou 2014, 131–154.

Although Buddhist texts undeniably comprised the highest percentage in all four collections, it was clear that the Pelliot collection had the highest amount of non-Buddhist material, whereas the collection in Beijing had very few such texts. Zhou wrote the following commentary on Ikeda's numbers:

> The majority of Buddhist scriptures from the cave are ordinary sutras, such as the *Lotus sutra*, *Great Perfection of Wisdom sutra* and *Diamond sutra*, which the monks recited every day; these manuscripts do not differ much from their transmitted copies. More valuable are the Confucian texts of the four categories and Daoist scriptures, with administrative documents and all types of texts with dated colophons having especially high value. This brief analysis (i.e. in the table) shows that the Paris collection has higher numbers in four categories (i.e. administrative documents, dated texts, Confucian and Daoist texts) and lower in one (i.e. Buddhist texts), and thus in terms of its quality is by far superior to the other three collections.[9]

Buddhist manuscripts were clearly considered to be the least valuable part of any collection and the fact that the manuscripts in Beijing were almost completely Buddhist in content remained a painful reminder of the humiliation associated with foreigners acquiring the bulk of the Dunhuang manuscripts. That Stein did not read Chinese and thus overlooked some of the most valuable material was part of the general rhetoric when writing about the discovery of the manuscripts.

Among those who refused to see the 'fonds Pelliot' as the most valuable collection was Fujieda Akira 藤枝晃, one of the most important scholars in the field of Dunhuang studies in the twentieth century. He was also among the few scholars who had the opportunity to examine, on several occasions, the manuscripts in Paris and London in person. In his introduction to the manuscript collections, he complained about the 'treasure-hunting' approach so prevalent among the early generation of scholars, claiming that one of the reasons informing this attitude had been Pelliot's criteria for selecting the manuscripts:

> Pelliot made his selection at Tunhuang from the standpoint of a sinologue. Although it is true that the non-Buddhist manuscripts in Paris are far more numerous than in other collections, this has for half a century induced scholars to take the Tunhuang manuscripts as a treasure-trove of sinology, rather than a mine of information on the bibliography of manuscripts. Surely, the writing exercises of schoolboys are hardly suitable for the textual criticism of Chinese classics![10]

9 Zhou Yiliang 1985, 56–57.

10 Fujieda 1966, 7–8.

As Fujieda pointed out, another problem was that scholars wishing to work on the Pelliot and Stein collections could only access a few manuscripts at a time, being forced to pick manuscripts of special interest. Instead, he argued that it was important to assess the overall composition of the original content of the cave library and appreciate it as a single collection.

Pelliot's targeted approach to acquiring the manuscripts led to the Stein collection containing a larger proportion of Buddhist texts that were initially less appealing for China scholars, especially as many of them were essentially copies of a few well-known texts.[11] Their text-critical value was limited, as was their potential to reveal something new about the background of the texts. Nothing demonstrates this better than when in 1990–1995 the Sichuan People's Press published facsimiles of the Stein collection of Chinese manuscripts in 14 large volumes, they only included the non-Buddhist part. Appropriately, the English title of the series was *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (Chinese Texts Other than Buddhist Scriptures)*. The decision to omit the Buddhist part of an essentially Buddhist collection was of course symptomatic of the state of the field at the time, as was the choice to exclude texts in other languages.[12] A point that has become apparent only recently is that Stein's less targeted selection of material renders his collection more representative of the original contents of the library cave.[13] Furthermore, in the last two decades there has been a growing interest in the history of Chinese and Central Asian Buddhism, which has also helped focus attention on the Stein collection.[14]

As is probably the case with any collection of books, the largest portion of the Dunhuang manuscripts comes from the period closest to the cut-off date, that is, the early eleventh century. Hence, most of the material belongs to the ninth and especially the tenth century, with numbers rapidly diminishing for earlier centuries. While on the whole the manuscripts range from the fourth through to the early eleventh century, as a collection, the Dunhuang material belongs to the ninth and tenth centuries. By that time, earlier Buddhist scrolls would have been considered precious rarities. This also means that many of the earlier manuscripts had to have undergone various degrees of subsequent intervention, as their owners appropriated them for their own purposes.

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11 Whitfield 2007, 121–124.

12 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Lishi yanjiusuo et al. 1990–1995.

13 This point was made, among others, by Susan Whitfield at the Stein Study Day at the British Museum on 1 April 2019; cf. Rong 2013, 519–520.

14 A related issue is the potential presence of a large number of forgeries among the Dunhuang manuscripts, a theory advocated by Prof. Fujieda Akira; see some of the contributions in Whitfield 2001. Although there are indeed occasional cases of forged manuscripts, the assumption that some of the large collections were entirely forged has since been discredited; Rong 2013, 501–517.

(ii) The Guiyijun period

Narratives of the role of Dunhuang along the Silk Roads typically allude to the city's strategic location on the crossroad between East and West, describing it as a place where East meets West. This is, of course, true and the archaeological record bears witness to the mixed nature of the region, demonstrating the unique consequences of the continuous interaction of peoples and cultures over the course of many centuries. At the same time, this model is very much based on seeing East and West as the primary cultural centres and Dunhuang as an in-between zone. It is an approach that imagines the vast area between the main centres as a transitional region through which the centres interact. While this view certainly has its merits, it is also possible to redirect the focus on this in-between region and see it in its own right, rather than in the shadow of the primary centres.

One of the main problems with the East-West model is its binary nature, which results in seeing the region as a frontier zone, a tunnel that leads from one place to the other. In a way, the thousand-kilometre-long Hexi Corridor extending from the Central Plains to the deserts of Central Asia is the epitome of a geographical channel that connects different worlds. This model, however, is only part of the truth and its heavy dependence on the paradigm of opposing civilisations prevents one from appreciating the region's unique situation. In addition, it depicts the region as an East-West hub, conveniently ignoring the northern and southern exchanges which were just as important in terms of the region's history. The image of Dunhuang exclusively as a major stop along the Silk Roads is a modern illusion that exoticizes the contrast between distant cultural centres that are more familiar to us today.

During the first half of the Tang period, Dunhuang, along with a considerable portion of Central Asia, was firmly part of the Tang domain. The outbreak of the An Lushan 安禄山 rebellion (755–763) dealt a devastating blow to the dynasty, which was soon forced to abandon its western protectorates and even the western territories under regular control, including the Hexi region.[15] Dunhuang fell to the Tibetans at the end of a long siege in 786 and remained under their control until the mid-ninth century. The decades of Tibetan rule brought great changes not only politically but also in terms of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural makeup of local society. Chinese scribes were employed to copy Tibetan sutras for large state-run transcription projects and the Tibetan language became part of the linguistic

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15 Franke and Twitchett 1994, 4. On the An Lushan rebellion, see Pulleyblank 1955 and Twitchett 1979, 426–463.

landscape for many centuries.[16] During the entire Tibetan period, Dunhuang remained an important Buddhist centre and, no longer being part of the Tang realm, was spared from the persecution of foreign religions that raged during the Huichang 會昌 era (844–846).[17]

Map 1 shows Central Asia and the northern part of East Asia in 820, when Dunhuang formed part of the Tibetan Empire. The smaller rectangle in the centre of the map shows the Hexi Corridor with Dunhuang at its western end and the wider area surrounding it. By this time, the Tang had completely relinquished the lands west of the Yellow River, and Dunhuang was deep in Tibetan territory. The oasis states of the so-called Western Regions 西域 in modern-day Xinjiang 新疆 (e.g. Kucha 龜茲, Khotan 于闐) were also under Tibetan control. The Uighur Empire in the north was still a major power and remained so for another two decades.

Map 1: Central Asia and the northern part of East Asia in 820. Loosely based on Tan Qixiang et al. 1982, 36–37.

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16 When Lajos Lóczy and Gustav Kreitner arrived at the Mogao Caves in 1879, the place was occupied by only two Tibetan monks, who had been caring for the caves for the past fifteen years (Kreitner 1881, 669). When Aurel Stein went there in 1907, he also saw a Tibetan lama; Stein 1912, v. 2, 164. Similarly, Yoshikawa Koichirō 吉川小一郎, a member of the second Ōtani expedition, mentions seeing a Tibetan monk at the site in 1911; Galambos 2008, 30–31.

17 On the Huichang persecution of Buddhism, see Dalby 1979, 666–669.

Around the mid-ninth century, a series of momentous changes reshaped the political landscape of Central and North Asia. In 840, the Kirghiz tribes in modern-day Mongolia defeated their Uighur overlords and brought the Uighur Empire to an end. Hundreds of thousands of refugees migrated southward, establishing themselves in several locations. One such area was that of Xizhou 西州 (modern-day Turfan 吐魯番), where they formed the West Uighur Kingdom. From the second half of the tenth century, this group gradually converted to Buddhism, although for a period of time they continued to practise Manichaeism, which had been the state religion of their northern empire.[18] Another group settled in the Hexi Corridor, east of Dunhuang, in the region of Ganzhou 甘州 (modern-day Zhangye 張掖).[19] Two large groups arrived consecutively near the Chinese border garrisons in the Ordos and, after unsuccessful attempts to submit to the Tang, were gradually annihilated in a series of battles.[20]

Around the same time, succession struggles following the death of Emperor Langdarma (r. 838–842) resulted in the collapse of the Tibetan Empire. The rise of warlords and the dissolution of the central administration led to a period called 'the era of fragmentation'. Buddhism, which had enjoyed strong imperial patronage in the previous decade, went through a period of persecution.[21] In Dunhuang, Zhang Yichao 張議潮 (798/799–872), a local warlord, led a successful uprising in 848, establishing his rule over the region. Taking advantage of the weakening of Tibetan power, he gradually extended his control over several former Tang prefectures, such as Guazhou 瓜州, Ganzhou and Yizhou 伊州. Among his first steps to secure his position was to send an embassy to the Tang capital Chang'an 長安 and declare allegiance to the court. In recognition of his victories, and to keep him at bay, the court appointed him military commissioner of the Return to Allegiance Circuit 歸義軍節度使. Naturally, allegiance was somewhat rhetorical, as Zhang Yichao effectively ruled as a king over his newfound domain.[22]

Apparently, the Tang court harboured no illusions regarding Zhang Yichao's loyalty and observed his military successes with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they welcomed his triumphs over the Tibetans but were cautious not

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18 On the chronology of Uighur conversion to Buddhism, see Moriyasu 2008.

19 Wilkens 2016, 197–199.

20 Drompp 2005. The two groups of Uighurs not only fought the Tang forces but also each other and various peoples under Tang control.

21 van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 4.

22 On Zhang Yichao and the Guiyijun, see Rong Xinjiang 1996, 62–78; cf. Rong 2013, 40–43.

to allow him to become too strong.[23] As a measure of control, they requested his brother Zhang Yitan 張議潭 (d. 867) move to the court as a princely hostage.[24] Hoping to curtail his influence further, in 863 the Tang established a military commissionership in Liangzhou 涼州, its actual control, however, remained in Zhang Yichao's hands. His brother died in Chang'an in 867, just as Zhang Yichao extended his control over the regions of Longyou 隴右 and Xizhou. At this point, the Tang court requested his presence in the capital, and he had no choice but to comply. He left his nephew Zhang Huaishen 張淮深 (831–890) in charge but, despite repeated requests, the court did not officially confer on him the title of military commissioner. This lack of court support significantly destabilised Zhang Huaishen's position, which was no doubt intentional. When he finally received the official appointment in 888, his position had weakened to a point of no return. Two years later, he was assassinated along with his wife and sons.[25]

After Zhang Huaishen's death, a series of internal crises further weakened the Guiyijun, as the Zhang family struggled to hold on to power. When in 910 Zhang Chengfeng 張承奉 learned about the fall of the Tang dynasty, he founded the Jinshan state 金山國 in Dunhuang with himself as its first emperor. The new state was soon forced to acknowledge itself as a vassal of the Ganzhou Uighurs. In 914, however, Cao Yijin 曹議金 (d. 935) took the throne by force and restored the Guiyijun, assuming the title of military commissioner. Within a few years he was able to obtain an official appointment from the Later Liang 後梁 (907–923) court. He stabilised his position by improving relations with neighbouring states, giving one of his daughters in marriage to the new khagan of the Ganzhou Uighurs and, a few years later, another one to the king of Khotan (Map 2). The Cao family's rule lasted until the mid-eleventh century, when the expanding Tangut state brought the Hexi region under its control.

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23 As Rong 2013, 41 notes, they were concerned 'that Zhang Yichao would turn into another "Tibet" and challenge the Tang from the west'.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.
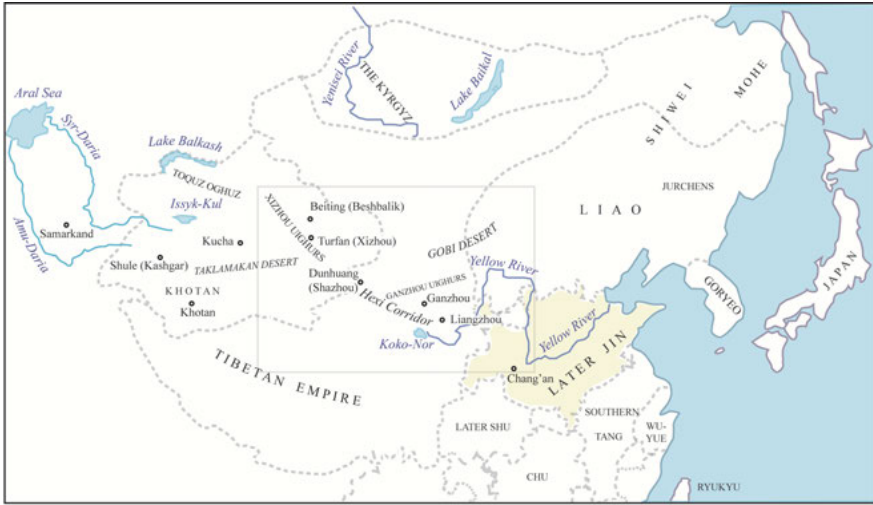
Map 2: Central Asia and the northern part of East Asia in 943. Loosely based on Tan Qixiang et al. 1982, 82–83.

According to our current understanding, the Dunhuang cave library was closed shortly after 1006, thus the contents of the cave are closely connected with the history of the Guiyijun. The manuscripts and paintings in the library cave, as well as the murals in the entire Mogao Caves 莫高窟 complex, provide a wealth of information on nearly all aspects of contemporary life. The donors of the Buddhist cave temples and portable paintings were members of the local elite and the material culture they left behind provides important details about their political aspirations and family background.

(iii) A cross-cultural perspective

Research for this book began with my fascination with the Central Asian influences in medieval Chinese manuscript culture, as reflected in the Dunhuang material. I searched for codicological and palaeographic features that were atypical from the point of view of Chinese scribal habits and identified features that could reflect external influences. These ranged from the use of the pen (vs. the brush) to the appearance of entirely new book forms and to donor inscriptions written in a

reversed direction.[26] As research progressed, however, it became clear that even though I focused on the non-Chinese elements in the manuscripts, I essentially perpetuated a Sino-centric view when measuring the contents of the Dunhuang library cave against an idealised image of what 'proper' Chinese manuscripts should look like. Instead of documenting the complex interaction between different manuscript cultures attested in the library cave, I primarily examined Chinese-language data, imagining Chinese scribal culture as a passive recipient of external influences. Yet contacts are seldom unilateral. Actions involving more than one party are usually multi-directional exchanges that affect all participants. Interaction does not simply modify local customs and habits but combines internal and external factors into something new that had not previously existed.

This can be exemplified by taking a look at a couple of episodes in the history of local manuscript culture. The codex as a book form almost certainly appeared in Dunhuang as a result of contacts with Western scribal cultures. Once it became integrated into the local culture, it spread further to other neighbouring regions. As a result, the Xizhou Uighurs, who most likely adopted this form from Dunhuang, called these booklets *čagsı* (< *cezi* 冊子, LMC *tʂʰaijk-tsẓ́*), borrowing the word from Chinese.[27] Naturally, the source of the loanword is in itself indicative of the direction of borrowing.[28] Similarly, the writing of Chinese characters in vertical columns from left to right, a phenomenon attested during the Guiyijun period, was possibly a Sogdian or Uighur influence on local scribal practices.[29] Yet the shift in Sogdian scribal culture from horizontal to vertical lines was most probably the result of Chinese influence.[30] The Uighurs adopted this vertical Sogdian script and passed it on to the Mongols, from whom it later became adopted by the Manchus. Similar borrowings and adoptions demonstrate the multidirec-

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26 Galambos 2012.

27 Throughout this book, I use the Late Middle Chinese (LMC) reconstructions in Pulleyblank 1991.

28 I am indebted to Simone-Christiane Raschmann for her help with the Uighur book forms and their terminology; cf. Raschmann 2014.

29 Sims-Williams and Hamilton 1990 use the term 'turco-sogdiens' (i.e. Turco-Sogdian) for the Dunhuang manuscripts that combine Turkic and Sogdian linguistic features. For the English translation of this book, see Sims-Williams and Hamilton 2015.

30 Ramsey 1989, 209, Janhunen 2011, 36. The idea of the contribution of Chinese writing to the vertical direction of the Uighur (and thus indirectly to Mongolian and Manchu) script had already been raised in Abel-Rémusat 1820, 61–62. Yoshida 2013 argues that the Sogdians began writing horizontally in the second half of the fifth century. The Sogdian script originally derives from the Aramaic alphabet used in Sogdiana during the Achaemenid dynasty (550–331 BCE) and, accordingly, was written in horizontal lines, from right to left. It is not always easy to tell the orientation of manuscript fragments, since lines that read horizontally from right to left can be simply turned sideways and read as vertical columns from left to right. Cf. Reck 2009.

tional dynamics of interaction.[31] Attempting to interpret such complex patterns of interaction across Central and East Asia based on a traditional Sino-centric framework is problematic at the least.

The current study, therefore, attempts to examine the Dunhuang manuscripts from a cross-cultural point of view, recognising the ubiquity of contacts in premodern societies. Nowhere is this more evident than along the Eurasian pathways we collectively call the Silk Roads. Peoples, religions, technology, material objects and art spread to different regions, and interaction was a constant part of daily life. Instead of invariably trying to explain changes as internal responses to societal development or evolutionary trends, a wider perspective allows us to link some of the innovations with external stimuli.

Neighbouring states to the Tang and Song empires were not merely satellites of a central core but cultural centres in their own right, which maintained contacts with each other and further regions within their field of vision. In many cases they acted as intermediaries in the transmission of objects and ideas. A decentralised perspective is not merely a matter of academic preference or political correctness but a point of view that has very real consequences for how we interpret cultural phenomena and societal changes. A case in point is the period of Tibetan control over Dunhuang from 786 until 848. It is not uncommon to see these six decades as a period of foreign oppression, ended by a Chinese uprising that liberated the region. The liberation narrative, however, leads to a number of problematic assumptions.

One such assumption is that throughout the eighth and ninth centuries Dunhuang persisted as an essentially Chinese city in which the population harboured a culture of resistance, and shaking off the Tibetan yoke enabled the restoration of conditions that had been in place before the occupation. Yet, as this book argues, by the end of Tibet's political control over the region, Dunhuang had become culturally different to what had existed previously. Tibetan administration may have come to an end, but Hexi remained a Sino-Tibetan region. Tibetan remained one of the main languages in the region throughout the Guiyijun period. As Imaeda Yoshirō reminds us, in terms of the amount of writing preserved in them, the Tibetan manuscripts account for at least 30–40% percent of the entire corpus.[32] Many were written long after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire. Interpreting Guiyijun Dunhuang as a newly liberated Chinese state ultimately reflects modern attitudes to national identity, shaped by political events of the twentieth

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31 On a similar point concerning the interaction between non-Chinese and Chinese traditions of Buddhism, see Zhiru 2007, 12.

32 Imaeda 2008, 81.

century. While it is true that in their contacts with the Tang court the Zhang family presented themselves as loyalists who resisted the Tibetans, in reality they had held official posts in the Tibetan administration and rebelled only when the decline of Tibetan political power threatened their interests. By contrast with how modern scholarship sometimes describes the Tibetan period, there was probably no widespread culture of resistance.[33]

Another consequence of the occupation narrative is interpreting the Tibetan period as a time of cultural decline. It is common to ascribe real or perceived changes in this period to the population not having direct contact with the Tang empire or its successor states, which are inevitably portrayed as the ultimate source of civilisation. Yet this was by no means a period of isolation for Dunhuang. One could argue that during the period of Tibetan presence the region became integrated into a vast cultural continuum that acted as a powerful stimulant for growth and innovation. There were bound to be changes, many of which were neither forced nor undesirable.

In terms of the manuscripts, one of the conspicuous changes was the shift to using the Tibetan-style pen, as opposed to the Chinese-style brush. Fujieda Akira was the first to draw attention to the phenomenon, arguing that it was no longer possible to acquire brushes from China.[34] Brushes, however, were not a luxury commodity only to be obtained as an import from abroad. Save in exceptional cases, the population must have had the means to produce such brushes locally, and nothing suggests that severed trade routes compelled the scribe to change his primary writing instrument. It is a great deal more likely that the use of the pen was a cultural preference developed under the influence of Tibetan scribal culture. The fact that the brush did not make a comeback at the end of the Tibetan period reveals the profound and lasting impact Tibetan culture had on writing practices. Moreover, it also demonstrates the lack of effort to abandon practices and habits associated with the 'oppressors'.

We can see a similar type of reasoning in the alleged deterioration of the quality of writing paper during the Tibetan period. According to this view, paper from the Tibetan and Guiyijun periods was of inferior quality in comparison with the paper used while Dunhuang was still part of the Tang. This too was considered the result of quality imports no longer being available from the Tang.[35] This ex-

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33 Yang 2016 convincingly argues against the ostensible 'Tibetanization' policy in Dunhuang, ponting out that the Chinese population was not forced to dress as Tibetans.

34 Fujieda 1961, 206, Fujieda 1968, Fujieda 1969, 19–22 and Li Zhengyu 2005. Fujieda estimates that more than 60% of all Dunhuang manuscripts were written by pen.

35 E.g. Ueyama 1982 and 1990, 401–423.

planation is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it was probably never common practice in Dunhuang to import paper, at least not in large quantities. The library cave contained some scrolls produced in the Tang capital, which are of exceptional quality and aesthetic finish. In addition, fragments of Tang official correspondence were also of superior quality in terms of both paper and writing style. The majority of the manuscripts, however, were always written on paper of local origin.[36] The supposed deterioration of paper quality after Dunhuang was no longer part of the Tang is more of an assumption than a properly documented phenomenon. This impression, in turn, may partly be due to there being many more irregular manuscripts and fragments from the last couple of centuries of the Dunhuang collection, in comparison with the less haphazard nature of earlier material. That earlier manuscripts, even fragmentary ones, tend to be of higher quality is not because they were written when Dunhuang was part of China but because they are the type of manuscripts that tend to be preserved for centuries. The later stratum in the collection includes a much higher ratio of miscellaneous and ephemeral material connected with the daily life of the population. Unsurprisingly, a great deal of this kind of material is written on paper of lower quality.

Furthermore, scholars have noted that non-Buddhist Chinese texts (i.e. literary and historical works) were typically not copied during the Tibetan period but became popular again at the beginning of the Guiyijun period. This is undoubtedly an important observation, for on the one hand it helps to date undated manuscripts and on the other attests to major changes in educational practices.[37] Yet to interpret the absence of secular Chinese texts during Tibetan rule as a sign of cultural backwardness betrays a strong anti-Tibetan bias. Such a view regards the secular texts of the Chinese (i.e. 'Confucian') tradition more valuable than the largely Buddhist literature in vogue during the Tibetan period.[38] A lack of secular Chinese education, however, does not necessarily indicate decline or regression but simply reflects alternative cultural values or differences in the official curriculum.[39]

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36 See the findings of the scientific analysis of paper in van Schaik, Helman-Ważny and Nöller 2015.

37 Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 13.

38 There were, of course, secular texts copied during the Tibetan period, and not only in Chinese. An example of a Tibetan historiographic text is the *Old Tibetan Chronicles*; Uray 1992, Hill 2006, Dotson 2011.

39 This is the case even if there were contemporaneous opinions regarding Tibet's cultural backwardness, which of course inevitably reflect ethnocultural biases. The narrative of China's superiority vis-à-vis the barbarian tribes around her has been a perpetual theme since the beginning of the imperial period.

Chinese classical texts were not in vogue simply because their discourses were irrelevant to a mainly Buddhist ideology.

A related issue is that of cultural borrowing vs. technological innovation during a period of such perceived decline. As mentioned above, the Sino-centric viewpoint explains some of the changes, such as the use of wooden pen instead of the traditional brush for writing Chinese characters, as regressive developments caused by isolation. Here, isolation means being cut off from China and therefore from the perceived source of the civilising force. By contrast, 'positive' changes are interpreted not in the light of the consequences of isolation but as internal innovations.

For example, as Chapter Two is to demonstrate, the Guiyijun period witnessed the appearance of entirely new book forms. These were the pothi, codex and concertina, all page-based manuscripts with discontinuous writing surfaces. Of these, the codex is a borrowing from Western manuscript cultures, for many of the exemplars from Dunhuang, regardless of their language, emulate the quire structure of Western codices, including the method of folding larger sheets of paper or vellum into quires. Chances of this very specific technology being invented independently in different parts of the Eurasian landmass are slim. Yet modern histories of the Chinese book often describe the codex as a technological innovation that arose within the Chinese tradition primarily because it allowed the reader to locate information in books more conveniently.[40]

On the one hand, this view is based on the assumption that the modern book, ultimately a derivative of the Western codex, is the most convenient book form, which is not necessarily true. Even after the introduction of the codex, the vast majority of manuscripts in Dunhuang remained in scroll form and there was no wholesale rush to switch to this ostensibly superior form. On the other hand, the approach that sees the Chinese codex as an autochthonous invention denies the possibility that anything of value could come from outside the Sinosphere. Yet it was precisely during the time when Dunhuang had lost contact with Central China that the codex made its debut in the region, which makes perfect sense if one looks at the wider picture. If anything, a careful comparison of surviving codices across different sites in Western China may shed light on the routes along which this book form spread to the Hexi region.[41]

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40 E.g. Ma Heng 1926, Liu 1958, 43, Tsien 1985, 230–231. In contrast, Drège 2018, 28 cautiously suggests that the codex in Dunhuang may represent the influence of Manichaean or Nestorian book cultures.

41 For an argument in favour of a comparative approach in codicology, see Beit-Arié 1993. The first but extremely valuable result of such an initiative is Bausi et al. 2015. Cf. Diringer 1953.

Pre-modern societies, especially along the Silk Roads, were multilingual. Today, the largest collections of medieval manuscripts all consist of materials written in multiple languages. Over thirty languages and scripts are attested at sites around Turfan, approximately twenty in Dunhuang and at least a dozen in Kharakhoto.[42] Even though most individuals no doubt had a limited command of languages, on the level of society, as far as we can see, multilingualism was an everyday reality, rather than something exceptional or out of the ordinary. While the separation of modern scholarship by languages is to some extent inevitable, a willingness to engage in research related to other languages helps seeing medieval societies and manuscript cultures in a more holistic, and ultimately more accurate, manner. Similarly, an attention to the materiality of manuscripts helps transcend linguistic boundaries inevitably present in the texts. Material culture bridges the linguistic divide, enabling us to see connections and patterns that otherwise may remain undetected.[43]

(iv) Manuscripts as physical artefacts

During the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in the materiality of manuscripts in international scholarship.[44] As manuscripts become increasingly accessible in high quality reproductions or digital photographs, their visual attributes such as book form, layout and palaeography receive more attention.[45] Naturally, materiality is but one side of the equation, and it is necessary to consider both text and form together, as two sides of the same coin. The text is inseparable from its physical carrier, which is a first-hand witness of the circumstances

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42 In addition to the languages attested in the Dunhuang library cave, the so-called Northern Zone 北區 at the Mogao Caves yielded handwritten and printed fragments with additional languages not represented in the library cave (e.g. Tangut, Mongolian, Syriac); Peng 2001. On the Mongolian material from Dunhuang, see Rybatzki 2009; on a Syriac fragment, Duan 2001; on a Tangut, Matsui 2012; on an Old Uighur, Yakup 2006.

43 Perhaps due to their disciplinary framework, fields such as Buddhist studies or history of science and technology have successfully bridged the linguistic gap in the study of pre-modern manuscript traditions.

44 There is a growing body of scholarship devoted to the scientific analysis of manuscripts. See, for example, Helman-Ważny 2014a and 2014b, Helman-Ważny and van Schaik 2013, as well as the series of papers in issue No. 11 of *Manuscript Studies* (2018).

45 In recent years, a large portion of the Dunhuang manuscripts have become available in good quality digital form through Gallica (http://gallica.bnf.fr), the digital library site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, as well as the websites of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk) and its partner institutions.

leading to the production of that particular manuscript. Like any archaeological object, it contains clues which may enhance our understanding of both the text and the social conditions which brought it into being. Approaches focusing on the text alone reduce the manuscript to a mere textual witness, the primary value of which is to contribute data for textual criticism. A holistic enquiry, by contrast, may result in additional insights that lead beyond the text and help to identify the individuals and the occasion responsible for the production of the manuscript. This, in turn, may also have implications for interpreting the text.

The traditional text-based approach understands the text as an entity in itself and makes it the focus of scholarly analysis. Looking back in time from the vantage point of the present, it attempts to track the text through the long line of textual transmission to an imagined original version. This process, however, is in a sense an illusion because scribes often do not copy the text for the sake of long-term preservation, even if they claim to do so. Instead, texts are remnants of social and religious practices. Every copy is made for a specific purpose and this purpose may differ from that of the previous manuscript. The centuries-long chain of transmission is a retrospective construct that connects copies made at different times for different purposes into a single succession.

Finishing the copying of a text did not necessarily mean the end of the manuscript's life cycle, for in addition to the scribe a series of individuals (e.g. peers, disciples, teachers, siblings, descendants, collectors, subsequent owners) continued to engage with it. They added reading marks and punctuation, notes or even other texts, some of which seem to have little to do with the first text. They may have removed damaged parts of the original manuscript and glued additional pieces of paper to it (some with writing) as a means of conservation. The manuscript continued to evolve in ways that may not have been anticipated by the person who had written the first text. In contradistinction to this complex and prolonged process of engaging with the manuscript, the purely text-centric perspective typically envisions manuscript production as a single act, or perhaps a series of disconnected acts, of copying, each of which produces a separate text.

One of the aims of this book is to underline the value of the approach that pays attention to the physical form of manuscripts and to demonstrate how it may provide insights into the social and religious context of their production and use. The examination of codicological and palaeographic features is not a scholastic exercise to its own end but an essential part of considering the available evidence. Therefore, it should be a regular procedure when working with manuscripts.

(v) Structure of the book

This book consists of four chapters. They are preceded by this 'Introduction', which outlines the conceptual framework of the study and enumerates its main questions. It contextualises the analyses presented later in the book by placing them into a grander narrative of Dunhuang at the end of the first millennium CE and the long history of the Chinese book. It also provides a brief historical overview and discusses the main methodological points. The following four chapters are case studies that examine four groups of manuscripts chosen on textual and non-textual grounds. All four groups are from Guiyijun Dunhuang and set out to explore the unique culture of this period. The overall argument is that the culture of the local elite, responsible for producing the manuscripts and paintings examined in this book, was much more mixed and far less 'Chinese' as normally imagined. This was a new development that signalled a significant change from that which preceded it, when Dunhuang was part of larger empires.

Chapter One, 'Multiple-text Manuscripts', focuses on a group of codices and concertinas, which contain a series of shorter Buddhist scriptures and spells selected from a relatively limited repertoire of texts. Although the number and arrangement of texts is different in almost all examples, the manuscripts are all codices and concertinas, and thus their physical form establishes an immediate link between them. This is especially likely since codices and concertinas appeared in Dunhuang around the ninth century and remained relatively uncommon. Another shared feature is that most of these items feature more than one hand, suggesting a collaborative process of production. The analysis of several manuscripts from this group suggests they may have been produced collectively by family members and each person's participation played a part in the religious efficacy of the manuscript. In this, they are clearly different from a series of multiple-text scrolls copied in a single hand, as part of the ritual of commemorating the dead. Due to their small size, it is likely their owners carried the booklets around, and they served apotropaic and ritual functions.

Chapter Two, 'Manuscripts Written by Students', examines manuscripts with student colophons as a distinct group. Although there is evidence that students copied a wide variety of texts, the ones who left the colophons studied at local Buddhist monasteries and primarily copied secular texts, such as the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety), *Lunyu* 論語 (Confucian Analects) or *Qianziwen* 千字文 (Thousand Character Text). Former scholarship has relied on the colophons to reconstruct various aspects of educational practices and institutions in Dunhuang. Scholars have also worked on the primers and other educational texts such manuscripts contained. In contrast to approaches primarily concerned with social history or textual studies, my main interest here is in the seemingly random scribble-like

notes on the verso of these scrolls. My contention is that they were neither random scribbles nor writing exercises, as they are typically explained, but records of assignments of later students who used the same manuscript. This understanding, on the one hand, contextualises the fragmentary bits of text on the verso and explains their function and, on the other, demonstrates that new students continued to use the scrolls years or decades after the date in the colophon. Overall, the manuscripts with colophons of this type offer a glimpse of how students from elite families in Dunhuang studied in local monasteries. At the same time, they are also tokens of the reciprocal relationship developed between the upper echelons of society and local monasteries in Guiyijun Dunhuang.

Chapter Three, 'Writing from Left to Right', examines cases of Chinese characters that read in a left-to-right direction, that is, in a direction opposite to how they would normally read. The examples come from manuscripts and votive paintings. Although sporadic instances of such writing are known from elsewhere, there are over a hundred cases among the Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings. The chapter divides the examples typologically into two groups, based on the orientation of writing. In the first group are examples written horizontally on pothi manuscripts, emulating the way Tibetan lines read in similar manuscripts. The second group gathers cases with vertical lines that read from left to right, which divide into three subgroups according to their specific context. The first of these are geometric compositions in manuscripts featuring mandalas and amulets. These have a strong link with esoteric Buddhism and Tibetan culture, and thus we can confidently link the left-to-right direction of writing, despite it being vertical, with Tibetan scribal practices. The second subgroup consists of examples of vertical columns that appear among the miscellaneous content on the margins and verso of scrolls. This group partially overlaps with student manuscripts and often contain fragments of so-called association circulars (*shesi zhuantie* 社司轉帖), notices sent out by local associations (*she* 社) to members. Still, many items in the group do not share these features but have a Buddhist orientation. The third subgroup comprises left-to-right inscriptions on votive paintings commissioned by the local elite. The donor inscriptions in the majority of surviving paintings read from left to right, suggesting that this way of writing was not accidental but a deliberate choice on the part of the donors. All of the dated examples in the second and third subgroups date to the period between the late ninth and the late tenth centuries, placing this practice securely within the time range of the Guiyijun period. The shared time frame further suggests that the second and third subgroups are related and must have a similar origin. As we cannot document a substantial Tibetan connection, the direction of writing itself suggests a Sogdian or Uighur influence, and the surnames of some of the donors corroborate this.

Chapter Four, 'Circulars and Names', begins with examining a group of manuscripts that contain circulars issued by lay Buddhist associations. Some of these are surviving copies of actual documents sent out by the management of associations but there are also copies written by students. These later ones are often fragmentary and frequently read from left to right. Thus, again, we see an overlap with manuscripts examined in other chapters of this book. The circulars often contain lists of names of individuals who were their recipients. In total, the circulars preserve thousands of personal names from Guiyijun Dunhuang, making them possibly the largest body of onomastic data available from a single place and period in pre-modern China. The names themselves have a number of unusual characteristics that set them apart from names in other periods and locations. One of these peculiarities is that they often contain elements that carry negative connotations, which is not typical in the recorded Chinese tradition. Another unusual phenomenon is that given names often repeat, suggesting a naming practice similar to Western cultures. Several highly popular names, which appear to be phonetic renderings of non-Chinese names, corroborate this impression. Considering the high percentage of surnames of Sogdian origin, many of these given names may also be connected with a Sogdian background. Yet, in contrast with earlier periods characterised by a tendency to transliterate Sogdian given names into Chinese phonetically, by the Guiyijun period most of the relevant names had become translations.

Finally, the 'Conclusions' at the end of the book reiterate the main findings and discuss some of their implications. I emphasise that these four groups of manuscripts exhibit a considerable degree of overlap, demonstrating that they originate with the same segment of society. The main argument is that the manuscripts evidence the unique culture of Guiyijun Dunhuang, which was very different from what existed when the region was part of the Tang or the Tibetan empire. The end of the Tibetan administration in Dunhuang did not mean that life went back to 'normal', that is, to what it had been six decades earlier, for by this time the nature of elite society had changed completely. This unique Guiyijun culture is what we see behind the production of a significant portion of the Dunhuang manuscripts and the murals in the cave temples at Mogao.

The research behind this book has developed over the past fifteen years and it is perhaps unavoidable that one's understanding of the subject continues evolving. As a result, it is necessary to restate some of my earlier findings, including some of those that have already appeared in print. The book incorporates three of my earlier papers, which have now been updated and recontextu-

alised. The first of these is an article on multiple-text manuscripts, which now forms part of Chapter One.[46] The second, an overview of association circulars in Dunhuang, has become part of Chapter Four.[47] The third, a preliminary study of the scribble-like notes on the verso of manuscripts written by lay students, is now part of Chapter Two.[48] All three papers have been re-worked and integrated into the larger narrative of respective chapters.

46 Galambos 2019.
47 Galambos 2016.
48 Galambos 2015a.

1 Multiple-text Manuscripts

Manuscripts come in many forms. This is especially true for a vast collection the size of the Dunhuang corpus, which contains tens of thousands of items written over the course of several centuries, in a variety of languages. In addition to the one-text-per-one-manuscript model, there are also many physically homogeneous manuscripts which include discrete texts written in succession, sometimes in the same hand, but not necessarily so. Among the Dunhuang manuscripts, a particular group of such multiple-text manuscripts stand out.[49] These are about three dozen codices or concertinas with several shorter Buddhist scriptures, incantations, or mantras. As a group, they have obvious typological similarities, yet the selection of texts and their order is almost never the same, suggesting they were intended for personal use and it was the individual owner determining which texts to include and in what order.

Former researchers have drawn attention to such manuscripts, recognising them as a distinct group. Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 described them as 'scriptures written in succession' (*renshakyō* 連寫經), referring to the fact that the same manuscript contained multiple consecutive texts.[50] Later he used the same expression for the whole group and noted that many of the texts were apocryphal scriptures, some of which—for historical reasons—survived only in Dunhuang.[51] Hypothesising about the function of such booklets, Stephen F. Teiser raised the possibility that they may have been temple copies used by monks in practical services.[52] Kuo Liying discussed these manuscripts in the context of apocryphal texts, highlighting their connection with esoteric practices.[53] In his study of the history of Chinese bookbinding, Li Zhizhong 李致忠 drew attention to the physical peculiarities of such manuscripts, calling them 'compendium' booklets, which is a codicological term analogous with the concept of multiple-text manuscript

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49 In using 'multiple-text manuscript' as a technical term, I follow Bausi, Friedrich and Maniaci 2019, the contributions in which examine the phenomenon across different manuscript cultures.

50 Makita 1964, 366 and Makita 1976, 38−39. Tanaka Ryōshō 田中良昭 (1967, 104) used the same expression in connection with the same manuscripts.

51 In Tanaka and Makita's usage, *renshakyō* was not really a term but a descriptive expression for such manuscripts. This is why taking it as a technical term and translating it as 'chain scriptures' (Schmid 2011; 268, Wang 2018, 1999), 'chain sutras' (Mollier 2008, 16), or 'linked sutras' (Goodman's 2013, 38) is not ideal.

52 Teiser 1994, 99–100.

53 Kuo 2000, 694−695; see also Schmid 2011, 368−369.

used in this chapter.[54] Amanda Goodman emphasised how the analysis of the physical format had the potential to reveal a great deal about how the constituent texts were understood at the time.[55]

This chapter examines multiple-text manuscripts in a holistic way, including both content and form, hoping to gain insights into their production and use. My initial approach, therefore, is from the point of view of the typology of book form and binding, contrasting these features with those in other manuscripts. While textual content is an equally important part of the equation, I hope to go beyond the practice of focusing solely on the texts.[56]

As we will see below, such manuscripts may have been produced collectively by smaller groups of individuals as acts of religious offering. The personal transcription of a text would have triggered the religious efficacy of the manuscript and appropriated the merit generated by the copying. As most similar items are small booklets, it is not unreasonable to assume they were carried on the body and possibly served an apotropaic function. Conversely, the fact that such multiple-text manuscripts make up a substantial portion of the total number of surviving codices and concertinas is an indication that the religious motivation involved in their production also played a role in the spread of these book forms in Dunhuang and elsewhere.

1.1 New book forms in Dunhuang

The ninth century saw the appearance of several new book forms in Dunhuang. Although in terms of overall numbers the scroll remained the dominant form, the introduction of folded and layered manuscripts was a milestone in the history of the Chinese book. This was the time when Chinese books first began having pages and, consequently, folio numbers.[57] Due to only a small portion of the relevant items being dated, it is hard to pinpoint the exact moment when such book forms made their debut. Most researchers date them to the Tibetan and the Guiyijun periods, when the region's closest ties were not with the Tang empire

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54 Li 1989, 115. Naturally, the term is the choice of word on the part of the translator (Frances Wood) who translated the original article into English.

55 Goodman 2013, 38–39.

56 In my approach, I am following the example of earlier scholars such as Fujieda Akira, Stephen F. Teiser and Jean-Pierre Drège, all of whom have been successful in merging these two aspects in their study of Dunhuang manuscripts.

57 Although still relatively rare in Dunhuang, folio numbers later became an important device in printed books. On the significance of the page format, see Mak 2014.

and its successor states but with Central Asia and Tibet, resulting in new types of cultural stimuli.

The new book forms differ from the dominant scroll in marked ways. Fujieda Akira dubbed them 'irregular formats' as a means for distinguishing them from the 'standard format' of the scroll.[58] Naturally, the terms 'irregular' and 'standard', with their normative connotations, are not ideal as conceptual categories. It is true, however, that the new forms deviate from the majority of Chinese manuscripts, even if this is by no means the case for Tibetan ones. They are also less uniform than scrolls which often followed prescribed standards and thus tended to be of similar size and layout. In contrast, the new forms exhibit considerable diversity in size and shape. From the point of view of general physical structure, we can identify three major types: 1) the pothi, 2) the concertina and 3) the codex. Unlike the scroll, which is a longer stretch of paper rolled up around a central axis, all three new forms consist of folia stacked or folded into a single booklet. In the following, I briefly examine the main characteristics of these three types.[59]

1.1.1 Pothi

The pothi book consists of oblong rectangular folia stacked together. The prototype of this form is the Indian palm-leaf manuscript (Skt. *pustaka* > *pothi*) which is still in use in parts of South and South-East Asia. Pothis from Dunhuang and other sites in Western China structurally replicate the same palm-leaf manuscripts but using paper. The switch to paper may have been related to the limited availability of palm leaves in the desert climate of Chinese Central Asia, although the popularity of paper in the region must have also been a decisive factor. Accordingly, the pothi folia made of paper retain the shape of palm leaves, including the string holes originally used to bind the leaves together. This remains so in Dunhuang, although the holes usually do not serve a practical function and at times are merely drawn on the surface, leaving the paper unperforated. Evidently, the holes remained part of the design symbolising a

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58 Fujieda 1966, 16–27.
59 For a brief overview of the history of research on the book forms in Dunhuang, see Drège 2018, 25–28.

connection to earlier stages of the Buddhist manuscript tradition.[60] They survived as a design feature, as a reference to an earlier stage of the Buddhist book.[61]

The majority of pothi books from Dunhuang are in Tibetan, and only relatively few are in Chinese. Although manuscripts in pothi form survive in various languages from other sites in Western China, their appearance in Dunhuang is unquestionably linked with the Tibetan presence. Accordingly, Jean-Pierre Drège dates the introduction of the pothi to the second half of the eighth century.[62] Tibetans wrote on the pothi leaves horizontally, with lines parallel to the long edge of the leaves, similar to the way scribes in India and Central Asia wrote on them with scripts that had a horizontal orientation. When writing Chinese, the leaves had to be turned 90 degrees for the vertical lines of text to remain parallel to the long side. This was a simple solution that presented no difficulties unless the languages were to be mixed.

An example of a Chinese pothi is manuscript S.5635, a single folio 26.6 × 9.2 cm in size, with the beginning of the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經 (Skt. *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*; Sutra Spoken by Vimalakīrti). Fig. 1 shows the recto and verso of the same folio side by side. The paper is not ruled, as was often the case with pothi manuscripts. Nevertheless, the beginning and end of the lines are aligned (i.e. justified), forming distinct top and bottom margins. Each page contains seven lines of text, each with 27–29 characters.[63] The string hole in the centre of the upper part of the folio is circled with red ink, which was common in pothis from Dunhuang. Although one of the corners of the folio seems to be damaged, the other three reveal that the corners used to be rounded. Rounded corners were also common in pothi manuscripts in other languages, most likely reflecting the legacy of palm-leaf manuscripts.[64]

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60 In a letter to Émile Senart, Paul Pelliot (1908, 508) attributed the use of the pothi format for Chinese books to the religious piety of Chinese believers, which drove them to imitate the Indian pothi. For an English translation of this part of the letter, see Drège 2018, 20–21.

61 In a way, this is similar to how modern PDF and Word documents retain the page-based format of physical books (i.e. codices), including margins and headers, even though this is far from being the ideal format for computer screens with their landscape orientation.

62 Drège 2014d, 362; cf. Moretti forthcoming.

63 Other than the lines with titles, of course.

64 A related feature is that in some instances the opposing edges of the leaves are not parallel but slightly curved, so the leaves resemble a superellipse instead of a rectangle. This practice was not limited to Dunhuang but is also seen in manuscripts from the southern part of the Tarim Basin. See, for example, some of the pothi leaves Aurel Stein excavated in 1901 at Dandān-Uiliq and Endere along the southern perimeter of the Taklamakan Desert; Stein 1907, v. 2, Plates CVII–CX.
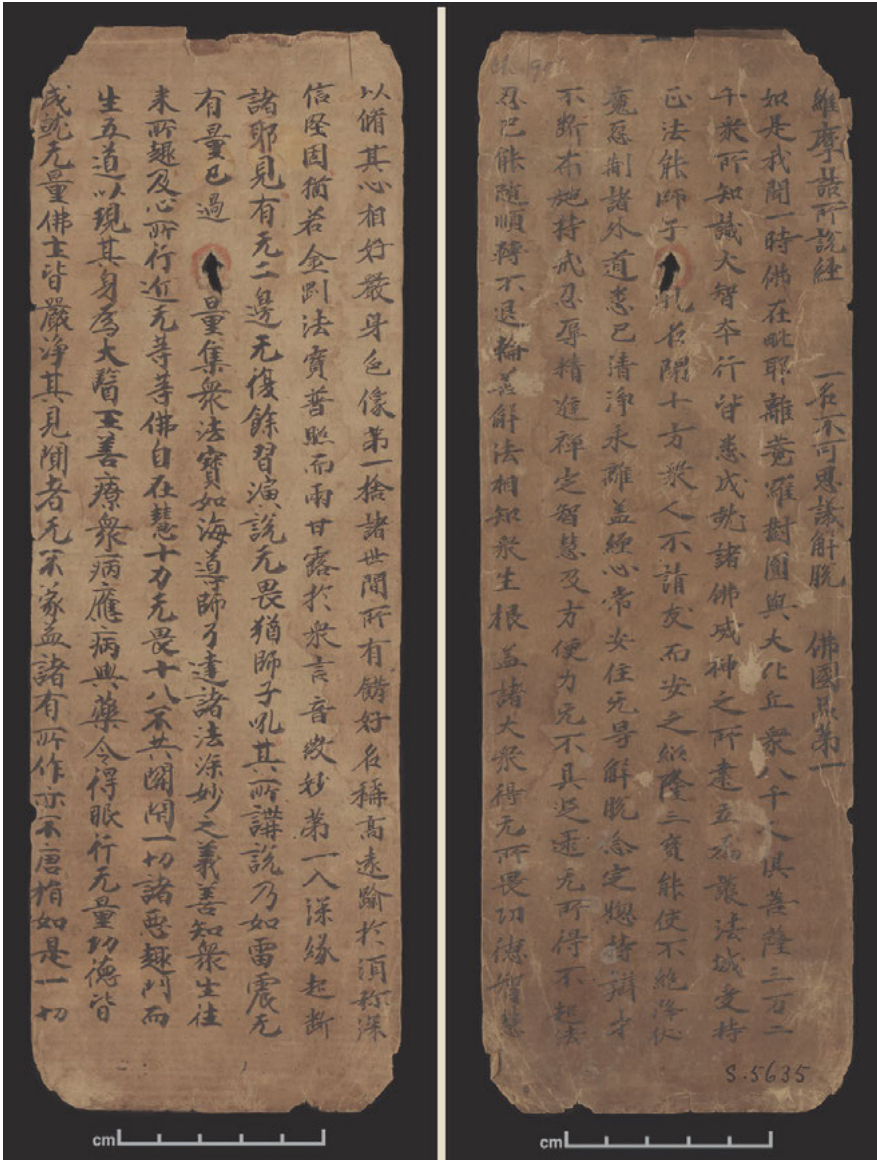
Fig. 1: The recto and verso of a pothi folio, manuscript S.5635. (26.6 × 9.2 cm; The British Library)

1.1.2 Concertina

The concertina is essentially a scroll folded at regular distances in alternating directions. The result is a book that can be unfolded by pulling it apart. This form is also known in English as 'accordion', 'leporello', 'pleated binding' or, using its Japanese name, *orihon* 折本 ('folded book').[65] The most common Chinese name is *jingzhe zhuang* 經摺裝, which is sometimes translated into English as 'sutra binding' or 'folding sutra binding'.[66] This form is known both in the West and in South-East Asia but the earliest surviving examples are those from Dunhuang.[67]

As a book form, the concertina is primarily attested in Dunhuang for Tibetan manuscripts, and this may also indicate its origin. Drège notes that only slightly more than 10% of the concertinas are in Chinese and considering that almost all of the few unambiguously dated specimens come from the second half of the tenth century, it is unlikely that this form would have been used before the Tibetan control of Dunhuang (i.e. 781).[68] In view of the fact that there are over three hundred such manuscripts from Dunhuang and none of the dated ones predates the tenth century, the connection to the Tibetan period seems to rest primarily on the assumption that that was the moment when the Tibetan cultural influence was at its zenith in the region. Yet, as we know today, Tibetan culture remained a strong presence even after the end of Tibet's political rule.[69] Judging solely from the dates in colophons, the Chinese concertinas are firmly within the time frame of the Guiyijun period.

As a general rule, the unambiguously dated examples are Chinese, as Tibetan manuscripts typically record the date using the twelve-year cycle, which does not tell us the precise year. In his study of a Tibetan multiple-text concertina manuscript known as the *Tibetan Chan Compendium* (P. Tib. 116), Sam van

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65 The Japanese word *orihon* (also spelled *ori-hon*) was adopted into the English language by the second half of the nineteenth century at the latest; e.g. Audsley 1882, 85; cf. Evans 1997, 134. Discussing medical books bound in this form from late imperial China, Unschuld 2010 uses the term 'leporello'. In the context of manuscripts from South-East Asia, these books are often called 'folding books' or 'folded books'; see Terwiel and Chaichuen 2003.

66 E.g. Tsien 1985, 230 and Burkus-Chasson 2005.

67 For examples of fifteenth-century English manuscripts in this type of binding, see Shirota 2019. For an overview of this form in the Aethiopian manuscript tradition from the fifteenth century onward, see Balicka-Witakowska 2010; in pre-Islamic Java, see Jákl 2016.

68 Drège 2014a, 365. The numbers are based on manuscripts from the Stein and Pelliot collections.

69 Takeuchi 1990 and 2004; van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 67–68.

Schaik notes that the handwriting points to the period from the mid-ninth century onwards, which is perfectly compatible with the dates in dated Chinese concertinas.[70] Combining such palaeographic evidence with the tenth-century dates of Chinese concertinas, van Schaik tentatively dates the manuscript to the first half of the tenth century. Yet the question remains whether the concertina as a book form was in use in Dunhuang prior to the mid-ninth century when Tibet's political control ceased. If this had indeed been the case, the questions to be asked are why had it not become popular earlier, the moment the Tibetans had taken control of the region? And if this really was a new phenomenon in Tibetan manuscript culture, what triggered its development?

Although the concertina is in a sense an extension of the scroll form, the folded pages in Dunhuang are mostly tall and narrow, with folia resembling the shape of pothi leaves. In some cases, the panels include the string holes we see in pothi manuscripts. If anything, the purely symbolic function of such holes is even more obvious in concertinas than in pothi manuscripts.[71] One such item, shown in Fig. 2, is the bilingual manuscript S.5603, in which the main text in black ink is a Chinese-language commentary to the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, whereas the text added in red between the lines is the Tibetan text of the sutra without the commentary.[72] In its closed form, the stacked leaves resemble a codex, yet when fully spread out, it is in the shape of an unrolled scroll. At the same time, the individual folia are in the shape of pothi leaves and include the string hole. Thus, in terms of its shape and structure, this particular manuscript combines features of the three book forms (i.e. scroll, pothi and codex). In this example, both the Chinese and Tibetan texts run parallel to the long side of the page, which indicates that the book had to be oriented differently depending on which language was read.

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70 van Schaik 2016, 293.

71 Paul Pelliot was the first to note the genetic relationship between pothis and concertinas; see Pelliot 1908, 509, Drège 2018, 21.
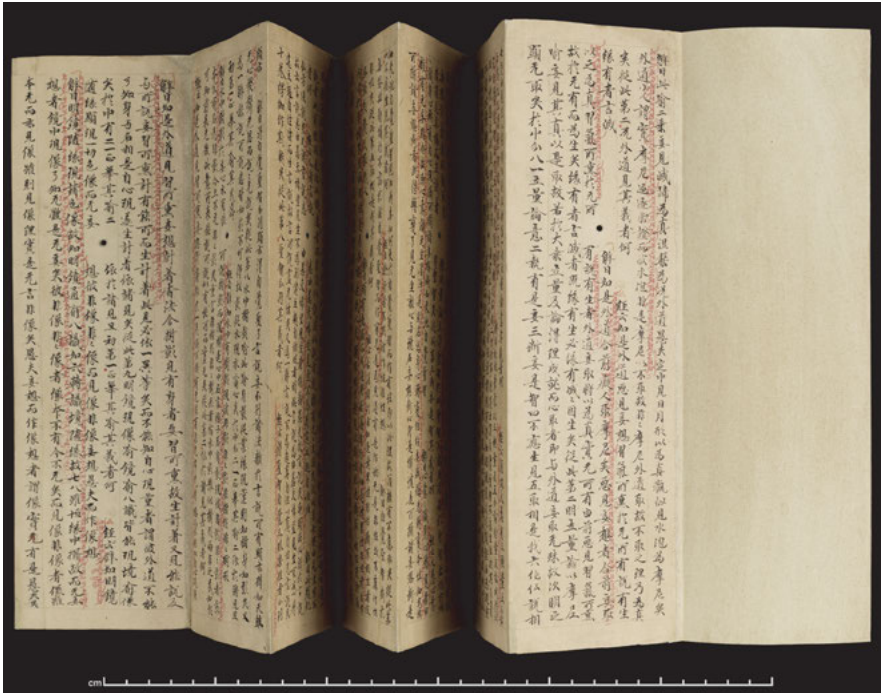
72 Ueyama 1990, 389-397.

Fig. 2: Manuscript S.5603 in a concertina form. (29.2 × 9.1 cm; The British Library)

Less commonly, the shape and dimensions of concertinas resembled those of codices. For example, manuscripts S.5541 (8.2 × 7.2 cm) and S.5587 (7.3 × 5.4 cm) have a less elongated shape reminiscent of codices.[73] A fascinating example are the three printed copies of the 32-section version of the *Diamond sutra* from the mid-tenth century (Or.8210/P.11, P.4515 and P.4516), all folded as a concertina but with codex-like dimensions. Fig. 3 shows two opposing pages from item Or.8210/P.11, a printed copy commissioned in 949 by Cao Yuanzhong 曹元忠 (d. 974), the ruler of Dunhuang. After being printed, the paper sheets were assembled into a concertina, which in its current form only has sections Nos. 1, 2 and 32 of the text. That the

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73 Two miniature concertinas with such non-pothi like proportions were discovered in a relic deposit dating from 1049 inside the White Pagoda in Balin Right Banner, Inner Mongolia. The smaller (5.2 × 3 cm) contained the *Foshuo Molizhitian jing* 佛說摩利支天經 and the larger (5.5 × 4 cm), the *Diamond sutra*; see De, Zhang and Han 1994, 23; also Shen 2006, 77–79. These booklets were evidently used as amulets and formed part of the Esoteric Buddhist practice of empowerment.

omission of other sections was not the result of damage to the once complete book and that the current condition is in fact its original structure is implied by the two other copies, the content of which partially overlaps with this copy.[74] The presence of a printed frame indicates that the page-based layout was part of the design from the start, and that the concertina is not a remounted scroll. In contrast to concertinas with pothi-shaped leaves, those with codex-shaped dimensions may have been intended to emphasise an affiliation with the codex, a form that was neither Chinese nor Tibetan.
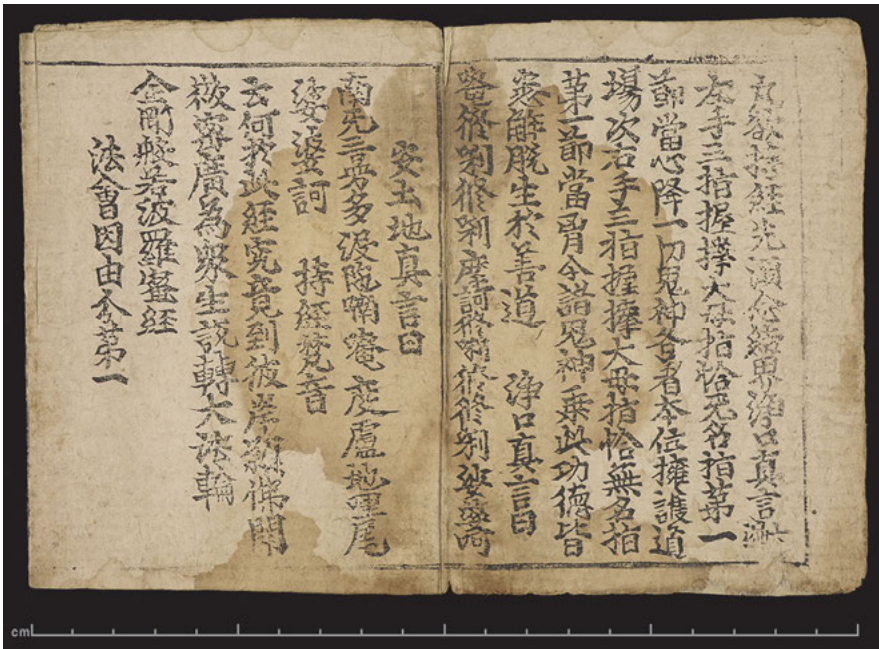
Fig. 3: A printed copy of the *Diamond sutra* in Or.8210/P.11. (14 × 10.2 cm; The British Library).[75]

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74 P.4515 contains sections No. 31 and 32, followed by a series of spells; P.4516 has sections No. 1 and 2.
75 The manuscript dimensions in the captions to figures refer to a single folio, which would be the size of the closed book, even when the figure displays, as it does in this case, more than one page.

1.1.3 Codices

The codex is a book that consists of one or more quires or gatherings (also called signatures). The quires, in turn, comprise several bifolia stacked together and folded in half, then sewn together in the middle. Essentially, this is the same book form that spread throughout the Western world during the period of Late Antiquity and ultimately evolved into the modern book.[76] Even the method of successively folding larger sheets of paper to create quires was identical to how vellum or parchment sheets were folded in the West.[77] There is little doubt that the appearance of the codex in the Sinophone (or rather, Sinographic) world is indebted to contact with Western manuscript cultures, even if the exact trajectory of the borrowing remains unclear.[78] According to Jean-Pierre Drège, there are about four hundred codices known from Dunhuang and twenty-six of these bear a date. The earliest date is 899 (P.3913) but some of the undated ones may be from even earlier.[79]

In general, the codex in Dunhuang has two major types. The first one is the sewn one, structurally identical to Western codices in that it consists of quires assembled into a book. The bifolia in each quire are sewn together along the centrefold, ensuring that the leaves do not come loose. A codex may have one or more quires, depending on its size. In the second type, the bifolia are similarly folded in half but instead of being gathered into quires, each folded bifolio is glued to the next one along the outer edge of the centrefold (Fig. 4).[80] Despite this basic difference, the two types of codices are very similar in most other aspects. Unlike the so-called 'thread-bound books' (*xianzhuang shu* 線裝書) that became the norm in later centuries, in which only one side of the leaves held writing and the blank side was on the inside, in Dunhuang people usually wrote on both sides.[81]

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76 The literature on the origin and development of the codex is too vast to enumerate here. Some important contributions include Turner 1977, Roberts and Skeat 1983, van Haelst 1989, Harris 1991, Harnett 2017 and Boudalis 2018. On non-European codices, see the relevant entries in the volume *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (Bausi et al. 2015).

77 On the folding of papers sheets into quires, see Drège 2014b.

78 Drège 2018, 28 opines that 'the spread of books carried by occidental religions, Nestorianism or Manichaeism, may have had an influence on the Chinese book'.

79 Drège 1979, 18 and Drège 2014b, 373.

80 This type of binding is often referred to as 'butterfly binding' 蝴蝶裝, although some scholars use the same term for other types of bindings. To avoid ambiguity and confusion, I do not use this term here.

81 This was not a universal rule and there are manuscripts in which some leaves have text on one side only, leaving the blank side exposed, or gluing it to the blank side of the adjacent folio. We can see both scenarios, for example, in manuscript P.3759, a small multiple-text codex merely 5.1 × 4.7 cm in size.
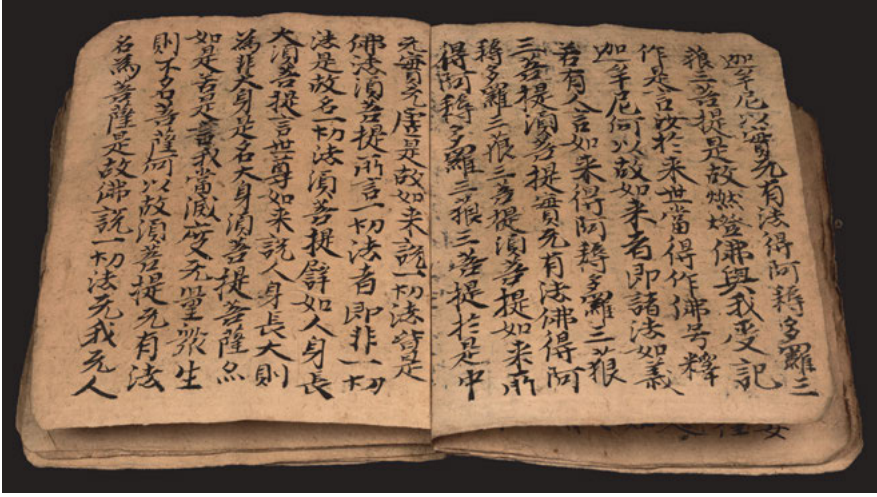
Fig. 4: Manuscript S.5451, an example of a glued codex. (14 × 11.2 cm; The British Library)

Another major difference was, of course, that in Dunhuang codices the folds were at the spine, whereas in later Chinese books they were on the outside, forming the fore-edge of the book.

An often overlooked feature of Dunhuang codices is that many of them were folded in half vertically in parallel with the spine. Modern curators and conservators usually flatten them because they tend to see them as objects that essentially had the same structure as western books. Yet even after a century of modern curatorial care, many of them retain a little 'muscle memory' and curl upwards upon removal from their envelope or box. Evidently, such booklets were folded when they were carried. Fig. 5 shows the front cover of manuscript S.5638 (13.6 × 13.2 cm), a small codex almost square in shape. At the centre, the trace of the vertical fold is visible, indicating how the manuscript used to be folded, even though the booklet is relatively small.[82]

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[82] A less likely scenario is that this occurred when the manuscripts were packed up for storage in the library cave. Some of the larger Tibetan pothi manuscripts, for instance, were rolled up, which was not the usual manner in which they were stored.

Fig. 5: The front cover of codex S.5638. (13.6 × 13.2 cm; The British Library)

The small size of some codices inevitably raises the issue of portability. When viewing them purely as digital images, which is so often the case, it is easy to forget how small some of them are in reality. In contradistinction to many other manuscript traditions, the Dunhuang codices are never large. Neither are there any lavishly illuminated exemplars, as it was the case in Manichaean book cul-

ture.[83] Some items contain drawings or paintings but, on the whole, these are relatively simple. The manuscripts themselves are also unsophisticated, suggesting personal, rather than public use.[84]

Another physical trait, possibly related to portability, is that most codices had trimmed corners. It is easy to see that this would have protected the corners from damage,[85] especially as the Dunhuang codices usually had no hard binding. Yet this feature was probably not a local invention but arrived at Dunhuang along with the codex form itself. Trimmed corners occur in a disproportionally high number of codices, exhibiting two main variations: rounded and bevelled (i.e. cut along a straight line at 45 degree angle) ones. The division between the two is not always obvious, showing that they represented more of a sliding scale, rather than two opposite poles. Fig. 6 shows manuscript S.5442, a small glued codex (10 × 10.8 cm) with bevelled corners. The pattern of the corners repeats on all bifolia and the irregular traces of the blade demonstrate that the bifolia were trimmed together, while the book was closed. Whatever their original function, trimmed corners were clearly part of the basic design of Dunhuang codices, a feature present in most of them.
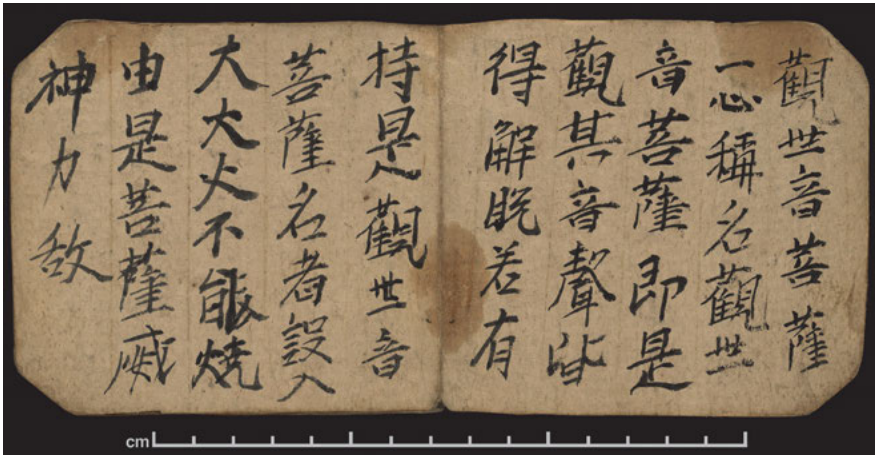

Fig. 6: A bifolio from codex S.5442, showing the bevelled corners. (10 × 10.8 cm; The British Library)

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83 See the stunning examples of Manichaean book art in Gulácsi 2005.

84 On Dunhuang manuscripts with illustrations, see Drège 1999a; also Fujieda 1968.

85 Budge 1977, ix puts forward a similar theory about a Coptic Biblical papyrus codex from the late third or early fourth century.

On the whole, based on their content, we can divide the Chinese codices from Dunhuang into two main types. The first are those with primers and texts of an educational nature, such as the *Qianziwen* 千字文 (e.g. P.4809, P.3062), *Kaimeng yaoxun* 開蒙要訓 (e.g. S.5431, S.5464), *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* 孔子項託相問書 (e.g. P.3833, S.5529), as well as the poems of Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 (d. ca. 670; e.g. P.3833, P.4094), Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910; e.g. S.5477, P.3910) and other popular poets. These codices must have belonged to students and were related to educational practices.[86] The other main category includes booklets with Buddhist texts, including ritual manuals, popular scriptures or a series of them. They certainly do not form a homogenous group as they include both single- and multi-text manuscripts.[87] Among the noteworthy single-text examples are the booklets with the *Diamond sutra* (Ch. *Jingang bore boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅密經, Skt. Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra) copied by an old man in his eighties from a printed edition from Xichuan 西川.[88] According to the colophons, the old man transcribed these copies 'for circulation among the faithful' 流傳信士,[89] exhibiting a wish to benefit all living beings, without directly pushing any personal agenda to the foreground.[90] This type of devotional aspiration was, of course, an important part of Mahāyāna Buddhism and served as a major motivation for the production of manuscripts and art.

