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Bound and Unbound: A Chinese Codex from Dunhuang and Its Pieces

Abstract: Among the group of Dunhuang manuscripts in the codex form is S.5531 from the Stein collection at the British Library (London). This is a small multiple-text manuscript booklet from the tenth century, probably produced by several family members in collaboration with each other as part of the series of rituals commemorating the dead. In its current form, the manuscript consists of four quires tied together, although it is also clear that at least one quire is missing from the beginning. This paper is able, for the first time, to reconstruct most of the original manuscript by identifying two pieces of this missing first quire in other collections of Dunhuang manuscripts. More importantly, however, the separate pieces allow us to gain an insight into the different stages of the manuscript's life between its initial production and its internment in the Dunhuang library cave. This reveals that the manuscript continued to be used for different ends long after the texts were copied by members of a family for the sake of commemorating their deceased kin.

1 Introduction

The Dunhuang manuscripts represent the largest body of manuscripts from premodern China. They have been researched extensively by scholars all over the world since their discovery in 1900, leading to crucial insights into Chinese and Central Asian history, literature, religions and languages.[1] Although the manuscripts were initially studied mainly for the texts they contained, researchers in the past few decades have become increasingly interested in their non-textual aspects, such as function, use and production. The manuscripts provide evidence of the diversity of book forms and binding methods, some of which are common in the collection but either entirely unknown elsewhere or attested only outside mainstream Chinese book culture. The group of more than 400 codices that appeared in Dunhuang around the turn of the tenth century, showing a direct influence of book cultures to the west of China, is particularly

1 I am grateful to Yukiyo Kasai for the help I received while working on this paper.

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interesting. This paper examines one of these codices, today kept in London at the British Library (BL) under press mark Or. 8210/S.5531 (hereafter: S.5531), which survives as a four-quire booklet, lacking the first quire from the beginning of the volume. I explore how the condition of binding, including the degree to which it has been unbound, can shed additional light on the manuscript's history by identifying two more manuscripts that were originally part of the same codex and considering its function. Even more importantly, the phonetic glosses of Chinese words in the Tibetan script, which appear on one of the pieces, have implications for the history of the entire region.

2 Manuscript S.5531

After the discovery of the Dunhuang cave library at the beginning of the twentieth century, its contents were acquired by a series of foreign explorers and visitors and, within a few years, significant collections of manuscripts found their way into libraries and museums around the world. Therefore, the manuscripts that were originally sealed together in a cave in the early eleventh century ended up in different public collections. Three of the most important of these, all relevant to the discussion presented in this paper, are the Stein collection in the BL in London, the Pelliot collection in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in Paris, and the Oldenburg collection in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) in St Petersburg.[2] It is not uncommon that parts of the same manuscript are now housed in different collections, and such cases are usually attributed to how the manuscripts were handled when they were initially acquired.

The original contents of the Dunhuang library cave comprise tens of thousands of manuscripts, chiefly written in Chinese and Tibetan, with smaller numbers in a variety of other languages, such as Old Uyghur, Khotanese, Sogdian and Sanskrit. Amidst this vast body of manuscripts, more than 400 are in the codex form, and even though their quantity is negligible in comparison to the total number of manuscripts, they are highly visible, signalling a drastic departure from the traditional scroll form that had dominated Chinese manuscript culture for more than six centuries. They are also important because they represent our earliest extant books with pages, a format which was to become,

2 For an overview of the main Dunhuang collections around the world, see Rong Xinjiang 2013, 137–176.

in a different iteration, the dominant book form for the following millennium or so.

Among the codices, it is possible to identify a group of about thirty multiple-text manuscripts (MTM) with shared characteristics, which were probably created in tenth-century Dunhuang for the sake of commemorating the dead. These items are relatively small and contain several shorter scriptures, aiming to provide karmic protection and solicit favourable rebirth for the deceased person, who may have been a family member. The booklets typically feature different hands, suggesting a scenario in which several family members were involved personally in the copying of scriptures, acting in collaboration to produce the final manuscript.[3] Among the Dunhuang manuscripts, this model of production was not exclusive to codices, but these MTM codices form an easily recognisable group. It is not clear why some people opted for using a rare new book form to copy scriptures for their mourning rituals, instead of continuing with the traditional scroll form. Whatever the answer to this question may be, it is likely that the small size of the booklets was related to them being carried on the body, to enable the recitation of texts while travelling and working and, simultaneously, to provide protection for their carriers.

