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Composite Manuscripts in Medieval China: The Case of Scroll P.3720 from Dunhuang

1 Introduction

Manuscript Pelliot chinois 3720 (hereafter: P.3720) at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) is a Chinese scroll from the Dunhuang 敦煌 cave library discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a collation of different texts, including appointment decrees, religious poetry, a funerary inscription, a short record of the history of the Mogao caves 莫高窟, etc. The texts come from distinct sources, and some had been written at different times by different persons as separate manuscripts, before they were all joined together into a single scroll. Thus the manuscript is also a composite object physically, consisting of separate pieces of paper glued together sometime during the 10th century. While the individual texts have been successfully used by scholars as primary sources for information about the history of Dunhuang and the cave complex at Mogao, it is clear that in order to fully understand the motivation behind the creation of the scroll, the arrangement of the individual components (i.e. sheets of paper) and texts must also be examined. A remarkable aspect of the arrangement is that some of the texts are dated and the dates range from 851 to 938, with an 87-year gap between the earliest and latest ones. The present study is an attempt to enhance our understanding of the date, authorship and composition of this manuscript, and at the same time also shed light on the practice of creating such composite scrolls in medieval China.

This paper was partly written in Paris with the kind support of Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and partly while I was a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg. I am grateful for both of these organizations for making it possible for me to concentrate solely on my research during these periods of time. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to Nathalie Monnet of the BnF for facilitating my work with the manuscripts at the Pelliot collection. I also thank colleagues who have provided valuable criticism and suggestions during my research on this topic, including Jean-Pierre Drège, Michael Friedrich, Costantino Moretti and Wang Ding.

2 Medieval scrolls from Dunhuang

The term 'Dunhuang manuscripts' refers to the tens of thousands of manuscripts discovered around the turn of the 20th century in a hidden niche at the Buddhist cave temple complex at the Mogao caves, also known as the Thousand Buddha Caves. The Mogao caves are located near the town of Dunhuang in Northwestern China, what used to be the Chinese frontier in historical times. The discovery of the manuscripts is generally attributed to Abbot Wang 王道士, a Taoist monk who lived at the temple complex and acted as the site's voluntary caretaker.[1] According to contemporary records, in the summer of 1900 he hired local workmen to remove the sand which blocked the entrance to some caves and one of the workers, after having cleared the entrance corridor to the cave known today as Cave 16, noticed cracks in the northern wall of the corridor. Behind the mural that covered the wall, a small cave was found, filled to the ceiling with manuscripts and paintings.[2] Still, in the internal turmoil of the last years of the Qing dynasty, the cave library remained relatively unknown until the arrival, seven years later, of Hungarian-born British archaeologist M. Aurel Stein (1862–1943) who managed to persuade Abbot Wang to part with a substantial amount of Chinese, Tibetan and other manuscripts in exchange for a donation towards the restoration of the caves. As the news of the discovery travelled, several other foreign explorers visited the caves and left with significant collections of manuscripts.[3] Eventually, Chinese authorities issued an order for the transport of the remaining material to the capital and managed to deposit a sizeable collection at the Metropolitan Library. Nevertheless, Abbot Wang seems to have held some of the manuscripts back as he was still able to subsequently sell a considerable number to Japanese and Russian explorers.[4] The largest collections of Dunhuang manuscripts today are in the British Library in London (Stein collection), the BnF in Paris (Pelliot collection) and the National Library of China in Beijing.

1 Abbot Wang's secular name was Wang Yuanlu 王圓籙, although, as Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 points out, Yuanlu 圓籙 also has the appearance of a monastic name. Rong (2013, 81) suggests that this may have been out of a desire to conceal his original name after coming to Mogao.

2 For a general introduction to the discovery of the cave, see van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 13–14.

3 Stein's encounters with Abbot Wang are described in his *Ruins of Desert Cathay* (Stein 1921, vol. II, 172).

4 On the Japanese acquisition of Dunhuang manuscripts, see Galambos 2008; on the Russian expedition to Dunhuang, see Popova 2008.

Because of the scattered nature of the material, the exact number of Chinese manuscripts originally present in the library cave is still unclear. Some scholars estimate the total number of existing items to be close to fifty thousand.[5] Yet this is only the number of Chinese manuscripts, whereas the library also included material in a dozen and a half other languages, including Tibetan, Uighur, Sanskrit, Khotanese and Sogdian. Next to Chinese texts, Tibetan ones were the second most numerous, which aptly demonstrates the influence of Tibetan culture in this region.[6] The contents of the material are also extremely diverse, ranging from Buddhist sutras and commentaries to popular literature, official correspondence and administrative documents. Based on dated colophons, the time span for the entire collection is estimated to range from the late 4th to the early 11th centuries, although the bulk of the material appears to come from the 9th–10th centuries.

The quintessential book form of Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang is the scroll. Even though there are a number of other forms (e.g. concertina, butterfly, whirlwind, notebook) which have greatly contributed to our understanding of the history of the book in China, the scrolls are the most numerous in the collection. The scroll is also the form which remained, until at least the widespread use of printing, the dominant one in China proper, where the influence of other literate cultures, such as Tibetan, Uighur or Khotanese, was less prominent than in the northwestern peripheries where Dunhuang was located. From an evolutionary point of view, it is reasonable to assume that the scroll derives from the bamboo or wood roll used in early China, which consisted of narrow slips tied together with two or three cords, rolled up for convenient storage. Yet by the late 4th century when paper manuscripts appeared in Dunhuang, the scroll had already developed into a fully mature book form and was used extensively for recording Chinese texts.

The scroll form is epitomized by the standard Buddhist sutra scroll. In terms of its structure, it is glued together from rectangular sheets of paper into a long strip of writing surface which, depending on the length of the text written on it, could be up to several metres long. Naturally, there was a physical limit to how long a scroll could be. While there are examples that are over ten metre long, the majority of scrolls in the Dunhuang collection is under five metres. An interesting

5 This, of course, depends on what counts as a manuscript. While the term 'item' is used in library catalogues, it also includes fragments, even ones that only contain a single character, and these cannot be counted on a par with long scrolls that have thousands of characters.