It is not hard to see that there are some fundamental similarities between pothis, concertinas and codices from Dunhuang. They are all booklet-type forms that appeared in Dunhuang after the region lost direct connection with the Tang and developed closer ties with Tibetan and Central Asian cultures. In a sense, they are tokens of the new cultural contacts of the region. Although bound differently, concertinas and codices often featured pages in the shape of pothi leaves, which could well have been a conscious effort to emphasize the connection with palm-leaf manuscripts of the Buddhist past.

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86 Student manuscripts are to be examined in the next chapter.

87 Occasionally, manuscripts contain a combination of educational and religious texts, such as codex S.5464, which contains the primer *Kaimeng yaoxun* followed by two empty pages and the *Jingang jing zan* 金剛經讚 (Eulogy on the *Diamond sutra*).

88 There is quite a bit of secondary literature on this group of manuscripts, e.g. Wen Chu 1990; Teiser 1994, 121–128 and 224; Zheng Acai 1998, 36. For the *Diamond sutra* in Dunhuang in general, see Hureau 2014.

89 See, e.g. Giles 1940, 320.

90 For an overview of the motives for making donations in Guiyijun Dunhuang, see Sørensen 2020a, 6–7.

1.2 Multiple-text manuscripts with short scriptures

In addition to their physical likeness, a group of codices and concertinas stand out due to their comparable content. The physical and textual correspondences between these manuscripts justify treating them as a specific group.[91] They usually contain a series of Buddhist scriptures from a relatively limited pool of texts, including the *Guanyin jing* 觀音經 (Scripture of Guanyin, i.e. the 25th chapter of the *Lotus sutra*),[92] *Molizhitian jing* 摩利支天經 (Sutra of Marīci-deva), *Dizang pusa jing* 地藏菩薩經 (Sutra of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha), *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Prolonging Life), *Foshuo yan shouming jing* 佛說延壽命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Extending One's Life-span), and the *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*, i.e. *Heart sutra*). Several of these short Buddhist texts are apocryphal scriptures composed in China.[93]

From the point of view of their physical characteristics, some concertinas have a slightly stiffer cover, which may also include a silk wrapping. Similarly, the cover of codices is often firmer than the rest of the pages but, on the whole, the manuscripts are still relatively limp.[94] As mentioned before, many of the codices retain traces of having been folded in half along a vertical axis. Significantly, multiple-text manuscripts in this group are typically small, sometimes the size of a credit card or even smaller. There are several manuscripts with dimensions smaller than 5 × 5 cm, which implies a fundamental difference in terms of their use and function, when compared with Buddhist scrolls that constitute the overall majority of the Dunhuang corpus. The smallest booklets imply not only portability but perhaps even an effort to make them as unobtrusive as possible. Almost too small to be read comfortably, they may have been used as amulets, sewn into clothes, or placed inside containers.

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91 There are, of course, many other types of manuscripts that contain multiple texts, such as ritual texts, meditation texts, doctrinal works, poems, hymns, spells or excerpts from scriptures, etc. The ones discussed here represent a subset with shared a) physical characteristics and b) textual content.

92 The title *Guanyin jing* is the abbreviation of a much longer one that usually appears at the start of the text in manuscripts. On this, see below.

93 Featuring 2,000 plus characters, the *Guanyin jing* is the longest. The *Foshuo xuming jing*, for example, is merely 235 characters, including its head and end titles. For a useful discussion of the *Molizhitian jing* in Dunhuang manuscripts and art, see Zhang Xiaogang 2018.

94 In some instances, the cover folio comprises multi-layered sheets of paper, causing it to be stiffer than the rest of the folia in the manuscript. In general, codices from Dunhuang and other Silk Road sites in China do not have hard covers, which makes them similar to Western 'limp bindings', as described in Szirmai 1999, 285–319.

An important clue regarding the function of these multiple-text manuscripts can be derived from the pictures contained in some of them. Occasionally, the manuscripts include a picture of the donors, thereby emphasising their votive nature. For example, the opening pages of manuscript P.3932 have a drawing of two donors worshipping Bodhisattva Guanyin (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7: The image of donors worshipping Bodhisattva Guanyin at the beginning of P.3932. (12 × 7.4 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The donors appear to be a husband and wife, kneeling on a carpet on the left side of the composition, their faces turned towards the bodhisattva on the right. The husband puts his palms together, while the wife clasps her hands inside her sleeves. Guanyin is seated on a raised lotus pedestal, holding a willow branch in his left hand. On the top of his head is a miniature figure of Amitābha Buddha, a typical iconographic feature. The picture portrays the donors turning to the bodhisattva for help, just as the *Guanyin jing*, the first text in the manuscript, advocates in times of hardship. They are pleading for the support and protection of the compassionate bodhisattva to deliver them from calamity or misfor-

tune. It is likely that a specific experience in the donors' lives, illness or death, was the immediate motivation for the manuscript's production.[95]

An analogous composition, but of a considerably less skilled hand, decorates the beginning of Stein painting 209, a miniature codex (6.2 × 6.3 cm) in the British Museum.[96] Here, the text is the *Foshuo xuming jing* (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Prolonging Life), written similarly in a decidedly unskilled hand (Fig. 8).[97] The picture shows a donor worshipping a standing deity with a flaming halo. The scripture mentions Amitābha Buddha, as well as Bodhisattvas Guanyin and Dashizhi 大勢至 (Skt. Mahāsthāma-prāpta), making it highly likely that the figure depicts one of them. Despite the unskilled manner of the drawing, the flaming background and the overall composition of a devotee standing in front of the deity suggest the figure could be Guanyin. The bodhisattva has short, stick-like legs characteristic of a child's drawing, although the age of the 'artist' is uncertain. The donor figure is equally problematic, especially for his headwear that makes him look like a rabbit with long ears.
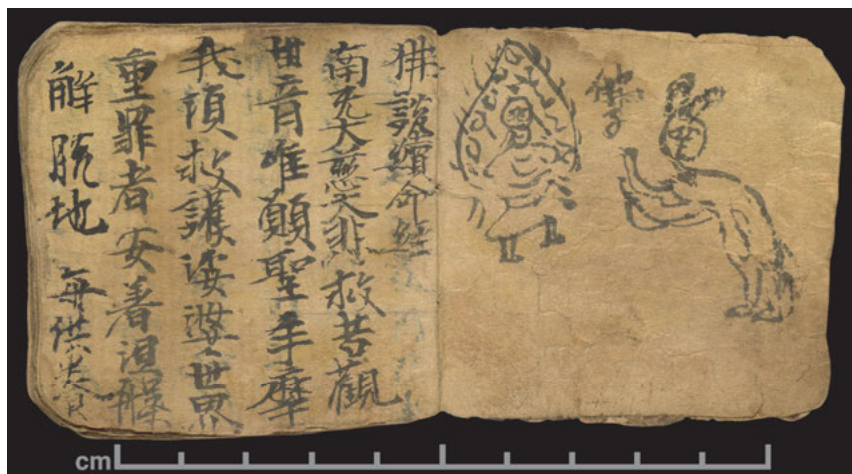

Fig. 8: Stein painting 209 with a line drawing of a donor with a bodhisattva. (6.2 × 6.3 cm; The British Museum)

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95 See below on the textual structure of this manuscript.

96 Most of the Stein manuscripts originally deposited in the British Museum are now kept in the British Library. Probably due to the drawing, this small codex is one of the few manuscripts that remain in the British Museum along with paintings and other art objects. This is why its pressmark starts as "Stein painting," even though it is a manuscript.

97 On the *Foshuo xuming jing* in Dunhuang, see Li Xiaorong 2010.

Due to the ineptness of the drawing, it is virtually impossible to decipher what it intends to depict without parallels in other manuscripts. In fact, when first introducing this booklet, Aurel Stein described the drawing as a 'sketch of demons or monsters'. [98] It has been suggested that the worshipper may have been a child as his hair seems to be in two tufts, characteristic of young boys.[99] This is, of course, a possibility but a comparison of the drawing with the one in P.3932 above suggests that it depicts a donor with joined palms worshipping the bodhisattva. There is, however, no solid evidence to confirm that the donor in the picture is a child.

The manuscript is in a classic codex form with folded bifolia sewn together into quires. As can be seen in Fig. 8, the corners are rounded and the pages are further trimmed so that most (but not all) have an arching bottom edge. The side edges arch slightly inward and the top edges are straight. The trimming must have been done after copying the text, as it affected some characters near the bottom of the pages. The crudeness of the trimming is consistent with the quality of the drawing and the handwriting, and probably represents the efforts of the same person. Somewhat unexpectedly, the sewing is done well, and the thread holds the quires together tightly (Fig. 9). For this reason, it is not inconceivable that the sewing was re-done later by conservators at the British Museum, possibly using the original thread.

Technically speaking, this manuscript is not a multiple-text manuscript as it only contains a single text. The reason it is being adduced here is primarily due to the drawing of the donor at the beginning. Nonetheless, the codex consists of 8 bifolia, excluding the front and back covers, amounting to a total of 30 pages.

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98 Stein 1921, v. 2, 977.
99 Whitfield and Farrer 1990, 99. Headwear with similarly raised flaps appears in a painting of an adult donor in P.4518 (2).
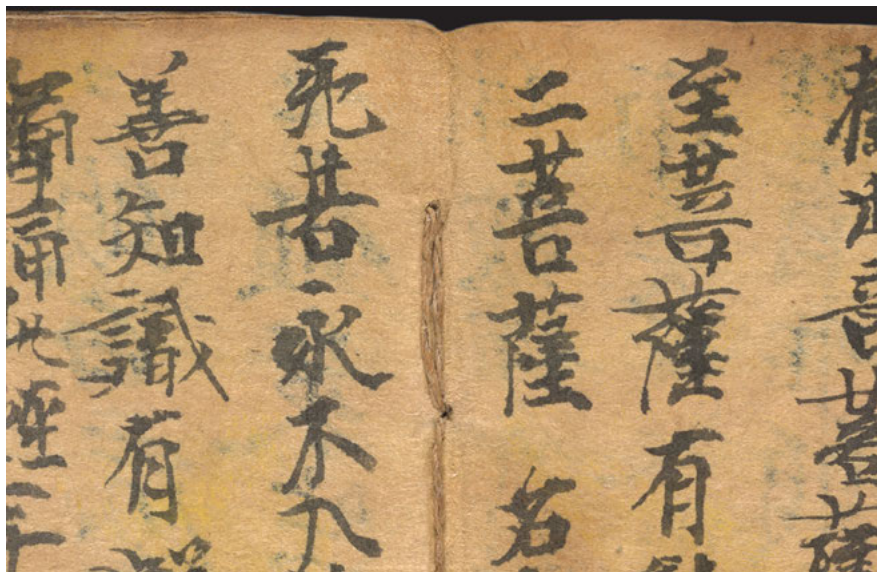
Fig. 9: The thread that binds the quires together in Stein painting 209.

Of these, the drawing and the text only take up the first 7 pages, the remaining 23 pages are blank (Fig. 10).[100] In other words, only about a quarter of the manuscript has text in it, all the other pages are blank. It would be naive to think that the individual who produced the codex, regardless of the quality of his or her handwriting, misjudged the length of the *Foshuo xuming jing* to such an extent. Instead, it is more likely that either the same individual, or someone else, intended to add additional texts to the booklet. The incompleteness of the manuscript shows that the texts in such multiple-text booklets may have been copied on different occasions. Weeks or months may have passed between the copying of individual sections, which also partly explains why most multiple-text manuscripts feature more than one hand.[101]

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100 Unfortunately, this manuscript has not been published in full form and even the digital images on the IDP website are selective and include only the inscribed pages, thus creating the impression of a very thin booklet filled with text.

101 Another example of the same type of incomplete multiple-text manuscript is S.5678, a glued codex with the *Guanyin jing*. In addition to this text, the very last page, which now also functions as the back cover, contains the title and the first seven characters of the *Foshuo yan shouming jing*. The rest of the page is blank, even though enough space was available to write two more lines. As there are traces of one or more bifolia torn off from the end, the missing
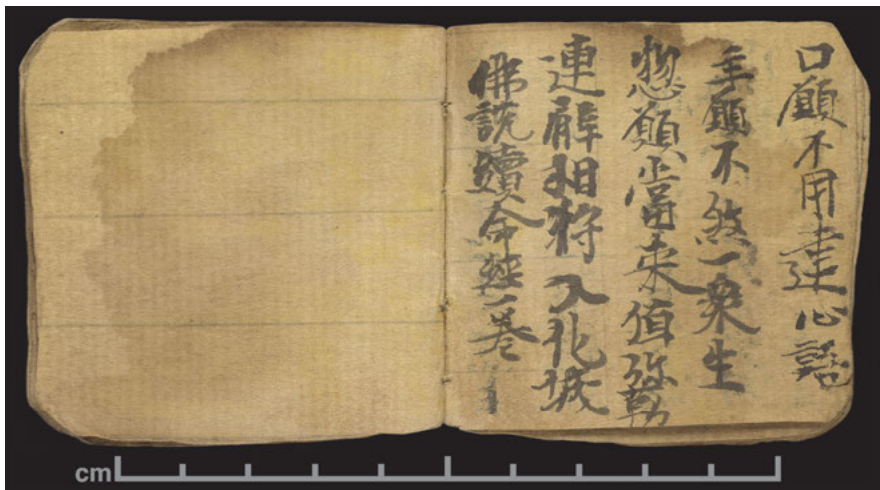
Fig. 10: The end of the text in Stein painting 209, showing the horizontal ruling lines from the original scroll.

In discussing this manuscript, Stein pointed out that the manuscript paper had originally been ruled for a scroll but was then cut into pieces and sewn into a codex. It was not uncommon to reuse sheets from older Buddhist scrolls to create codices, only in this case the source paper was blank, save for the ruling lines. Indeed, the ruling lines make it clear that the producer of this codex did not simply use a standard-size sheet of paper but disassembled a scroll already ruled for writing. As we can see in Fig. 10, some pages have horizontal ruling lines, confirming that in the codex some sheets were turned sideways. On the side covered in writing, we can faintly see the original scroll's top or lower margin, which is now vertical. The width of the spread-out bifolia is about 12.6 cm, that is, about half of the width (i.e. height) of the sheets of paper in Tang-dynasty Buddhist scrolls.[102]

pages were probably also blank. Nevertheless, the title and the first few characters of the second text suggest that this codex was on its way to becoming a proper multiple-text booklet but was never finished.

102 The standard size of scrolls in the Tang is already pointed out in Fujieda 1966, 16. For an extremely useful detailed analysis of paper sizes in scrolls, see Drège 2002.

Fig. 11 shows the steps of the process for creating the bifolia for the codex from a sheet of paper intended to be used in a scroll.[103] Note the presence of ruling lines, which are also visible, but have no function, in the codex. In step 1, the original sheet was cut in half lengthwise. Step 2 was to fold (see dashed line) one of the resulting narrower sheets in half, also lengthwise. In step 3, this folded narrow sheet was sliced crosswise into 8 pieces. These pieces formed the 8 bifolia of the codex, which were then stacked together into quires (step 4).
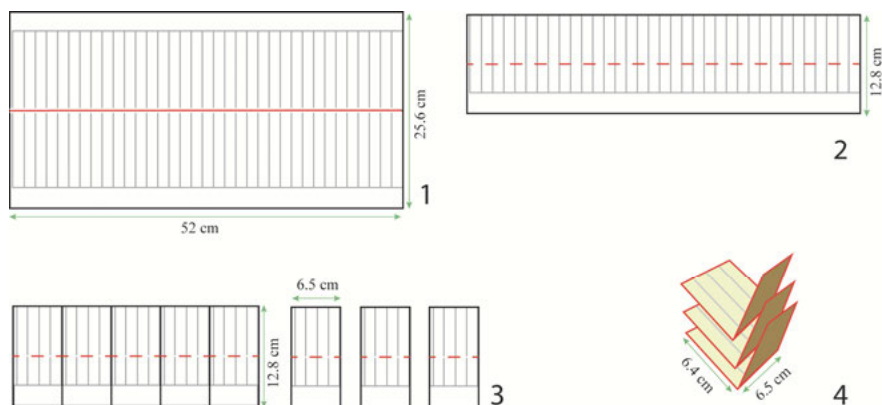

Fig. 11: Cutting and folding a sheet from a scroll to make a quire in a codex.

In fact, it may be deduced that the entire codex was assembled from a single sheet of paper that had originally formed part of a scroll. One sheet would have produced two such codices. The height of the pages in the codex at their highest point is ca. 6.2 cm. Multiplying that by 8, the number of bifolia in the codex, works out at 49.6 cm, which is very close to the length of the individual sheets of paper in some Tang dynasty scrolls. Thus the codex was cut and folded from sheets ca. 25.2 × 49.6 cm in size.[104] These dimensions are very different from the sheets in scrolls from the ninth and tenth centuries, which were typically 40–45 cm long. According to Jean-Pierre Drège's study documenting the size of sheets in dated scrolls from the Stein and Pelliot collections, this size is characteristic

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103 For simplicity and clarity, only the highest value of the dimensions in Fig. 11 is given (i.e. 12.8 cm).

104 Multiplication inevitably introduces a degree of imprecision.

of sheets used in scrolls from around the 690s until the end of the eighth century.[105] There are both Buddhist and Daoist scrolls with sheets of similar size from this period. Among Buddhist texts in particular, the closest match is S.4989 (25.2 × 49 cm) with the *Jinguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 (Sutra of the Supreme King of Golden Light, Skt. *Suvarṇa(pra)bhāsottama-sūtrendrarāja*) and a colophon dated to 703.

The codex being assembled from a single sheet of paper that had originally been part of a scroll presents an intriguing phenomenon as it entails a direct conversion from one scroll sheet to two small codices. Nothing was left out and nothing added, the entire sheet was consumed for the production of two codices. There seems to be some significance in this perfect conversion from one book form to the other, making it extremely unlikely the paper sheet was recycled purely as a writing support. Tang dynasty Buddhist scrolls prior to Dunhuang's separation would have unquestionably had a religious, social and potentially political import during the Guiyijun period. Reusing the sheets of such scrolls for the production of new codices must have been a deliberate procedure whereby the original scroll not only retained part of its efficacy but may have acquired new significance.[106] This would have been true even if the original sheet had no writing on it, as is the case with Stein painting 209.

In the above two examples, the picture at the beginning of the codex depicts the donors, showing them in the pious act of worship in front of Guanyin. The self-referential images clarify that the making of the booklet constituted an offering (*gongyang* 供養), through which the donors requested the bodhisattva's help. The *Guanyin jing* prescribes the verbal act of calling out the name of Guanyin, rather than just focusing one's mind on him, and this tallies well with the predominantly textual content of these manuscripts. By carrying a copy of this chapter of the *Lotus sutra* along with other texts on them, the owners would have continuously enjoyed the bodhisattva's protection without explicitly having to call out his name.

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105 For the height of the sheet, I use the maximum width of the spread bifolia (i.e. 12.6 cm) multiplied by two. Any variation in the width of the bifolia would have been the result of trimming that occurred after the codex had been assembled.

106 This is also apparent in the case of Uighur codices from Turfan, which at times consist of folded paper from Chinese sutras written around the fifth and sixth centuries. For the related phenomenon of reusing personal letters of the deceased to write Buddhist scriptures as a way of mourning in medieval Japan, see O'Neil 2019.

1.3 Manuscript S.5531

A further example is manuscript S.5531 from the Stein collection at the British Library. It is a small codex (12.5 × 7.3 cm), approximately the size of a modern passport, only slightly narrower. It matches the size of manuscript P.3932 above, pointing to similarities in their function and background. Aside from the last two pages, the paper is ruled throughout the manuscript, delineating each page into four vertical columns. The top and bottom margins are about 0.5–0.8 cm wide, while the side ones are slightly wider. The consistency of the layout indicates that the entire manuscript was carefully designed. There were no subsequent additions to the original structure. Typical of Chinese manuscripts of this period, it is written with a pen, rather than a brush. The back of the codex is darker in colour, even though its other side (i.e. the last page of the manuscript) matches the colour of the other leaves.

Structurally, the manuscript consists of 32 bifolia, folded in half and assembled into four quires of equal size. Thus, each quire has 8 bifolia sewn together with a white thread, through four sewing holes pierced along the centrefold at a roughly even distance from each other.[107] The beginning of the book is missing, and the text begins in mid-sentence. The missing portion of the text (i.e. *Guanyin jing*), including the title, amounts to 1,119 characters, which—based on the 45 character per page format of the extant pages—constitutes approximately 25 pages. This is slightly over 6 bifolia, thus it is possible the first quire was smaller than the remaining ones with 8 bifolia each. It is more likely, however, that the codex opened with a series of spells and a picture of donors, and the first quire matched the size of the extant four.

The inside of the back cover (Fig. 12) has the date 'the twentieth day of the twelfth month of the *gengchen* year' 庚辰年十二月廿日, the year probably corresponding to 921, as Lionel Giles, the first cataloguer of the Stein collection, proposed.[108] As the year is given according to the sexagesimal cycle (i.e. *tiangan dizhi* 天干地支) without a concrete reign title, theoretically it could also refer to 861 or 980, both of which fall within the Guiyijun period when these types of codices were in use. Nevertheless, they were much more common towards the first half of the tenth century, hence the conjecture of 921 is probably accurate. As a continuation of the Tibetan practice, dating colophons with cyclical signs

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107 There are also remnants of some red, blue, and green threads in the second and third quires. It is unclear whether the colours had any significance beyond ornamentation.

108 Giles 1957, 85. Below the date, slightly to the right is the red seal of the British Museum, which initially housed the Stein collection of Dunhuang manuscripts.

without reign titles is also typical of this period.[109] In his inventory of colophons in Chinese manuscripts, Ikeda On accepts this dating, identifying the *gengchen* year as 920. This was true for most of the year, yet according to the Gregorian calendar, the twentieth day of the twelfth month would have technically been at the beginning of the following year.[110]
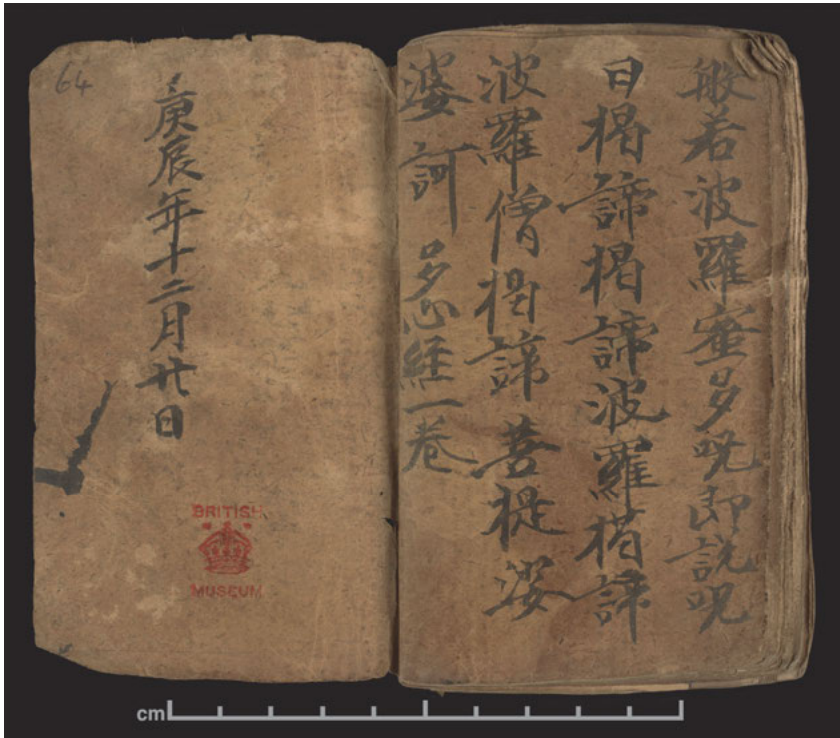

Fig. 12: The inside back cover of manuscript S.5531 with the date (left) and the end of the *Heart sutra* (right). (12.5 × 7.3 cm; The British Library)

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109 See, for example, Zhang Xiuqing 2007 and 2008.
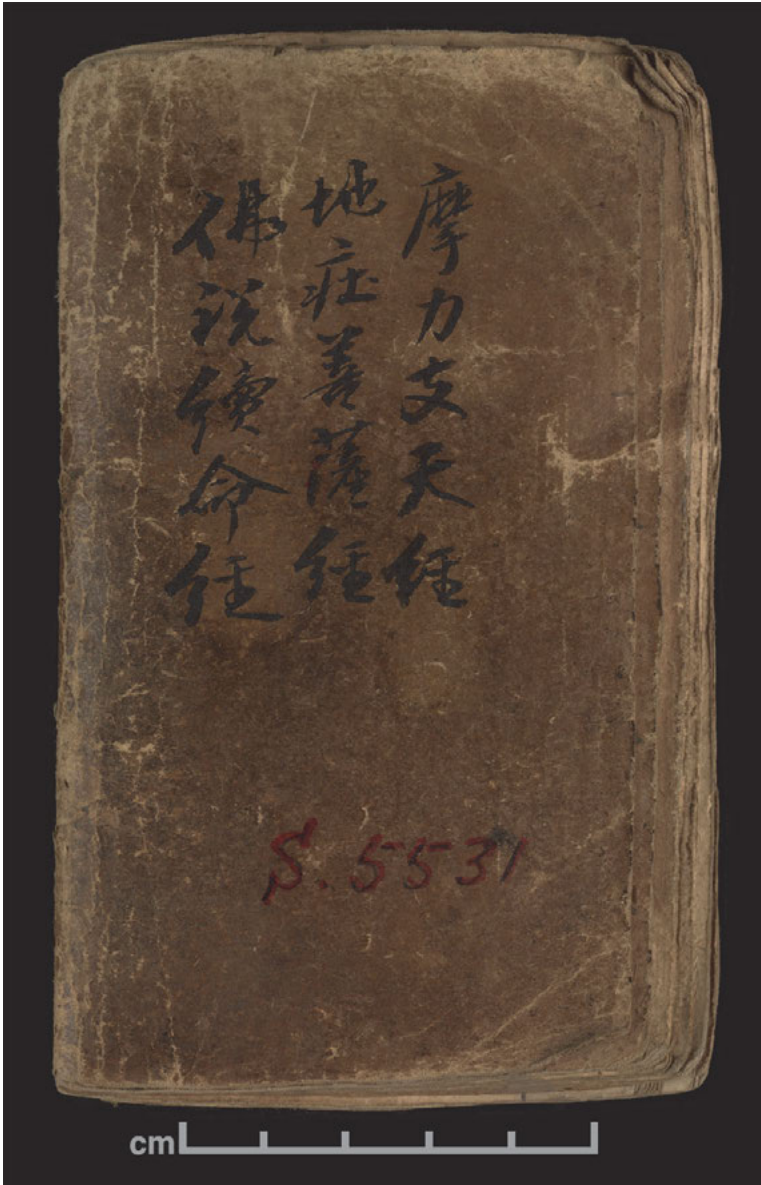**110** Ikeda 1990, 464.

Fig. 13: The back cover of S.5531 with the titles written by Stein's secretary.

On the back cover of the booklet (Fig. 13), we find the title of three scriptures in the hand of Stein's Chinese secretary Chiang Ssu-Yeh (i.e. Jiang Xiaowan 蔣孝琬, 1858–1922).[111] Not recognising Chiang's handwriting, I initially thought these three titles were a form of an early 'table of contents'.[112] Yet a comparison with titles written on other manuscripts confirms that it was Chiang who wrote the three titles on the back of S.5531. He commonly recorded titles or brief descriptions directly on the scrolls, to which he usually appended numbers in red ink using the so-called Suzhou numerals 蘇州碼子, a traditional numeral system commonly employed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for accounting and other number-intensive tasks. Sometimes Chiang's description is unmistakably vernacular, as in S.1286, on which he wrote 'worn and torn piece (i.e. fragment) of the *Foming jing*' 破爛佛名經一塊.[113] Chiang's hand was not immediately apparent in manuscript S.5531 because the titles are not accompanied by the conspicuous red numerals. Chiang's titles on the back cover read as follows:

1. *Molizhitian jing* 摩力支天經 (< *Molizhitian jing* 摩利支天經; Sutra of Marīci-deva)

2. *Dizhuang pusa jing* 地莊菩薩經 (< *Dizang pusa jing* 地藏菩薩經; Sutra of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha)

3. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經 (Sutra of Extending Life)

In the first two titles, Chiang miswrote the character *li* 利 in the name of Marīci and the character *zang* 藏 in the name of Kṣitigarbha with phonetically similar substitutes (i.e. *li* 力 and *zhuang* 莊). As both other manuscripts and later inscriptions testify, using the character 力 to write the second syllable was a possible, if uncommon, way of transcribing the name of Marīci in Chinese.[114] In Chiang's case, however, this was simply a mistake due to his complete unfamiliarity with Bud-

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111 Stein always wrote about Chiang with affection and respect; see, for example, Stein 1912, v. 1, 114–117, Stein 1921, v. 2, 578. See also Wang Jiqing 2013, Ren and Wang 2014.

112 Galambos 2019, 42–44.

113 Although this work has up to now not been carried out, the systematic study of Chiang's notation in the manuscripts could potentially lead to insights into the original arrangement of the manuscripts in the library cave. See Fang Guangchang 1995 and Fang Guangchang 2006, 218.

114 This phenomenon was naturally limited to dialects in which the final stops of entering-tone characters became lost. For example, the *Quan Liao wen* 全遼文 (Chen Shu 1982, 248) records an inscription dated to 1096 from a stūpa in Jizhou 薊州 (modern-day Tianjin 天津), which mentions obtaining relics of the Buddha at a place called Molizhitian Cliffs 摩力支天佛厓, with the name of Molizhitian written in the same way as in Chiang's note.

dhist literature. The three titles he wrote on the back of the manuscript must have been a quick reference note, rather than an actual table of contents, especially as the manuscript contains several other texts. Most of these are explicitly marked with a title, showing they did not function as parts of a new composite text but remained separate textual entities, appearing together in a manuscript only temporarily. Moving through the booklet from the beginning, we find ten distinct texts, identified with the following titles:[115]

1. [*Miaofa lianhua jing Guanshiyin pusa Pumen pin di nianwu* 妙法蓮華經觀世音菩薩普門品第廿五] (Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma, Chapter 25: The Universal Gateway of Bodhisattva Guanshiyin)

2. *Foshuo jie baisheng yuanjia tuoluoni jing* 佛說解百生怨家陀羅尼經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī for Dispelling Resentment Accumulated in the Course of a Hundred Lifetimes)

3. *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing* 佛說地藏菩薩經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha)

4. *Foshuo tianqingwen jing* 佛說天請問經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Questions Asked by a Deity)

5. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Prolonging Life)

6. *Molizhitian jing* 摩利支天經 (Sutra of Marīci-deva)

7. *Foshuo yan shouming jing* 佛說延壽命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Extending One's Life-span)

8. *Shaosheng sanke* 少乘三科 (Three Categories of the Lesser Vehicle)

9. *Foshuo Yanluo wang shouji sizhong nixiu sheng qizhai gongde wangsheng jingtu jing* 佛說閻羅王授記四眾逆修生七齋功德往生淨土經 (The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha to the Four Orders on the Prophecy Given to King Yama Concerning the Merits of the Seven Feasts to be Cultivated in Preparation for Rebirth in the Pure Land)

10. *Bore boluomiduo xin jing yi* 般若波羅蜜多心經一 (Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra, in one …)

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115 For the sake of transparency and easier comparison, I include the Chinese characters in the lists of titles even if they have already occurred.

The texts in the codex feature a so-called 'head title' (*shouti* 首題) located at the very beginning and, in most cases, an 'end title' (*weiti* 尾題). This was a typical way of marking the beginning and end of texts in Chinese scribal culture, in both single- and multiple-text manuscripts. The two titles did not necessarily match, as the head title normally used the official and complete appellation, while the end title could be an abbreviated or less formal way of referring to the text.[116] Thus text No. 9 has an extremely long head title but its end title is the much more manageable *Foshuo Yanluo wang jing yi juan* 佛說閻羅王經一卷 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on King Yama, in one *juan*).[117] It seems to have been a consistent rule for the type of multiple-text manuscripts discussed in this chapter that they included the phrase *yi juan* 一卷 ('in one *juan*') in the end title but not in the head title.[118]

Item No. 1 is the *Guanyin jing*, that is, the 25th chapter of the *Lotus sutra* in Kumārajīva's translation, an extremely popular text during the medieval period both in Dunhuang and elsewhere. It survives in over a hundred manuscripts, some with colour illustrations.[119] As a result of its immense popularity and independent circulation, the chapter was also commonly referred to by a stand-alone title, further emphasizing its self-contained status.[120] As the first quire of the manuscript is missing, no head title is present, although we can confidently reconstruct this from other similar manuscripts, which show little variation in this regard. Hence the title is shown in the list in brackets. The end title reads *Miaofa lianhua jing yi juan* 妙法蓮華經一卷 (Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma, in one *juan*), which in other manuscripts is more commonly written as *Guanyin jing yi juan* 觀音經一卷 (Scripture of Guanyin, in one *juan*).[121] The end title appears on a new line which is followed by an empty line to separate the text visually from the one that follows it (Fig. 14).

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116 This convention of head and end titles continues largely unchanged into the printed tradition during the following centuries.

117 For a careful study of this scripture and its role in the lives of people in Dunhuang and in medieval China in general, see Teiser 1994.

118 I am grateful to Nadine Bregler for drawing my attention to this phenomenon. This is an intriguing pattern because it holds true even for scriptures that are merely a few lines long (e.g. the *Heart sutra*) and thus should not really amount to a whole *juan*. Evidently, the measure word *juan* is used in such cases as a purely textual unit and no longer retains its original sense of a 'scroll'.

119 Yü 1994, 152; see also Fujieda 1968 and Drège 1999a.

120 For a brief overview of the *Guanyin jing* in Dunhuang, see Fang Guangchang 1997, 225–227 and Drège 2014e.

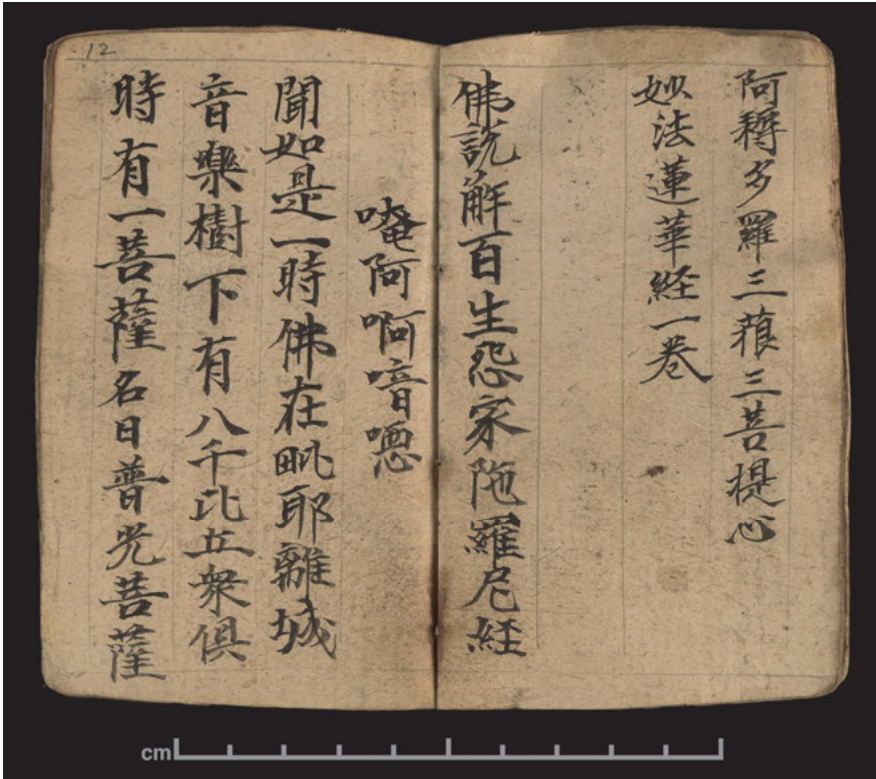**121** See, for example, manuscript P.3932 below.

Fig. 14: The division between the first and the second texts in manuscript S.5531, marked with an empty line (third line from the right).

The next text in the codex is the *Foshuo jie baisheng yuanjia tuoluoni jing* (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī for Dispelling Resentment Accumulated in the Course of a Hundred Lifetimes), a collection of magical spells. It begins with a full title on a separate line, but the end title is missing. In its place, the text concludes with a short spell on an indented line.[122] There is no empty line here to mark the end of the text but the indentation of the final line with the spell and the blank space following the head title of the following text provide a sufficient visual break to identify the boundary. Later in the manuscript, the titles do not always occupy a separate line yet there is almost always enough

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[122] There is a similar spell on an indented line at the beginning of the text, following the head title (see Fig. 14).

indentation or empty space to indicate the division. The very last text (No. 10) in the codex is the *Bore boluomiduo xin jing*, more commonly known as the *Xin jing* 心經 or *Heart sutra*. The head title is written out in full but is surprisingly followed by the word *yi* 一 ('one'). As the head titles in such manuscripts do not include the phrase *yi juan* 一卷 ('in one *juan*'), the person copying the text probably realised the mistake only after writing the character 一, which is why he stopped at that point.[123] As expected, the end title includes the phrase and is written as *Duo xin jing yi juan* 多心經一卷 ([Prajñāpārami]tā-hṛdaya-sūtra, in one *juan*).

Text No. 8, the *Shaosheng sanke* 少乘三科 (Three Categories of the Lesser Vehicle), usually written as *Xiaosheng sanke* 小乘三科 (Three Categories of the Small Vehicle), consists of a series of questions and answers explaining Buddhist terms such as the Three Jewels 三寶, Four Noble Truths 四諦 and Five Aggregates 五蘊. This text occurs in over a dozen Dunhuang manuscripts, including P.2841 and P.3057.[124] In our manuscript, the head title merges into the text without any visible separation, making it difficult to identify as a title. The end is also not marked with an end title. As a result, Giles did not identify it in his catalogue as a proper text, describing it instead as 'questions and answers on Buddhist doctrine'.[125]

Although the beginning of the codex is missing, based on other manuscripts of similar structure, we can be fairly certain that the original booklet did not bear a title on the front cover. Most of the texts in it are known from transmitted literature and are also well attested in other manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries. The scriptures in the codex show some discrepancies with the received versions but in most cases the variants are inconsequential. A series of corrections confirms that the individuals copying the texts were conscious of mistakes and made an effort to eliminate them. They used a variety of devices ranging from common correction marks to subsequent insertion of longer strings of text. Among the more significant differences is that the *Foshuo yan shouming jing* 佛說延壽命經 is not the version in the Taishō Canon (T2888, 85) but a different text bearing the same title. This non-canonical version survives in

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[123] Once again, I thank Nadine Bregler for suggesting this scenario.
[124] See Tanaka 1983, 357–389; cf. Magnin 1984, esp. 267. For possible Old Uighur connections, see Kitsudō 2012. According to Sam van Schaik (personal communication), there are also some Tibetan texts, represented in many manuscript copies, with similar content.
[125] Giles 1957, 85.

Dunhuang in numerous copies, including many of the manuscripts discussed in this chapter.[126]

Even though, as this chapter illustrates, the Dunhuang cave library yielded a series of similar manuscripts with analogous collections of texts, none of these match the combination and sequence of the ten texts in S.5531. Accordingly, despite its typological similarities to other members of the group of multiple-text manuscripts, the booklet appears to be an *ad hoc* selection of texts predicated by the donor's personal preference. The codex form and its small size imply that the donor carried the manuscript around. The nature of texts in it, in turn, points to a talismanic or ritual function.

Comparing the codicological structure of the codex with its textual arrangement, we can see that the textual boundaries never overlap with those of the quires, indicating that the physical structure had essentially no relevance for how the texts were copied. In fact, text No. 4 begins half a page into the second quire, without any sign of trying to adhere to the quire division. Clearly, once sewn together, the quires formed an indivisible whole.[127] This is comparable to the composition of scrolls, in which scribes seemed to pay little attention to the physical boundaries once the individual sheets of paper had been glued together into a continuous writing surface.[128]

The handwriting in the book is relatively uniform, although it is possible to discern several different hands. Table 2 compares characters *ci* 此 ('this') and *wu* 無/无 ('there is no; have no') across the ten texts in the codex. The examples show that, as a rule, the same character is written consistently within the same text but not necessarily in others. Allowing for the possibility that the same individual's handwriting could have varied according to his mood, amount of time available, his ability to focus or other factors, the examples in the table represent the work of at least four or five different hands. Taking character 此, for example, text No. 1 seems to represent one hand, texts Nos. 2 and 3 another one, texts Nos 5, 7 and 9 yet another one. The forms of the character 無/无 largely confirm this classification and fill in some gaps. The forms in texts Nos. 6 and 9 are the most compatible with each other, while the form in text No. 4 (i.e. 無)

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126 It also survives in Tangut translation from Khara-khoto; see Zhang Jiuling 2018.

127 This holds true even if the text had been written before the bifolia were sewn together.

128 This does not mean that they wrote in an arbitrary manner, as the number of lines per paper sheet usually remained stable within the same scroll. Yet strictly speaking, the number of lines was set during the process of ruling the paper, and the individual copying the scripture simply followed the ruling without having to worry about the physical structure of the scroll.

exhibits an entirely different orthographic structure.[129] Thus the forms 無 and 无, even if appearing in the same manuscript, were written by different individuals. Finally the thick strokes of the forms in text No. 10 are distinct from those in all other texts. In sum, the texts in the codex are in five distinct hands, which demonstrates that in practical terms, the production of the manuscript entailed a much more elaborate process than one individual simply copying a series of Buddhist scriptures in succession.

Tab. 2: Comparison of characters 此 and 無/无 in the ten texts in manuscript S.5531.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The size of characters (not apparent in the table) is yet another indication of different hands. The last text, for example, is written in substantially larger characters, with about 8–9 characters per line instead of the 10–13 found in the rest of the manuscript (see Fig. 15). In addition to being in a distinct hand, the larger character size sets it apart from the rest of the texts. While the differences in the quality or size of characters may appear a trivial observation, they reveal the involvement of several people in copying relatively small amounts of text

129 The term 'orthography' is used here in reference to character structure, without advocating whether particular character forms conform to, or are different from, an officially sanctioned standard.

into the same booklet. This, in turn, is of significance for understanding the process of the production of the entire manuscript, as well as its potential function. As will be argued below, this particular codex probably represents the collective work of several individuals, possibly from the same family, acting as donors together. Rather than having a single donor making an offering on behalf of the whole family, it seemed important that each individual copied several pages in their own hand, thereby becoming involved personally—and physically—in the act of offering.
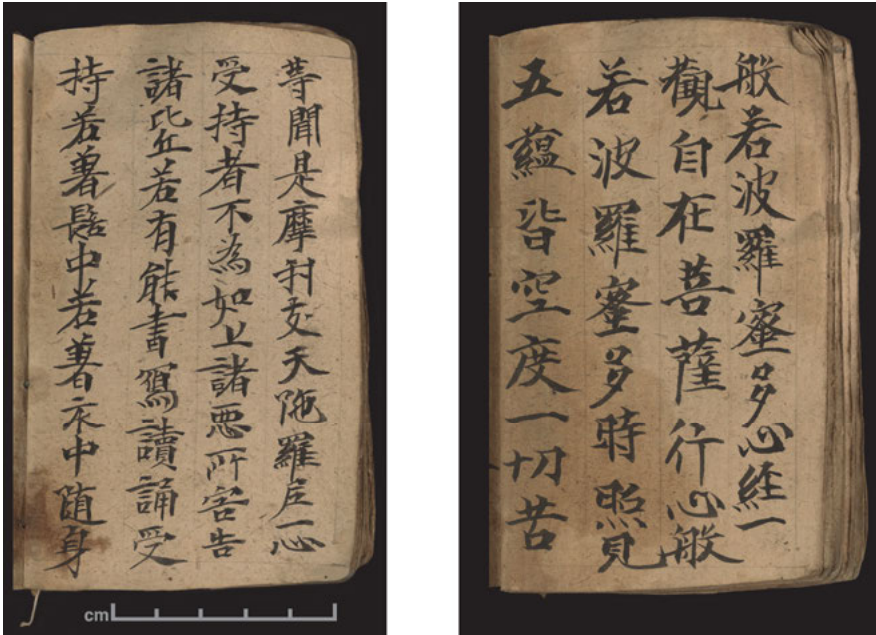

Fig. 15: Comparison of handwriting and character size in text No. 6 (left) and text No. 10 (right) in manuscript S.5531.

It is also significant that although each individual could have made an offering by copying an entire manuscript on their own, instead they each copied a small portion of the same codex. Clearly, this was not an act designed to increase efficiency through the division of labour – for any of them could easily have completed an entire booklet alone. It seems that in addition to being personally involved in the project, it was also important that the participants produced a single object together to make the offering as a group. The booklet was a physi-

cal token of this act, signifying its collective nature. This kind of group offering is parallel to the situation seen in votive silk paintings from Dunhuang, which sometimes depict entire families of donors.[130] Although there are always one or two main donors called *shizhu* 施主 (*dānapati*), by being visually present in the picture, the other family members also actively—and personally—participate in making the offering. Similarly, votive stelae may also record hundreds of contributors.

1.4 Manuscripts P.3932 and P.3136

Although S.5531 appears to be an *ad hoc* compilation, there are a number of comparable items in the Dunhuang corpus. One of the more similar ones is P.3932 from the Pelliot collection, a small codex already mentioned above as an example of a manuscript that opens with a drawing of the donors. It is 12 × 7.4 cm in size, similar to the dimensions of S.5531 (i.e. 12.5 × 7.3 cm). Naturally, the identical book form and similar size suggest a connection between the two items. This manuscript, however, has a maroon damask wrapping over its multi-layered front and back covers. The damask is worn at the edges but otherwise appears to be of good quality (Fig. 16).[131] The photos show that the wear is heavier along the spine (i.e. the right side of the front and the left side of the back cover). The presence of the cover indicates that the codex was more than just a random collection of scriptures and was designed to last. It may still have been used for apotropaic purposes, with the care invested in producing a damask cover simply reflecting personal taste.

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130 On donor families in the paintings, see Sørensen 2020a, 13–19.
131 I am grateful to Nathalie Monnet of the Bibliothèque nationale de France for verifying that the binding of P.3932 visible in the digital images is the original binding.

Fig. 16: The front (left) and back (right) cover of P.3932. (12 × 7.4 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Fortunately, this manuscript is complete and thus the amount of missing text is not an issue. It comprises a total of 92 pages (i.e. 46 folia) in 23 bifolia, not counting the stiffer front and back covers which, unlike in most other Chinese codices from Dunhuang, are not part of the quire structure. The booklet consists of six quires, each with four bifolia.[132] The bifolia are sewn together through six sewing holes with red and white threads, which still hold the leaves together securely. Consistent ruling lines are present from the first page to the last, dividing each page into four vertical columns with 0.5–0.8 cm margins at the top and bottom. This layout is similar to that of manuscript S.5531 above, although the side margins are narrower (ca. 0.2–0.3 cm).

Turning to the next page, we find a two-page line drawing of Bodhisattva Guanyin with two donors kneeling in front of him on a mat (see Fig. 7 above). Roughly contemporary scenes depicting donors in the act of worship (*gongyang*) are common in silk paintings. Appearing at the beginning of the codex suggests that this couple is making an offering through the production of the manuscript.

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132 For a description of the manuscript, including its codicological features, see Soymié et al. 1991, 423–424.

The pictures of the bodhisattva and the donors have been executed with considerable skill, suggesting the involvement of a trained artist.

The first text starting immediately after the picture is the *Guanyin jing*, as was the case in codex S.5531. As the book is complete, the head title is present, and is the standard one for the text: *Miaofa lianhua jing Guanshiyin pusa Pumen pin di nianwu* 妙法蓮華經觀世音菩薩普門品第廿五 (Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma, Chapter 25: The Universal Gateway of Bodhisattva Guanshiyin). The end title reads *Guanyin jing yi juan* 觀音經一卷 (Scripture of Guanyin, in one *juan*). The text takes up about two-thirds of the whole book and is written in a skilled and confident hand, possibly a hired one. We have no information on this individual, he could have been a scribe, monk or just someone with good handwriting offering his services for payment. The donors, in turn, would have accrued karmic merits through the act of paying for the production of the manuscript. Yet the hand could equally have been that of someone in the family, possibly even the main donor.

The codex continues with the *Heart sutra* and several additional texts, as was the case in S.5531. In fact, the first five of the total seven texts in P.3932 overlap with the contents of S.5531, a pattern that warrants closer comparison.[133] The seven texts in P.3932 are as follows:

1. *Miaofa lianhua jing Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin di nianwu* 妙法蓮華經觀世音菩薩普門品第廿五 (Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma, Chapter 25: The universal gateway of Bodhisattva Guanshiyin)

2. *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra)

3. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Extending Life)

4. *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing* 佛說地藏菩薩經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha)

5. *Foshuo jie baisheng yuanjia tuoni jing* 佛說解百生怨家陀尼經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī for Dispelling Resentment Accumulated in the Course of a Hundred Lifetimes)[134]

6. *Cishi zhenyan* 慈氏眞言 (Mantra of Maitreya)

7. *Jing kouye zhenyan* 淨口業眞言 (Mantra for the Purification of Karma Caused by Speaking).

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133 Cf. Kuo 2000, 694.

134 This title omits the second syllable of the word *tuoluoni* 陀羅尼 (dhāraṇī).

Compared with S.5531, the sequence of texts is different, possibly because there was a certain degree of flexibility with regards to which texts, and in what order, should be part of such a manuscript. It is apparent that the two manuscripts are analogous not only in their physical form and size but also their content, which inevitably points to a connection in function and use. Indeed, most multiple-text manuscripts of this type contain various combinations of the same few short texts.[135]

Text No. 6 is a mantra entitled *Cishi zhenyan* 慈氏眞言 (Mantra of Maitreya). This also occurs in manuscript S.5555 (a similar type of codex) at the end of the *Guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaituo tian jing* 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率陀天經 (T.452.14; Sutra on the Visualisation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya's Rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven).[136] The *Cishi zhenyan* features at the end of the same scripture in several printed books from Khara-khoto, confirming its popularity in the Tangut state two centuries later.[137] In fact, an imperial colophon at the end of the printed scriptures mentions the distribution of a hundred thousand copies of the *Guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaituo tian jing* in Chinese and Tangut.[138] As the surviving exemplars reveal, copies of the scripture from the Tangut state invariably included the *Cishi zhenyan* mantra. In this manuscript, however, the *Cishi zhenyan* is on its own, without the scripture, and is followed by a note saying that if one recites the mantra three hundred thousand times, one will be born in Tuṣita Heaven and can see Maitreya in person. Following this comes the *Jing kouye zhenyan* 淨口業眞言 (Mantra for the Purification of Karma Caused by Speaking), a short mantra of merely fourteen characters, a common element in manuscripts of the *Diamond sutra* but also a variety of other scriptures.[139] Fig. 17

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135 Teiser 1994, 273–274 and Kuo 2000, 694–695.

136 Nearly three decades ago Wang Juan 1992, 227 noted that S.5555 was the only manuscript where this mantra survived. But it is now known that other specimens of the mantra, both printed and handwritten, exist. It is probably relevant that manuscript S.5555 also includes the *Foshuo yan shouming jing*.

137 See the series of concertinas dated to 1189 in Lev N. Menshikov's catalogue of the Chinese material from Khara-khoto (i.e. the Kozlov collection) in what is known today as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (Men'shikov 1984, 194–201). As far as I can see, the mantra appears in items TK-58, TK-59, TK-60, TK-81, TK-82, TK-83 and TK-85.

138 For a partial translation of the imperial colophon, see Dunnell 1996, 225.

139 See, for example, manuscripts S.1846 and P.3325, or the famous printed copy of the *Diamond sutra* from 868, celebrated as the earliest complete specimen of a dated printed book in the world (Or.8210/P.2). The mantra served, as suggested to me by Henrik Sørensen, as a 'spiritual toothbrushing' before the recitation starts. It remained extremely popular in later centuries; for example, in the novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記, Chapter 13) Sanzang 三藏 recites it before chanting the scriptures; see Xue Keqiao 1994, 50.

shows these two mantras together on the last three inscribed pages of our co-dex. The white arrows mark the beginning of each text. Visually, the mantras form a single block of text that bear no resemblance to the rest of the manu-script. Within this block, however, the boundaries are much less obvious.
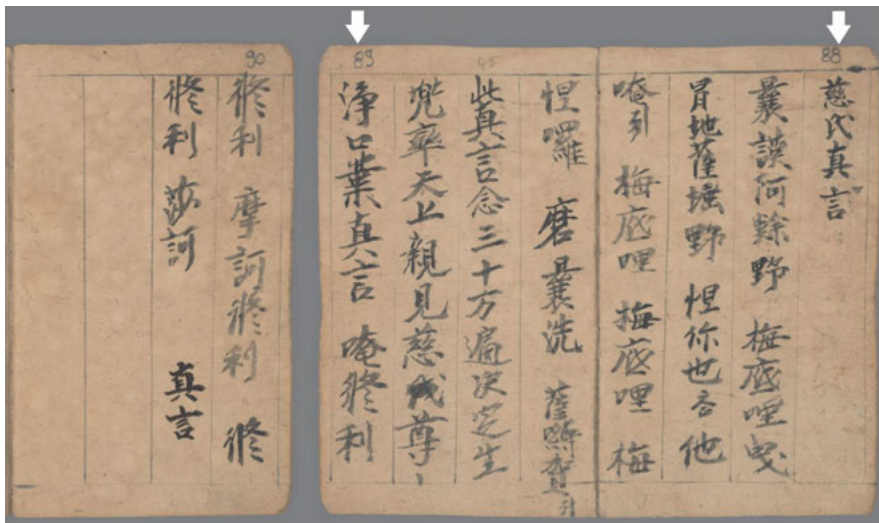

Fig. 17: The two mantras at the end of manuscript P.3932 (from right to left).

The mantras constitute the only text in this booklet which does not also occur in manuscript S.5531.[140] They are written in the same inept hand, in contrast with the total of 83 pages written by two far more practised hands. In terms of the quality of handwriting, the first three scriptures are in a highly competent hand. Texts 4 and 5 seem to be in a different but still fairly practised hand and, finally, the two short mantras at the end in a third, unskilled hand.[141] The amount of text these three hands (A, B and C) copied is also interesting. Using the pages as units of measure, we find the following distribution:[142]

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140 This shows that although the mantras often accompanied particular scriptures (i.e. *Dia-mond sutra*), they could also function on their own as independent texts.
141 Zhang Zong 2001, 95 agrees that the first three scriptures in P.3932 are in one hand and the following two in another. The short mantras at the very end are obviously in a third.
142 For counting the pages, I rely on the page numbers added in pencil by modern conserva-tors. The drawings are on pages 2–3, and the text begins on page 4.

Hand A: pp. 4–75	71 pages	82.5%	competent
Hand B: pp. 76–87	12 pages	14%	competent
Hand C: pp. 88–90	3 pages	3.5%	incompetent

We can see that C, the incompetent hand, only wrote three pages–merely 3.5% of the total text in the codex. Clearly, it was important to include this person in the codex, albeit with a minimal amount of text. The mantras were possibly written by one of the two donors whose image appears at the beginning of the manuscript. As the male donor's headwear verifies he was an official and therefore must have possessed reasonably good writing skills, it may have been the wife who wrote them. The husband was probably hand B, writing texts Nos. 4 and 5, whereas the first three texts in the best hand were entrusted to a hired hand (i.e. A). Although theoretically it is possible that hand A belonged to a third individual, someone from the same family, several details point to the involvement of an outside person.

First, the codex has a damask cover and is professionally bound, which could not have been done as part of a do-it-yourself project. Second, the pictures of the donors and the bodhisattva betray specialised skills. Third, the picture shows only two donors, which suggests that the third hand was not from within the family. Finally, the fact that hand A copied over 80% of the booklet in highly competent handwriting is an indication that his status was quite different from the other two hands. If anyone, A is more likely to be the outside person, copying texts on behalf of the donors. Hands B and C wrote a total of 15 pages, comprising less than a fifth of the entire manuscript. Adding two texts, no matter how short, in their own hand must have ensured the religious efficacy of the manuscript and was the final step in helping take possession of the merits generated by the copying of all of the texts.

The damask cover of the codex is relatively unusual, and it is precisely for this reason that we can link it with manuscript P.3136, another codex covered in silk cloth of similar colour. The cover of P.3136, however, is independent of the body of the manuscript, and wraps around it in a manner similar to modern dust jackets. The outside cover and the individual bifolia are sewn together using a simple overcast stitch. Additional sewing holes are visible near the stitching holes (Fig. 18), which intimate that the current binding is not the original binding. Instead, the crudeness of the stitching suggests that this was a quick fix to stabilise the booklet after it had come apart. Similar to a modern dust jacket, the front cover has a flap (4.5 cm wide), possibly to strengthen the edge of the fabric and to prevent wear.
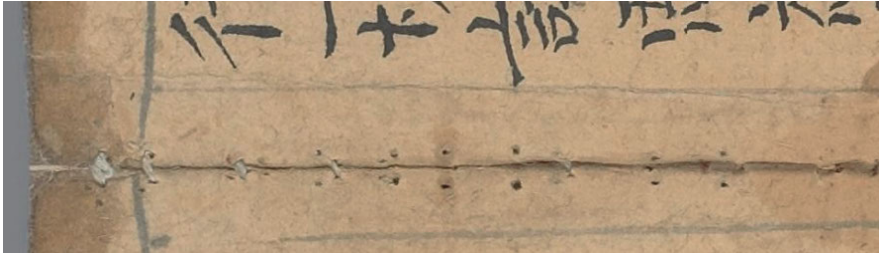
Fig. 18: Unused sewing holes along the stitching in manuscript P.3136. (16.5 × 11.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

In terms of its physical structure, the manuscript consists of four bifolia and a singleton (i.e. stand-alone folio) at the very beginning of the codex. One side of the singleton is empty but the other has a painting of a red Guanyin enhanced with gold (Fig. 19).[143] Although the painting is damaged, the attention to detail and the use of gold are in sharp contrast to the improvised manner of the stitching. The painting is on a separate leaf with unclear physical boundaries, thus it is not impossible that it originated from elsewhere and was incorporated into the new structure by the person who rebound the codex. Opposite the image are eight lines from the *Fomu jing* 佛母經 (Sutra of the Buddha's Mother; T.2919.85). The beginning of the text is missing, suggesting that the physical manuscript in its current form is also incomplete.

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143 Drège 1999a, 110. Thanks to Sam van Schaik, who pointed out to me that red Avalokiteśvara is a meditation deity appearing in some of the Tibetan tantric texts from Dunhuang; cf. van Schaik 2006, 62.

Fig. 19: The beginning of manuscript P.3136. (16.5 × 11.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Indeed, a now missing bifolio must have been glued before the page with the *Fomu jing*, as can be seen from the ripped surface of the paper along the right edge of the page (Fig. 19). On the image here, the surface with the rip damage is lighter in colour. There are similar traces at the centre of every second opening, which reveals that originally this was a glued codex.[144] At one point someone had taken the glued bifolia apart, damaging the paper along the edges in the process. Then someone, perhaps the same individual, stitched the leaves together (on two separate occasions), along with the cover and possibly the painting. This secured the physical structure of the manuscript and ensured no additional leaves were lost.

With its four and a half bifolia, this is a much slimmer codex than any of the previous ones. Accordingly, it only contains only three texts, all of which are very short. The three texts are as follows:

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144 The reason why the tear is at the centre of every second page spread is that the other spreads represent the centrefolds of the bifolia and thus were not glued.

1. *Fomu jing* 佛母經 (Sutra of the Buddha's Mother)
2. *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra)
3. *Molizhitian jing* 摩利支天經 (Sutra of Marīci-deva)[145]

The *Fomu jing* is a short apocryphal sutra of about 500 characters. It survives in 49 copies in Dunhuang and another five fragments from Turfan, representing several textual versions.[146] In our manuscript, only one page of the *Fomu jing* is present, with about 180 characters (along with the title) from the beginning missing, which estimating from the 125 characters on the existing page, would amount to a page and a half. The missing text from the beginning is the result of one or more bifolia having been removed, but it is unclear why the text breaks off at the end of the page. Instead of continuing with the *Fomu jing*, the next page (i.e. the verso side of the same folio) contains the *Heart sutra*, written in a completely different hand. Apparently, the individual copying the *Fomu jing* stopped at the end of the page without finishing the text. The other two texts in the manuscript are written in the same hand and overlap with the content of the codices discussed above, which is yet another piece of evidence linking this manuscript to other items in our group of multiple-text manuscripts.

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145 This is actually the *Foshuo Molizhitian pusa tuoluoni jing* 佛說摩利支天菩薩陀羅尼經 (T1255a, 21), rather than the *Foshuo Molizhitian jing* 佛說摩利支天經 (T1225b, 21), as the title would suggest.
146 On the *Fomu jing*, see Durt 1996, Nishiwaki 2006, Nishiwaki 2007, Lin Renyu 2012, Kishida 2014 and Zhang Xiaoyan 2016, 76. The Taishō version of the text is based on the incomplete text in S.2084.

Fig. 20: Donor's image and colophon in manuscript P.3136. (16.5 × 11.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Just as importantly, at the end of the last text we find a painted image of a male donor kneeling on a mat and worshipping with two palms put together (Fig. 20). He is holding a flower between his palms, and a similar kind of flower appears above him, in the top left corner of the page.[147] This painting is similar in quality to the drawings seen in other codices but differs from the more elaborate image of Guanyin on the singleton at the beginning of this booklet. Unlike in the other examples, the donor is facing not Guanyin but the end of the *Molizhitian jing*. Nonetheless, as, the beginning of the manuscript features a painting of Guanyin, the donor and the bodhisattva form a frame around the three texts between them. Directly in front of the figure of the donor is a colophon stating his name and that this manuscript constitutes an offering:

清信佛弟子節度押衙李順子一心供養

Wholeheartedly offered by the *jiedu yaya* Li Shunzi, the Buddha's disciple of pure faith.

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147 A full-page painting of possibly the same type of flower appears two pages later in the manuscript.

The colophon is written from left to right, in the opposite direction to how Chinese is normally written.[148] There is no date but the direction of writing and the codex form indicate the tenth century. The title *jiedu yaya* 節度押衙, designating an officer subordinate to the military commissioner, is also closely connected to the Guiyijun regime.[149] The donor's handwriting in the colophon is different from either of the two hands that copied the three texts in the booklet. This can be seen in the execution of particular strokes, as the hand in the colophon tends to write some strokes thicker, as opposed to the more consistent thickness of strokes in the three scriptures. The three short texts in this manuscript typically occur towards the end of other codices, which begin with the much longer *Guanyin jing*. This implies that P.3136 is only the end of the codex, most of which had been lost before someone bound the remaining pages together using the impromptu stitching.

1.5 Other examples: S.5618 and beyond

Above, we have examined several multiple-text manuscripts in a codex form. There are, however, also concertinas with similar content and structure. One such example is S.5618, an undated manuscript with no colophon. Its dimensions are 12.5 × 6.3 cm, which are similar to those of the two codices examined above (i.e. S.5531 and P.3932), both of which are approximately 12 × 7.3 cm in size. The pages in S.5618, however, are slightly taller and narrower, resembling more the shape of pothi leaves.[150] This is also the case with most Tibetan concertinas from Dunhuang, and therefore the majority of concertina manuscripts in general. Fig. 21 shows two adjacent pages with the end of one text and the beginning of another.

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148 For this phenomenon in the manuscripts, see Chapter Three in this book.

149 In the Stein collection, the dated manuscripts mentioning this title are S.4363 (dated 942) and S.2973 (dated 970). For a study of the title in Dunhuang, see Zhao Zhen 2001.

150 These dimensions were not a local phenomenon but were extremely popular in other parts of East Asia. Many of the Tangut manuscripts and imprints from Khara-khoto, from approximately two centuries later, are concertinas of similar size. In fact, to this day, concertinas of this shape remain a common form of short Buddhist scriptures in East Asia.
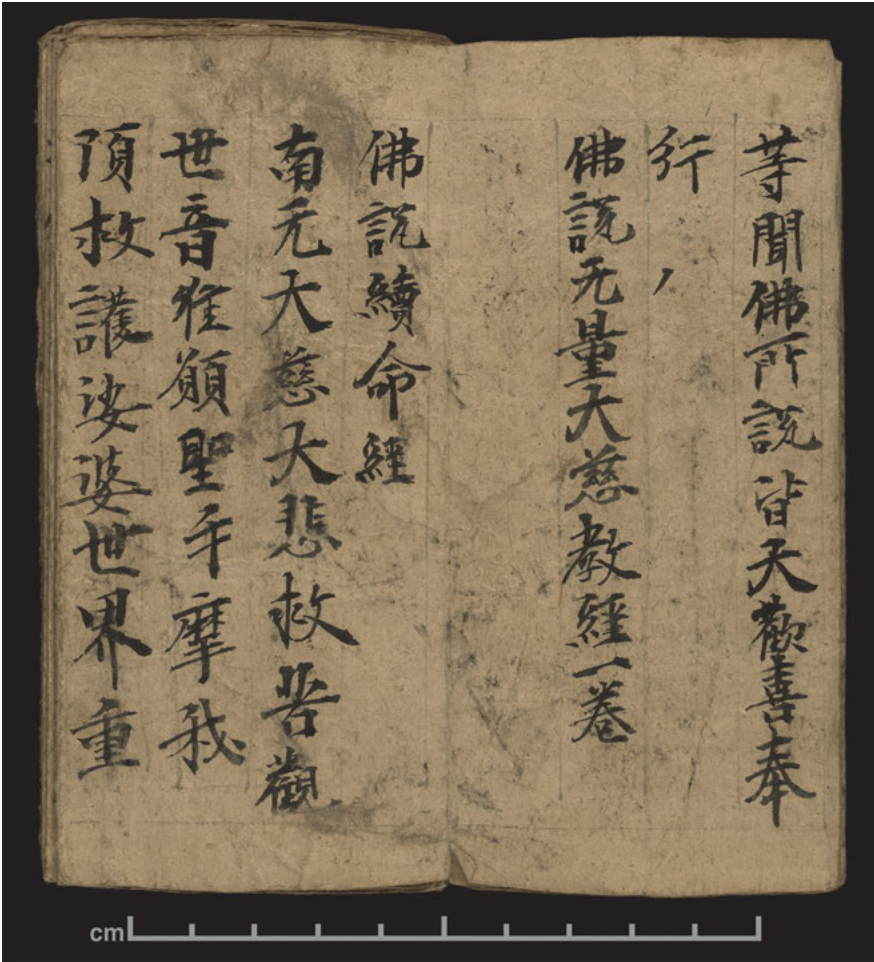
Fig. 21: Two pages from concertina S.5618. (12.5 × 6.3 cm; The British Library)

The manuscript has no proper cover, except for an empty folio at the very end. It is slightly narrower than a proper page and thus acts as a flap covering the back. Physically, the manuscript consists of 6 sheets of paper glued together into a long, scroll-like writing surface, which is then folded into 38 folia. The size of the paper sheets is 13.3 cm, 49 cm, 31.4 cm, 45.4 cm, 48.5 cm and 48.8 cm, showing that a full size sheet was 48.5–50 cm in length.[151] The seamlines are consistently located

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151 Special thanks to Mélodie Doumy for kindly measuring the sheet sizes in this manuscript.

0.5–1 cm before or after the folds. The top and bottom edges of the pages are slightly arched; a feature also seen in codices and pothis. The arched edges create a contrast with the straight horizontal lines of top and bottom margins.

