

Manuscripts and Travellers: The Sino-Tibetan Documents of a Tenth-Century Buddhist Pilgrim. By SAM VAN SCHAİK and IMRE GALAMBOS. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012. vii, 247 pp. \$140.00 (cloth)

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Sam van Schaik and Imre Galambos not only shed light on a dark age of Sino-Tibetan history after the falls of the Tang dynasty and Tibetan empire left voids in official records, but they also take the reader on an enjoyable philological and cultural journey through their careful analysis and interpretation of a tenth-century manuscript once in the hands of a Buddhist pilgrim. This document, now housed at the British Library, has been digitized as part of the International Dunhuang Project. Although van Schaik and Galambos are expert philologists drawing attention to details of orthography, historical linguistics, and handwriting styles, their prose remains accessible, rendering *Manuscripts and Travellers* a pleasurable read for anyone interested in the dynamic historical-cultural aspects of Buddhist pilgrimage—including advanced undergraduates.

Manuscripts and Travellers consists of ten chapters and is divided into two parts: the first concerns the cultural setting and historical contexts for the “Daozhao manuscript,” a name coined by the authors after the Buddhist pilgrim who once carried it, while the second offers a translation and analysis of the three interlinked parts of the document. The main manuscript (A) contains letters of passage documenting the pilgrim’s itinerary. Glued to this are Manuscript B—with a Chinese sūtra recto and Tibetan tantric texts on the verso—and Manuscript C, a Chinese text copying a seventh-century inscription commemorating the building of the Gantong monastery near Liangzhou. High-quality digital reproductions and useful maps are appended to facilitate reading.

The authors’ approach to the study of manuscripts is through the lens of scholarship on material culture. By making this theoretical distinction, van Schaik and Galambos open up space for interpretations of the Daozhao manuscript that cross the borders of traditional academic disciplines. In this process, attention is given to agency—who created the pieces of the manuscript and what broader societal and political norms allowed for the manuscript’s existence and preservation until this present day.

Chapter 2 begins at the Dunhuang cave—home to the Daozhao manuscript for over one thousand years. The authors deftly survey the existing literature on the cache of manuscripts at Dunhuang; yet, they do not impose definitive answers to the functions of the cave or the motives for its closing, instead reminding the audience that “these related questions are far from being fully understood” (p. 27). In this context, the authors—Sam van Schaik, a Tibetologist, and Imre Galambos, a Sinologist—join linguistic forces to tackle the complexities of the Daozhao manuscript, which they appropriately place amongst a corpus of well-known, yet understudied, texts including Sino-Tibetan glossaries and bilingual Chinese and Tibetan texts.

Chapter 3 focuses on the topic of Buddhist pilgrimage between China and India in the tenth century. The authors temper the idealized image of Buddhist pilgrims in themes related to journeys to the West in Chinese literature by bringing attention to the historical and social contexts that allowed for pilgrimage, especially the necessity of patronage and local support. By analyzing the pilgrimage route in comparison with other contemporary manuscripts, van Schaik and Galambos convincingly propose: “[P]ilgrimage to India was a much wider phenomenon involving hundreds, perhaps even thousands of pilgrims” (p. 36; cf. p. 106). Although the authors mistakenly identify Bya khyung Monastery (Chinese: Xiaqiong si; located in western Hualong Huizu Autonomous County of Qinghai Province today) as the name of the monastery at Dantig (in the southeast corner of the same county), this is a minor error repeated from previous scholarship (cf. p. 40, note 20 on Stein), especially in comparison to their major contribution to the understudied history of hermitages, such as Dantig.

Chapter 4 explores the complex political terrain in this geographic area often designated as the “Hexi Corridor” in Chinese sources; and known as “Tsongkha” in tenth-century Tibetan sources, or as “Amdo” in much later histories (ca. eighteenth century). After the demise of the two major political forces in the region—the Tang Dynasty and the Tibetan empire—the forging of religious and political relationships between Tibetans, Uighur Turks, Mongols, and Chinese was not only key to survival, but also a portent for future relations. The study of the Daozhao manuscript thus reveals the multicultural backdrop of its creation, with Tibetan as a *lingua franca* necessary for Buddhist pilgrimage at that time.

Part 2 takes up the themes raised in the previous chapters, but centers on the manuscript itself. The authors’ technique of contextualizing the translation with analysis opens the door to an adventure in the tenth-century world of Buddhist pilgrims, local military-political leaders, and Buddhist devotional practices. These devotional acts include the copying of a stone inscription at Gantong monastery (Manuscript C in ch. 6), sections of the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness* (Chinese: *Baoenjing*; ch. 7), and Tibetan tantric texts (including rituals on Avalokiteśvara and a Mahāyoga treatise; ch. 8), as well as the presentation of the letters of passage necessary for Buddhist pilgrimage (ch. 9). The authors interpret the document alongside relevant secondary literature and external historical evidence, while offering a compelling analysis of the various sections of the document with careful attention to paleography and codicology.

Manuscripts and Travellers is a fascinating and informative study that spotlights a long-neglected Sino-Tibetan manuscript from Dunhuang. Van Schaik and Galambos succeed in decentering official histories and expounding on the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of this area, while also showing the importance of patronage in Buddhist affairs.

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