One of these MTM codices is manuscript S.5531 from the Stein collection at the BL (Fig. 1). It is merely 12.5 × 7.3 cm in size, which makes it smaller than the size of a modern passport (15.5 × 10.5 cm). The manuscript features ten short Buddhist texts, mostly popular scriptures, written in several hands. Of the ten texts, the first and by far the longest is Chapter 25 of Kumārajīva's (344–413) translation of the *Lotus sūtra* (Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經), known by the title 'Chapter on Universal Gateway' (Ch. 'Pumen pin' 普門品). This chapter was widely popular not only in Dunhuang but throughout East and Central Asia and commonly circulated as a stand-alone text, often identified using the separate title *Guanyin jing* 觀音經 (*Sūtra* on Avalokiteśvara).[4] This stand-alone form is, in fact, how it appears in S.5331, although in this specific manuscript the title at the end of the text reads *Miaofa lianhua jing yi juan* 妙法蓮華經一卷 (*Sūtra* of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma, one scroll).[5] In terms of its message, the text encourages anyone facing difficulties or going through hardship to appeal to and call out the name of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin 觀

3 I have explored this group of codices in detail in Galambos 2020a, 37–84.

4 For the sake of brevity and convenience, in this paper, I will also use the title *Guanying jing* to refer to this text.

5 Here the word 'scroll' (*juan*) is clearly a textual unit rather than a codicological one, since the manuscript is a codex rather than a scroll.

音), who will, without fail, deliver them from trouble. These apotropaic and salvatic qualities made the *sūtra* particularly well suited for rituals involving the commemoration of the dead. The scripture was probably included in most MTM booklets belonging to this group for this reason. It was often, as in this case, the first text.

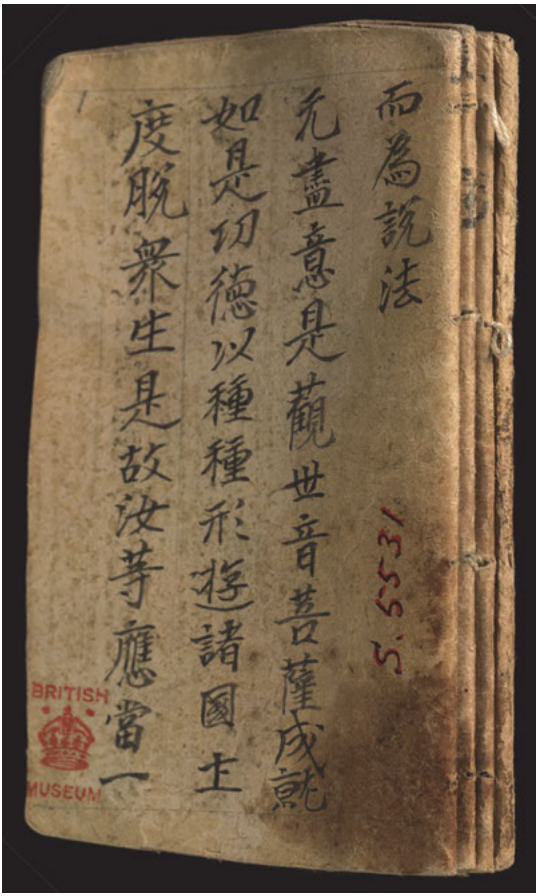


Fig. 1: The four extant quires of manuscript London, BL, Or. 8210/S.5531; courtesy of the British Library Board.

In its current form, S.5531 consists of four quires, each of which comprises eight bifolios (i.e. sixteen folios or thirty-two pages). The bifolios are sewn together along their centrefold using a beige thread, with a sporadic addition of some

red, green and blue threads. The thread shows signs of wear and is torn in several places but remains functional and able to hold the bifolios and the quires together. It is probably the original thread, rather than an addition by modern conservators, which is a possibility of which we are keenly aware. We cannot see what the front cover looked like because the beginning of the manuscript is missing. Fortunately, the back cover is extant and, as is the case with Dunhuang codices in general, it is the limp last leaf of the manuscript. There is no separate cover independent of the quires. The outside of this last leaf, although made from the same paper as the rest of the codex, is of a darker brown colour, at least partly from finger grease but possibly also from smoke or as a result of intentional colouring. The inside of this last leaf gives the date as the end of the *gengchen* 庚辰 year, which could refer either to 921 or 981. We find three titles (with some mistakes) on the back cover from among the ten texts present in the booklet. These three titles, however, can be identified as having been written by Aurel Stein's Chinese secretary in the early twentieth century.