6 On the original number of the Tibetan manuscripts in the Dunhuang library cave, see Sam van Schaik's blog entry at <http://earlytibet.com/about/whereabouts/>, as well as his earlier article on those that remain in China today (van Schaik 2002).

phenomenon in this respect is that while shorter texts could fit on a single scroll and thus be self-contained both textually and codicologically, longer sutras (e.g. *Lotus sūtra*) were typically copied by *juan* 卷 (roll; 'fascicle').[7] We get the impression that such longer sutras almost never circulated in their full form and even complete sets commonly consist of scrolls copied at different places and different times.

As the text is written on a scroll in vertical rows, going from right to left, the first sheet is the rightmost one. The second one is glued onto it using an approximately 1 cm wide overlap, in a way that its right side is placed underneath the left edge of the previous sheet. New sheets are added in a similar fashion, depending on the length of the scroll (Fig. 1).[8] Many complete scrolls have at their end a wooden stave to provide support when the scroll is rolled up. In general, the scroll is rolled up from the left end and this way when the reader unrolls the manuscript from the right, he starts reading the beginning of the text. As he goes on, the parts already read are also rolled up in an opposite direction and only the part in use at that moment remains flat and visible.

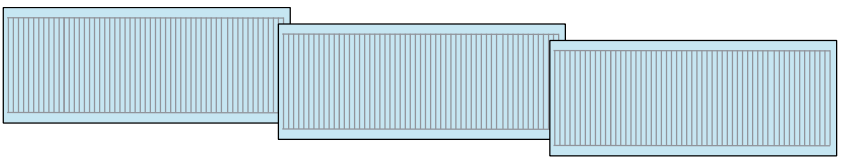

Fig. 1: Composition of a scroll, glued together from separate sheets of ruled paper.

7 The term *juan* (literally: roll; 'fascicle') in the Chinese bibliographic tradition is in fact the same word used for referring to 'scroll', indicating that the concept of *juan* derives from how texts circulated in medieval and earlier times. In Buddhist texts, which represent by far the most common type of writing in the Dunhuang corpus, there is a distinction between 'chapter' (*pin* 品) and 'fascicle' (*juan*). While many texts are divided in a way that chapters and fascicles coincide, there are also cases when a fascicle (which is inevitably the larger unit) contains more than one chapter. This somewhat fuzzy boundary between the two units also points to their different origin: the fascicle used to be a codicological unit, and the chapter a textual one (see Kalinowski 2005). Accordingly, chapters were present in Buddhist texts before those were translated into Chinese, whereas fascicles were a specifically Chinese division introduced only in the Chinese versions which circulated as scrolls.

8 Scrolls for Buddhist manuscripts were prepared in a very similar way in Japan where this process is significantly better documented than in the case of medieval China. For a concise overview of the surprisingly regularized process of creating scrolls in Nara Japan, see Lowe 2011, 25–30.

Before writing on them, the sheets are usually ruled. There are only two horizontal gridlines, one at the top of the page, the other at the bottom, and these two demarcate the top and bottom margins. There are no side margins, as the paper sheets are glued together in a way that the text seamlessly continues from one sheet to the next.[9] Only at the beginning and the end of the scroll may we see margins. This shows that the individual sheets do not function as 'pages' but, once glued together, they stop being structural elements.[10] Instead, the basic unit of layout becomes the complete scroll. Vertical ruling runs between the top and bottom horizontal gridlines, forming vertical columns about 1.5–2 cm wide. The characters are written in these columns. In the standard sutra form, there are 17 characters per line and 27–29 lines per sheet. Although each line has the same number of characters and the size of characters is roughly the same, no attention is paid to the horizontal alignment of the characters.[11]

Naturally, in a vast corpus the size of the original holdings of the Dunhuang library cave, many scrolls did not follow this standard sutra form, which was used for manuscripts that were intended to be part of an official collection of a monastic library. Other sutras can vary greatly in the number of characters per line, number of lines per sheet, width of margins, or size of sheets. Nevertheless, these differences mainly pertain to particular measurements, while the overall composition of the scroll remains the same. A scroll invariably consists of sheets of paper glued together and rolled up into a tube-like form. Many of the actual scrolls found in Dunhuang, however, are composed of smaller pieces of manuscripts glued together into a single object by a subsequent compiler. The pieces may have different origins and could have been written years apart, even though they ended up as parts of a single scroll. An example of such a composite scroll is manuscript IOL Tib J 754 which was glued together from three different manuscripts

9 In fact, the sheets are often glued together with such accuracy that the joins are not detectable in a photograph and one has to examine the manuscript in person in order to be able to see them.

10 This arrangement, once again, points to the evolution of the scroll form from the earlier bamboo or wood rolls, which contained no pages and the codicological unit immediately below the roll was the slip. In the medieval paper scrolls, the equivalent of the slip would be the vertical line which, in this new context, is physically no longer separate. I use the term 'line' do designate a row of text, even if it runs vertically, as it is the norm in English language scholarship on Dunhuang. French scholars, whether writing in French or English, prefer to use the word 'colonne' [column] to reflect the fact that the text goes in vertical direction.

11 An exception from this rule are the gathas and other kinds of stanzas within the text which are generally grouped together into segmented clusters of characters and because of their more structured nature they are also aligned horizontally.

mainly written in Chinese and Tibetan.[12] It also contained letters of passage for a Chinese pilgrim travelling through Amdo and Hexi on his way to India, and it is likely that the he carried the scroll with him as he moved from one monastery to the other.

Accordingly, hundreds of scrolls among those discovered in the Dunhuang library cave are second or third generation manuscripts that have been re-used to create new manuscripts for new purposes.[13] In addition, many of them are fragmentary and one may run the risk of making assumptions on the basis of the surviving part that may not hold true for the original item. For example, manuscript Pelliot chinois 2492 is a notebook which contains a series of poems of the illustrious Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846). Although physically not a composite object, it is a manuscript holding multiple texts copied together into an anthology-type arrangement.[14] Based on the Bai Juyi poems, the notebook was named by the eminent Chinese scholar Wang Zhongmin 王重民 (1903–1975) *Bai Xiangshan shiji* 白香山詩集 (Collection of poems by Bai Xiangshan [i.e. Bai Juyi]). It seemed that this was one of the rare instances of a single-author collection, perhaps compiled by the author himself. About four decades later, however, scholars discovered in the Russian collection of Dunhuang manuscripts a loose page that had been separated from the original notebook. This missing page connects to the last Bai Juyi poem from the end of the notebook in Paris but then continues with two poems by other Tang poets, thereby proving that the notebook in its original format was not a collection of Bai Juyi's poem, and was certainly not compiled into an anthology by the poet himself. Instead, it was simply an anthology of Tang poetry.[15] This example shows that we should be careful when making assumptions about medieval collections and anthologies, especially when they are incomplete.