The manuscript contains four short Buddhist texts, which show a significant degree of overlap with the multiple-text codices discussed so far. Using the titles seen in the manuscript, the four texts are as follows:[152]

1. *Foshuo wuliang dacijiao jing* 佛說無量大慈教經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Teaching of the Immeasurable Great Compassion)
2. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Prolonging Life)
3. *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing* 佛說地藏菩薩經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha)
4. [*Foshuo Molizhitian tuoluoni zhou jing* 佛説摩利支天陀羅尼呪經] (Dhāraṇī Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Marīci-deva)

The *Foshuo wuliang dacijiao jing* 佛說無量大慈教經 is an apocryphal scripture that survives in Dunhuang in over forty manuscripts, of which seven have the complete text.[153] The Taishō edition (T2903, 85) is based on S.1627, which only contains about a third of the full text. The version in our concertina is missing about 150 characters from the beginning and shows a number of discrepancies with other Dunhuang witnesses, such as manuscript S.6961.

Once again, the manuscript features a seemingly haphazard collection of scriptures (some of them apocryphal) in a concertina form, yet the repeated occurrence of this pattern in a series of manuscripts proves that such compilations were neither unusual nor random. Instead, we can see that such multiple-text booklets formed a distinct group of manuscripts with shared physical characteristics and textual content. Taking manuscript S.5618 as a representative example, we can use the four scriptures it contains to locate other manuscripts that may potentially belong to the same group. Tracing the distribution of the four texts across the Dunhuang corpus allows us to identify manuscripts which contain more than one such text. Based on the concordance of Buddhist texts in Dunhuang manuscripts compiled by the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies Library, Table 3 displays the manuscripts in which the four texts occur.[154]

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152 The square brackets are to indicate the title of the fourth text does not appear in the manuscript.
153 Zhang Xiaoyan 2016, 69. The seven manuscripts are S.110, S.6961, BD00943, BD14125, BD05242, Dunbo-56 and Hane-203.
154 Kokusai bukkyōgaku daigakuin daigaku fuzoku toshokan 2015. Despite the great utility of this concordance, it is not complete. It lists, for example, only 34 manuscripts with the *Wuliang*

Tab. 3: Distribution of the four apocryphal scriptures in S.5618 across the Dunhuang corpus.

Title	Quantity	Pressmarks
Foshuo wuliang dacijiao jing 佛說無量大慈教經	34	BD00933, BD00943, BD03731, BD05242, BD06380, BD06464, BD07807, BD09235, BD09236, BD09592, BD09862, BD10962, BD12274, BD13797, BD14125, Dunbo-56, F-350, Дх-1588, Дх-2723, Дх-5465, Gantu-16, Hane-164, Hane-203, Hane-467, S.110, S.1018, S.1627, S.1726, S.4368, S.4559, S.5618, S.6961, S.7006, S.7156
Foshuo xuming jing 佛說續命經	18	BD00693, Дх-883, Дх-927, Дх-1009, Дх-1591, Ganbo-16, Hane-412, P.2374, P.3115, P.3760, P.3932, S.1215, S.3795, S.5531, S.5535, S.5581, S.5618, S.5679
Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經	26	BD00919, BD03862, BD03925, BD07281, BD09147, Дх-277, Дх-397, Дх-2636, Дх-3000, Ganbo-16, P.2289, P.3748, P.3760, P.3932, S.431, S.2247, S.5458, S.5531, S.5535, S.5618, S.5672, S.5677, S.6257, S.6983, Shangbo-48, Shangtu-62
Foshuo Molizhitian tuoluoni zhou jing 佛説摩利支天陀羅尼呪經	13	Дх-213, Дх-927, Hane-299, Hane-508, P.3110, P.3136, P.3759, P.3824, P.3912, S.5391, S.5392, S.5531, S.5618

Looking at the list in the table, we have to remember that the texts may have different versions, some longer, others shorter, and their differences would not necessarily be reflected in the titles. Nevertheless, my intention here is not so much to trace specific versions or lineages of texts as to identify manuscripts with similar content. What is of interest here is which manuscripts in the table contain more than one of these four scriptures. Some may feature combinations with other scriptures but, for the sake of the current exercise, the investigation is limited to those involving two or more of the four texts found in manuscript S.5618 (i.e. in Table 3). The one item that contains all four texts is S.5618, which is not surprising, as it is the concertina we used as the starting point of the search. The other relevant manuscripts are as follows:

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dacijiao jing, including the so-called 'small format' version, whereas Zhang Xiaoyan 2016 records 44 items (but curiously omits F-350, which is in the concordance).

- S.5531   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經
                 Foshuo Molizhitian tuoluoni zhou jing 佛説摩利支天陀羅尼呪經
- P.3932   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經
- Дх-927   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Molizhitian tuoluoni zhou jing 佛説摩利支天陀羅尼呪經
- Ganbo-16   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經
- S.5535   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經
- P.3760   *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
                 Foshuo Dizang pusa jing 佛說地藏菩薩經

The presence of the *Foshuo xuming jing* in all eligible manuscripts forms a conspicuous pattern. Similarly, all but one of the manuscripts include both the *Foshuo xuming jing* and the *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing*. Undoubtedly, these were among the most popular texts in such multiple-text manuscripts. We can also see is that this group contains two codices already examined earlier in this chapter (i.e. S.5531 and P.3932). Aside from these, the remaining manuscripts are Дх-927, Ganbo-16, S.5535 and P.3760.

Of these, Дх-927 is yet another small codex of 16 folia (14 × 10 cm) containing several short texts, including incantations and the *Heart sutra*. This is obviously a similar booklet to those discussed earlier and should be treated as part of the same group. In his catalogue of Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Oldenburg collection in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad), Lev N. Menshikov divides the contents of the booklet into eight entries, with somewhat subjective results, as some of the writings do not amount to proper texts.[155] This is especially true for the scribble-like notes a few pages into the booklet, which record, in an untrained hand, a number of names and titles in no apparent order.

Ganbo-16 from the collection of the Gansu Provincial Museum is yet another similar codex with a series of shorter texts. The first is the *Quanshan jing* 勸善經 (Scripture Urging Kindness; T.2916, 85), which ends with a colophon dating to the nineteenth day of the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign (803).[156] The codex form, however,

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155 Men'shikov et al. 1963, 315.
156 For a translation of the *Quanshan jing* into English, see Goble 2017. See also Yuankong 1992, Zhang and Zhang 2009, Gen 2012 and Zhang Xiaoyan 2015.

only appeared in Dunhuang at the end of the ninth century and thus the year 803 cannot denote the time when this particular manuscript was written, especially as colophons with the same date appear in quite a few manuscripts with the *Quanshan jing*.[157] In manuscript P.3036, for example, a second colophon follows the 803 one, attributing the copying to a certain Baoxuan 寶宣 in the third year of the Tianfu 天福 reign (938), demonstrating the date 803 was copied along with the text.[158] In Ganbo-16, the *Quanshan jing* is followed by the *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing*, *Foshuo Molizhitian jing*, *Foshuo xuming jing*, *Foshuo Guanshiyin jing* 佛說觀世音經, *Foshuo rulai chengdao jing* 佛說如來成道經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Tathāgata Attaining the Way) and *Foshuo daweide Chishengguang rulai jixiang tuoluoni jing* 佛說大威德熾盛光如來吉祥陀羅尼經 (Auspicious Great Dhāraṇī Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Tejaprabhā Tathāgata). The title of the *Foshuo yan shouming jing* is also present but the text itself is not there. This is, once again, a similar collection of short scriptures, written in different hands and ending with an incantation.

S.5535 is a codex of 27 folia, 17 × 11.3 cm in size, with a back cover made of paper and red fabric.[159] The thread used for the binding has not survived but the remaining holes indicate that this was a sewn codex. Li Zhizhong regards the 'stab holes' in the side of the folia as evidence of it being an early 'thread-bound' book, similar to those of the Song period.[160] The holes, however, are probably traces of a secondary stitching similar to that in manuscript P.3136 with the gilded painting of Guanyin. At any rate, it is clear that before being deposited in the Dunhuang library cave, the booklet had already undergone some conservation work in an attempt to repair fire damage. Worms and rodents may have inflicted additional damage. The booklet begins with the *Guanyin jing*, followed by the *Heart sutra*, *Foshuo xuming jing*, *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing* and, finally, the *Foshuo bayang shenzhou jing* 佛說八陽神呪經 (Sutra on

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157 A similar phenomenon is that of ninth and tenth century manuscripts containing examples of Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705) characters, which normally indicate the manuscript had been written during her reign. In such cases, however, it is evident that these idiosyncratic character forms were copied along with the text; see Drège 1984.

158 Ikeda 1990, 479 dates manuscripts of the *Quanshan jing* with a second colophon to the time of the second colophon but takes the date 803 at face value when there is only one colophon (ibid., 386). Similarly, Giles 1937, 24–25 dates manuscripts S.912 and S.1349 to 803, even though the date in the colophon cannot possibly refer to the time of copying.

159 Giles 1957, 84 claims that the fabric is silk but Li 1989, 115 identifies it as hemp cloth.

160 Ibid., and Li Zhizhong 1998, 323.

the Miraculous Incantations of the Eight Yang).[161] The manuscript features several different hands, none of which is particularly skilled or unskilled. The last pages have been left empty, perhaps to allow a donor to add another short scripture or a mantra. As mentioned above regarding Stein painting 209, the empty pages at the end of this codex are not an isolated case but a common phenomenon among the surviving multiple-text manuscripts.[162]

Finally, P.3760 is a tiny concertina with pages merely 6.5 × 4.8 cm in size, about half the size of a credit card. The front and back are reinforced with a layer of colour paper, making the covers stiffer than usual (Fig. 22). Vertical ruling lines divide the front cover into three columns, the middle of which shows a crude drawing of an incense burner of the type commonly held by male donors in Dunhuang paintings. The right column contains the words *Foshuo guan Mile pusa* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩, using the ligature 艹 to write the word *pusa* 菩薩 ('bodhisattva'). This appears to be an abbreviation of the title *Foshuo guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaituo tian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率陀天經 (T452, 14), yet the text itself is not in the manuscript. The title is upside down in relation to the rest of the manuscript, confirming that it is not directly related to the content within.

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161 This last text is only present as a stand-alone title, which makes it difficult to see which text it meant to represent. Most likely it would have been the *Foshuo tiandi bayang shenzhou jing* 佛說天地八陽神呪經 (T2897, 85), an apocryphal sutra allegedly translated by Yijing 義淨 (635–713), which is different from the *Foshuo bayang shenzhou jing* 佛說八陽神咒經 (T428, 14) translated by Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護, b. 233). The apocryphal sutra was very popular and survives in over a hundred manuscripts; see Gen 2008, 50–51. As manuscript evidence attests, the Chinese apocryphal text was also popular in Tibetan and Old Uighur translations. On the Tibetan translation, see Nishioka 1981, Stein 2010, 90–92 and 246–248, as well as Silk 2019, 238. The Old Uighur translation of the text has a vast secondary literature; see, for example, Haneda 1915, Yamada 1958, Ligeti 1971, Oda 2015 and, most recently, Li 2019. On a Tangut fragment, see Matsuzawa 2004.

162 Soymié et al. 1991, 250 notes that the colour is grey-blue, but it seems also to include a greenish undertone, perhaps the result of the discolouration of diluted ink.

Fig. 22: The front cover of manuscript P.3760. (6.5 × 4.8 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

In terms of its form, this is a concertina consisting of a total of 115 pages, which modern conservators have numbered in pencil. Each page has four lines of text and most of the lines consist of six characters. The ruling is consistent and in red ink, in contrast with the black or grey ink commonly seen in manuscripts. The red ruling lines on some pages are extremely faint and hard to see in reproductions. It is possible to discern three different hands (A, B and C) in the manuscript, all of which are fairly unskilled. To demonstrate their peculiarities and differences, Fig. 23a–c shows three double pages with each of the three hands.
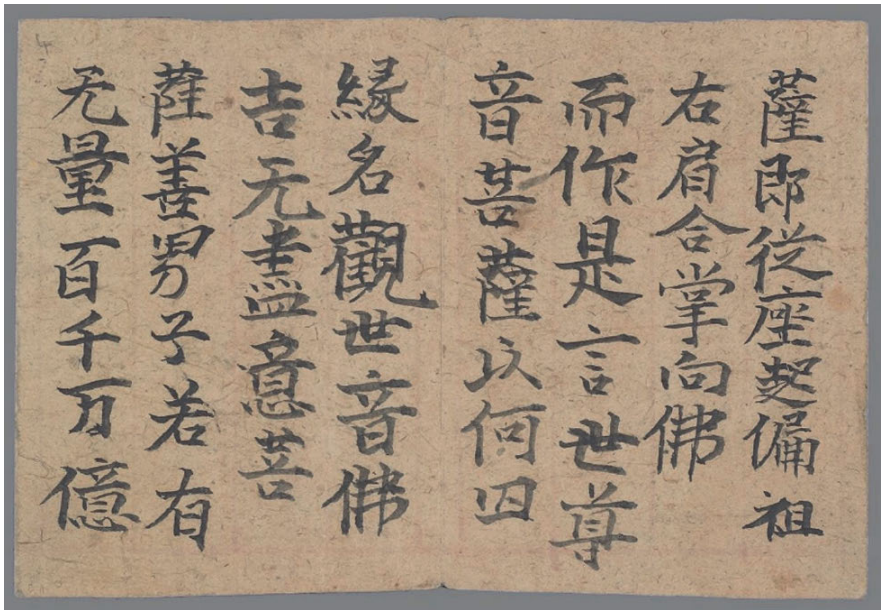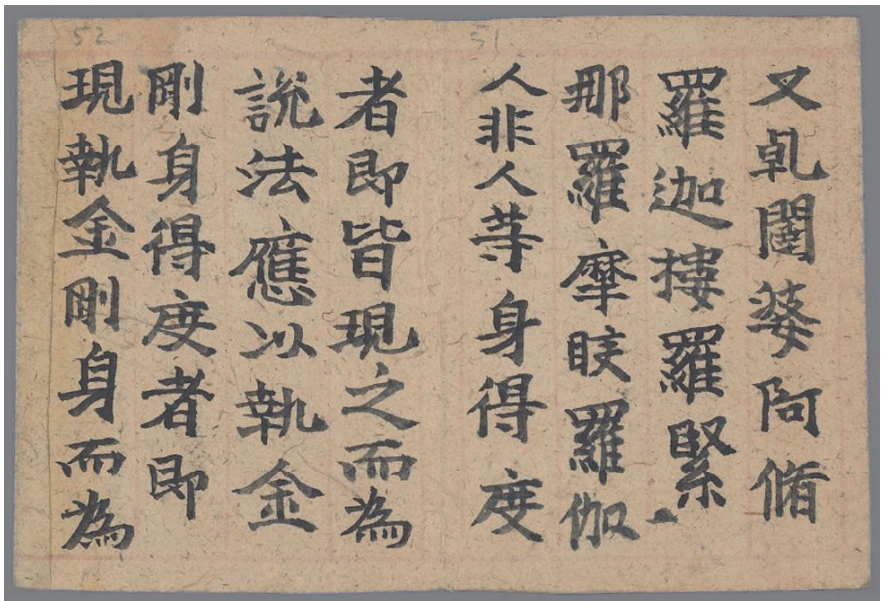
Fig. 23a: Hand A in manuscript P.3760.

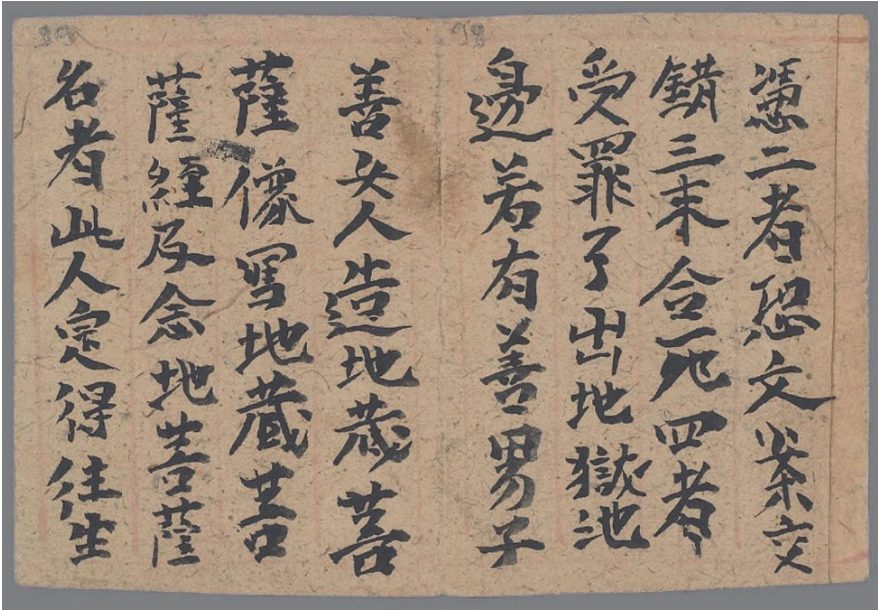**Fig. 23b:** Hand B in manuscript P.3760.

Fig. 23c: Hand C in manuscript P.3760.

The distribution of the three hands in the manuscript is markedly uneven. Using the folded pages of the concertina as a unit of measure, the amount of text each of them takes up from the total of 113 inscribed pages is as follows:[163]

Hand A: pp. 2–48	46 pages	40.7%
Hand B: pp. 49–97	49 pages	43.4%
Hand C: pp. 97–100	2.5 pages	2.2%
Hand B: pp. 100–115	15.5 pages	13.7%

The places where the hands change have no correlation with the textual or codicological boundaries in the manuscript. Although they sometimes change in mid-sentence, this usually happens at the beginning of a new line, which is easy to achieve because the lines are very short, only 6–7 characters each. Another intriguing phenomenon is that hands A and B initially copied about the same amount of text (i.e. 46 and 49 pages), stopping 18 pages before the end. At

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163 The page numbers used here are those written on the pages by modern conservators.

that point hand C stepped in but copied only 3 pages, leaving B to finish the remaining portion. It is conceivable that this had been the plan all along, but it may well have been so that hand C was having difficulties and hand B had to help out. Indeed, as far as it is possible to judge from the handwriting, hand C may have suffered from a neurological disorder that affected his or her writing.[164] This would also explain why the last portion of text, even without the help from hand B, was shorter than those of the two other hands (18 vs. 46/49 pages). A disorder of this sort suggests that the individual was older. The scenario emerges of three individuals, perhaps family members, dividing the total amount of text they wanted to copy into two larger and one smaller portion, anticipating that copying would be difficult for hand C. Finally, hand C was unable to finish even the reduced portion allocated to him or her and had to rely on hand B to finish the task.

This does not mean, however, that the other two hands were professionals. The pages they wrote, which make up the bulk of the manuscript, include a number of idiosyncratic character forms, as well as glaring omissions from the text of the scriptures. Among these is hand B's writing the duplicate characters of the word *zhongzhong* 種種 ('various') with reversed forms as 種種, in which the first graph is an unattested orthographic form. Another example, also by hand B, is the phrase *shouzu* 手足 ('hands and feet'), written as 手足, with the first character mimicking the structure of the second one. Once again, the result is an unattested orthography that is simply a mistake. Hand A makes its own share of mistakes, repeatedly omitting characters from the name of Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音菩薩, writing it as *Guanshiyin pu* 觀世音菩 or *Yin pusa* 音菩薩. These mistakes attest to the rudimentary writing skills of the hands in this manuscript, which makes it unlikely that either of them was a hired hand. A more likely scenario is that all three persons were of the same family.

Looking at the manuscript in terms of content, it contains three different texts from among those commonly occurring in multiple-text manuscripts. It is, therefore, not surprising to see them together here in yet another concertina. As was the case in other examples, the *Guanyin jing* is the first of the three texts, which are as follows:

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164 A well-known case of tremor in medieval England are manuscripts written by the so-called 'tremulous hand of Worcester'; see Franzen 1991. For an attempt to diagnose the type of tremor in these manuscripts, see Thorpe and Alty 2015.

1. *Miaofa lianhua jing Guanshiyin pusa Pumen pin di nianwu* 妙法蓮華經觀世音
   菩薩普門品第廿五
2. *Foshuo Dizang pusa jing* 佛說地藏菩薩經
3. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經

The first text is the longest, taking up 91 of the 113 inscribed pages. Reaching the end of the first side, it continues seamlessly onto the other. Texts Nos. 2 and 3 take up only 22 pages in total. In the end, text No. 3 finishes on the very last page, managing neither to run out of space nor to leave any blank pages. This was by no means a fortunate accident, for the concertina form makes it impossible to add or remove pages. Evidently, the person who created the physical manuscript knew in advance the total number of pages required for the three texts and made sure that all three hands copied them according to the plan. Most likely, they copied the scriptures from another concertina in which the same three texts followed each other in the same order.

The manuscripts examined in this section contained at least two of the four texts present in manuscript S.5618 (listed in Table 3). We have identified a total of seven such items (including S.5618), all of which were either codices or concertinas with at least three different texts. Considering some of these texts were not very common, the pattern is remarkable. At the same time, it is important to note that not all codices belong to this group of multiple-text manuscripts, for many of them contain primers or simple writing exercises, model letters or just one Buddhist text (i.e. *Diamond sutra*). The same holds true for concertina manuscripts, which may include other types of texts.[165] Therefore, the examples discussed in this chapter represent only a subset of Chinese codices and concertinas from Dunhuang.

In a multilingual society, such as Dunhuang in the ninth and tenth centuries, the social and ritual practices behind the production of such multiple-text booklets were certainly not limited to Chinese manuscripts. Focusing on a group of Tibetan manuscripts that contain Avalokiteśvara (i.e. Guanyin) texts, van Schaik notes that although the pothi was the most common form for Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, followed by the scroll, a large proportion of the Avalokiteśvara texts were written on concertinas and codices. One of the features of these manuscripts was that many of them were collections of several

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165 Just to name two examples, S.5693 is a gazetteer and S.5765 is a fragment of the *Fozang jing* 佛藏經 (T653, 15) translated by Kumārajīva.

short prayers and sādhanas.[166] They were usually of small size to facilitate portability on the body. On the function of such manuscripts, van Schaik writes:

> These collections of prayers and sādhanas may have been used by wandering monks or lay yogins either for personal use or when providing religious services for others. In post-imperial Tibet, such figures, who would have been literate in Buddhism but without monastic sponsorship, would probably have been common. It is easy to imagine most of the Avalokiteśvara texts in the Dunhuang collections being used in this way—texts to be read to the dying or deceased, rituals for healing the sick, helping crops, and sorting out personal problems, as well as general-purpose, all-accomplishing prayers like the 108-epithet prayer in praise of Avalokiteśvara.[167]

This, of course, resonates with what the function of Chinese multiple-text manuscripts may have been. This group of Tibetan codices and manuscripts come from the Guiyijun period, just like their Chinese counterparts.[168] They exhibit obvious similarities with the physical characteristics of the Chinese manuscripts, including their size, colour and type of paper. For example, manuscript Pelliot tibétain 37 (Fig. 24) is a glued codex with a collection of texts on the after-death state. It consists of 28 bifolia but is, in its current form, incomplete. The leaves have trimmed corners and a slanting top edge. The booklet is 13.7 × 15 cm in size, thus, when closed, almost square in shape. The size is significant because it indicates that the bifolia were probably cut from sheets of paper 27.4 cm and 45 cm wide, very similar to the size of sheets used for Chinese scrolls.

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166 van Schaik 2006, 62–64. The sādhanas are the visualisation and recitation practice of the deity (ibid., 58).

167 Ibid., 63.

168 Several items from this group can be dated to the second half of the tenth century; ibid., 64.
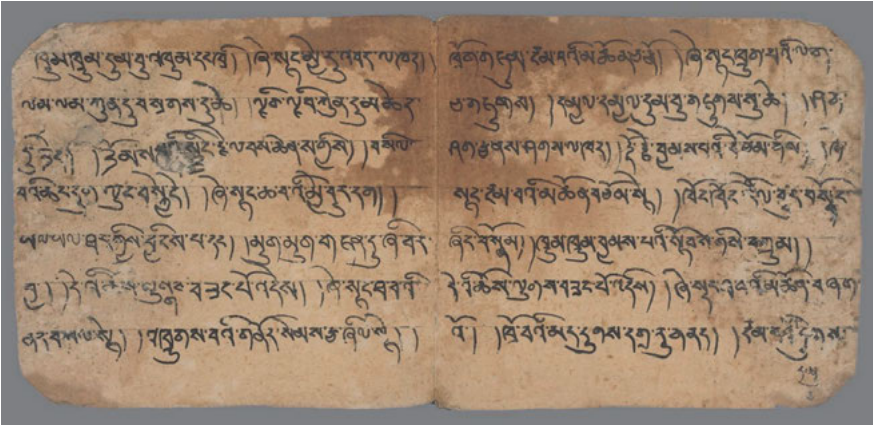
Fig. 24: Two opposing pages from the Tibetan codex Pelliot tibétain 37. (13.5 × 15 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Accordingly, there is a series of similarities between these groups of Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts, including their time frame, book form, shape, size, and even the fact that they contain multiple texts related to ritual services. Whether they actually belong to the same group of manuscripts as the Chinese multiple-text manuscripts discussed in this chapter requires a comparative analysis of the texts contained in them.

1.6 Scrolls

Looking at the phenomenon in the light of the physical form of manuscripts, it is apparent that the texts found in such multiple-text items also appear in manuscripts that are not codices or concertinas. The previous section described seven manuscripts with the *Foshuo xuming jing* (line 2 of Table 3) and at least one other text, and all proved to be multiple-text codices or concertinas. Of the remaining 11 items with the *Foshuo xuming jing* (but none of the other texts in Table 3) only Дх-1009 and S.5581 are codices, while the other items are scrolls, fragments of scrolls, or stand-alone sheets of paper. Some of these manuscripts feature a very similar array of texts. For example, BD00693, a scroll 184 cm in length, contains the following eight texts:

1. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
2. *Foshuo jie baisheng yuanjia tuoluoni jing* 佛說解百生怨家陀羅尼經
3. *Foshuo yan shouming jing* 佛說延壽命經
4. *Foshuo tianqingwen jing* 佛說天請問經
5. *Bore boluomiduo xin jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經
6. *Zaota gongde jing* 造塔功德經 (Sutra on the Merit of Building a Stūpa)
7. *Foshuo dasheng sifa jing* 佛說大乘四法經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Four Dharmas)
8. *Foshuo shixiang jing* 佛說十想經 (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Ten Contemplations)

The overlap with the content of the group of manuscripts described in this chapter is clear. The first five texts match those seen in manuscripts S.5531 and P.3932, attesting to the similarities with the structure of multiple-text codices. Yet the remaining three texts are different from those commonly seen in codices and concertinas. The *Zaota gongde jing* (Sutra on the Merit of Building a Stūpa) and *Foshuo dasheng sifa jing* (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Four Dharmas) are both translations by Divākara 地婆訶羅 (613–688).[169] The *Foshuo dasheng sifa jing* and *Foshuo shixiang jing* (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Ten Contemplations) also occur in manuscript P.3919, which is a pothi with a series of texts that are, once again, different from those in multiple-text codices and concertinas.[170] This shows that despite textual similarities, there are also important differences that set this scroll apart from the codices and concertinas. Aside from the obvious disparity between the two book forms, the texts in the scroll are written in the same hand. Further to which, this hand is visibly more competent than many of the hands we have seen in the codices and concertinas. There are insertions and some crude corrections, such as blotting out mistaken words with ink and writing corrections on the side, yet the handwriting on the whole is uniform and competent. This seems to indicate a different background from multiple-text codices and concertinas written in different hands, frequently with very basic writing skills.

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169 Atypically, the head title of the scripture (i.e. *Zaota gongde jing* 造塔功德經) in this manuscript is shorter than the end title (*Foshuo zaota gongde jing* 佛說造塔功德經). A complete translation of the *Zaota gongde jing* is available in Boucher 1991, 8–10; see also Miller 2018. On Divākara's activities, see Forte 1974 and 2015, 50–52; Chen 2007, 217–223.

170 In fact, the *Foshuo shixiang jing* only occurs in four Dunhuang manuscripts, i.e. BD00693, P.3919, Hane-287 and ZSD2207.

One of the other items with the *Foshuo xuming jing* is S.5679, a 122 cm long scroll containing three scriptures. The verso has a few scribbled characters, such as *foshuo* 佛說 ('spoken by the Buddha') and the name of the Longxing monastery 龍興寺, none of which amount to an actual text.[171] The three successive texts in this scroll are as follows:

1. *Foshuo yan shouming jing* 佛說延壽命經
2. *Foshuo xuming jing* 佛說續命經
3. *Jiu zhu zhongsheng kunan jing* 救諸眾生苦難經 (Sutra on Relieving Sentient Beings from Hardship)

This item is similar to BD00693 as it is a scroll featuring a selection of similar texts, but only three of them. Furthermore, the third text is written in a different hand, a detail that makes the manuscript more semblant to multiple-text codices and concertinas. Another scroll similar to it both in terms of its physical form and content is P.2374 (111 cm). The first two texts in it match those in S.5679 (i.e. *Foshuo yan shouming jing* and *Foshuo xuming jing*) but the third one is the *Foshuo tianqingwen jing* 佛說天請問經. The entire manuscript is written in the same confident hand, including the colophon at the end. There are some corrections and insertions and the end title of the last text is erroneously given as *Foshuo yan shouming jing*, rather than the correct *Foshuo tianqingwen jing*.[172] Fortunately, there is a colophon which states the time of copying as the eighth day of the fourth month of 959. It further explains that the dhyāna master Huiguang 惠光 of the Chengdian Chan Monastery 承典禪院 in Guazhou 瓜州 copied the three texts (i.e. *Yan shouming jing*, *Xuming jing* and *Tianqingwen jing*) in a total of forty-nine scrolls on behalf of a donor. In other words, the three scriptures together formed a set and Huiguang made forty-nine copies, all in scroll form. Presumably, manuscript P.2374 is one of those forty-nine copies. Thus, the ultimate purpose of producing the manuscripts was to generate merit for someone else. The number forty-nine undoubtedly refers to the 'seven-seven feast' 七七齋 associated with the forty-nine days of mourning the dead. As a consequence, the scroll was what Kuo Liying calls an 'offering sutra', copied in multiple copies for the sake of dedicating blessings to the deceased.[173]

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171 Another manuscript with a similar disconnected reference to the Longxing monastery is the Sino-Tibetan scroll IOL Tib J 754; see van Schaik and Galambos 2012.

172 Li Xiaorong 2013, 194 suggests that Huiguang used the title *Foshuo yan shouming jing* as a joint title for the three scriptures, as they all have content related to extending life. I think he simply made a mistake.

173 Kuo 2000, 692–694.

Perhaps the most well-known example of such a manuscript is P.2055, the final colophon of which lists the sutras copied by Zhai Fengda 翟奉達 (d. 966) for the benefit of his deceased wife during the seven feasts commemorating each seven-day period, as well as those on the hundredth-day, one-year and three-year anniversaries. The texts include the *Tianqingwen jing* and the *Yanluo jing* 閻羅經 (i.e. *Foshuo Yanluo wang jing*), however, most of them are scriptures that do not occur in concertinas and codices.[174] The scroll itself only contains the last three scriptures, each with a separate colophon ascribing it to a particular day within the schedule of feasts laid out in the long colophon at the end of the scroll. The other scriptures from this set survive in two other scrolls (BD04544 in the National Library of China and TY193 in the Tianjin Arts Museum), each with multiple scriptures.

In terms of its physical structure, P.2055 is a composite scroll assembled from several smaller pieces, some of which are darker in colour than others. Significantly, there is a clear seamline at the end of each of the three scriptures (and their colophons), showing that they were not copied on the same scroll from the start but were glued together subsequently. Their order reveals that each newer scripture was glued before (i.e. to the right) of the previous one, so in its final form the scroll essentially begins with the text copied last. The long colophon at the end of the whole scroll yet again constitutes a separate sheet of paper.[175] The manuscript, therefore, grew over the course of several months and reached its final form only after the completion of the entire set of rituals. This process is clearly different from the usual way of gluing sheets of paper together into a scroll before writing on it. The scroll with three scriptures we see today encapsulates a prolonged process of ritual mourning and dedicating merits to a deceased relative.

Zhai Fengda was most likely the individual who wrote the colophons but researchers have suggested that the scriptures themselves were in another

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174 For a translation of Zhai's colophon with the list of the sutras, see Mollier 2008, 69; on the 'seven-seven feast', see Makita 1976, 338–340, Teiser 1994, 102–121 and Du Doucheng 2004. A similar memorial service called *shichi shichi no ki* 七七ノ忌 was also known in Hei'an 平安 (794–1185) Japan; see Tanabe 1984, 394–395.

175 Unfortunately, I have access to BD04544 and TY193 only through facsimile reproductions which are insufficient for a reliable examination of physical structure. As far as I can see, there are no seamlines following the end of individual scriptures, which suggests these two scrolls may not be composite manuscripts. Of course, one can ascertain this only by examining the original items, thus I limit my observations here to P.2055.

hand.[176] The differences, however, are largely in the width of individual strokes, while in terms of their orthographic structure and general balance the characters in the colophons and the main texts do not exhibit conclusive differences. Due to this, I think that Zhai Fengda also copied the scriptures, but using a sutra-copying hand. As was customary in the region during the Guiyijun period, he used a pen instead of a brush, which is perceptible in the even thickness of strokes in the colophons.[177] But when copying the scriptures, he made an effort to emulate the strokes of brush-written characters, which makes the hand look different. Essentially, he copied the scriptures in a formal hand, in contrast with his everyday handwriting evidenced in the colophons. He was, of course, a highly educated individual able to copy larger quantities of texts and thus his situation may have been unusual.

The similarities in form and content between scrolls such as P.2374, BD00693 and P.2055 suggest that they all stem from a similar social context, which largely revolved around mourning practices and assigning merits to the dead. This background fits well with both the types of texts and the colophons, some of which expressly make references to the process of commemoration. As a group, these scrolls have important differences from multiple-text codices and concertinas. One clear difference is that the scrolls maintain the traditional Chinese book form that had been in continuous use from the early medieval period. By contrast, the portability of codices and concertinas must have played a key role in their function. Secondly, for the most part, the scrolls are written in the same hand, as opposed to the booklets which typically evidence the involvement of several hands. Trivial as it may seem, this is a major difference because it attests to an entirely different process of production which, in turn, points to a dissimilar liturgical practice. Thirdly, the scrolls are much more likely to include colophons which state the purpose and context of copying. In contrast, the codices and concertinas usually have no colophons, and when they do, their wording is more generic and does not allow us to establish a direct link between the manuscripts and mourning practices.

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176 The difference between the hands in the scriptures and colophons was noted in Gernet and Wu 1970, 40. Teiser 1994, 102–103 is also of the opinion that the three scriptures were probably written by a different hand from the individual who wrote the dedications.
177 Fujieda 1973, 438 and Fujieda 1968.

1.7 Conclusions

This chapter looked at Chinese codices and concertinas from Guiyijun Dunhuang as examples of multiple-text manuscripts. Such manuscripts consist of a series of Buddhist texts copied successively into a single booklet which probably served apotropaic and ritual purposes. The manuscripts are of similar size and physical form and contain a combination of texts from a limited pool of scriptures and mantras. The small size and trimmed corners imply that individuals may have carried the booklets on their body. The textual and physical parallels confirm a connection between them, making it likely that they were produced not only under similar circumstances but also within a restricted time range. The discrepancies between the individual examples, however, reveal that there was a certain degree of arbitrariness as to which texts and in what order were copied into such manuscripts.

Most multiple-text manuscripts examined in this chapter were written in more than one hand, evidencing the participation of several persons. The examples suggest that in some cases family members produced a booklet on their own, yet in other cases they may have paid someone to bind the book properly and copy a portion of the texts. Paying for the production of the physical manuscript would have been part of the act of offering that earned the donors karmic merit. Donors took possession of these merits and activated the religious power of the manuscript by copying a portion of the text in person. The multiple-text booklets seem to be unique in that they involved each family member personally in the process of producing the manuscript. While each individual could have easily completed an entire manuscript on their own (and probably most of them did on other occasions), it was vital they all participated in the production of the same object. Family members who had obvious difficulties writing yet copied a few pages demonstrated that personal involvement of all participants was essential for the booklet to function properly.

It is significant that in some cases the last pages of multiple-text codices or concertinas remain blank, as this phenomenon may offer a glimpse into the process of production. It tells us that the manuscripts with the series of scriptures in them took shape over a longer stretch of time, rather than within a day or two. Such manuscripts may have continued to grow throughout their use. Their owners were in no hurry to finish them but kept them available for new 'contributions'. Whatever the case may be, the blank pages, which have often been ruled, should not be seen as a miscalculation on the part of the individuals who produced the manuscript. They did not constitute leftover space but were perhaps the most important part of the manuscript, inviting members of a family to continue appropriating the karmic merits generated by the act of copying.

2 Manuscripts Written by Students

As with the multiple-text booklets examined in the previous chapter, the overall majority of Dunhuang manuscripts have Buddhist content. Although other types of texts constitute a smaller portion of the corpus, together they are still sizeable in volume. Among this body of non-Buddhist material, manuscripts with colophons written by students studying at local monasteries present a fascinating subset. Despite their association with monasteries, the students had secular names and chiefly copied secular texts. Most of the specific details about them derive from the colophons they appended to the texts they copied. The students produced the manuscripts over a timespan that falls within the range of the Guiyijun period. The typological similarities of these manuscripts justify treating them as a unique group which, as was the case with the multiple-text manuscripts in the previous chapter, may offer insights into the lives and activities of a specific segment of local society.

From the 1970s onward, scholars of Dunhuang and medieval China have examined these manuscripts, authoring a variety of excellent studies. In contradistinction to earlier approaches focusing on the history of education and its institutions, the current chapter aims to examine how students produced the manuscripts and continued using them long after the initial act of production. Crucial to the methodology applied here is the analysis of the visual characteristics of the scrolls, especially their layout and marginalia. As before, my contention is that the examination of non-textual aspects alongside textual ones will provide further insights into the specific circumstances that shaped the manuscripts before being deposited in the library cave.

2.1 Former scholarship

In the early days of Dunhuang studies, the scrolls featuring student colophons attracted little attention. Occasional references tended to discuss individual examples along with other types of colophons, without attempting a comprehensive analysis. Among the first scholars to mention poems written by Dunhuang students was the celebrated philosopher and scholar Hu Shih 胡適 (i.e. Hu Shi, 1891–1962), who cited two compositions he termed *yuanshi* 怨詩 ('poems of lament'). Taking them at face value—as expressions of sentiments

associated with student life—he wrote that he could commiserate with the laments these young authors expressed from a distance of a thousand years.[178]

Paradoxically, the biggest impetus for the study of the Dunhuang manuscripts written by students came from a manuscript discovered not in Dunhuang but Turfan. The discovery happened in 1969, at the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), during the excavation of Tomb 363 of the Astana cemetery near Turfan. The scroll in question contained Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) commentary to the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), commonly known as the *Lunyu Zheng shi zhu* 論語鄭氏注. According to the colophon, the text was copied in 710 by a twelve-year old student called Bu Tianshou 卜天壽.[179] Following its discovery, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), the famous writer and scholar, Mao's most favoured intellectual and president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, wrote a brief introduction in which he praised the literary quality of the poems. He also commented on the abundance of non-standard character variants (*biezi* 別字).[180] The discovery generated a flurry of scholarship on the pages of the academic journals *Kaogu* 考古 and *Wenwu* 文物, with scholars correcting some of Guo's readings and discussing the problem of phonetic variants.[181] In 1972, the Japanese publisher Heibonsha issued a volume with a full set of photographs (including colour prints), thereby making the scroll accessible to all.[182] The book also included photographs of four *Lunyu* manuscripts from Dunhuang, as well as Japanese translations of the newly published Chinese studies on the manu-

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178 Hu Shi 1937.

179 Technically, he was twelve *sui* 歲, which would make him eleven years old.

180 Guo Moruo 1972a. Guo's paper appeared in the first issue of *Kaogu* that year, shortly before the publication of the official excavation report of the Xinjiang Museum (Xinjiang Weiwu'er zizhiqu bowuguan 1972; on the manuscript specifically, see also Wenwu chubanshe 1972), making him the first to write about the manuscript. In the same issue of *Kaogu*, as part of a survey of archaeological discoveries from the ongoing Cultural Revolution, Xia Nai 夏鼐 (1972, 36–37) also briefly described the manuscript and published a photograph. Other studies addressed the textual aspects of the manuscript (Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo ziliaoshi 1972) and its handwriting (Han Guopan 1973).

181 Long Hui 1972a and 1972b.

182 Tei Gen 1972. A few years later, Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 also published a collection of *Lunyu Zheng shi zhu* manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan (Kanaya 1978). A similar collection of *Lunyu Zheng shi zhu* manuscripts by a Chinese scholar was Wang Su 1991; see also the additional comments in Rong Xinjiang 1993. On the history of the text, including relevant manuscript evidence, see Makeham 1997; on its significance in education in the Tang period, see Simson 2009, 220–226.

script.[183] In the 'Preface', Guo Moruo makes the point that Bu Tianshou's copy of the *Lunyu* illustrates that at the beginning of the eighth century, the cultural level in the Western Regions was essentially of the same calibre as that of Central China.[184]

The study of the Astana manuscript re-focused scholarly attention on comparable manuscripts from Dunhuang. In 1973, Ogawa Kan'ichi 小川貫弌 published two papers in which he examined student colophons from Dunhuang as a coherent group of material.[185] He saw that the gradual availability of the main collections of Dunhuang manuscripts in print or microfilm had made it possible to progress from the initial tasks of cataloguing and conducting case studies, to more comprehensive analyses involving larger groups of manuscripts. Noting that the student manuscripts dated from the Guiyijun period, he divided them into two groups: those from the period of the Zhang family's rule (848–914) and those of the Cao family's rule (914–1030).[186] He listed over fifty manuscripts with such colophons and observed that students identified themselves as belonging to particular monasteries primarily during the tenth century and not earlier. He also directed attention to colophons written by members of the two ruling families. Ogawa was the first to explore student manuscripts from Dunhuang in detail and draw up an initial inventory upon which subsequent scholars could depend.

An important English-language study was Victor Mair's 1981 catalogue of Dunhuang manuscripts written by lay students.[187] This was a basic description of nearly 600 manuscripts the author judged to have been produced by students, including those with student colophons. Whenever available, Mair transcribed and translated the colophons and added brief comments on links to other manuscripts, the quality of handwriting, corrections, punctuation and other palaeographic peculiarities. This catalogue was a major step in delineating the corpus of manuscripts related to students. It presents manuscript data in a useful arrangement and contains insights of great value to anyone working on Dunhuang manuscripts.

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183 Guo Moruo wrote a preface, which appears in the volume in both Chinese (i.e. Guo's calligraphy) and Japanese.
184 Kanaya 1978, 8.
185 Ogawa 1973a and 1973b.
186 The closing date of 1030 derived from Pelliot's now discredited theory that the library cave had been sealed on the eve of the Tangut conquest as a means for preserving the manuscripts.
187 Mair 1981. A digital version of this catalogue is now also available through the IDP website (http://idp.bl.uk).

In 1986, the Taiwanese historian Kao Ming-shih 高明士 wrote a thorough overview of Tang education in Dunhuang, in which he also examined the colophons written by students. He divided the Tang dynasty in Dunhuang into three periods: 1. High Tang (618–787); 2. Tibetan period (787–848); and 3. Late Tang (848–907). He discussed the educational activities of local monasteries within the third period, under the category of private schools.[188]

Around the same time, Li Zhengyu 李正宇 published two influential papers related to the manuscripts written by students. The first had a wider focus and looked at schools in Dunhuang in general, from early Tang to the end of the Guiyijun period.[189] In this group, students studying at local monasteries were merely one category among those from various types of schools, including provincial and county-level ones.[190] The second paper focused specifically on student colophons, gathering all available examples and arranging them in chronological order.[191] He identified 144 colophons, observing that some were not genuine. He divided the colophons into three groups: those that were dated unambiguously using reign marks; dated using the cyclical format; or undated. In total, he found that 72 colophons were dated unambiguously, providing a substantial sample base for comparison. Of the cyclical dates, some employed the sexagecimal cycle and others the duodecimal corresponding to the animal signs of the zodiac. Of the undated manuscripts, some may have originally had colophons now lost or illegible due to damage.[192] Li Zhengyu's inventory remains useful to this day, even though now it is possible to improve on the accuracy of some of the dates.

Shortly after this, in a study devoted to the role of Buddhism in education during the Tang period, Erik Zürcher discussed manuscripts written by students.[193] After providing an extensive overview of evidence concerning Buddhist education in transmitted sources, Zürcher turned to the Dunhuang manuscripts

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188 Gao Mingshi 1986. Of course, one of the arguments of the present book is that the concept of Late Tang was not directly applicable to Dunhuang. On the Tang-dynasty phenomenon of studying at Buddhist monasteries, as seen in literary sources, see Yan Gengwang 1969.

189 Li Zhengyu 1986a.

190 Unfortunately, very few colophons explicitly identify students as belonging to any of these types of schools, thus providing accurate statistics is difficult. Essentially, only one or two colophons survive for each type.

191 Li Zhengyu 1987.

192 As the manuscripts lay hidden inside a cave for a millennium, any such damage would have occurred before being stored in the cave and could not have been caused by wear and tear during the subsequent centuries.

193 Zürcher 1989.

to examine the kinds of texts students copied while they studied in monasteries. Calling attention to the writing exercises on the verso of manuscripts, he hypothesised that some of the students were merely five or six years old. He cited a series of examples in which the master wrote a text such as the *Qianziwen* (Thousand Character Text) horizontally across the top of the page and the student copied each character in vertical columns over an entire line. This type of practice probably occurred during the earliest stage of education, while primers would have been copied at a slightly more advanced level. Zürcher also discussed the group of manuscripts with student colophons and emphasised that the colophons were almost exclusively attached to secular texts, despite the fact that the students often identified themselves as belonging to specific monasteries. Continuing Zürcher's approach, a more recent overview on Tang education in the light of the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts has been provided by Wojciech Simson.[194]

In Japan, from approximately the turn of this century, Itō Mieko 伊藤美重子 has dedicated a series of studies to Dunhuang manuscripts written by students.[195] Her primary focus has been on educational texts but also on student poems, eventually leading to a monograph on school education in Dunhuang as seen through the manuscripts.[196] Although the subject of the book is broader, the first chapter is a systematic analysis of student colophons and relevant manuscripts. At the core of the chapter is a carefully compiled inventory of colophons, by far the most comprehensive and detailed to this day. It consists of three different lists, the first of which has six categories based on the type of main text in the manuscript (e.g. Confucian or Daoist classics and the *Qianziwen*, vernacular literature, didactic primers). The first list encompasses manuscripts from any period, provided the colophon states that a student copied the text. The second list contains colophons from the Zhang family's rule over Dunhuang in chronological order, and the third, those from the period of the Cao family's rule. The lists provide an efficient and convenient tool for studying this body of material. In a separate chapter, Itō discusses the poems written by students and provides a full transcription of the entire corpus.

Other contributions focused specifically on student poems. In his 1994 study of Dunhuang poems, Xiang Chu 項楚 transcribed and organised these texts as part of a chapter on folk poetry.[197] Xu Jun's 徐俊 important 1995 study contended that the poems were not necessarily the result of the students' liter-

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194 Simson 2009.

195 E.g. Itō 2001 and 2007a.

196 Itō 2007b and 2008.

197 Xiang Chu 1993, 210–220.

ary creativity, but were part of a shared repertoire of folk poems or songs.[198] By contrast, Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清 viewed the poems as an opportunity to gain a glimpse of the students' lives in Dunhuang, an aspect neglected by earlier scholarship.[199] Zhu Fengyu's 朱鳳玉 more recent study differentiates between the poems students composed themselves and those they merely copied.[200]

A great deal more research exists on educational texts in Dunhuang, but it focuses primarily on the texts, rather than the social and educational setting of the learning experience. The most important of which is by Zheng Acai 鄭阿財 and Zhu Fengyu, a comprehensive study of educational texts from Dunhuang.[201] In addition, extensive research is also available on individual primers, such as the *Qianziwen*,[202] *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教 (Family Instructions of the Grand Duke),[203] *Kaimeng yaoxun* (Essential Teachings for Beginners),[204] *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* (Discussion of Confucius with Xiang Tuo),[205] *Zachao* 雜抄 (Miscellaneous Jottings) and many others.[206] In contrast with such text-oriented studies of primers and poems, the purpose here is to examine the manuscripts themselves and document the physical and codicological attributes they have in common. The goal therein is to demonstrate is that by viewing them together as a group, such attributes may offer additional insights into the circumstances of their production.[207]

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198 Xu Jun 1994; cf. Xu Jun 2000.

199 Yang Xiuqing 1999.

200 Zhu Fengyu 2007.

201 Zheng and Zhu 2002. This work should be the first point of reference on medieval primers.

202 On the Dunhuang *Qianziwen*, see Zhang Nali 2001, 2002a and 2002c, Zhang Xinpeng 2008, Chen Ziqin 2015 and Nugent 2018.

203 On the *Taigong jiajiao*, see Demiéville 1982, Gao Guofan 1984, Wang Fanzhou 1986, Zhou Fengwu 1986, Liu Anzhi 2009, Zhang Xinpeng 2010 and 2012. For a recent edition of this text, including a translation into Japanese, see Yōgaku no kai 2009.

204 On the *Kaimeng yaoxun*, see Wang Fanzhou 2000 and Zhang Xinpeng 2013.

205 On the *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu*, see Soymié 1954, Zhang Hongxun 1985 and Zheng Acai 1993.

206 Although its title suggests a generic reference to miscellaneous notes, the *Zachao* in Dunhuang was a title of a specific text that survives in 13 different manuscripts. See Naba 1942, Zhou Yiliang 1948, Takata 1983, Zhu Fengyu 1988 and Zheng and Zhu 2002, 165–194.

207 In this respect, Christopher Nugent's (2010) book on the production and circulation of manuscripts with poetry is directly relevant to the approach implemented here, even if it does not specifically discuss the manuscripts in question as the work of students. See also Galambos 2015b.

2.2 The colophons

Not all manuscripts written by students have colophons. Often the colophon is missing due to damage to the manuscript, but occasionally the individual copying the text just did not write one. In other instances, the colophon does not identify the individual copying as a student. The designation 'student colophons' used in this chapter is a translation of the Chinese term *xuelang tiji* 學郎 題記, used in modern scholarship as a reference to colophons in which students have identified themselves as *xuelang* 學郎, *xueshilang* 學士郎 (also written 學 仕郎 or 學使郎) or, less frequently, *xuesheng* 學生 or *xueshenglang* 學生郎. A concrete example of such colophons from the Guiyijun period is in manuscript P.2825, in which the main text on the recto is the primer *Taigong jiajiao*. As usual, the colophon appears at the end of the scroll, following the end title of the main text:[208]

> 大中四年庚午正月十五日學生宋文顯讀　安文德寫
>
> Read aloud by the student Song Wenxian and copied by An Wende on the fifteenth day of the first month of the *gengwu* year, the fourth of the Dazhong reign (850).

In this colophon Song Wenxian identifies himself as a student (*xuesheng* 學生), although An Wende was probably a student too. One possible scenario may have been a student reading the text to a peer who wrote it down either after hearing it or copied it from a previous copy. In either case, the manuscript's production had clearly been part of an exercise or an assessment. The second part of the colophon referring to An Wende stands slightly apart and is written in larger characters, possibly by a different hand. The same hand may have written the character *du* 讀 ('to read') immediately before the hiatus. Therefore, these five characters (i.e. 讀　安文德寫) may represent a later addition. Indeed, the first part of the colophon (minus the character 讀) is complete on its own and the second part (along with the character 讀) may have served as an addendum aiming to clarify the division of labour between the two students.

　　Another colophon, from a year later (i.e. 851), in manuscript S.705 states that the same two students produced a copy of the *Kaimeng yaoxun*. The hand in the two colophons appears to be the same. This colophon in the second manuscript reads as follows:

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208 Cf. Mair 1981, 20.

大中五年辛未三月廿三日學生宋文獻誦 安文德寫

Recited by the student Song Wenxian and copied by An Wende on the twenty-third day of the third month of the *xinwei* year, the fifth year of the Dazhong reign (851).[209]

Once again, there appears to be a small gap before the name An Wende, but it is barely noticeable. The last syllable in the name of Song Wenxian is written with a different character (獻, LMC xian` vs. 顯, LMC xjian´) but the context leaves little doubt it was the same student. If anything, the different way of writing his name shows that as long as the sound was approximately similar (if not identical), it was possible to write one's name with alternative characters. It is also possible that An Wende wrote his peer's name and was not certain how to write it correctly, for he had only heard the name and had not seen it in written form. Furthermore, the verb describing Song Wenxian's contribution here is *song* 誦 ('to recite'), but it is clear that in both cases the text is being read aloud and the other student is writing or copying the text. As the two manuscripts are only a year apart and were produced using the same division of labour, we can see that the two students collaborated on two or more occasions.

Another example of a student's colophon is the one at the end of a copy of the *Qin fu yin* 秦婦吟 (Lament of the Lady of Qin) of Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910) in manuscript P.3381.[210] The colophon appears to be in the same, relatively confident hand as the main text and the end title. It reads as follows:

天復伍年乙丑歲十二月十五日燉煌郡金光明寺學仕張龜信[...]

[Copied] on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month of the *yichou* year, the fifth of the Tianfu reign (905), by Zhang Guixin, student of the Jinguangming Monastery in Dunhuang commandery.

The end of the name Zhang Guixin is partially missing, but the character 信 remains recognisable. The verb at the end of the colophon is also missing, so the lower edge of the scroll may have been trimmed or damaged. In its current form the edge is uneven and shows signs of wear, thus the damage must have occurred before the scroll had been deposited in the cave library at the beginning of the eleventh century. Zhang Guixin identified himself using the term *xueshi* 學仕, which is possibly an abbreviation of *xueshilang* and may not neces-

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209 Cf. Giles 1939, 1025.
210 On the *Qin fu yin*, see Chen Yinque 1936, Nugent 2010, 31–65 and Tian Weiwei 2014.

sarily indicate a different type of student.[211] The colophon states that Zhang was from the Jinguangming (Golden Light) Monastery 金光明寺, and this is in fact the earliest dated colophon associating a student with this monastery. A similar colophon from fourteen years later appears at the end of another copy of the *Qin fu yin* in manuscript S.692, written in a much less skilled hand. Fig. 25 shows the end of the scroll with a white arrow marking the line with the colophon. The colophon reads:
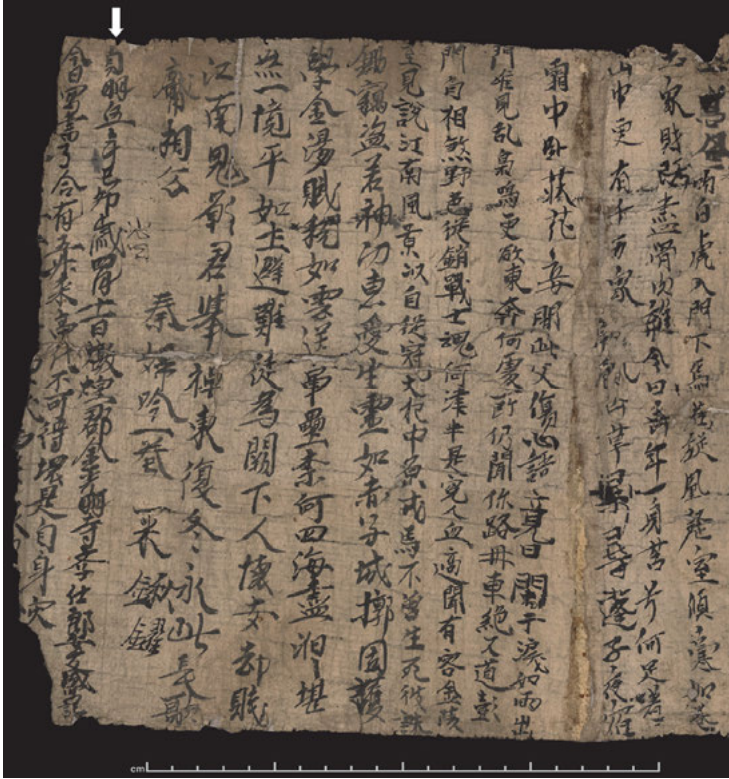

Fig. 25: Section of the recto of S.692, showing the end of the *Qin fu yin* and the colophon (26.9 × 141.2 cm; The British Library)

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211 The second character is not clear in the manuscript and is perhaps more similar to the character 什. This, however, would be somewhat problematic phonetically as 什 (LMC ʂfiip) is an entering tone character and its pronunciation was quite different from 仕 (LMC ʂfiɹˋ) or 士 (LMC ʂfiɹ). Just as importantly, such reading is completely unattested among the variations of the word 'student' in this group of manuscripts.

貞明伍年己卯歲四月十一日燉煌郡金光明寺學仕郎安友盛寫記。

Record of copying on the eleventh day of the fourth month of the *jimao* year, the fifth of the Zhenming reign period (919), by An Yousheng, student of the Jinguangming Monastery in Dunhuang commandery.[212]

It is clear that not only is the main text the same but the colophon itself is very similar – expressly identifying the student as one of the Jinguangming Monastery in Dunhuang commandery.[213] Other *xuelang* manuscripts from roughly the same time feature a variety of other texts, but never the *Qin fu yin*. Indeed, of the four copies of the *Qin fu yin* bearing student colophons, only these two name the student as belonging to a monastery, and in both cases it is the Jinguangming Monastery. This does not mean, of course, that the students in each monastery copied the same texts but it shows that at least in this period the *Qin fu yin* was part of the curriculum at the Jinguangming Monastery. Other texts students copied in this monastery are the *Lunyu* (S.3011, dated 858), *Li Ling Su Wu wanghuan shu* 李陵蘇武往還書 (Letter Exchange between Li Ling and Su Wu; P.3692, dated 922) and the *Yanzi fu* 鷰子賦 (Rhapsody on the Swallow; P.3757, undated).[214]

The term for the student here is *xueshilang* 學仕郎, which corroborates the reading of *xueshi* in P.3381 above, as an abbreviation of it, and proves that the second character should indeed be read as 仕. Following immediately after the colophon is a student poem (see below) followed by another poem that has been torn off. Remnants of a few characters from the missing line can still be made out but are too fragmentary to identify the poem.

It is also noteworthy that the student's surname is An, identifying him to be of Sogdian background. This was by no means unusual and even within student

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212 Cf. translation of colophon in Giles 1940, 325.

213 Dunhuang/Shazhou is sometimes referred to as a prefecture (*zhou* 州) and sometimes as a commandery (*jun* 郡), reflecting the official designation of the region. In 619, the Tang administration set up Guazhou 瓜州 prefecture with a prefectural seat in Dunhuang; in 622, it was renamed Western Shazhou 西沙州 prefecture; in 633, the word 'Western' was dropped; during 742–758, the region was named Dunhuang commandery 敦煌郡; and in 758, it was named Shazhou prefecture once more; see Li Zhengyu 1986a, 39.

214 On the *Yanzi fu*, see Jian Tao 1986 and Huang Zheng 2003. For the text of the surviving versions of the text, see Pan Chonggui 1994, 1135–1167. Both Hans van Ess (2003, 611) and Valérie Lavoix (2014, 182) note the similarities between the *Yanzi fu* and the Han-dynasty *Shenwu fu* 神烏傅(賦) excavated in 1993 in Yinwan 尹灣, Jiangsu Province. For the *Lunyu* manuscripts from Dunhuang, see Kanaya 1978, Wang Su 1984 and 1991, Li Fang 1998, Zhang Yongquan 2008, v. 4, 1437–1881 and Hao Chunwen 2014.

colophons there are a number of individuals whose names signify Sogdian origin (e.g. An Wende, Kang [...]yuan 康□遠, Shi Qingtong 石慶通).[215] In contrast, Zhang Guixin in P.3381 is a typical Chinese surname, the most common in the Dunhuang region of the period.[216] This attests to the complexity, in cultural and ethnic terms, of the local population during the Guiyijun period, especially its literate segment. The degree to which segments of the Central Asian population were integrated is evidenced by the fact that students of a Sogdian background were copying Chinese literary texts alongside their Chinese peers.

The above examples are merely three of over a hundred and fifty colophons written by students. Although they contain numerous shared features that justify placing them in the same group, they also exhibit considerable variation. Nonetheless, the variable information mainly pertains to the students' particular circumstances, whereas the colophons demonstrate a relatively formulaic structure. Focusing on their common characteristics, it is possible to outline the basic structure they tend to, even though individual examples may deviate:

(i) Date

The date may include the reign title and the year, which convert unambiguously to the Gregorian calendar we use today, or a combination of cyclical signs which repeat every sixty or twelve years. Often the cyclical date supplements the reign title, which, in theory, provides an added level of accuracy. The two, however, do not always match. As for the general chronological framework, almost all unambiguous dates fall within the Guiyijun period. In Li Zhengyu's catalogue of student manuscripts, only three items with absolute dates come from before this period. Of these, the first is P.3274, an annotated copy of the *Xiaojing* 孝經 from 742; the second is Bu Tianshou's 759 copy of the *Lunyu* from Astana (i.e. not from Dunhuang); and the third is a scroll from 767 most likely bearing a forged colophon.[217] Therefore, only one Dunhuang manuscript may pre-date the Guiyijun period.

Of the manuscripts with dates given in the cyclic format, Li Zhengyu lists only one from before the end of the Tibetan period. This is manuscript BD06258

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215 For a summary of Sogdian personal names, see Yoshida 2006. See also the discussion in Chapter Four of this book.
216 Dohi 2015, 6 shows that out of the 19,765 occurrences of full names from the Guiyijun period 2,789 (i.e. 14%) contained the surname Zhang. The next most common surname was Wang 王 with 1,232 occurrences, numbering less than half of those with the surname Zhang.
217 Li Zhengyu 1987, 27.

from the *xinchou* 辛丑 year, which Li claims refers to 821.[218] Yet, as Zhang Xiuqing 張秀清 demonstrates, the cyclical signs probably denote 881, meaning this manuscript in fact dates from the Guiyijun period.[219] In all, this group of manuscripts is closely linked with Guiyijun society after the end of Tibet's political control.

(ii) Place

If the colophon mentions the place, it is typically Shazhou 沙洲 or Dunhuang. As monasteries and temples in different regions often had the same name, adding the name of the region in the colophon made the geographical location more specific. The prevalence of these two toponyms in the colophons is clearly the result of the manuscripts coming from a local site. When the colophon omits the name of the region, it is safe to assume the manuscript is still a local product. Although similar practices must have existed in other regions, almost all of the relevant manuscripts are from Dunhuang.

(iii) Monastery

Not all students were studying at monasteries, and even those who were, did not always write down the name of the monastery. The surviving body of colophons preserves the names of eleven monasteries in Dunhuang. These monasteries—in chronological order of their attestation—are as follows:[220]

Liantaisi 蓮臺寺 (Lotus Platform Monastery)	867–936
Jingtusi 淨土寺 (Pure Land Monastery)	870–979
Lingtusi 靈圖寺 (Spiritual Image Monastery)	896–940
Jinguangmingsi 金光明寺 (Golden Light Monastery)	905–922
Qianmingsi 乾明寺 (Heavenly Brightness Monastery)	915–975
Longxingsi 龍興寺 (Dragon Rising Monastery)	917–920
Yong'ansi 永安寺 (Eternal Peace Monastery)	923–983
Sanjiesi 三界寺 (Three Realms Monastery)	925–975
Dayunsi 大雲寺 (Great Cloud Monastery)	958–962
Xiandesi 顯德寺 (Manifested Virtue Monastery)	ca. 977
Chengnansi 城南寺 (South of City Monastery)	

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218 Li Zhengyu 1987, 34.

219 Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 14.

220 Chai Jianhong 2008, 148. The dates to the right indicate the range of dated colophons, when available, linked with each monastery.

Although the Dunhuang region had seventeen or eighteen monasteries at the time,[221] not all of them feature in the colophons. This, of course, may simply be the result of where the surviving manuscripts originated from and does not necessarily mean that other monasteries were not involved in similar educational activities. That students identified themselves as belonging to particular monasteries is evidence that they produced the manuscripts while they were studying there. The role of monasteries in this educational arrangement will be discussed below. Monasteries, however, were not the only locations for studying. The manuscripts prove that prefecture and county level schools (*zhouxue* 州學 and *xianxue* 縣學), as well as medical schools existed, although only a few such colophons survive.[222] The texts copied at these schools were often identical to those studied at monasteries but differed in their context and time frame.

(iv) Student

The word 'student' is written in a variety of different ways (e.g. *xuelang*, *xueshilang*, *xuesheng* or *xueshi*). In some cases, we can see that some of the terms may have been abbreviations (e.g. *xuelang* for *xueshilang*), while elsewhere the variants signified actual differences. The terms may also have a chronological dimension, as there is evidence that some were limited to certain periods. For example, the term *xueshilang* was only in use from the end of the ninth century and not during the early decades of the Guiyijun period.[223] It is significant that those copying the texts identified themselves as students, as the word references a specific context for the production of those manuscripts. This establishes that the texts were copied as part of a curriculum, rather than for devotional or other purposes. The understanding that they were part of a formal educational setting has been essential for reconstructing the school system in Dunhuang and in pre-modern China in general.[224]

(v) Name

Names are among the most important pieces of information in colophons, for they identify the persons responsible for the creation of the manuscript. With but few exceptions, the students' names are secular. This indicates the students

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221 Rong 2013, 119.t

222 Zürcher 1989, 319.

223 Li Zhengyu 1987, 27.

224 See, for the example, Gao Mingshi 1986, Itō 2008.

were usually neither monks nor novices and they did not intend to join the *saṃgha*. The predominantly secular selection of texts they copied confirms this orientation. The surnames appearing in the colophons include Chinese (e.g. Zhang 張, Wang 王, Liang 梁) and Sogdian (e.g. An 安, Kang 康, Shi 史, Cao 曹) ones. In some cases, the name allows us to connect the manuscript to other manuscripts or inscriptions, which can be useful for ascertaining the general period the individual was active in and even learn about his circumstances.

(vi) Action

The colophon usually ends with a verb specifying the type of action the person in question performed. Most common are the verbs *xie* 寫 ('to copy') and *ji* 記 ('to record, note'). Sometimes they follow each other, signifying that the colophon records the act of copying. Usually, *ji* 記 refers to inscribing the colophon, whereas *xie* 寫 to writing the main text. When more than one colophon is featured, there may be additional verbs, such as *du* 讀 ('to read aloud') or *song* 誦 ('to recite'). Sometimes the colophon concludes with a particle such as *er* 耳 ('and that is it').

The above paragraphs exemplify the general structure of student colophons, although in practice individual examples may vary. The students may omit some elements, depending on what they considered important. The most stable items of information are the date, the student's name and the type of action the student performed. Obviously, they may not have always felt it necessary to record they were studying in Dunhuang, as from their perspective this would have been blindingly obvious. In any case, signing one's name as part of a colophon was unquestionably an active expression of ownership, taking both responsibility and credit for having completed the work.

The students' age is of interest, even if the colophons from Dunhuang do not mention it. Researchers often assume they are children but it is not necessarily so. In the colophon of the Astana *Lunyu* with Zheng Xuan's commentary, Bu Tianshou wrote in the colophon that he was twelve *sui* of age. This fits well with the school setting, even if his tender age prompted a number of admiring comments on his literary talent and ability to copy such a long and complex text. Unfortunately, none of the student manuscripts from Dunhuang specifies the age of students. Erik Zürcher attributed manuscripts with rudimentary exercises to small children, offering a vivid description of their work: 'Combined with the known age of many beginners—five or six years—they move readers by the picture they evoke: tip of the tongue protruding; a tiny hand clutching an

unwieldy writing brush.'[225] He may, of course, be correct about some manuscripts but it is also likely that some students were older.