The *Guanyin jing* at the beginning of S.5531 starts mid-sentence more than halfway through the text. A quick calculation reveals that only about 40 % of the text is present, whereas the preceding 60 % is lost. Based on the number of characters preserved in the manuscript, it is possible to calculate that the missing portion of this text would have amounted to about a quire, provided that it was the same size as the four extant ones and there were no other texts preceding it. While, in principle, there could have been other quires with additional texts before that, we will see below that this was not the case.

The individual folios in the booklet do not form rectangular sheets of paper with straight edges but have rounded corners and arching top and bottom edges, which is of significance for the subject matter of this paper. The arch of the side edges is less pronounced, yet, is obvious when observed against the vertical ruling lines of the pages. The round corners and arching edges produce a characteristic folio shape, which is somewhat uncommon among codices from Dunhuang. In addition, there are four sewing holes along the centrefold of the bifolios, positioned at roughly equal distances from each other, with the top and bottom holes being relatively close to the edge.

3 Two additional pieces

I was recently fortunate to have been able to identify two pieces from the lost first part of S.5531 in other Dunhuang collections. This was possible largely due to the characteristic shape of the folios and the distinctive handwriting at the

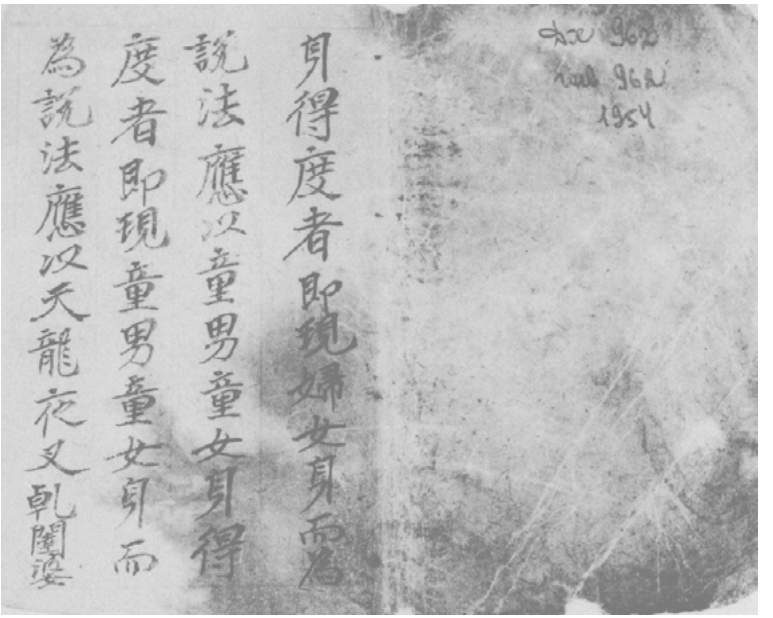
beginning of S.5531, which I was able to recognise while looking at other manuscripts from Dunhuang. The first of these pieces is manuscript Дх-962, currently part of the Oldenburg collection at the IOM in St Petersburg (Fig. 2).[6] This is a single bifolio and it is apparent that the folio shape, including the arched edges, matches that in S.5531.[7] The same is true for the location of the four sewing holes, except that this is a single disconnected bifolio and, thus, the thread is now missing. Only the last two (i.e. two sides of the same folio) of the total of four pages contain writing. The text is arranged into four lines per page, 10–12 characters per line. It comes from the *Guanyin jing*, connecting seamlessly to the beginning of S.5331. It is visible, even at first glance, that the handwriting is the same as that at the beginning of S.5531. All these details confirm that Дх-962 used to be part of the same manuscript.[8]

