



## CROSBY, OSCAR TERRY

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**CROSBY, OSCAR TERRY** (born Ponchatoula, Louisiana, 21 April 1861, d. Warrenton, Virginia, 2 January 1947), collector of an important group of Khotanese texts. He began his career as an electrical engineer, having a particular interest in high-speed electric locomotion. He became the first president of the Potomac Electric Power Company in Washington, D.C., and was later president of the Washington Traction and Electric Company, the Trenton (N.J.) Street Railway Company, and the Wilmington-Philadelphia Traction Company. During World War I he served as assistant secretary of the treasury in charge of loans to the Allies and, as United States commissioner of finance, presided over the Inter-Allied Council for War Purchases and Finance. Before the war he had already shown a keen interest in movements to prevent war and was elected president of the World-Federation League. In addition to his distinguished career in business and politics, Crosby found time to earn himself a reputation as a world traveler and became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He traveled to Abyssinia, the Egyptian Sudan, Borneo, Haiti, South Africa, east Africa, Guatemala, and Russia, among other places (*National Cyclopaedia*, pp. 83-84).

Crosby's importance for Iranian studies is a result of his travels to the Tarim basin, which he described in *Tibet and Turkistan*, published in 1905. During a visit to Khotan in 1903 he had purchased a collection of manuscript fragments, which turned out to be written in Khotanese and Sanskrit. He consulted Professor A. F. R. Hoernle in Oxford about them, then deposited them in the Library of Congress, with the "request that they be made available, as far, as



possible, to any inquiring paleograph” (p. 62).

The present author, after trying for many years to track down “the Crosby collection,” eventually succeeded in 1984, owing to the help of Susan Meinheit and Gene Smith. The fragments had been temporarily withdrawn from deposit by Crosby’s heirs, and their return to the Library of Congress had not been noted, so that for many years their location remained unknown. The Crosby collection consists of approximately 150 fragments, of which at least fifty-six are written in Khotanese and all but two of the remainder in Sanskrit. The two leaves in non-Brahmi script are probably forgeries, though this opinion was not confirmed by an ink test made at the Library of Congress. Many of the fragments can be joined together, so that the total of new material is less than appears at first sight. Four fragments belonging to a Khotanese version of the *Saṅghāṭasūtra*, when joined together, constitute one of the rare instances of a complete folio of this text, of which numerous fragments are found in other collections. Four other fragments, all in the same script and evidently belonging to a single manuscript, are parts of an omen text containing terms similar to those in the two previously known Khotanese omen texts. A third group of four fragments, written in the same script and evidently belonging to a single manuscript, are part of a medical text; most of them contain references to needles and cauterization. One of the fragments is part of a document written in cursive script in Late Khotanese. It is dated in the rat year of the seventeenth regnal year of an unnamed king. The Sanskrit texts in the Crosby collection, all written in Buddhist Sanskrit, are also of interest for Khotanese studies, as at least twelve of the fragments appear to belong to the *Sumukhasūtra*, of which a complete Khotanese translation is known (for discussion of the importance of one of these fragments, see Emmerick, 1986).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(Ronald E. Emmerick)