

Khotanese Documents in the Pelliot Collection

— Saka Documents Text Volume II

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Contrary to the title given by the organizers, I'm not speaking about something entirely new, but about a project that started more than 20 years ago. It is a text edition of the Khotanese documents in the Pelliot collection published in facsimile by the late Professor Emmerick in 1971 and 1973 as *Saka Documents V* and *VI*. As is well known, the first four volumes of *Saka Documents* edited by Sir Harold Bailey covering Hoernle, Stein, Hedin and some Pelliot manuscripts have a *Text Volume* (in 1968) by the same author to accompany them, and Professors Emmerick and Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya have provided *Saka Documents III* (in 1995) accompanying their facsimile volume (1993) for the St. Petersburg collection. So the gap in the series obviously needs to be filled. Since I worked on the longest text in those two facsimile volumes edited by Emmerick in the 1970s for my Doctoral dissertation, the board of the Corpus accepted my proposal to prepare a Text Volume. Today I'm going to give you an idea about what kinds of documents this remarkable collection contains.

The most important among them is no doubt **P 2786**. With 250 lines it is the longest of the known Khotanese secular documents. The internal structure of the manuscript is, however, a bit complicated. The first one third is a draft of a report sent to the royal court of Khotan by a Khotanese envoy leading a delegation composed of Buddhist priests and laymen. They are on the way to China, but their journey has come to a standstill at Dunhuang by the order of restraint from the ruler of Dunhuang, called the Linggong, because of the road further east is unsafe. The report records the delegation's negotiation with the Linggong, the dispatch of a group of scouts and their reports. This is a familiar theme also found in other documents, notably in two long documents from the Stein and Pelliot collections concerning the pilgrimage of the seven Khotanese princes to the Wutaishan. In our case, the second one third of the manuscript has basically the same, but slightly improved and expanded text, which must be the next version of the draft. What is interesting is, another Stein manuscript with miscellaneous

contents, has a document written by the chief priest of the same delegation, thus providing an independent description of the same events. It is difficult to date these documents exactly. The title used by the ruler of Dunhuang as well as other pieces of circumstantial evidence suggests the tenth century, more likely in the second half than the first. The last one third of P 2786, apparently written by the same hand as what precedes, deals with a different topic. It is about sending products of Khotan, the most important of which is jade, to China as tribute (called “the royal favor to China” in the text), naturally expecting rewards surpassing the expenditure. Of special interest is a series of complaint, eight in all, on individuals who volunteered to take jade into China, but never carried out what they promised. This text seems to suggest that the state economy depended at least partly on outsourcing to private enterprises. This part of the document has a parallel text, unfortunately incomplete, in another Stein manuscript **Or.8212.186** (Skjærvø’s Catalogue, p. 55-60) which was displayed in the Silkroad exhibition here three years ago.

Two fragmentary documents, each of which consists of two pieces of manuscript fragments, concern the escorting of seven Khotanese princes to the Wutaishan mentioned earlier. In fact the authors of the longer documents recur here, and the events described in these fragments seems to fall within the period dealt with by the longer documents. When the first volume of the Catalogue of the Pelliot Chinese manuscripts was published in 1970 by Professors Gernet and Wu, it was pointed out there that **P 2031** and **P 2788** join to form a single fragment. The Khotanese text on the other side of these two manuscripts also form a single text without interruption. On the other hand, the fact that **P 2898** and **Ch. 00327** (= IOL Khot S.18; Skjærvø’s Catalogue, p. 520) also join to produce continuous texts both in **Chinese** (a copy of the *Aparimitāyū¹-sūtra*, known to have been mass-produced under Tibetan rule at Dunhuang) and Khotanese had not been noticed, simply because the two pieces are deposited in two different institutions separated by the Channel. All these documents, two longer and two shorter ones, may belong to the end of the ninth century.

