



DUNHUANG I. THE CAVE SITES; MANICHEAN TEXTS

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i. The cave sites; Manichean texts

The Mogao Caves (Mogaoku) or Caves of One Thousand Buddhas (Qianfodong) are located some 25 km from Dunhuang at the edge of the Dunes of the Singing Sands (Mingshashan) of the Gobi desert, these cave-shrines, more than 730 in total (of which almost 500 belong to the better preserved southern section) and containing more than 45,000 square meters of predominantly Buddhist murals and more than 2,000 Buddhist painted stucco sculptures, testify to the importance of the site as a major center for Buddhist pilgrims over a period of approximately one millennium. Dunhuang's situation—at the point where the northern and southern silk routes, which skirted the Tarim Basin in the Taklamakan Desert, merged at the Hexi Corridor leading to Chang'an—made it particularly important to monks and merchants traveling to and from China. The first cave was hewn in the 4th century C.E. and the last in the 14th, a period in which Dunhuang was under the control of, not only the Chinese, but also, among others, Tibetans, Uighurs, Tanguts, and Mongols. The discovery, in the late 1890s, of a sealed-up cave crammed with manuscripts, printed documents, and paintings on silk and paper attracted archeologists to Mogao. Thousands of the manuscripts stored in this cave, Cave 17 (the “library cave”) were obtained and carted away by the British-Hungarian explorer [Marc Aurel](#)



Stein, who arrived at Mogao in March 1907, and by the French Sinologist Paul Pelliot, who visited the site in February-March of the following year. The Chinese authorities decided to secure the remaining manuscripts in 1909-10, but several hundred items were obtained at the cave by members of the first Japanese Central Asian expedition mounted by Ōtani Kozui in 1911 and the Russian expedition led by Sergei Oldenburg in 1914. As a result of these activities the largest collections of Dunhuang manuscripts and printed documents, well over 40,000 in total, belong to the National Library of China and Beijing University Library, the British Library in London, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the Institute for Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, and Ryūkoku University Library in Kyoto. There are, however, further holdings at libraries and museums throughout East Asia and Europe; and several items are kept in private collections.

Dating from the 4th to the early years of the 11th century, when the cave was sealed (cf. Rong, 1999-2000. pp. 272 ff.), the manuscripts found in the library cave preserve a great variety of religious, philosophical, and literary texts and economic, legal, and official documents as well as biographies, calendars, vocabularies, and documents on history, topography, medicine, mathematics, customs, and art. The majority of the texts are in Chinese and Tibetan, but a large number of texts are in other languages, such as Sanskrit, Khotanese, Sogdian, Tangut, and Old Turkish. The contents of the cave confirm the historical preponderance of Buddhism in the region but also reveal the presence here of other religions, in particular, Daoism, Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Manicheism.

In his famous letter to Émile Senart in Paris, dated 26 March 1908 and written at the site, Paul Pelliot reported on his most important finds in the library cave. Among these were two Chinese manuscripts of great importance to the study of Manicheism: a fragment (29 cols.) of a synopsis of the principles of Manicheism and the organization of the Manichean church and a section (chapter one) of the Daoist polemic *Laozi huahu jing* “Scripture on Laozi’s Transformation of the Barbarians,” in which Mani is depicted as an incarnation of Laozi (Pelliot, 1908, pp. 515-18). Printed editions of these two texts (P[elliot Chinois] 3884 and 2007) soon after appeared in *Dunhuang shishi yishu* (“Lost Books from a Stone Chamber at Dunhuang”), a collection of rare Dunhuang texts compiled by Luo Zhenyu and published in Beijing at the end of 1909 (cf. Luo, 1909, fasc. 10 and 9; the *editio princeps* of the Manichean



fragment was established by Jiang Fu). Photographs were published the following year in Luo Zhenyu's *Shishi bibao* ("Rare Treasures from a Stone Chamber," nos. 11 and 13). In 1913, printed editions and annotated French translations of the two texts by Édouard Chavannes and Pelliot himself appeared in the *Journal asiatique* (pp. 105-32; pl. I). The edition of the catechism, provisionally entitled "Fragment Pelliot" by Chavannes and Pelliot, would probably have appeared earlier, had it not been for the discovery of a lengthy Manichean treatise (345 cols.) on cosmogony, soteriology, and ethics among the Chinese manuscripts brought from Dunhuang to the National Library in Beijing in 1909-10 (*yu* 56, now *bei* 8470). A handwritten facsimile of this well-preserved text was published in the spring of 1911 by Luo Zhenyu in his newly founded *Guoxue congkan* under the general title *Bosijiao canjing* "Fragmentary scripture of a Persian religion" (fols. 1-13). This was immediately made available to Chavannes and Pelliot, whose annotated French translation of the text was published in the *Journal asiatique* in the same year (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1911, pp. 508-90; Luo's edition, pp. 591-617). Fragments of related versions in Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish were later identified among the manuscripts discovered by German and Japanese expeditions in the region of Turfan (in the eastern part of modern-day Xinjiang), and the text's identity as a version of the *Treatise on the Light-Nous* was then established (cf. von Le Coq, 1922, pp. 15-22; Sundermann, 1983, pp. 231-42; Klimkeit and Schmidt-Glintzer, 1984, pp. 82-117; Sundermann, 1992, pp. 19-21, 62-73 (secs.1-79); Zieme, 1995, pp. 251-76; Lieu, 1998, pp. 60-75; Mikkelsen, 2000, pp. 22-26; Wilkens, 2001-02, pp. 78 ff.). Fragments of one further Chinese version of this treatise have been identified in the Berlin Turfan collection (cf. Yoshida, 1997, pp. 35-39).

