The Chinese Language and the Silk Roads

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Abstract

This chapter will provide an overview of research on the position of the Chinese in the multilingual environment of the Silk Roads. Almost none of the languages prevalent on the Silk Roads was genetically related to Chinese, they were either Indo-European, including Iranian languages, or Altaic languages; only the Tibetan language is of the same linguistic stock as the Chinese language. The linguistic situation on the Silk Roads is best represented by the manuscript findings from Dunhuang, Turfan and other oasis towns. Particular focus of this chapter will be on the cultural background of early translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese, the relevance of the Chinese and Chinese education in the oasis towns of Dunhuang and Turfan, and the role of the discovered manuscripts in the linguistic study of Chinese.

Keywords: Silk Road, Historical Intercultural Contact, Chinese and non-Chinese languages on the Silk Roads, Traditional Chinese teaching, Thousand Character Classic, Chinese in non-Chinese scripts, Phonological studies, The *Qieyun*, Chinese Original Manuscripts, Chinese in non-Chinese scripts

Introduction

This chapter will present an overview of the languages spoken and written on the Silk Roads, with particular regard to the role of the Chinese language and its relation to the many non-Chinese languages in the region. The term "Silk Roads" in this discussion predominantly refers to the oasis towns north and south of the Taklamakan Desert in present-day Xinjiang, a Chinese autonomous region. This region was dominated by different empires at different times, and it thus constituted an important cultural melting pot for many centuries, beginning in the second century BCE. Information about the Silk Roads and life in the oasis towns has been transmitted by manuscripts and artefacts preserved along the Silk Roads, by the chapters on the Western Regions in Chinese historiographies and the travelogues of Chinese monks. These materials relate the relevance of the Silk Roads for the Chinese Empire, and they report the religious and cultural life on the Silk Roads; moreover, these manuscripts found are highly valuable for the study of the historical phonology of Chinese. The most detailed information on the culture and religion on the Silk Roads was provided by the travelogues of Chinese monks who travelled to India to study Buddhism, the religion which entered China via the Silk Roads in the first century CE. These traveller monks, together with many others, played

an eminent role in the transmission of Buddhism from India to China and the translation of Buddhist texts from Indian languages. The travelogues provide detailed information on life in the monasteries from Dunhuang to India, information that guided archaeological expeditions, and which has been confirmed by their discoveries particularly from the beginning of the twentieth century on. The Chinese historiographies, contrastingly, concentrated on information about political alliances, as well as practical matters such as household size, number of armed men, manner of life (i.e., either nomadic or sedentary), cultivation of plants, etc. The chapter is organized a follows: The role of the Chinese monks for the early translation of Buddhist texts will be discussed in section two. Sections three and four are devoted to the different languages attested on the Silk Roads and to the role of Chinese in the oasis towns Dunhuang and Turfan, section five introduces Chinese texts written in non-Chinese scripts, and section six discusses the relevance of the manuscript finds along the Silk Roads in the linguistic study of Chinese.

Chinese monks and the early translation of Buddhist texts

The most famous travelogues were composed by the monks Faxian 法顯 (fourth to fifth century), Xuanzang 玄奘 (seventh century) and Yijing 義淨 (seventh to eighth century), respectively. These monks had similar motives for their journeys to the West. Faxian, for instance, believed that the Vinaya texts available in China at the end of the fourth century were incomplete and thus insufficient as a basis for correct monastery life. Xuanzang was discontented with the heterogeneity of the various Buddhist theories in the texts available in China during the early Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) and intended to search for the "missing, untranslated original Sanskrit texts, particularly the *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra*" (Li 1996: 1; Meisterernst 2016).
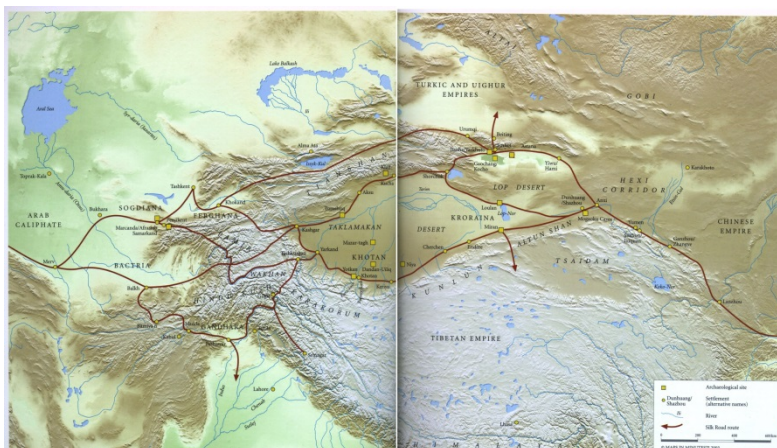

Figure 4.1 The Silk Roads (http://idp.bl.uk/database/img_popup.a4d?recnum=160)

Apart from the valuable information these monks provided in their reports, they also played a prominent role in the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese. Faxian, Xuanzang and Yijing were all of Chinese origin, but many of the early translators and Buddhist followers active on the Silk Roads from the second century CE on were from different ethnic origins, comingfrom regions ranging from India to present-day Xinjiang. The translations were conducted by translation teams, including native speakers of Chinese. The early translators had to convey a faith to the Chinese that was based on a religious background that was fundamentally different from that of the Chinese people, and they translated from texts written in typologically different languages. The source texts of the Buddhist translations were written in Indo-European languages, such as Gāndhārī and other Prakrit languages, Sanskrit and Pali. Most of the sources, particularly the early translations, are not extant (Nattier 2008; Peyraube 2015). These early translations are difficult to understand, and thus their value for comparative linguistic studies is limited (Zürcher 1991; Peyraube 2015).