12 For a book-length study of this manuscript, see van Schaik and Galambos 2012. The manuscript with the Tibetan letters also had a Sanskrit dhāraṇī written in Chinese characters and some Chinese transcriptions of Tibetan names and titles.

13 Stephen Teiser (2012, 253) also makes this point when discussing the codicological forms of liturgical texts. As an example, he mentions scroll S.4537 which consists of four sheets of paper, all of different size and written by different hands.

14 This format of copying one text after the other was also common in Buddhist practice, where the *Guanshiyin jing* 觀世音經 and other popular sutras were routinely copied in succession. The modern Japanese term for such multiple-text manuscripts (MTM) is *renshakyō* 連寫經, or 'chain sutras.' See Mollier 2008, 16, where this is described as a common practice in the case of apocryphal sutras.

15 For this fascinating story, see Rong 2013, 389–391.

3 Wuzhen and his mission

Manuscript P.3720 from the Pelliot collection at the BnF is one of the scrolls from the library cave at the Mogao caves near Dunhuang. The scroll contains an array of different texts, many of which can be associated with Wuzhen 悟真 (816?–895; secular surname: Tang 唐), a celebrated monk from Dunhuang who in 850 led a mission to Chang'an 長安, the capital of the Tang empire.[16] Dunhuang was a thriving cosmopolitan town in Northwestern China, one of the last Chinese outposts on the Silk Road. Until the second half of the 8th century it was part of the Tang domain but, following a series of internal troubles within the empire, control over the northwestern peripheries weakened and large Central Asian territories were lost to the rapidly growing Tibetan empire. Dunhuang fell in 786 and was under Tibetan control until 848 when a local Chinese warlord called Zhang Yichao 張議潮 (d. 872) revolted and drove the Tibetans out.[17] He then set up his own government, acting as a *de facto* king over Dunhuang which remained cut off from Central China and functioned as an independent Chinese kingdom. Taking advantage of the weakening presence of Tibetans, Zhang soon extended his rule to the prefectures of Guazhou 瓜州, Ganzhou 甘州 and Yizhou 伊州. Among the first steps to stabilize his position, he sent envoys to Chang'an to establish contact with the Tang court and offer his allegiance. The mission was headed by the local monk Wuzhen, a disciple of Hongbian 洪辯 (d. 868), the region's highest ranking cleric.

That Zhang Yichao sent Buddhist monks to Chang'an, rather than a group of high officials, is no doubt related to the Huichang 會昌 persecution of Buddhism (845–846) that had swept through the Tang realm five years prior to Hongbian's journey. In the views of many, this was the single most destructive event in the history of Buddhism. Tens of thousands of monasteries were destroyed, monastic property was confiscated and wrecked, and monks and nuns were forcibly returned to lay life. Although the measures were promptly reversed in 846 after the death of Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840–846), the damage caused to the Buddhist establishment throughout the empire was unprecedented. Dunhuang, however, was physically separate from the Tang and during the Huichang persecution was still under Tibetan control. It is not clear how 'foreign' or offensive the population

16 For a detailed description of Wuzhen's life and the works he authored, see Chen Tzu-lung's monograph on him (Chen 1996).

17 The dates of the Tibetan rule over Dunhuang are not definite and there are also other opinions. Che Wei-hiang 1983 believes that the correct dates are from 781 to ca. 850.

of Dunhuang perceived the Tibetan rule but it is certain that the Tibetans were enthusiastic supporters of Buddhism and went out of their way not to cause any damage in this respect. In fact, when they took Dunhuang in 786, they made the city submit after a decade of siege, not wanting to apply force and destroy this holy seat of Buddhism.[18] By the time Zhang Yichao wrested control from the Tibetans, the persecution of Buddhism in China proper also ended and with it began a time of great Buddhist revival. Based on Dunhuang's reputation as a holy city at the gates to the Western Regions, with a long history of religious devotion, Wuzhen's mission was able to reintroduce some orthodox doctrines from an old and continuous monastic community that survived the persecution unscathed.

Transmitted sources about Wuzhen's mission to Chang'an are scarce. In a Song dynasty chronicle we read that during his sojourn in Chang'an, 'Wuzhen from Shazhou 沙州 (i.e. Dunhuang) who arrived in the capital to pay homage', was awarded, along with other eminent monks, the 'purple robe', the highest imperially-sanctioned award.[19] As the ultimate pledge of allegiance, Zhang Yichao also sent his younger brother Zhang Yitan 張議潭 to the court to present maps of the newly conquered territories. In effect, Zhang Yitan went to live in Chang'an as a princely hostage, and in response to this Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859) established the Guiyijun 歸義軍 (Return to Allegiance Army) governorship and appointed Zhang Yichao its Military Commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使). This began the Guiyijun period in Dunhuang history that lasted nearly two hundred years. When after twenty-two years of residing in Chang'an, Zhang Yitan died in 872, Zhang Yichao was summoned to the Tang court in person. In his absence, and following his own death in Chang'an later the same year, his nephew Zhang Huaishen 張淮深 (831–890) took over the rule of the Guiyijun. In the end, the Zhang family's rule of Dunhuang outlived the Tang dynasty and lasted until 914 when Cao Yijin 曹議金 came to power and his family remained in power until the Tangut conquest.[20]

Despite its formal allegiance to the Tang court, the Guiyijun was an independent state and its rulers reigned as kings, maintaining diplomatic contacts with other Central Asian states, such as Khotan or the Ganzhou and Xizhou Uighurs. Both the *Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史 ('Old History of the Five Dynasties') and