Manuscript P.3620, bearing the colophon of Zhang Yichao, the first military commissioner of the Guiyijun state, offers a telling example of how one may be led astray when assuming students to be children. The colophon appears after an 'Untitled song' 無名歌 and states that the text was 'copied by the student Zhang Yichao on the twenty-fifth day of the third month of the *wei* year' 未年三月廿五日學生張議潮寫. The year is given in terms of the twelve-year cycle, corresponding to the Year of the Goat. Scholars have commonly equated this with the year 815, primarily because at this time Zhang Yichao would have been sixteen or seventeen years old and thus of suitable student age.[226] Twelve years earlier he would have been too young and twelve years later, no longer a child.[227] Yet, Zhang Xiuqing argues that the *wei* year here might refer to 851 when Zhang Yichao was already fifty-two or fifty-three years old.[228] She explains that, on the one hand, the copying of such types of secular texts was not in vogue until after the end of the Tibetan period (i.e. 848). On the other, contrary to earlier assumptions, the custom of recording dates using the twelve-year cycle was not limited to the Tibetan period and continued well into the Guiyijun period. Accordingly, the word *xuesheng* ('student') signified his status in a given context and had nothing to do with his age. Whether or not this was indeed the case with Zhang Yichao, we should not automatically assume that all students associated with monasteries were children.[229]

Occasionally a student identifies himself as a child, as seen in the colophon of manuscript BD06258, in which 'the student boy Tang Wenying' 學生童子唐文英 dedicates the merits from copying the *Guanyin sutra* to his ailing younger

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225 Zürcher 1989, 36. One detail to be corrected in Zürcher's description is that students of the period in question would have been holding a pen, and not a brush.

226 Soymié et al. 1991, 110; Li Zhengyu 1986a, 41; Li Zhengyu 1987, 38; Zhang Yanqing 2005, 89. Ikeda 1990, 402 suggests that the manuscript dates to the early ninth century. Mair 1981, 32 dates the *wei* year to 923, evidently not connecting this Zhang Yichao with the military commissioner.

227 Zhang Yichao's date of birth is unknown, but Zhang Huaishen's stele 張淮深碑, which survives in manuscript copies, states that he was 74 *sui* when he died in 872. This allows us to calculate the year he was born. For the text of the stele, see Fujieda 1964.

228 Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 14.

229 We find a comparable example in the *Tang zhiyan* 唐摭言 (*juan* 10, 112), a collection of anecdotes by Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870–940), which describes how a certain Duan Wei 段維, still illiterate at the age of forty, was suddenly overcome with a desire to study. He went to a monastery where he first learned poems and then was given the *Xiaojing*, all of which he mastered very quickly.

sister.[230] The student presumably stated that he was a boy to distinguish himself from those who were not. Typically the colophons do not provide enough information to determine the student's age but we should not automatically conclude they were children. Nor should we assume that the purpose of studying at a monastery limited to acquiring basic literacy skills, for there may well have been other motivations of which we are not aware.

Last but not least, the colophons contain very little information on students' gender, other than the term *xuelang*, in which the component *lang* 郎 on the whole implies a male individual. Only in very few cases is gender mentioned, as in BD06258 above, in which the student refers to himself as a 'boy' 童子. Elsewhere the students are known historical figures (e.g. Zhang Yichao) whose gender is known. At other times the term *langjun* 郎君 is used, referring to a male of high status. Perhaps the most common type of available information is the student's name, which may be gender specific. While this may often be so, many names do not reveal the gender. None of the cases suggest that the student may have been female.

Another intriguing question is the students' social status. Examples exist of colophons written by members of both ruling families of the Guiyijun period, indicating that at least some of the students were members of the highest echelons of Dunhuang society. Some names appear in other manuscripts, in ledgers and inventories, indicating individuals bearing administrative and organisational responsibilities, which also places them in a higher social strata. The manuscripts show that students studying in monasteries were male members of elite or prominent clans.

2.3 The main text

The colophons provide a record of the circumstances related to copying the main text, which was the primary occasion for the creation of the manuscripts. Although the verso of a manuscript often contains a variety of other texts or textual fragments, the colophon normally pertains to the main text on the recto, which must have been the first text written on the scroll. Colophons, or parts of them, may also appear on the verso, yet these instances seem to be copies imitating the one on the recto and thus only indirectly relate to that side of the scroll. The main texts in such manuscripts permit a number of observations.

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230 Li Zhengyu 1986a, 41, Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 14. This was, of course, a different type of manuscript and a different type of colophon from those executed in an educational setting.

One such observation is that the main text is often written in a more formal script than the colophon, which in practical terms means better handwriting.[231] It is true that the main text itself is, at times, written in an unskilled hand but the hand in the colophon and other miscellaneous notes (e.g. poems, jottings, fragmentary copies of the main colophon, additional colophons) is usually even less skilled. In some cases, the contrast is striking. We may assume the main text to be part of an assignment in which the quality of handwriting mattered, whereas the colophon was an auxiliary notation and not part of the assessed work. The colophon may more accurately reflect how the student normally wrote when not striving to impress. Probably for similar reasons, the miscellaneous notes on the verso of many such scrolls are also typically of lower quality than the main text on the recto. This distinction holds true even if the verso is in several hands.

Another fascinating phenomenon is the limited choice of texts, especially in comparison with the wide range of literature that survives in the Dunhuang corpus. The texts in manuscripts copied by students were relatively short and included specimens from the Classics, vernacular literature, poetry and a variety of primers.[232] Among the most frequent are the *Lunyu* (either with or without commentary), *Xiaojing*, *Qianziwen*, *Taigong jiajiao*, *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu*, *Kaimeng yaoxun* and Du Zhenglun's 杜正倫 (d. 658) *Baixing zhang* 百行章 (Stanzas on the Hundred Conducts).[233] Of these, the last five items are primers whose aim was expressly educational. By contrast, the *Lunyu* and the *Xiaojing* were not primers *per se* but the significance of their core message and their manageable length made them a reliable part of the curriculum.

Manuscripts could also feature poems as the main text. Among the most popular were the poems of Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 (d. ca. 670), the *Qin fu yin* and the *Yanzi fu*.[234] Wang Fanzhi's poems were especially popular and were common even in manuscripts without student colophons. While few of his Buddhist poems survive in transmitted collections, they certainly enjoyed great popularity in Dunhuang.

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231 On the differences between formal vs. quotidian hands in early Chinese manuscripts, see Boltz 2012/2013.

232 For an overview of the texts, see Zürcher 1989, 328, Drège 1991, 85–86, Drège 2003 and Itō 2008, 44–58.

233 For the Dunhuang *Baixing zhang*, see Fukui 1958, Deng Wenkuan 1985, Hu Pingsheng 1990, Zheng and Zhu 2002, 320–348 and Wu Shaowei 2018. For an up-to-date transcription, as well as a translation into Japanese, see Itō 2008, 231–279.

234 On Wang Fanzhi's poems, see Chen 1966, Demiéville 1982 and Kehren 1998/1999. A Chinese language edition is available in Wang and Xiang 2010.

Students copied other texts but those mentioned above were the most common. The choice of primers is obvious, as their *raison d'être* was to facilitate learning. Many referenced a larger pool of cultural knowledge in a convenient and accessible manner. Since the four-character segments of primers such as the *Qianziwen* functioned as mnemonic index cues, by memorising them, students gained access to a much larger body of historical and cultural knowledge.[235] Other texts contained didactic content and transmitted core social values along with teaching the basic repertoire of characters.

It was undoubtedly important that the primers and other works the students copied consisted primarily of common characters and a relatively narrow range of difficult ones. Similarly, their language was usually simple, with perhaps the sole exception of the *Lunyu*, in which the overall cultural significance of the work and its emphatic endorsement of learning surely justified its inclusion in the curriculum. The self-contained nature and brevity of separate sections were also features that deemed the text desirable for educational purposes, despite its archaic language and complicated syntax.[236] These, in turn, would have been resolved by following the teacher's interpretation and not engaging in potential ambiguities.

The length of texts appears to have been equally relevant. The *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* is approximately 1,500 characters long; the *Qin fu yin* 1,666; the *Xiaojing* about 1,800; the *Taigong jiajiao* 2,200; the *Yanzi fu* just under 3,900 and the *Baixing zhang* about 5,700.[237] Their relative brevity was ideal for copying on small to medium size scrolls. Manuscript P.3698, for example, a scroll with a complete copy of the *Xiaojing* and its preface, consists of three sheets of paper, a realistic task for a student to copy within a short period of time. For its 16,200 characters, the *Lunyu* is once again an exception, but students often copied it in smaller sections. Occasionally, a student would copy the entire text including the commentary.

Some manuscripts contain lines with a succession of repeated characters. Clearly, the aim was to practise the writing of individual characters, yet the sequence of characters usually comes from a known text.[238] Among the most

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235 On this point, see Nugent 2018; cf. Galambos 2015b, 271–272.

236 On the love of learning in the *Lunyu*, and its contrast with the Western notion of the love of wisdom (*philosophia*), see Perkins 2006. On the language of the text, see Xiao 2005/2006.

237 These numbers are rough estimates based on unpunctuated copies of the texts. In reality, the numbers would vary depending on whether the students copied the preface and chapter titles.

238 In some cases, the model is an administrative text, such as the verso of BD08172, in which the text copied in this character-by-character manner is an association circular; on these, see

common texts selected for this exercise was the *Qianziwen*. A striking case is manuscript S.2703, which contains long repetitions of sequential characters from the *Qianziwen*. The copying is occasionally interrupted mid-line with a note stating the date (e.g. 'nineteenth day' 十九日), demonstrating that the student practised three to five different characters every day, copying each of these between 30 and 100 times. In at least one instance, a comment from the teacher appears, noting how the student was 'gradually acquiring some skill, deserves to be rewarded' 漸有少能，亦合甄賞.[239] Manuscripts featuring such repetitive exercises do not contain student colophons, and it is almost certain they were written by students at lower stages of learning.

It is obvious that many of the same texts copied by students in Guiyijun Dunhuang were also popular in other regions of East and Central Asia. The primers recovered from Turfan and Khara-khoto, the two sites yielding the largest collections of medieval manuscripts after Dunhuang, overlap to a significant degree with those at Dunhuang. Many similar manuscripts also survive in Japanese collections. The *Qianziwen* and the *Mengqiu* 蒙求 (What Beginners Seek), for example, were among the most important *kanbun* 漢文 primers in premodern Japan, including the period that matches the Guiyijun period.[240] Similarly, manuscript copies of the *Qianziwen* with phonetic glosses in the Tibetan (from Dunhuang) and Uighur (from Turfan) scripts survive, demonstrating the wide influence of the primer among China's neighbours.[241] In addition to extensively copying the *Lunyu*, *Xiaojing* and various primers in Chinese characters, some non-Chinese peoples also translated them into their own languages. Translations of a variety of such texts survive among the rich collection of Tangut material found at the ruins of Khara-khoto.[242]

Finally, a pattern that emerges from this small corpus indicates that students were usually involved in the production of only one manuscript. A rare

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Chapter Four of this book. In manuscript S.1619, the student practised eight consecutive characters from Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) *Lanting jixu* 蘭亭集序 (Preface of Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion).

239 On this manuscript, see Li Zhengyu 1986b. Further examples are cited in Zürcher 1989, 315–319.

240 On the Japanese reception of Chinese primers, and especially the *Qianziwen*, see Chapters 1–2 in Guest 2013. For a comparison of a Dunhuang copy of the *Mengqiu* with early Japanese copies, see Zhang Nali 2002b; for a collection of Japanese manuscripts of the *Mengqiu*, see Hayakawa 1973.

241 On the Tibetan manuscript, see Haneda 1923; on the Uighur ones, Umemura and Zieme 2015; Shōgaito and Yakup 2004. On fragments of Chinese primers from Turfan, see Chō 2006.

242 On primers and related texts in Tangut, see Galambos 2015c, 135–176.

example of the same students signing their names at the end of two manuscripts is scrolls P.2825 and S.705 (mentioned above), recited and copied by Song Wenxian and An Wende approximately a year apart (i.e. 850 and 851). Names may repeat in other documents such as contracts, association circulars or even mural inscriptions but almost never in a manuscript bearing a student colophon. The significance of this phenomenon is that the manuscripts bearing such colophons probably do not represent daily exercises, otherwise we would expect, even in a more or less random sample base, there to be some overlap between manuscripts and students. Instead, surviving colophons record different students writing the same few texts, revealing that copying the main text must have been a significant assignment, perhaps an examination taken at the end of an extended period of study. In this respect, the main text would have served an entirely different purpose from the scribble-like notes on the verso, which will be addressed further on in this chapter.

A related phenomenon is that over a hundred-fifty student colophons survive in Dunhuang, whereas they are a rarity in manuscripts from other sites. Aside from Bu Tianshou's copy of the *Lunyu* from Astana, there appear to be no other examples with colophons resembling the format of those from Dunhuang. On the one hand, this may stem from the motives behind the accumulation of the contents of the library cave and the reasons for its eventual sealing. On the other, the colophon in the Astana *Lunyu*, discovered at a considerable distance from the manuscripts of Guiyijun Dunhuang both in time and space, evidences the pervasiveness of this format throughout Chinese manuscript culture. The same format must have been shared wherever Chinese characters were in use, even if Dunhuang is the only site where these have survived in any number.

2.4 The poems

A number of student manuscripts contain short poems known in modern scholarship as 'student poems' (*xuelang shi* 學郎詩).[243] All of these survive as part of the miscellaneous content on the margins and the verso. These poems never constitute the main text, even though the main text itself may be a longer poem (e.g. *Qin fu yin*, *Yanzi fu*). This raises the question of which pieces qualify to be called a 'student poem'. In a sense, it is a practical label for a variety of verses students wrote in their manuscripts. Yet they do have shared characteristics such as struc-

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243 Marginalia expressing similar sentiments were also present in medieval European manuscripts; see, for example, Avrin 1991, 223–224 and Gehl 1993, 48–51.

ture, usually consisting of four lines, each with four, five, six or seven syllables. In most cases, they did not survive in transmitted sources, unlike the work of Tang poets such as Li Bai 李白 (701–762) or Gao Shi 高適 (ca. 700–765). Some contain colloquial words and phrases and we may even catch glimpses of humour. In terms of their visual appearance, the poems look haphazard and are often, although not always, written in a careless hand. In this respect, they resemble copies of association circulars and contracts randomly scattered on the verso of manuscripts, without ever becoming the main text on the recto.

Initially, modern scholars assumed that the poems were authored by the students themselves, who composed them either out of boredom or just for fun. Researchers considered them to be directly relevant to the process of copying or to the daily life of students. Hu Shih saw them as an expression of the difficulties the copyists were experiencing while copying the manuscripts.[244] Guo Moruo made a similar assertion regarding the Astana *Lunyu* manuscript copied by Bu Tianshou. Examining a student's poem at the end of the scroll, he confidently asserted that it 'had undoubtedly been composed by Bu Tianshou himself'.[245]

Such a view is, of course, not entirely unreasonable as many of the poems relate to the lore of students copying texts. For example, manuscript S.692 with a copy of the *Qin fu yin* and An Yousheng's colophon, dated to 919 (see above), includes a poem written in the same hand as the main text and the colophon. The poem itself reads as follows:

rhymes: x-a-x-a

今日寫書了	Today I have finished copying
合有五斗米	For as much as five pecks of rice
高代不可得[246]	If a high fee is unobtainable
環(還)是自身灾[247]	This is still my own misfortune[248]

The opening line confirms that the poem has direct relevance to the life of someone engaged in copying texts. The five pecks of rice is a literary trope for

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244 Hu Shi 1937, 3–4.

245 Guo Moruo 1972a, 6.

246 代 may be a loan for 貸 ('loan').

247 The character 環, read here as 還, has the signifier 土, rather than 王, and thus may stand for a different word. The word 災 ('disaster, misfortune') is written with the vernacular form 灾, which matches the modern simplified form.

248 Cf. translations in Mair 1981, 45 and Nugent 2010, 48.

meagre payment.[249] The rest of the poem discusses the experience of being paid too little for copying, which seems to imply the person in question copied texts for a living. Yet students copied such manuscripts as part of their studies and not in exchange for payment. For this reason, this specific poem is probably not about a student but rather someone who copied texts for a living, perhaps a professional scribe. It must have been the theme of copying texts that resonated with the student who would have appropriated the poem from a different context. It is even more likely he would not have been the first student to adopt these lines for such a manuscript but was simply following previous examples.

This is the only instance of the poem in Dunhuang, although a variation of the first line ('Today the copying is finished' 寫書今日了) occurs at the beginning of another poem in manuscript BD01199 and, in yet another different poem, in Bu Tianshou's scroll from Astana.[250] Also, the title of Xin Qiji's 辛棄疾 (1140–1207) lyric 'To the tune of *Busuan zi*: When I drink, I do not write' 卜算子 · 飲酒不寫書 seems to allude to the same line, although the rest of the poem is different.[251]

Another example is manuscript P.2621 with a partial copy of a *leishu* 類書 ('encyclopaedia') called *Shisen* 事森 (Forest of Affairs). The colophon is written by a student called Yuanyi 員義 and dates to the *wuzi* 戊子 year, which could refer to 868 or 928. Immediately after the colophon, the same hand as that in the colophon added the following poem:[252]

rhymes: x-a-x-a

寫書不飲酒	Copying and [not allowed to] drink wine
恆日筆頭乾	With the tip of my pen normally being dry (i.e. not composing literature)
且作隨疑過	I am about to create arbitrary mistakes
即與後人看	And leave them to my successors to take care of

The poem seems to express a humorous sentiment that the author copies texts all day without being able to drink wine, yet to compose a real literary work he

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249 A commonly cited example for this meaning is a line by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) who is reported to have said about meeting an inspector that he 'would not bow for the sake of five pecks of rice' 為五斗米折腰; see Tian 2011, 76.

250 For the poem in BD01199, see Xu Jun 2000, 918, for that in the Astana scroll, see Guo Moruo 1972a, 6.

251 Wang Zheng 2004, v. 3, 1195.

252 Cf. Mair 1981, 16.

needs to drink, which is why he will not trouble himself too much with the quality of copying.[253] Although the poem is about copying texts, it probably related to the life of people who copied texts as a job, rather than students in monastery schools. The fact that the student penning the poem is not its author is confirmed by variant versions in other scrolls. The poem survives in four different manuscripts. A copy in manuscript BD08668 is identical in wording to that in P.2621, showing no variation whatsoever. Manuscript P.3305, a copy of the *Lunyu* with He Yan's 何晏 (ca. 190–249) commentary,[254] contains several poems, including a version of this one. The verso of this scroll has a stand-alone colophon from the ninth year of the Xiantong 咸通 reign (868), which was a *wuzi* year.[255] Finally, another version appears in manuscript P.2937, a scroll with the *Taigong jiajiao* dated to the fourth year of the Zhonghe 中和 reign (884).[256]

In terms of variation, the manuscripts exhibit the following discrepancies against P.2621 translated above:

P.2621	寫書不飲酒	恆日筆頭乾	且作隨疑過	即與後人看
P.3305		干 德 宜	有錯	
P.2937		必 干 但 須	有作 □	

Most of the variation involves cases of phonetic or graphic substitution and thus is unrelated to the meaning expressed in the poem: 干 is a commonly attested variant of 乾; 宜 (LMC ŋi) is a substitution for the homophonous 疑 (LMC ŋi); 必 (LMC pjit) is another phonetic substitution for 筆 (LMC pit);[257] 但 is probably a graphic mistake for 且. More difficult to explain is why 須 (LMC syǎŋi) is written in place of 隨 (LMC sɦyj) or 德 (LMC təǎk) in place of 作 (LMC tsak), and it is

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253 Naturally, this suggests a completely different context from the ritualised transcription of Buddhist scriptures, which required not only sobriety but a series of ritual purifications aiming to remove defilement from the scribe's body. For the phenomenon in Japan, see Lowe 2012 and 2017, 36–45.

254 I.e. *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解. The end title in the manuscript, however, calls the text simply *Lunyu*.

255 Of the character 咸 only the right-hand component 戈 is visible but as the character 通 follows it, the only possible reign title can be Xiantong. Furthermore, the ninth year of Xiantong was indeed a *wuzi* year. The date in the colophon refers to the intercalary eleventh month and while technically it was the twelfth month that was intercalary that year, it is nevertheless a reasonably close match.

256 The date is on the verso and may not be directly applicable to the time of writing the *Taigong jiajiao* on the recto and the poem, yet it provides a rough temporal framework for the time when the manuscript was in use.

257 On similar homophonic differences in Tibetan prayers, see van Schaik 2007, 195–196.

likely some of these difficulties are related to the poems being transmitted orally in dialect. Thus 須宜 (LMC syǝ̌-ŋi) and 隨疑 (LMC sɦyj-ŋi) may write the same disyllabic dialectal word not attested otherwise. The only variant relevant to content seems to be 即與 ('and leave them to') vs. 有錯 ('if there are mistakes') in the fourth line, but in fact the meaning of the line remains more or less the same, and thus the variation might simply reflect two different versions as is often the case in this sort of popular verse. Scholars often attribute orthographic instability to the low literacy skills of students, in the assumption they were still at the early stages of their learning career.[258] It is evident, however, that the poems circulated orally, which leads to variability when written down.

The discrepancies attest to the variability of such poems, although there are also striking similarities between some versions. For example, in P.3305 a different hand in fainter ink copied most of the poem once again, replicating it word for word, along with the variant *de* 德.[259] Obviously, this was a copy made from the other on the same manuscript and not an alternate version recorded anew from memory or after hearing. More unexpected is that the versions in P.2621 and BD08668 match perfectly, while being different to all other versions. This suggests that the *wuzi* year in P.2621 may refer to not 868 but 928, which is close in time to the date of BD08668 (i.e. 920). The lesson learnt from these variants is that different students could copy the same poem years and even decades apart. They may have known them in slightly different versions or modified them to fit their own circumstances, but we may be certain they were not the authors. Instead, versions of the poem must have been in common circulation at the time. In fact, the discrepancies between alternate versions may simply be due to predominantly oral circulation.

Another poem that relates to copying or writing is found at the end of scroll P.3192, which contains a copy of the *Lunyu* with He Yan's commentary. The colophon dates to a *bingzi* 丙子 year, and a date on the verso helps to identify this as the year 856. The poem is written in the same hand as the colophon, and possibly the main text. It reads as follows:

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258 Mair 2000, 425–426 writes that the students who wrote the poems 'obviously did not possess full literacy' and, in the case of this particular poem, was 'apparently exacerbated by drunkenness'.

259 This is true until the end of this copy, at which point the student ran out of space and wrote 有錯人 instead of 有錯後人看.

rhymes: x-a-x-a

書後有殘紙	After my writing, some paper remains
不可列 (裂) 將歸	Which must not be torn off to take back home
雖然無手筆	Thus even though I have no calligraphic skills
且作五言詩	I am about to compose pentasyllabic poems

The poem is indeed a pentasyllabic quatrain jotted down on the remaining part of the scroll, which is only a few centimetres wide. Thus, on the surface, it seems the poem references this specific situation. Yet there is another copy of the poem in manuscript P.2947, bearing a colophon dating to a *jiayin* 甲寅 year (894).[260] This copy is identical to the previous one, only written in a much less skilled hand. It is similarly located at the end of the scroll, in the middle of a larger stretch of leftover space, as if trying to fill it out as much as possible. In this respect the content of the text fits its physical appearance (perhaps even better than in P.3192). Nonetheless, there is a large time gap between the two copies, with one dating from 856 and the other from a *jiayin* year (i.e. 894), indicating a thirty-eight year time difference.

Another version of the same poem survives in manuscript P.3322, towards the end of the recto, as the second of three poems. The colophon attributes the copying of the main text, which is an incomplete astrological work, to the student Zhang Daqing 張大慶. Judging from the handwriting, he was probably the individual who wrote everything on this side of the scroll, including the three poems. This version has some minor differences with the other two versions, yet none of these alter the meaning of the lines. Writing 淺 ('shallow'; LMC tsʰianˊ) in place of 殘 ('remainder'; LMC tsfian) is both a graphic and phonetic variation, as is the use of *bie* 別 ('separately'; LMC piat) in place of *lie* 列 (< 裂 'to tear'; LMC liat). Using *shou* 首 ('head'; LMC ṣiwˊ) in place of *shou* 手 ('hand'; LMC ṣiwˊ) in the third line is a phonetic substitution common in other poems as well. The relatively practised handwriting supports the assumption that the substitution may have not been accidental. The colophon dates to a *gengchen* 庚辰 year, which could be 860, 920 or 980.[261] It is highly unlikely that either version was an

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260 Itō 2008, 87 follows Ikeda 1990, 341 in dating the colophon to 834 but the argument dating it from 894 in Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 15 is convincing.

261 Interestingly, the colophon initially began with the *jimao* 己卯 year, but Zhang Daqing crossed it out and changed it to *gengchen*, the following year. As the date is the seventeenth day of the first month, only a couple of weeks into the new year, it is likely that Zhang wrote the old year out of habit but corrected it immediately after realising his mistake.

autograph copy. Rather, they were part of a common lore associated with local manuscript culture and students used them as space fillers.

Xu Jun was the first scholar to point out that the students who wrote the poems on the margins and empty spaces of such manuscripts were not necessarily their authors. He argued that in many cases students recorded existing poems, such as children's songs and nursery rhymes.[262] One of the examples he cited was that of manuscript P.3441, the recto of which had a copy of the *Lunyu* with He Yan's commentary, followed by a colophon dating to 853. The colophon also stated that the text was copied by a certain Gao Yingjian 高英建 who was the adjudicator of students (*xuesheng panguan* 學生判官).[263] The verso of the scroll has a number of smaller bits of texts, including association circulars. Among these notes, upside down in relation to two adjacent circulars, the following poem appears in faded ink:

rhymes: x-a-x-a

白玉雖未寶	Although I have never considered white jade a treasure
黃金我未雖（須）	I have never needed gold [either]
心在千章（張）至（紙）	My mind is set on a thousand sheets of paper
意在萬卷書	My thoughts are focused on ten thousand scrolls of writings

The handwriting is crude, and the poem contains cases of phonetic substitutions that would normally qualify as blatant mistakes, such as writing 章至 (LMC tʂiaŋ tʂiˋ) in place of 張紙 (LMC triaŋ tʂiˊ). One may argue that the poem reflects the aspirations of a student focused on his studies, rejecting the treasures of the world to busy himself with books. As Xu Jun pointed out, a variant of the same poem also survives in manuscript P.2622, the recto of which contains a series of model letters. The verso of this scroll has a stand-alone colophon which dates to the thirteenth year of the Dazhong reign (859), only six years later than the date in P.3441 (i.e. 853). The text itself is unmistakably a variant of the same poem, even if it is in a manuscript of a different student. The most forceful evidence against considering the students to be authors is the survival of yet another version of the poem on a ninth-century stoneware ewer from the

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262 Xu Jun 1994.
263 Cf. Mair 1981, 30.

Changsha Kilns 長沙窯 in southern China.[264] The discrepancies of the latter two versions against that in P.3441 are as follows:[265]

P.3441	白玉雖未寶	黃金我未須	心在千張紙	意在万卷書
P.2622[266]	非為		意□	心存
Changsha kiln	非為　千　不		意念	心藏

Once again, the three versions show some variation, none of which cause a significant change in meaning. Nonetheless, the variants can improve the reading of the first line, as 'I have never considered white jade a treasure' 白玉非為寶 works better than the version seen in P.3441.[267] Interestingly, it is not the two Dunhuang versions that are closest but the copies in P.2622 and on the ewer from the Changsha kiln, which show that the differences are not a function of geographical distance. Indeed, the three versions belong to roughly the same period, yet the inscription on the stoneware ewer comes from southern China, over 2,500 kilometres from Dunhuang. As by the ninth century Dunhuang was not even part of the Tang empire, the poems must have spread to the Northwest some time before Tibetan expansion into the Gansu region in the 780s. The occurrence of the same poem in such geographically distant locations proves that even though the Dunhuang students copied it onto the manuscripts in the ninth century, they were not the ones who composed it. The authorship of the verses remains an open question, even if some of them appear to relate to student life or the experience of copying manuscripts. Additional poems and short phrases on objects from the Changsha Kilns also have parallels with those found on Dunhuang manuscripts, including quotes from primers and poems of

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264 On the Changsha kilns, see Lam 1990.

265 The characters in version in P.3441 are presented here in their correct form, substituting phonetic loans with the intended character.

266 I slightly modify the transcription of the version in P.2622 in Xu Jun 1994, 19, which gives the third line as □竟千張數. High-quality digital photographs make it clear that the second character is 意 (rather than 竟), and the first character is missing altogether. Although the hand is more practised in P.2622 than in P.3441, numerous idiosyncrasies point to a predominantly oral transmission of such poems, as opposed to the main text on the recto. For example, the character 張 uses the component 彳 instead of the standard 弓; the character which I transcribe as 鈙 is probably a variant of 紙. Itō 2008, 86 follows Xu's reading.

267 Thus in P.3441, *sui wei* 雖未 (LMC syj ʋjyjˋ) is probably a phonetic error for *fei wei* 非為 (LMC fjyj yj). Writing 雖 (LMC syj) instead of 非 (LMC fjyj) may involve an intermediate character such as 維/唯/惟 (LMC jyj), which shares the phonetic component with 雖.

Wang Fanzhi.[268] The material confirms that a shared body of mostly non-elite literature was in circulation in southern China and the Hexi region, and possibly elsewhere. This, of course, raises the question whether 'student poems' is an appropriate term, as many of them were originally not connected to student lore. Nevertheless, it may be argued that in the Dunhuang manuscripts they function as student poems, even if they originated elsewhere.

In general, the poems in student manuscripts share a series of traits that bring them together as a group: they have the same or similar rhyme pattern, are located on the margins or verso of scrolls, and are often written in a scruffy hand. Most importantly, they only appear in manuscripts written by students. While some of them indeed seem to relate to student life, the connection is at times tangential at best. The students did not compose the poems but adopted them from an existing pool of verses that circulated orally.

2.5 Palaeographic peculiarities

By examining the physical characteristics of manuscripts with student colophons, we notice that most of them are scrolls, fragments of scrolls or, less commonly, booklets. None of the scrolls are very long so they do not feature a wooden roller.[269] Typically, the recto of a scroll with a student's work only contains a single text, which is followed by a colophon. The verso may include a variety of smaller notes, but these are subsequent additions and postdate the main text on the recto. The paper is also usually of poorer quality, which is common for manuscripts of the Guiyijun period.
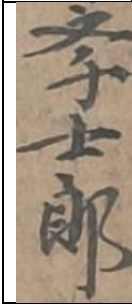
From a palaeographic point of view, one of the conspicuous idiosyncrasies of student colophons is writing the character *xue* 學 ('to study; learning') with the variant 孝, a combination of the components *wen* 文 ('culture; text') and *zi* 子 ('child').[270] As this character occurs in the words *xuelang* and *xueshilang*, it is a common element in the colophons (see Table 4 below). This particular character variant is well attested throughout the medieval period and would have been perfectly legible for literate members of society. Remarkably, it is rare in the main text of student manuscripts but common in the colophons.

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268 Liu Jingmin 2002; also, McMullen 2013, 84.
269 Among the exceptions are manuscripts P.2808 and P.3666, both of which have thin wooden rollers.
270 On such semantic compound structures, see Galambos 2011, 401–403.

Tab. 4: Variant forms of the character 學 in the words *xueshilang* and *xuelang* in student colophons.

P.3691	P.3833	P.2842 bis	P.2808	P.2808	P.2621	S.728

The examples in the table show that the character 學 is commonly written as 孝. In P.2808, however, it is written twice as 斉, a combination of the components *wen* 文 ('culture; text') and *er* 耳 ('ear'). Although semantically this combination perhaps makes even more sense for expressing the concept of learning, this form is a well-attested variant of the character *qi* 齊 ('even, complete').[271] It is most likely that these two instances of the character are miswritten. Both lines in which they occur are in the same hand and thus the two forms should probably be regarded as errors specific to this student, rather than a hitherto unrecorded variant of the character 學. The mistake is peculiar as the student clearly tried to emulate the variant 孝 but confused it with an analogous variant (i.e. 斉) of a different character (i.e. 齊). This indicates that the student was not entirely familiar with either form and did not use them under ordinary circumstances. His attempt to write the unfamiliar variant was likely due to an awareness of the custom or convention of using such variants in student colophons.
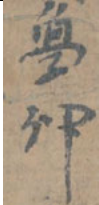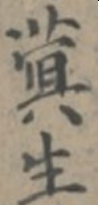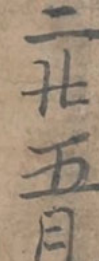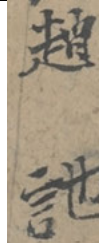
As mentioned earlier, the colophon in manuscripts with student colophons is often written in a scruffy hand, much more so than the main text. As the text copied was probably part of a formal exam-type assessment, the students appear to pay more attention to their handwriting. We see the same phenomenon in other types of manuscripts (e.g. devotional copies of scriptures), in which the colophons are often in a careless hand, but the main text is not. This corresponds to the dis-

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271 In fact, this variant of the character 齊 features in a list of such semantic compound characters in manuscript S.388, which is a collection of shorter lexicographic works. Incidentally, the same list also includes the form 孝 as a variant of the character 學. Manuscript S.388 has generated a wealth of interesting research; for some of the recent studies, see Nishihara 2015, Zhu Fengyu 2018 and Ikeda 2018.

tinction between formal and informal ways of writing, emphasised by scholars working on manuscript traditions.[272] Of course, there are also cases in which the main text and the colophon are written by different individuals.

As an illustration of the rudimentary level of writing skills manifested in the scribble-like notes in some of the manuscripts written by students, see the examples in Table 5 below. In manuscript P.3369, the word *xuelang* 學郎 in one of the colophons would be completely illegible without the context. Manuscript P.3305 includes a poem, in which the character 學 in the word *xueshenglang* 學生郎 is also unusual. Based on the quality of handwriting and the large number of phonetic substitutions in the poem, it is tempting to classify this form as an outright mistake, which would also explain why it does not occur in pre-modern dictionaries.[273] Yet variants of this form appear in similar manuscripts, such as P.2721 in the same table, suggesting that this may not have been an idiosyncratic error.[274]

Tab. 5: Basic orthographic problems in colophons and scribbles written by students.

P.3369	P.3305	P.2721	P.2681	P.3910	P.3910	P.3757

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272 E.g. Boltz 2012/2013.

273 To my knowledge, no dictionary, traditional or modern, includes these unusual variants for the character 學, even though they occur in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

274 In fact, the form of the character 學 in P.3369 bears more similarity to this unusual form than the standard character.

A more obvious mistake appears in an unfinished note at the beginning of manuscript P.2681, in which the *Lunyu* is the main text. In the note, the date is written as 二廿五日, a blatant mistake since the character 廿 is a ligature standing for the word 'twenty'.[275] Adding the redundant character 二, the student showed he may not have been completely familiar with how the ligature worked.[276] The next two examples are from the back cover of codex P.3910, both featuring serious orthographic problems. The first phrase reads 'Zhao recorded' 趙記 but the character 記 is written as 訑, that is, a combination of the components 言 and 也. The *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑒 records this form as a variant of the character 詑 (*tuo*, 'to cheat'), whereas the *Yupian* 玉篇 lists it as a standard character with the same meaning (i.e. 'to cheat') but different pronunciation (i.e. *yi*). It is apparent that what we see in the manuscript is a mistake made by someone whose writing skills were as yet undeveloped. The quality of handwriting in the booklet seems to corroborate this assumption. The second phrase from the same manuscript reads 'wrote it with his right hand' 右手書之 but the words 'wrote it' 書之 are written as a single character, as if the character 之 was the component 疋 at the bottom. Once again, the error indicates an individual of minimal writing skills. Finally, the last example from manuscript P.3757 shows that the first character of the word *yanzi* 鷰子 ('swallow'), a variant of *yan* 燕, is written in an almost indecipherable way. In manuscripts P.2681 and P.3910 the characters were probably not written by the person copying the main text but an even less experienced student who made the notes at a later point in time. Nonetheless, the examples provide evidence of the palaeographic peculiarities common in student manuscripts.

2.6 Scribbles on the verso

In addition to the literary texts students copied formally, the manuscripts often contain fragments of pragmatic texts related to social and economic matters. Occasionally complete documents exist but, more often than not, only the first lines or words are present. Similar texts also survive among the Dunhuang manuscripts as documents used by the local population in the course of their daily life. Naturally, these are invaluable for the study of the social and economic history of the region. Distinguishing the copies made by students is usually relatively straightforward, but

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275 The character *nian* 廿 is written here as a variant of the form 卄, which was common in medieval manuscript culture; see Huang Zheng 2005, 291. Of course, the form 卄, which is essentially a doubling of the character 十 ('ten'), is in full accord with the origin of the character.

276 The character *ri* 日 is written here in a way that resembles the character 月, a phenomenon relatively common in manuscripts from this period.

in some cases the difference is not immediately apparent. Fragmentary copies of such documents usually appear in manuscripts that contain other texts copied by students, which, by default, signify a connection with educational practices.

The co-occurrence of educational texts and fragments of social and economic documents on the same physical manuscript is a consistent pattern that merits closer examination. One of the aims of such an exercise would be to identify additional manuscripts that originate from educational settings, for this would have obvious implications for the function of those copies. Clearly, students were responsible for the production of many more manuscripts than is normally assumed. We are therefore compelled to re-examine some texts and consider whether they should be treated as actual documents or as copies made by students for the purpose of practice. The latter group is also a reminder that it is sometimes more appropriate to define texts in terms of their function, rather than genre or content.

While the number of manuscripts featuring student colophons is limited, the presence of texts commonly copied by students may link further items to learning practices.[277] Some of these will inevitably be of a different origin but some will feature visual patterns confirming an affiliation with students. For example, Dunhuang students often copied the *Xiaojing*, which had an established connection with learning throughout the medieval period. The text is particularly suitable for this purpose as it has a relatively limited repertoire of common characters and, at the same time, propagates the value of filial piety, a fundamental virtue of traditional society. Moreover, its brevity makes it an ideal text for copying.

More than thirty manuscripts of the *Xiaojing* survive in Dunhuang, including versions with (e.g. P.3274, P.3378, P.3382, P.3816) and without (e.g. P.3369, P.4897, S.3993, S.5821) commentary.[278] Some are complete, but damaged or fragmentary copies also exist. In addition, there are many other scrolls that contain the title (on the verso), without the text itself being present anywhere on the scroll. While it is certain that not all copies of the *Xiaojing* can be attributed to students, some of them have colophons to this effect, attesting to the popularity of the text in such a context.

The majority of the surviving Dunhuang copies of the *Xiaojing* do not have student colophons, which in principle makes their connection to student life uncertain. However, when these manuscripts are compared to those containing colophons, some display similarities indicating a shared background. In some cases, the manuscripts are visually comparable to the ones written by students, featuring similar

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277 For a similar effort, see Mair 1981.

278 A collection of facsimile reproductions of the *Xiaojing* manuscripts from Dunhuang is available in Chen Tiefan 1977. Cf. Hayashi 1976, Chen Tiefan 1978 and Zhu Yuqi 2010. For an overview of relevant Dunhuang manuscripts in a Western language, see Drège 2014c.

handwriting, size and layout. In other cases, the scribbles and notes on the verso resemble those in manuscripts produced by students. Although often seen as random and inconsequential, the scribbles collectively form a pattern that may contribute to our understanding of how students used such manuscripts.

2.6.1 Manuscript S.728

Manuscript S.728 can be examined as a practical example. This is a 180 cm scroll featuring an almost complete copy of the *Xiaojing* written in a relatively good hand on a stained, yellowish paper. The scroll currently consists of four full sheets of paper and a largely missing (i.e. torn) fifth one at the very beginning. Since only two lines are missing from the opening portion of the *Xiaojing*, the first sheet must have contained quite a bit of additional text. The extant sheets comprise 23–24 lines of text, and it is likely that the first sheet would have been of the same size, which means that the lost text was about 19–20 lines long. This amount of paper would comfortably fit the 15–17 lines of the 'Preface', with the same character size and spacing.[279]

Although the end of the scroll is complete, the left edge of the last sheet has a narrow strip of discoloration, revealing that it must have been glued to something else (Fig. 26). As additional sheets of paper would have been glued from the other side, and with a narrower overlap, the darker paper must be a trace of a no longer present wooden roller. In turn, the roller suggests that the scroll was not only an assignment the student submitted as assessed work but also a manuscript that remained in use for a certain amount of time. The roller facilitated the day-to-day handling of the scroll and protected it from damage.

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279 An example of such a fragment is P.4628, which contains the beginning of the preface of the *Xiaojing* but not the text itself. The fragment, however, is in an entirely different hand and so it is not the missing portion of S.728.
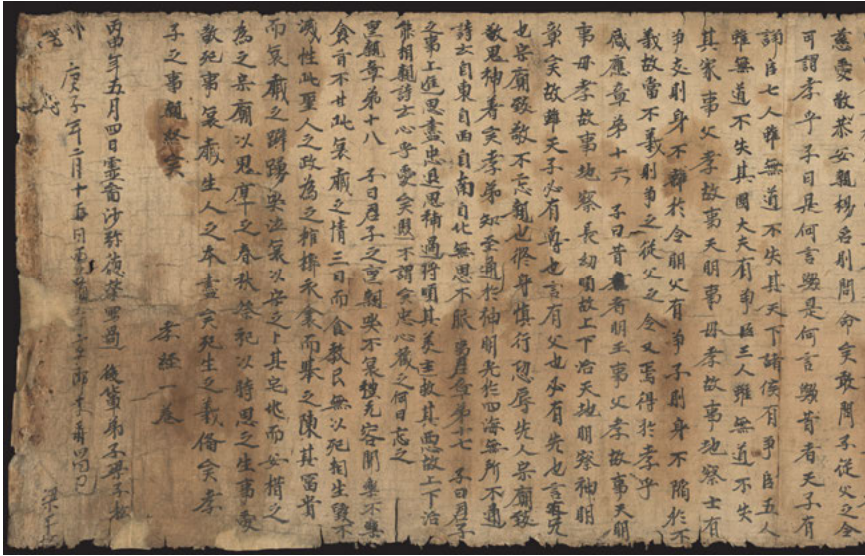
Fig. 26: The end of recto of manuscript S.728 with the two successive colophons. (30 × 180 cm; The British Library)

The *Xiaojing* ends with an end title, which is followed by two consecutive colophons, each on a separate line. The second of these is indented and may or may not be in a different hand.[280] The two colophons read as follows:

丙申年五月四日靈圖沙彌德榮寫過　　後輩弟子梁子松

Copying completed on the fourth day of the fifth month of the *bingshen* year (936) by Derong, *śrāmaṇera* of the Lingtu [Monastery]　　　Junior disciple Liang Zisong.[281]

庚子年二月十五日靈圖寺孝郎李再昌巳 (記)　　　　　　　　　梁子松

Recorded on the fifteenth day of the second month of the *gengzi* year (940) by Li Zaichang, student of the Lingtu Monastery.[282]　　　　　　　　　Liang Zisong

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280 Above the indented second colophon, the word *xuelang* 孝郎 is written sideways, at an angle. It was followed by one more character which is no longer visible. To the left of the beginning of the second colophon are another two—unfortunately illegible—characters in the same hand, similarly, written sideways.

281 Translation based on Mair 1981, 46.

282 Ishihama Juntarō 石濱純太郎 (Hayashi 1976, 37), Mair 1981, 46 and Drège 2014c, 41 read the name as Li Erchang 李爾昌, although Mair indicates his uncertainty regarding the second character by adding a question mark after it. Others (e.g. Ikeda 1990, 477, Itō 2008, 46) correctly read it as Li

As the second colophon shows, the name Liang Zisong appears once more, on its own, on a separate line, near the bottom of the scroll.[283] It is uncertain what it signifies in this place but it is the name of the same student named at the end of the first colophon. Another problem concerns the meaning of the character 巳 at the end of the second colophon. In my translation, I read it as the verb 'to record', normally written with the character 記 or 紀, which would be consistent with the format of colophons in general.

In both colophons, the date appears in the cyclical format and is thus ambiguous. Within the Guiyijun period, when manuscripts with student colophons were in vogue, the *bingshen* year could refer to 876, 936 or 996, while the *gengzi* year, to 880, 940 or 1000. Of these, the dates 936 and 940 are the most probable, primarily because Derong is also mentioned in a commemorative inscription from 950 (P.3390), by this time with the title Master of Discipline (*shimen falü* 釋門法律).[284] Significantly, the dates in the two colophons are four years apart. Assuming that the first date records the actual time of copying the *Xiaojing*, we may ponder the significance of the second colophon from four years later. Clearly, it does not refer to the act of copying, it merely states the second colophon itself dates to a particular time. The question is was prompted Li Zaichang to add his colophon to the first one.

Regarding the identity of students, the two colophons mention three persons, each with a different title or rank. Derong, who did the copying, is a novice monk (*shami* 沙彌, i.e. *śrāmaṇera*) of the Lingtu Monastery. This is a rare instance in which the student is not a secular person but a member of the monastic establishment. He omits the word 'monastery' (*si* 寺) but this poses no difficulty for interpreting the colophon. Liang Zisong, whose name appears after the first part of the colophon, is a junior (lit. 'later generation') disciple (*houbei*

Zaichang 李再昌. In Guiyijun manuscripts, the character 爾 most often appears in its non-standard form as 尒 (Huang Zheng 2005, 103), whereas the character 再 is commonly written in a way resembling that in the colophon (ibid., 532). In addition, the given name Zaichang occurs, with other surnames or by itself, in many other manuscripts from Dunhuang (e.g. S.2894, S.8426).

283 Itō 2008, 46 follows Ishihama Juntarō (Hayashi 1976, 37) in reading the last character in the name (*song* 松) as the verb *jiao* 校 ('to edit, proofread'), no doubt in an attempt to locate the verb and make sense of the note. However, the same name features in the first colophon and, as will be seen below, also appears on the verso of the manuscript, confirming that the last character here is indeed *song* 松.

284 This inscription survives in manuscript P.3390. Derong was a brother of Zhang Yingrun 張盈潤 who had also studied in the Lingtu Monastery, as seen from a colophon dated to 827 (P.5011); Chen Zuolong 1978, 75; Li Zhengyu 1987, 35–36. For this reason, Derong (whose secular surname was Zhang) cannot be the same person as Liang Zisong.

dizi 後輩弟子) with a non-monastic name. Finally, the person who recorded the second colophon is Li Zaichang, a student of the Lingtu Monastery. The use of the word *guo* 過 is somewhat unusual, acting as a resultative complement that denotes the completion of an action.

In its current form, the scroll presents a complex arrangement of texts and notes of different periods. The verso contains numerous shorter notes, which at first glance appear to be random scribbles without any particular order or significance. Some of these textual fragments are upside down in relation to others, amplifying the impression of it all being haphazard and disconnected. Some consist of merely a few characters that are difficult to interpret without context. The first string of text at the beginning of the verso reads:

五月五日天中節　一切惡

On the fifth day of the fifth month, during the Tianzhong Festival, all bad...

Although the line ends mid-sentence, it is long enough to recognise the beginning of an incantation known from transmitted sources and several Dunhuang manuscripts. The complete text appears on the verso of manuscript S.799, a two metre long scroll with a superb copy of the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 (Old-Text Version of the Exalted Documents).[285] The incantation itself expresses a wish that all bad things would be extinguished on the day of the Tianzhong (i.e. Duanwu 端午) Festival.[286] The full version reads as follows:

五月五日天中節一切惡事盡消滅急急如律令

On the fifth day of the fifth month, during the Tianzhong Festival, may all bad things completely vanish, at once and immediately, as if according to statutes and ordinances!

A slightly different variant of the same incantation occurs on the verso of manuscripts BD03106. This version reads:

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285 This is an incomplete section of the so-called 'Old-Text' version of the *Shangshu*, which features a preface and commentary ostensibly written by Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d. c. 100). Of the 51 copies of the *Shangshu* that survived in the Dunhuang library cave, 49 belong to this version and two to Lu Deming's 陸德明 *Shangshu shiwen* 尚書釋文 (Textual Explanations of the Exalted Documents); Xu Jianping 2018, 158–159. There is also a Tibetan manuscript (Pelliot tibétain 986) with a loose translation of the text; Coblin 1991 refers to it as a 'paraphrase'.
286 Xu Jun 2000, 190.

五月五日天中節赤口亦（惡）舌自消滅急々如令

On the fifth day of the fifth month, during the Tianzhong Festival, may the red mouths and evil tongues disappear of themselves, at once and immediately, as if according to ordinances!

The 'red mouths and evil tongues' is a reference to the potentially harmful effect of sorcerers, perhaps also indicating talk that is toxic and malicious.[287] Additional variants are also known from both manuscripts and transmitted texts.[288] The formula 'at once and immediately, as if according to statutes and ordinances' 急急如律令 was originally an expression used in official documents during the Han dynasty but later became the closing part of some Daoist incantations.[289] As the fragment in S.728 includes the first two characters of the second segment, it is certain that it refers to the version preserved in S.799 and not the one in BD03106, in which the second segment is different.

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287 Mollier 2007, 91–92. The expression 'evil tongue' 惡舌 is written here with the character *yi* 亦 ('also'), which is a mistake. Xu Jun 2000, 857 reads the character 亦 in BD03106 as an error for 赤, resulting in the phrase 'red tongue'. Moreover, he transcribes the very end of the incantation as 蔥蔥{女+舍}, which he interprets as a corruption of the characters 急急如; the manuscript, however, writes the phrase 急々如令 correctly. What Xu reads as the single character {女+舍} is in fact the characters *ru* 如 and *ling* 令 written side by side horizontally. The unusual arrangement is simply the result of the writer running out of space and writing the second character to the right of the first one.

288 Zhang Xiaohong 2019, 22. An unfinished fragment also appears on the verso of manuscript P.3812.

289 Miller 2008; cf. Mollier 2007 and 2008; Sakade 2003.

Fig. 27: The incantation of the Tianzhong Festival on the verso of manuscripts S.728 (*Xiaojing*; left) and S.799 (*Guwen Shangshu*; right).

Fig. 27 shows this line of text in S.728 (left) and S.799 (right) side by side. The hand in the first manuscript is relatively unskilled, whereas the one in the second is more confident, even though the line itself is not entirely straight.[290] In S.799, a different hand began copying the characters 五 and 天 but stopped after five characters. This was probably not an aborted writing exercise but a note reminding the student what he was supposed to practise. The unfinished incantation in S.728 may have been a similar notation telling the student what the

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290 There are, of course, also some problems with spacing, as it is visibly inconsistent in this line. Yet the characters themselves are relatively well written.

assignment was. He made a note of what he had to do and then completed the exercise itself on a different sheet of paper. The fact that in both manuscripts the incantation appears at the very beginning of the verso points to a comparable context.

It is significant that the first colophon on the recto of S.728 dates to the fourth day of the fifth month, that is, the eve of the Tianzhong Festival, which fell on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. Therefore, the student most likely wrote the fragmentary incantation at the beginning of the verso of this scroll either on the night before the festival or on the day of the festival, when the second colophon was still absent. In this way, the final form of the manuscript took shape over the course of several years and students added notes to the scroll in an irregular manner, moving from one side to the other. This does not mean it was done randomly, only that it is difficult now to reconstruct the chronological order in which the scroll arrived at its current form. The incantation of the Tianzhong Festival with a known date is a rare opportunity to document some of the stages in the formation of such manuscripts.

Continuing further along the verso of S.728, the words 'This is Futong incurring another person's anger...' 此者富通得人憎 appear. The characters seem to be in the same, or a similar, hand as the unfinished incantation to the right. The words provide no context but Futong 富通 is without doubt a personal name. In fact, a certain Zhang Futong 張富通 is mentioned in a solitary colophon on the verso of manuscript P.3698, a copy of the *Xiaojing* examined above.[291] Significantly, the name occurs in a colophon dated to the *gengzi* year (940), which matches the year of the second colophon written by Li Zaichang on the recto of S.728. Naturally, the *Xiaojing*, the context, the given name and the year all point to a connection between the two manuscripts, indicating that the person named Futong here is probably the Zhang Futong mentioned in P.3698.

Returning to S.728, the notes and scribbles on the verso also contain bits of texts relating to the recto. A case in point are a few phrases from the *Xiaojing*, as well as the names Li Zaichang and Liang Zisong. Indeed, while Liang Zisong is named in the first colophon on the recto as a 'junior disciple' 後輩弟子, on this side he is called 'the student Liang Zisong' 孝郎梁子松. Another fragment of text says *fengchi xiuzao dawang* 奉敕修造大王,[292] in which the term *dawang* 大王

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291 A different person called An Futong 安富通 appears on the verso of manuscript S.1478 in a contract copied as a writing exercise.

292 The character 造 is not entirely clear in the manuscript, which is why Hao Chunwen (1993, 77) initially transcribed the line as 奉敕修□大王. My own transcription follows the later reading in Hao and Shi 2003, 579, which seems to match what is visible in the manuscript.

('great king') most likely referred to Cao Yijin 曹議金 (r. 914–935), the first ruler of Dunhuang from the Cao family. We know that the term *dawang* was used in Dunhuang in reference to Cao Yijin from 931 and this remained a common way of referring to him until 964, long after his death in 935.[293] This time frame fits perfectly with the dates of the colophons on the recto (i.e. 936 and 940), and provides supporting evidence for interpreting the cyclical signs as these particular years.

The verso of the scroll also contains a four-line poem about a student involved in copying texts as a form of exercise. As can be seen on the left side of Fig. 28, the text is arranged in a transparent layout clearly separating each seven-character line as a means of emphasizing the poem's parallel structure. The text reads as follows:

孝郎大歌(哥)張富千，一下趁到孝經邊。
太公家教多不殘，甕獽兒實鄉偏。

The student, big brother Zhang Fuqian,
All of a sudden goes rushing off to his *Xiaojing*,
His *Taigong jiajiao* is not incomplete at all,
He is a clever fellow, truly an eccentric.[294]

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293 Hao Chunwen 1993, 77, quoting Rong Xinjiang 1990 on the appellations of the military commissioners of Dunhuang during the Guiyijun period.
294 I adopt, with slight modification, the translation from Mair 1981, 46 but follow the transcription in Xu Jun 2000, 855.
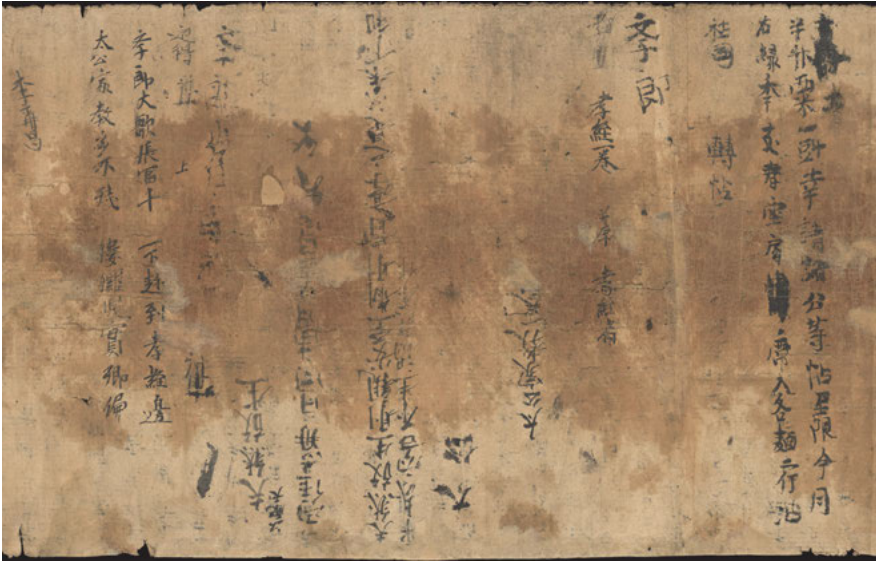
Fig. 28: Detail from the verso of manuscript S.728.

The last line of the poem is difficult to interpret in its current form, not least due a missing syllable. The word *louluo* 獲玀, which Mair translates as 'clever fellow', is a term written in the Dunhuang manuscripts with a variety of characters (e.g. 婁羅, 樓玀, 嘍囉, 僂玀), signalling that it may have been mostly outside the realm of written language or that it is a non-Chinese word. Initially, the word seems to have mostly had a positive connotation but in time it also acquired a pejorative meaning.[295] The name Zhang Fuqian does not occur anywhere else in the manuscript. As seen above, the verso contains a fragmentary reference to a certain Futong, who may have had the surname Zhang, but there is not enough evidence to connect the two names. In fact, as the constituent characters of Fuqian mean 'rich' + 'thousand', the name may have functioned as a 'speaking

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295 On the term's meaning and origin, see Xu Shiyi 2005. An interesting case where the word is used to translate a foreign term is found in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, which mentions that the words *han julu* 含俱録 in the title of Mouyu Qaghan 牟羽可汗 (r. 759–780) meant *louluo* 婁羅 in Chinese (*Jiu Tang shu*, 5204). In this, *han julu* 含俱録 (LMC: xɦiam kɦiyǎˋ lywk) is probably a scribal error for *he julu* 合俱録 (LMC: xɦiap kɦiyǎˋ lywk), which in turn stands for *alp külüg* ('brave and famous'); see Hamilton 1988, 97 and Rybatzki 2000, 238. Sam van Schaik notes (personal communication) the existence of a similar Tibetan word, *le-lo*, meaning a 'lazy person'.

name' designating students of wealthy families. The Zhang clan was among the most affluent families in the region, even after the Cao dynasty took over. Although this is merely a hypothesis, the poem may well have referred to such students in general or perhaps someone in particular without using his real name.[296]

As the name Li Zaichang appears next to this poem, Xu Jun suggests he may have been its author.[297] But the name is in a different hand and at an angle to the vertical lines of the poem and thus probably does not directly relate to the quatrain. Alongside the variety of textual fragments on the verso of the scroll are a series of titles in a seemingly arbitrary randomness. In total, the verso contains the following titles, written in at least two different hands:

Dasheng baifa mingmenlun kaizong yiji 大乘百法明門論開宗義記
Xiaojing 孝經
Taigong 太公
Taigong jiajiao yi juan 太公家教一卷
shesi zhuantie 社司 轉帖
Xiaojing yi juan bing xu 孝經一卷　並序
shesi zhuantie 社司 轉帖

The titles occur in this order but not one after the other, as there are other bits of texts or stretches of empty space between them. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, some are upside down in relation to others, so they do not appear as a list but are scattered without any discernible order. The *Dasheng baifa mingmenlun kaizong yiji* was a Buddhist text composed, based on Faxiang 法相 doctrine, by the monk-scholar Tankuang 曇曠 while staying at Dunhuang during the Tibetan period.[298] This is followed by the title of the *Xiaojing*, repeated later with the addition of the words *yi juan* 一卷 ('in one *juan*') and *bing xu* 並序 ('plus the preface'). Another title is the *Taigong jiajiao*, a primer commonly found in similar manuscripts. Though it is not surprising to see this title on a scroll created by students, there is no sign of the text itself. But the title appears twice, once in full form and another time as a two-character abbreviation. As witnessed above,

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296 Nonetheless, the given name Fuqian is attested in Dunhuang manuscripts as part of real names, e.g. Ma Fuqian 馬富千 (P.2944), Linghu Fuqian 令狐富千 (P.2953).
297 Xu Jun 2000, 85.
298 On Tankuang and his teachings, see Ueyama 1964, Yamaguchi 1965, Meinert 2007, 248–251 and Chō 2016.

the titles of the *Xiaojing* and *Taigong jiajiao* appear together in the student poem on the same side of this manuscript, attesting to their close connection with student life in general, and perhaps with these students in particular.

The third title appearing on the verso of the scroll is not really a title but the words *shesi zhuantie* 社司 轉帖, which is the heading of circulars issued by the management of local associations. There are two instances of this heading on the verso of our scroll, both written apart from other bits of text.[299] The one near the centre of the verso is followed by two lines of text from the body of the circular, which allow us to establish that the circular reads in vertical columns from left to right, in contrast to the usual right-to-left sequence of Chinese lines. The other heading near the end of the verso is only followed by a single character from the text of the circular but as it appears to the right of the heading, it is enough to show that, once again, the lines read from left to right. Similar examples of unorthodox ways of writing Chinese characters will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.

2.6.2 Manuscripts S.707 and P.3698

The next example is manuscript S.707, another *Xiaojing* scroll written by a student. The beginning of the scroll is missing but the end is complete. The main text and the colophon appear to be written in the same hand, although the colophon is in slightly smaller characters and fainter ink. It reads as follows (Fig. 29):

同光三年乙酉歲十一月八日三界寺學仕郎郎君曹元深寫記

Record of copying on the eighth day of the eleventh month of the *yiyou* year, the third of the Tongguang reign (925), by the *langjun* Cao Yuanshen, student at the Sanjie Monastery.

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299 Traces of the character 社 seem to be present in two more instances but are too faint to allow a confident reading.
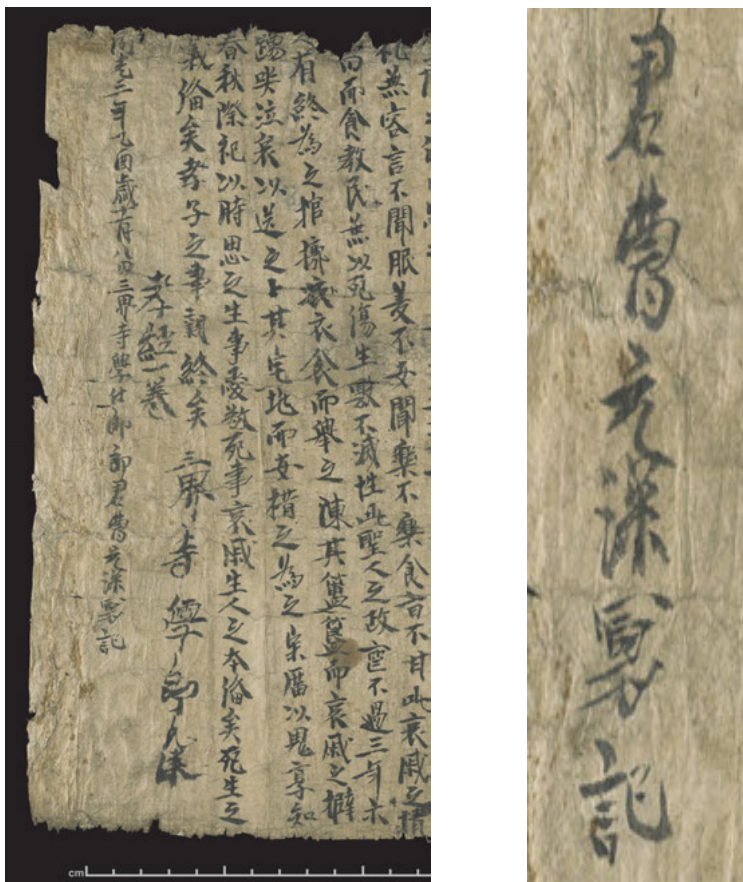
Fig. 29: The end of the *Xiaojing* and the colophon in manuscript S.707 (left), with the name of Cao Yuanshen enlarged (right). (29.2 × 67.5 cm; The British Library)

The first remarkable detail about this colophon is that it was written by Cao Yuanshen 曹元深 (d. 944) who was to become the ruler of Dunhuang, fourteen years later, in 939. The term *langjun* 郎君 ('young lord, young scholar') seems to signify social rank that elevates Cao Yuanshen above other students who did not use such designations. Cao's case immediately provides some context to the identity and social status of students studying at Buddhist monasteries, signalling that they were from an elite background, belonging to the region's prominent families. The preservation of their scrolls in a monastic library may be due to the monaster-

ies wishing to maintain a bond with the families.[300] Providing education to the political elite certainly helped ensure the goodwill of these clans, especially once the students took on leading roles in society. The manuscripts would have functioned as tokens of the bond between the monasteries and political power.

The verso of the scroll contains a number of scribble-like notes similar to those on the verso of S.728, some only a character long, others longer. All are in the same hand, which could be that of Cao Yuanshen. The notes mainly comprise random snippets taken from the colophon on the verso, and multiple instances of the beginning of a poem about a *langjun*. This poem survives in full in other manuscripts (e.g. S.5711), here only fragments from the beginning are present. The longest segment is the first line: 'the young scholar must establish himself' 郎君須立身.[301] At the end of these fragments the note 'scroll written by the *langjun* Cao Yuanshen' 郎君曹元深書卷 and in the next line the name 'the *langjun* Yuanshen' 元深郎君 (Fig. 30) appear.
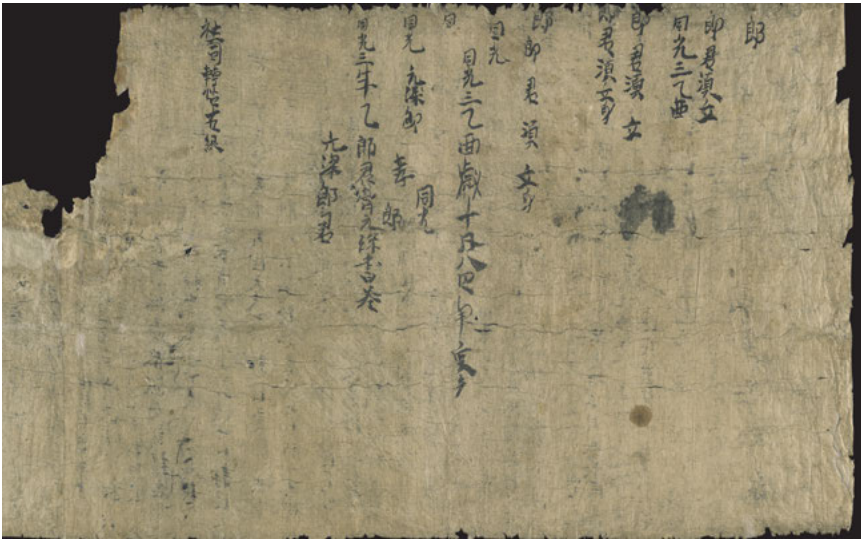
Fig. 30: Section of the verso of manuscript S.707.

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301 The poem seems refer to the sons of prominent families copying the *Xiaojing*. Indeed, the poem itself alludes to the following line in that text: 'Filial piety begins with serving one's parents, continues with serving one's ruler and ends with establishing oneself' 夫孝，始於事親，中於事君，終於立身.

Amidst these fragments of texts is the character *xiao* 孝 ('filial piety'), probably an abbreviated reference to the *Xiaojing*. Finally, the last line of text on the left, standing apart from everything else, is the beginning of an association circular, which breaks off after six characters. Overall, such seemingly random bits of text establish a clear connection with the *Xiaojing* in Cao Yuanshen's hand on the recto. An obvious similarity with S.728 above is that the verso contains two of the same titles (i.e. *Xiaojing* and *shesi zhuantie*).

Yet another example of a *Xiaojing* manuscript in a student's hand is manuscript P.3698. Due to damage to the colophon, the name of the student is missing, all that can be read is that he copied the text in a *jihai* 己亥 year, which probably corresponds to 939.[302] Additional support for this date comes from Zhang Futong's colophon on the verso, dated to the *gengzi* year. *Gengzi* is the following year in the sixty-year cycle and, as mentioned above, in this place must have signified the year 940. Another line on the verso, possibly a beginning of a contract, includes the date 'eighteenth day of the twelfth month of the *jihai* year, the fourth of the Qianfu reign' 千符肆年歲次己亥十二月十八日, in which the reign title probably refers to Tianfu 天福, the fourth year of which was indeed 939, a *jihai* year.[303]

On the recto, the first 17 lines of the *Xiaojing* (i.e. the 'Preface' and the first line of the main text) have red punctuation marks, segmenting the text into clauses and sentences. The punctuation disappears after these 17 lines, suggesting that the student who applied them was relatively familiar with the main text of the *Xiaojing*. Thus, technically these are not punctuation but reading marks that give evidence of a posterior engagement with the text and the manuscript, most likely by a different student. The practice of transferring manuscripts to later students is evidenced in the colophon of manuscript P.2715, which contains yet another copy of the *Xiaojing*.[304] The colophon states that after finishing the act of copying, the student 'carefully checked it for omissions and mistakes, so that it may be handed over to later students' 點勘一無脫錯，傳之後學. It is

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302 More precisely, it corresponds to the beginning of 940, as this was the end of the year according to the lunar calendar.

303 Once again, this date would technically correspond to the beginning of 940. My reading follows that of Zhang Yongquan 2008, v. 8, 4274, although the characters Zhang reads as 千符 are written in a scruffy hand and may represent 于時, a common formula at the beginning of dates. Nevertheless, this formula is not usually followed by numerals, which makes Zhang's reading the preferable one. See also Soymié et al. 1991, 183.