Because S.5531 begins with a new quire, the fact that the text of the *Guanyin jing* in Дх-962 connects directly to the beginning of S.5531 tells us that the folio covered with writing in Дх-962 was the missing quire's last folio, and the second page of it, connecting to S.5531, was the last page of that quire. This, of course, makes perfect sense if we look at the blank half of Дх-962, which would have been the first folio of the quire. Thus, its first page is of a significantly darker colour, matching the last page (i.e. back cover) of S.5531, proving that this was the cover of the original manuscript. Accordingly, the manuscript, indeed, originally consisted of five quires, the first of which, in time, became detached from the rest. This also makes it clear that the *Guanyin jing* was the first text in the booklet and both sides of the first folio of the booklet, similar to those of the final folio, were blank.

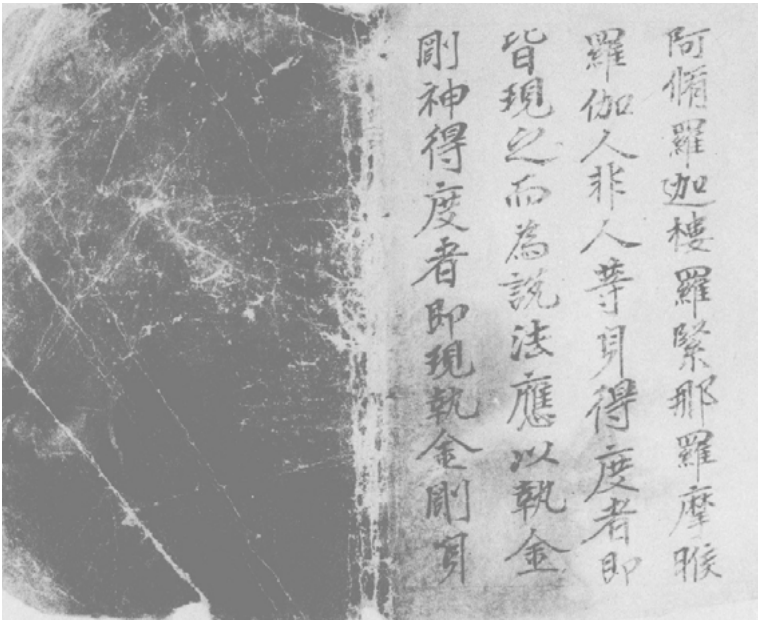
6 Without discussing it in detail, I have briefly identified this fragment as belonging together with S.5531 in Galambos 2020b.

7 Lev Menshikov gives a brief description of Дх-962, dating it to the ninth to eleventh centuries, in the catalogue of the Russian collection of Dunhuang manuscripts. He correctly identifies it as the outer cover, describing it as 'heavily soiled' (see Vorobjeva-Desjatovskaja et al. 1963, 207).

8 Unfortunately, colour is not a reliable criterion for matching manuscripts. Manuscripts kept in different collections cannot be compared side by side, and their images are published on different media, some in black and white. In addition, manuscripts may age differently depending on how they are stored or whether they are ever used or exhibited.



a



b

Fig. 2a–b: The two sides of the bifolio St Petersburg, IOM, Дх-962; reproduced from Eluosi kexueyuan Dongfang yanjiusuo Shengbidebao fensuo et al. 1996, 229–230.

Another piece of this manuscript that I was able to locate is Pelliot tibétain 1262 from the BnF in Paris (Fig. 3). This manuscript was originally classified as Pelliot chinois 2935, as a pencil note on the top margin of the first page shows. Subsequently, the manuscript was transferred from the Chinese to the Tibetan collection and, along with this move, acquired a new press mark.[9] This is an incomplete quire consisting of three bifolios covered in writing. The shape and size of the folios match those in S.5531 and Дх-962, and so do the locations of the four sewing holes. Once again, noticing these non-textual similarities was the first step in identifying the manuscript as belonging with the other two. Although today the three bifolios are kept together and classified as a single manuscript, they are no longer held together with a thread. This, of course, is entirely reasonable, since these bifolios were part of the quire that had become detached. In fact, they must have separated from the rest of the manuscript precisely because the thread tying them to the other quires was torn. Thus, once the bifolios were not held secured with the thread, they could easily go missing.