Figure 1. Chinese Manichean text fragment: "Compendium of the teachings of Mani, the Buddha of Light" (Stein manuscript S 3969 in the British Library).

In 1916, a scroll containing some thirty Manichean hymns and prayers in Chinese was discovered in the Stein Collection (S 2659) by the Japanese scholar Yabuki Yoshiteru (cf. Yabuki, 1930, I, p. 312; idem, 1988, pp. 25 f., 85; Stein, 1921, II, p. 922). The task of editing and translating the texts of this collection, entitled *Xiabu zan* "Lower section hymns" and famously known as the "Hymnscroll," was offered to Paul Pelliot; he, however, ceded this to Ernst Waldschmidt and Wolfgang Lentz (cf. Pelliot, 1925, p. 113; Waldschmidt and Lentz, 1929, p. 117), who subsequently published their editions and German



translations of about two-thirds of the texts in two major studies on Manicheism (1926, pp. 84-111, 119-20, 123-24; 1933, pp. 485-91). An English translation of the full *Xiabu zan* was published by Tsui Chi in 1946 (pp. 174-219) and a German translation by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer in 1987 (pp. 11-67). Numerous fragments of parallel hymn texts in Middle Iranian and Old Turkish, notably the first canto of the hymn-cycle *Huyadagmān*, have been identified, especially in the Berlin Turfan collection (cf. Henning apud Tsui, 1943, pp. 217-19; Boyce, 1954, pp. 66-77; Henning, 1959, pp. 122-24; Zieme, 1966, pp. 351-60; Bryder, 1985, pp. 63-74; MacKenzie, 1985, pp. 421-28; Sims-Williams, 1989, pp. 321-31; Sundermann, 1990; Bryder, 1999, pp. 252-75). A fragment of a Chinese Manichean hymnbook, containing hymns copied from the *Xiabu zan*, belongs to the same collection (cf. Thilo, pp. 161-70, texts A & B).

A large fragment (82 cols.) of one further Chinese Manichean text was discovered among the Stein manuscripts (S 3969) in 1923 by Yabuki, who identified it as the initial part of the manuscript to which the “Fragment Pelliot” belonged (cf. Lin, 1988, pp. 89-90). Pelliot commenced work on a translation of its text (cf. Pelliot, 1929, pp. 248-49); but this did not reach publication until 1990, when it was appended to the annotated French translation of the combined text by Nahal Tajadod (Tajadod, 1990, pp. 257-60). The first translation of the Stein part, which carries the date of composition (731) and the title *Moni guangfo jiaofa yilüe* “Compendium of the teachings of Mani, the Buddha of Light,” was prepared by Gustav Haloun and Walter B. Henning and published in 1952 (pp. 188-96; photographs on plates between pp. 184 and 185); the first translation of the combined text was published by Schmidt-Glintzer 35 years later (1987, pp. 69-75).

Several fragments of Manichean texts in Old Turkish and Sogdian have been identified among the Dunhuang manuscripts in London and Paris. The most important of these, among the Stein documents, is a well-preserved version of the principal confessional prayer for auditors in Old Turkish, written in 338 lines of Manichean script, the *Xuāstvānīft* (Or. 8212/178 (Ch. 0015); i.e., *Xuāstvānīft* A; cf. von Le Coq, 1911, pp. 283-99, photograph on foldout plate; Bang, 1932, pp. 137-242; Asmussen, 1965, pp. 169-79, 194-230; further Radloff, 1911, pp. 873-89; von Le Coq, 1912, pp. 57-61). A shorter Manichean confessional prayer, written in Uighur script, is found in the Pelliot collection (P 3072; cf. Hamilton, 1986, pp. 63-66; photo p. 285; Klimkeit, 1993, p. 307). One manuscript in the same collection (P 3049) contains a small number of



Manichean writings in Old Turkish and Uighur script: a meal hymn to the twelve authorities, a meal hymn to the twenty-two properties of deities, scribal exercises on the titles of Bügu Khan, and a letter to the Uighur ruler Il Tonga Tigin (Hamilton, pp. 37-53; photos, pp. 276-82; Klimkeit, pp. 328, 332-33, 371-72). An almost identical version, also in Uighur script, of the hymn to the twenty-two divine properties is preserved in another Pelliot manuscript from Dunhuang (P 3407; Hamilton, pp. 55-56), and one manuscript (P 2961) contains one further scribal exercise for an address to Bügü Khan (idem, 69-70; photo, p. 287). A short text, in Uighur script, of the same type as the latter belongs to the Stein collection (Or. 8212/124; idem, pp. 67-68; photo, p. 286); and a text, also in Uighur script, containing a list of names of Manichean clergy is kept in the collection of Dunhuang manuscripts in Paris (P 3071; idem, pp. 57-62; photo, p. 284). At least one Manichean fragment (Pelliot sogdien 25) was among the Sogdian manuscripts of the Pelliot collection brought to publication by Émile Benveniste in 1940 (Benveniste, 1940a, pl. 212-13; idem, 1940b, p. 159); its identity as an exercise copy of the Manichean *Wazargān āfrīwan* “Psalm of the Great” was established later by W. B. Henning (Henning, 1946, p. 713, n. 6). Two fragments of one manuscript kept in the Stein collection (Or. 8212/83 = Ch. 00334 and Or. 8212/82 = Ch. 00335) preserve parts of a Sogdian prose text, probably Manichean, on five sins (corresponding to the five commandments of the Elect; cf. Sims-Williams, 1976, pp. 48-51).

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