The first point of culmination of the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese was achieved at the beginning of the fifth century, with the erudite monk Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 *Jiumoluoshi* (344–413 CE or 350–409 CE) from Kucha.[1] Kumārajīva was the son of an Indian Brahmin and a Kuchean princess; thus, he was not a native speaker of Chinese. He learned the language during sixteen years as a captive of General Lü Guang 呂光, who conquered and occupied Kucha in 384 CE (see Hureau 2003: 7). In 402 CE, he became the head of a translation project in Chang'an, which consisted of around 800 monks who translated and retranslated Buddhist texts. Kumārajīva also wrote some genuine Chinese texts. He had a reputation as a true intellectual, and according to his writing style, a meticulous study of Classical Chinese literature must have been the basis of his linguistic endeavours. His most famous translation is the Lotus Sutra 妙法蓮華經 *Miàofǎ Liánhuā Līng* 'the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*', one of the most influential sutras in East Asian Buddhism, represented by countless copies of the work found in the oasis towns. Kumārajīva's teacher was the famous translator Buddhayaśas, Fotuoyeshe 佛陀耶舍 (d. 413 CE), born in Jibin 罽賓國, Kashmir, India, as the son of a Brahmin. Buddhayaśas profited from a comprehensive education in traditional Indian sciences, including grammar and composition, art, mathematics and logic; additionally, he was educated in epistemology and philosophy.

The most significant translator of Buddhist texts prior to Kumārajīva was Dharmarakṣa, Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (230? –316 CE), who was born in Dunhuang 敦煌 and was of Indian and Scythian (Yuezhi 月氏 (Tochari)) descent. Dharmarakṣa was well acquainted with Confucian teachings, and his work was regarded as the foundation of Buddhism in Northern China (see the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism at http://www.buddhism-dict.net/). During his time, no *Mahāyāna* texts were yet available in China, so Dharmarakṣa followed his teachers to the West where he learned the "36 languages" of the Western Regions and translated their texts into Chinese. One of the earliest translators of Buddhist texts was the Parthian An Shigao 安世高, a member of the royal family of the Arsacids, who probably arrived in Luoyang around 148 CE. The important role of Iranian people and Iranianized people in the dissemination of Buddhism in China was mentioned in Pelliot and Chavannes (1911). Zürcher (1959) remarked that

> it was probably he (An Shigao) who initiated the systematical translation of Buddhist texts and who organized the first translation team. In this respect his importance is indeed very great: his translations primitive though they may be, mark the beginning of a form of literary activity which, taken as a whole, must be regarded as one of the most impressive achievements in Chinese culture. (Meisterernst 2016)

Languages spoken on the Silk Roads

From the late nineteenth century on, many original manuscripts in a multitude of languages were discovered in oasis towns along the Silk Roads; these bear witness to the multilingual and multicultural societies living in these towns from the Han period (206 BCE–220 CE) up to the fourteenth century. As Figure 4-2 below demonstrates, the area around Turfan 吐魯番 on the northern Silk Roads was linguistically the most diverse area in present-day Xinjiang, where manuscripts in more than 20 languages and scripts were discovered.
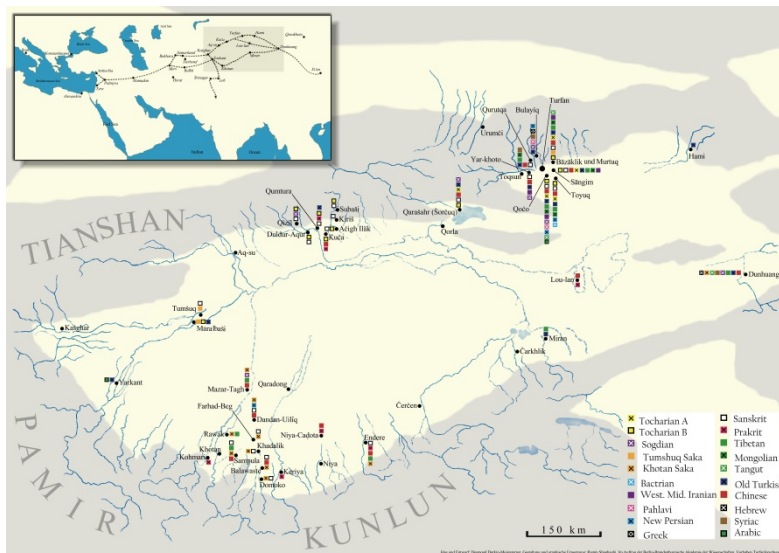
Figure 4.2 Languages on the Silk Roads (courtesy of the Turfan Research Centre http://turfan.bbaw.de/)

The number of languages and scripts represented by the manuscripts found in the Turfan area exceed that of the languages of the manuscripts from the famous library cave in Dunhuang. However, the Chinese manuscripts discovered in Dunhuang are in considerably better condition than those in the Turfan collection; the latter frequently consist of only small fragments of manuscripts. Whereas in Dunhuang, manuscripts in Chinese, Tibetan, Khotanese and Sanskrit are predominant, in Turfan, manuscripts in Middle Iranian, Uyghur and Sanskrit prevail. Although the total number of manuscripts discovered in Dunhuang is higher (46,755 in the British collection according to the International Dunhuang Project [IDP] database) than the manuscripts discovered in Turfan (31,203 according to the IDP),[2] the lack of the Turkish and the Persian languages among the Dunhuang manuscripts is evident. The British collection, which hosts a great number of the manuscripts from Dunhuang, records merely 2 manuscripts in Manichean script, 13 in the Middle Persian language, 321 manuscripts in Uyghur script and less than 100 in the Sogdian language and script.[3] Contrastively, there are more than 21,000 Chinese manuscripts, more than 10,000 manuscripts in Brahmi script, almost 9,000 in the Sanskrit language and more than 7,000 Tibetan manuscripts. Additionally, a great number of Tangut, Khotanese and Tocharian manuscripts were discovered in Dunhuang (see http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_en.a4d, accessed May 2016).