The text in Pelliot tibétain 1262 does not connect directly with either of the other two manuscripts, but it comes from the part of the *Guanyin jing* that does not appear in the other manuscripts. Therefore, there is no overlap, which would have negated the possibility that these pieces were once part of the same manuscript. It is the first of the several hands featured in S.5531, writing the *Guanyin jing*, that matches the one in Дх-962. Pelliot tibétain 1262 has two hands (the change happens on page 4) and, as expected, the second of these matches the hand in the other two manuscripts. Thus, we can be certain that both Pelliot tibétain 1262 and Дх-962 were part of the missing first quire. In this manner, with these two manuscripts, we now have accounted for four of the original eight bifolios of the quire. It is of course possible that all or some of the still missing bifolios will be located in the future.

The most conspicuous aspect of Pelliot tibétain 1262 is the presence of Tibetan annotations on the first page (Fig. 3). The phonetic reading of every Chinese character on this page is written to the right in Tibetan script. Even though this happens only on the first page, involving just four lines of text, transcribing Chinese words into another language was relatively uncommon and there are not many examples of this in the Dunhuang corpus.[10] The transcriptions must have been the reason for moving the manuscript into the Tibetan collection, even though the language re-

9 Drège 1979, 18.

10 Anderl and Osterkamp 2017, 222 lists three texts where Chinese characters are accompanied by Tibetan transcriptions and sixteen texts where a Chinese text is written entirely in the Tibetan script.

mains Chinese, plus the other eleven pages contain exclusively Chinese characters. This has also been the main attraction of the manuscript for research, and there have been quite a few studies citing the manuscript in connection with the phonetic reconstruction of the local Chinese dialect or as an example of the linguistic interaction between the Chinese- and Tibetan-speaking inhabitants of the region.[11] Without doubt, these are valid considerations and the phonetic glosses offer important insights for such enquiries. At the same time, I think that the physical and visual characteristics of the manuscript, including its layout and codicological structure, are also of value because they have the potential to clarify the circumstances under which the Tibetan transcriptions have been added. This, in turn, may help us understand the context of the interplay between the two languages and scripts.

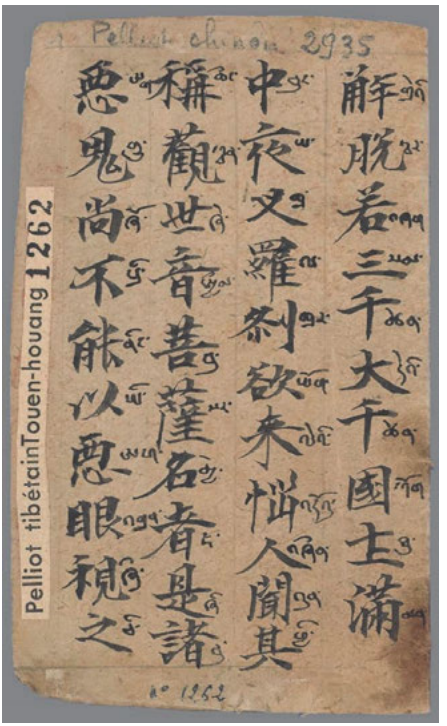


Fig. 3: The phonetic glosses in Tibetan script; Paris, BnF, Pelliot tibétain 1262, first page; courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

11 See e.g. Coblin 1991, 98; Takata Tokio 1987, 98.

The Tibetan transcription appears on the right side of each character, in a slightly smaller script and the same orientation as the Chinese script.[12] Thus, they are written horizontally, gloss by gloss, annotating the Chinese characters. However, they cannot be read together continuously as a horizontally written Tibetan text. This type of arrangement is far from trivial because the Tibetan glosses were sometimes arranged in an entirely different manner. Exemplarily, in Pelliot tibétain 1046 (A), a manuscript that contains Tibetan phonetic glosses alongside the Chinese text of the *Qianziwen* 千字文 ('Thousand character text'), the Tibetan glosses are turned sideways, enabling the reader to turn the manuscript 90 degrees counterclockwise and read the Tibetan script continuously without looking at the Chinese characters.[13] The reader would have to turn the manuscript back to read the Chinese-character version, at which point, reading the Tibetan transcriptions would become inconvenient. The transcription in Pelliot tibétain 1262, however, is oriented in the Chinese manner, and the reader does not have to rotate the page sideways. But this also means that reading the Tibetan glosses continuously, if one was reciting the text, would be awkward. The current layout suggests that whoever added the Tibetan transcriptions intended to read the page using the Chinese characters, looking at the Tibetan transcriptions only as auxiliary notations, perhaps when being uncertain about the correct reading of a character.