18 Rong 2013, 70.

19 Zanning 贊寧, *Da Song seng shilüe* 大宋僧史略 (T2126, 54:249a08–10).

20 Although the Cao claimed descent from the prominent Cao clan in Central China, it is possible that they were actually of Sogdian descent; see Rong 2001 and Chen 2001. For a general overview of Sogdians in Northwestern China during the late Tang and Five Dynasties periods, see Étienne de la Vaissière 2005, 306–326.

the *Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史 ('New History of the Five Dynasties') discusses the Guiyijun in the treatise on Tibetans, whereas the *Songshi* 宋史 ('History of the Song dynasty') includes it in the treatise on foreign countries.[21] In reality, the Tang court watched the growth of the Guiyijun power with concern because, while being sympathetic with the idea of weakening the Tibetan domination over Central Asia, they were all too aware of the possibility that it might 'turn into another Tibet.'[22] At the same time, Tang support and official acknowledgment was an important source of legitimacy for Guiyijun rulers in an effort to solidify their position both against the Tibetans and internally. It was doubtless more prestigious to be appointed military commissioners in an outlying Tang principality than to call themselves kings of an independent state.

The importance of Tang support and acknowledgment is amply demonstrated by the fate of Zhang Huaishen, who took over the rule of the Guiyijun after Zhang Yichao left for Chang'an in 872. The Tang did not officially appoint him as Military Commissioner, even though Zhang Huaishen repeatedly sent envoys to Chang'an, seeking Tang acknowledgment. Without Tang political support, he gradually lost large portions of his domain to the Uighurs and internal discontent arose against him because of his unsettled legitimacy. By the time he finally received Tang endorsement in 888 his position had been weakened to the point that in 890 he was assassinated along with his wife and six sons.

This is the background of Wuzhen's journey to Chang'an. He was heading the first embassy to Chang'an, a highly successful mission that had major consequences for the Guiyijun. This is amply highlighted by the fact that, in contrast with the dearth of information on Wuzhen's journey to Chang'an in traditional histories, there is a considerable amount of material related to this event in Dunhuang, the monk's hometown, both in the form of stone inscriptions and manuscripts. Although no overall account of the mission survives, bits and pieces of contemporary material allow us to reconstruct some of his activities in the Tang capital. It also reveals that Wuzhen became a key figure in the Buddhist community of Dunhuang, and that this began with his mission to Chang'an.[23]

Among the material discovered in Dunhuang is a series of poems written in Wuzhen's honour by eminent monks of the Buddhist monasteries he visited in

21 Rong 2013, 7.

22 Rong 2013, 41.

23 Among the Dunhuang manuscripts there are also some scrolls with Wuzhen's own handwriting. For example, a manuscript copied by Wuzhen himself from before he rose to fame is S.2064, with the colophon dated to a *yimao* 乙卯 year. Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2007, 75) identifies this cyclic date as the year 835, when Wuzhen would have been only nineteen years old.

Chang'an. A total of fourteen such poems survive, some in more than one copy, revealing their popularity in Dunhuang during the 9th–10th centuries.[24] In addition, there are also three poems written by Wuzhen himself in response to those addressed to him. Based on the names of people and places mentioned in this material, we know that he visited the most important monasteries in Chang'an and that he was treated with respect and admiration. Part of this esteem must have been the result of him being from Dunhuang, which was considered a holy Buddhist city, a gateway to the Western Region whence the teachings of the Buddha came to China. In addition, Dunhuang escaped the Huichang persecution as it lay beyond the control of Tang administration, thus in comparison with the Tang realm, the Buddhist tradition in the Dunhuang region had a legitimate claim to being continuous and authentic. Finally, the victory of the city's Han population over the Tibetans was certainly another factor for being received with such enthusiasm. Wuzhen was granted a purple robe and promoted to the rank of Master of Doctrine, whereas his master Hongbian, the leading cleric of Dunhuang, was conferred the title of Chief Buddhist Controller of Hexi (*Hexi du sengtong* 河西都僧統).

4 Codicological structure of scroll P.3720

Manuscript P.3720 is a relatively long scroll, about 3.5 m in length. The paper is mostly light brown with creases and numerous stains and holes. The catalogue states that it consists of eleven sheets, which vary greatly in length.[25] In addition, a narrow fragment inserted between Sheets 7 and 8 is mentioned but this is not counted as a separate sheet, presumably because of its small size. From the point of view of the physical division of the manuscript, it then comprises twelve sheets of paper glued together into a single scroll. Much of the material appears to be related to Wuzhen, including his appointment decrees and a series of poems composed during his visit to Chang'an. This suggests that the scroll in its current form is not a random collage of unrelated fragments but a collection of materials around a central theme. In other words, the scroll was the result of a conscious effort to join a number of individual fragments, regardless of what the purpose or function of the components in their original context was.

24 Among the manuscripts, there are three scrolls with texts related to Wuzhen and his mission: P.3720, P.3886 and S.4654. For an itemized list of texts in these manuscripts, see Fu 2010, 73–74.
25 Soymié et al. 1991, 212.

One of the conspicuous facts about this scroll is that it includes a number of dated colophons and the dates range from 851 to 934. Since they are all found on the same manuscript, this immediately raises the question whether the dates represent the time when the texts were copied or they were copied together with the texts from earlier manuscripts. The physical characteristics of the constituent parts of the scroll, such as paper and handwriting, make it clear that some of the texts, including their colophons, indeed come from separate sources and were pasted together only subsequently. Moreover, even the colophons of fragments written by the same hand on the same type of paper have different dates, which reveals that the dates must have been copied together with the texts and thus do not pertain to the actual time of copying.

Some of the components are very short and bear only a few lines of text, suggesting that they themselves at one point had been parts of longer manuscripts but were removed from those. We have no way of knowing whether this was done because the original manuscripts became damaged or whether they were cut up on purpose to be including in this new scroll.[26] According to the dates in the colophons, the scroll was assembled from manuscript pieces written in the course of at least 87 years. Naturally, this corroborates the observation that the constituent parts had been removed from pre-existing manuscripts, rather than having been written with the aim of appearing together in this scroll. This, in turn, also means that we are dealing with an act of recycling, where the purpose of the components in their original context might have been quite different from the role they came to play in this particular collage. At the same time, it is important to note that the compiler of this composite scroll made an effort to cut out texts from older manuscripts and glue these together. For some of the shorter pieces it would have probably been easier and faster to write out the texts anew, rather than bother with defective old fragments. Since the compiler did not do this but took the time to recycle the old fragments, we may assume that it was important for him not only to collect the texts but also to save these relics in their physical form.