One group of Khotanese texts seems so far to have failed to attract due attention. They are texts of unequal length, mostly preserved as unfinished drafts on several manuscripts, all originating from Dunhuang, in large part in the Pelliot collection and some in the Stein collection. Written as usual in scriptio continua on the verso side of the discarded scrolls of the Chinese Buddhist scriptures, they are in many cases marked by punctuation marks as verse just like such literary texts as the Rāma story or the

Sudhana Avadāna. What distinguishes them from the fictions of Indian inspiration is that they are often addressed, like letters of a traveler on the road, to the family or teachers in the homeland. These texts have sometimes been taken to represent real letters intended to be sent to the addressees. However, factors such as elaborate expressions, recurring standard phrases, and especially the fact that the text is clearly written in verse (**P 2027**), lead us to believe that they represent a literary genre comparable to the theme “love-in-separation” in classical Sanskrit poetry. I have proposed to call them “letters in verse”. Here’s some sample lines in my translation:

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An interesting variety of such poems is found in **P 4649**. It is written on the other side of a large sheet of paper with an elaborate picture in black ink of a six-armed Bodhisattva. The Khotanese poem is unique in that the narrator is a woman, who calls herself *Īaŋ bĀŋ* “humble maidservant” as against much more common *Īaŋ bĀa* “humble servant”. In addition the Khotanese language distinguishes the masculine forms from the feminine forms in the past tense of a verb. In this text in at least two places the first person feminine transitive is clearly used. Of course it is a possibility that a male author wrote it. But the strong emotion expressed there seems to suggest otherwise. Perhaps she is a poetess, a Khotanese MahsatĀ or Sappho. A sample translation is as follows:

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One of the manuscripts in which these verses are found, **P 2739**, is in a bad shape already around 1970 when Emmerick prepared his facsimile edition. Luckily I was able to verify most of Bailey’s readings in *Khotanese Texts* Vol. 2, through the **photographs** I inherited from my teacher the late Professor Mar Dresden. Bailey’s readings are based on the prewar state of the manuscript and photos taken in the 1930’s. I’m sure they are now properly preserved in the Ancient India and Iran Trust. It is hoped that, if a catalogue of the Pelliot Khotanese manuscripts is prepared in the future, such information is included in it.

A unique fragment in the group of manuscripts is **P 4091**. It is a fragment of a genuine official letter from the royal court of Khotan, not a draft scribbled on the other side of discarded Chinese Buddhist scrolls. The large, ornamental script has the same

characteristics as that of P 5538, which is an official letter of the Khotanese king *Viða' Īpra* to the ruler of Dunhuang in the year 970. Although in P 5538 the Khotanese regnal year (in the Chinese style) is used, in the present fragment the Chinese regnal year *Kāiyùn* 開運 (written *khYyi-gvñf*) the second year (= 945) of Later Jin is used. The square Chinese seal is also different from that of P 5538. It is to be noticed that these two Khotanese official letters are the only Khotanese texts found in Dunhuang of which we can be reasonably certain that they had been written in Khotan and sent to Dunhuang where they were preserved. In other words, although this may sound absurd, with the absence of Khotanese manuscripts from the Khotan area that can be dated to the tenth century, these two pieces are the only *direct* evidence of the Khotanese language used in Khotan in the tenth century. Another problem posed by this fragment is the use of the Chinese regnal year. In the tenth century, both before 945 and after, it is known that original Khotanese regnal years in the Chinese style were used both in Khotanese documents and in Chinese documents from Dunhuang. So why is the Chinese regnal year used here? Was there any principle about which one to use on what occasion?

The last text I'd like to mention is **P 2024**, which is one of the few Khotanese commercial documents from Dunhuang. The surviving text is a fragment of business record, where the unit of payment for various kinds of merchandise is *pvaica*, or “roll” (of cloth), reflecting the state of economy in the area in the tenth century. What is characteristic of this document is the abundance of Turkish words, both as proper names and the names of merchandise. After my initial attempt at interpretation Professor Zieme kindly supplied some additional information. Another interesting point is the word *painakyaïma* which is found seven times in the document. The contexts suggest that one such is either three or four rolls worth, or can buy a sheep. The word sounds Chinese, although the identification is not so far forthcoming. This Khotanese word also offers an alternative, and perhaps better, reading *pynkym* to Pelliot Sogdian 28.2 (Sims-Williams et Hamilton (1990) **E2**) *pyrkym* “(merchandise) dont je suis redevable, chose due par moi, ma dette”.

Such are some representative documents to be published in *Saka Documents Text Volume II*. I hope to complete the preparation of the volume in not the so remote future.

Thank you very much.