304 The colophon dates to the *dinghai* year. As the date is in the cyclical format, which earlier scholars associated with the Tibetan period, Ikeda 1990, 333 dates it to 807. Zhang Xiuqing 2008, 13 is, however, undoubtedly correct in dating the scroll to the Guiyijun period.

possible that the *diankan* 點勘 also involved punctuating it, as its first component *dian* 點 ('to dot, mark') seems to imply. Should this have indeed been the case, the student copying the *Xiaojing* would have been responsible for adding the reading marks but for the benefit of those junior students who were to use the scroll after him.

At the beginning of the verso of P.3698, the words 'student of the Lingtu Monastery' 靈圖寺孝郎 appear; unfortunately the damage makes it impossible to read the name of the student. Nevertheless, judging from the two previous *Xiaojing* scrolls, this bit of text was copied from the colophon on the recto. The verso contains an array of scribbles, some upside down in relation to the others, as was the case with scroll S.728. The Dunhuang Academy's updated index to the Dunhuang manuscripts sums up the content on the verso as 'circulars and miscellaneous jottings' 轉帖及雜寫.[305] The analysis presented below intends to demonstrate that a careful examination of the jottings may reveal meaningful patterns in their seeming disarray.

Among the notes on the verso, is the sentence 'the ox is the powerful bodhisattva' 牛是大力菩薩, appearing on its own here, completely out of context. It uses the copula *shi* 是, characteristic of vernacular language, which signals that the phrase may ultimately come from a song or other non-classical text. Slightly to the left, at the bottom part of the page, the words 'the powerful bodhisattva' 大力菩薩 are repeated, again, without context. These two truncated fragments of text are unquestionably references to the popular tradition according to which the ox is a bodhisattva who took pity on humans toiling the earth and incarnated as an ox to relieve their burden.[306] This is a tradition that gains momentum in the Ming-Qing period, and this note in a tenth-century Dunhuang manuscript is evidence for its early transmission.

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305 Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 2000, 293.

306 See, for example, the *Yuga rongi* 瑜伽論記 (T:1828, 42, *juan* 60) by the Silla monk Dunryun 遁倫 (ca. 650–730). I am grateful for Professor Wang Yong 王勇 who drew my attention to references to this lore in Ming-Qing *baojuan* 寶卷 ('precious scroll') texts, such as the *Huangji jiulian rutong linfan baojuan* 皇极九蓮儒童臨凡寶卷 and *Zhongxi cuyan baojuan* 眾喜粗言寶卷. Thanks also go to Meir Shahar for kindly sharing his research on this topic.
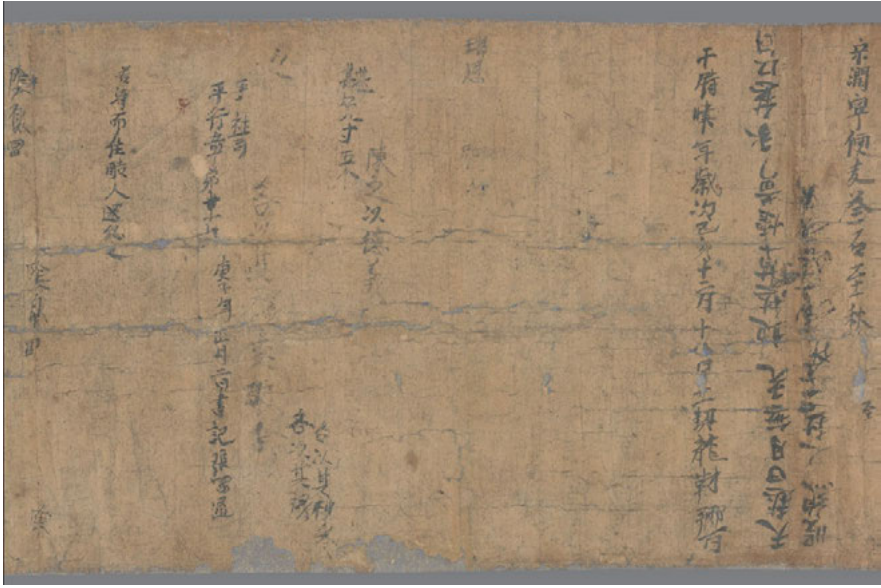
Fig. 31: Section from the verso of P.3698. (30 × 124.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Further to the left, amidst other bits of textual fragments, is a quatrain starting with the words 'Heaven worries that the sun and the moon will have no light' 天愁日月無光, shown upside-down on the right side of Fig. 31. Other bits of text, on the left half of the image, include the words 'demonstrating virtue and right-eousness' 陳之以德義, which is a quote from Chapter 7 of the *Xiaojing* (see the recto of the scroll).[307] A bit to the left, in a similar type of faded ink, we see the words 'came each according to his office to assist in the sacrifices' 各以其職來祭, a quote from Chapter 9.[308] These characters occur another two times in stronger ink towards the bottom of the scroll, next to the colophon of Zhang Futong. The *Xiaojing* snippets are written in a hand so unskilled that without being able to link them to their source it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to decipher the characters.

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307 This phrase appears in the received version of the *Xiaojing* as 陳之於德義 (e.g. *Xiaojing zhushu* 3, 2550). The version quoted on the verso of the manuscript (i.e. with the character 以 in place of 於) matches the text on the recto but also a number of early quotes of the *Xiaojing* in other texts; e.g. *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論 19, 232; *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 10, 145.
308 I adopt, with some modification, the translation of the *Xiaojing* fragments from Rosemont and Ames 2009.

Significantly, the two strings of text from the *Xiaojing* (i.e. 陳之以德義 on the upper part of the writing surface and 各以其職來祭 at the bottom) delineate a passage of 275 characters in length.[309] The part of the *Xiaojing* (and the preface) before this segment is 883, and the one after it is 1,050 characters long. It is possible that the longer segments divided further into shorter sections but there is no evidence of this in the manuscript.[310] At the other end of the verso, we find the words *zi yue* 子曰 ('The Master said'), which, in this context, may have been a similar segment marker. Even if these words are from the *Xiaojing* and not some other text, their frequency makes it impossible to identify the specific location they might designate. It is likely that the text was divided into segments and the students copied or studied it in such smaller portions. At any rate, the markers delineate the *Xiaojing* into at least three segments. It is probably not insignificant that while the content on the verso of this scroll varies in orientation, with bits of text appearing upside down in comparison with other ones, all *Xiaojing* markers maintain the same alignment, evidencing a consistency that is not otherwise apparent on the verso of the scroll. In sum, we can conclude that the quotes from the *Xiaojing* are not random scribbles, but notation directly connected with studying the main text.

The assignment would not have always been the same length. The *Xiaojing* quotes on the verso of S.728, for example, divide the text differently. We find on the verso two similar markers, namely, 'the love they feel towards them is the same' 而愛同 and 'this being the case, while alive' 夫然故生,[311] which break the text into three sections of 670, 356 and 1,182 characters. Comparing the manner in which the bits of texts divide the *Xiaojing* in manuscripts S.728 and P.3698, we find a similar pattern of a semi-long segment followed by a short one, with the final part being the longest. Fig. 32 displays this pattern in a visual form, making the similarity even more apparent.

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309 This delineation is inclusive, which is clear from the fact that the first quote represents the beginning of a clause, whereas the second the end of one.

310 The first segment of 883 characters could easily divide into three segments of about 294 characters. Similarly, the last segment of 1,050 characters could break into four shorter segments of about 263 characters.

311 The section beginning with the words 'in such a world...' 夫然 is copied for a line and a half on the verso of the scroll, right next to four characters that mark its beginning.
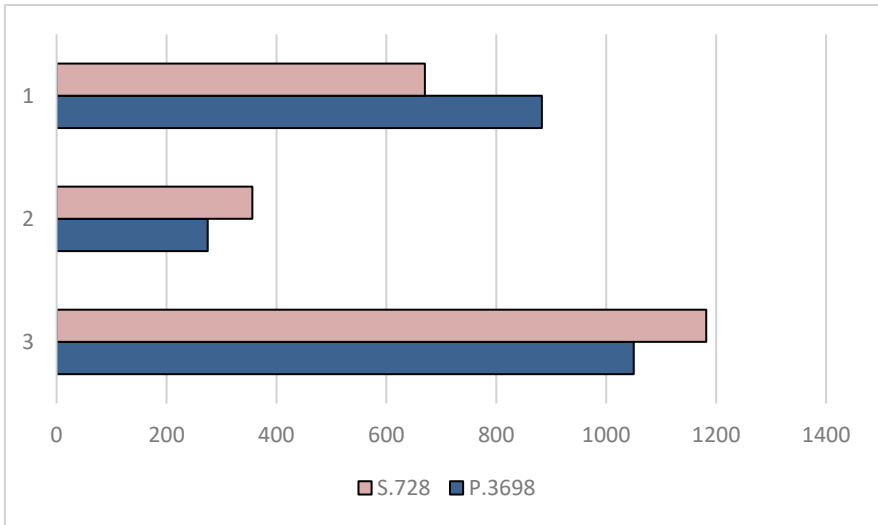
Fig. 32: The division of the *Xiaojing* into three segments in manuscripts S.728 and P.3698.

It is reasonable to assume that students of different age and proficiency would have had a different workload and different obligations. For example, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, manuscript S.2703, containing rows of identical characters from the *Qianziwen*, recorded the days spent on the exercise, allowing us to calculate the number of characters copied in the course of a single day. The student appears to have copied 12–13 lines a day, with characters ranging from 12 to 18 per line, incurring a total work load of approximately 150–230 characters per day. This was a lighter workload than the sections of the *Xiaojing* in manuscripts S.728 and P.3698, but it is probable that the student who wrote S.2703 was much younger.[312]

Another disconnected piece of text in this area of the verso of P.3698 are the words 'Conduct of Fairness, Chapter 19' 平行章第十九, which is a reference to one of the chapters of the didactic primer *Baixing zhang*. Further to the left are nine characters from Chapter 18 of the same text: 'If [the official] is incorruptible but unjustly cruel towards others, he will incur the people's resentment' 若清而住(枉)酷人還怨之. Although the text itself does not appear in this manuscript, the mere presence of these small fragments is enough to demonstrate that the

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312 On this and other similar student manuscripts, as well as speculations regarding the age of students, see Zürcher 1989, 36–39. See also Simson 2009, 205–207, discussing a similar exercise but using a contract.

students who used this scroll also studied the *Baixing zhang*. As there are only eighteen characters between these two quotes from the text, they could not have been marking the two ends of a section intended for a single practice. They perhaps signify two separate occasions of referring to the text. The distance between the first one from the beginning of the *Baixing zhang* (including the title, name of author and the preface) is 1,383 characters, which is a considerably longer segment than those of the *Xiaojing*.

As was the case with other manuscripts of the *Xiaojing* discussed above, the verso of P.3698 contains a considerable amount of titles and texts. None of these is longer than one or two lines and thus they are not 'texts' *per se* but rather references to texts. Some of these are not referred to with a title but are merely quotes from known works (e.g. *Xiaojing*, *Baixing zhang*). Fig. 33 displays the spatial arrangement of these titles and quotes on the verso of the scroll. The boxes with dotted red borders indicate the bits that are upside down, whereas the boxes with blue solid borders, the ones right-side up. For better visibility, the notes, or their initial characters, are shown outside the borders of the manuscript.
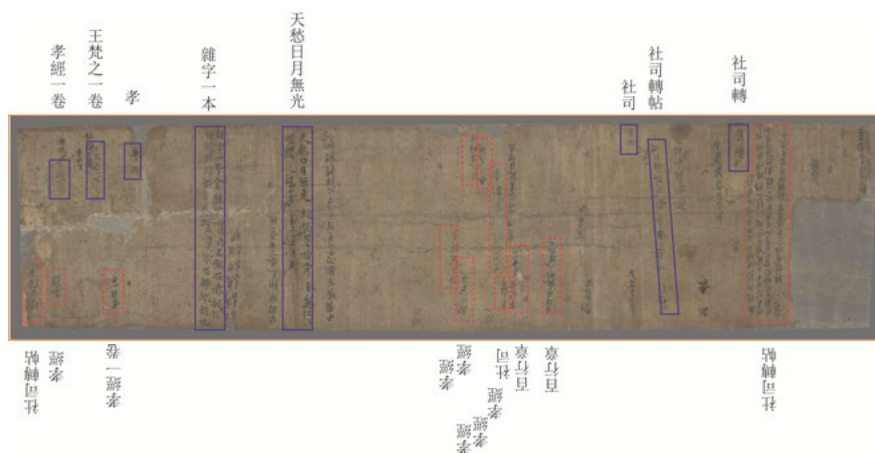
Fig. 33: The spatial arrangement of titles and quotes on the verso of manuscript P.3698.

Overall, the bits of text are in disorder, and some of them appear upside down in relation to others. It is possible, however, to identify several clusters which include texts with matching orientation and, in several cases, similar content. This pattern suggests that the items within each cluster were written around the same time but probably on a different occasion from those in other clusters. The

titles and quotes are written in more than one hand, yet there is not enough text to arrive at a reliable conclusion regarding the number of hands. In total, it is possible to identify the following items:[313]

shesi zhuantie 社司轉帖
shesi zhuan 社司轉
shesi zhuantie 社司轉帖
shesi 社司
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*Baixing zhang* 百行章]
('Heaven worries...' poem) 天愁日月無光
Zazi yi ben 雜字一本 (Miscellaneous Characters, in one *juan*)
Xiao 孝
Xiaojing yi juan 孝經一卷
Wang Fanzhi yi juan 王梵之一卷
Xiaojing yi juan 孝經一卷
[*Xiaojing* 孝經]
[*shesi zhuantie* 社司轉帖]

There are several instances of the heading *shesi zhuantie*, as well as fragments of the circulars themselves. None are complete and even the longest, written in a left-to-right direction, is but four lines long. Several fragmentary quotes from the *Xiaojing* seem random but, as argued above, mark sections of the text assigned to students for copying or studying. While *Zazi* 雜字 (Miscellaneous Characters) could be a generic reference to a category of texts or an *ad hoc* collections of characters intended for learning purposes, here it is followed by the words 'in one volume' 一本, indicating that it is most likely the title, perhaps abbreviated, of a specific work. Only two and a half lines of it survive here, showing that the aim was not to record it in full.[314] Similarly, the title *Wang Fanzhi* 王梵之 is a reference

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313 Square brackets indicate the items that are quotes without titles.
314 For a transcription of this fragment, see Zhang Yongquan 2008, v. 8, 4274–4273.

to a collection of poems by Wang Fanzhi, with the last character *zhi* 志 written as a near homophone. In sum, the texts referenced on the verso of this scroll are the *Xiaojing*, *Zazi*, *Baixing zhang*, the poems of Wang Fanzhi and association circulars.

Obviously, these are very similar to those on the verso of the other *Xiaojing* manuscripts discussed above. As a consequence, when taken together, the seemingly random scribbles on the verso of student manuscripts exhibit patterns directly related to the process of learning. The relative consistency of the patterns over the course of several decades is yet another indication of the specificity of the process and proves the scribbles, if properly interpreted, have the potential to provide additional insights into how students studied on a day-to-day level.

2.7 Conclusions

It stands to reason that students in Guiyijun Dunhuang, akin to students anywhere else, copied primers and works of didactic nature. The scrolls with the *Xiaojing*, *Qianziwen, Baixing zhang* and *Taigong jiajiao* are all examples of such activity and there is no doubt that they were copied in a school environment. Their function lay in teaching a basic set of characters and, at the same time, advocating proper conduct. In doing so, students absorbed the didactic message while acquiring literacy skills. There are dozens of examples of manuscripts featuring texts copied by students studying in local monasteries. The verso of many of these contain seemingly random scribbles and miscellaneous notes, including titles of primers, bits of information (e.g. names and dates) from the colophon on the recto, and brief fragments of pragmatic documents related to administrative and economic matters. The basic assumption forwarded in this chapter is that individually the scribble-like notes on the verso may appear to be arbitrary, but when assessed alongside similar fragmentary jottings in other manuscripts, they reveal patterns and connections that help to understand how students used the manuscripts.

In this chapter, I examined, as a case study, three *Xiaojing* manuscripts (S.728, S.707, P.3698) in order to assess their common traits, especially the multitude of disconnected notes on their verso. Among the findings was that some of the scribbles on the verso were directly related to the *Xiaojing* and the colophon on the recto. The title of the *Xiaojing* appeared on the verso repeatedly, as did disconnected quotes from the text itself. Additional notes referenced texts (e.g. *Taigong jiajiao*, *Baixing zhang*, *Zazi*) which could not be found in these manuscripts but are common in other manuscripts with student colophons.

Presumably, the same students also studied and copied these texts, only in manuscripts that did not survive.

The presence of fragmentary bits of association circulars revealed yet another persistent pattern in the *Xiaojing* manuscripts. The circulars will be examined in detail in Chapter Four, here I would only like to draw attention to their significance regarding manuscripts written by students. The circular fragments can be several lines long, but in most cases consist of only a few characters. Their location on the verso appears to be random yet they occur with predictable consistency. Frequently several disconnected bits appear on the same manuscript, indicating once more that their presence is not accidental. Characteristically, they are written in an unskilled hand and contain errors and omissions. While scholars often dismiss these fragments as writing exercises, most of them are too short for such a purpose and are probably reminders of exercises expected to be completed elsewhere. A striking feature we will explore in the next chapter is that some of the circulars read from left to right, in opposite direction from how Chinese is normally written.

In all, the scribble-like notes on the verso of these scrolls cannot be viewed as random jottings, certainly not in the sense of being arbitrary. Instead, they provide evidence of students working on both the main text on the recto and other texts not present in the manuscript. Some of the notes on the verso were added by other students who may have used the manuscript years after the first student had copied the main text. The implication here is that the scrolls or booklets we see today are the product of years of collaborative engagement with the manuscript. This phenomenon is similar to that witnessed in the previous chapter regarding multiple-text manuscripts. Most importantly, as many of the students belonged to prominent families, the manuscripts must have served as tokens of a bond between the monasteries and the political elite.

The surviving evidence inevitably creates a skewed impression of the scope of education in Dunhuang. Yet the emergence of student colophons at the beginning of the Guiyijun period is not necessarily a sign of a sudden increase of the level of culture after the so-called 'dark years' of the Tibetan period. Similarly, the prevalence of monastic schools as opposed to county or commandery-level ones does not prove that monasteries were the primary location for educational activities during this period. On the contrary, the manuscripts reveal that monasteries acted as private schools for the elite and thus were involved in the education of a relatively small number of students.

3 Writing from Left to Right

Partially overlapping with manuscripts written by students are those that contain examples of text reading from left to right. Before the twentieth century, Chinese text usually read in vertical columns from right to left. This direction is present in the earliest examples of Chinese characters on bone and bronze and thus forms a tradition of more than three thousand years.[315] There are, however, occasional examples of oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions that read in a different direction, but on the whole the direction of writing remained unchanged until very recently. Among the few exceptions to this pattern are several groups of manuscripts and inscriptions found in Dunhuang, featuring Chinese text written from left to right. Such examples are, as the other phenomena presented thus far, limited to the Gui-yijun period. This paper divides such cases into two typologically different groups and examines each of them separately. My argument is that the unconventional direction of writing reflects the influence of non-Chinese scribal cultures which had a tradition of writing in a different direction. As a consequence, the examination of such manuscripts and inscriptions has implications for understanding the cultural affinities of manuscript groups. Just as importantly, determining the exact chronological framework of such cases helps to date undated manuscripts and paintings.

The modern practice of writing Chinese characters horizontally began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, largely due to the influence of Western scientific literature and language-learning material.[316] Among the early publications was the Chinese translation of Edwin J. Houston and Arthur E. Kennelly's *Algebra Made Easy*, which appeared in China under the title *Suanshi jiefa* 算式解法 only a year after its 1898 American release.[317] Other books related to language teaching, such as the 1904 *Yingwen Hangu* 英文漢詁 (English title: *English Grammar Explained in Chinese*) by Julin Khedau Yen-Fuh (Yan Fu 嚴复), featured an extensive amount of horizontal Chinese text interspersed with English sample sentences. Far earlier than this, as Zhang Zhiqiang 張志強 pointed out, Robert Morrison's (1782–1834) early nineteenth-century *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* had already printed Chinese characters horizontally in a left-to-right direction.[318]

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315 See, for example, Matsumaru 1980, 66–67, 89–90 and 134. For an example of sequential oracle-bone divinations written from left to right, see Takashima 2000, 394.

316 This episode in the development of Chinese written culture is surprisingly under-studied. Among the few scholarly contributions is Zhang Zhiqiang 1997.

317 Hao and Kai 1899.

318 Zhang Zhiqiang 1997, 68, Morrison 1815–1823.

Anglophone Protestant missionaries, however, were clearly not the inventors of this practice, as evidenced by examples in manuscripts and printed books in other European languages, such as French, Latin and Portuguese.[319] But in the majority of these examples the Chinese characters had been incorporated into the horizontal lines of the Latin script, rather than being written on their own as continuous text. Monolingual Chinese and Japanese books written entirely horizontally appeared in the twentieth century and increased in popularity only gradually. In mainland China, the left-to-right horizontal direction of writing was officially introduced in 1956.[320] Yet even today many books follow the traditional alignment of vertical lines. Most newspapers combine vertical and horizontal sections and titles as a means for creating a more interesting layout. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see the shift to horizontal writing as a one-way development. Frequently, when aspects of writing considered traditional (e.g. vertical columns, non-simplified characters and traditional-style punctuation) are used, these efforts are meant to emphasise a link with traditional culture.

It is crucial to note here that directionality is an attribute of the script, not the language. Over its long history, the Chinese language has been, and to some extent still is, written in different scripts, each having its own direction. The Dunhuang manuscripts include examples of continuous Chinese text written with the Tibetan alphabet in horizontal lines running from left to right.[321] During the Mongol period, the 'Phags-pa script was sometimes used to write Chinese in vertical columns from left to right.[322] The Muslim Hui have been using, alongside Chinese characters, the Arabic script (i.e. *xiaojing* 小經 or *xiaoerjing* 小兒經), which reads horizontally from right to left.[323] These are not isolated cases or occasional renderings of individual words or phrases but entire sub-cultures in which the

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319 One such example is the French Jesuit missionary Cibot's (1727–1780) letter on the Chinese script, which includes a few examples of Chinese text that read horizontally, from left to right; see Pierre-Martial Cibot, *Lettre de Pékin, sur le génie de la langue chinoise et la nature de leur écriture symbolique, comparée avec celle des anciens Égyptiens*, published in 1773. Manuscripts examples with Chinese text written horizontally from left to right go back as far as the Portuguese-Chinese glossary by Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610); see Witek, Ruggieri and Ricci 2001.

320 Wiedenhof 2015, 365–366.

321 Simon 1958, Takata 1993 and 2000, 58–59. The same direction of writing is also attested among the Dungans, who use the Cyrillic (and earlier the Latin) alphabet to write a northwestern Chinese dialect; Rimsky-Korsakoff 1967, 357–364 and Mair 1990.

322 Coblin 2007, 1–22.

323 Zavyalova 1999, Sobieroj 2014 and 2019.

sounds of the Chinese language are recorded with a phonetic script in a direction that differs from the way Chinese characters normally read.

The existence of left-to-right examples of Chinese text in Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings was noted already at the initial examination of the contents of the Dunhuang library cave. Paul Pelliot, who came to the Mogao Caves shortly after Aurel Stein, was the first to note this phenomenon while looking through the manuscripts at the site. In a letter written to the Indologist Émile Senart (1847–1928) on 26 March 1908, within days after going through the contents of the cave, Pelliot mentioned that some of the Chinese pothi manuscripts were written horizontally, from left to right, 'just like we print Chinese in our European books'.[324] Pelliot's diary entries written during his visit to Dunhuang also record his surprise at seeing Chinese written in this anomalous direction. Interestingly, there seems to have been no interest in examining the cultural ramifications of writing horizontally on pothi manuscripts since Pelliot's comments.[325]

Many later studies mention the left-to-right direction of writing, but these are all cases of Chinese characters that read in vertical columns, and an entirely different category from those Pelliot commented upon. In his catalogue of the British collection of Chinese manuscripts, Lionel Giles made an effort to document this practice but many examples escaped his attention, partly because they were too fragmentary.[326] The catalogue of the French collection also recorded such cases, including a list of relevant manuscripts for a convenient overview.[327] The phenomenon has been noted even more commonly in connection to paintings. In his 1931 catalogue of Dunhuang paintings acquired by Aurel Stein, for instance, Arthur Waley remarked that some of the inscriptions read from left to right.[328] In a study on the Maitreya's Paradise painting of the Fogg Art Museum, Rei Sasaguchi stated that '[I]nscriptions written from left to right are not uncommon among the paintings and manuscripts recovered from Tun-huang'.[329] Similarly, in his cata-

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324 Quoted in Drège and Moretti 2014, 4. Later this comment became part of Pelliot's initial report on the acquisition of Dunhuang manuscripts; Pelliot 1908, 509.

325 Ghesquière and Macouin 2008, 68. In one place (ibid., 312) he accidentally mentions the direction as running from right to left but it is clear that he means the opposite direction, especially as he adds that this direction is the same as the one in European printed works.

326 E.g. Giles 1957, 53 and 158.

327 The first volume of the catalogue (Gernet and Wu 1970) appeared only in 1970, even though it was already completed in 1955. This first volume only listed manuscript P.2473 in the index, missing P.2439 which also has an example of a left-to-right bit of text on the verso.

328 Waley 1931.

329 Sasaguchi 1972/1973, 46.

logue of Stein paintings at the British Museum, Roderick Whitfield carefully made note of all such instances.[330]

Despite such references to an otherwise uncommon way of writing Chinese, scholarship has paid little attention to the phenomenon until relatively recently. Part of the reason for this was that in most cases the unorthodox writing direction presented no challenge for reading the inscriptions and thus generated no interest to wrestle with the topic at a deeper level. Among the few brief studies on the subject is a paper by Yang Sen 楊森, who connected the examples from Dunhuang with other cases from early and medieval China, arguing that this manner of writing, unusual as it was, has been an inherent part of Chinese written culture throughout its history.[331] While this view is certainly not incorrect, comparing examples as diverse as Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, Zhou bronze inscriptions and Dunhuang paintings generates an overly broad time frame, concealing the cultural background of the practice in Guiyijun Dunhuang. Yang correctly hypothesised that rather than being invented in Dunhuang, this way of writing must have originated elsewhere, in spite of the fact that he was referring to earlier cases in the Chinese tradition.

Another recent paper on the subject is by Zhu Yao 朱瑤, who divided the examples of left-to-right writing into three categories. The first being manuscript colophons; the second, inscriptions on Buddhist paintings; and the third, contracts and circulars copied on the verso of scrolls. She suggested that this practice must have been linked to the cultural background of the period in question. She considered its origins to be related to Dunhuang's location on the Silk Road and the interaction with peoples who wrote their languages in a different direction. In particular, she saw the involvement of the Chinese population in Tibetan sutra-copying enterprises during the Tibetan period as the direct motivation for writing in this manner. Simultaneously, Zhu Yao drew attention to the symmetrical arrangement of inscriptions, furnishing examples in which the unconventional direction of writing could be attributed to the symmetry of the design. In terms of the time frame of the phenomenon, she believed that it had begun during the Tibetan period but persisted, as a remnant of that era, into the Guiyijun period.[332] This chapter is to demonstrate, however, that examples of this practice invariably date to the Guiyijun period.[333]

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330 Whitfield 1982–1985.

331 Yang Sen 2001.

332 Zhu Yao 2011.

333 Cf. Galambos 2012, 79–84 and Galambos 2015a, 868–871.

This chapter explores the topic in a systematic manner, by examining a larger pool of examples, to attain a more reliable understanding of the phenomenon. Similarly, close attention to the relevant dates in the manuscripts and paintings allows to demarcate the chronological dimension of the practice, which is vital in interpreting its cultural background. As will be seen below, the examples narrow down the overall time frame of the phenomenon, connecting it expressly with the Guiyijun period. Typologically, examples of Chinese left-to-right writing at Dunhuang are of two distinct types, depending on whether the text reads (1) horizontally or (2) vertically. Specimens of horizontal lines occur in pothis and can be linked directly to Tibetan manuscript culture. The second type featuring vertical lines of text is more common and can be divided further into three subtypes in terms of where and in what context the texts appear. They may be part of (i) the geometrical compositions in manuscripts with mandalas and dhāraṇī-amulets; (ii) the miscellaneous and seemingly random content on the margins and verso of manuscripts; (iii) the cartouches and donor inscriptions in votive paintings on silk, canvas and paper. I believe that we can attribute the development of all types and subtypes to the influence of non-Chinese scribal cultures, although the very sources of such influence may vary.

3.1 Horizontal lines on pothi leaves

Among the manuscripts from Dunhuang are a couple of pothi-leaf manuscripts with Chinese characters written horizontally, in a left to right direction. These must be the same items Pelliot described in his letter to Émile Senart. In addition, there are also pothi leaves with folio numbers written in this direction. The pothi form itself indicates a link to Tibetan manuscript culture, which is therefore the source of influence.

As seen in Chapter One, the pothi form ultimately derives from the Indian palm-leaf manuscript, yet in Dunhuang it reflects the influence of Tibetan scribal culture. Tibetan texts are written on the leaves horizontally, in a left-to-right direction. Typically, a single leaf has five to seven horizontal lines of text. But when scribes adopt pothi leaves for writing Chinese, they rotate them 90 degrees and write the text in long vertical columns, often with the help of ruling lines. It is such pothis that contain cases of Chinese text written horizontally from left to right, emulating the arrangement of Tibetan manuscripts. This coincides with the way in which Chinese is usually written today, a practice which is similarly the result of influence from the West. In both cases innovation came from outside as a result of interaction with cultures using an alphabetic or syllabic script.

As a result of not using a string to bind the leaves together and stabilise their order, some pothis have folio numbers. This device was unnecessary when writing on scrolls, but became a feature of new manuscripts forms, such as the pothi and the codex. Interestingly, the folio numbers on pothi leaves are sometimes not rotated along with the Chinese text but maintain the orientation of Tibetan manuscripts. For instance, P.3914 (Fig. 34), a collection of Tantric texts and spells, is a manuscript with folio numbers going up to 30, appearing consistently at 90 degrees in relation to the main text.[334] This is a carefully executed manuscript which occasionally uses red ink for titles and key Buddhist terms, indicating that the orientation of folio numbers was not random but formed part of a deliberate design adhered to throughout the entire manuscript.[335]

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334 The phenomenon of Chinese folio numbers being added at 90 degrees in relation to the non-Chinese main text is also found in Uighur manuscripts and printed texts from Turfan. For example, in U 4727, an Uighur fragment of a printed concertina volume from the Berlin Turfan Collection, the Chinese folio number is at a 90 degree rotation to the main text, which runs vertically from left to right; cf. Yakup 2009, 187–188. In other cases, e.g. U 0374, folio numbers appear to follow the orientation of the Uighur text.
335 The use of red ink is, however, not consistent as words in red disappear from the later part of the manuscript. The red ink appears to have two main functions, the first of which is to segment the text and make it easier to read. The other function, apparent in Fig. 34, is to mark Buddhist terms that command respect.
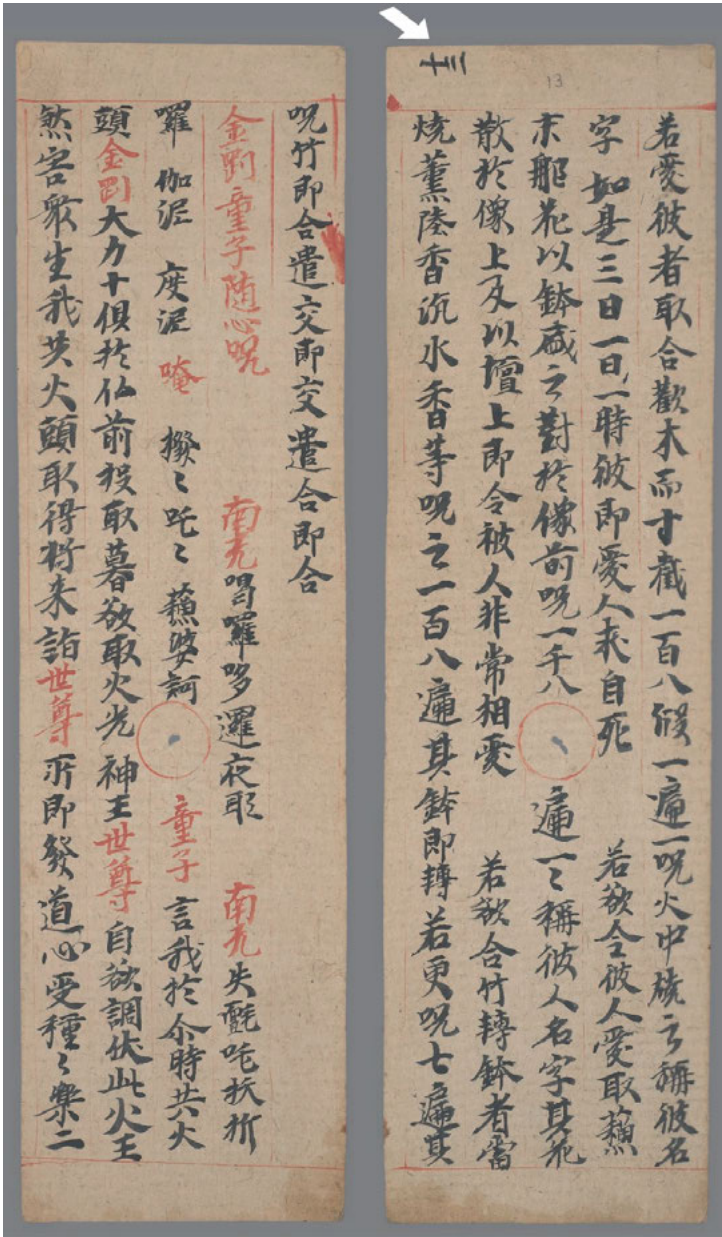
Fig. 34: Chinese manuscript in a pothi form, P.3914; the folio number 13, marked by the white arrow, is at 90 degrees to the main text. (27 × 7.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

An interesting case is manuscript P.3920, in which the folio numbers follow the orientation of the main text, making them easily legible when holding the pothi leaves vertically. Once the numbers reach 11 十一 so that they consist of more than one character, the two constituent characters are written vertically, following the usual way of writing Chinese. Yet from folio 24 廿四 until folio 101 一百一 the numbers are written horizontally, from left to right (Fig. 35). The sole exception is folio 41 卌一, which reads vertically, whereas all other folio numbers around it have a horizontal orientation.
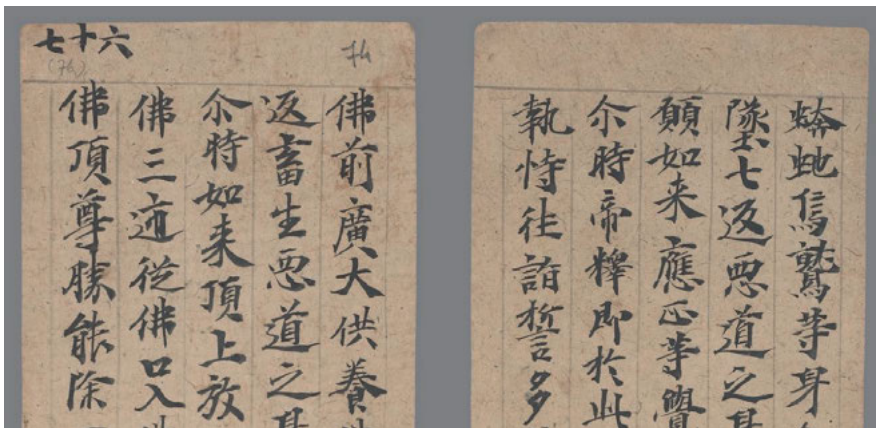
Fig. 35: Horizontal folio number 76 in manuscript P.3920. (28.8 × 8.4 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Yet another example is manuscript P.3916, in which the direction of folio numbers is inconsistent from one folio to the other (Fig. 36). The orientation of numbers matches that of the main text, assuming a vertical reading of the leaves. When there are only two characters (e.g. 11 十一 or 22 廿二), they are written vertically. This is, at times, also the case for numbers made up of three characters (i.e. 51 五十一). In most cases, however, numbers consisting of more than two characters are written in two vertical columns reading from left to right. In a sense, the orientation only changes when there is not enough space for the numbers to fit in a single column. A characteristic feature of the foliation in the manuscript is that when the second column contains only one character, it is placed in the middle, rather than at the top of that column, which would be the usual way of beginning a new line. This way of filling up a block of rectangular space with several characters is reminiscent of the arrangement of Chinese characters in seals. Evidently, the individual who added the folio numbers on the side of the leaves thought of each number as a self-contained graphic unit, rather than text.

Fig. 36: Examples of folio numbers in manuscript P.3916. Starting from the left, the numbers are 11, 22, 51, 53, 66, 101 and 129. (23.8 × 8.8 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Another example is Pelliot tibétain 102, a manuscript written entirely in Tibetan, except for the left-to-right Chinese folio numbers running at 90 degrees to the main text (Fig. 37). As it had once been a large volume, the folio numbers go up to 200. The number 199, for example, consists of five characters arranged in three separate columns reading from left to right. Matching the orientation of the Tibetan text, the folio numbers could have been comfortably written in a single vertical line on the margin. Instead, the writer chose to write them in this manner, demonstrating that he considered the numbers to form discrete units or blocks, rather than ordinary text.

Fig. 37: Folio numbers in manuscript Pelliot tibétain 102, rotated 90 degrees to the Tibetan text. The numbers are 146 and 199. (23.7 × 8.7 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Examples of continuous Chinese text reading horizontally from left to right are more conspicuous. One such manuscript is P.3922 with the *Faju jing* 法句經 (Skt. *Dharmapada*; Verses on the Dharma) and another text identified as the *Dunwu zhenzong yaojue* 頓悟眞宗要決 (Essential Teachings According to the True Principle of Sudden Awakening). The surviving portion of the manuscript consists of nine pothi leaves 7–7.3 × 28.5–29.8 cm in size, with Chinese characters running horizontally in a left-to-right direction (Fig. 38). The latter text is linked with early Chan Buddhism and is also known from scroll P.2799, the beginning of which preserves the full title as *Dunwu zhenzong jingang bore xiuxing da bi'an famen yaojue* 頓悟眞宗金剛般若脩行達彼岸法門要決. It consists of questions and answers between the layman Houmochen Yan 侯莫陳琰 (660–714) and the dhyāna

master Zhida 智達, who are two identities of the same person.[336] A considerably longer Tibetan version survives in a concertina manuscript (Pelliot tibétain 116) with pages of roughly the same dimensions (7 × 29.5 cm) as the pothi leaves in P.3922.[337] This reveals that the Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts were likely used within the same, possibly bilingual, community. The horizontal alignment and the direction of the text is clearly an attempt to emulate the Tibetan model and may be connected with the particular circumstances of the manuscript's use. Significantly, the text amounts to more than 4,000 characters, which is of a different magnitude to the small groups of characters in the folio numbers. This is a substantial amount of continuous Chinese text written in a manner typical of Tibetan texts.
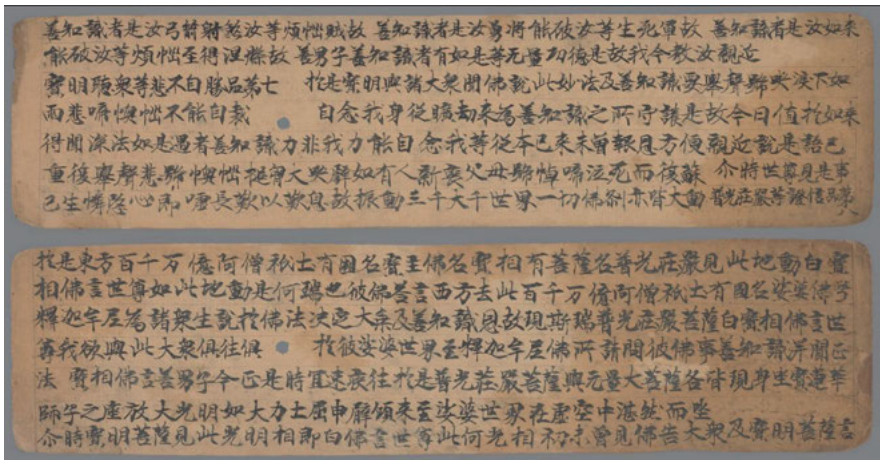
Fig. 38: Two pages from manuscript P.3922 with Chinese text written horizontally from left to right. (7–7.3 × 28.5–29.8 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

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336 The two names refer to the same person, using his secular and monastic names. The Houmouchen 侯莫陳 surname is of Xianbei 鮮卑 origin and derives from the name of the Houmouchen tribes. This was an important aristocratic clan with a number of renowned military and civil officials before the eleventh century, when they gradually disappeared from the scene. This was due partly to them changing their original surname to Chen 陳 and other Chinese surnames. On the clan itself, see Chen Feifei 2018; on its connections with Buddhism, see Long Chengsong 2017.

337 On the Tibetan manuscript, see Ueyama 1976 and Tanaka and Robertson 1992, 57–78. Although this is a concertina, parts of the manuscript have been stitched together using thread. Cf. van Schaik 2014, 49–58.

A similar example is P.3923, which contains the complete text of the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (Skt. *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-dhāraṇī*; Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Jubilant Corona), a popular scripture translated by Buddhapāla 佛陀波利 (fl. 676). As with the previous example, this pothi also consists of nine leaves of very similar size (6.9 × 28.6 cm), each with seven lines of text. However, in place of the brownish paper typical for the ninth century, the leaves of the manuscript have been dyed red, which is highly unusual. Fig. 39 shows two pages, the first of which contains the title and the name of the translator, all in horizontal lines reading from left to right.
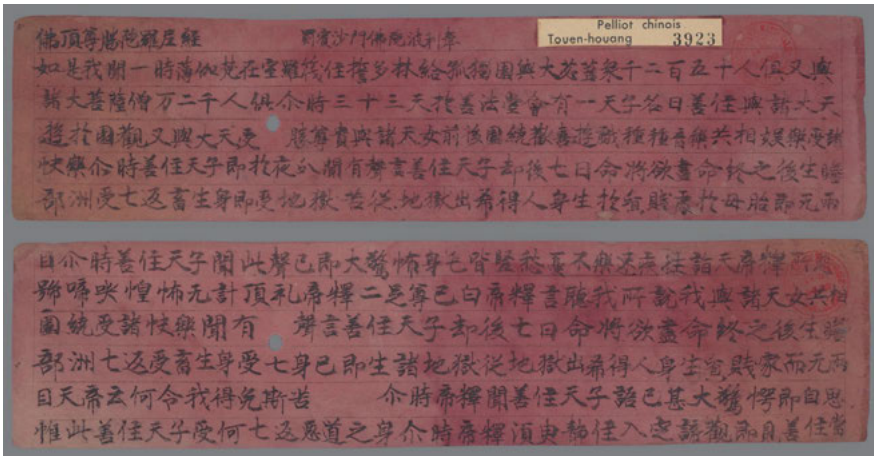
Fig. 39: Two pages from manuscript P.3923, dyed in red. (6.9 × 28.6 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The two manuscripts are very similar in appearance, including the ruling, the string holes and the number of lines per page. The hand, however, is not the same. Needless to say, it is not possible to attribute the unorthodox direction of writing to convenience or other pragmatic considerations and we must acknowledge that the writers intended to replicate the visual arrangement of Tibetan manuscripts. This, in turn, would not have been a purely aesthetic preference but may relate to how these Chinese and Tibetan pothis were recited. It is possible that turning the leaves from bottom to top would have better suited the arrangement of ritual objects. Today we accustomed used to reading Chinese horizontally but, during the ninth century, these pothi leaves would have looked quite out of the ordinary.

The pothi manuscripts with examples of horizontal Chinese characters reading from left to right are few in number and the practice of writing in this manner was by no means common. Nevertheless, taken together, the examples appear to be more than simply eccentric choices made by individual scribes. The pothi form in itself establishes a direct link to Tibetan manuscript culture. Chinese texts in this form basically follow the layout of Tibetan manuscripts, and the characters are written with a Tibetan-style hard pen. The Chan Buddhist orientation of the texts forms yet another obvious connection with Tibetan culture, more specifically with the over fifty Tibetan Chan manuscripts that found in the Dunhuang library cave.[338] Unfortunately, not enough material has survived to determine the exact time frame of these manuscripts. Features associated with Tibetan manuscript culture signify that the manuscripts were probably produced during the Guiyijun period, as was the case for the vast majority of Tibetan pothis, excluding the group of sutras mass-produced for the Tibetan emperor.[339]

An example of horizontal writing not on a pothi leaf is manuscript P.3811, studied primarily for the Daoist talismans and seals it contains.[340] The same manuscript also preserves several pages of incantations in horizontal lines of Chinese characters written from left to right (Fig. 40). The Chinese text appears to be a phonetic transcription of a non-Chinese language. In terms of its layout, it is written in double lines of nine characters, each of which concludes with the Tibetan end-of-clause marker *shad*, in the shape of a vertical line. Even without being able to reconstruct the source text, the horizontal lines and Tibetan punctuation marks confirm that the inspiration for writing Chinese characters this way must have derived from Tibetan scribal culture.[341] The motivation of writing the text in difficult-to-read Chinese characters rather than the phonetic Tibetan alphabet is uncertain. It may have served individuals unfamiliar with Tibetan script

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338 Regarding Chan Buddhist texts in Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, see van Schaik and Dalton 2004, van Schaik 2014 and 2015. See also manuscript P.4646, a pothi manuscript that contains several Chan texts, including the apocryphal *Chanmen jing* 禪門經. For Chan texts in Tangut, see Solonin 2000; for those in Uighur, see Kudara 1992 and Zieme 2012.

339 An example of a long Chinese pothi is manuscript S.5663 with a colophon dated to a *yiwei* 乙未 year. Because it refers to the monk Daozhen 道真 (d. ca. 987), active during the second third of the tenth century, the year must refer to 935, long after the end of the Tibetan period; see Teiser 1994, 144–145.

340 See, for example, Drège 1999a, 151–152, Wang Yucheng 2000, 38–39 and Huang 2017, 86.

341 While Drège 1999a, 152 tentatively ascribes this manuscript to the eighth century, Wang Ka 2004, 153–154 dates it to the Guiyijun period on the basis of the handwriting style. He also claims that the horizontal text is a Chinese transcription of Sanskrit sounds. Cf. Yu Xin 2006, 95.

who nonetheless needed to be able to read the incantation aloud during a ritual. It was, however, more common to take advantage of the convenience offered by the Tibetan alphabet to record the sound of Chinese scriptures, which would certainly have been difficult to read for those lacking proficiency in Chinese.[342]
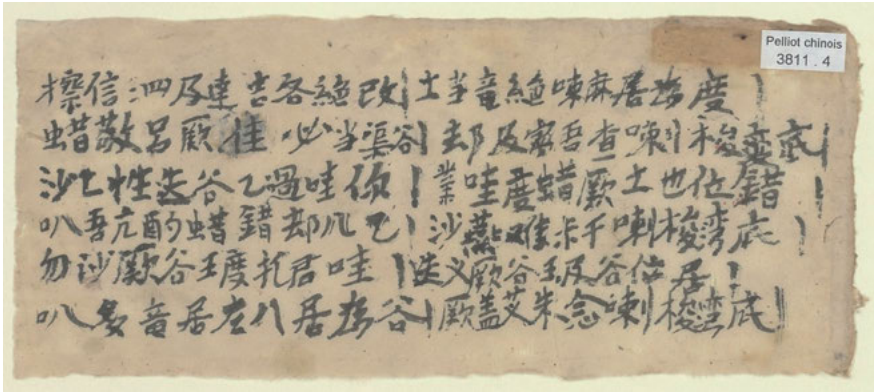

Fig. 40: Horizontal lines of Chinese characters on folio 4 of P.3811. (10–10.2 × 24.1 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

A fascinating manuscript is Pelliot tibétain 1257, a Sino-Tibetan glossary of Buddhist terminology, as it aligns side by side technical terminology in the two languages.[343] This too is not a pothi but an unusual book form featuring ten sheets of paper attached to two bamboo sticks. As shown in Fig. 41, the Chinese text adapts to the left-to-right direction of the Tibetan text and reads either entirely horizontally or in short vertical columns from left to right. Thus the terms *Jiufengshan* 鷲峯山 ('Vulture Peak'), *da gongdian* 大宮殿 ('great palace') or *Xumishan* 須彌山 ('Mount Sumeru') all read horizontally, whereas *Wangshecheng* 王舍城 ('Rājagr̥ha'), *youposa* 憂婆塞 ('upāsaka; lay disciple') and a number of other terms read in vertical columns from left to right. Although some two-character terms appear as a single column, it is significant that no Chinese text reads from right to left, which would be the usual way of writing Chinese.

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342 Takata 2000, 58–59.

343 On this manuscript, see Yamaguchi 1975, Apple and Apple 2017.
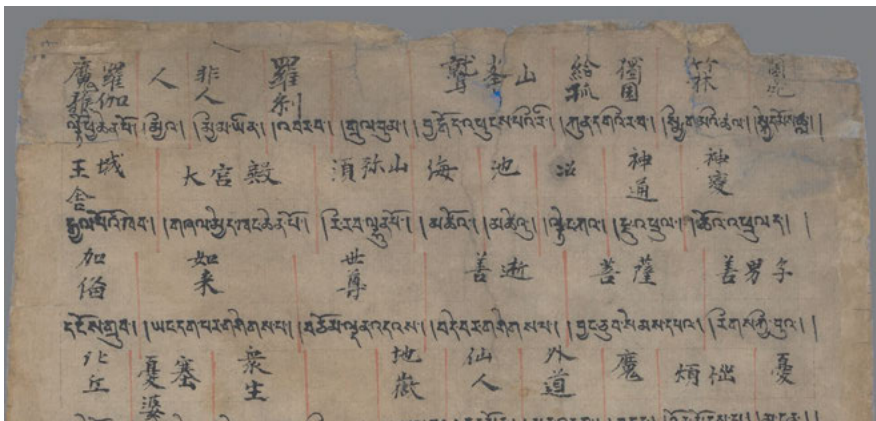
Fig. 41: Buddhist terminology in Chinese and Tibetan in manuscript Pelliot tibétain 1257. (29.5 x 39 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

This example is noteworthy because it demonstrates that Chinese characters can change their direction under the influence of a different type of script. The fact that some Chinese terms read horizontally and others vertically (but still from left to right) shows that there was no well-established convention for the manner of writing them in such a context. Nevertheless, scribes felt compelled to maintain the left-to-right direction of the Tibetan text even when writing the Chinese equivalents of the terms. Just as noteworthy is how at times they wrote in vertical columns (from left to right), even though Tibetan is invariably written horizontally. Such vertical columns are in fact a mixed format that merges the vertical orientation of the Chinese script with the left-to-right direction of the Tibetan one.

3.2 Vertical columns written from left to right

The other major type of left-to-right writing is vertical columns of Chinese text written from left to right. As mentioned earlier, it is possible to identify three subtypes based on where the examples occur. Thus, despite their typological similarity, the three subtypes do not reflect the same cultural influence.

(i) Mandalas and amulets

Manuscripts containing sporadic vertical columns of Chinese characters written from left to right include mandala-type designs and dhāraṇī-amulets combining image and text in complex geometrical compositions.[344] These relate to esoteric Buddhist practices and, despite their vertical orientation, betray a strong Tibetan influence, as is clearly seen from the Tibetan counterparts of some of the compositions. These manuscripts originate in a highly specialised context and form a distinct group. At the onset, it must be emphasized that there are not many manuscripts containing such geometrical designs, and even fewer featuring left-to-right bits of text. There is only a small pool of cases, nonetheless the proportion of such cases within relevant manuscripts is significant.

Manuscript P.4519, for instance, contains a relatively large (66.6 × 60 cm) square-shaped composition assembled from four smaller sheets of paper. All the text is written in the same hand; the text is in black ink and the images and structural lines are in red, while some of the shapes are filled with ochre colour.[345] Straight red lines and images of deities divide the surface into smaller text areas containing the incantations. The boundaries seem to be driven entirely by visual design and do not coincide with textual divisions. It is in such delineated areas that some of the text reads in vertical columns from left to right. Fig. 42 displays the layout of the composition, showing the shape and format of text areas.

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344 On this type of manuscripts, see Copp 2014 and Sørensen 2019; cf. Drège 1999a, 154–156.
345 For a useful description of P.4519, see Soymié et al. 1995, 157–160.

Fig. 42: The overall layout of manuscript P.4519, a dhāraṇī-amulet with a geometrical design. (66.6 × 60 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The close-up detail in Fig. 43 illustrates the way sections of text appear inside the contoured areas. The text on the left side of the image begins with the words '... contemplate this, I shall explain it to you step by step' 思念之吾當為汝分別 演說. These words are from the *Foshuo suiqiu ji de da zizai tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 佛說隨求即得大自在陀羅尼神呪經 (The Scripture of the Dhāraṇī Spirit-Spell of Great Sovereignty, Preached by the Buddha, Whereby One Immediately Attains What Is Sought; T1154, 20), a text translated by the Kashmiri monk

Maṇicintana (Baosiwei 寶思惟, d. 721).[346] The quote begins in mid-sentence at the lower left corner of the text area on the left, continuing from the text area above it, which ends with the words 'You [should contemplate this] earnestly…' 汝善 (in the bottom right corner of that area). As the image shows, the Chinese characters in the individual text areas read in vertical columns from left to right.
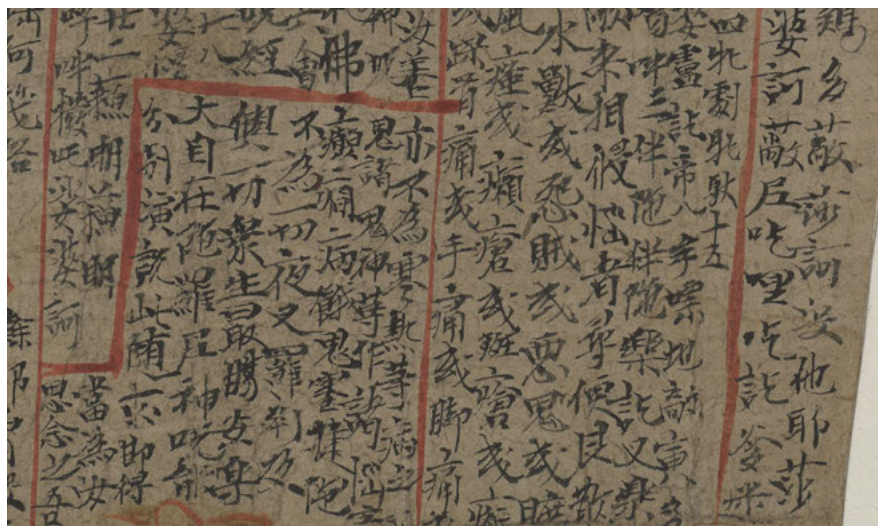
Fig. 43: Delineated text areas with text reading in vertical columns from left to right; detail from P.4519.

The visual arrangement of the amulet itself does not justify this direction of writing and part of the text indeed reads in the 'normal' direction. In other similar manuscripts (e.g. P.3982, P.4912), the text is written entirely in the usual manner, making P.4519 an exception, rather than the norm. The manuscript has, however, apparent similarities with Tibetan dhāraṇī-amulets, such as Pelliot tibétain 389 (Fig. 44), which has an almost identical composition but the text is in Tibetan and does not fill the surface to the extent of the Chinese text in P.4519.[347] It is therefore probable that the left-to-right direction of writing, despite its vertical alignment, relates to Tibetan scribal culture and esoteric Buddhism.[348]

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346 On Maṇicintana, see Forte 1984. The English translation of the scripture is from Copp 2014, 64.
347 On Pelliot tibétain 389, see Lalou 1936. Note also that this manuscript is about a quarter of the size of P.4519.
348 On esoteric drawings, see Luczanits 2009.
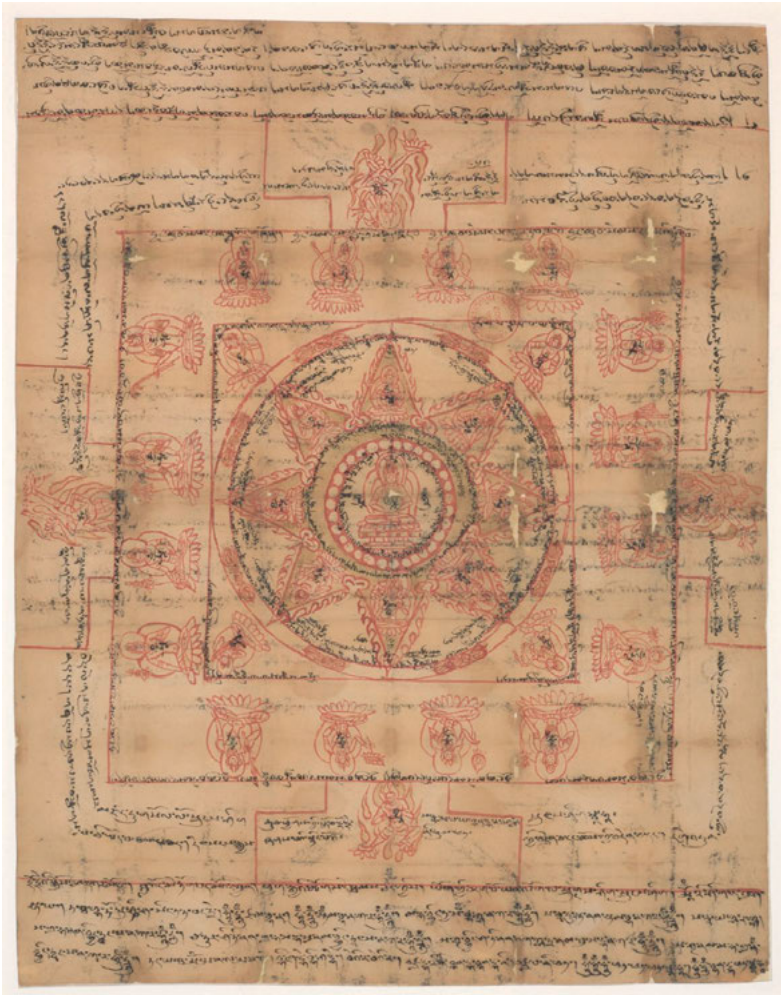
Fig. 44: A Tibetan dhāraṇī-amulet, Pelliot tibétain 389. (31.7 × 40.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

A different type of layout is seen in manuscript S.4690, which is a model of an amulet to be borne by monks.[349] At the centre of the composition is an eight-petalled flower enclosing a double circle with the inscription 'for those worn by monks, paint a Diamond Spirit in the centre of the incantation' 僧帶者於咒心中

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349 Copp 2014, 114–117.

畫作一金剛神, which is a quote from the scripture translated by Maṇicintana.[350] As Fig. 45 shows, this text reads from left to right. The same text appears in the same way in manuscript S.6264, a different copy of the amulet model, demonstrating that the atypical direction was not an *ad hoc* arrangement but an integral part of the composition. This second model features less text and may not have been as complete as S.4690 but the inscription at the centre of the design is already present. The central location of the inscription excludes the possibility that the direction of writing was related to symmetry or balance.
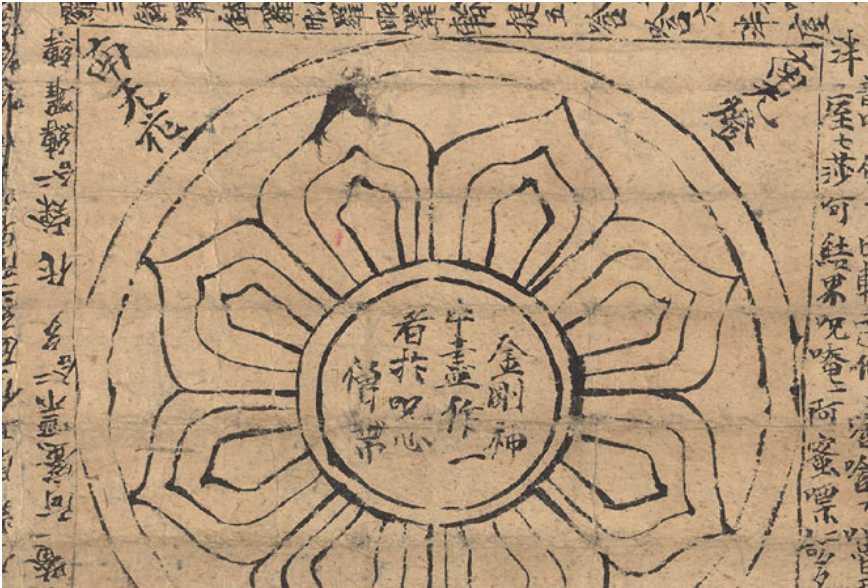
Fig. 45: Central part of the amulet model in manuscript S.4690. (30.5 × 39.9 cm; The British Library)

Pelliot sanscrit Dunhuang 8 is an assembly of 12 smaller bits of printed leaves pasted together into a rectangular form. The central part of the composition is the *Sheng Guanzizai pusa qianzhuan miezui tuoluoni* 聖觀自在菩薩千轉滅罪陀羅

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350 Copp (ibid., 115) notes that the character 畫 is written in these two manuscripts as 盡. The two characters are indeed sometimes written very similarly in the Dunhuang manuscripts and thus cannot always be distinguished purely based on their graphic form. The context and the link with the source text confirm that the character in question writes the word *hua* 畫 ('to paint, draw').

尼 (Thousand-Turning Dhāraṇī of the Noble Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara for the Eradication of Sins), with the figure of seated Guanyin encircled by the Sanskrit dhāraṇī (Fig. 46).[351] On the two sides and beneath this central composition are 11 identical strips of framed paper with a spell called *Jiu channan tuoluoni* 救産難 陀羅尼 (Dhāraṇī for Relieving from Childbirth Difficulties), which were probably meant to be worn on the body by women in labour.[352] The Chinese name of the spell, to the left of the Sanskrit text, reads in two vertical columns from left to right (Fig. 47). It is significant that it is a woodblock-printed text produced in multiple copies, corroborating that the direction of writing was an intrinsic part of the design.[353]

Fig. 46: Pelliot sanscrit Dunhuang 8. (27.5 × 40.2 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

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351 The central composition also survives as stand-alone versions; see, for example, Hidas 2014, 105–109.

352 Copp 2014, 44–54, Li and Ma 2017, 340.

353 Similar collages constructed from multiple identical copies of the same image and text were not uncommon in Dunhuang; see Shen 2019, 80–86.
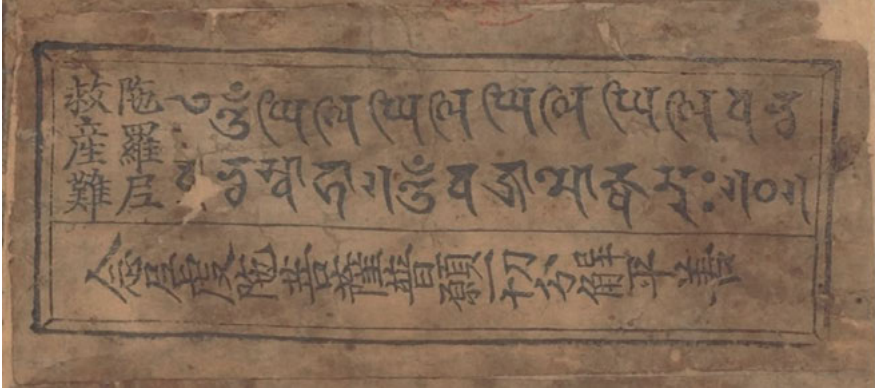
Fig. 47: *Dhāraṇī for Relieving from Childbirth Difficulties*, Pelliot sanscrit Dunhuang 8. (13.7 × 5.5 cm)

Occasionally, similar geometric designs feature text reading horizontally from left to right. An example is Stein painting 174 (Fig. 48), which contains a sketch of the ritual space for the recitation of the *Uṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī*.[354] As Jean-Pierre Drège points out, the setup conforms to the description that survives in a version of the scripture in the Tibetan canon.[355] All of the text seems to be written in the same hand, although not enough characters are present for a conclusive verdict. Some but not all of the captions are written horizontally from left to right. Among these are the labels 'incense burner' 火爐, 'seat of spell master' 咒師坐 and 'Heavenly King' 天王 (*devarāja*). Interestingly, of the labels for the gates in the four cardinal directions, the northern and western portals (*beimen* 北門 and *ximen* 西門) read from left to right but the southern and eastern portals (*nanmen* 南門 and *dongmen* 東門) read from right to left. Although graphic symmetry seems to play no role in the direction of writing, it is possible that the labels of the four portals reflect a conceptual juxtaposition. Strictly speaking, it is an example of horizontal writing, but in terms of its design and cultural background, it is clearly related to the examples on mandalas and amulets.

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354 Waley 1931, 169, Fraser 2003, 154–156, Copp 2014, 100–101.
355 Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004, 274.
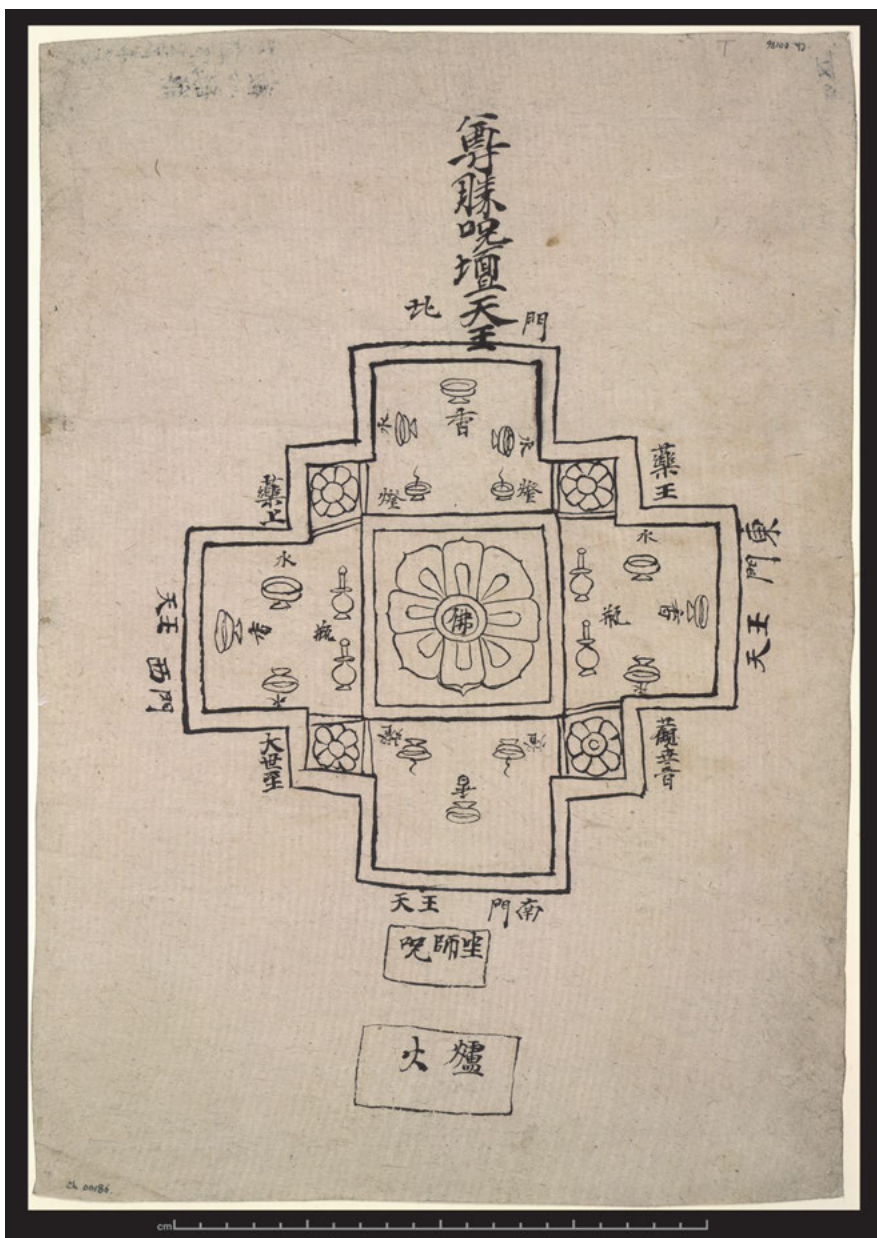
Fig. 48: Stein painting 174 (44 × 30.5 cm; The British Museum)

The above examples survive in mandala-type compositions with clear links to esoteric Buddhism. The esoteric Buddhist context and the unmistakable parallels with Tibetan manuscripts demonstrate the source of influence to be Tibetan scribal culture, even if in most cases the Chinese text remains vertical. None of the relevant examples are dated but a few specimens of printed amulets date from the last third of the tenth century.[356] Naturally, these dates only give a general indication of the possible time frame of our manuscript examples but they point to the later part of the Guiyijun period.