P.3720 is a good example of how new manuscripts were created by recycling older fragments of different age and origin and reassembling those into a new

26 An intriguing example of a dismantled manuscript is P.2893 from the Pelliot collection in Paris, a copy of *juan* 4 of the *Sutra of Requitting Kindness* (*Da fangbian Fo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經, T156, 3) with Khotanese texts on the verso. This scroll is over 6 m in length but two full sheets of paper with 54 lines of texts are missing from its first third. These two sheets had been removed sometime in the 10th or 11th century and the scroll was glued together again, without those two sheets. In a strange twist of fate, the two missing sheets with the 54 lines of the sutra ended up in London as part of the collection acquired by Sir M. Aurel Stein. On this scroll, see van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 122–123.

object. In the following, I will describe the codicological and textual components of this scroll. For the sake of convenience, I take the side fully covered with text as recto, and the largely empty other side with disconnected fragments of texts as verso. Since my interest is mainly codicological, I will use the paper sheets as the basic unit of description, calling the sheets in sequence Sh1–Sh12.

Sh1 (21 cm) An appointment decree given to Hongbian and Wuzhen, with a colophon dated to the 21st day of the 5th month of the 5th year of the Dazhong 大中 reign (851).[27] This is a copy of a stele inscription originally located in the cave library with the manuscripts.[28] Since this is a copy of a stele inscription, the date in the colophon was obviously copied together with the text of the inscription. In contrast with this, the title in the manuscript begins with the words 'Item 1: Appointment decree' 第一件告身, which does not appear on the original inscription but was added by the copyist. The text itself consists of only 13 lines, including the title and colophon, and apparently had been cropped from a larger manuscript that also contained other texts. An indication of this, beside the small size of the paper, is that the tips of some characters at the leftmost end of the text are cut off, suggesting that there had been a text immediately after this one on the original manuscript. The presence of the title 'Item 1: Appointment decree' absent from the original inscription, however, indicates that even before being included in P.3720, this text was already part of some anthology-type collection.

Sh2 (25.5 cm). An appointment decree given to Wuzhen. It begins with the words 'Item 2' 第二件 and concludes with a colophon dated to the 22nd day of the 4th month of the 10th year of the Dazhong reign (856). The decree is merely 6 lines, including the colophon, but is followed by a record of merits in another 8 lines, still on the same sheet of paper. These two texts are written in the same handwriting as the first appointment decree (Sh1), on the same type of paper, strongly suggesting that they used to be part of the same manuscript.

Sh3 (18 cm). A decree appointing Wuzhen Vice Buddhist Controller of Hexi (*Hexi fu sengtong* 河西副僧統). The title begins with the words 'Item 3' 第三件 and

27 The catalogue identifies this date as June 24, 851. Since it is possible, however, that dates in the Guiyijun may have differed from those in Central China, I give the month and day in their traditional format as they appear in the manuscript.

28 At the beginning of the 20th century, this stele was located in Cave 16, the large cave in the side of which the hidden library cave (Cave 17) was found. It is assumed that the stele had originally been inside the library cave (Cave 17) but was removed before its sealing in the early 11th century, probably in order to free up space for more manuscripts. On the stele and its role in the cave, see Imaeda 2008, 92–93.

the colophon is dated to the 28th day of the 6th month of the 3rd year of the Xiantong 咸通 reign (862). It consists of a total of 9 lines. The text is written in the same hand as those on Sh1 and Sh2, on the same kind of paper. This has several implications. First, initially all three sheets had been part of the same manuscript. Second, the texts had been copied by the same person at the same time from pre-existing documents (e.g. Hongbian's stele inscription) together with their respective dates. Third, the source manuscript from which these texts had been extracted was itself a compilation related to Wuzhen, and at least some of the texts were strung together using sequential titles (e.g. 'Item 1', 'Item 2'). Fourth, the source manuscript also contained additional texts, as these three fragments do not appear to have followed one another, even if their titles are sequential. As to the date of the original manuscript, it must have been copied not earlier than the latest date seen in these texts, which is 862.

Sh4 (23.5 cm). A decree appointing Wuzhen Chief Buddhist Controller of Hexi (*Hexi du sengtong*). The date in the colophon is the 25th day of the 12th month of the 10th year of Xiantong (870). It consists of 12 lines, including the title and colophon, seemingly written in a different hand from the texts on the previous sheets, on lighter paper. The second to last line is written on the line where this sheet joins with the next one (Sh5), with the last line already on the other sheet, demonstrating that these two sheets were glued together before the text was written on them. This also means that Sh4 and Sh5 definitely come from the same source manuscript.

Sh5 (37 cm). A continuation of the previous sheet. Bears a copy of the appointment decree already seen in Sh1, including the colophon dated to 851. Thus the chronological order which has been observed so far loses its continuity. In fact, since these two texts were written on two sheets that had belonged together, they appeared in reversed order already in their original context. Moreover, the source manuscript from which they were extracted must have also been a compilation of material related to Wuzhen, just as the source of the texts on Sh1–Sh3. The presence of a duplicate text in the scroll once again points to the importance of including – and thereby saving – older fragments in their physical form, as opposed to purely preserving the content of the texts.

Sh6 (8 cm). The beginning of five poems written in honour of Wuzhen by monks from monasteries in Chang'an during Wuzhen's visit there. The handwriting is the same for all poems and is visibly inferior to the ones in the previous sections. Although no date is provided, we know that these poems were all

written at the time when Wuzhen was visiting Chang'an, thus we can tentatively date them to 850. This is a very short sheet, with only 4.5 lines of text, as the last line is written on the joint line with Sh7. This shows that Sh6 and Sh7 come from the same source manuscript and were already glued together when they became part of scroll P.3720.