The Turfan collection hosts about 4,800 Chinese manuscripts, almost 24,000 manuscripts in Brahmi script, 15,000 in the Sanskrit language (many of those are very fragmentary) and 6,800 in the Tocharian language (see http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_de.a4d, accessed May

2016). About 1,500 manuscripts have both Chinese and Uyghur language and script; in most cases, this implies that one side of the manuscript contains a Chinese text, and the reverse side an unrelated Uyghur text. Additionally, there are about 6,000 Old-Turkish fragments in Uyghur and Sogdian scripts, in Turkic Runes, and in Manichean, Syriac, Tibetan and Brahmi scripts; about 5,000 Iranian text fragments, of these about 3,000 are in Manichean script and in Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian languages; about 1,500 manuscripts in Sogdian script and Sogdian, Middle Persian and Parthian languages; about 300 in Nestorian script and the Sogdian language; 12 in Pahlavi script and the Middle Persian language; about 100 Mongolian text fragments; 573 fragments in Syriac script; and 275 Tibetan text fragments (Turfanforschung [Turfan Research Centre], Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science, http://turfan.bbaw.de/). These figures illustrate the multifaceted relations between languages and scripts; for example, different scripts were employed to write different textual genres in the same language, and several languages were written in the same script. Additionally, these figures clearly illustrate the dimension of the multilingual and multicultural influences of the Silk Roads, as well as how the linguistic situations varied in different locations on the northern and southern branches. For instance, Dunhuang was a Chinese military outpost from the early Han period on; thus, the Chinese language prevailed, despite the changing political dominance in the area. In the Turfan area, Chinese was merely one of numerous languages on the northern branch of the Silk Roads.

In both the Dunhuang and Turfan areas, a particularly great number of manuscripts and manuscript fragments in Brahmi script and in Indian languages were discovered, although it is unlikely, according to Takata (2000), that any Sanskrit-speaking social groups lived in Dunhuang. It was rather a language that had to be learned in the monasteries in order to study Buddhism. The number of Indian language manuscripts indicates the great relevance of Indian languages in the dissemination of Buddhism on the Silk Roads and in the monastery towns outside India in present-day Xinjiang. The relevance of the Indian languages was already mentioned in Faxian's travelogue dating from the early fifth century, as shown in (1), from the beginning of his journey in the Taklamakan Desert.[4] Faxian relates that all those who had left their families to become monks had to learn the Indian language and script.

(1) *Taishō* 51, 2085, 857a (*Gaoseng Faxian zhuan*)

從此西行所經諸國類皆如是。唯國國胡語不同。然出家人皆習天竺書天竺語。

Cóng cǐ xī xíng suǒ jīng zhū guó lèi jiē rú shì, wéi guó guó Húyǔ

From this west got REL pass PL country kind all like this. Only country country

Hu.language

bù tóng. Rán chūjiārén jiē xí Tiānzhú shū Tiānzhú yǔ

NEG identical. But world.renunciant all learn Indian script Indian language

'From this going to the West, the kind of all the states they passed was like this, only the Hu (Central Asian) languages differed from state to state. But those who renounced the world all learned the Indian script(s) and the Indian language(s).'

According to Deeg (2005: 509), the Indian scripts referred to here are in the Kharoṣṭhī and Brahmī Indian languages, which include Northern Prakrits and Gāndhārī as well as Sanskrit. Faxian reports having learned an Indian script and an Indian language on his travels through India, as shown in the excerpt in (2) below:

(2) *Taishō* 51, 2085, 864

法顯住此三年。學梵書梵語。

Fǎxiǎn zhù cǐ sān nián, xué fàn shū fàn yǔ

Faxian stay this three year, learn Brahma script Brahma language

'Faxian stayed there for three years and learned the Brahma script and the Brahma language.'

Following Deeg (2005: 562), the Brahma script is most likely Brahmī, and the Brahma language is most likely Sanskrit, or a hybrid containing Prakrit elements.

In the reports on the foreign countries and city states along the Silk Roads in the transmitted Chinese historical literature, linguistic diversity did not seem to be of great relevance. As an apparent exception, the writing style of an Iranian language was included in the standardized catalogue of basic cultural features in the 史記 *Shǐjì*, which were the earliest reliable reports on the countries visited in the Western Regions, an excerpt of which is shown in (3) below:

(3) *Shǐjì* 123, 3162

安息在大月氏西可數千里。其俗土著，耕田，田稻麥，蒲陶酒。畫革旁行以為書記。

Ānxí zài Dà Yuèzhī shì xī kě shù qiān lǐ, qí sù tǔzhuó,

Anxi be Da Yuezhi clan west can several thousand li, POSS custom sedentary,

gēng tián, tián dào mò, pútáo jiǔ, huà gé páng xíng yǐwéi shū jì

plough field, grow rice wheat, grape wine, write leather side go make book record

'Anxi (Parthia) is located around several thousand miles west of the Da Yuezhi. Its custom is to be sedentary, they plough the field, they grow rice and wheat, and they have wine of grapes. Writing on leather, they do it in horizontal lines to write their reports.'

In general, linguistic diversity was not an issue in the chapters on the non-Han people in the early Chinese historiographies. The general term 胡語 *Húyǔ*, for instance, for different Central Asian foreign languages (see Rong 2013: 396), employed by Faxian (see [1] above) was not attested in the earlier Chinese historiographies such as the *Shǐjì* and the 漢書 *Hànshū*; it only appeared, though infrequently, in the 魏書 *Wèishū* (sixth century), the 北史 *Běishǐ* (seventh century) and the 周書 *Zhōushū* (sixth to seventh century). None of the terms employed for Indian languages by Faxian were attested in the early official Chinese historiographies. In contrast, a reference to different languages and scripts along the Silk Roads was made by Xuanzang on a regular basis, as in the following two examples in (4) and (5). The first is about Aksu, a former state in Eastern Turkestan, and the second is about Xuanzang's travels in the Wakhan Corridor between present-day Tajikistan and Pakistan. Thus, the linguistic diversity on the Silk Roads within and outside the Chinese realm was predominantly reported by Buddhist traveller monks.