(ii) Margins and verso of scrolls

Differing from the geometrical compositions in mandalas and amulets is a larger pool of examples of Chinese text written in vertical columns from left to right. They are not directly connected to esoteric Buddhism and typically occur on the margins or verso of scrolls associated with students and Buddhist donors. Occasionally, they appear on codices or other types of manuscripts, but are most common in scrolls. Table 6 contains a list of relevant manuscripts with an absolute date, expressed by means of a reign title and year. Whenever applicable, the penultimate column records the title of the main text on the recto. As association circulars are common in such manuscripts, the rightmost column indicates their presence, no matter how fragmentary.

Tab. 6: Instances of left-to-right writing in manuscripts with unambiguous dates.

	Pressmark	Dates in the manuscript	Relevant date	Main text	Circular
1	P.2716	855, 864, *hai* (855/867/879/892)	867/879/ 892	*Lunyu* [student colophon]	+
2	P.2937	884	884	*Taigong jiajiao*	-
3	P.3666	867, 888, 890	888	*Yanzi fu*	+
4	P.2738	869	869	*Taigong jiajiao*	+
5	P.2598	883	883	*Xinji wenci jiujing chao* 新集文詞九經鈔	+
6	P.2825	850, *xinhai* (891), 893	891–896	*Taigong jiajiao* [student colophon]	+

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356 Drège 1999b.

	Pressmark	Dates in the manu-script	Relevant date	Main text	Cir-cular
7	S.329 +S.361	857, 892, *renzi* (892), 893, *guichou* (893), 894, *jiayin* (894), 875, 895	894, 895	*Shuyi jing* 書儀鏡	+
10	S.1386	942, 943, 944		*Xiaojing* [student colophon]	+
11	S.395	943, 946		*Kongzi Xiang Tuo* [*xiangwen shu*]	+
12	S.1907	946, 948		*Fumu enzhong jing* 父母恩重經	-
13	S.2894	972, 973		Vinaya text with commentary	+

The date is one the most important details permitting modern scholars to contextualise a manuscript. It is the most direct means for linking it to our existing knowledge of the historical context. Dates appearing in manuscripts, however, are not always reliable indicators of the moment when a particular bit of text was written down. Manuscripts may contain multiple texts added at different times or may be composite objects assembled from fragments of older manuscripts, some with their own temporal layers. For this reason, particularly for manuscripts featuring multiple texts or a variety of textual fragments, it is crucial to evaluate the validity of the date for each bit of text. Accordingly, the fourth column in the table signifies the date relevant for the left-to-right bit of text, as far as it is possible to determine.

Manuscript S.329 of the British Library, a relatively long scroll (290 cm) with a collection of model letters called *Shuyi jing* 書儀鏡 (Mirror of Letter Models) on the recto, is a concrete example.[357] Zhao Heping 趙和平 demonstrated that this item is the first half of S.361, another scroll (198 cm) that contains the continuation of the same text.[358] The verso of S.329 features a series of disconnected texts ranging from random notes and dates to association circulars, some written from left to right. The white arrows in Fig. 49 show the direction and length of two circulars written in this manner; the first is fragmentary but the second is complete. Elsewhere on the recto another complete circular reads in the conventional direction.

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357 On the *Shuyi jing*, see Rong 1998, 84 and Wu Liyu 2018.

358 Zhao Heping 1990, 65.
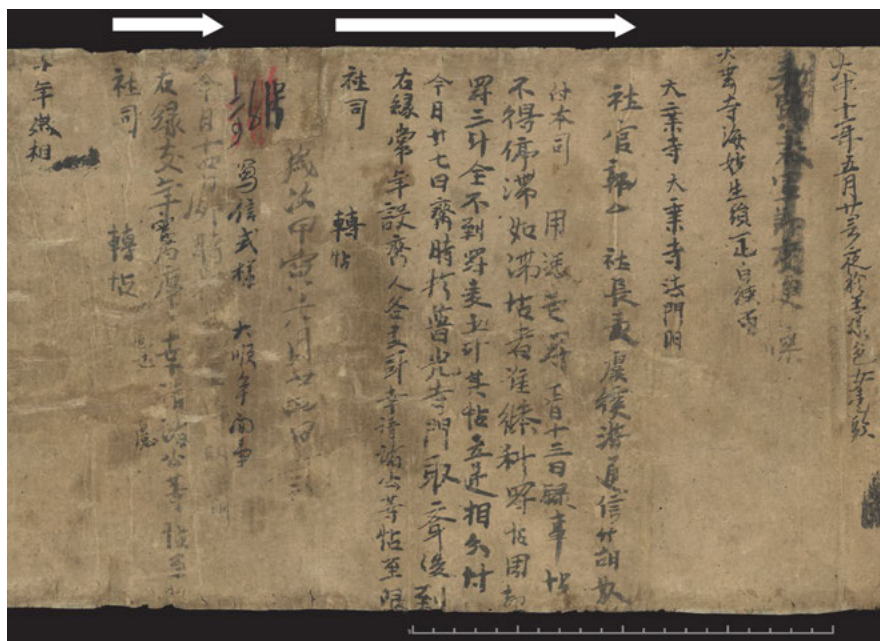
Fig. 49: Verso of manuscript S.329, showing a full and a partial left-to-right circular (marked with arrows). (27.5 × 290 cm; The British Library)

The miscellaneous material on the verso is written in several hands, some faint to the point of being illegible. There are several dates on this side: the eleventh year of the Dazhong 大中 reign (857); a *renzi* 壬子 year, the third of Dashun 大順 (892);[359] and the second of Jingfu 景福 (893). In addition, there is a *jiayin* 甲寅 year (894), as well as 'the second year of *guichou*' 癸丑二年, which must be 893 (i.e. the second year of Jingfu). Altogether, the verso contains five dates, and it seems that they, along with the other scribble-like bits of text, are random notes. This makes it difficult to determine whether they are relevant for the bits of text written from left to right. Incidentally, the date referring to the *jiayin* year (894) appears immediately after (i.e. to the right of) the circular fragment that reads from left to right and is written in the same hand and same kind of faded ink (Fig. 49).[360]

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359 In reality, the Dashun reign only lasted two years and thus 892 was technically already the first year of the Jingfu reign.

360 The line in between the circular and the date, written in strong black ink (i.e. 'letter-writing models from the Dashun period' 寫信式樣，大順年間事) is in the hand of Stein's secre-

The verso of S.361, which used to be the other half of the original scroll, contains the following two dates: the second year of the Qianfu 乾符 reign (875) and the second of Qianning 乾寧 (895). The latter date appears twice and, as one of these occurrences is at the very end of the scroll, next to a longer fragment of a model letter written from left to right, it appears to be the most relevant date for that text.

Another example featuring multiple dates is manuscript P.2825, a scroll nearly 3 m in length, with a copy of the primer *Taigong jiajiao*. We have already discussed the colophon on the recto of this manuscript in Chapter Two, describing how the text was read aloud by the student Song Wenxian and written down by An Wende in the fourth year of the Dazhong reign (850). As in the previous example, the verso of the scroll has a series of seemingly random material, including miscellaneous notes and a lay association circular reading from left to right. There are three dates on the verso: the first year of the Dashun reign (891); the second of Jingfu (893) and the third of Qianning (896). Additionally, a reference to a *xinhai* 辛亥 year is present, most likely signifying 891. The dates all fall within the same five-year period but none of them can be confidently associated with the circular that reads from left to right. The date 896 is located in its immediate vicinity but the black ink is noticeably different from the faint ink of the circular (Fig. 50).[361] Even so, it is relatively safe to assume that the circular dates not to 850, when the *Taigong jiajiao* on the recto was copied, but to around 891–896 when the rest of the miscellaneous, scribble-like notes were added to the verso.

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tary Chiang Ssu-Yeh. As usual, above his description are the Suzhou numerals in black and red ink.

361 The faintness of ink in part of the content in such scrolls is a common phenomenon, probably related to ink quality and how it ages. In fact, some of the text is so faded it is barely perceptible. The variations in intensity are evidently unrelated to the sequence in which the individual bits of text were written, as from a distance of a millennium the difference of a few years is insignificant.
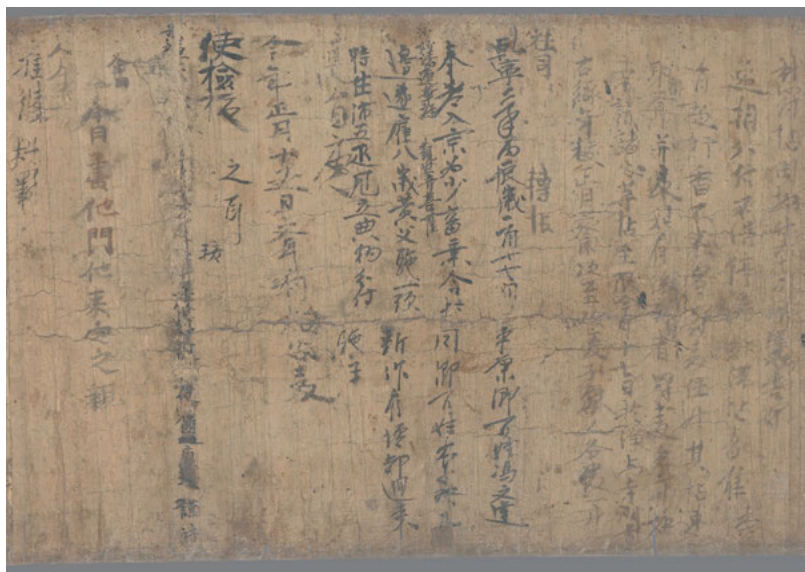
Fig. 50: Verso of manuscript P.2825, showing (on the right) a faint left-to-right copy of a circular and the date 896 (third year of Qianning), in stronger ink, to its left. (29.5–30.7 × 279.9 cm; The British Library)

Yet another example is manuscript P.2716, the recto of which contains an incomplete copy of He Yan's commentary to the *Lunyu*. The writing style in the text and the colophon confirms that this is not a scholarly edition but a copy made by a student. Indeed, the colophon at the end of the text (Fig. 51) states that it was copied by the student Linghu Zaisheng 令狐再晟 in the ninth year of the Dazhong reign (855). The two characters of the surname Linghu 令狐 in the colophon form a ligature (*hewen* 合文). Underneath this colophon, separated by a bit of space, are the words *haiyuan ya* 海源押, possibly meaning that the copying was approved by someone called Haiyuan.[362] This could be the monastic name of a monk overseeing the student's work, although none of the other relevant manuscripts contain notes to this effect. To the left of the first colophon is another in a similarly incompetent hand, stating that this colophon was written by a boy (童子 *tongzi*) called Linghu Wenjin 令狐文進 in the fifth year of the Xiantong reign (864). Once again, the surname Linghu is written as a ligature.

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362 Some scholars (e.g. Xu Jianping 2006, 367, Zhang Yongquan 2008, v. 4, 1728) read the second character without the 'water' radical as *yuan* 原 but, since this is part of a name, it is of no consequence for to the note's meaning.
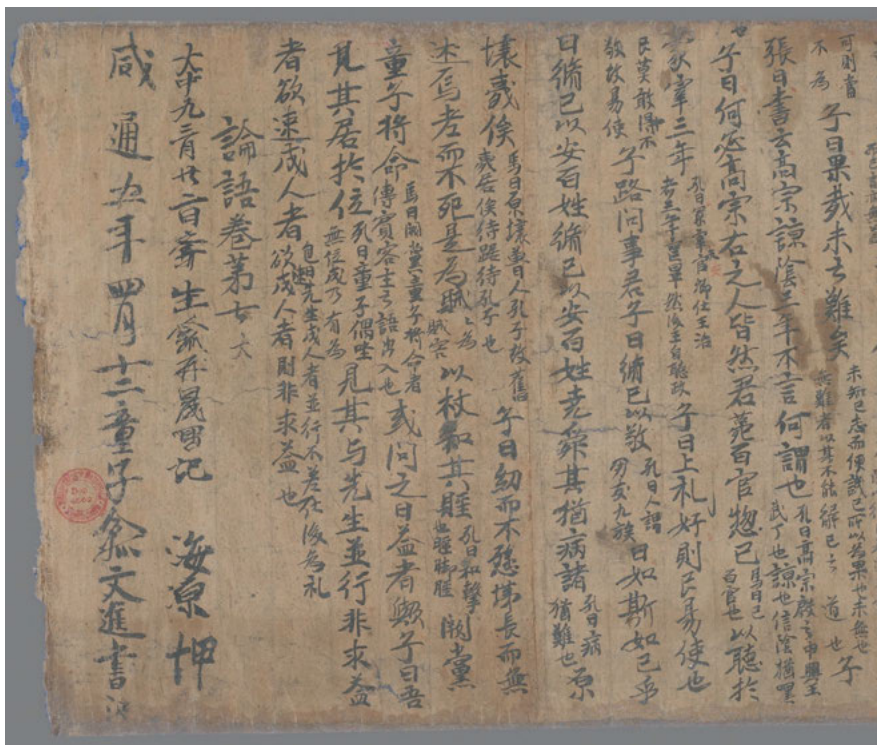
Fig. 51: The end of the recto of manuscript P.2716 with the two colophons. (27.2–28.3 × 158.4 cm; The British Library)

Nine years separate the two colophons and while the first likely denotes the actual time of copying the *Lunyu*, the relevance of the second is not straightforward. It was apparently added at a later point in time by another member of the Linghu family but the exact relationship between the two of them is not clear. Wenjin may have simply used a manuscript copied by Zaisheng several years earlier.[363] In any case, Wenjin could not have been Zaisheng's son because the nine-year gap between the two colophons implies a narrower age difference between them. Provided, of course, that they were roughly the same age when studying at the monastery, which is not necessarily the case. Nonetheless, Wenjin may have been a younger brother or another young male member of the larger family who inherited the scroll and became its second user.

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363 This is a scenario suggested in Zheng Binglin 2001, 7.

The recto of this scroll looks very similar to that of P.2825 and the dates of their colophons are also close in time (855 vs. 850). In addition, the verso of P.2716 likewise contains a copy of a circular written from left to right by an unskilled hand. To the right of it, another circular reads in the conventional direction. Far removed from these two circulars, at the rightmost edge of the verso is a reference to a *hai* 亥 year (i.e. Year of the Boar). As there is a *hai* year every twelve years, this date could theoretically refer to a number of actual years, including 855 seen in Linghu Zaisheng's colophon on the recto, or 867, which would be closer to the date in Linghu Wenjin's colophon (i.e. 864).[364] As seen above in P.2825, the left-to-right bits of text on the verso are nearly half a century later than the colophon on the recto. Considering the parallels between the two manuscripts, the left-to-right text on the verso of P.2716 is probably also later than the dates of the colophons. The dates 867, 879 or 892 are therefore more realistic.

Incidentally, the name Linghu Wenjin occurs in a long list of names at the end of a circular in another manuscript from Table 6, namely, P.2738.[365] It comes as no surprise, therefore, that manuscript P.2738 is extremely similar to P.2716, featuring the *Taigong jiajiao* on the recto and a series of miscellaneous notes and scribbles on the verso. Among this material are two fragmentary copies of the *Shang xiang Huang Qi tie* 尚想黃綺帖 (I reverently think of Huang and Qi),[366] a short piece of text attributed to the celebrated calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (306–361).[367] Clearly no effort has been made here to reproduce Wang Xizhi's calligraphy, the text is in a similarly careless hand as the rest of the scribbles on this side. Although one of the copies has been written in the usual direction, another one at the end of the verso reads from left to right. Due to damage to the end of P.2738, it is not possible to see the colophon on the recto, but the miscellaneous notes on the verso include two references to the tenth year of the Xiantong reign (869). This date, once again, is close in time to the dates in P.2716 and P.2825, supporting the initial impression that the two scrolls were created under similar circumstances.

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364 Xu Jianping 2006, 367 proposes that the *hai* year refers to 855 seen on the recto.

365 Li Zhengyu 1987, 28.

366 Huang and Qi likely refer to the calligraphers Xia Huanggong 夏黃公 (Master Huang from Xia) and Qili Ji 綺里季 (Ji from Qili), two of the so-called Four Hoaryheads 四皓, who withdrew into the mountains from the tyrannical rule of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BCE); see Zhang Tiangong 2004. On the Four Hoaryheads, see Berkowitz 2000, 64–80 and Berkowitz 2014, 343–344.

367 On manuscripts with the *Shang xiang Huang Qi tie* excavated from sites at Khotan, Kucha, Turfan and Dunhuang, see Rong Xinjiang 2014; cf. Zhang Xinpeng 2018. The first few characters of the text, repeated over and over, also occur on the verso of a Tibetan manuscript, namely, Pelliot tibétain 4111.

A pattern clearly emerging from the examples is that there is a significant overlap between manuscripts that contain left-to-right instances of writing and those written by students. Indeed, of the 13 manuscripts in Table 6, only the last item (S.2894) features a text that cannot be directly connected to an educational setting. The rest of the items contain secular texts commonly copied either by students studying at local monasteries (i.e. *Lunyu*, *Taigong jiajiao*, *Yanzi fu*, *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu*, *Kaimeng yaoxun*, *Xiaojing*) or those in other types of schools (i.e. *Xinji wenci jiujing chao*, *Shuyi jing*, *Fumu enzhong jing*). Three manuscripts feature student colophons expressly identifying them as having been copied and used by students associated with Dunhuang monasteries.

The above examples demonstrate that although some manuscripts include dates from the 850s onward, such early dates are probably not applicable to the left-to-right bits of texts on the verso. Often the content on the verso, including the text reading from left to right, postdates the main text copied on the recto by quite a few years. The earliest date we can confidently link with the practice of writing from left to right is 867. As for the upper end of this practice, the latest examples are from the early 970s. Although the sample base of unambiguously dated manuscripts here is limited, we should expect the same general time frame to be applicable for manuscripts with cyclical dates.

Table 7 lists manuscripts with cyclical dates expressed either in terms of the sixty-year or twelve-year cycle. Whereas within a person's lifetime such dates may have been perfectly adequate to record dates, from a distance of virtually a millennium they lose their specificity and become ambiguous. The fourth column records, whenever possible, the deduced date of the relevant piece of text. As earlier, the rightmost column indicates whether the manuscript includes fragments of association circulars, and the penultimate column records the title of the main text.

Tab. 7: Instances of left-to-right writing in manuscripts with cyclical dates.

	Pressmark	Dates in the manuscript	Deduced date	Main text	Circular
1	S.6614	*gengchen* (920/980), *jiaxu* (914/974)		*Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經	+
2	P.2880	*gengchen* (920/980)		misc. titles and excerpts	+
3	S.728	*bingshen* (876/936), *gengzi* (880/940)	936, 940	*Xiaojing* [student colophon]	+
4	P.3698	4th year, *jihai* (879/939), *gengzi* (870/940)	939, 940	*Xiaojing* [student colophon]	+
5	P.2439	*jiyou* (889/949), *jiashen* (864/924)		*Sapoduopini piposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙	+
6	P.3108	*jiaxu* (914/974), *gengchen* (920/980)		*Qianziwen*	-
7	P.2690	*jiaxu* (914/974)		*Nian'er wen* 廿二問, i.e. *Dasheng ershi'er wen ben* 大乘二十二問本	-
8	S.6461	*jiaxu* (914/974)		*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經	+
9	S.5509	*jiashen* (924/984)		list of contributions	-
10	P.3842	*dinghai* (867/927/ 987), *bingxu* (866/ 926/986)		confession text	-
11	S.274	*wuzi* (868/928/988)		*Foshuo wuchang jing* 佛說無常經	+
12	P.3234	*jiachen* (884/944), *renyin* (882/942), *guimao* (883/943)	944, 942, 943	Commentary on the *Dasheng baifa mingmenlun kaizong yiji* 大乘百法明門論開宗義記	-
13	S.10564	*gengzi* (880/940/1000)		-	+
14	S.214	*guiwei* (923/983), *jiashen* (924/984)	924	*Yanzi fu* [student colophon]	+
15	BD00268	*guiwei* (923/983), *renjia* (922/982)		*Foshuo yan shouming jing*	-
16	BD01046	*wu*		*Sifenlü shanbu suiji jiemo* 四分律刪補隨機羯磨	-
17	P.3692	*renwu* (922)	922	*Li Ling yu Su Wu shu* 李陵與蘇武書 [student colophon]	+
18	S.1163	*gengxu* (890/950)		*Taigong jiajiao* [student colophon]	+

	Pressmark	Dates in the manuscript	Deduced date	Main text	Circular
19	P.2680	bingshen (936)	936	misc. Buddhist texts	+
20	P.2537	*guiyou* (913/973)		*Lüechu yingjin* 略出纂金	-
21	S.5961	*guiyou* (913/973)		*Xinhe liuzi Qianziwen* 新合六字千字文	
22	P.3706	*gengwu* (910/970), *guiyou* (913/973), *wuyin* (918/978), *bingwu* (886/946)	970, 973, 978, 946(?)	*Da foming chanhui wen* 大佛名懺悔文	+
23	P.3826	fifth interc. month of *wuzi* (868/928/ 988), *dinghai* (867/ 927/987), *gengyin* (870/930/990)	988, 987, 990	several Buddhist liturgical texts	-
24	P.4683A	*yisi* (885/945)		*Daban niepan jing*	-
25	P.2717	*dingmao* (907/967)		*Zhengshi zibao* 鄭氏字寶	-
26	S.3011 (A+B)	*wuyin* (858/978)		*Lunyu*	+

The first thing apparent about this table is that it has twice as many items as Table 6 above. This indicates that the people who produced these manuscripts preferred to use Tibetan-style cyclical dates. The titles of the main texts show that this group is quite different from the previous one. Less than half of the total items contain secular texts that can be linked to student lore. Even though five manuscripts feature student colophons, there is a high ratio of manuscripts with Buddhist texts.

Manuscript S.214 is a 144 cm scroll with a copy of the *Yanzi fu* (Rhapsody on the Swallow), executed in a mediocre hand. The colophon attributes the copying to Du Yousui 杜友遂, student at the Yong'an Monastery 永安寺 who copied this text at the end of the *guiwei* 癸未 year, which probably corresponds to 923.[368] A second colophon, three-four months later (i.e. third month of the *jiashen* 甲申 year), names the same student. The verso of the scroll contains miscellaneous scribbles and several circulars, two of which are longer than one line

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368 More precisely 924, as the date is at the very end of the lunar calendar; see Mair 1981, 239. Ikeda 1990, 466 agrees with this date.

and thus have an identifiable direction of writing.[369] As Fig. 52 shows, the one on the right reads in the conventional direction, while the faint one on the left runs in reverse. The white arrows above the image indicate the length and direction of the two circulars.
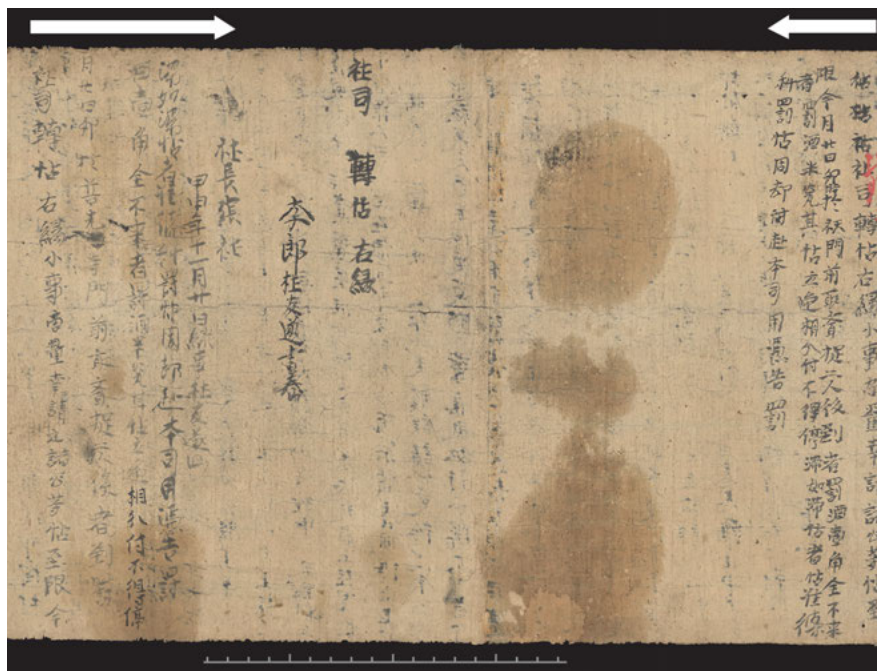
Fig. 52: The verso of manuscript S.214 with two circulars running in opposite direction. (29.5 × 144 cm; The British Library)

The hand in the two circulars is very similar, possibly belonging to the same person. In addition, the opening formula of a circular with only six characters appears in the space between them, in larger characters and darker ink but still in a similar hand. As it is a single line of text, the direction of writing is uncertain. An indented line immediately to the left reads 'Scroll written by the student Du

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369 For a transcription of these two circulars, see Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989, 37. The two circulars are very similar in content, except that one of them requests members to meet 'in front of the Puguang monastery' 普光寺門前, whereas the other 'in front of the Zoroastrian [temple]' 祆門前; also, the latter is missing the date and signature from the end.

Yousui' 孝郎杜友遂書卷.[370] Du Yousui's name also features in the faint left-to-right circular, which dates to the eleventh month of the *jiashen* year (924), eight months after the second colophon on the recto. The name, the date and similar handwriting establish a direct connection between the two sides of the scroll, suggesting they were written by the same student over the course of several months.[371] Unfortunately, all of the dates are in a cyclical format and thus do not reveal the precise year of the left-to-right pieces of text. Nonetheless, it is clear from its content and appearance that the scroll belongs to the same group as the manuscripts in Table 6 above and is probably close to them in time. The date 924 suggested by former research fits this time frame well.

Manuscript P.3706 presents a different example. Its verso mentions the years *gengwu* 更午 (910/970), *guiyou* 癸酉 (913/973), *wuyin* 戊寅 (918/978) and *bingwu* 丙午 (886/946). It also features, among the scribble-like notes, the name of the Kaibao 開寶 reign (968–976), which overlaps with the cyclical dates *gengwu* (970) and *guiyou* (973). Although Kaibao could theoretically also represent the beginning of the name of the Kaibao Monastery 開寶寺, the correspondence with the cyclical signs indicates that here Kaibao does in fact signify the reign period. Accordingly, the cyclical dates listed above must refer to 970 (*gengwu*), 973 (*guiyou*) and 978 (*wuyin*).[372]

Another manuscript dated with cyclical signs is P.3826 with the *Kongzi gong Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* 孔子共項託相問書 (Discussion of Confucius with Xiang Tuo).[373] The verso of the scroll contains miscellaneous fragments, including a contract for the hire of labour and a left-to-right fragment of the main text from the recto. There are also a number of cyclical dates, such as *gengyin* 更寅 (870/930/990), *dinghai* 丁亥 (867/927/987), and *wuzi* 戊子 (868/928/988), which are quite close to each other, regardless of their actual date. Fortunately, the month of the *wuzi* year is identified as the intercalary fifth month (*run wuyue* 閏五月), and as among the possible choices 988 was the only *wuzi* year with an intercalary fifth

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370 The character *xue* 孝 (學) is written here in a way that is closer to the surname Li 李. As already observed in Chapter Two regarding manuscript P.2808, the problem seems to have been a deliberate attempt to use the non-standard form 孝, which may have been less familiar to the student.

371 Another case of left-to-right text on this side of the scroll is one of two copies of a heptasyllabic quatrain, which run symmetrically outwards from a central axis. The poem has no title and is not attested in other sources. For an annotated transcription, see Zhang Xihou 2006, v. 9, 4014–4016. Curiously, this part of the verso also contains a reference to Wang Xizhi's *Shang xiang Huang Qi tie*, discussed above in connection with manuscript P.2738 (dated 869).

372 The *bingwu* year remains an outlier but it could refer to 946.

373 The title is slightly different from the *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* 孔子項託相問書 seen in other manuscripts but it is, of course, the same text.

month, it is certain that the date refers to that year.[374] Therefore, the *gengyin* and *dinghai* years signify 990 and 987.

There are also some completely undated manuscripts with examples of text reading from left to right. Sometimes they offer clues that help their dating, especially if they contain names or events known from dated documents. Table 8 lists instances of left-to-right writing in manuscripts with no date.

Tab. 8: Instances of left-to-right writing on undated manuscripts.

	Pressmark	Dates in the manuscript	Deduced date	Main text	Circular
1	P.3094	-		*Dasheng baifa mingmenlun kaizong yiji*	+
2	Дх-1377	-		-	-
3	P.3319	-	second half of ninth c.	*Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經	+
4	P.3136	-	after ca. 880 (codex)	*Fomu jing, Foshuo bore boluomiduo xin jing, Foshuo Molizhitian [pusa tuoluoni] jing*	-
5	P.2473	-		*[Taishang] dongyuan shenzhou jing* [太上]洞淵神呪經	-
6	S.4747	-		*Xin pusa jing* 新菩薩經	-
7	S.865	-		*Fumu enzhong jing*	+
8	S.2104(A)	-		*Dasheng baifa mingmenlun kaizong yiji*	-
9	S.4863	-		-	-
10	S.6104	-		-	+
11	P.3411	-	after 914	*Shi ende zan* 十恩德讚	-
12	P.4520	-		*Bore boluomiduo xin jing*	-
13	P.5042	-		*Bore boluomiduo xin jing*	-
14	P.3838	-	after ca. 880 (codex)	astrological texts	+
15	P.tib.1069	-		-	-

[374] For dating manuscripts using intercalary months, see Zhang Xiuqing 2007, which shows that between the beginning of the Tibetan period (ca. 780) and the time of the sealing of the Dunhuang library cave (ca. 1006), 988 was the only year with an intercalary fifth month.

None of the items in this table contains secular texts associated with educational practices. Most of the content is Buddhist but the table also includes a Daoist scripture. Several items have no main text. This is a major difference from the predominantly secular texts of lay students seen in Table 6 and, to a lesser degree, in Table 7.

Manuscript P.3319 featuring part of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅 蜜多經 (Skt. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; Great Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom) has several incomplete fragments of association circulars on the verso, as well as a student poem written poorly, in a left-to-right direction. No dates are present but at the beginning of the verso the note 'people of the Great Tang' 大 唐國人 appears in large bold characters and bright ink. Ning Ke 寧可 and Hao Chunwen 郝春文 speculate that the people of Dunhuang could have referred to themselves as 'people of the Great Tang' only during the period of Tibetan control or the early part of the Guiyijun period (certainly before the collapse of the Tang dynasty). Thus, they tentatively date the manuscript to the second half of the ninth century.[375] Again, this does not conflict with the general time frame seen in Table 6.

The verso of manuscript P.3411 contains three lines, written from left to right, partially matching the title of military commissioners of the Cao family. This puts the date of the manuscript within the Cao dynasty's control of the Guiyijun period, that is, after 914. A more complete form of the same title, as well as the dates 938 and 939, appear in manuscript P.3931.[376]

Two of the items in Table 8 are codices, which, as seen in Chapter One, appear in Dunhuang only towards the end of the ninth century. Of these, P.3136, a small booklet with a left-to-right colophon by a certain Li Shunzi who held the official title *jiedu yaya*, has already been discussed. The title connects the manuscript to the Guiyijun period, but the book form helps to narrow the time frame further to the period after around 880. The other codex in the table is P.3838, with two divination texts. On an empty stretch of space on folio 3 (left side) someone has added, in a left-to-right direction, the opening formula of a circular (Fig. 53).[377] Although there are no dates within the manuscript, the codex form shows it cannot be earlier than the late ninth century. Nevertheless, the earliest attested date of a Chinese manuscript in a codex form corresponds to the time frame of writing from left to right pieces.

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375 Ning and Hao 1997, 145; cf. Rong Xinjiang 1990.

376 This codex contains a variety of miscellaneous texts, including an account of a pilgrimage of an Indian monk to Wutaishan 五臺山; see Schneider 1987.

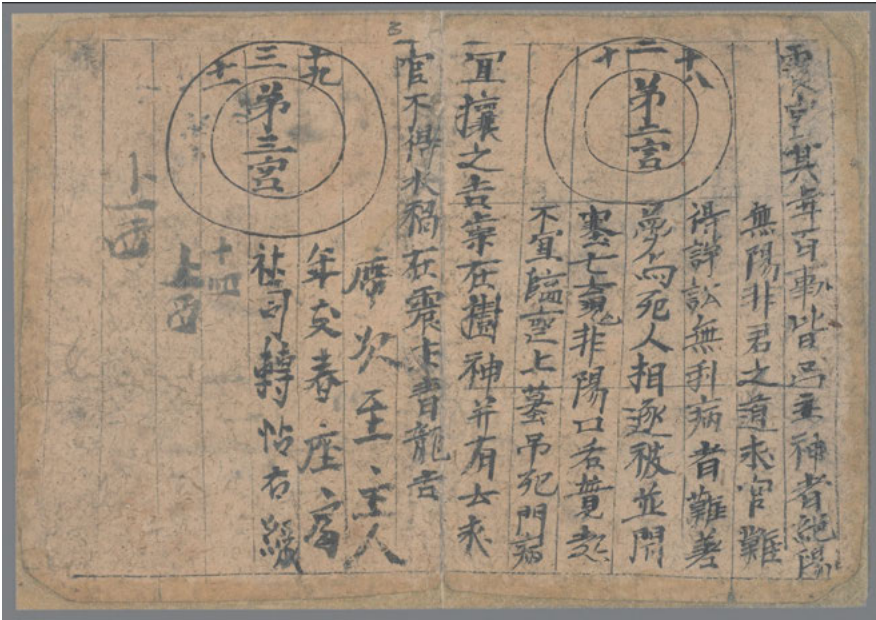**377** The folio number is that added by modern conservators.

Fig. 53: Two pages from codex P.3838, with the opening formula of a circular in the lower half of the left page. (14.5–14.8 × 10,5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Looking through the manuscripts in Tables 6, 7 and 8, a pattern that emerges is that, in almost all cases, the examples of left-to-right bits of Chinese writing are smaller snippets of text, scribbles or notes on the verso or the margins of manuscripts. In the same manuscripts, most of the other material, especially the longer texts, reads in the usual direction. In other words, writing Chinese from left to right was not the normal or regular way of writing in manuscripts. Even those individuals who occasionally wrote short bits of text in this manner would, in most cases, have written in the traditional direction.

A conspicuous trait of such disconnected fragments is the frequent inclusion of association circulars, or circular fragments, sometimes merely a few characters in length. Indeed, quite often the fragments of circulars are the bits of text written from left to right. But even when this is not the case, they tend to co-occur in the same manuscript. Most manuscripts in Table 6 contain circulars. This pattern is unlikely to be a coincidence and points to a significant overlap between individuals who copied the circular fragments and those who wrote the left-to-right bits of text. Remarkably, the ratio of circulars is noticeably lower in manuscripts contain-

ing cyclical dates or no dates at all (Tables 7 and 8). Clearly, bits of circulars were more common in manuscripts with unambiguous dates.

A similar pattern emerges when moving from Table 6 to Tables 7 and 8 in the decrease of secular texts copied by students. This, of course, also signals a change in the function of manuscripts, as the differences in dating practices likely relate to dissimilarities in the social context. The unambiguously dated manuscripts feature a disproportionally high ratio of primers and texts used as primers, including those followed by student colophons. As discussed in Chapter Two, the miscellaneous notes on the verso, including the left-to-right bits of text, were probably reminders of assignments students had to complete elsewhere. At the same time, the students who copied the main text may not have been those who wrote the notes on the verso, as later students may have continued using the same scroll for years or even decades.

The earliest date in a manuscript with left-to-right instances of text is 850 (P.2825) but, as argued above, this date does not pertain to the bit of text written in this way. The earliest actual date that can be linked with such examples is probably 867 (P.2716), although even this is only an indirect deduction. More conclusive is the date 891 (P.2825). As the latest attested date is 990 (P.3826, Table 2), the examples cover a period of about a century, falling firmly within the range of the Guiyijun period. This was, therefore, a scribal practice with clear geographical and temporal limits. Regrettably, there are only a few unambiguously dated manuscripts with such examples and thus the time frame of the practice may not be entirely accurate.

(iii) Inscriptions on votive paintings

In addition to the tens of thousands of Chinese, Tibetan and other manuscripts, the Dunhuang library cave also preserved hundreds of paintings on silk, canvas and paper. Many of the paintings contain votive inscriptions penned by the donors who paid for the objects.[378] The murals inside the caves contain similar inscriptions, as well as cartouche inscriptions identifying Buddhist figures and narrative scenes. Donor inscriptions are of particular significance as many are unambiguously dated and include basic information about the donors.[379] An apparent feature of the donor inscriptions from Dunhuang is how they mostly

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378 The donor inscriptions of most Dunhuang paintings are collected in Ma De 1996. For the paintings in American collections, see Ma De 1999.

379 There is a wealth of recent research on votive paintings from the Guiyijun period, e.g. Soymié 1999, Li Yingjin 2010, Russell-Smith 2005, Sørensen 2020a and 2020b.

read in vertical columns from left to right. The same is true of many framed captions naming the deities or labelling narrative scenes from scriptures.

I have identified 40 paintings with at least one left-to-right inscription.[380] The items are presented in three tables below: Table 9 lists paintings with absolute dates that include a reign title; Table 10, those with cyclical dates; and Table 11, with no dates at all. Naturally, the lists include only inscriptions that are legible enough to establish the direction of writing.[381] In some cases, the inscription is not visible (e.g. EO 1143, Stein 502), in others the writing is in a single column (e.g. MG 17665) or has no observable directionality.

Tab. 9: Dunhuang paintings with unambiguous dates.

	Museum number	Central deity	Holding institution	Date
1	Stein painting 28*	Guanyin	British Museum	892
2	Stein painting 31	Tejaprabha Buddha	British Museum	897
3	Stein painting 14	Guanyin	British Museum	910
4	—	Bhaiṣajya-guru	Hakutsuru Museum	929
5	Stein painting 41	Maitreya	British Museum	939
6	EO 1135	Maitreya	Musée Guimet	940
7	MG 17775	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	943
8	1943.54.1	Maitreya's paradise	Arthur M. Sackler Museum	945
9	Stein painting 16	Śākyamuni Buddha	British Museum	953
10	MG 17695	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	955
11	Stein painting 216	several bodhisattvas	British Museum	956
12	Дх-68	Guanyin	Hermitage State Museum	956

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380 For the paintings, I use the published images from the main collections in Britain (Whitfield 1982–1985), France (Giès et al. 1994–1996), Russia (Menshikov et al. 1997–2005) and India (Chandra and Sharma 2012, as well as Waley 1931). Whenever possible, I rely on digital images available on the websites of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk), the British Museum (http://http://www.britishmuseum.org) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (http://gallica.bnf.fr). The inscription below the image of Bhaiṣajya-guru in the collection of the Hakutsuru Museum is visible in the colour plate in *Bukkyō geijutsu* 仏教芸術 (2019) 2, 1; Tabayashi 2019.

381 The museum number of Dunhuang paintings in the British Museum begin with 'Stein painting', followed by a number (e.g. Stein painting 54). In contrast, paintings in the National Museum of India, Delhi simply use the name 'Stein' as the prefix (e.g. Stein 356).

	Museum number	Central deity	Holding institution	Date
13	Stein painting 65	Guanyin	British Museum	957
14	MG 25486	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	959
15	—	Guanyin	Sichuan Museum	961
16	Stein painting 19	Kṣitigarbha	British Museum	963
17	Stein painting 24	Guanyin	British Museum	963
18	F1930.36	Guanyin	Freer Gallery of Art	968
19	Stein painting 52	Guanyin	British Museum	971
20	27.570	Guanyin	Boston Museum of Fine Arts	975
21	MG 17659	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	981
22	Stein painting 54	Guanyin	British Museum	983
23	MG 17662	Kṣitigarbha	Musée Guimet	983
24	1943.57.14	Guanyin	Arthur M. Sackler Museum	985
25	11606	*Bao fumu enzhong jingbian* 報父母恩重經變	Gansu Provincial Museum	991

Other than the items in the table, I have been able to find only one unambiguously dated painting featuring only text written from right to left (i.e. in the conventional direction) and no text reading from left to right. This is Stein painting 5, dated to 864, earlier than all of the paintings in Table 9. Evidently, the practice of writing inscriptions from left to right had a temporal aspect and this painting predates the advent of this practice. It was not in vogue in 864 but by 892 was already gaining momentum. This matches the manuscript evidence, which dates the beginning of the practice to the 880s. From the entire list in Table 9, Stein painting 28★ (dated 892) and Stein painting 14 (dated 910) are the only items which, in addition to containing a left-to-right inscription, also have text written in the 'normal' direction.[382] All other items contain text written from left to right exclusively. This makes the paintings very different to the manuscripts, in which the number of items with left-to-right text is minimal in comparison with the overall quantity of manuscripts from the same period.

To demonstrate the arrangement of inscriptions and their directions, Stein painting 28★ with the central figure of Guanyin (Fig. 54) presents a good example. The top left corner of the composition contains a partly damaged cartouche

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382 In fact, in Stein painting 28★, it is the central donor inscription that reads from left to right.

with a yellow background bearing the words 'Wholeheartedly offered to the Compassionate [Bodhisattva] Guanshiyin, Saviour from Trouble' 南無大慈悲救苦觀世音[菩薩]一心供養. This inscription reads from left to right and thus fits our group. It is also noteworthy, that the text does not emanate from the central figure of the deity but runs towards it. The donors are depicted at the bottom of the composition, in a separate register. Of these, the main donors are the monk Zhigang 智剛 and the nun Shengming 勝明, whose names appear in green cartouches, in contrast to the yellow cartouches of the other donors. Both Zhigang and Shengming are identified as having the surname Sun 孫, indicating that they were of the same family. Of the two donors behind the monk, the first is the female Miaozhen 妙真, whose name could indicate a nun but her portrait clearly shows a lay devotee.[383] The last person is called Hezi 和子 and seems to be a male devotee.[384] As the inscriptions do not specify Miaozhen's and Hezi's surname, it is likely that they were also part of the same Sun family. The two nuns behind Shengming, called Pujing 普淨 and Minglü 明律, do not offer any clues to their identity.[385] As their cartouches do not include the word *gongyang* ('to offer, worship'), they may have played a different role in the act of offering.

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383 The name Miaozhen is evidently of Buddhist background and is also attested in Dunhuang as a monastic name; it appears, for example, in three lists of nuns in manuscript S.2614 (dated 895); in manuscript S.2669 (dated 865–870), the name appears in another list of nuns, which also gives her secular name as Song Weiwei 宋威威; see Dohi 2015, 1141–1142.

384 Dohi 2015, 363 lists (Sun) Hezi as a nun but I think Whitfield 1982–1985, v. 1, 323 is correct in that the picture shows a male lay devotee. Hezi is attested in the manuscripts with various surnames (e.g. Zhang, Wang, An) as a male given name.

385 Waley 1931, 47 misreads the names Pujing as Puzheng and Miaozhen as Miaochen; Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004, 245 adopt the same readings. Waley also takes the character *sun* 孫 in the sense of 'grandson' and reads Sun Shengming 孫勝明 as 'the grandson Shengming', which does not work because both the main inscription and the portrait identify her as a nun. Nevertheless, reading *sun* as 'grandchild' is not altogether impossible and would make sense in this context. But, as in other inscriptions granddaughters are referred to using the word *sunnü* 孫女, the character *sun* 孫 in this place must signify the surname Sun 孫.

Fig. 54: Stein painting 28*. (83.3 × 63.1 cm; The British Museum)

The main donor inscription located at the centre of the bottom register states that the painting was commissioned by Zhigang, Shengming and others on behalf of deceased nuns and clerics. Naturally, the family ties between the do-

nors raise the possibility that the painting may commemorate members of the same family. The inscription itself reads in the usual direction from right to left. But the two-line inscription with Miaozhen's name on the left is written in a left-to-right direction (Fig. 55). Thus, of the three multi-column inscriptions in this painting, two read from left to right, whereas the long central one reads from right to left. As mentioned above, this combining of directions in the painting may be due to its relatively early date, when the practice of writing devotional inscriptions from left to right was still gaining momentum.

Fig. 55: A section of the bottom register in Stein painting 28*, with two inscriptions written in opposite directions.

While the paintings were obviously the work of trained professionals, the inscriptions in the cartouches were most likely filled in by the donors who commissioned the painting. This was the same type of personal participation in the devotional process already seen in the case of multiple-text manuscripts in Chapter One. This scenario is corroborated by the fact that the inscriptions sometimes, although certainly not always, appear in a decidedly untrained hand. There are also numerous empty cartouches among Dunhuang paintings, probably because donors had not yet appropriated them.[386] In Stein painting 28*, however, some of the inscriptions are in a very similar hand, suggesting that the same individual may have written more than one name. In other words,

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386 Again, this phenomenon seems to be analogous to the empty pages at the end of multiple-text codices.

not every donor wrote their own name.[387] Unfortunately, some of the inscriptions are unclear and thus it is difficult to compare the hands in the different cartouches. Nevertheless, as far as it can be seen, the main donor inscription and the inscriptions next to the figures of Zhigang, Miaozhen and Hezi appear to be in the same hand. This must have been the hand of Zhigang, one of the two main donors and possibly the eldest among the members of the Sun family.

The examples in Table 9 place the upper time limit of left-to-right inscriptions at 991, which is the date in the latest painting featuring an absolute date. As this is only 15 years away from the sealing of the Dunhuang library cave, it is possible that the practice did not discontinue but we simply do not have enough dated examples to document it beyond 991. It is noteworthy, however, that this date is a close match for the latest attested date of a manuscript featuring left-to-right text (i.e. 990). Combining the evidence from the paintings and the manuscripts, that is, groups (ii) and (iii), we can establish that the practice of writing in this manner lasted from about 890 until 991 and possibly longer. The fact that the donor inscriptions in *all* paintings within this time frame read from left to right establishes a direct connection between the paintings and the practice of writing Chinese in a left-to-right direction. That is to say, the individuals who commissioned such paintings were those who invariably wrote their inscriptions in this way.

The list in Table 10 records paintings with dates given as cyclical signs. This list is shorter than the previous one as votive paintings tend to be dated unambiguously, for the date is an essential piece of information in donor inscriptions. According to the general time frame established in Table 9, the cyclical dates should fall between 890 and 991. In all but one case, it is in accord with how art historians have dated the items based on iconographic features.

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387 This is, of course, self-evident in cases when deceased parents are also present among the donors.

Tab. 10: Dunhuang paintings with cyclical dates.

	Museum number	Central deity	Holding institution	Date
1	Stein painting 32	Bhaiṣajyaguru	British Museum	*bingchen* (896/956)
2	MG 22799	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	*jiashen* (924/984)
3	MG 23079	Amoghapāśa	Musée Guimet	*gengxu* (890/950)
4	Stein 391	Guanyin	National Museum, New Delhi	*jiashen* (924/984)
5	Stein 357	Guanyin	National Museum, New Delhi	*yimao* (895/955)
6	P.4518 (27)	Vaiśravaṇa	Bibliothèque nationale de France	tenth c., Year of the Hare

Stein painting 32 is one of the largest paintings from Dunhuang (152.3 × 177.8 cm) and has a Sino-Tibetan donor inscription that can only be seen via infra-red photography. Roderick Whitfield notes that this inscription runs from left to right and is dated to a *bingchen* 丙辰 year. He follows Heather Karmay in interpreting this as the year 836, towards the end of the Tibetan period.[388] Karmay also notes that the name of the painter, identified in the Tibetan inscription as dPal-dbyangs, occurs in several manuscripts, unfortunately none of which are dated. Likewise, it is impossible to know whether it was the same dPal-dbyangs as the artist of the painting.[389] Thus the assumption that the painting was produced during the Tibetan period seems to be based primarily on it having a Tibetan inscription and Tibetan stylistic elements. As we know now, however, Tibetan language and culture continued to have a strong presence in the region well into the Gui-yijun period. As the Chinese inscription in Stein painting 32 is written in a left-to-right direction, the painting most likely dates from after 891, and thus the *bingchen* year should signify 896 or 956.

Progressing to other paintings in the group, MG 23079 from the Musée Guimet is dated to a *gengxu* 庚戌 (890/950) year, which, according to Michel Soymié who compared it with dated paintings, corresponds to 950.[390] The in-

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388 Whitfield 1982–1985, 311–312. For an image of infra-red photograph of the very faded bilingual inscription, see ibid., v. 1, Fig. 43, as well as Wang 2018, 102.

389 Karmay 1975, 11–14.

390 Giès et al. 1994–1996, 348.

scription identifies the figure in the picture as Bodhisattva Amoghapāśa (Bukong juansuo pusa 不空羂索菩薩) but writes the name phonetically as Bokong juansuo kusa 伯空卷索苦薩 (Fig. 56), exhibiting a complete disregard for the usual way of writing the name and the meaning of constituent characters.[391] Apparently, whoever wrote the inscription in the cartouche thought of the name entirely phonetically. The date Soymié suggests is in full accord with our sample base of dated paintings in Table 9.

Fig. 56: Upper part of the figure of Amoghapāśa in MG 23079, with a phonetic rendering of his name in the cartouche. (87.8 × 50 cm; courtesy of the Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet)

Another painting in this group from the Musée Guimet is MG 22799, a long banner with two male and two female donors underneath a figure of Bodhisattva Guanyin.[392] The caption in the catalogue identifies the banner as dating to the ninth year of the Taiping xingguo 太平興國 reign (984).[393] In reality, the paint-

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391 Soymié points out that while using the character 苦 instead of 菩 may be considered a banal mistake, writing 伯 for 不, and 卷 for 羂 is 'inexcusable'; see ibid.

392 On this painting, see also Soymié 1999, 13–14.

393 Giès et al. 1994–1996, 337–338.

ing contains no reign title and Jean-Pierre Drège reads the date as the [...]*shen* □申 year. He refers to the results of infra-red photography, which reveal that the previous character is *jia* 甲 and thus the date of the painting should be 984.[394] As before, the date is in full agreement with the time range suggested by the presence of a left-to-right inscription.

P.4518 (27) is a painting on paper, showing an image of Vaiśravaṇa. This is the only item in this group with inscriptions written in both directions. In addition to a horizontal Khotanese votive inscription dated to the Year of the Hare, the composition has two Chinese inscriptions, each running in an outward direction away from the central axis.[395] Due to the presence of the Khotanese inscription, the Year of the Hare probably refers to 943 or 955.[396] According to Fujieda Akira, the opposite directions of the two inscriptions are a matter of symmetric arrangement.[397] The one on the left side of the upper part of the painting says 'Wholeheartedly offered to the Heavenly King by Wang Shangqing' 王上卿天王一心供養, in which the subject-object-verb sentence structure reflects the Khotanese word order.[398] The name Wang Shangqing appears as Hvāṃ' Śāṃ Khīṅä in the Khotanese inscription at the bottom of the painting. While the name Shangqing 上卿 means 'senior minister' or just a high official in general, here it seems to work as a given name, which may be why the Khotanese text transliterates it.

Fig. 57 shows the lower half of the painting with the Khotanese votive text in the centre and a second Chinese inscription on the right, next to an image of a donor holding an incense burner. This is written in a much clumsier hand than the first one (not seen on the image here) and seems to read: 'Wholeheartedly offered by Zhang Ruzhe' 一心供養張儒者.[399] Although, once again, the word order is decidedly non-Chinese, there can be little doubt that it commemo-

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394 Ibid. As a result of the same infra-red technology, Akiyama Terukazu reads the name of the elder brother as Wang Gebo 王揭撥. This name should be read Wang Laza 王揭擸; see below and especially the next chapter.

395 The Khotanese inscription was first published in Bailey 1956, 138; for a translation, see Dudbridge and Emmerick 1978, 283.

396 Dudbridge and Emmerick 1978, 284–285.

397 Ibid., 284.

398 The word order is, of course, exactly that of Tibetan as well.

399 Dudbridge and Emmerick (ibid.) note the problematic syntax of the two Chinese inscriptions and follow Fujieda Akira's suggestion that they must have been written by a non-Chinese, perhaps Khotanese, individual. The authors also point out (based on consultation with Fujieda Akira and Wu Chi-yu), the first character 一 ('one, whole') in the phrase *yixin* 一心 ('wholeheartedly') is overimposed on the character 發 ('to generate, depart'). The phrase *faxin* 發心 ('to generate the [enlightenment-]mind'), which is otherwise very common in Buddhist literature, does not work in this place.

rates a votive act on the part of Zhang Ruzhe, who is also the donor depicted sitting on a mat, holding an incense burner. Even though the name Ruzhe means 'scholar', it almost certainly functions here as a given name. The name seems to point to a Chinese person, but the grammar and the inept handwriting do not corroborate this. Even without an explicit date, the Khotanese connection firmly places the painting in the tenth century, which also fits the time range of left-to-right inscriptions.

Fig. 57: Donor inscriptions in Chinese (right) and Khotanese (centre); detail from P.4518 (27). (65.6 × 34.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Finally, Table 11 lists paintings in which the date is missing or illegible. The three paintings that are not in the list because their inscriptions read in the usual right-to-left direction are Stein painting 51/58; MG 17657; Stein painting 27 and Stein 356. These probably date to before the unorthodox direction became prevalent in votive inscriptions in Dunhuang. The first two items in Table 11 (Stein painting 3 and MG 23080) have inscriptions in both directions, which may suggest they are from the last third of the ninth century.

Tab. 11: Dunhuang paintings with missing or illegible dates.

	Museum number	Central deity	Holding institution	Date
1	Stein painting 3	Guanyin	British Museum	last third of ninth c.(?)
2	MG 23080	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	last third of ninth c.(?)
3	P.4518 (19)	Guanyin	Bibliothèque nationale de France	after ca. 890
4	Stein painting 59	Guanyin	British Museum	after ca. 890
5	Stein painting 63	Guanyin	British Museum	after ca. 890
6	Stein painting 67–68	Śākyamuni Buddha	British Museum	after ca. 890
7	MG 17778	Guanyin	Musée Guimet	after ca. 890
8	Stein painting 203	Bhaiṣajyaguru	British Museum	after ca. 890
9	S.5666	Rahu	British Library	after ca. 890

Stein painting 3 has mirror images of Bodhisattva Guanyin, each accompanied by an inscription in which the vertical columns read from the central axis toward the outside. In this respect, the direction of writing seems to be part of the design and is thus predicated by the position of the lines in the composition. Such a symmetrical design, however, seems to have been an option only during the period when examples of left-to-right writing were in vogue. Former scholarship has dated this painting to the Tibetan period on the basis of interpreting the word *luo* 落 ('to fall') in the inscription as referring to the expression *luofan* 落番 ('fallen into the hands of the Tibetans').[400] Yet because the inscription is damaged, the character *fan* 番 ('Tibet') is purely conjecture.[401] The relevant part of the inscription reads: '[This image of Guan]shiyin Bodhisattva was reverently made and wholeheartedly dedicated by the disciple of pure faith Wenyi in order to [safely?] return home after having fallen ...' [觀]世音菩薩 清信弟子溫義，爲

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400 Whitfield 1982–1985, v. 1, 321–322 attributes this idea to a personal communication with Fujieda Akira, according to whom 'the character *luo* (fallen) seems in each case to invite completion with the character *fan*, as in other inscriptions in the caves themselves, referring to the Tibetan control of this district, and the principal wish is undoubtedly the very Chinese one of a desire to return home'. Cf. Wang 2018, 139.

401 Ma De 1996, 137 transcribes neither *luo* 落 nor *fan* 番, since the former is not clear, and the latter is altogether absent.

己身落□□歸鄉，敬造一心供養.[402] The part allegedly referring to the Tibetans is missing in both inscriptions. Fortunately, a similar colophon is preserved at the end of manuscript S.2992, which contains a copy of the *Guanyin jing*. The colophon reads as follows:

清信弟子女人賀三娘，為落異鄉，願平安，申年五月廿三日寫。

Copied on the twenty-third of the fifth moon of the *shen* year, to the order of the female Buddhist disciple of pure faith He Sanniang (i.e. 'third girl'), who, having fallen into a foreign land, prays for peace and happiness.[403]

Clearly, the 'foreign land' (*yixiang* 異鄉) mentioned in the colophon is not necessarily Tibet, at least not in the sense of a political entity. It certainly does not imply that Dunhuang was under alien control at the time. In a sense, it connects to the text of the scripture which urges people to call out to Guanyin in times of adversity, which includes finding themselves in inhospitable regions, such as the land of the rākṣasa demons 羅剎鬼國. The expression 'having fallen into a foreign land', in pragmatic terms probably means she lived far away from home. Technically, the word *yi* 異 means 'different, other' and simply refers to living somewhere else.

Coming back to Stein painting 3, the inscription certainly expresses a desire to return home but there is no evidence of it being related to Dunhuang under Tibetan control. The word *fan* 番/蕃 is not in the painting but even if it once had been, it would not automatically prove a connection with the Tibetan period in Dunhuang. This information is insufficient to date the painting. Instead, the presence of inscriptions that read in opposing directions implies a date in the neighbourhood of 890 or slightly earlier, but definitely within the second half of the ninth century.

One of the possible explanations for the unconventional direction of writing in paintings is that the vertical lines move outwards from a central axis, which is often an image of the deity. Accordingly, the text emanates from the central image, as is commonly the case with flames or rays of light. Paintings do indeed exist with inscriptions running in opposite directions. Such an explanation has been noted in connection with painting P.4518 (27) above. Stein painting 3 presents a perfectly symmetrical layout in which the two facing inscriptions and

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402 This bit is part of the right side inscription that reads from left to right. The other inscription is nearly identical, similarly missing the alleged reference to Tibet.

403 Translation loosely based on Giles 1957, 87. Giles tentatively dates the *shen* year (i.e. Year of the Monkey) to 768.

Guanyin figures are essentially mirror images of each other. A less regularised composition is Stein painting 14, in which the three cartouches with inscriptions appear on the two sides of a standing figure of Guanyin (dated 910). The one on the left reads in the normal way from right to left, representing an outward direction from the central figure of the bodhisattva. The two inscriptions on the other side, a larger one in a cartouche on the top right and a smaller one below, both read from left to right, similarly in a centrifugal direction. Thus, all three inscriptions proceed from the centre towards the outside. In the majority of paintings, however, the inscriptions do not follow this pattern of moving away from the centre. The most common type of votive inscription, almost always written from left to right, appears directly below the central image and thus its direction cannot be explained in terms of symmetry. Also, in most paintings all inscriptions read from left to right, making the symmetry hypothesis untenable.

The paintings demonstrate that the practice of writing inscriptions from left to right was directly connected to Guiyijun culture. The phenomenon begins around 890 and lasts until the end of the tenth century. The latest clearly dated example is from 991 but it is very likely that the practice continued beyond the time of the sealing of the library cave. Considering that this way of writing was otherwise rare, this was surely a local phenomenon connected to a specific group of people.

This group of people commissioned most of the surviving paintings on silk and canvas and also took an active role in the production of murals during this period. As votive inscriptions typically include the names of the donors, in many cases their identity is known. In terms of social hierarchy, they must have represented the elite echelons of Dunhuang society, with the financial means to commission potentially expensive votive objects. It is also noteworthy that many of the names are non-Chinese, even though the inscriptions and the manuscripts themselves are in most cases written in Chinese. A number of surnames are clearly associated with Sogdian background (e.g. Kang 康, Mi 米 or Shi 史).

As naming practices in the Guiyijun period will be the subject matter of the next chapter, here I only mention briefly the personal names evidencing the diverse cultural makeup of local society during the ninth and tenth centuries. For instance, the donor's name in Stein painting 19 (dated 963) is Kang Qingnu 康清奴 (Fig. 58). The surname reveals that he was of Sogdian background and his family originally came from Samarkand. His given name Qingnu means 'Servant of Purity' in which the second element *nu* 奴 was a frequent part of given names, translating the Sogdian word *βntk* ('slave, servant'). As this is a typical theophoric structure, the word *qing* 清 ('purity') must have been a Chi-

nese (possibly abbreviated) rendering of the name of an Iranian deity. On the painting, Kang Qingnu's deceased mother is identified as being from the Yin 陰 clan (usually considered Chinese), so the donor himself must have been Chinese on his mother's side.

Fig. 58: Donors at the bottom of Stein painting 19, with a central votive inscription that reads from left to right. (56.1 × 51.5 cm; The British Museum)

But donors also exist with Chinese surnames, as is the case with Stein painting 52, dated 971, the main donor of which is called Zhang Laza 張擖攞, whose given name means 'heap of garbage'.[404] This name was so unexpected that previous scholarship either misread it or marked it as illegible.[405] Yet this was a relatively common given name that occurs in the Dunhuang manuscripts with different surnames. In the painting, the name of the mother is illegible, but Zhang Laza and his brothers' wives are from the Fan 氾 and Song 宋 families, with typically Chinese surnames. Zhang Laza's name also occurs in several circulars of irrigation channel managers (*quren zhuantie* 渠人轉帖) in manuscript P.5032, possibly referring to the same person. This is further supported by the fact that the manuscript mentions a number of individuals from the Zhang,

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404 The opprobrious name Laza was not uncommon in Dunhuang and there are many examples in donor inscriptions and name lists attached to circulars. For the word *laza*, alternatively written as *laza* 拉雜 (and its various orthographic variants), see the detailed and instructive analysis in Mair 1999, 14–39.

405 Whitfield 1982–1985, v. 2, 320 reads the given name as Keqiao (sic., 擖橋?), whereas Ma De 1996, 139 uses empty squares to mark its illegibility. Whitfield is correct that the character 擖 indeed has a reading of *ge* (<ke), yet in combination with the character 攞 it should be read as *ye* or *la*.

Fan and Song families, whose surnames match those of the primary donors in the painting. Yet the same manuscript also lists people with surnames such as Kang 康, An 安, Sun 孫, Qu 屈, Shi 石, Jia 賈 and Yin 陰, who have both a Central Asian and Chinese background. If anything, this situation evidences the complex makeup of Dunhuang society at the time, and that people of Chinese and Central Asian origin not only interacted in their daily business but also intermarried and formed mixed lineages. Their children, regardless of surname, integrated diverse linguistic and cultural elements.

3.3 Conclusions

Vertical columns written from left to right are merely one pattern observable in the layout of manuscripts and inscriptions in groups (ii) and (iii). It is also apparent, that these two groups belong to a very similar time frame. They are, however, different from the examples in mandalas and amulets, which unquestionably reflect a Tibetan influence. Although we can identify, especially in the paintings, occasional Tibetan elements, on the whole, groups (ii) and (iii) do not exhibit a consistent link with Tibetan scribal culture and art. When searching for potential sources of influence, the Uighur and Sogdian scripts are the only ones in the Hexi region that could be written vertically from left to right.[406]

As seen above, the paintings and the manuscripts include some surnames of Sogdian ancestry, but typical Chinese surnames may also be paired with given names that suggest a Central Asian influence. It is also important that the donor families in the paintings are often of mixed cultural heritage. This observation fits well with our understanding of the cultural and linguistic situation along the Silk Roads and it is likely that these families were both multilingual and multicultural. Directly equating the people who produced the left-to-right inscriptions with Sogdians is problematic as they had been in the region for centuries and one would need to explain the appearance of this new development within their own culture. As far as we know, there was no new wave of Sogdian immigrants around the end of the ninth century.[407] There were, howev-

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406 The Uighurs borrowed their script from the Sogdians and thus these two scripts are genetically related. The vertical orientation of the Old Uighur script continued when it was adapted to write the Mongolian and later the Manchu languages.

407 Early presence of Sogdians at Dunhuang is attested by the 'Sogdian ancient letters' found by Aurel Stein among the ruins of a watchtower west of Dunhuang. The letters date to the early fourth century and were written in Gansu; see Sims-Williams 1985 and de la Vaissière 2003, 24. For a translation of Letter II, see Sims-Williams 2001.

er, large groups of Uighurs who moved southwards following the 840 collapse of the Uighur Empire to form independent states in Ganzhou and Xizhou, east and west of Dunhuang. Although the Uighurs were not present as a political entity in Dunhuang before the beginning of the eleventh century,[408] the gradual formation of the Ganzhou Uighurs Khaganate from around 890 roughly coincides with the time when examples of left-to-right bits of writing in manuscripts and paintings from Dunhuang begin to appear.[409] In Dunhuang, this is the point when the Zhang family struggles to maintain control and the region sinks into political turmoil.

Of course, the Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings in groups (ii) and (iii) are in Chinese and we are merely dealing with an influence from a different culture, whether Uighur, Sogdian or a mixture of both. The elite families who commissioned the votive paintings came to the foreground in this period, evidencing a new cultural and political identity. Accordingly, the culture of the elite reflected in the Guiyijun manuscripts and paintings is entirely different from the pre-Tibetan period when the region was still part of the Tang empire. With the end of the political dominance of Tibet, a new type of culture emerges with strong Central Asian elements.[410] At the same time, Tibetan culture and language remained influential even though politically the region was no longer under Tibetan rule. Guiyijun Dunhuang developed a new type of culture that differed greatly from that in the Tang empire and labelling it 'Chinese' is an oversimplification, even if the community primarily wrote its manuscripts and inscriptions in Chinese.[411] Clearly, the situation was far more complex.[412]

The early eleventh century, when the library cave was sealed, represents the cut-off date for the manuscripts and portable paintings. Fortunately, in addition to this material, there is an abundance of murals inside the Mogao

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408 Moriyasu 2000, 33–34.

409 Sims-Williams and Hamilton 2015, 11–12 draw attention to the existence among the Dunhuang manuscripts of a small group of so-called Turco-Sogdian documents, which attest to the close contacts and intermixing of Sogdians and Uighurs.

410 Russell-Smith 2005 argues that a new local painting style developed in the tenth century, which supports the findings advanced in this paper, although the examples of text written from left to right indicate that this new local culture emerged at the end of the ninth century.

411 Kornicki 2018 convincingly argues that Sinitic, that is, the written form of Chinese, should be regarded as an East Asian script shared by a variety of cultures throughout East Asia. It is possible to argue that the Guiyijun period in Dunhuang was yet another example of a non-Chinese culture that used the Chinese script.

412 See the arguments in Russell-Smith 2005, 227–231 for the emergence of a local culture, which was neither specifically pro-Chinese nor 'anti-foreign'.

Caves, and some of these also contain inscriptions written from left to right. In contrast to the contents of the library cave, the time frame of the murals is not restricted by the sealing of the cave and so they preserve a sizeable body of art produced during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In practical terms this means that they cover the rest of the Guiyijun period, undocumented in the contents of the library cave, as well as the period of Tangut control over Hexi. With time, however, following the move of China's economic and cultural centres to the south and the rise of the maritime Silk Road, Dunhuang lost its strategic location, which in turn led to the decline of Buddhist patronage and cave-building activity.[413] The murals in the caves may help us arrive at a more accurate time frame for the left-to-right inscriptions at Dunhuang. Although many of the caves were rebuilt in later periods and some of the murals and inscriptions were painted over with new ones, there are extant murals and inscriptions from most periods prior to the Mongols. Regrettably, the mural inscriptions are less accessible, as reproductions tend to focus on pictorial material and the overall composition of the caves. Consequently, the reproductions often do not include all inscriptions, or their quality is such that it is difficult to read them. In most cases the inscriptions are available only in transcription with no mention of the direction of writing.[414] Therefore, despite the potential benefits of such a study, the analysis of the direction of writing on mural inscriptions is a task yet to be undertaken.