Sh7 (41.5 cm). Continuation of the poems from Sh6. At the end of the last poem a large red circle with a dot inside is added, as if closing the section; this is, however, not one of the marks commonly used in manuscripts and its precise function in this place is unclear. On the left side, the sheet was cut in a way that the edge of the paper is now very uneven, revealing a marked inattention to the aesthetic aspects of the collage.

Sh8 (2 cm). This is a narrow strip of paper with a single line on it, ending the previous text. What this shows is that in the source manuscript an additional sheet began here before the poems were removed and used in a new manuscript. This sheet is so narrow that the catalogue does not even count it as a sheet but only mentions that a fragment of a sheet is inserted between sheets 7 and 8.[29]

Sh9 (41 cm). Copy of the funerary inscription of the monk Yin Haiyan 陰海晏, including a preface, with a colophon dated to the 1st year of the Qingtai 清泰 reign (934). Yin Haiyan served as Chief Buddhist Controller of Hexi (*Hexi du sengtong*) during 926–933 and this is a copy of his tomb inscription. The colophon includes the name of the person who authored the inscription and 934 refers to the date of the inscription itself, rather than when this manuscript copy was created. The text does not mention Wuzhen, although Yin Haiyan was one of his successors. The text consists of 19 lines written in a crude hand.

Sh10 (51 cm). An eulogy to Yin Lübo 陰律伯, Chief Vinaya-Piṭaka Master of Dunhuang (*Dunhuang du pinizang zhu* 敦煌都毗尼藏主), whose dates are unknown.[30] Another copy of this text appears in manuscript Pelliot chinois 4660. In addition, this sheet also contains two more poems, although with no personal names in them. The paper and handwriting on this sheet appear to be the same as in the previous one, thus it is likely that these two sheets used to be part of the same source manuscript even before they became used in our scroll.

29 Soymié et al. 1991, 212. This also means that since I count this narrow strip as a separate sheet, from this point on my count is out of sync with the catalogue.

30 On the Buddhist title *pinizang zhu* 毗尼藏主 during the Guiyijun period, see Jiang 1993.

Sh11 (43 cm). A copy of a longer stele inscription commemorating the creation of a cave temple by Zhang Huaishen, nephew of Zhang Yichao and the second ruler of the Guiyijun. A copy of the same text also appears on manuscript S.5630, but the original stele does not survive. The text is incomplete, missing both the beginning and the end. It appears to be in the same handwriting and on the same kind of paper as Sh9–Sh10, thus these four sheets (Sh9–Sh12) must have come from the same source manuscript. The fact that the text is incomplete suggests that the person who assembled this scroll was salvaging fragmentary pieces of older manuscripts and assembling them thematically.

Sh12 (41 cm). Continuation of the text from the previous sheet. The text is unfinished thus it is probable that additional sheets used to be here but were lost already in the source manuscript. These two last sheets (Sh11–Sh12) are of roughly equal length and appear to be intact, showing that they originally had been part of a manuscript where this was the standard sheet size, and that the missing portion of the text was detached when the sheets came apart.

The verso of the manuscript is mostly empty, the only actual text on it is the *Record of the Mogao Caves* (*Mogaoku ji* 莫高窟記) that commemorates the building of the cave temple complex at Mogao.[31] This is a copy of an inscription written with a brush on the wall of the antechamber of Cave 156.[32] The colophon dates it to the 6th year of the Xiantong reign (865), which matches the original version on the cave wall, showing that the date pertains to the inscription, not the creation of this particular manuscript copy. The text consists of 13 lines, including the title and the colophon. It appears towards the middle of the scroll, on the verso of Sh6. Other than this, the verso of the scroll contains some seemingly random notes, writing exercises and a few duplicate dates in very large characters, leaving most of the writing surface empty. All of these notes appear upside down in relation to the rest of the manuscript, further highlighting their randomness. The reoccurring date is the 3rd year of the Tianfu 天福 reign (938) but its significance is unclear as it is entirely without context here. We should point out, however, that the date

31 For the analysis of this text and its codicological characteristics, see Galambos 2009, 813–819. Unfortunately, the digital images of this manuscript available at the IDP website <http://idp.bl.uk> and, in significantly higher resolution, at Gallica <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> are rather confusing because about half of the verso is omitted, making it impossible to understand the correlation of texts on the two sides of the scroll. The same images of the manuscript's verso are joined together into a virtual scroll on Artstor <http://artstor.org>, creating an even more confusing result with no indication whatsoever that part of the images is actually missing.

32 Apparently, this text cannot be seen anymore, even though it was still legible until a few decades ago. We can study it based on tracings done prior to its deterioration. I am grateful to Shi Pingting and the staff of the Dunhuang Academy for clarifying this to me.

938 already occurs on Sh9–Sh10, the recto of which has a colophon dated to 934. Obviously, this is an indication that the date is not entirely random but is somehow related to the text on the recto.

5 The source components in P.3720 and the compilation of the scroll

Tab. 1 below summarizes the contents of the twelve sheets with the two sides aligned next to one another. Whenever the same text is written on more than one sheet of paper, I removed the line separating the cells in the table (e.g. Sh3–Sh4 recto). When, on the other hand, one sheet of paper contains more than one text (e.g. Sh2), I marked these separate texts with the letters a) and b).[33] As for the sequence of the sheets, the table aligns the contents of the manuscript by their sequence on the recto, even though the verso would have been naturally read in a reversed direction (i.e. from Sh12 to Sh1).

cm	#	Recto	Verso
24	Sh1	Appointment decree of Hongbian and Wuzhen, dated 851	–––
25.5	Sh2	a) Appointment decree of Wuzhen, dated 856 b) Record of merit	–––
18	Sh3	Appointment decree of Wuzhen, dated 862	–––

33 In the case of S5–6, text a) begins on S5 and continues onto S6, where it is followed by a different text.

cm	#	Recto	Verso
23.5	Sh4	a) Appointment decree of Wuzhen, dated 870 b) Appointment decree of Hongbian and Wuzhen, dated 851 (duplicate copy of the same text as on Sheet 1)	*Record of the Mogao Caves*, dated 865
37	Sh5		
8	Sh6	Five poems written in honour of Wuzhen (written in Chang'an in 850)	–––
41.5	Sh7		
2	Sh8		
41	Sh9	Funerary inscription of the monk Yin Haiyan, dated 934	the date 938 repeated twice (upside down) random notes and writing exercises, including the date 938 (upside down)
51	Sh10	Eulogy to the monk Yin Lübo	
43	Sh11	Inscription commemorating the creation of a cave temple by Zhang Huaishen	blank, with only two and a half characters
41	Sh12		blank, with only ten characters

Tab. 1: Codicological structure of manuscript P.3720.