(4) *Taishō* 51, 2087, 870c

人性風俗，文字法則同屈支國，語言少異。

Rén xìng fēngsú, wénzì fǎzé tóng Qūzhī, yǔyán shǎo yì

People nature custom, written.language regulations same Quzhi, spoken.language little difference

'The nature of the people, their customs, written language, rules and regulations are identical to [those in] Quzhi (Kucha), the spoken language is a little different.'

(5) *Taishō* 51, 2087, 941b

皮褐為服。文字同睹貨羅國，語言有異。

Pí hó wéi fú, wénzì tóng Dǔhuòluò guó, yǔyán yǒu yì

Leather wool make clothes, written.language same Tukhāra country, spoken.language have difference

'They make their clothes with leather and wool, the written language is identical to [the one in] Tocharistan, but there are differences in the spoken language.'

The Chinese language on the Silk Roads

As has been demonstrated in the section above, an impressive variety of languages and scripts were discovered in the oasis towns along the Silk Roads. Depending on the predominant cultural influence, the number of the most representative languages and scripts vary in the respective city states. The Indian languages were vital for the transmission of Buddhism in China and the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese; accordingly, manuscripts in Indian languages abounded in the monasteries of the oasis towns. Especially on the northern branch of the Silk Roads, Iranian languages were employed for the transmission of Zoroastrism, Manicheism and Nestorianism, and the Uyghur language was employed in religious texts, as well as in a great number of secular texts on everyday culture in the oasis towns.[5] The Turfan Research Centre in Berlin, which hosts the manuscripts collected from the northern branch by German expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century, predominantly focuses on manuscripts in Old Turkish and Iranian languages. All of the Chinese manuscripts in the Turfan collection have been identified and listed in catalogues.[6]

Research on the Chinese materials found on the Silk Roads frequently rather focuses on the better preserved and more complete manuscripts from the Dunhuang Mogao caves. Linguistically, the so-called 变文 *biànwén*, or transformation literature written in Tang period vernacular, belongs to the most important discoveries from Dunhuang. Mair (1994) considers the *biànwén* literature the earliest variety of a vernacular language in written Chinese. This pre-modern vernacular is labelled（古）白話 (*gǔ*) *báihuà* (e.g., Mair 1994). Although the Buddhist translation literature, to a certain extent, includes elements of the vernacular, it is still composed in a variety of written language; thus, *biànwén* literature is invaluable in the reconstruction of the spoken Middle Chinese language. According to Mair (1981), the *biànwén* texts were composed by lay students who conducted their studies in monasteries taught by both lay and clerical teachers. In addition to these monastic schools, other schools and academies existed that conveyed a more traditional Chinese education. In these institutions, popular literature such as *biànwén* literature was usually not included in the curriculum (Mair 1981: 90). A considerable number of studies from different perspectives have been devoted to *biànwén* literature and to the great corpus of Chinese manuscripts in the Dunhuang collection in general.

Chinese texts in Dunhuang and Turfan and their relevance[7]

The collections from both Dunhuang and Turfan demonstrate that the traditional study of Chinese was obviously part of regular education, even in the Turfan area. This region, although under Chinese administration for many centuries, was considerably more remote from the Chinese cultural realm than the Dunhuang area. However, close connections existed between Dunhuang and Turfan, and the variety of Chinese spoken in both areas has been assumed to be very similar (Takata 2004).[8] During the Tang Dynasty, the Confucian Classics were taught in the provincial and district schools established in Dunhuang and Turfan, as well as in the capital (Rong 2013: 367).[9] In addition to the official schools, Buddhist monasteries constituted cultural and educational centres. Besides the predominant Buddhist texts, texts of many other genres and numerous non-Buddhist texts, including Chinese texts of 'the four traditional categories (i.e., 經 *jing*, 史 *shi*, 子 *zi* and 集 *ji*) were found in the Dunhuang library cave and in the Turfan area (see Rong 2013: 341).[10] In Dunhuang, dozens of copies and many lost commentaries of the Classics were preserved (Rong 2013: 65, 367). These include manuscript copies of the 周易經典釋文 *Zhōuyì Jīngdiǎn Shìwén*, "which in many points differ from the transmitted version of this text" (Rong 2013: 65, 367) and other parts of the 經典釋文 *Jīngdiǎn Shìwén*, which will be discussed presently. Of the Buddhist texts discovered in the Dunhuang library, the most popular, with over a thousand copies, were Xuanzang's translation of the 大般若波羅密多經 *Dà Bōrě Bōluómìduō Jīng*, Kumārajīva's 金剛般若波羅密經 *Jīngāng Bōrě Bōluómì Jīng*, Yijing's 金光明最勝王經 *Jīnguāngmíng Zuìshèng Wáng Jīng* and Kumārajīva's 妙法蓮華經 *Miàofǎ Liánhuā Jīng* and 維摩詰所說經 *Wéimójié Suǒshuō Jīng* (Rong 2013: 346).