The direction of writing in Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings may seem a technical matter, a pedantic attention to details of little consequence. Perhaps this is the reason why former scholarship has paid little attention to this phenomenon and very few attempts have been made to address the problem in any depth. Yet, as this chapter argues, a systematic examination of relevant examples reveals the influence of non-Chinese scribal cultures. Exploring the potential source of this practice has obvious implications for understanding the cultural background of the paintings and manuscripts and offers an independent criterion for dating them. Most importantly, we can appreciate the differences in comparison with the time when the region was still part of the Tang realm.

From a purely technical point of view, establishing the time frame for the left-to-right bits of writing allows us to date other manuscripts and paintings

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413 Rong 2013, 76–77.
414 For example, the collection of donor inscriptions from the Mogao Caves merely notes in the introduction (Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 1986, 2) that some of the inscriptions read from left to right and others from right to left but gives no indication of the direction of writing for individual inscriptions.

with greater accuracy. Naturally, this method should not be applied mechanically and, in each case, we should consider other types of evidence, if available. Nevertheless, the method itself is a step towards dating artefacts by means of quantifiable and objective data. As additional manuscripts and paintings are identified, it may become possible to refine the chronological framework of the practice, and thereby enhance our understanding of its social and cultural background.

4 Circulars and Names

The Dunhuang manuscripts, particularly the documents related to the economic and social history of the region, provide first-hand information, not available in transmitted sources, on daily life in this multicultural and multilingual region. The manuscripts include a variety of texts concerning local associations known as *she* 社.[415] Chinese scholars commonly refer to the texts as *sheyi wenshu* 社邑文書, or association documents.[416] A subset of this group is several hundred copies of circulars sent out to members of such associations, informing them of the time and place of upcoming meetings, the agenda, contributions they were supposed to bring and penalties for late arrival or non-attendance.[417] The circulars date from the Guiyijun period and are usually on coarse paper, often on the verso of manuscripts with other texts. Looking at them as a group, it is striking that many of them are in an untrained hand and abound in mistakes.

Some of the surviving manuscripts containing circulars are actual notices sent out to communicate with members, and as such, they are first-hand witnesses of the activities of local associations. They were written by the management and then passed around among members, possibly by means of a messenger. After making a full round, the circular would make its way back to the management. The very fact that some of them have survived is evidence that at times they were kept after having served their initial purpose. Rather than being filed away for record keeping, they may well have been kept as samples for students to copy as a writing exercise.

Indeed, many of the extant circulars are fragmentary and appear in conjunction with texts written by students, indicating they were not originals but copies. The inclusion of these circulars among the repertoire of texts used for practice illustrates how administrative and other documents could serve an

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415 The institution of *she* was not unique to Dunhuang and there were antecedents in central China from earlier times; for a brief overview, see Ning Ke 1985.

416 Hao Chunwen 2007, 129 estimates that the total number of surviving documents related to associations is more than 480. For a brief overview of the documents related to associations, see Rong 2013, 296–300.

417 I follow Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989 in using 'association' as a translation of the Chinese word *she*. Lionel Giles (1939) referred to them as 'clubs'; Leonid Chuguevsky as 'lay social unions' (in Russian; Chuguevskij 1976 and 1977) or 'corporations, associations' (in French; Čuguevskiǐ 1981, 25); Erik Zürcher (1989, 46) as 'religious societies'. The English title of the reprint of Naba Toshisada's (1974, 459) seminal study called them 'voluntary associations'. I prefer the term 'association' because it is neutral, in contrast to the interpretive nature of some of the other terms.

entirely different function after their original use. In fact, in many cases their ultimate survival is the result of this secondary function, in contrast to the multitude of other documents and letters which were not utilised in such way and thus perished.

A fascinating feature of the circulars is that they often contain the list of recipients, that is, the document's intended audience. Taken together, their names constitute an important body of onomastic data with potential insights into the cultural background of local population during the Guiyijun period. The second half of this chapter attempts to tap into this corpus of names and interpret them in the light of what has been said about the region in the previous chapters.

4.1 Former scholarship

Scholars recognised the value of documents related to associations relatively early.[418] The first person to study such documents from the Stein and Pelliot collections was the Japanese scholar Naba Toshisada 那波利貞. In 1938 and 1939, he published two long studies, in which he not only presented the first overview of this group of texts but also provided an exhaustive analysis of the typology of associations, their characteristics and social function.[419] Citing a large number of concrete examples from the manuscripts, he drew attention to a wealth of hitherto unknown material. His systematic approach and attention to detail laid the foundation for subsequent research on the topic.

In Britain, Lionel Giles published the first full translation of an association circular (S.1453) in 1939, as part of a longer project of translating the colophons of dated manuscripts from the Stein collection.[420] He also provided a short discussion of such documents, calling them 'club circulars'. His posthumous catalogue of the Chinese manuscripts gathers the relevant texts together under the heading as 'Club rules and circulars' (Nos 7572–7624).[421] In France, the eminent historian Jacques Gernet discussed associations in Dunhuang in his book on Buddhist economy. Relying on Naba Toshisada's research for specific examples, he emphasised the continuity of such associations from the fifth century through the Song

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418 For an overview of research on documents related to associations, see Hao Chunwen 2007 and Zhao Dawang 2019b.
419 Naba 1938, Parts I–III, Naba 1939a and 1939b.
420 Giles 1939, 1038–1040.
421 Giles 1957, 259–261.

period.[422] Accordingly, he saw the Guiyijun associations merely as a local manifestation of a much wider phenomenon in Chinese social history. In Russia, Leonid I. Chuguevsky studied the manuscripts related to economic and social history from the 1970s onward. Working in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), he primarily researched the manuscripts in the Oldenburg collection, and thus his papers were equally important for introducing hitherto unknown manuscripts to scholars around the world.[423]

Research continued in Japan with a study by the historian Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章, who made a number of important observations, including a clear distinction between original documents and copies made by students as writing exercise.[424] After a brief hiatus, research in Japan resumed with contributions that positioned associations within the social history of Dunhuang. Dohi Yoshi-kazu 土肥義和 analysed the role of associations in the construction of cave temples and Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 examined them in relation to daily life.[425] A major step in the study of the documents was the publication of the Toyo bunko series entitled *Tun-huang and Turfan Documents Concerning Social and Economic History*, volume IV of which bore the subtitle '*She* Associations and Related Documents'.[426] Each entry included a transcription, notes, bibliography of secondary literature and, in a companion volume, facsimile reproductions made from microfilms.

Chinese scholars became involved in the study of documents related to associations from the 1980s onward. Significant early contributions were authored by Guo Feng 郭鋒, Ning Ke, and Hao Chunwen.[427] With the major Dunhuang collections becoming available in facsimile editions, it became possible to study the documents as a more or less comprehensive corpus.[428] A result of these ef-

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422 Gernet's book was originally published in French in 1956 (Gernet 1956), while the Chinese (Xie Henai 1994) and English (Gernet 1995) translations came out nearly four decades later. The discussion of 'Organized Associations' is in Gernet 1995, 259–277.

423 Chuguevsky 1976, 1977, 1982, and 1996. The collection was kept at the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which is known today as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts.

424 Chikusa 1964. Paul Demiéville (1970, 17–18) published a brief overview of Chikusa's study on the pages of *T'oung Pao*. Other contributions to the subject from this period include Chen Zuolong 1965 and 1973.

425 Dohi 1980a, 285–292 and Nagasawa 1980, 468–475.

426 Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989.

427 E.g. Guo Feng 1983, Ning Ke 1985, Hao Chunwen 1989a and 1989b, and somewhat later Ning and Hao 1994, Ning and Hao 1995. See also Liu Yonghua 1991.

428 Huang Yongwu 黃永武 published facsimile versions of the Dunhuang manuscripts from microfilms in a 140-volume series entitled *Dunhuang baozang* 敦煌寶藏 (Huang Yongwu 1986).

forts was the collection of relevant documents Ning Ke and Hao Chunwen published in 1997.[429] This publication was a milestone in research, for at the time it represented the first complete collection of all relevant manuscripts in scrupulous transcription, providing access to primary sources that were otherwise not easily accessible. Although it is more complete than the Toyo bunko edition, both publications remain essential for the study of association documents.

The beginning of the new millennium saw a series of excellent studies on Dunhuang associations, and this trend continues to this day.[430] In addition to researching the social or economic history of the region, scholars continue to exploit the same body of texts for its linguistic features, and recently there has been renewed interest in links with Buddhism.[431] Among the most exciting topics that have generated quite a few publications is the history and nature of women's associations.[432] There are also book-length studies of the documents related to associations, one by Hao Chunwen, the other by Meng Xianshi 孟憲實.[433] The second edition of Hao Chunwen's 2006 monograph demonstrates the continuous interest in the subject and its significance for Dunhuang studies in general.[434]

4.2 Documents related to associations

Associations were, and still are, an integral part of religious life in China. Although they were ubiquitous in the medieval period, almost all relevant documents from Dunhuang date to the Guiyijun period and exhibit a high degree of homogeneity. Even documents and circulars written decades apart maintain essentially the same formulaic wording, pointing to a shared tradition. As a result, the relevant documents allow us to reconstruct the main characteristics of

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Although by modern standards the quality of the images is far from ideal, the publication was an important stimulus for the field of Dunhuang studies, as it provided access to the manuscripts. Even today, when most manuscripts are available as digital images or good quality paper publications, owing to its comprehensive coverage, the *Dunhuang baozang* remains a useful resource.

429 Ning and Hao 1997.

430 E.g. Yang Jiping 2001, Meng Xianshi 2001 and 2002, Hao Chunwen 2006c, Qi Xiaoqing 2009, Meng Xianshi 2009a and 2009c, Zhao Dawang 2019a.

431 Studies specifically focusing on vocabulary include Yang Sen 1999a, Ye Guiliang 2004, Wang Jianjun 2007 and Zhang Xiaoyan 2013. On links with Buddhism, see Hao Chunwen 2004 and Zhang Peijun 2008.

432 Ning and Hao 1990, Huang Xia 1996 and 1997, Yang Sen 1998, Lin Yanzhi 2000, Yu Xin 2002, Meng Xianshi 2005, Hao Chunwen 2006b, Meng Xianshi 2009b, 284–303 and Teiser 2020.

433 Hao Chunwen 2006a and Meng Xianshi 2009b.

434 Hao Chunwen 2019.

local associations. The manuscripts reveal that the associations in Guiyijun Dunhuang were governed by the Three Officers (*sanguan* 三官), comprising the President (*shezhang* 社長), the Manager (*sheguan* 社官) and the Secretary (*lushi* 錄事). In some cases, an officer called Elder (*shelao* 社老) may also be present.[435]

As far as we know, the *she* in Dunhuang did not have names. They had a charter that laid down their organisational rules and main principles, but they appeared to have had no unique names by which they were distinguished. The circulars dispatched by the management were only sent to members of that particular association and there was no need to differentiate it from others. In a sense, it was the list of recipients that defined the group. The heading of circulars from Dunhuang sometimes indicate the type of people who formed an association (e.g. irrigation channel managers, brothers, women) and thus distinguish between different types. When people needed to identify a specific association, they could use the name of one of its officers as a term of reference. For example, manuscript Дх-2149 contains the list of people owing firewood, and the list includes 'Eighty-two people of the *she* of Gao Zhu'er' 高住兒社八十二人, in which Gao Zhu'er was perhaps one of the officers.[436]

Manuscript S.5465 contains a series of notes on the source and apportionment of measures of oil. This record mentions two different associations and differentiates between them using personal names. Thus, it is reported that two *sheng* 升 of oil were 'returned to be used by the *she* of the family from Changle' 還常樂家社用, probably referring to the village by that name 130 km east of Dunhuang. The next entry states that on a different occasion another *sheng* of oil was 'returned to be used by the *she* of Ma Pingshui and his brothers' 還馬平水兄弟社用.[437] Ma Pingshui 馬平水 must be the same person whose name also occurs in an association circular in manuscript P.3372 (dated 972) and whose death is recorded in manuscript S.6886 (dated 981).[438] The circular with his name, however, does not list anyone else with the Ma surname.

In principle, circulars had a list of names at the end and members appended a mark below their name to indicate that they had received and read the notice. In reality, however, most of the extant circulars do not have lists of names, most likely because they are not originals but copies written by students. Nonetheless,

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435 On the identity of the *she*'s officers, as well as their role, see Yang Sen 1999a.

436 A person with the same name also appears in manuscript Дх-1453, which dates to the *bingyin* 丙寅 year (906/966). On manuscript Дх-2149 and its relevance for taxation during the Guiyijun period, see Liu Jinbao 2007.

437 A transcription of this text is available in Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989, 123.

438 The records of apportioning oil to associations date to the *dingchou* 丁丑 year, which probably signifies 977.

even such copies occasionally include a list of recipients and thus can help to understand the associations' demographics. Some of the names match those of the donors in votive paintings, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, were commissioned by elite families.

While a large number of circulars and other documents related to associations survive, they are minimal in comparison with the total population of Dunhuang, which was 25,000 thousand at the time.[439] This is especially the case if we consider that the documents span a period of at least five generations. Unfortunately, it is not known what portion of the local population participated in such associations and how common they were. Most documents were simply lost, and only a fraction survived for reasons largely external to the documents themselves, such as the practice of copying them as writing exercise or using them as scrap paper for conserving Buddhist scrolls. Occasionally monastic names appear among the members, but most associations were made up of lay believers. In rare cases all members of a *she* were clergy. For example, the list of names at the end of a circular in manuscript S.5139 lists Buddhist monks with titles such as *sengzheng* 僧政, *falü* 法律, *dusi falü* 都司法律, *laosu* 老宿, *shangzuo* 上座, *sheli* 闍梨, *sizhu* 寺主 and *chanshi* 禪師. As the list enumerates the top clergy in Dunhuang, these individuals must have belonged to different monasteries and were quite different from the family-based individuals encountered in most circulars.

Manuscript P.3544, shown in Fig. 59, provides an example of how, when and why Dunhuang residents formed associations. The text is written with a pen in a bold, confident hand on a separate sheet of brownish paper. Although part of the last line has been left blank, indicating the end of a section, in its current form the manuscript is probably incomplete, and the original text was longer. Nevertheless, it is evident that the bylaws have a logical and ordered layout, with the itemised conditions and aims of the association appearing as an indented list of items, similar to modern bullet points. Half-way through line four, an empty space has been inserted before the expression Sagely Lord the Emperor 聖主皇帝. The space is the so-called 'reverence space' (*jingkong* 敬空), a common scribal device used consistently down the ages to modern times.[440] Its significance in this place, along with the well-ordered layout, lies in that it supports the assumption that this is an original document, rather than a copy written by a student.[441]

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439 Rong 2013, 40.
440 Galambos 2014, 354–355.
441 See also McMullen 2013, 134 for the significance of the space before the term *shengzhu* 聖主.
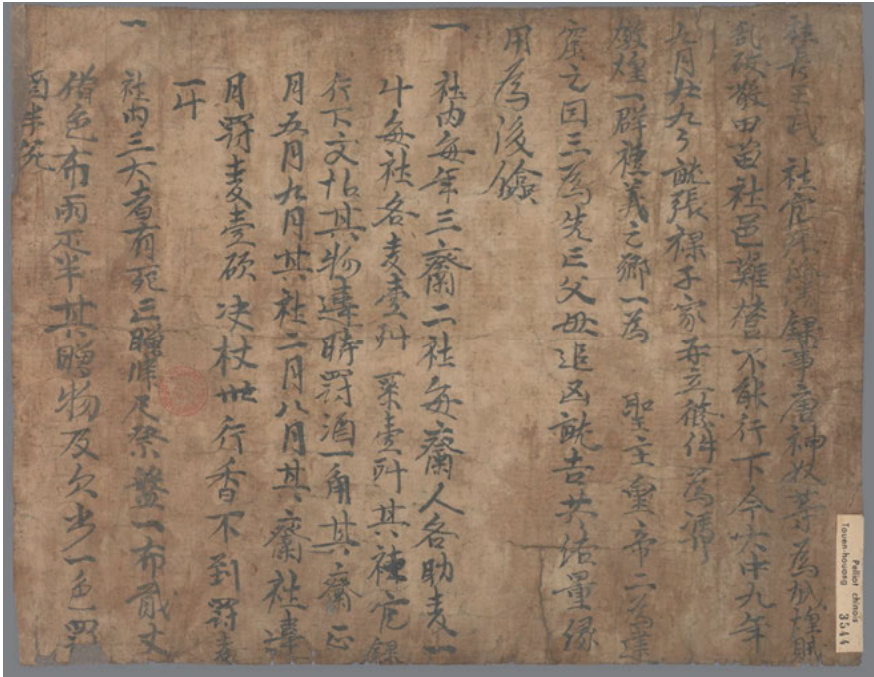
Fig. 59: Bylaws of an association, manuscript P.3544. (29.1–29.5 × 37.8 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

At the onset, the document clarifies that it is a reinstatement of an association that previously existed but had been suspended due to external circumstances. The first part of the text lists the names and titles of the individuals involved in the event, explains the motive for repeatedly drawing up the bylaws, and states the main objectives of the association. This part reads as follows:

社長王武、社官張海清、錄事唐神奴等，為城煌（隍）賊亂，破散田苗，社邑難營，不
能行下，今大中九年九月廿九日，就張錄子家，再立條件為憑。燉煌一群（郡），禮義
之鄉，一為　　　　　　聖主皇帝，二為建窟之因，三為先亡父母，追凶就吉，共結量（良
）緣，用為後僉（驗）。

On account of the turmoil caused by bandits in the city, leading to the destruction of grain
seedlings and difficulties in operating the association, which could no longer be sustained,
President Wang Wu, Manager Zhang Haiqing, Secretary Tang Shennu and others on this
twenty-ninth day of the ninth month of the ninth year of the Dazhong reign (855), gather in
the home of Zhang Luzi and hereby renew the bylaws with the aim of having a written record
of those. Dunhuang is a commandery where the rites and rules of propriety are observed,
and so, first, for the benefit of the Sagely Lord the Emperor; second, for the sake of construct-
ing caves; and third, for the sake of deceased parents and to participate in the rituals related
to inauspicious and auspicious events, [the members] together form a favourable bond, of
which [this document will serve] as written evidence for future reference.

The bylaws were composed in the autumn of 855, only a few years into the Gui-
yijun period, when the region was no longer under Tibetan administration. The
expression *chenghuang zeiluan* 城隍賊亂 ('turmoil caused by bandits in the
city') has been interpreted as a reference to the decades of Tibetan control over
Dunhuang.[442] This view, however, seems to hinge on seeing this episode in the
history of the region as a period of foreign oppression and Zhang Yichao's revolt
as an act of liberation on the part of the oppressed Chinese population. Instead,
the expression must signify Zhang Yichao's rebellion and the ensuing fighting
in the region.[443] This was a recent event that inevitably had a significant impact
on the lives of the individuals drawing up the bylaws, in contrast with the rela-
tively peaceful decades of the Tibetan period, which for those involved would
have meant the world in which they were born and raised. The bylaws also
make it clear that the association existed in the city earlier, but its operation had
to be suspended due to troubled times, which is unlikely to have been a refer-
ence to a situation two generations earlier, before the present members' life-
time.

442 Hao Chunwen 2003, 94–95.
443 This point is also made in Meng Xianshi 2003, 146. The recto of manuscript P.2598 contains a
text about installing a white parasol at the four corners of the city 'in order to avert calamity and
repel bandits in the city' 為城隍攘（禳）災卻賊. The date of the manuscript is 883 and it is clear
that the fear of bandits and possible calamities mentioned here reflect contemporary concerns. On
this text, see Yu Xin 2009, 110–111 and Wang Wei 2007, 114.

Shengzhu 聖主 ('Sagely Lord') is a common Buddhist term that appears in early translations of Buddhist texts as a reference to the Buddha.[444] Since the current ruler Zhang Yichao claimed loyalty to the Tang court, the term must refer to the Tang emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859), who was imbued with religious significance. The wellbeing of the emperor was a common element of votive inscriptions. For example, a colophon to manuscript BD14679 (dated 902) with a copy of the *Guanyin jing* states that the copying was completed with one's own blood for, among many other things, the protection and longevity of 'the present True Sagely Lord' 當真聖主.[445]

The phrase *zhui xiong jiu ji* 追凶就吉 (or *zhui xiong zhu ji* 追凶逐吉 in other manuscripts), which I translate here as 'to take part in the rituals related to inauspicious and auspicious events', refers to funerals and weddings within one's own family.[446] In practical terms, the performance of such rituals must have been among the association's most important functions. As seen in Chapter One, some of the manuscripts were also written as part of the ritual commemorating the dead, demonstrating that religious worship often revolved around funerary rites.

One of the fascinating aspects of Dunhuang associations is that some of them had exclusively female membership. Manuscript S.527, a short scroll with no other content, records the bylaws of such an association. Once again, this is visibly an original document, not a student's copy (Fig. 60). The text begins with the following words:

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[444] The term has also been borrowed into other religious traditions; for example, in Chinese versions of Christian texts it translates the word Mār ('Lord'), signifying the figure of Jesus; see Wang Juan 2018, 638.

[445] Fang Guangchang 1997, 226 reads the character *zhen* 真 in this phrase as a phonetic substitute for *jin* 今 ('now; present'). This reading would match the inscription in Stein painting 5, which uses the phrase 'for the benefit of the current emperor' 為當今皇帝; see Whitfield and Farrer 1990, 29. But this particular colophon dates to 902, the final years of the Tang dynasty, and thus the use of the word 'true' 真 in reference to the emperor may signify a contrast with an impostor. Therefore, this may not be a simple case of phonetic substitution but rather an expression of the desire to benefit the cause of the 'true' emperor, expressing a political standpoint.

[446] Zhang Xiaoyan 2013, 99–104 and Ye Guiliang 2004, 80.
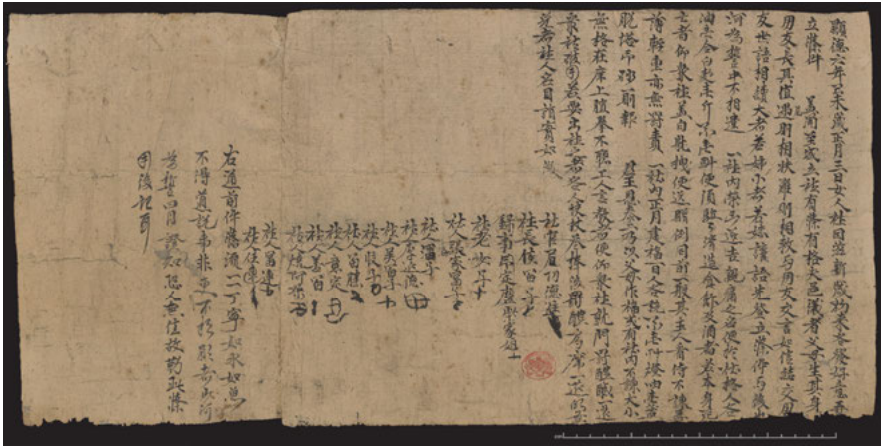
Fig. 60: Bylaws of a women's association in manuscript S.527. (30.2 × 62.2 cm; The British Library)

顯德六年己未歲正月三日，女人社因滋（茲）新歲初來，各發好意，再立條件。
蓋聞至城（誠）立社，有條有格。夫邑儀（義）者，父母生其身，朋友長其值（志）：
遇危則相扶，難則相救：与朋友交，言如信：結交朋友，世語（與）相續，大者若姊，
小者若妹，讓語（與）先登，立條件與後，山河為誓，中（終）不相違。

On the third day of the first month of the *jiwei* year, the sixth of the Xiande reign (959), our women's association, on the occasion of the arrival of the New Year, in an expression of each member's good will, hereby renew the bylaws.

For we have heard that to establish an association with utmost sincerity, one must make written bylaws and regulations. As for members of the association, it is their parents who give birth to their body but it is through friends that they develop their conscious aspirations. Friends aid each other in times of crisis, relieve each other when in difficulty. Dealing with friends, one should be faithful to one's word, when making friends, one should treat them in generational order; treat the older ones as their elder sister, and the younger ones as their younger sister, yielding and giving priority to each other. [With these objectives in mind, members] establish the bylaws for future reference, and swear to the mountains and rivers an oath which they will never violate.

The bylaws expressly name the *she* as a 'women's association' 女人社, indicating the members felt it was important to distinguish this kind of specialised association from ordinary ones that did not specify the members' gender. Among the core principles was a familial-like bond between the members to help each other whenever necessary. The words 'Dealing with friends, one

should be faithful to one's word' 與朋友交，言如信 are a loose quote from *Lunyu* 1:7 (與朋友交，言而有信).[447] The words of Confucius must have lent legitimacy to the document and emphasised that the bond between members was just as important as biological ties, if not more so. According to the list of founding members at the end of the document (Fig. 61), the Manager (*sheguan*) was a nun, whereas the President and the Secretary and the rest of the members were lay individuals. Interestingly, an Elder is also listed and her name is simply Nüzi 女子 ('woman, girl').
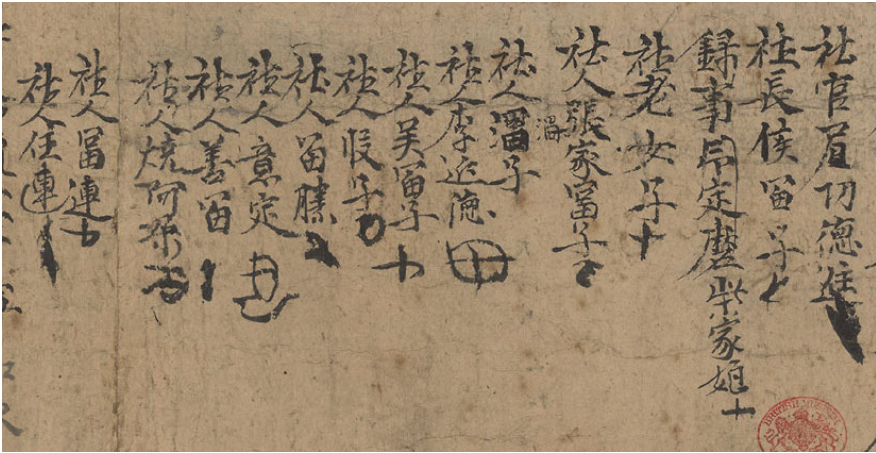
Fig. 61: Close-up of women's names and signatures in manuscript S.527.

As can be seen from Fig. 61, fifteen women signed the document, all identified, apart from the officers, as *sheren* 社人 ('member of the *she*'). As this is not a copy but an actual document, the names are written in the same hand as the rest of the document but the signatures are different. Unlike today, the signatures here and in many other documents from Dunhuang and Turfan do not write out the name but consist of simple marks or characters (or fragments thereof) taken from the names.[448] Some of the names that end with the character *zi* 子 (e.g. Nüzi 女子 and

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447 Cf. translation in Watson 2007, 17.

448 Although this practice was not limited to Dunhuang and Turfan, these two collections provide a considerable amount of first-hand archaeological evidence to document it. On the crow-like mark seen in Guiyijun documents, see Eliasberg 1979. On the fascinating development of signatures in general, see Fraenkel 1992. For the use of finger digit marks and fingerprints for authenticating documents, see Laufer 1912 and 1917 and Chavannes 1913, as well as the very useful remarks in Teiser 2020.

Wu Fuzi 吳富子) have a cross-like sign underneath, which at first sight may be interpreted as a cursive form of *zi* 子. A very similar cross appears, however, under the name Fulian 富連, suggesting that this may simply be a generic signature mark. Other manuscripts confirm this, as the same sign can follow a variety of different names.[449] In the case of Yiding 意定, the signature resembles an abbreviated or unfinished version of the character 意.[450] One explanation for these types of signatures is that they were written by illiterate people,[451] however, this is not necessarily the case, for such abbreviated signs may well have been a perfectly acceptable way of signing documents. A case in point is the Secretary (*lushi*), who signed the document using a similar cross-like sign, even though she would have been the person actually writing the documents related to the operation of the association, possibly including these very bylaws. In general, the notion that most commoners, especially women, were illiterate is an assumption that has yet to be researched and proven and may not be the case at all.

In terms of membership, if a member wished to join or leave, he or she had to submit an application to this effect, and the management or members would make an official decision on the matter. For example, the verso of manuscript P.3266 contains an application for joining an association (*tou she* 投社). It begins as follows:

> 投社人董延進 右延進父母生身，並無朋有（友），空過一生，全無社邑。金（今）遇貴社，欲義（意）投入，追凶逐吉。

> Applicant Dong Yanjin:
> Although aforementioned Yanjin was given birth by his parents, he does not have any friends, has lived his entire life without a purpose, and is unattached to any association. Today, having come across your esteemed association, he would like to join it and participate in the rituals related to inauspicious and auspicious events.

Once again, the rhetoric emphasises the absolute necessity of friendship beyond the biological relationship with one's actual parents. Yet the point of joining the *she* is to 'participate in the rituals related to inauspicious and auspicious events', that is, to gain the financial support of other members in rituals related to weddings and the commemoration of the dead with respect to one's own family. This does not, however, mean that fellow members could not be related to each other. On the contrary, it was common for family members to be part of

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449 See, for example, P.2932 in which the same mark appears after several names.

450 Huang Zheng 2005, 498 lists this incomplete signature as a variant form of the character 意.

451 Yang Sen 1999b, 87–89; Lü Deyan 2010, 51.

the same association, sometimes together with members of their extended family. A case in point is manuscript S.5698, which records a decision made in response to a request submitted by one Luo Shennu 羅神奴 on behalf of himself and his two sons. The text reads as follows:

> 癸酉年三月十九日，社戶羅神奴及男文英、義子三人，為緣家貧闕乏，種種不員（緣）。神奴等三人，數件追逐不得，伏訖（乞）三官眾社賜以條內除名，放免寬閑。其三官知眾社商量，緣是貧窮不濟，放卻神奴。寬免後，若神奴及男三人家內所有死生，不關眾社。

> The nineteenth day of the third month of the *guiyou* year. Three members of a household in the *she*, namely, Luo Shennu and his sons Wenying and Yizi, have been experiencing difficulties due to their family's poverty. Shennu and his sons, having been unable to make the contributions on several occasions, earnestly requested the Three Officers and the other members to allow their names to be removed from the charter and relieve them from their membership. The Three Officers brought the matter for discussion in front of the members who decided to relieve Shennu on account of his dreadful poverty. If, following his release, there are cases of death or birth in the family of Shennu and his sons, these will not concern the members of the *she* anymore.

According to this record, the decision was reached by the assembly, who relieved Luo Shennu and his sons from being part of the membership. Apparently, being part of an association could impose a significant burden on poorer members and they could fall behind on contributions. It is possible that Luo Shennu did not initiate the application for withdrawal but was forced to request it because he had fallen behind with payments. The association would thereby disengage itself from any further obligations towards him and his family. It is also possible that poverty was an excuse and Luo Shennu and his sons simply wished to leave because they did not find that paying the contributions was worth the benefits any longer. They may have been thinking of joining another association or were about to spend an extended period of time away from Dunhuang and did not want to continue paying over that period.

Associations were an integral part of the daily life of people in Dunhuang. They provided the organisational background for much of the religious activity, such as celebrating festivals, building caves at Mogao, renovating temples and bridges, sponsoring the copying of scriptures. Much of the relevant documents available today come from the Guiyijun period but this may simply be the result of the circumstances that led to the sealing of the library cave. Similar types of organisations must have played an important role through most of the region's history.

4.3 Circulars

The group of texts related to associations include different types of documents, ranging from bylaws to applications and notices to circulars and various kinds of ledgers. All of these documents are essential for reconstructing the social history of the region and the development of the institution of *she* in particular. Yet by far the most numerous documents in this body of material are the circulars that begin with the words *shesi zhuantie* 社司 轉帖. Together they constitute the largest subset of texts related to associations. Although the corpus also contains circulars of other kinds of associations, the generic type that begins with these four characters was the most common.[452]

The circulars from Dunhuang are relatively stable in their format and wording throughout the period they were in use. While the earliest unambiguously dated example of such a document is from the tenth year of the Xiantong 咸通 reign (869), there may be earlier ones that are either undated or dated ambiguously.[453] In many cases the dates are given as cyclical signs, which inevitably presents a certain degree of uncertainty. Thus it is possible that some of the undated circulars go back to the Tibetan period, that is, before 848. At the other end of the timeline, none of the documents are later than 992. Therefore, the corpus of association circulars can be dated to the mid-ninth through the late tenth century, which in Dunhuang chronology closely overlaps with the Guiyijun period. In addition, it also approximates the time span of the groups of manuscripts examined in the previous chapters.

To demonstrate the basic structure of circulars, consider manuscript S.1453, a 5 m long scroll with a complete copy of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Diamond sutra*. The circular is located towards the middle of the verso, on the fifth sheet of paper. Aside from the circular, the verso is largely empty, with only a few one or two-line snippets of texts, apparently in the same hand as that which wrote the circular. The style of writing is semi-cursive (Fig. 62) and the ink is relatively faint, making it not always easy to read the text. In such cases the formulaic wording of circulars is of great help for deciphering individual characters. The document is dated to the second year of the Guangqi 光啟 reign (886), already a generation or so into the Guiyijun period. The text reads as follows:

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[452] For the classification of attested associations, see the division in Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989.

[453] As we have seen above in connection with manuscript P.3544 (dated 855), there were other types of *she*-related documents from before 869, but not circulars.
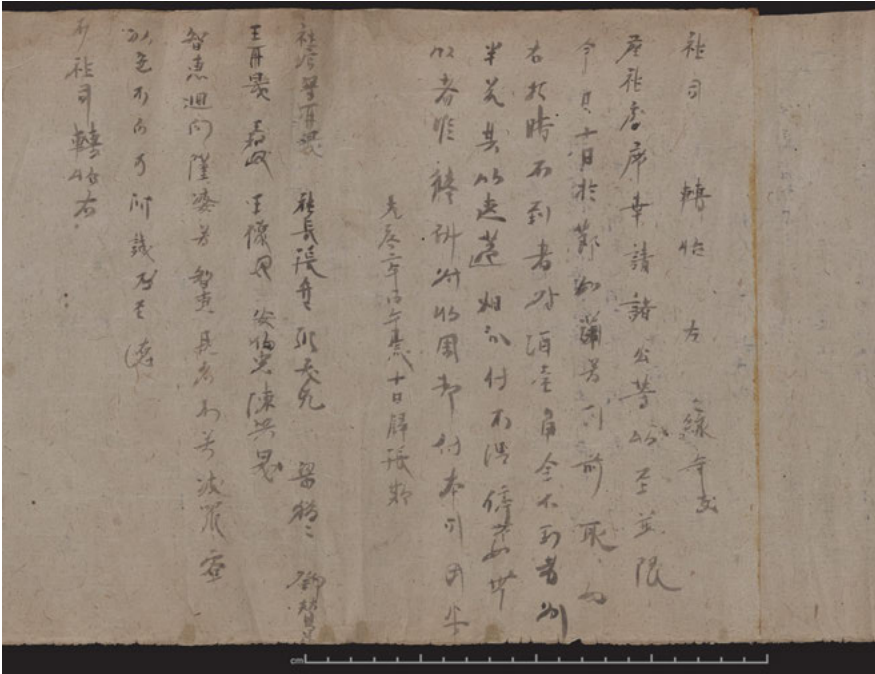
Fig. 62: Section from the verso of manuscript S.1453, showing a circular. (27.2 × 499 cm; The British Library)

社司　　　　轉帖 右　　　緣年支

座社局席，幸請諸公等，帖至，並限今月十日，於節加蘭若門前取（聚）。如右（有）於時不到者，罰酒壹角。全不到者，罰半甕。其帖速遞相分付，不得停帶（滯）。如帶（滯）帖者，准條科罰。帖周，卻付本司，用告。

　　　　光啟二年丙午歲十日，錄［事］張欺。

社官梁再晟　社長張弁々　　張犬兒　　　梁狗々　　　鄧贊□

王再晟　　　王和奴　　　王像奴　　　安福忠　　　陳興晟

From the office of the association.　　A circular.　　The aforementioned [office], on account of the annual meeting and feast of the *she*, kindly invites all members to gather, in response to this circular, on the tenth day of the present moon, at the entrance to the Jiejia Hermitage.[454] Those who do not arrive punctually will be fined one beaker (*jiao*) of wine,

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454 The Jiejia Hermitage 節加蘭若 was one of more than twenty hermitages in the Dunhuang region; Li Zhengyu 1983, 84. The word *lanruo* 蘭若 (also *alanruo* 阿蘭若) is a transliteration of Sanskrit *araṇya* ('forest') and refers to a smaller scale than Buddhist temples or monasteries. In Dunhuang, they are considered to reflect a Tibetan influence; see Dohi 1980b, cf. Sørensen forth-

and those who do not come at all will be fined half a jar (*weng*). The circular is to be transmitted rapidly from member to member, and must not be held up or delayed. Whoever delays the circular will be fined according to the regulations [of the *she*]. When the circular has completed a full round, it should be returned to the office to be used for declaring [the fines imposed].

> Tenth day of the *bingwu* year, second of the Guangqi reign (886).
> Secretary Zhang Qi

Manager of the association: Liang Zaisheng

President of the association: Zhang Bianbian

Zhang Quan'er, Liang Gougou, Deng Zan[...], Wang Zaisheng, Wang Henu, Wang Xiangnu, An Fuzhong, Chen Xingsheng

On account of the formulaic nature of circulars in general, this particular copy is fairly representative of the group. Using this example as a generic sample, we can outline the structure of such documents the following way:

a) Heading

The words *shesi* 社司 and *zhuantie* 轉帖 typically stand apart. This indicates that even though modern scholars refer to this type of document collectively as *shesi zhuantie*, and here they appear to follow autochthonous terminology, in reality the two words are separate entities that would not have been read together. The phrase *shesi* denotes the association's management or office, that is, the authority issuing the document, whereas *zhuantie* is the type of document.[455] Although in this specific manuscript the main text of the circular begins on the same line, the heading often has a line to itself, and the main text continues on the next line. As seen in previous chapters, in many cases manuscripts contain but a few characters from the heading or the very beginning of the body of the circular.

b) Announcement of the meeting

Essentially, this is the core message of the circular, the reason for it being issued in the first place. The rest of the text only stipulates the conditions already familiar to most people. The opening part announces the meeting and the agenda, extends an invitation to attend, and states the date, time and venue of the meet-

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coming. The name Jiejia (LMC *tsiat kja:*) may also be a Chinese rendering of a Tibetan word, in which case it would be transliterating *tser ka*; Takata 1988, 374–375 and 306–307.

455 We could alternatively interpret *zhuantie* as a verb, meaning 'to circulate'. In either case, it does not form a phrase with *shesi*.

ing. Although the announcement of the meeting and the agenda invariably come first, the invitation and the time and place of the meeting do not always follow in the same sequence. Among the most common agendas are the organisation of the Solstice and New Year banquets, the celebration of Buddhist festivals and the collection of funerary donations. There are also cases when the proposed agenda is the 'discussion of a small matter' 少事商量, which does not reveal the actual agenda, but members were probably already aware of it. Members also had to bring along contributions, which the circular may or may not have itemised.

In many cases the hour of the meeting was also specified. When this was not expressly announced, the gathering probably took place at the usual time. Circulars tended to call their members together in the same month. In some cases the meeting was to be held on the same day as the date of the circular (e.g. S.1453, P.5003), while in other cases it was held a day or two, or even a week later. Thus a circular in manuscript S.5631, written on the fourteenth day of the first month, calls the meeting for the twentieth of the same month, giving six days of notice. Nevertheless, we may assume that the circular made its round among the members relatively quickly, perhaps within a single day, as members must have lived or worked in proximity to one another. In some cases meetings were held at 5–7 am, and in at least one case, at 3–5 am (S.1159). We should probably see this in the context of a New Year celebration, which presumably lasted until the following morning and may have involved several locations.

The circular usually requested members to convene in front of a temple's entrance, outside of a city gate (e.g. 'outside the eastern gates' 東門外), by a bridge, or at the home of a host (*zhuren* 主人). In cases when the meeting was not at someone's home, members may have gathered at a specified location in the city and then walked together to the actual venue. Late arrivals would have doubtless known where they had to go, even if the circulars made no mention of such details.

c) Stipulations for late arrival or non-attendance

The management usually treated late arrival and non-attendance separately and imposed different fines. Those who did not arrive on time had to pay considerably less than those who did not show up at all. The fines were fixed in alcohol or grain and appear to have been relatively minor in comparison with those mentioned in circulars of irrigation channel managers, which could impose several lashes with the cane for late attendance. For example, a circular (P.5032) states that late arrivals were to receive seven strokes of the cane and

those not showing up would receive even heavier punishment. The circular does not specify what kind of heavier punishment, which was perhaps dealt with on a case by case basis.

Members could also receive a caning for disobeying the Three Officers. The model association bylaws in S.5629 stipulate that from that point on disobedient members would be fined seventeen 'painful strokes with the cane' 痛杖. The severity of fines did not seem to have a correlation with the agenda of the meeting but depended on the type of association. Presumably it was a matter of violating the association's rules rather than the amount of damage or inconvenience caused by the misconduct. It is possible that such measures were symbolic and members had the option of paying a fine instead.

d) Request to distribute and return the circular

As far as we can determine, the management issued the circulars as single copies, which were promptly transmitted from member to member. It is possible that the primary channel of transmission was via personal contact between members. Once again, the rules imposed a penalty for failing to pass on the circular in a timely manner. Such persons were to be fined in accordance with the rules of the *she*. A circular in manuscript S.705 uses the phrase *ni tie* 匿帖 ('to conceal the circular') instead of *zhi tie* 滯帖 ('to detain the circular'), indicating that such cases were not entirely unprecedented.

After all recipients had read the circular and it had made its full round, it was to be returned to the management that issued it. The circular typically ends with the statement that, once returned, it 'will be used as evidence for declaring the fines imposed' 用憑告罰.[456] Accordingly, in addition to acting as a means of communication with members, the same sheet of paper also had a record-keeping function. That is to say, the circular played a role in each step of the process of organising the meeting, from drawing up a list of attendees and notifying those to imposing potential fines after the event's conclusion. It was a document with a complex set of functions going well beyond what the word 'circular' normally connotes.

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456 Translation of the phrase is from Giles 1939, 1039.

e) Date and signature

The individual writing and signing the circular was the association's Secretary. In S.1453, this person was called Zhang Qi 張欺.[457] He was one of the officers in charge of the day-to-day management of the association, along with the President and the Manager. In a few cases, the Manager or the President signed the document instead of the Secretary. Sometimes the verb *tie* 帖 is added after the name of the Secretary, expressly stating that he was the person penning the circular. In terms of their visual format, the date and signature are similar to ordinary colophons seen in manuscripts from Dunhuang, as they appear on a heavily indented separate line and contain similar kind of information.

The date in S.1453 includes the reign title and, therefore, can be converted to our present-day calendar unambiguously. This is, however, a rare example, for the majority of circulars use the cyclical format, which does not tell us the exact year. For example, the recto of manuscript S.6461 contains fragments of circulars and the date 'eighteenth day of the *jiaxu* year' 甲戌年十八日. Aside from the fact that the month is missing, the year *jiaxu* during the Guiyijun period could refer to 854, 914 or 974. Without further evidence it is impossible to know which of these possible candidates was the year when the circular was written.

f) List of members

The main text of the circular is normally followed by a list of recipients expected to attend the meeting. The list often begins with the Manager who was in charge of daily administration. In some manuscripts the character *zhi* 知 appears next to some of the names, confirming that these members acknowledged reading the document before passing it on. Names not marked in this manner probably designated members who did not receive the circular. A circular in manuscript P.5003 has twelve names marked with *zhi* 知 ('notified'), and three with *bu zhi* 不知 ('not notified'), which suggests that neither the *zhi* nor the *bu zhi* were written by the members themselves, as members who have not seen the circular could not have recorded this on the document. Instead, it is likely that someone from the management made a note of receipt or non-receipt directly on the document after receiving it back. Further support for this hypothesis derives from manuscript

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457 It is curious that his personal name is written with the character *qi* 欺, which means 'to cheat, swindle'. As we will see below, personal names with negative connotations were by no means uncommon.

P.5003 in which the markings all appear in the same type of ink, which is consistently fainter than the rest of the circular.

Some circulars may have other marks besides the words *zhi* or *bu zhi*. For example, a circular in manuscript S.5632 (Fig. 63), dated to 967, has a long list of names, the majority of which are marked with a circle, a black dot, a right-angled hook at the top right corner of the name, or a combination of these. Ning Ke and Hao Chunwen speculate that the black dot was placed by recipients as acknowledgment of receipt, whereas the circles and the hooks were drawn by the management to mark whether the person came to the meeting and made a contribution.[458] A closer look at the manuscript reveals that some of the black dots may have been erased and then replaced by a circle, which indicates that the status of some members was updated at some point. If this is indeed the case, they may mark not acknowledgment of receipt but something assessed during the meeting, such as punctual arrival or the sufficiency of contributions. It is also possible that it was one of the officers who entered the updates after the circular made its way back to the office, whereas members added the initial marks as the document circulated among them prior to the meeting.
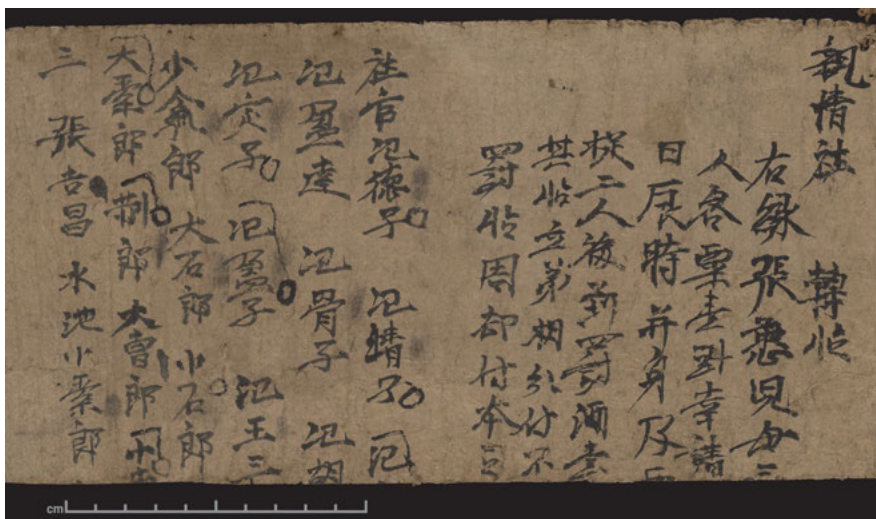
Fig. 63: A circular with a list of names in manuscript S.5632. (15 × 202.5 cm; The British Library)

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458 Ning and Hao 1997, 104.

This raises the question of how the management delivered the circular to members. The clause warning against holding back the document suggests a scenario whereby members would come into possession of the circular for a limited amount of time before passing it on to others, perhaps by finding the next person on the list and handing them the document. The *zhi* and *bu zhi* notes on P.5003, written by someone other than the recipients, may also indicate the involvement of a messenger who carried the circular from member to member. This person may have left the circular with each member for some time to return in a few hours and then take it to the next recipient, or may have just showed it briefly to members. Perhaps there was more than one scenario. If a messenger delivered the circular, the recipients may not have seen the actual document at all, as the messenger could have just as easily passed on to them the information orally. The fact that the acknowledgment of receipt is marked as *zhi* ('notified') and *bu zhi* ('not notified'), rather than using a verb associated with reading or receiving a physical document (e.g. *du* 讀 'read' or *shou* 受 'received'), is an indication that the delivery of the message may have been verbal.[459] To be sure, not all members would have been fully literate, even if they appeared as recipients of a written document.

The above is the basic structure of association circulars. There are occasional differences in the sequence of sections or sub-sections but, on the whole, the wording and format are consistent. In fact, the formulaic text of circulars must have been so familiar to members that the message did not seem to suffer even when characters were omitted, rendering occasional sentences ungrammatical. Unsurprisingly, documents related to associations abound in omissions and orthographic variants, a phenomenon that is true for not only student copies but also original documents.

4.4 Layout and format

Former scholarship has extracted information from association circulars for reconstructing various aspects of medieval society, including religious cults and festivals, local geography, language, or even food. In most cases, however, scholars worked with them as texts, paying limited attention to their physical form and materiality. In a way, this is a side effect of having conveniently punctuated transcriptions at one's disposal. While such pre-digested editions may

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459 Other examples of using the term *zhi* ('notified') include manuscripts P.4958 Pièce 3, P.2842 Pièce 4 and S.4660.

facilitate access for a wider readership, they also obscure peculiarities that would be apparent when looking at the original manuscripts or high-quality photographs.

Original documents typically appear on a separate sheet of paper, as stand-alone texts. They may have another text on the other side, but this would constitute subsequent reuse of the paper. Originals do not occur on codices, pothis or concertinas. Occasionally, longer scrolls are glued together from small sheets of paper, some of which contain circulars. In general, the circulars that appear in manuscripts amidst a variety of other texts are copies. The size of paper sheets used for genuine documents is often around 27–31 × 41–42 cm, as it is the case with manuscript P.3037, which is 30.6 × 42.2 cm in size (Fig. 64).
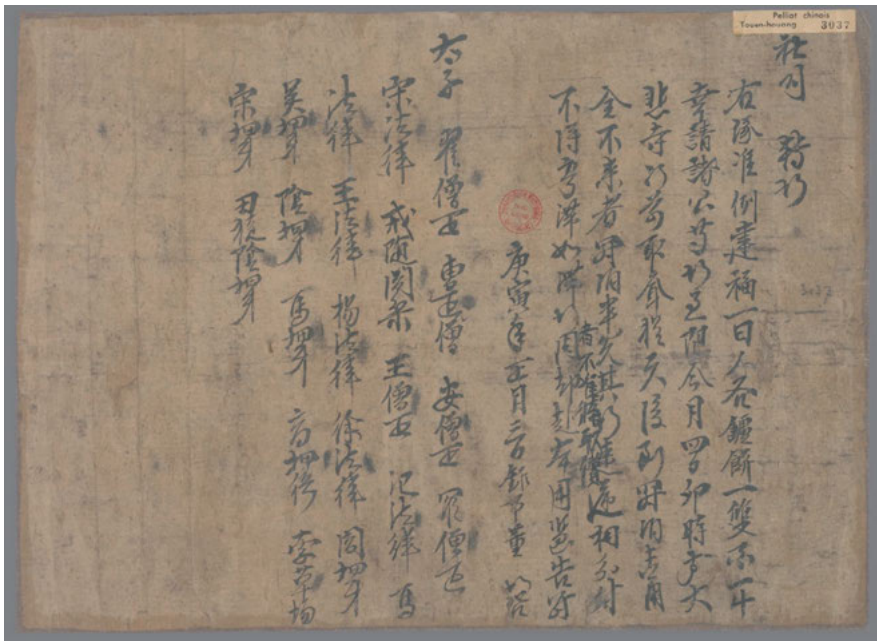
Fig. 64: Manuscript P.3037, an original document. (30.6 × 42.2 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The circular stands out for its lucid layout and competent handwriting. This was, however, not always the case and one cannot rely on these criteria alone to judge the authenticity of a document. In terms of the information they contain, copies may be just as valuable as originals, provided they reproduce the text more or less faithfully. Thus, it is entirely reasonable to rely on them in the study of social and economic history. Problems may arise when applying their date to the entire manuscript. As discussed in the previous chapter, there may be a gap between the time of the original being written and it being subsequently copied as an exercise. Regarding circulars, there is usually no way of knowing when a copy was made as the date forms part of the original document. Usually the time lag between the two is insignificant and applying the date to the entire manuscript does not produce noticeable distortions. But it is also possible that the copy had been made decades after the date of the original, in which case we may judge the manuscript to be earlier than it really is.

Taking a closer look at fragments of circulars is also worthwhile. These offer little of value for historians as they are often too fragmentary to preserve any factual information. For this reason, they are usually ignored. Yet their presence in many manuscripts is in itself an intriguing pattern. They can be extremely brief, only a few characters in length, and may repeat several times in the same manuscript. It is as if someone began writing a circular and stopped after a few characters, only to write another one a bit further on the same scroll. As such mini-fragments do not amount to actual documents, they are not included even in collections of circulars that aim to be comprehensive. Yet as already seen above, they are very common in manuscripts written by students and, partly overlapping with these, in manuscripts with left-to-right bits of text.

Several longer fragments or even complete circulars read from left to right. For example, manuscript S.10564, a detached folio of a codex, has a copy of a circular, superimposed over a contract for hired labour (Fig. 65).[460] The ink of the contract is faint, which is why the circular may have been written—palimpsest-style—over it. Evidently, both texts represent writing exercises, confirmed by the fact that both read from left to right and are in the same unskilled hand.[461] The beginning of another contract on the right side of the fragment possibly represents a different hand. Both the circular and the contract date to

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460 Its size (21 × 14.5 cm) and rounded corners clearly indicate it to be a folio specifically from a codex, and not some other kind of manuscript.

461 The contract records the conditions of a certain Yin Fusheng 陰富晟 hiring someone for a period of one year. Sha Zhi 1998, 268–269 notes that the contract reads from left to right and constitutes a writing exercise.

the exact same day, namely, the first day of the third month of the *gengzi* year, probably referring to 940. It is clear that neither text could have functioned as an actual document and the fact they bear the same date suggests they are fictional, possibly invented by the student copying the texts.
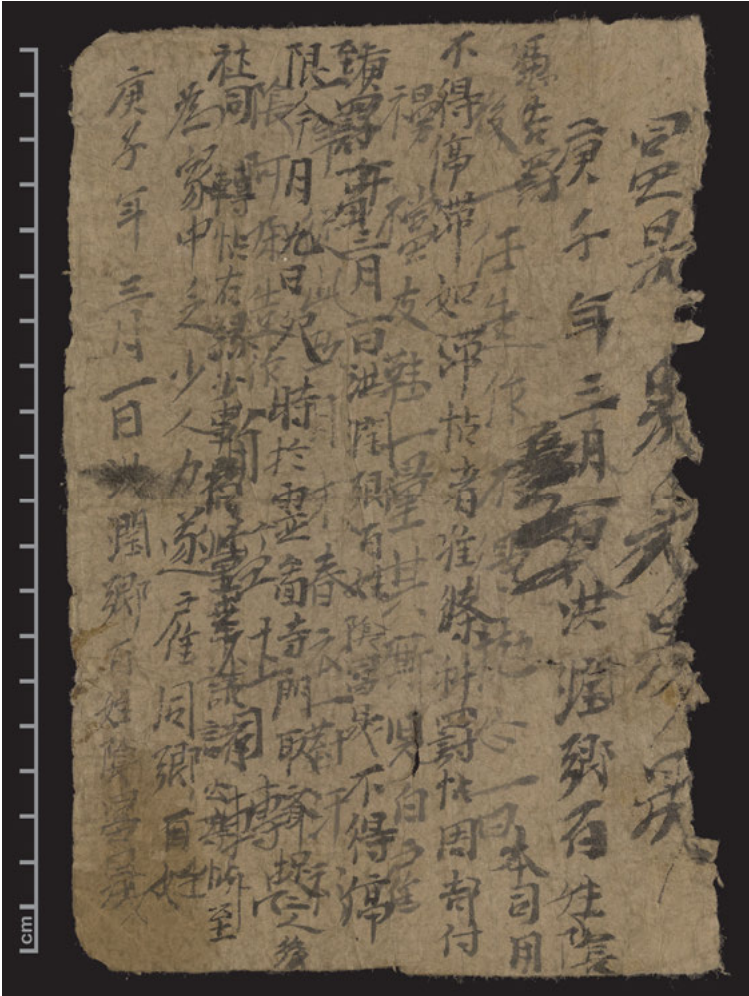
Fig. 65: Manuscript S.10564 with a circular written from left to right. (21 × 14.5 cm; The British Library)

As seen in Chapter Three, only a few dozen examples of left-to-right writing exist among the tens of thousands of Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang, which is a very small amount when compared with the size of the corpus. Significantly, all of the examples date from between the late ninth and the end of the tenth century. In the manuscripts, fragments of circulars are more often written in a left-to-right direction than any other type of text. They occur in a specific type of manuscript, in a particular kind of context. There is a conspicuous overlap between the circular fragments and the reversed direction of writing. For this reason, the sheer presence of such fragments, even those that are too short to ascertain the direction of writing, tells us that the manuscript probably belonged to students and dates to between the late ninth through the end of the tenth century.

Returning to the potentially fictive date of the circular and contract in manuscript S.10564, it is possible that students may have changed some of the details in the circulars.[462] Manuscript S.214, already discussed in Chapter Three, may involve a similar case. The recto contains the *Yanzi fu* (Rhapsody on the Swallow) with a colophon that attributes the copying to the student Du Yousui. On the verso of the scroll, Du Yousui's name also appears as the secretary (*lushi*) of a circular that reads in a left-to-right direction. The student either served as the secretary of an association or replaced the original name with his own while copying the circular. In either case, he probably did not invent an entirely fictive circular out of thin air and only changed the name of the secretary.[463]

An obvious example of a circular that represents a writing practice is seen in manuscript BD08172, the verso of which contains a circular written horizontally across the top of the scroll (from right to left), with each character copied vertically for the full length of the line, and occasionally for yet another. This was a common type of writing exercise and there are similar examples with poems, the *Qianziwen*, *Kaimeng yaoxun* or other texts. A circular would have been significantly shorter than most of these texts, containing fewer characters, none of which were difficult. The first sample circular on the verso of S.1453 (see above), for example, comprises 124 characters, of which 89 are unique, presenting an entirely manageable workload even for someone in the early stages of elementary education.

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462 The same, of course, would be true of contracts copied as writing exercise.

463 The date of this circular is the twenty-second day of the eleventh month of the *jiashen* year, which must be 924, only a year after the date of the colophons on the recto. This suggests that the student either copied a recent circular or updated the date to the time when he was writing.

Naturally, circulars copied as a writing exercise did not function as real documents. Students simply used them as yet another genre of texts to hone their writing skills. Yet they must have copied, perhaps with some additions or substitutions, actual circulars that had been used in real life. Unlike model letters, which were also common in Dunhuang, the copies of circulars contain actual data, such as the date, place and agenda of the meeting, and often even the names of the members and the Three Officers. They are not model texts but copies of genuine documents no longer in use. It is unlikely that the students invented the elaborate lists of names and other specifics while copying the texts for practice. They may have, as Du Yousui's example demonstrates, replaced a name or some other detail but probably preserved the rest of the text in its original form. Even the most crudely written circulars appear to be copies of original documents.

4.5 Lists of names

Many of the circulars end with a list of recipients, and the names may offer some clues regarding the cultural and linguistic background of the members. Of course, as the circulars are in Chinese, it would be easy to conclude that the members were Chinese, that is, people whose native language matched that of the documents. Yet in a multicultural region such as Dunhuang, language, especially in its written form, may not be a reliable indicator of someone's cultural background. The same is true, of course, for names. Chinese and Tibetan were both lingua franca during the Guiyijun period and thus individuals of diverse background routinely wrote and copied texts in these languages.[464] We should remember that by this time the Dunhuang oasis was an independent state with limited connection to the Tang and its successor states but extensive contacts with its Central Asian neighbours. As the contents of the library cave attest, the population spoke and wrote in Chinese, Tibetan and other languages and had a complex makeup.

The Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings preserve a vast pool of personal names which together represent one of the richest bodies of onomastic data from medieval China. What makes this material particularly valuable is that it consists of names that people at the time used for themselves, rather than how

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[464] For example, Chinese scribes in Dunhuang commonly copied Tibetan sutras, as is seen from both the names and the inexperienced handwriting in these manuscripts, e.g., van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 33–34; cf. Uray 1981, Takata 2000, Takeuchi 2004 and 2013.

historians and writers were to call them later. Also, they enable researchers to explore naming practices among individuals who belonged to the same family, the same association or the same group of donors. As we will see below, for example, the given names often recurred in combination with different surnames. While some of these given names were not entirely unique, their recurrence in relatively short lists suggests that members of associations or donor groups belonged to the same extended families in which particular given names featured with high frequency.[465]

Scholars began paying attention to personal names in manuscripts and paintings as soon as the material became accessible. The catalogues of major collections all include indices which list the names that occur in colophons.[466] Similarly, the collection of donor inscriptions from murals in cave temples around Dunhuang, compiled in 1986 by the Dunhuang Academy, contains a personal name index that provides a convenient way of looking up donors.[467] A ground-breaking resource on Dunhuang onomastics is a recent index by Dohi Yoshikazu, which represents the result of decades spent editing and researching the material. This collection boasts over 30,000 instances of personal names—including nearly 20,000 full names and about 10,000 given and monastic names—from Dunhuang manuscripts and paintings from the late eighth until the early eleventh century.[468] The first volume containing the names amounts to 1,250 pages, whereas the second with the index tables is 500 pages.[469] Without doubt, this is a major contribution to the study of Guiyijun Dunhuang, opening up new possibilities for research on pre-modern societies along the Silk Roads and medieval China in general.

Despite the enormous potential of this rich body of onomastic data, relatively little research has been carried out on naming practices specifically during this period. While similar research is available for the Chinese tradition in gen-

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465 This practice was, and still is, common in many societies around the world. For example, in Hingham, Mass., during the period between 1630 and 1734, 74% of first-born daughters shared the name of their mother and 67% of first-born sons the name of their father; Main 1996, 3–4.

466 On the Stein collection at the British Museum (currently at the British Library), see Giles 1957, 281–301; on the Pelliot collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gernet and Wu 1970, 329–374 and the relevant sections in the following volumes; on the collection in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Men'shikov et al. 1963, 722–737 and Men'shikov et al. 1967, 628–650.

467 Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 1986, 238–246.

468 The 10,000 given names are those without surnames, including monastic names and those that omit the surname.

469 Dohi 2015 and 2016.

eral,[470] the tens of thousands of names from Guiyijun Dunhuang have only been examined on an *ad hoc* basis, in connection with the political, economic or religious history of the region. Among the pioneers of onomastic research concerning Chinese Central Asia are Yoshida Yutaka 吉田豊, Wang Ding 王丁 and Sanping Chen, who have made a series of important contributions to the study of Sogdian and other names written in Chinese, especially those found in the Turfan material.[471] Yet naming practices in Guiyijun Dunhuang are noticeably different from those in Turfan and merit separate study.[472]

Naming practices in pre-modern China are a complex phenomenon, further exacerbated by the multicultural and multilingual background of the population of the Tarim Basin and the Hexi Corridor. One of the techniques of adapting Central Asian names into a Chinese-speaking environment was choosing specific surnames already in use for designating natives of specific regions (e.g. An, Kang, Shi).[473] Another method consisted of abbreviating longer surnames and given names into a format familiar to Chinese speakers, such as one-character surname and two-character given name. Nonetheless, even in this sinicized format, the name would often remain recognisably of non-Chinese origin. In fact, as we will see below, sometimes names that retained a foreign flavour would have been deliberately chosen over fully sinicized ones.

One of the obvious ways of engaging with the cultural and linguistic background of the people in Dunhuang and Turfan is through their surnames.[474] From among the so-called Nine Zhaowu Surnames 昭武九姓, historically known to indicate Sogdian ancestry and one's ultimate place of origin, the surnames An 安 (Bukhara), Kang 康 (Samarkand), Cao 曹 (Kabudhan), Shi 史 (Kesh), Shi 石 (Chach) and Mi 米 (Maimurgh) occurred fairly commonly. The relatively high ratio of these surnames in manuscripts or inscriptions is often cited as evidence

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470 See, for example, Bauer 1959, Alleton 1993 and Blum 1997. Chen Huaiyu 2012 examines premodern given names with Buddhist elements.

471 E.g., Yoshida 1990, 1991, 2003, 2006 and 2007; Wang Ding 2005, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2018 and 2019; Chen 2002, 2016, Chen and Mair 2017.

472 Specifically on names in the Dunhuang manuscripts, see Hong Yifang 1998, Du Wentao 2013a, 2013b and 2016.

473 In this chapter, I use the term 'surname' (rather than 'family name') to designate the Chinese concept of *xing* 姓. Similarly, I adopt the term 'given name' as an equivalent of *ming* 名, that is, the part of a person's full name that does not include the surname. Western cultures commonly employ terms such as 'first name' or 'Christian name', neither of which are appropriate in the context of East and Central Asia.

474 Skaff 2003, 478–481 uses this as a methodological principle for identifying Sogdian residents but also acknowledges the limitations of this approach.

of a strong Sogdian presence in the region.[475] Along similar lines, persons with typical Chinese surnames (e.g. Zhang 張, Li 李, Wang 王) are usually understood as having a Chinese background.

Yet even a cursory glimpse at given names in circulars and contracts from the Guiyijun period reveals not only that many of the names themselves are peculiar but also that their distribution is unusual. For example, the repeated occurrence of the same given name in combination with different surnames, sometimes even within the same circular, is markedly different from naming practices attested in transmitted sources, where given names do not repeat at such a rate. Considering the relatively high ratio of Sogdian surnames and examples of left-to-right pieces of text, it is to be expected that the given names corroborate this kind of influence.[476]

A methodological desideratum for the analysis of given names is to look at them in context. In addition to tracing the origin of individual names and establishing their cultural and linguistic background, it is vital to see how these names link with the time and location in which they occur. The lists of names at the end of circulars highlight the cultural complexity of Dunhuang society. The matching surnames in many lists reveal that members of the same family often belonged to the same association, which is not surprising, as the *she* were intimately involved in family-related events such as births and mourning rituals. Commemoration of a deceased family member is a recurrent agenda in the circulars. A concrete example is manuscript P.2817, a small sheet of paper about 29 cm high and 21 cm wide. One side of the sheet has a confession text and the other an association circular and a loan contract, followed by a list of names (Fig. 66). Moving from right to left, the circular comes first, then the loan contract and, finally, the list of names. As the list of names seems to belong to the circular, the contract is in effect sandwiched between the circular and the list of recipients. The three parts are separated by space and thus form three distinct blocks of text. The circular is incomplete and contains omissions that render parts of it nearly incomprehensible. The text reads as follows:[477]

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475 E.g. Rong Xinjiang 2001, Zheng Binglin 2005a and 2005b. On the Nine Zhaowu Surnames, see Zhang Guangda 1986, Cai Hongsheng 1998 and especially Yoshida 2003.

476 The most comprehensive study of Sogdian personal names, and an invaluable resource for comparative research, is Pavel B. Lurje's *Personal Names in Sogdian Texts* (Lurje 2010). On hybrid names among the Uighurs, see Zieme 2006.

477 The transcription largely follows Ning and Hao 1997, 130.

社司　轉帖　索寶定身亡，舍（合）有送儀酒壹瓮。人各粟一斗、土褐布色勿（物）壹疋
、柴一束。幸請諸公等，帖[至，並]限今月卯時，[於]長太蘭若門前取齊。足（捉）貳……

From the office of the association – a circular: On account of Suo Baoding's passing away, we collectively offer as a gift one jar (*weng*) of ritual ale. Each person [contributes] a peck of millet, a bolt of brown fabric and a bundle of firewood. [The office of the association] kindly invites all members to [gather, in response to this] circular, in the Hour of the Rabbit (5–7 am) of this month[478] in front of the entrance to the Changtai Hermitage. The two [persons who arrive last shall be] seized....[479]
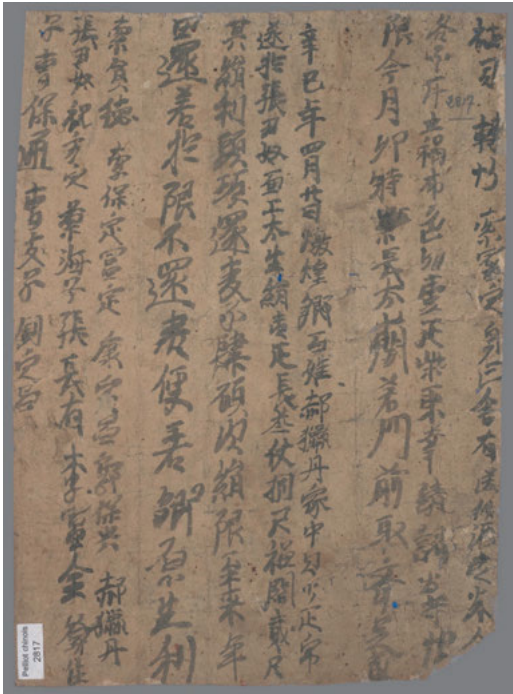
Fig. 66: Manuscript P.2817 showing a circular, a loan contract and a list of names. (29.2–29.6 × 21.1–21.5 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

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478 Ning and Hao 1997, 131 suggest that the word 月 ('month') here is a mistake and should be read as 日 ('day'), which would make the circular calling together a meeting at dawn of the same day.
479 Although the characters 足貳 do not give much context to clarify their meaning, examples in other manuscripts make it clear that they are an incomplete variant of the phrase 捉二人後到 ('the two persons who arrive last shall be seized'). For a similar interpretation of the expression, see Gernet 1995, 272.