When we look at the codicological composition of the manuscript, it is obvious that even though the scroll consists of 12 separate pieces of paper, some of these had been joined together prior to the compilation of the scroll. Accordingly, the person who composed the scroll did not glue together 12 manuscript fragments but used larger ones that were composite pieces themselves. Thus Sh1–Sh3 are written on the same type of paper by the same hand, showing that they used to belong to the same manuscript. At the same time, in their original context the texts did not follow one another in the same order and there seems to have been additional texts between them, which were omitted from our scroll. We shall call this first composite component C1.

The next component (C2) in our scroll consists of Sh4–Sh5 with two different texts, one of which is a duplicate copy of a text already present in C1 (Sh1). The next component (C3) comprises Sh6–Sh8 with the five poems written to Wuzhen on his visit to Chang'an. Once again, there is indication that the poems were not all in the same order and some text was omitted from our scroll. It is equally possible, however, that the missing text was cut out at an earlier time and C3 appeared in its current form already in the source manuscript. The next component (C4) is Sh9–Sh10 where, once again, the two sheets most likely do not represent their original form as some text is missing from between them. Finally the last component (C5) is the two sheets of Sh11–Sh12 with the incomplete text commemorating Zhang Huaishen's merits for building a Buddhist cave at Mogao. Thus manuscript P.3720 consists of five separate components (C1–C5) that were glued together into a single scroll. Tab. 2 below shows the correspondence between components and sheets, including the dates on the recto and verso.

Components	Sheets	Dates (recto & verso)	
C1 (67.5 cm)	Sh1	851	
	Sh2	856	
	Sh3	862	
C2 (60.5 cm)	Sh4	870	
	Sh5	851	865
C3 (51.5 cm)	Sh6	(850)	
	Sh7		
	Sh8		
C4 (92 cm)	Sh9	934	938
	Sh10		938
C5 (84 cm)	Sh11		
	Sh12		

Tab. 2: The five original components of manuscript P.3720.

The dates in the five components are also intriguing. The three dates in C1 (i.e. 851, 856 and 862) appear as colophons to texts written by the same hand, presumably at the same time. Thus none of them represent the date of manuscript C1 itself, which would instead be dated to 862 or later. On similar grounds, C2 would have to be dated 870 or later, which works well with the date 865 (*Record of the Mogao Caves*) on the verso of the manuscript. For C3 we do not have any dated colophon and can only conclude that the manuscript was written after Wuzhen's trip to Chang'an in 850, although it is very likely that this happened significantly

later. In C4 we have 934 on the recto and at least three instances of the date 938 on the verso. Now it is possible that the oversized scribble-like dates on the verso were added to this manuscript several years later than the text on the recto but it would have still been done before C4 became part of P.3720. In sum, our manuscript had to have been compiled after 938. Finally component C5 provides no clue to the date, other than the text itself would have been written after Zhang Huaishen's coming to power, that is, 872. This does not tell us, however, when this particular copy of the inscription was made.

Tab. 2 illustrates that many of texts on the recto are related to Wuzhen, although this conveniently identifiable theme disappears in the last three texts on Sh9–Sh12 and the connection is not immediately apparent. Yet Wuzhen had very close ties with the Zhang family and he was appointed Vice Buddhist Controller of Hexi upon Zhang Huaishen's recommendation, as seen in Sh3 dated to 862. In this new position, Wuzhen was obviously even deeper involved with the Buddhist projects of the Zhang administration, even if his name is not specifically mentioned in Sh11–Sh12. In addition, the inscription in Sh11–Sh12 commemorating Zhang Huaishen's building of a cave is certainly related to the inscription *Record of the Mogao Caves* on the verso of Sh6, the original of which was in Cave 156, built by Zhang Huaishen in memory of his uncle Zhang Yichao. Thus it is obvious that the last 3 texts are also related to the other ones, although this connection appears to be the Buddhist community of the Guiyijun in general, rather than the person of Wuzhen. It is perhaps too much of a coincident that it is the last three consecutive texts that are not immediately related to Wuzhen, and this also suggests that we should look for a broader theme here but still within the framework of the Buddhist saṃgha of Dunhuang. Similarly, the texts on Sh9 and Sh10 are both eulogizing monks from the Yin clan, one of the prominent families in Dunhuang, and thus they are also linked in this regard, even though we do not fully understand the connection of the Yin clan with Wuzhen.[34]

A proportional diagram of the physical composition of the whole scroll is presented in Fig. 2. The thick lines indicate divisions between the original components and the dotted ones, between the individual sheets within a single component. The digits underneath represent the sheet numbers from 1 to 12. The image reveals that even though the size of the sheets varies greatly (e.g. Sh8 is a narrow strip of paper between Sh7 and Sh9), there is no great discrepancy between the length of the original components.

34 On the social status of the Yin clan in Dunhuang, see Zhang 2007.

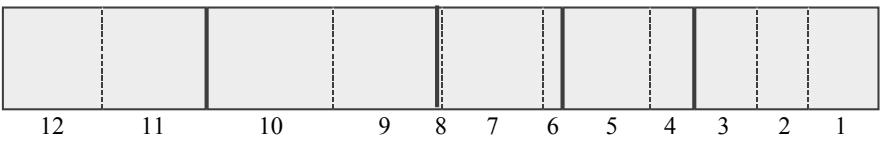

Fig. 2: Physical composition of scroll P.3720.