Texts which provide evidence of the position of the Chinese language and the teaching of Chinese discovered in Dunhuang and Turfan are basically of the same kind. They include copies of the 切韻 *Qièyùn* (or fragments of them), phonetic glossaries, dictionaries, writing exercises, copies of primers, etc., as well as copies of the Classics and historical and other secular texts. Of the primers discovered, the most prominent is the 千字文 *Qiānzìwén*, copies of which were secured in Dunhuang and—though to a lesser extent—in Turfan.[11] The *Qiānzìwén* belongs to the group of the so-called 三百千 *Sānbǎiqiān* (三字經 *Sānzì Jīng*, 百家姓 *Bǎijiāxìng* and *Qiānzìwén*), the most popular primers during the Tang period (Bai 2005; Knapp 2005). These primers, although clearly Confucian, were less ideological in content than the later Neo-Confucian primers, and they predominantly served to teach basic literacy

and knowledge (Knapp 2005: 396; see also Mair 1981).[12] Besides primers, writing exercises such as Or.8210/S.11969B, Recto (IDP: http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=1089053112;recnum=21045;index=1) bear witness to Chinese education in the oasis towns. All of the words in this fragment of an exercise have to do with dwellings, buildings, etc.: 舍 *shè* 'house', 宅 *zhái* 'residence', 堂 *táng* 'hall', 廊 *láng* 'porch', etc.

Additionally, a number of phonetic glossaries and dictionaries were discovered; to the most important of those belong several copies of different editions of the long lost original version of the *Qièyùn* by Lu Fayan 陸法言 (601 CE) (Zhou 周祖謨 1994, 2001; Takata 2004; Rong 2013: 393). Of the many dictionaries and phrasebooks in Dunhuang, only one will be briefly referred to here, the *Essential Record of Correct Terminology* (IDP signature Or.8210/S.388 Recto: http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=1117797010;recnum=388;index=1), described in Boltz (2005). The title of the manuscript is "ascribed to Lang Zhiben, Sima of Xuzhou and Companion of the Prince of He (i.e. Li Yuangui, son of Tang Gaozu)." It includes graphic variants with phonetic and semantic glosses from the 字樣 *Zìyàng* (*Models of the Written Word*). According to Zhou 周祖謨 (1988) (cf. Boltz, 1992: 51) the *Zìyàng* was compiled by Yan Jian 顏監 "sometime between 649–704; Lang's work can be dated to ca. 636–49" (Boltz: IDP, accessed 2 June 2016).

The non-Buddhist Chinese manuscripts in the Turfan collection
The following section will focus on the Chinese materials discovered in the Turfan area. The 4,800 manuscripts in the Turfan collection in Berlin have been completely identified. Although existing catalogues list graphical and other variants of the identified texts in relation to their transmitted versions, none of the manuscripts have been edited yet. However, numerous studies, particularly on the non-Buddhist texts from Turfan in the Chinese and other collections, have been conducted recently by Chinese and Japanese scholars (e.g., Dohi 土肥 義和 2009; Arikawa 荒川正晴 2010; Rong 榮新江 2010). Recent research has increasingly acknowledged the relevance of the manuscript versions of the transmitted texts in linguistics and other fields of study, and the analysis of graphical, lexical and grammatical variants in the manuscript materials has been a particular focus of study.[13]

The Chinese manuscripts in the Turfan collection include:

- Classical literature
- Some fragments from rare rime dictionaries (e.g., *Qièyùn*) and other dictionaries (e.g., 玉篇 *Yùpiān*)
- Lists
- Writing exercises
- Manichean texts
- Buddhist literature

The fragments from copies of Classical Chinese content demonstrate that the relevance of the teaching of the Classics in Turfan was apparently comparable to that in Dunhuang. Among the manuscripts discovered are fragments of the 小雅 *Xiǎoyǎ* in the 诗经 *Shījīng* in the Mao tradition and of the 大禹謨篇 *Dà Yǔ Mó* chapter in the 尚書 *Shàngshū* (Nishiwaki, 2001). Fragments of copies of the 左傳 *Zuǒzhuàn*, with commentary by Du Yu 杜預, the *Shǐjì*, the *Hànshū* and the 新唐書 *Xīn Tángshū* provide some evidence of the study of historical Chinese texts as part of the educational programme in Turfan. Additionally, fragments of copies of the *Qiānzìwén*, with writing exercises on it, and quite a number of phonetic glossaries and dictionaries are part of the non-Buddhist collection of Chinese manuscripts. The manuscript Ch 1234, for instance, shows a writing exercise on the characters 遐 *xiá* and 邇 *ěr*, supposedly based on the *Qiānzìwén*, in the free spaces of a household register. Apart from these exercises on randomly chosen paper, true exercise booklets existed for the practice of writing Chinese characters, as the manuscript fragment Ch 3800, shown in Figure 4-3 below, demonstrates. The page is divided into small squares, each of which is allotted to one character.

Figure 4.3 Ch 3800: Fragment of an exercise book

In addition to a number of phonetic glossaries of Buddhist texts, some fragments from copies of the *Qièyùn* and two block-print fragments from the *Yùpiān*, a sixth century dictionary, were discovered. The glossaries of Buddhist texts included Uyghur glosses of a Chinese text; in these the pronunciation of difficult Chinese characters is expressed by familiar Chinese characters according to the Uyghur phonetic system (Takata 高田時雄 1995; Nishiwaki 2001). Some of the fragments in the collection contain parts of the *Qièyùn* on the recto and parts of a text, which most likely can be identified as the *jīngdiǎn shìwén* on the verso side (Ch 323 v, Ch 343 v, 1246 v, 1577 v and 2917 v); these manuscripts obviously all belong together. The fragments from the *Jīngdiǎn Shìwén* contain phonetic glosses of the 爾雅 *Eryǎ* (probably third century BCE), which belongs to the 十三經 *Shísān Jīng* (*Thirteen Confucian Classics*). According to Nishiwaki (2001), the texts on the fragments differ from the *textus receptus*. The *Qièyùn* passages on the recto sides of these manuscripts have been discussed e.g. by Zhou (1994) and Takata (2004). According to Takata (2004), these manuscripts are close to Lu Fayan's original version and were probably brought to Turfan during the Tang period in the first half of the eighth century. An additional manuscript fragment (Ch 2094) was identified by Zhou (1983: 236) and Nishiwaki (2001) as belonging to an enlarged version of the *Qièyùn*. These manuscripts constitute invaluable materials for research on the history of the *Qièyùn*.