Something that is seldom mentioned in scholarship is that this manuscript consists of twelve pages and only the very first has Tibetan glosses. This lends a degree of arbitrariness to the Tibetan transcription, as a more thought-out or systematic engagement with the text would have surely involved a larger portion. Similarly, if the goal was to aid the recitation or chanting of the *sūtra*, then we would expect the transcriptions to continue on the remaining pages. Instead, only four lines of Chinese text amounting to forty-one characters were transcribed. In addition, they do not start at the beginning of the *sūtra* but at a random place around the middle portion, precipitated simply by how the manuscript fell apart when it became unbound. Consequently, the transcriptions give the impression of an exercise not connected directly with recitation or any other type of religious practice.

12 We know several examples of the *Guanyin jing* transcribed with the Tibetan script without the presence of Chinese characters. These include the verso of Pelliot tibétain 1239 (BnF) with six lines from the beginning of the text and F-325b (IOM); Takata Tokio 1991 and 2019.

13 Pelliot tibétain 1046 (A) was originally manuscript Pelliot chinois 3419, until it was also moved to the Tibetan collection. This manuscript has been mined extensively for linguistic data; see, for example, Coblin 1992; Csongor 1960; Takata Tokio 1981.

4 The original manuscript

Having identified Дх-962 and Pelliot tibétain 1262 as pieces of the first quire of the original manuscript, we can use the text of the *Guanyin jing* to work out the exact position of these bifolios, as well as the parts that are still missing from the manuscript. Of the first quire, we currently have the single bifolio (Дх-962, in red in Fig. 4), which was the outer bifolio of the quire, plus the three stacked bifolios (Pelliot tibétain 1262, in green), which were at the centre. Since the amount of text missing from the *Guanyin jing* indicates that the first quire also consisted of eight bifolios, similar to the remaining four quires in S.5531, we are currently still missing four bifolios, i.e. sixteen pages. These are the four bifolios (in grey) that were originally located between Дх-962 and Pelliot tibétain 1262.

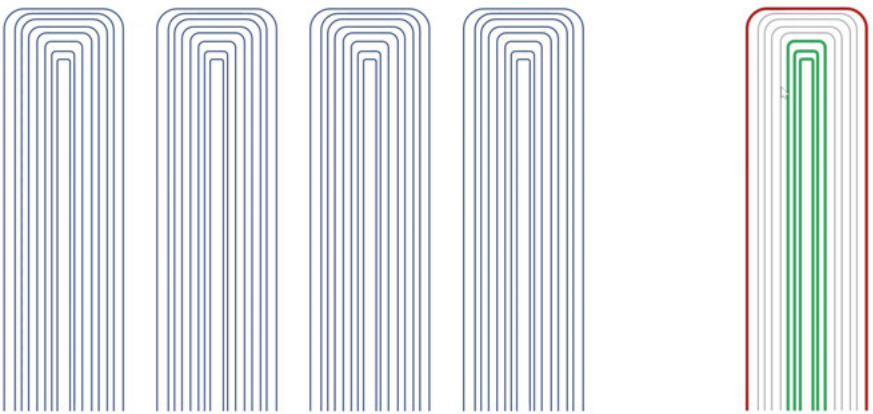


Fig. 4: Structure of the four quires of S.5531 (left) and the partially reconstructed first quire (right).

The fact that several pieces of the original booklet ended up in different collections is, in itself, not unusual for Dunhuang manuscripts and there are plenty of similar examples. In fact, now that the majority of manuscripts have been published in facsimile form of sufficient quality or are available in digital form on websites such as Gallica[14] and International Dunhuang Project,[15] rejoining disjointed fragments has developed into one of the promising new directions of

14 See: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ (accessed on 13 February 2023).
15 See: http://idp.bl.uk (accessed on 13 February 2023).

research with a potential to provide context for many loose fragments.[16] The general assumption regarding such cases is that manuscript pieces and fragments, even if fallen apart, had probably been placed together inside the library cave and became separated during the process of handling the contents of the cave at the beginning of the twentieth century when the material was acquired by foreign explorers. This is naturally a valid scenario, especially since the manuscripts and paintings seem to have been removed from the cave and handled on several occasions. It is only to be expected that while moving around thousands of items, some of the loose fragments would be disconnected and misplaced.