As to the composition of the whole scroll, the ten-character note on the verso of Sh12 may reveal the identity of the compiler. The note is written upside down and separated into two five-character segments, one written towards the top of the page, the other towards the bottom. While these two segments are clearly apart and even written with an ink of different brightness, the hand is the same and they most likely belong together. The text says: 'Shenshaxiang baixing–––Zhang Fonu hao shou zi' 神沙鄉百性(姓) ––– 張仏(佛)奴好手子. This is quite ungrammatical as a sentence but may be tentatively translated as 'The skillful work(?) of Zhang Fonu, a commoner from Shensha locality.'[35] While my translation here conveniently states that Zhang Fonu collated the scroll, the words 'hao shou zi' 好手子 do no yield any reliable reading and may possibly have a different meaning. Yet it is interesting that this commoner had the surname Zhang, just like the ruling Zhang family in the early part of the Guiyijun.[36] Another detail that is apparent is that despite his Chinese surname, Zhang Fonu's given name means 'servant of the Buddha', which points to a Central Asian identity, as this is a name that ultimately goes back to the Sanskrit name Buddhadāsa but is attested in both Iranian (Sogdian, Bactrian) and Uighur sources. Perhaps a non-Chinese ethnicity

35 Shensha locality, or village, 神沙鄉, was one of the many localities around Dunhuang. When a commoner is identified by name in the manuscripts, in many cases the locality he belonged to is also mentioned. During the Tibetan control of Dunhuang, instead of localities we have the district (*buluo* 部落), which was a Tibetan administrative unit, presumably corresponding to the locality of the post-Tibetan period.

36 At the same time, it would be unwise to rush into conclusions about the change of status of the Zhang ruling family and see them as commoners under the Cao regime. The Zhang surname was extremely common in Dunhuang and there are plenty of examples of commoners with this surname even during the Zhang family's rule. Yet it is also not impossible that even these commoners would have sustained some sort of connection, real or imagined, with their 'relatives' at the higher echelons of society.

can also explain the ungrammatical expression 'hao shou zi' 好手子, which may be either a direct translation from another language or a phonetic substitution.[37]

With regard to the time of putting together the scroll, we have seen that it was glued together from older manuscript fragments not earlier than 938. In terms of Dunhuang history, this was long after the termination of the Zhang clan's rule of the Guiyijun, which ended in 914 when Cao Yijin came to power. After a long and successful reign, Cao Yijin died in 935 and his son Cao Yuande 曹元德 succeeded him until his own death in 939. He was followed on the throne by his younger brother Cao Yuanshen 曹元深, although actual power fell into the hands of Cao Yijin's Uighur wife.[38] At the same time, the Guiyijun's close ties with the Uighurs suggest that Zhang Fonu, the person possibly behind the compilation of scroll P.3720 and whose given name revealed a Central Asian origin, was of Uighur or Turco-Sogdian background.

6 Conclusions

The above considerations bring up an important point concerning the Dunhuang collection. When confronted with the immense variety of manuscripts that had been deposited in the library cave, with dates ranging from the late 4th to the early 11th centuries, we tend to forget that even though the material stretches over a period of six hundred years, we are essentially looking at a late 10th or early 11th century collection. The implications of this realization are obvious. Unlike printed books, especially modern ones, which we feel justified to consider as having been produced in a specific point in time (i.e. their date of publication), a notion which is also supported by the existence of other copies of the same print run, medieval manuscripts often continued to be used long after their initial creation and this use meant ever new additions and alterations.[39] Users habitually added punctuation, notes, colophons, forewords, dedications, titles, even altered the manuscript physically by cropping it or pasting additional pieces onto it. In

37 It is possible, for example, that the character *zi* 子 ('child, son') at the end is used instead of *zi* 字 ('character, text'). This, however, still does not resolve the grammatical problems of the phrase.

38 Rong 2013, 43–45.

39 Naturally, the same phenomenon can be observed with regard to printed books and there is a whole field of studying marginalia and other additions, yet the afterlife of books in a manuscript tradition is perhaps even more apparent.

general, owning a manuscript implied not a passive act of possession but an active participation in its growth, and in the course of several generations a manuscript might have ended up very different from how it looked when first created.

Composite scrolls such as P.3720 discussed in this paper are by no means rare in the Dunhuang corpus, yet little attention has been paid to them as a specific type of manuscript in the past. Historians often use the texts in these complex collages without questioning their physical form and context. Manuscripts, however, were rarely created with the intention of preserving or transmitting texts. Instead, they came to life as a result of a social activity and their existence was often merely a byproduct of such an activity. Consequently, one cannot disregard the composition of a manuscript and the intentions behind that. One needs to look at manuscripts comprehensibly, examining them as whole objects including their physical and social characteristics, which came into being with an intent, fulfilling a specific need. This, in turn, will also help contextualizing the texts and will provide additional insights into their content.

Scroll P.3720 was compiled in Dunhuang during the Cao family's rule, not earlier than 938. The person who glued a series of older fragments together was possibly a certain Zhang Fonu, whose note appears on the verso of the last sheet of paper. His given name suggests a Central Asian background, even though his surname identifies him as Chinese, and he shared his surname with the powerful Zhang clan who ruled Dunhuang between 848 and 914. The scroll was obviously not put together randomly as it revolves around the theme of the Buddhist community of Dunhuang. The texts on C1–C3 are all related to the celebrated monk Wuzhen, suggesting that he may have been the common theme for the compilation. C4, however, jumps ahead in time and we cannot detect a connection with Wuzhen. Then C5 yet again goes back to the time of Wuzhen and commemorates Zhang Huaishen's building of a Buddhist cave temple at Mogao. Thus we have to say that the common thread is the Buddhist saṃgha of Dunhuang, even though there is an apparent emphasis on the person of Wuzhen in the first half of the scroll. In this connection, we should keep in mind that the Dunhuang saṃgha was far from being a purely religious matter, as Buddhism was the means by which the ruling clan legitimized its reign throughout the Guiyijun period both internally and in their diplomatic relations with other states. Accordingly, one of Zhang Yichao's first steps after his victory over the Tibetans was to send a Buddhist mission headed by Wuzhen to the Tang court. Later rulers from the Zhang and Cao families were also active supporters of Buddhism and carried out large-scale projects involving the construction of cave temples at the Mogao caves. Scroll P.3720 is thus closely tied to both state legitimacy and the Buddhist saṃgha of Dunhuang.

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