In addition to these (and unrelated) manuscript fragments, block-print versions of the *Qièyùn* were discovered in Turfan. The fragments Ch 1072, Ch 1106 v, Ch 1150 v, Ch 2437 r, Ch 3715 and Ch 3533 r all belong to this group. They are also listed and identified in Nishiwaki (2001) and discussed in Takata (2004), together with others in the Japanese collection.[14] According to Takata (2004), these block-print versions of the *Qièyùn* are more developed than the 广韵 *Guǎngyùn*, the Song period enlarged edition of the *Qièyùn*, in several respects: sometimes more words are included in a 小韻 *xiǎoyùn* 'small rime'; commentaries on the words are often more detailed than in the *Guǎngyùn*; and words in the commentaries are sometimes accompanied by glosses. The latter is a particular feature of these editions of the *Qièyùn*. Takata (2004) proposes that these versions of the *Qièyùn* were brought to Turfan during the Song period, a time when Chinese hegemony had been replaced by the Uyghurs. The fragment Ch 1538 provides some evidence of the employment of the *Qièyùn* also under the Uyghurs (Takata 2004); this constitutes one of the latest versions of the text according to the Uyghur handwriting. It evidently differs from the *Guǎngyùn* in its 反切 *fǎnqiè* spellings.

It seems that the Uyghurs did not strictly adhere to the *fǎnqiè* spelling system provided in the *Qièyùn* but instead adopted Uyghur phonetic rules in reading it (Takata 2004). The different block-print copies discovered in Turfan all date from periods later than the manuscript copies.

Chinese texts written in non-Chinese scripts

One of the most valuable finds for the study of the historical phonology of Chinese are the Chinese texts written in non-Chinese scripts discovered on the Silk Roads; these include Chinese texts written e.g. in Brahmi and Tibetan scripts (e.g. Emmerick and Pulleyblank 1993; Coblin 1995; Takata 2000).[15] In contrast to Chinese script, Brahmi script and the Tibetan script derived from it are alpha-syllabic scripts; these scripts allow an exact rendering of the phonetic system of the language they write. Thus they provide invaluable materials for the reconstruction of the respective stage of the Chinese language at the time the transcriptions were produced. Tibetan transcriptions of Chinese texts have been discussed e.g. in Takata 高田時雄 (1993, 1998) and Takata (2004) and in Coblin (1995). A Chinese text written in a Central Asian, i.e. the Khotanese Brahmi script has been discussed in Emmerick and Pulleyblank (1993). Takata (2004) lists and discusses the Chinese Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist eulogies, songs and poems that were written in Tibetan script rather than in Chinese characters during, and also after, the time of Tibetan Rule in Dunhuang (ninth to tenth century).[16] One of the most famous examples is the so-called Tibeto-Chinese "Long Scroll" identified in Takata 高田時雄 (1993) and Coblin (1995). A line from this text identified in Coblin (1995) is presented in (6) below: the first line contains Coblin's reading of the Tibetan transcription; the second line contains Pulleyblank's (1991) reconstructions of Late Middle Chinese[17]; and the third line contains the Chinese original corresponding to the Tibetan transcription as it was reconstructed by Coblin.

(6) 44 / / then di 'tshi ga'u / ta 'wun zhir zhe / byan 'shan lim ding / dzan 'than kung tig / le nyam

tʰian tʰi' tsʰẓ́ kjaːj' ta vun ʂit ʂhiaj' pjian ʂaːn lim təð́ŋ́ tsan' tʰan' kəwŋ təð̌k liaj niam'

天地此界多聞室逝邊山林等讚歎功德禮念

zhan ʔin / 'hwa'u 'shi yi'u dze / 'phu gyung zhe wur

ʂhian' ʔjin xɦuaj ʂi iw´ tsɦiajŋ pʰuð́´ kywŋ' ʂhiajŋ fɦut

善 因迴施有情普供成佛

The Chinese original was restored following a short poem in the manuscript P. 2066, held in the Bibliothèque National, Paris, which shows close correspondences with the Tibetan transcription. In the transcription, the final stop –*t*, as in *ṣit* 室 *shì* 'house' and *fɦut* 佛 *fó* 'Buddha', is represented by –*r* in *zhir* and *wur* in the Tibetan transcription, this shows that it was already weakening at the time (Emmerick and Pulleyblank 1993: 42).[18]

Another example of a Chinese Buddhist text with an interlinear transcription in Sogdian letters, a manuscript from the Turfan collection in Berlin (manuscript So 14830), will be briefly presented here. The blue arrows in the manuscript point to the letter "p" in the Sogdian transcription, representing the final –*p* of the respective Chinese words.
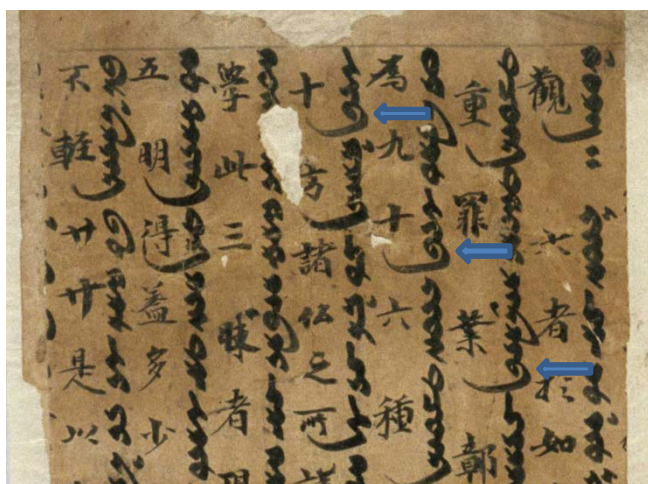