Our MTM booklet, however, has the potential to complicate this scenario. The fact that one of the three pieces of our original booklet features sound glosses in the Tibetan script on the very first page indicates that the manuscript had fallen into pieces before it was deposited inside the cave. The Tibetan glosses must have been added after the manuscript came apart, which is why they appear on the first page of the quire, rather than, say, on the first page of the original booklet. Consequently, the Tibetan-script transcriptions could not have been contemporaneous with the production of the booklet. They must have been added at a later stage and probably had nothing to do with the context in which the booklet had originally been produced. This original context, as mentioned above, was probably related to the mourning ritual performed for the benefit of a deceased family member. By contrast, the Tibetan transcription could have been added years or even decades later as an unrelated event. By this time, the separate pieces were no longer kept as part of the same manuscript, and the person adding the transcriptions may not even have been aware that other pieces of the manuscript were still somewhere nearby.

Why is this of significance? Because this reconsidered scenario reveals that the manuscripts we see today were not always the result of a single act of production at a specific moment in time. Instead, in their current state, the manuscripts are often chronologically layered objects, the end result of several, potentially unrelated, acts of intervention that happened over an extended period. In the case of our MTM codex, the initial production of the manuscript would have been the copying of the ten scriptures as part of the ritual commemorating the dead. But even this seemingly simple process did not happen overnight, because the presence of different hands in the manuscript demonstrates that the copying involved multiple individuals, who probably copied the texts over

16 For representative studies of this direction, see Zhang Xiaoyan 2016; Zhang Yongquan 2021; Zhang Yongquan and Luo Mujun 2016.

the course of weeks or months.[17] Another episode in the history of the booklet would have been the moment when the thread broke and the binding fell apart.[18] This probably did not happen while the mourning period was in progress, otherwise the binding would probably have been fixed. And yet another episode would have been when the booklet was already in pieces and someone used the beginning of three loose bifolios (i.e. Pelliot tibétain 1262) to practise their reading of Chinese characters.

In other words, the manuscript remained in use after the initial act of its production. While it was originally produced for a specific purpose, it was used at a later point by other individuals for other purposes in different contexts. This kind of reuse is markedly distinct from the idea of recycling, which implies that the original manuscript is used purely for its paper or some other properties. Instead, in this case, the new users continued to interact with the content of the original booklet, but were doing this in a different way from those who produced it. Clearly, the person adding the Tibetan syllables on the first page of Pelliot tibétain 1262 was not taking advantage of the empty space on the page to write unrelated things but actively engaged with the text that was already there. He or she was adding a layer that was meaningful only in combination with the previous layer. Without the Chinese text of the *Guanyin jing*, the transcription would not have been complete. This kind of interaction enriches the original item and, at the same time, personalises (or, rather, re-personalises) it to fit the new context.

The example of S.5531 and its satellite pieces reminds us that the Dunhuang library cave was not simply a collection of manuscripts deposited there at various points in time over the course of the preceding six centuries. The contents of the cave were generally a late tenth- and early eleventh-century collection, which also means that many of the manuscripts had been used in a variety of contexts for decades or even centuries. By the time a fifth-century scroll was interred in the cave in the early eleventh century, it would have had a history of more than five hundred years, and, during that period, members of respective communities would have interacted with it in a variety of ways. They would not have just stored it but, from time to time, would also have read it, leafed

17 Some MTM scrolls used in a similar mourning context have colophons demonstrating that the final manuscript was produced over the course of the three-year mourning period; see Galambos 2020a, 81–83.

18 Of course, the tearing of the binding thread could have been caused by someone (but probably not the mourners) using the manuscript for some time. Thus, there might have been many more episodes of which we will remain unaware.

through it while reciting it, displayed it in public, showed it in private to important guests, copied it, imitated its calligraphy, added notes on the recto or the margins, repaired and conserved it, and generally appreciated it as an object of value and significance. By the time it was interred in the cave, the scroll would have looked very different from how it looked when first produced. To some extent, the same holds true for much later manuscripts as well, as they would have had their own histories before ending up in the cave.