At this point the text breaks off in mid-sentence and a loan contract begins, followed by a three-line list of names that seems to belong to the circular. The names read as follows:

索員德　索保定　富定　康定昌　郭保興　郝獵丹　張丑奴　祝方定　景海子　張長有　李富全　鄧住子　曹保通　曹友子　劉定昌

Suo Yuande, Suo Baoding, Fuding, Kang Dingchang, Guo Baoxing, Hao Liedan, Zhang Chounu, Zhu Fangding, Jing Haizi, Zhang Changyou, Li Fuquan, Deng Zhuzi, Cao Baotong, Cao Youzi, Liu Dingchang

The list of names is in the same hand as the circular and possibly the loan contract. This is an untrained hand, as a result of which some of the characters are hard to read. The first three names have the same surname as the deceased, making it likely that they were part of the same family. Surprisingly, the second name Suo Baoding 索保定 is a homophone of the deceased person's name (i.e. Suo Baoding 索寶定). It was not uncommon to use a similar sounding character in someone's given name, so the two names probably refer to the same person. As the circular's the agenda is the death of Suo Baoding, the list of names may belong to another circular issued while Suo Baoding was still alive. The list records the names of three members of the Suo, two of the Zhang and two of the Cao families. The other six surnames are each represented by one person only.

The contract located between the circular and the list of names is not an unrelated document, as it details the conditions under which Hao Liedan 郝獵丹 borrowed silk from Zhang Chounu 張丑奴, both of whom feature in the list of names to the left. It is therefore a record of a transaction between two members of the same *she*, and it is likely that membership in the same association facilitated the development of similar business deals between members.[480] The date at the beginning of the contract is the twentieth day of the fourth month of the *xinsi* 辛巳 year, which probably refers to 981. Even though there is an apparent connection between the contract and the circular, the fact that neither of them is complete and that they appear together in a manuscript with a confession text on the other side indicate that the documents were copied as writing exercise.

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480 The verso of manuscript P.3108 contains a similar example of a member borrowing from several other members of the same association; see Zhao Dawang 2019a, 54.
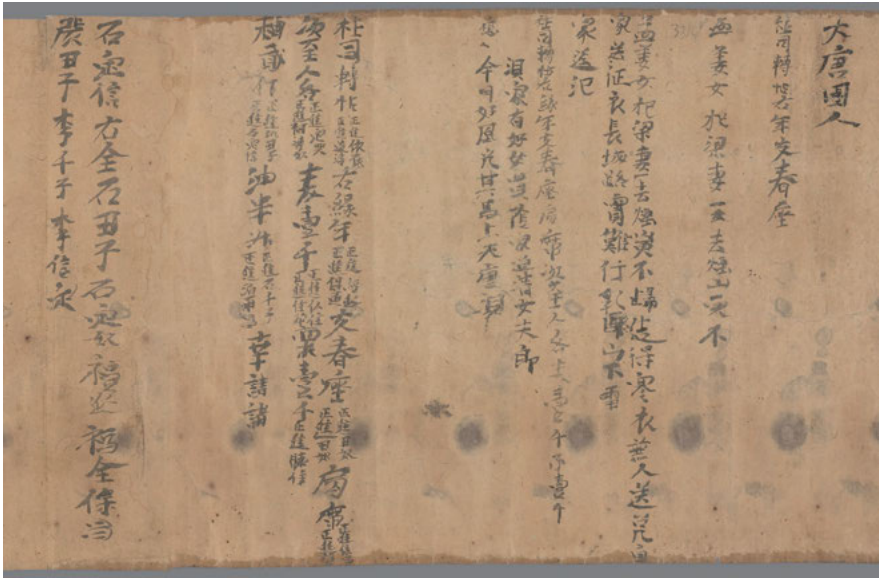
Fig. 67: Verso of manuscript P.3319. (27.7 × 338 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Another example of a list of names is manuscript P.3319 with a section of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* (Great Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom) in Xuanzang's 玄 奘 (602–664) translation, the verso of which contains a number of incomplete snippets of text. Fig. 67 shows the succession of these snippets on the verso, starting with the words 大唐國人 ('people of the Great Tang state'), already mentioned in Chapter Three. To the left of it are several characters from the beginning of a circular calling for a meeting in connection with the annual New Year banquet. The line is left unfinished and on a new line to the left is the beginning of a poem about Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女, also known from manuscripts P.3911 and P.2809.[481] Once again, the line is left unfinished but is followed by a longer, similarly incomplete, version of the same poem. The following line has a fragment of a circular, followed by two lines of incomplete student poems. After a wider stretch of space are three lines of a circular, more space and, finally, a list of names. As far as can be seen, all of these fragments are in the same clumsy hand, with the exception of the four large characters ('the people of the Great Tang') in the top right corner of Fig. 67. Considering the visual appearance of

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481 For the text of the poem, see Ren Zhongmin 2015, 65–66; on relevant manuscripts, see Wu Zhen 2011. An English translation of the poem is available in Wagner 1984, 94–95.

the fragments and the mixture of student poems and association circulars, the scroll unquestionably belonged to a student, even if there is no colophon to this effect on the recto. The list of names along the left edge of Fig. 67 reads as follows:

石定信　右(石)全　石丑子　石定奴　福延　福全　保昌　張丑子
李千子　李定信

Shi Dingxin, Shi Quan, Shi Chouzi, Shi Dingnu, Fuyan, Fuquan, Baochang, Zhang Chouzi, Li Qianzi, Li Dingxin

Of the ten individuals in the list, the first seven share the surname Shi 石, which was a common Sogdian surname, designating, as mentioned above, individuals and families originating from Chach. Although technically the last three of these seven individuals are listed without a surname, it was common practice to omit the surname when it matched that of the previous names. In contrast, the surnames Zhang and Li are considered typically Chinese. Evidently, the meeting, and perhaps the entire association, was dominated by the Shi family.

There are two given names in the list that repeat: there is a Chouzi 丑子 in both the Shi and Zhang families, and a Dingxin 定信 in both the Shi and Li families. This simple observation has two implications. Firstly, the naming practices evidenced here, and in Guiyijun Dunhuang in general, were different from those evidenced in historical and literary sources, where given names tended to be less repetitive and did not come from a relatively limited pool.[482] Secondly, as such repetitions were more likely to occur within the same extended family, the Shi, Zhang and Li families in the list were probably related through marriage. Accordingly, extended family networks must have played an important role in the formation of associations.[483] It is also noteworthy that surnames of Chinese (e.g. Zhang, Li) and non-Chinese (e.g. Shi) origin can take the same given names.

To the right of the list of names in the manuscript, separated from it by a stretch of empty space, is a fragmentary circular. The layout of this circular is

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482 This is not to deny the many trends in Chinese naming practices. On large-scale trends during and after the Cultural Revolution, see Lu and Millward 1989. Cf. Wiedenhof 2015, 92.

483 Shi Fuyan and Shi Fuquan share the first ('generational') character of their given name, which means that they must have been brothers. The same is true for Shi Dingxin and Shi Dingnu, whose names also occur in manuscript P.5032 in circulars dated to the *wuwu* 戊午 year (898/958). The same manuscript also contains the name Zhang Chouzi 張丑子, only in circulars dated to the *jiashen* year (924/984). The co-occurrence of these three names in two different manuscripts (but not in other ones) indicates they probably designated the same three individuals.

unusual in that every few characters are followed by two names, each preceded by the phrase *zhengjin* 正進 ('right effort'). The phrase and the names are in small script, forming double columns (Fig. 68). An explanation proposed for this unusual format is that the names may designate individuals in charge of various tasks in connection with organising the New Year banquet.[484] This does not, however, resolve the meaning of the phrase *zhengjin* in this place, which—considering its Buddhist background (i.e. it is the sixth of the Noble Eightfold Path)—may signify a title, perhaps something like an 'enforcer'. Setting aside the difficulties of interpreting the phrase and the reasons for the atypical layout, let us consider the personal names listed in small script. These three lines contain a total of seventeen names, and all except one are in pairs. The names are as follows:
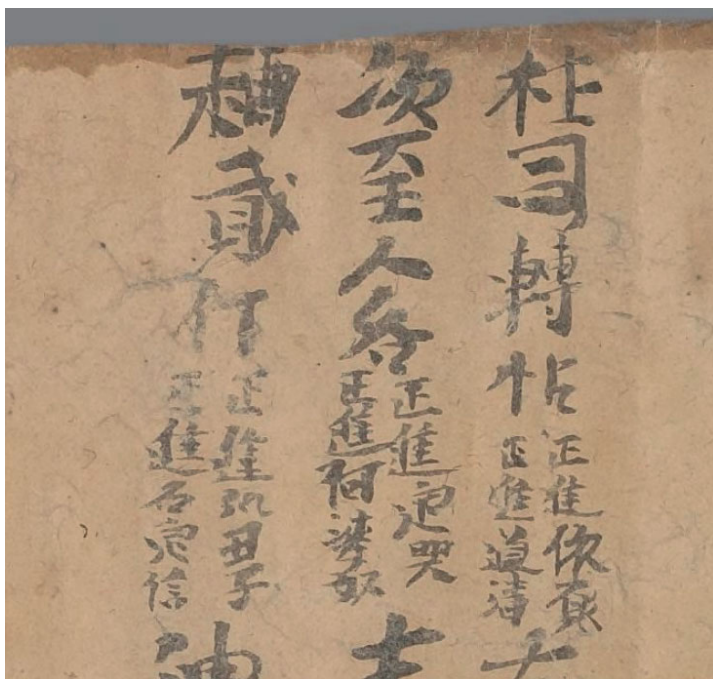
Fig. 68: Detail of the verso of manuscript P.3319, showing the small-script names in double columns.

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484 Ning and Hao 1997, 145.

Yiyuan 依願	Daoqing 道清
Fuyan 福延	Baotong 保通
Chounu 丑奴	Chouru 丑如
Baochang 保昌	Fu[...] 福□[485]
Dingku 定哭	Aponu 阿婆奴
Fozhu 佛住	Zhuyun 住孕(?)[486]
Shengzhu 勝住	
Zhang Chouzi 張丑子	Shi Dingxin 石定信
Shi Qianzi 石千子	Bo Zaichang 泊再昌

Of the names in the list, only the last four include the surnames. Zhang Chouzi 張丑子 and Shi Dingxin 石定信 overlap with the list of names discussed above, which is located slightly to the left of this circular. This confirms that the circular and the list of names on the left, even though both fragmentary and written distinctly apart, are related. Interestingly, Shi Qianzi 石千子 also has a near match in the list of names, only there it is written with a different surname as Li Qianzi 李千子. This does not automatically mean that there is a mistake in how the names are recorded for, as seen above, given names commonly recurred. Among the paired names without surname, Baochang 保昌 and Fuyan 福延 also appear in the list of names on the left, both with the surname Shi 石.

All in all, the overlap between the small-script names embedded in the text of the circular and those in the list of names on the left is considerable. This is, of course, not surprising as the two texts appear next to each other on the same side of the same manuscript. Both fragments are probably copies of documents related to the operation of the same association and neither contains the full list of members. The availability of members may have determined the list of invitees to the meeting. It is also possible, of course, that the membership of associations evolved over time and the two documents in this manuscript represent different stages in the history of the *she*.

The above examples involve relatively short lists of names in copies that functioned as writing exercise. As an example of a longer list of names, consider S.1159 with a circular of an association of irrigation channel managers, containing the following names:[487]

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485 This name is transcribed in Ning and Hao 1997, 144 as Huozi 禍子, although the first character is unlikely to be *huo* 禍.

486 In the manuscript, the second character of this name seems to have the component 七 at the bottom, which is a non-existing character. For this reason, I read the character as 孕, which was in fact a relatively common component in given names.

487 A transcription of the text is available as circular No. 192 in Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989, 77.

安幸深、張安正、令狐清兒、令狐殘奴、令狐万友、安丑子、安定千、畫友子、畫黑頭、徐緊成、李養子、李南山、李察兒、李員友、安幸德、安幸友、劉幸深、劉員遂、劉安子、劉員友、劉幸進、劉晟昌、劉閏德、氾文德、氾章午、氾章友、氾万興、王幸進、王弘義、孔住信、令狐海全、劉定子、楊再定

An Xingshen, Zhang Anzheng, Linghu Qing'er, Linghu Cannu, Linghu Wanyou, An Chouzi, An Dingqian, Hua Youzi, Hua Heitou, Xu Jincheng, Li Yangzi, Li Nanshan, Li Cha'er, Li Yuanyou, An Xingde, An Xingyou, Liu Xingshen, Liu Yuansui, Liu Anzi, Liu Yuanyou, Liu Xingjin, Liu Shengchang, Liu Runde, Fan Wende, Fan Zhangwu, Fan Zhangyou, Fan Wanxing, Wang Xingjin, Wang Hongyi, Kong Zhuxin, Linghu Haiquan, Liu Dingzi, Yang Zaiding

The list contains a total of 33 full names, each consisting of a surname and a two-character given name. Linghu is the only disyllabic surname, written with two characters. There are a total of eleven different surnames but the number of individuals associated with each of these is uneven. Table 12 arranges the 33 names in the list according to surnames, from most common to least common.

Tab. 12: Personal names by surnames in manuscript S.1159.

Freq.	Surname	Given names
8	Liu 劉	Xingshen 幸深, Yuansui 員遂, Anzi 安子, Yuanzi 員友, Xingjin 幸進, Shengchang 晟昌, Runde 閏德, Dingzi 定子
5	An 安	Xingshen 幸深, Chouzi 丑子, Dingqian 定千, Xingde 幸德, Xingyou 幸友
4	Li 李	Yangzi 養子, Nanshan 南山, Cha'er 察兒, Yuanyou 員友
4	Fan 氾	Wende 文德, Zhangwu 章午, Zhangyou 章友, Wanxing 万興
4	Linghu 令狐	Qing'er 清兒, Cannu 殘奴, Wanyou 万友, Haiquan 海全
2	Wang 王	Xingjin 幸進, Hongyi 弘義
2	Kong 孔	Zhuxin 住信
2	Hua 畫	Youzi 友子, Heitou 黑頭
1	Zhang 張	Anzheng 安正
1	Yang 楊	Zaiding 再定
1	Xu 徐	Jincheng 緊成

The most frequent surname in the list is Liu, with eight individuals, followed by An with five. Li, Fan, and Linghu have four individuals each. It is remarkable that the surname Zhang, the most common during this period in Dunhuang, occurs but

once.[488] Again, a pattern that supports the assumption that members with the same surname come from the same extended family is that some of these individuals share the first character of their given name. This, in turn, also suggests that they belong to the same generation within their wider family (i.e. brother/sisters, cousins or second cousins). Such examples are Liu Xingshen 劉幸深 and Liu Xingjin 劉幸進, as well as Fan Zhangwu 氾章午 and Fan Zhangyou 氾章友. In addition, there are three members of the An family whose given name begins with the character *xing* 幸, and yet another person from the Wang family. In fact, both the Liu and An families include a person whose given name was Xingshen 幸深, suggesting that the two families were related through marriage.

Some given names in this list carry negative connotations, such as Cannu 殘奴 ('Crippled Slave') or Chouzi 丑子 ('Ugly Child').[489] Another unusual descriptive name is Heitou 黑頭 ('Black Head'), belonging to a member of the Hua family. In addition, quite a few given names end with the characters *you* 友 ('friend'), *zi* 子 ('child'), and *er* 兒 ('son'), which are less popular choices in the recorded Chinese tradition. There are five names each with the final characters *zi* 子 and *you* 友 and two with *er* 兒, in total comprising more than a third of all names in the list. The given name Yuanyou 員友 occurs twice, once with the surname Liu and once with Li, similarly evidencing naming practices that are different from those familiar to us from transmitted literature.

An even longer list of names is preserved on the verso of manuscript S.2894, probably from the second half of the tenth century. This is a stand-alone list that is not part of any circular, although the same manuscript also contains copies and fragments of circulars. Several circulars date to the *renshen* year, most likely referring to 972. Since the circulars, as well as the long list of names, appear amidst a medley of other material on a longer scroll (220 cm), they are not original documents but copies written by one or more students. The list contains a staggering 81 names, listed in Table 13.[490] In the original manuscript the layout is far simpler, and the names simply follow each other (separated by spaces) as a long list.

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488 As already noted in Chapter Two, the surname Zhang was by far the most common in Guiyijun Dunhuang, occurring more than twice as often as the surname Wang, which was the second most frequent one; Dohi 2015, 6.

489 The characters *chou* 丑 and *chou* 醜 are used interchangeably in the names and there are examples of the given name of the same individual being written in different manuscripts and inscriptions with alternating variants, which is why the character 丑 can be read in the sense of 'ugly'. This of course does not mean that the two characters were interchangeable. They were, however, in such names.

490 The transcription of names follows that in Yamamoto, Dohi and Ishida 1989, 86–87.

Tab. 13: The 81 names from the long list of names on the verso of S.2894.

張富德	王清兒	李万定	趙沒利	陰彥弘
薛什子	唐慶住	鄧福勝	安員吉	康幸深
石海全	吉崑崗	羅瘦兒	曹達怛	白攬擂
米不勿	史幸豐	唐文通	宋苟奴	邦醜撻
泊知客	辛懷恩	孫昌晟	令狐万端	鄭薩女鷄
程滿福	劉建昌	郭幸司	高憨灰	陽繼受
氾再昌	樊賢者	范丑奴	菜魄華	董胡八
賀吉昌	索善通	翟大眼	尹酉子	孔阿朵
閻員保	闞碑魅	左山榮	馮阿察	馬良興
桑阿孿	陳喜昌	溫員遂	上雊呭拙	就彥深
雙佛德	傅奴子	星坊堆	沈尚憨	竇討墼
善美住	達麴麵	史大頭	盧漸勝	彭悉弘
譚什德	韓通達	郝延	郝安定	蘇丑兒
解儒晟	吳頹奴	呂端絕	武明菲	柳舐頭
姚延郎	嬌病溫	美午子	美黑頭	曹灰子
黑住奴	仍野孟	燒不勿	周押衙	城將頭
麴像子				

In contrast to the previous example, the individuals in this list have a wide range of surnames. In fact, most surnames feature only once, and only five of them occur twice (i.e. Shi 史, Tang 唐, Cao 曹, Mei 美 and Hao 郝). This, of course, must be a function of the nature of the list, on which we have no background information. In the list, Zheng Sanüji 鄭薩女鷄, Shangluo Duozhuo 上雊呭拙 and Peng Xihong 彭悉弘 probably represent Tibetan names.[491]

As was the case in earlier examples, a number of given names seem opprobrious, no doubt serving an apotropaic function. Such names include Shou'er 瘦兒 ('Skinny Son'), Laza 攬擂 ('Heap of Garbage'), Gounu 苟奴 (<狗奴, 'Slave of a Dog'), 醜撻 ('Ugly Tartar'), Chounu 丑奴 ('Ugly Slave'), Nuzi 奴子 ('Slave Child'), Fendui 坊堆 ('Pile of Dirt'), Datou 大頭 ('Big Head'), Chou'er 丑兒 ('Ugly Son') and Tuinu 頹奴 ('Degenerate Slave').[492] Some given names, however, have

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491 Zheng Binglin 2005a, 43. Zheng reads the name Zheng Sanüji 鄭薩女鷄 as Zheng Saliji 鄭薩力鷄. Dohi 2015, 502 reads the characters *sanü* 薩女 as a single character composed of 薛 and 女, and the surname as Zhi 擲.

492 The normal pronunciation of the character 坊 ('dust, earth') is *ben* and its archaic reading *fen* now only occurs in toponyms. Yet, as this given name is relatively common in the documents, its reading must have been similar to the reading of its variants in this context (i.e. *fen* 粉 and *fen* 糞). For this reason, I transcribe it as *fen*.

a positive meaning, such as Fude 富德 ('Rich and Virtuous'), Qing'er 清兒 ('Pure Son'), Fusheng 福勝 ('Fortune and Victory'), Xianzhe 賢者 ('Hermit'; 'Worthy') or Jichang 吉昌 ('Auspicious and Prosperous').[493]

This group of names includes six given names ending with the character *zi* 子 ('child') and three with *er* 兒 ('son'). There are no examples of names ending with *you* 友 ('friend') at all but three end with *nu* 奴 ('slave'), which evidently has a similar function in the names and is often the final component of theophoric names. Thus the given names have similarities but the surnames, especially as a group, are almost all unique. Oddly, a number of surnames are decidedly uncommon as surnames but common as everyday words: Mei 美 ('beautiful'), Cheng 城 ('city wall'), Reng 仍 ('still, yet'), Jiao 嬌 ('lovely, delicate'), Cai 菜 ('vegetable'), Xing 星 ('star'), Jiu 就 ('to approach'). We may hypothesise that some are miswritten variants of more common surnames, especially as a degree of orthographic flexibility is characteristic of such documents. But this is unlikely as too many of them are in one place. Furthermore, surnames are typically written with the correct character, even if sometimes in a hand that is not easy to read.

4.6 Naming practices in Guiyijun Dunhuang

The few examples seen so far demonstrate that a sizeable portion of given names featuring in the circulars differ from the type of names evidenced in transmitted Chinese sources. On the one hand, the same given names often repeat with different surnames, illustrating that given names in Guiyijun Dunhuang were often chosen from a pool of existing names. On the other, it is striking to see an array of given names with markedly negative connotations, such as those involving the words *fen* 糞 ('excrement'), *chou* 醜 ('ugly'), *can* 殘 ('crippled'), or *gou* 狗 ('dog'). The same types of names appear not only in circulars but also in contracts and even donor inscriptions inscribed on votive paintings.

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493 Some variation is evident in a shorter list of names at the end of another circular in the same manuscript (to the left), which contains some of the same names. For example, the character *da* 達 in Cao Dada's 曹達怛 name is mistakenly written as *xing* 幸, omitting the signific 辶. Considering that the same name occurs in more or less the same sequence with other names that are also present in the above list, there is little doubt that it refers to the same person. The common occurrence of the name Dada 達怛 or its phonetic variants in Guiyijun names is yet another piece of supporting evidence for taking Dada as the correct reading.

Differences from the recorded tradition emerge when comparing the given names paired with specific surnames in Guiyijun Dunhuang and in transmitted literature. To do this, we can contrast the names in literary texts from the Tang and Five Dynasties period (618–979) with those that appear in Dunhuang manuscripts and inscriptions during the Guiyijun period.[494] Taking the surname Shi 石 as an example, we find that the names from Dunhuang include a significant number of those which, at least to our eyes, seem to have a negative connotation, including some of the ones mentioned above (e.g. Laza 擸撮 'Heap of Garbage', Chouzi 醜子 'Ugly Child', Gounu 狗奴 'Slave of a Dog', Gougou 狗々 'Doggie'). These given names are not unique but occur commonly in combination with other surnames. In fact, they are among the most popular names in Dunhuang during the period in question. In addition, there are also other popular names (e.g. Shide 什德 and Zaizhu 再住), the meaning of which is not immediately apparent.[495] In contrast, the much shorter list of names paired with the surname Shi in literary sources from the Tang and Five Dynasties contains no obvious examples of given names with negative connotation.[496] The difference between the two pools of names is obvious.

Trying to find a comparable corpus of names that survives in manuscripts inevitably brings us to Turfan. Unfortunately, the pool of names is more limited in scope and this is even more so in the case of the surname Shi 石, which seems to have been rare.[497] But examining the much more numerous cases involving the surname Kang 康, out of the nearly 400 complete given names, 10 contain the element *nu* 奴 ('slave') and another 4 the transliteration of the Sogdian *βntk* with the same meaning (i.e. *pantuo* 畔陁 and *panduo* 畔多).[498] In contrast, in Dunhuang during the ninth and tenth centuries, 22 out of the approximately 370 complete names with the surname Kang feature the element *nu* 奴, and none the Sogdian form *βntk*.[499] Thus, the Chinese translation of the element 'slave' was more than twice as common in Guiyijun Dunhuang. Naturally, the Turfan material in the index encompasses a much wider time range and we would have to take into consideration the chronological distribution of the names for an accurate analysis. Nevertheless, even this preliminary comparison reveals some of the peculiarities of the naming practices in Guiyijun Dunhuang.

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494 Fang and Wu 1992 and Dohi 2015.

495 Dohi 2015, 294–305.

496 Fang and Wu 1992, 84–85.

497 Li and Wang 1996, 426.

498 Ibid., 8–21. The numbers for both Turfan and Dunhuang include repeated instances of the same name.

499 Dohi 2015, 189–204.

Concerning the issue of reusing given names, it is apparent that many of the names in Dunhuang are Buddhist in inspiration. Names such as Sheli 闍梨 ('Ācārya', 'Teacher'), Dade 大德 ('Bhadanta', 'Person of Great Virtue'), Xianzhe 賢者 ('Hermit'), Puzheng 普證 ('Universal Realisation'), Wunian 無念 ('Free from False Thoughts'), Lü 律 ('Vinaya', 'Precepts'), are evidently Buddhist in origin and do not necessarily differ from the situation in transmitted sources during the Tang-Song period. It is well known, for example, that the given name of the Tang poet Wang Wei 王維 (699–759) derived from the first syllable of the Chinese name of Vimalakīrti (i.e. Weimojie 維摩詰), and later he chose for his style name (zi 字) the second and third syllables of Vimalakīrti (i.e. Mojie 摩詰).[500] A difficulty when working with manuscripts and inscriptions is that it is not always easy to decide whether the part after the surname is a given name or a title (e.g. Falü 法律, Sengzheng 僧政).[501] In general, it is not surprising to see different individuals with the same Buddhist given names, as the religious tradition must have been a constant source of inspiration for naming.[502] Such names were common throughout the Buddhist world, across different regions and languages.

There are also many given names whose background is not transparent, yet they occur with high frequency. This is less surprising when the name has positive connotations, such as Zaichang 再昌 ('Twice Flourishing'), which seems to have been an extremely popular given name. It appears in combination with the surnames An 安, Bo 泊, Fan 氾, Jia 賈, Wang 王, Wu 吳, Yin 陰, Zhang 張 and quite a few other ones. In fact, despite the positive message of the name, its high frequency within a restricted corpus of Guiyijun names is curious. Nothing seems to warrant the popularity of this particular name over many other possible ones with similarly inspiring semantics. Certainly, the character *zai* 再 (LMC *tsaj´*; 'twice') is one of the most productive ones in Guiyijun onomastics, and there are dozens if not hundreds of examples of names such as Zaisheng 再晟 ('Twice Brilliant/Flourishing'), Zaiding 再定 ('Twice Settled'), or Zaiying 再盈 ('Twice Abundant'). But aside from its generic positive sense, the reason for its popularity in Guiyijun Dunhuang remains a mystery.

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500 On Buddhist names in the Chinese tradition, see Chen Huaiyu 2012; among the Uighurs, Zieme 1990.

501 On a similar practice among the Uighurs of Gaochang of choosing given names that ultimately derive from Chinese titles, see Hamilton 1984, Oda 1987, Zieme 2006, 117–118 and Moriyasu 2008. Common among given names of this type were Tutuŋ from Chinese *dutong* 都統 and Saŋun from Chinese *jiangjun* 將軍 ('general').

502 This is also analogous to naming practices in Jewish and Christian traditions were the names of the angels, prophets and saints (e.g. Gabriel, Daniel, Joseph) are extremely popular. This is precisely the reason why given names are commonly called 'Christian names' in the West.

In contrast to names with positive connotations, which are predictable elements of personal names, there are also semantically opaque ones. The given name Shide 什德 (LMC *ṣhip-təǎk*), for example, occurs with a wide range of surnames (e.g. Gao 高, He 何, Suo 索, Tan 譚, Yan 閻), attesting to its popularity in Dunhuang. Although the character *de* 德 ('virtue') certainly conveys an auspicious and desirable quality, the pairing with the syllable *shi* 什, primarily used in this period for phonetic transcriptions, suggests that the entire given name comes from a non-Chinese language.[503] Takata Tokio 高田時雄 identified the name Beg Zhib Tig in a tenth century Tibetan manuscript P.T.1254 as a transliteration of the Chinese name Bai Shide 白十德 (EMC *bɛ:jk dʑip tək*; LMC *pɦa:jk ṣhip təǎk*).[504] Another example is the name Ha Shib Tig in manuscript Ch.73. xiii.18, which Takata tentatively reconstructed as He Shide 何十德 (EMC *ɣa dʑip tək*; LMC *xɦa ṣhip təǎk*).[505] The given name Shide is clearly the one that is commonly written in Chinese manuscripts with the character *shi* 什. Even though it appears in the Tibetan documents as a Chinese proper name, it is probably more appropriate to see it as a sinicized name of non-Chinese (and non-Tibetan) origin.

During the late 1930s, Peter A. Boodberg wrote several papers in which he discussed Chinese names and their connections to the animal cycle associated with the year of birth of the name-bearer.[506] He cited historiographical sources such as the *Beishi* 北史 (compiled in 659), which explained that Gao Yang 高洋 (i.e. Emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝 of the Northern Qi 北齊; r. 550–559) was referred to as 'Son of the Horse' 馬子 because he had been born in a *wu* 午 year.[507] *Wu* is the cyclical sign of the horse and so this case demonstrates that the year of one's birth could feature in one's given name or nickname. Elsewhere, the *Beishi* records a ditty that includes a reference to Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 (506–556) as 'Son of

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[503] Of course, the character can be used for writing the numeral 'ten' 十 and in the context of given names could potentially stand for the tenth child in a family, a practice still popular, for example, in Japan. Yet on the one hand, we would not expect to have so many families having ten children and, on the other, this does not explain why only the number ten is used in these names. Similarly, since the first character of this name is consistently written as *shi* 什, it is unlikely that the name is related to the Buddhist concept of 'ten virtues' 十德.

[504] Takata 2019, 100. The transcription of the Tibetan text was originally published in Gaotian [Takata] 2014.

[505] Gaotian [Takata] 1998, 185.

[506] Boodberg 1938, 243–253, Boodberg 1939 and 1940.

[507] *Beishi* 7, 262; Boodberg 1938, 248–251. Due to a discrepancy between Gao Yang's year of birth and the actual Year of the Horse, Boodberg speculates that even though the *Beishi* interprets the name Mazi as referring to Gao Yang, the original document the historians relied on must have referred to his brother Gao Zhan 高湛 (d. 569) who was indeed born in the Year of the Horse.

the Dog' 狗子. Yuwen Tai, who also had the nickname Heita 黑獺 ('Black Otter'), was indeed born in the Year of the Dog, which is why the reference could have worked.[508]

In several attested cases it was the style name that referenced the year of birth. Boodberg cites the case of the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–535) official Liu Teng 劉騰 (464–523), whose style name was Qinglong 青龍 ('Green Dragon') and he was indeed born in the Year of the Green Dragon (*jiachen* 甲辰). Similarly, one the childhood names of Lu Changheng 盧昌衡 (b. 536), an official during the Northern Dynasties, was Longzi 龍子 ('Son of the Dragon'), probably because he was born in the Year of the Dragon. Boodberg remarks that among the twelve animals of the zodiac, only the dragon and the tiger were used consistently in names.[509] Moreover, in the above examples involving the horse and the dog, the animals were not part of the person's real name but were labels other people used to refer to them. Sanping Chen cites the case of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) scholar Yuan Hong 袁宏 (330–378), whom the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 repeatedly calls Yuan Hu 袁虎; the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557) commentator Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標 (462–521) explains the name Hu 虎 ('tiger') as Yuan's childhood name.[510] Although it is not always possible to ascertain the year of birth of historical figures, given names such as that of Shi Yezhu 石野豬, a jester in Emperor Xizong's 僖宗 (r. 873–888) court whose given name literally means 'wild boar', are probably best understood as referencing zodiac signs.[511]

Following the same line of logic, Chen also draws attention to the popularity of names such as Chounu 醜奴 ('Ugly Slave') in the medieval period and argues that these were not opprobrious, as it was indeed the case with a series of other names, but referenced the year of the person's birth. In the case of the name Chounu, he reasons that the character *chou* 醜 ('ugly') signified the left side of the character, that is, *you* 酉, the tenth of the twelve Earthly Branches,

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508 *Beishi* 5, 174.

509 Boodberg 1940, 273–274.

510 Chen 2003. Chen notes that the commentator Liu Xiaobiao's childhood name was Fawu 法武, in which the character 武, as the historian Chen Yuan (1995, 44) pointed out, must have been a substitution for the character 虎 to avoid the Tang imperial taboo. Having been born in 462, which was the Year of the Tiger, the tiger in Liu's childhood name similarly referred to his zodiac sign.

511 Shi Yezhu appears in a couple of anecdotes in the *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言; the one involving Xizong 僖宗 is at the very beginning of the book (*Beimeng suoyan*, 17). For an English translation of this passage, see Otto 2007, 124–125; for a Russian one, Alimov 2009, 164. In her fascinating book on court jesters, Beatrice K. Otto (2007, 124) translates Shi Yezhu's given name as Wild Pig, rather than transcribing it as a personal name. This adds an element of humour to the name, which was, however, probably neither odd nor funny at the time.

which is the sign of the Rooster. In at least one case, the same character signified a *chou* 丑 year, corresponding to the Year of the Ox. Therefore, Chen argues that the character *chou* 醜 in such names does not stand for the word 'ugly' but represents 'the name-bearer's tutelary or guardian deity' whose virtues they praised or from whom they requested benevolence or favours. It is, like many others, a theophoric name in which the first part represents the deity.[512]

While the zodiacal explanation is on the whole convincing, there are also examples that show that the element *chou* 醜 in the names cannot refer to the person's year of birth.[513] Votive paintings that include the names of donors alongside their image provide a rare opportunity to approach this matter from a visual perspective. Even if the portraits are sketchy and conventionalised, they may still successfully convey the age, gender, and social status of donors, as well as their position within their family. A case in point is Stein painting 54 (dated to 983) with a large image of Guanyin and a family of donors who appear in two registers in the lower part of the composition. Fig. 69 shows the entire group of donors, with their names inscribed in colour cartouches beside each individual's portrait.

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512 Chen 2016. As examples of 'opprobrious' names, he also cites the name Laza and other similar names, such as Fendui 糞堆 ('Pile of Faeces'); see idib., 118–199. The given name Fendui was sometimes written in a semantically less transparent form as Fendui 粉堆 (e.g. Linghu Fendui 令狐粉堆 in manuscripts S.6003, P.3379 and P.2680; Li Fendui 李粉堆 in manuscript S.4472), which probably still carried the same meaning.

513 Chen 2016, 122 also notes that sometimes the character *chou* 醜 may have indeed had an opprobrious connotation in names but these cases were not as numerous as previously believed.

Fig. 69: Detail of Stein painting 54, showing the family of donors. (102 × 75.5 cm; The British Museum)

Ranking within the family proceeds from top to bottom, in an outward direction from the centre occupied by a long donor inscription on a green background. The inscription itself reads, as most similar inscriptions do, from left to right and unites the upper and lower registers, showing that it pertains to the entire family. Moving outward from the central axis, the donors gradually diminish in size, signifying their age and hierarchy within the family. The main donor is Mi Yande 米延德 whose name appears once in a beige cartouche next to his portrait and once, written as Mi Yuande 米員德, in the central donor's inscription.[514] The phonetic variation of the given name may be due to it being a transliteration of a non-Chinese name. The Sogdian surname indicates that the main donor's family was originally from modern-day Uzbekistan, whereas his wife came from the Cao family and must have also been of Sogdian background. The two of

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514 The orthographic flexibility of the name is also an indication that we are dealing with a name that was largely independent of its Chinese transcription. It is not surprising therefore that it occurs in Guiyijun Dunhuang with other surnames, e.g. Wang Yuande 王員德 (S.8468), Zhang Yuande 張員德 (P.3878), Suo Yuande 索員德 (P.2817), Suo Yande 索延德 (P.3231), Cao Yande 曹延德 (S.395), Song Yande 宋延德 (P.2155).

them occupy the place of highest status on the two sides of the donor inscription. Behind Mi Yuande, to the right of him, are his sons Yuanchang 願昌, Deying 德盈, and Fuchang 富長. Behind his wife of the Cao family, to the left of her, are their daughter Qingbi 清婢 and their sons' wives of the Yin 陰 and Wang 王 families, both of which are understood to be of Chinese background.[515] In the lower register, moving from the centre towards the right, are the grandsons Chouta 醜撻, Chouding 醜定, Chou'er 醜兒 and Changxing 長興, whereas on the left side are two wives from the Kang and Zhang families.[516] Finally, at the end of this register are the granddaughters Chouzi 醜子 and Chang'tai 長泰. Interestingly, the grandchildren are identified only in relation to the main donor couple (i.e. their grandparents) but no effort is made in the painting to link them with their actual parents.

Four of the six grandchildren have the character *chou* 醜 ('ugly') in their names. It is highly improbable that all of them were born in a *you* 酉 (i.e. Year of the Rooster) or *chou* 丑 year (i.e. Year of the Ox), either in the same year or exactly twelve years apart. It is apparent that all such names belong to the youngest members of the family (i.e. the third generation), never to adults. Of the second generation, the daughter Qingbi's 清婢 ('Servant of Purity') name includes the character *bi* 婢 ('servant girl, slave girl'), making it analogous to male names ending with *nu* 奴 ('slave'). The names of other family members seem less out of the ordinary in that they denote positive qualities.

As only the grandchildren's names include the character *chou* 醜, these were probably childhood names or nicknames, and their bearers would have changed them when they grew up. Yet there are also cases of adults having similar names in other manuscripts and inscriptions. For example, one of the main donors in painting MG 22799 from the Musée Guimet is the deceased grandfather Wang Chounu 王醜奴 ('Ugly Slave'), who was undoubtedly an adult. The name Chounu in particular was extremely common and occurred in combination with a range of different surnames, of both Chinese and Sogdian type. Another case in point is an association circular in manuscript P.3286, call-

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515 A note in small characters under the name of the daughter Qingbi says that she had married into the Li 李 family. Accordingly, while she is identified in this painting using her given name, in a similar votive painting of the Li family, she would feature as the 'new wife from the Mi family' 新婦米氏.

516 The first woman is named 'new wife from the Kang family' 新婦康氏 and the second, 'the grandson's new wife from the Zhang family' 孫新婦張氏. This distinction makes it likely that the first woman (i.e. Kang) was the wife of the donor's third son Fuchang, who is depicted as the last male donor in the top register. As for the second woman (i.e. Zhang), she must have been the wife of Chouta, the oldest grandson who is the first male donor in the lower register.

ing together members for a meeting at the home of Zhang Chouzi 張醜子 ('Ugly Son'), who must have been an adult to host a meeting in his home.

The theophoric nature of many of the names in Guiyijun Dunhuang is evident.[517] Examples include given names with *nu* 奴 ('slave, servant') as the second character (e.g. Shennu 神奴, Qingnu 清奴 and Fonu 佛奴). When looking at these names collectively, given names such as Fonu make it clear that the word preceding *nu* 奴 functions as not a modifier but a noun in a genitive construction. Therefore, Fonu means not 'Buddhist slave' but 'Servant of the Buddha', which is a name attested, among others, in Sogdian, Bactrian, Sanskrit and Old Uighur.[518] In fact, the Sanskrit version (Buddhadāsa) also occurs in Sogdian transcription as Butδās (*pwttδ's*) and in Old Uighur as Budataz.[519] Along the same line of logic, Shennu 神奴 means 'Servant of Gods', while Qingnu 清奴 is the Chinese version of the name Servant of Purity (or Servant of the Pure One).

The element 'slave' was a common feature of Sogdian names long before the Guiyijun period.[520] It is attested already in the Sogdian Ancient Letters from the fourth century in the name of Nanai-vandak (*nnyβntk*, 'Servant of Nanai').[521] Chinese renditions of *βntk* appear in names such as Naning-pantuo 那寧畔陀, Shi Pantuo 石槃陀, An Pantuo 安盤陁, Shi Shewu-pantuo 史射勿槃陀, An Nuo-pantuo 安諾槃陀, Zhai Hudian-pantuo 翟呼典畔陀.[522] The name Servant of Gods is Vayivande (*βyyβntk*), which could be transcribed phonetically as Bohepantuo 波何畔陀 (EMC *baɣa-banhda*) or Pohepantuo 婆何畔陀 (EMC *baɣa-banhda*).[523]

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517 See the discussion in Chen and Mair 2017. Although this paper is primarily devoted to theophoric names with the element *hei* 黑 ('black') in them, possibly reflecting a 'black cult' in Iranian onomastics, it contains a wealth of valuable information on theophoric names in general.

518 Analogous constructions are also known from other cultures, e.g. Hebrew Abdiel or Arabic Abdullah; cf. Pulleyblank 1952, 337. The Sogdian version **pwtyβntk* is also attested in Khotanese transcription; see Lurje 2010, 315.

519 The name Butδās (*pwttδ's*) occurs in the Sogdian inscriptions at Shatial. Sims-Williams 1997/1998, 537 points out that even though it is written in the Sogdian script, it is not a Sogdian person's name but a transcription of the Indian name Buddhadāsa. For the Uighur example of the name Budataz, see Zieme 1975, 200–201.

520 I am grateful to Nicholas Sims-Williams for his guidance regarding Sogdian names in this section.

521 On the name of the goddess Nanai in Chinese, see also Wang Ding 2005. Other examples of Sogdian names with Nanai include Nanai-farn, Nanai-thvār, Nanai-khsay, Nanayakk, and even Nanai on its own; Sims-Williams 2000, 524 and 527–530. See also Bi, Sims-Williams and Yan 2017 for a bilingual inscription, dated 580, in which the Chinese version of Nanai-vandak appears as Nini-pantuo 渥渥槃陁.

522 See, for example, Yoshida 2007, 202 and relevant entries in Lurje 2010. On a series of Sogdian names phonetically transcribed into Chinese, see Yoshida and Kageyama 2005.

523 Yoshida 1991, 242 and Lurje 2010, 140.

Similar names were not limited to the north-western regions of the Chinese cultural sphere. For example, one of the rare opportunities for examining several Sogdian names in both Chinese and their original language is the bilingual inscription found in a Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581) tomb in modern-day Xi'an 西安. The tomb belonged to the Sogdian Wirkak (Shi Jun 史君, 'Master Shi') and dates to 580. The tomb occupant's third son was called Fuluduo 富鹵多, corresponding to Protvandak (*pr'wtβntk*, i.e. 'Servant of Prot') of the Sogdian inscription.[524] Wang Ding points out that although this exact name is unattested in Dunhuang and Turfan, manuscripts from Turfan include the name Fuduo 富多, which is possibly an abbreviated version of Fuluduo 富鹵多.[525] The name Fuduo 富多 is essentially a transcription of Prot, omitting *βntk* ('slave, servant') altogether. We see a similar correlation in the case of Wirkak's first and second sons, who are called Pisha 毗沙 and Weimo 維摩 in the Chinese inscription, and Vreshmanvandak (*βr'yšmnβntk*, 'Servant of Vaiśravaṇa') and Zhematvandak (*δrymtβntk*, 'Servant of [the Greek goddess] Demeter') in Sogdian. The Chinese versions of the names omit the 'servant' and feature only the name of the deity, no doubt in order to conform to the two-character format of Chinese given names.[526]

The name Fuduo 富多 also occurs in Guiyijun Dunhuang, as is the case with Cao Fuduo 曹富多 in manuscript P.4907. By this time, however, Sogdian names written in Chinese characters seem to have taken a step in the direction of semantic transparency. Thus, it is possible that names such as Suo Funu 索富奴 were the new way of writing the same name, representing the name Prot with the single character *fu* 富 and translating *βntk* ('slave, servant') as *nu* 奴.[527]

Other common Sogdian theophoric names are those that end with *yān* (*y'n*, 'boon'). There are plenty of such examples of these in Sogdian onomastics, including Rēwyān (*rywy'n*, 'Boon of Rēw'), Āpoxyān (*"pwxy'n*, 'Boon of [the

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524 Yoshida 2005, 61. On Wirkak's tomb, see Dien 2003, Sun 2005, de la Vaissière 2005, Gulácsi and Beduhn 2012.

525 Wang Ding 2011.

526 While Pisha 毗沙 is indeed Vaiśravaṇa, Weimo 維摩 refers to not Demeter but Vimalakīrti; cf. Yoshida 2005, 68.

527 Additional examples of this name from Guiyijun Dunhuang include Zhang Funu 張富奴, Cheng Funu 程富奴, and Wang Funu 王富奴. An alternative interpretation of these Chinese names would be to equate them with Rēwvandak (*rywβntk*, 'Slave of the Rich One'), which appears among the Sogdian names in the Shatial inscriptions; see Sims-Williams 1989, 135 and Sims-Williams 2000, 528.

deity] Āpox'), or Māxyān (*m'xy'n*, 'Boon of the Moon-god').[528] Among the popular names is Butiyān (*pwtty'n, pwty'n, pwttyy'n*, 'Boon of the Buddha'), which appears in Chinese manuscripts from Turfan as Fudiyan 伏帝延 and Fuyan 拂延. Interestingly, the name of the Buddha does not follow the usual way of writing Buddha in Chinese, even though that would also work well phonetically.[529] In fact, it seems that in some cases there was a preference for keeping the foreign flavour of the name, possibly as a means of asserting cultural identity. By the Guiyijun period purely phonetic transcriptions of Sogdian names seem to have become much less popular, giving way to a structure in which one or both elements were translated. Yet the element *yan* 延 remains relatively common in names, especially in documents related to associations, e.g. Song Yiyan 宋義延 (P.3231), Gao Yuanyan 高願延 (S.2472), Deng Fuyan 鄧富延 (P.5032) or Shi Fuyan 石福延 (P.3319). In each case, the word preceding the element *yan* means something positive (i.e. *yi* 義 'duty, honour'; *yuan* 願 'wish, vow'; *fu* 富 'wealth, richness'; *fu* 福 'good fortune').

Occasionally, the manuscripts feature well-known Sogdian names such as Lushan 祿山, which was the given name of An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757), the leader of the rebellion that crippled the Tang dynasty. As modern scholars commonly assert, the name is a Chinese transcription of the Sogdian name Roxšan (Rokhshan) deriving from the word *rwxšn* ('bright').[530] Thus, the colophon following the *Qijie foming jing* 七階佛名經 in manuscript S.2360 states that 'this sutra was reverently copied by the disciple of pure faith Shi Lushan 石祿山, wishing that all hindrances of harmful behaviour would be extinguished, that his entire family, including the young and the elders, would be at peace, and

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528 This latter name occurs in Chinese as Moyan 莫延 and Moheyan 沒賀延; Lurje 2010, 235. On names of this type, see also Weber 1972.

529 Lurje 2010, 315. The same phenomenon can be seen in the name Butiδāy (*pwtyδ'yH*, 'Maid-servant of the Buddha'), which appears in Chinese as Fuzhitai 浮知臺, transcribing 'Buddha' as Fuzhi 浮知. Yet another example is the name Butifarn (*pwtyprn*, 'Glory of the Buddha'), which is attested in Chinese as Bodifen 勃帝忿, Fudifan 伏帝番, Fudifen 伏帝忿 and Futufen 伏吐忿, transcribing Buddha in ways that set it apart from the usual way of writing it in Chinese. Cf. Yoshida 1998, 40–41.

530 Pulleyblank 1955, 15 notes (citing W. B. Henning) that Lushan was the Chinese transcription of the Sogdian name *Rwxšn*, mentioning that this was also the name of ʿPωξάνη (Roxane), the princess of Bactria and wife of Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BCE). Yet, as Yoshida 1998, 39–40 points out, this identification is not without problems, not least because *Rwxšn* does not seem to be attested as a personal name in Sogdian language sources. Yoshida notes that among the names actually attested in Sogdian is the name *rywxšy'n*, which he links with the name Aleheishan 阿了黑山, attested in manuscript P.3664 (+ P.3559) as a name of a person from the Luo 羅 family; cf. Lurje 2010, 337.

that he would soon be able to see his children who are travelling afar'.[531] Here the Sogdian background of Shi Lushan is attested in his surname, his given name, and perhaps even in the fact that his children were travelling afar, possibly because they were involved in long-distance trade. The same name also occurs in manuscript P.3418 in a list of debtors, but since both the surname and given name were fairly common, this was probably a different person altogether. Another related name is seen in manuscript P.4019 Pièce 2c in the form of Shi Lushanmo 石祿山磨, in which the last character may or may not be part of the name.[532] Other examples include Kang Lushan 康祿山, a resident in the Turfan region; Mi Lushan 米祿山 who sold a slave girl to someone in Chang'an.[533] A legal document describes Cao Lushan 曹祿山, a resident of the Tang capital Chang'an, as 'a *hu* person who speaks no Chinese' 身是胡．不解漢語,[534] evidencing that this was a Chinese name of a Central Asian person living in the capital.

As mentioned above, naming practices in Guiyijun Dunhuang exhibit differences from those in earlier periods. While initially Sogdian-type names tended to be transcribed into Chinese phonetically, by the ninth century it became popular to translate their meaning. Although this was more of a preference than a rigid rule, the massive corpus of names from the Guiyijun period provides ample evidence for the trend. The most obvious examples are the multitude of names ending with *nu* 奴 ('slave'), in contrast to the earlier custom of transcribing *βntk* into Chinese as *pantuo* 畔陀/槃陀/盤陁. Thus, Servant of Gods became Shennu 神奴, Servant of the Buddha became Fonu 佛奴.[535] The mixed families evidenced in the donor inscriptions of votive silk paintings may be part of the same trend of integration. Yet analogous names are also present in the Old Uighur manuscripts from Dunhuang of the same period, such as Täŋri Qulï ('Serv-

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531 Cf. translation of the colophon in Yoshida 2009, 209–210.

532 Dohi 2015, 305 reads the name as Shi Lushanmo 石祿山磨 but unfortunately the last character is unclear. It is also possible that the bottom half of the character *mo* 磨 is in fact the same Shi 石 surname at the head of the following name in the list, whereas the top part of the character (i.e. *ma* 麻) is a mistake that has been crossed out. An argument in favour of this scenario is that the given name Lushanmo is entirely unattested, whereas there are numerous examples of the name Lushan in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

533 See Skaff 2003 and Wu 2002, 10, respectively.

534 Hansen 2005, 292.

535 We should note that there are examples of similar names from much earlier periods. For example, the *Songshu* 宋書 (98, 2404) records that two sons of Yang Songnu 楊宋奴 (d. 355) of the Kingdom of Chouchi 仇池國 in modern-day Gansu were named Fonu 佛奴 ('Slave of the Buddha') and Fogou 佛狗 ('Dog of the Buddha'). Both of these names are very similar to those we see in Guiyijun Dunhuang in large numbers.

ant of Gods') and Burxan Qulï ('Servant of the Buddha').[536] The examples suggest that such names often reflect naming practices that transcended linguistic and geographic boundaries.

To return to names from Guiyijun Dunhuang, the question arises whether the opprobrious and theophoric ones were 'real' names or various secondary appellations, such as nicknames (*hao* 號), style names (*zi*) or childhood names (*xiaozi* 小字, *xiaoming* 小名, *ruming* 乳名).[537] There are famous examples of names including *nu* 奴 ('slave') from the medieval period, such as Pusanu 菩薩奴 ('Servant of the Bodhisattva'), which was the childhood name of Li Congke 李從珂 (i.e. Emperor Min of the [Later] Tang 唐閔帝; r. 933–934), or Wenshunu 文殊奴 ('Servant of Mañjuśrī'), the childhood name of Yelü Longxu 耶律隆緒 (i.e. Emperor Shengzong of the Liao 遼聖宗, r. 982–1031).[538] Neither were opprobrious names rare; for example, the childhood name of the Five Dynasties official Li Song 李崧 (d. 948) was Dachou 大醜 ('Big Ugly One').[539]

In Guiyijun Dunhuang specifically, a number of childhood names are identified as such or can be inferred from the context. For example, the newly discovered tomb inscription for Zhang Huaicheng 张淮澄 (848–868), Zhang Yichao's nephew, states that his childhood name was Fonu 佛奴 ('Servant of the Buddha'), and he began to be called Huaicheng only from the age of seven.[540] This fits the pattern seen above in connection to Mi Yande's family in Stein painting 54, where most of the grandchildren had names involving the character 醜 ('ugly'), but not the adults. The difference between the names of young children and adults suggests that the names changed with age. A similar case is seen in Stein painting 203, showing the Healing Buddha (Yaoshi liuliguang fo 藥師琉璃光佛) featuring portraits of six members of the family of Linghu Hejun 令狐和君. Of the two children, only the son's name is legible, and he is called Chounu 醜奴 ('Ugly Slave').[541] None of the legible names of adult donors have the element 'slave', conforming to the naming pattern of the Mi family.

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536 Hamilton 1986, 144, Zieme 1977, 80, Rybatzki 2000, 232–233, Wang Ding 2018.

537 Although opprobrious names were not common among the Sogdians, they were a common part of the Turkic onomasticon.

538 *Jiu Wudaishi* 45, 613, *Liaoshi* 10, 107.

539 *Jiu Wudaishi* 108, 1419.

540 Wang Qingwei 2017, 13 and 19. Zhang Huaicheng was the son of Zhang Yichao's younger brother Zhang Yitan who travelled with his father to the Tang court as a princely hostage. He died and was buried in Chang'an, which is where his tomb inscription was found.

541 Li Ling 2012, 7 reads the daughter's name as Linghu Chou[...]令狐醜□, which would fit our pattern, but I am unable to verify that the first character of her given name is *chou* 醜.

Yet, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are cases in which similar types of names are used by adults. As seen above, male donors such as Wang Chounu 王醜奴 ('Ugly Slave') in MG 22799 and Zhang Laza 張擸攞 ('Heap of Garbage') in Stein painting 52 were indisputably adults.[542] The name of the donor Linghu Chouzi 令狐醜子 ('Ugly Son') appears in a cartouche next to an adult male figure in a mural from Cave 263.[543] Although most of the names that occur in textual sources (e.g. contracts, circulars) do not reveal the age and gender of the individuals, the above examples demonstrate that apotropaic names and those with the element 'slave' were not limited to children.

One of the inherent difficulties in analysing childhood names in pre-modern China is that historical sources do not usually record them. There may have been many more similar names in the medieval period, but most remain invisible to us today. It is therefore possible that the reason for the exceptionally large number of such names from Guiyijun Dunhuang does not indicate different naming practices, but that people continued to use their childhood names into adulthood. They used them in contracts, ledgers, inventories, circulars and even votive inscriptions. In addition, for the most part, Guiyijun names survive in everyday documents and inscriptions, which are very different in nature from standardised histories and other transmitted sources. Accordingly, the popularity of such names may very well be the function of the type of material available, as it was produced not by the literary elite who wrote transmitted historical works but by members of the local elite. Simultaneously, the obvious presence of Sogdian elements in local given names indicates that at least part of the distinctiveness of Guiyijun onomastics was the result of extended interaction with non-Chinese cultures of Central Asia.

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542 In fact, Zhang Laza was the donor's deceased father.

543 This fragment is now in the Hermitage State Museum in St. Petersburg (Дх-195); see Lu Duowa [Rudova] 1993, 48. The cartouche itself with Linghu Chouzi's name probably refers not to the main figure in the painting but to the one who is only partially seen on the left side. The remaining part of this figure confirms that it is of the same size as the fully visible one and is therefore an adult male.

4.7 Conclusions

One of the possible approaches to understanding the cultural makeup of society during this period is to utilise the large body of names preserved in inscriptions, circulars and texts related to economic and administrative matters. In addition to the commonly cited surnames that indicate Sogdian ancestry, the given names from the Guiyijun period also exhibit peculiarities that attests to the unique nature of local culture. One such peculiarity is the unusually large number of given names containing theophoric and apotropaic elements. Another is a disproportionally high ratio of shared given names, a phenomenon not evidenced in transmitted literature. My argument here is that some of the unusual names reflect Sogdian or other Central Asian naming practices. The Guiyijun period saw a shift from the tendency to transcribe foreign names phonetically to at least partially translating them. Taken together as an onomastic corpus, the Guiyijun names corroborate the impression that local society during the ninth and tenth centuries was entirely different from that of the previous centuries. It was no longer 'Chinese' but had a much higher ratio of Central Asian elements.

Naturally, the type of manuscripts and texts in which the names appear (e.g. circulars, contracts, donor inscriptions) would have had a major impact on which names survive. Moreover, as a considerable portion of the names come from copies of circulars and contracts made by students, we should remember that these do not qualify as 'primary sources' in the strict sense of the word. After all, the actual function of these copies was to provide sample texts for training purposes, regardless of the original texts' intended use.

Concluding Remarks

The Dunhuang manuscripts are the largest body of handwritten texts that have survived from medieval China. They come from the north-western region of the modern People's Republic, which for most of history lay either in the frontier zone or beyond the borders of the Chinese states. During the period that forms the timeframe of this book (i.e. the Guiyijun period), the region was an independent kingdom with close ties to Central Asian polities. Even though nearly two-thirds of the total number of manuscripts were written in Chinese, the original collection contained an array of other languages, evidencing the multilingual and multicultural nature of local society during this period. The question that arises concerning the Chinese manuscripts is how representative they are of Chinese manuscript culture in general, that is, of the literary tradition that had existed, but did not survive, in Central China.

Although the library cave at Dunhuang yielded an enormous body of manuscripts, medieval books were also discovered in significant quantities at other sites. Excavations at sites in the vicinity of Turfan in Xinjiang or at the ruins of Khara-khoto in Inner Mongolia have brought to light a large amount of manuscripts and printed books written in Chinese and other languages. Equally valuable is the multitude of early manuscripts preserved in Japan, whether imported from the continent or copied from imported exemplars in Japan. It is significant that all of the major discoveries were made on the peripheries of the Chinese cultural sphere in regions that lay—at the time when the manuscripts were actually produced—outside the borders of the Chinese empire. Furthermore, the Silk Road sites of Turfan, Dunhuang and Khara-khoto all yielded manuscripts in multiple languages, attesting to the multicultural makeup of the regions. Although the Chinese language and script remained in wide use, politically, or even culturally, each of these regions represented a unique amalgam of cultures and languages, which continued to evolve in time.

It is inevitable that the recent history and the current situation of these locations should influence how their past is perceived today. Turfan (i.e. Turpan) today is a prefecture-level city in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with a large Uyghur population.[544] Although the modern Uyghurs are probably not the direct descendants of the pre-modern Uighurs who produced the Old Uighur—and many of the Chinese—manuscripts excavated at local sites, their

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[544] I intentionally use spelling to differentiate the ethnonyms of modern Uyghurs and the Uighurs of the pre-modern period.

presence makes it much easier to envision Turfan as a non-Chinese region. The site of Khara-khoto had been part of the Tangut realm since the early eleventh century until the fourteenth. The city survived the Mongol conquest but was destroyed by Ming forces, who redirected the course of the river that acted as the main water supply, turning the area into arid desert. As a result, the site was abandoned and the ruins remained under sand until their re-discovery and excavation by a Russian expedition at the beginning of the twentieth century. The city never developed into a modern Chinese city and had no history of Chinese presence at any point during its existence. It is easy, therefore, to conceive it as an 'ancient' city in a non-Chinese region.

Dunhuang, however, has had a history of Chinese presence spanning over two millennia and is firmly established as part of China today. Although there have been longer stretches of time when the Chinese states exercised no real authority over the region, it has been under the control of the central dynasties and regimes since the mid-seventeenth century. The political and historiographical discourses over these past centuries have greatly contributed to envisioning the oasis as a Chinese city that had 'always' been part of the imagined continuum of 'China'. But we know for a fact that this was by no means always the case, as there were periods when control over the region was exercised by political entities not governed by the central dynasties. Appropriately, it is these periods that are the least documented in traditional histories, making them almost invisible when viewed from the perspective of Chinese historiography.

This book has examined manuscripts produced during one such non-Chinese period, when the region was under the rule of the Zhang and later the Cao families. Their reign is known as the period of the Return to Allegiance Circuit (i.e. Guiyijun), an appellation that referenced the domain's relationship to the Tang empire and its successor states. Otherwise the region was called Shazhou, a name that was also directly adopted into other languages (e.g. Ṣacū in Khotanese, Sha cu in Tibetan and Šaču in Old Uighur). One of the arguments of this book is that local manuscript culture during this period differed substantially from earlier periods and was characterised by a strong presence of Central Asian elements. Guiyijun society was much less 'Chinese' than normally believed. This, of course, did not prevent the ruling stratum from adopting a rhetoric portraying them as loyal subjects of the Tang and its successor states.

In other words, the caves, murals, silk paintings and a considerable portion of the manuscripts were produced by a mixed society that combined elements of Chinese and Central Asian origin. Guiyijun culture, at least as far as it appears in the surviving body of manuscripts and paintings, was a unique amalgam of Chinese, Tibetan, Sogdian and Uighur elements. The oasis developed a new

type of culture that was not yet in existence when Dunhuang was still part of the Tang and Tibetan Empires. This regional culture, however, was not arbitrary, instable or volatile. Most of the patterns and features described in this book had been in place for over a century, demonstrating a continuity throughout most of the period. They also exhibit a number of typological similarities with other regions, both in East and Central Asia.

To demonstrate the unique nature of Guiyijun scribal culture, this book discussed four groups of manuscripts (organised into four chapters), each selected on the basis of shared codicological and textual features. Although the selection criteria were different for each group, the manuscripts exhibited considerable overlap, suggesting that they had at least partly been produced by the same segments of society. The first of the four groups are multiple-text codices and concertinas, i.e. book forms that appeared in Dunhuang during the Guiyijun period and represented a distinct deviation from the dominant scroll. These booklets contain a series of shorter Buddhist spells and scriptures with an apotropaic function. They typically reflect the hand of several individuals, who may or may not have belonged to the same family. The fact that each individual copied several pages in their own hand demonstrate that personal participation was essential for ensuring the manuscript's religious efficacy. The physical form of the booklets and their small size suggest that believers carried them on their person as amulets. The unfinished exemplars featuring blank pages reveal that the donors added the texts successively over an extended period of time and the actual completion of these booklets was never a goal in and of itself. In this sense, they were not 'incomplete' but still useable, having the capacity for accommodating additional contributions.

The second group of manuscripts are scrolls with student colophons. Although there is evidence for the existence of other types of schools in Dunhuang, the majority of manuscripts with such colophons were produced by lay students from elite families studying in Buddhist monasteries. Despite the monastic setting, the students almost always copied secular texts, including classical texts such as the *Lunyu* and *Xiaojing*, or primers such as the *Qianziwen*, *Taigong jiajiao* and *Baixing zhang*. Among the shared characteristics of the scrolls is the presence of scribble-like notes on the verso, which former scholarship has often described as random jottings or writing exercises. This book argues that they were neither. Instead, many of those so-called 'scribbles' constituted records of assignments students were expected to complete elsewhere. As their handwriting makes clear, the students writing them were usually not those who had copied the main text on the recto but subsequent students who continued using the scroll while they studied at the same monastery. This means, on the one

hand, that the seemingly random notes on the verso had a practical import, and on the other, that students continued to engage with the manuscripts for years or even decades.

Manuscripts and paintings featuring bits of text reading from left to right form the third group examined in this book. Chapter Three divided the examples into two typologically distinct groups, depending on whether the lines of text read horizontally and vertically. Pothi leaves with horizontal lines of Chinese characters point to a connection with Tibetan scribal culture and Chan Buddhism. Examples written in vertical columns present a less homogenous group and could be divided into three subgroups according to the context in which they occurred.

The first subgroup is made up of examples that occur in manuscripts with mandalas and other geometric designs related to esoteric Buddhist practices. Once again, these have an obvious link to Tibetan scribal culture, which was the catalyst for the change of direction in writing. Such cases combine the Chinese (i.e. vertical) and Tibetan (i.e. left to right) ways of writing. Similarly, the second subgroup comprises manuscripts with examples of left-to-right columns but in an entirely different context. These examples are typically shorter bits of texts or disconnected textual fragments written on the margins or verso of scrolls produced by students. This subgroup seems to be closely related to the third subgroup, which incorporates left-to-right examples of donor inscriptions on votive paintings written on silk, canvas and paper. The paintings were commissioned by prominent families in Dunhuang which commanded the financial resources required for the production of such art objects. The fact that almost all donor inscriptions read from left to right indicates that in such contexts the direction of writing was a deliberate choice and possibly a means of self-expression. Of the writing systems available in the region at the end of the first millennium, it was the genetically related Sogdian and Uighur scripts that featured vertical columns reading in a left-to-right direction. As a result, this way of writing suggests the influence of Uighur and/or Sogdian scribal culture.

The last of the four groups of manuscripts, examined in the book's final chapter, comprises manuscripts with fragments of texts known as association circulars. In many cases the circulars are incomplete, often only a few characters in length. When long enough to determine the direction of writing, they often read from left to right and are found on the verso of scrolls written by lay students. The circulars often include the list of intended recipients, and the names evidence of a strong Central Asian, more specifically Sogdian, substratum in Guiyijun society. In addition to the surnames commonly linked with a Sogdian background (e.g. An, Kang, Mi, Shi), the given names in particular

reflect naming practices that differ not only from those in transmitted literature but also from earlier periods in Dunhuang. Among the unexpected features of names is the relatively narrow stock of given names, many of which seem to translate or transcribe non-Chinese names. Some of the given names can be traced to Central Asian theophoric names (i.e. Servant of the Buddha, Servant of Purity), whereas others seem to have been childhood names or apotropaic nicknames that continued to be used in adulthood. Overall, the given names attest to a shift in naming practices, which in turn points to changes in the cultural makeup of local society.

The four groups of manuscripts analysed here all date to the Guiyijun period and show a number of intersections. The influence of Central Asian manuscript cultures is detectable in three of the four chapters, namely, Chapters One (i.e. multiple-text codices and concertinas), Three (i.e. texts reading from left to right) and Four (name lists in association circulars). Another overlap is the connection with lay students studying in local monasteries, perceptible in all but the first chapter. Most significantly, all four groups are closely interlinked, in one way or another, with the life of the local Buddhist community.

A major theme of this book was its emphasis on codicological and palaeographic examination, arguing that these could offer insights into how the manuscripts had been produced, used and, at times, re-used. Some of the features analysed here, such as the direction of writing, may seem a technical matter, a pedantic interest in insignificant details. But it is precisely these aspects that can help document the influence of other scribal cultures or offer objective criteria for dating undated manuscripts and artefacts. Equally important is that they evidence the unique characteristics of the Guiyijun's regional culture in comparison with earlier periods.

The appreciation of manuscripts as physical artefacts is by no means a modern preoccupation. As shown in Chapter One, the codices and concertinas produced by lay believers were very likely carried on the body and performed an apotropaic function. Although the texts may have also been recited at particular occasions, the booklets themselves were thought to possess numinous power and functioned as amulets. The same holds true for the dhāraṇī-amulets discussed in Chapter Three, some of which were either extremely brief or in Sanskrit, and thus illegible for most believers. They were meant to be worn, rather than read.

Neither was the value attached to the physical manuscript an exclusively religious phenomenon, as it was part of the equation even for scrolls with secular texts. Chapter Two demonstrates how some students used scrolls written by earlier students for recording information related to their own studies. Rather

than doing this on a blank sheet of paper, they employed a scroll copied by an older peer, sometimes a member of the same family. Although in such manuscripts the object itself possessed no religious potency, its physical form bore a significance beyond its mere function as the carrier of texts. It embodied a continuity between successive students who studied in the same monastery and who likely belonged to the same social and political circle.

It is also relevant that the entire Dunhuang corpus was found inside a hidden side-chamber of a Buddhist cave. Whether this vast body of chiefly Buddhist manuscripts came into being through a gradual accumulation of religious books no longer needed (but which could not be destroyed either) or formed part of the burial of a clergy, or both, it is clear that the sealing of the chamber intended to preserve the manuscripts in their physical form. Once written down on paper, the texts could not be separated from their writing support. Just as the act of copying scriptures constituted a ritual exercise with a meaning going beyond the transcription of the text, the resulting manuscripts came to embody the Teaching, even when damaged to the point of illegibility. As a result, they could no longer be disposed of or destroyed.

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