Figure 4.4 Chinese text with Sogdian transcription (So 14830)

Figure 4a

Figure 4b

In 4a, the Chinese number 十 *shí* 'ten', Late Middle Chinese *ṣɦip* (Pulleyblank, 1991), has been transcribed by the Sogdian *šyp*, while in 4b, the Chinese word 業 *yè* 'work', LMC *ŋiap* (Pulleyblank, 1991), has been transcribed by the Sogdian *'nk'yp* (Durkin-Meisterernst: personal communication). According to Pulleyblank (1991), the final stops were lost in Early

Mandarin (thirteenth to fourteenth century), but among the final stops, –*p* seems to be the one that survived the longest. This can be shown by the fact that in the eleventh century, the final stop –*p* was still associated with the final stops in –*m*, whereas the finals */k/* and /*t*/ were classified with finals ending in vowels and glides by Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077 CE) (Emmerick and Pulleyblank 1993: 42). The Sogdian manuscript presented here probably dates from around the ninth or tenth century, and it confirms that at that time, the final stop was still present in the variety of Chinese spoken in the Turfan area and transcribed by a Sogdian (see Yoshida 吉田豐 1994). In another manuscript containing Chinese numbers in Sogdian transcription, probably dating from the tenth century, the final stops –*p* and –*k* are still preserved, and the final stop –*t* of Middle Chinese was transcribed as –*r* in the Sogdian script (Hamilton 1981; cf. Yoshida 1994), similar to the Tibetan transcription presented above.[19] This again confirms that this was the first of the final stops in Middle Chinese to disappear.

The value of the Chinese manuscripts found on the Silk Roads for linguistic studies
Rong (2013), in his study of traditional Chinese texts, clearly demonstrates the importance of the original manuscripts found in Dunhuang, compared with the versions transmitted and edited over the centuries, for philological and linguistic studies. Among the most important texts discovered in the Dunhuang library are older versions of the *Jīngdiǎn Shìwén* by Lu Deming 陸德明, which in many ways differ from the transmitted versions of the texts. Particular mention can be made here of the 尚書釋文 *Shàngshū Shìwén*. This reflects the state of the *shàngshū* before Tang Emperor Xuanzong ordered a change from the Old Script, 古文 *gǔwén*, to the New Script, 今文 *jīnwén*, in the eighth century (744 CE). The Dunhuang copy of the *Shàngshū Shìwén* preserves some characters from the 隸古定 *lìgǔdìng* 'clericized' version; these were subsequently deleted from the Song period version of the same text but were recovered in the manuscript versions from Dunhuang (Rong, 2013: 368). In general, the manuscripts finds on the Silk Roads of original texts from different periods are of the greatest value in the compilation of critical editions of numerous Middle Chinese texts.

The relevance of the discovered manuscripts in the reconstruction of the historical phonology of Chinese has already been pointed out. Texts such as the manuscript in Khotanese Brahmi discussed in Emmerick and Pulleyblank (1993: 56) show unique features not found in other contemporary transcriptions of Chinese, and thus reflect distinctions made in the language which would otherwise have remained obscure. For grammatical studies and the correct

reading of Buddhist texts, the study of the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts can be of great relevance, as shown in the following example in (7), the manuscript fragment Ch 647 (see Figure 4-5 below) from the Turfan collection, corresponding to *Taishō* 9, no. 262, in the *Miàofǎ Liánhuā Jīng* translated by Kumārajīva.

< Figure 4-5 here >

This manuscript, dating between the fourth and the middle of the sixth century (Thilo 1985), thus it was probably copied almost contemporarily to the time of the sutra's translation. In the transmitted version of the *Taishō* edition, the two adverbs 亦 *yì* 'also' and 曾 *céng* 'once'/*zēng* 'even, just' appear in the order 曾亦 *céng/zēng yì* (see [7a]). *Yì* is a modal adverb according to its default position in Late Archaic and Medieval Chinese. The different functions of *céng/zēng* are (i) *céng* 'once', an aspecto-temporal adverb, which is extremely common in Middle Chinese texts; (ii) a speaker-oriented adverb *zēng* 'even, just',; and (iii) a conjunction *zēng* 'then'.[20] As a speaker-oriented adverb or a conjunction, the default position of 曾 *zēng* is preceding *yì*as an aspecto-temporal adverb it has to follow *yì*. The latter is the default word order of modal and aspecto-temporal adverbs, which is "(speaker oriented) – modal – aspecto-temporal – *v*P" (Meisterernst 2015) in Late Archaic and Early Middle Chinese; it also corresponds to the universal order of adverbs proposed in Cinque (1999). This word order (i.e., *yì céng*) appears in the manuscript (see [7b]). It is also the most frequently attested order of the two adverbs in the Buddhist literature (according to the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association [CBETA]: http://cbeta.org) (see [7c]).

(7) a. T09, no.262, p. 26c25

我在十六數，<u>曾亦</u>為汝說。

Wǒ zài shí liù shù, céng yì wèi rǔ shuō

I be.at ten six number, CENG also for you tell

b. Ch 647

我在十六數，<u>亦曾</u>為汝說。

Wǒ zài shí liù shù, yì céng wèi rǔ shuō

'I myself was among the sixteen, and once I also preached for you.'

c. T02, no.99, p. 241c16

『我長夜輪轉生死以來，<u>亦曾更</u>受如是之苦，其數無量。

  Wŏ cháng yè lún zhuăn shēng sǐ yǐ lái, yì céng gèng shòu rú shì

  I long night wheel turn born die YI come, also CENG further receive be.like this

  zhī kǔ, qí shù wúliàng

  SUB suffer, its number measureless

  'Since then for long nights I turned the wheel of life and death, I also once

  additionally received all kinds of bitterness of immeasurable numbers.'