The Tibetan transcriptions, in turn, raise the question of who added them and why. As the Tibetan sound glosses follow the orientation of the Chinese, they are effectively truncated into single words, making them inconvenient to read as continuous sentences. This indicates that the exercise was not specifically oriented at learning how to recite the *Guanyin jing*, because then the transcriptions would not have started from a random point in the text. Instead, the point was to study reading or annotating Chinese characters in general, which was evidently a skill someone needed to practise. As to who this might have been, the first idea that comes to mind is naturally that this would be a Tibetan speaker practising his or her Chinese reading skill. However, as Takata Tokio argued in connection with phonetic transcriptions of Chinese texts using the Tibetan script, these might have been used by Chinese-speaking inhabitants (in some cases students) of the region who were not proficient at reading Chinese characters, and the phonetic script would have helped them to read or vocalise the texts.[19] This practice would have started during the Tibetan control of Dunhuang but continued right through the tenth century and possibly later. Because our manuscript dates from the tenth century, it is clear that the Tibetan transcriptions were also added in the tenth century (certainly before the closing of the library cave in the early eleventh century), providing yet more evidence for the interaction of Chinese and Tibetan scripts and languages during this period.

5 Conclusions

The exercise of rejoining pieces of the same manuscript has the potential to provide context for fragments. The date 921, for example, jotted on the inside back cover of S.3551 would clearly be applicable to both Дх-962 and Pelliot tibétain 1262. Similarly, our knowledge that S.3551 is an MTM booklet probably

19 Takata Tokio 2019, 99–103.

produced as part of the commemoration of the dead allows us to realise that the same also holds true for the other two pieces, even if in their current state, these are single-text manuscripts. Yet, there may also be elements in the individual pieces which were not part of the original codex and are, thus, not applicable to it. The most obvious example of this is the transcriptions of Chinese characters in Pelliot tibétain 1262, written in the Tibetan script. These were added after the original codex became unbound and, thus, have no relevance to the other pieces. More importantly, these additions provide evidence of the different stages of the manuscript and its pieces, some of which would have happened well after the initial process of producing the manuscript.

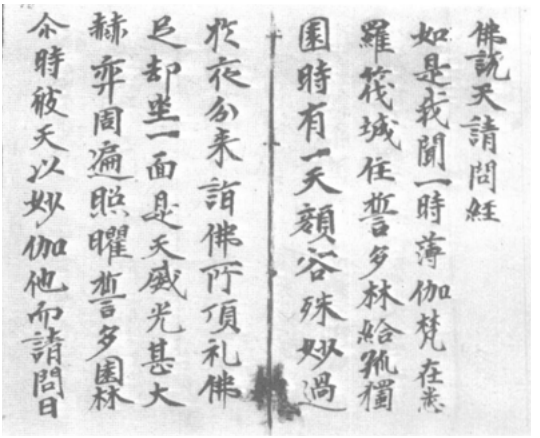


Fig. 5: The beginning of manuscript London, BL, Or. 8210/S.5531; reproduced from Huang Yongwu 1986, vol. 43, 227.

It is also instructive to consider why the disjointed parts of this manuscript have not been pieced together earlier. The most obvious reason is, of course, that they have been kept in separate collections in different countries, some separated from each other by the Iron Curtain. Before facsimile images of the manuscripts were published, it was only feasible to examine them by visiting the holding institutions, a task that was possible for only a very few scholars. And even if a fragment was published, the images were presented in a way that prioritised the texts, paying little attention to the physical form of the manuscripts. The reproductions typically ignored the margins and edges, cropping the images to save space so that text could be shown in as large characters as possible (Fig. 5). Finally, Pelliot tibétain 1262 was moved to the Tibetan collection, which

meant not only that it was less visible by scholars working on Chinese texts but was also never published along with the Chinese manuscripts. In the end, the pieces could be connected, on the one hand, by having access to high-resolution images of the manuscripts and, on the other, by straddling the linguistic divide created by academic specialisation.

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