The word order in (7a) in the transmitted *Taishō* version is extremely infrequent; additionally, half of the examples listed in the CBETA database are actually different versions of and commentaries on the instances in the *Miàofă Liánhuā Jīng*.[21] In most of the few remaining instances,曾 *zēng* evidently functions as a speaker-oriented adverb or a conjunction.[22] The marginal number of instances in pre-Modern Chinese literature of the order *zēng*/*céng yì*, together with the (correct) order *yì céng* of the two adverbs in the manuscript Ch 647, provides conclusive evidence of the default interpretation of *céng* as an aspecto-temporal adverb in this passage and for an incorrect transmission of this passage in subsequent Buddhist literature.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the sources for the study of Chinese and non-Chinese languages in the multicultural and multilinguistic oasis towns along the Silk Roads were introduced and briefly discussed. The reports and the manuscript materials discovered, particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century, demonstrate the relevance of traditional Chinese education and traditional Chinese studies in the oasis towns, particularly in Dunhuang and Turfan. Additionally, the great value of the manuscript finds for contemporary studies of the history of the Chinese language was pointed out from multiple perspectives.

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[1] Kumārajīva was the earliest of the "four great translators" of Buddhist texts, together with Paramārtha in the sixth century, Xuanzang in the seventh century, and Amoghavajra in the eighth century (Hureau, 2003).

[2] However, some of the most interesting and important Sogdian manuscripts (*The Sogdian Ancient Letters* [Rong, 2013: 62f]) from as early as the fourth century were discovered in Dunhuang. In the IDP database (http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_de.a4d), of the manuscripts in the Turfan collection that are already listed, the total number of Turfan manuscripts is accordingly higher. The IDP database is a work in progress, and as such, digitized objects will continue to increase.

[3] The French collection almost exclusively hosts Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts (http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_fr.a4d, accessed May 2016), while the Chinese collection almost exclusively contains Chinese manuscripts (http://idp.bl.uk/pages/collections_ch.a4d, accessed May 2016).

[4] Takata, in his article on multilingualism in Dunhuang, mostly refers to periods later than the late fourth and early fifth century, when Faxian travelled on the Silk Road.

[5] An extensive study of the Tibetan and Chinese secular manuscripts discovered in Dunhuang from the period of Tibetan rule (the end of the eighth to the middle of the ninth century) has been provided in Taenzer (2012), while Takeuchi (1995) discusses the Tibetan contracts, and the relation between Uyghur script and religion has been discussed in Kasai (2016).

[6] The following catalogues list the identified Chinese manuscripts: Schmitt and Thilo (1975) and Thilo (1985) identify and describearound 2,300 mostly Buddhist manuscripts; Nishiwaki (2001, 2014) list around 650 identified manuscripts; and Kudara (2005) identifies about 1,070 manuscripts. Nishiwaki and Kudara concentrate on the non-Buddhist manuscripts in the Turfan collection. An additional catalogue started by Kudara will be published by Mazumi Mitani.

[7] The collections, particularly in Dunhuang, have been comprehensively discussed in Rong (2013). Rong also provides an extensive list of references of Silk Road studies.

[8] According to Takata (2004), the Chinese families governing Turfan originally came from the Gansu area. In this area, many powerful dynasties existed before Chinese unification under the Sui and the Tang Dynasties.

[9] This was mentioned in the report on the Song time by envoy Wang Yande 王延德. Wang was sent to Gaochang at the end of the tenth century and reported on the existence of several dictionaries and rime dictionaries in the area, such as the 唐韻 *Tángyùn*, the 玉篇 *Yùpiān* and the 經音 *Jīngyīn* (*Sòngshǐ*: 14112).

[10] Rong (2013) devote several lectures to the different textual genres discovered predominantly in the Dunhuang library cave, as well as finds in the Turfan area.

[11] For a discussion of primers found in Dunhuang, see Zhou (2001: 470ff).

[12] Dunhuang primers have also more recently been studied comprehensively in Wang (2000) and in Zheng and Zhu (2002). Besides the Chinese versions, Uyghur versions of the *Qiànzíwén* were also discovered in the Turfan area.

[13] Databases such as the IDP and the CBETA have considerably facilitated this research; as such, online editions of all manuscripts in searchable databases are highly desirable for future research work on the Chinese language, history and culture.

[14] The block-print fragments of the *Qièyùn* have not been discussed in Zhou(1994).

[15] For a brief discussion on Sino-Uyghur, see Kasai (2016) and the extensive references therein.

[16] In 1962, Csongor published a short article on Chinese glosses in Uyghur texts written in Brahmi.

[17] Pulleyblank's (1991) reconstructions were selected by the author because they are easily available for comparison, and because they closely reflect the Chinese pronunciation at the time of the Tibetan transcription.

Pulleyblank's (1991) own reconstructions draw on the transcriptions of Chinese by non-Chinese scripts to a great extent.

[18] Emmerick and Pulleyblank (1993) note: "The evidence of foreign transcriptions shows clearly that /t/, at least was no longer a stop but had become a fricative or continuant of some kind. It is usually represented by –*r* in Tibetan, though examples of –*d* also occur."

[19] I am grateful to Nicholas Sims-Williams for pointing my attention to Yoshida 吉田豐 (1994), Yoshida (2013) and Hamilton's (1981) publications.

[20] These functions are considerably less common in Middle Chinese.

[21] Six instances are commentaries or different versions of the *Miàofǎ Liánhuā Jīng* and seven are independent.

[22] In the Academia Sinica database, there are two instances of the order *zēng yì* apart from the instances in the *Miàofǎ Liánhuā Jīng*).