

In the 28th year, 11th month, 13th day in the reign of the great king Jitugha Amkvaḡe, son of heaven, at this time Budhila and secondly Budhaya [two] of the sons of *śramanna* Athamo arose. They sold a vineyard of four *apciva*, and another piece of *letga kuthala* land in the *miši*-[land]. The whole amount is five [pieces of land]. Anamda bought it and paid the price, 1 golden stater and another 2 *muli*, and a later amount of 12 *muli*. They agreed on equal terms. It was well bought and well sold. This was written in the presence of the bhikṣu-sangha<sup>1</sup> at Cadota, at the request of Budhila and Budhaya. Witnesses were: the monk Budharachi, elder of the sangha, the monk Yipiya [ . . . ] the monk, and *dasavida* Samca, the monk Dhamamitra [ . . . ] the monk Dhama[kamal], the servant of the reverend Rihhasena, Cigita, and the monks Tsagirsta and Sanaga. This was written at the command of the bhikṣu-sangha by me the scribe Apgeya, and at the command of Budhila and Budhaya. Its authority is for a thousand years, as long as life. Whoever at a future time shall bring up arguments [in an attempt] to alter it, he shall have no authority in front of the bhikṣu-sangha. The fine [for such an attempt] is five pieces of cloth, and the punishment [*dhamila* — danda] fifty strokes. Thus carefully [its] authority [is fixed]. There is no end.

The monk Budhavama and the monk Bhatra are witnesses.

#### [An Ownership Dispute about a Slave]

In the 4th year of his majesty the great King Mairi the son of heaven, on the 13th day of the 3rd month, at this date [?] the Supis<sup>2</sup> came to Calmadana; they plundered the kingdom and carried off the inhabitants. The Supis seized a man called Samrpina, a slave of the *vasu* Yonu<sup>3</sup> and sent him as a present to Cinaṣgaṣi [the Chinaman Ṣgaṣi]. Cinaṣgaṣi [provided] from here, as a recompense for the man, two golden staters and two drachmas. [Consequently] that man became the rightful property [?] of Ṣgaṣi. His own master, the *vasu* Yonu, did not wish to remove the man himself, and permission was given to Ṣgaṣi to sell him to others. Considering this Cinaṣgaṣi sold this man to Katge. As the price of the man [ . . . ] and one bow is right. Cinaṣgaṣi has sold well and Katge has bought well. From now on [ . . . ]

<sup>1</sup> A Buddhist monastery.

<sup>2</sup> A nomadic people who often attacked oases.

<sup>3</sup> A Greek, derived from Yona, from Ionia.

## 4

### The Oasis Towns of Central Asia and the Spread of Buddhism, Third–Seventh Centuries

## 13

#### *Documents Excavated from the Ruins of Niya*

##### *Third Century*

*At Niya, a small oasis on the southern rim of the Takla Makan Desert that was once a major commercial center on the Silk Roads, archaeologists have excavated a Buddhist monastery with a stupa, or shrine, along with many documents in Chinese and Kharoshthi, an evolution of the Aramaic script that the Persians had brought to India. These documents reveal the monks' engagement in commercial transactions. Monks acted as witnesses and scribes for contracts and the arbitration of disputes, and the beneficiaries of their services sometimes paid them in rolls of silk. The monks accumulated so much silk that their regulations specified using rolls of silk to pay disciplinary fines. Together, the following documents suggest the interactions of people of many different ethnicities in an oasis town and the extent of Buddhist support of Silk Roads trade. What was the role of the Buddhist monastery in a small oasis community?*

#### [Contract for the Sale of a Vineyard]

This document concerning a vineyard [bought] from Budhila and Budhaya is to be carefully preserved by [ . . . ] and Samgasri.

This is the seal of the monks Samca, Sujata, and Dharmila.

Thomas Burrow, *A Translation of the Kharoshthi Documents from Chinese Turkistan* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1940), 84–85, 60–61, 95.

### [Regulations for a Community of Monks]

In the 10th year of his majesty the great king, Jitughha Mahagiri, son of heaven, in the 12th month, 10th day [...] the community of monks in the capital laid down regulations for the community of monks in Cadota. It is heard that the novices do not pay attention to an elder, they disobey the old monks. Concerning this these regulations have been laid down by his majesty in front of the order of monks. The elders Silaprabha and Pumnasena [are to be] in charge of the monastery [*viharavata*]. They have to administer all the activities of the community. [Disputes] are to be examined in accordance with the law. All the activities of the community of monks are to be administered by them [...] so that the community of monks shall be content in mind [*alananna*]. Whichever monk does not partake in the activities of the community of monks shall pay a fine of one roll of silk. Whichever monk does not take part in the *posatha* ceremony, his penalty is [a fine of] one roll of silk. Whichever monk at the invitations to the *posatha* ceremony enters in householder's dress, shall pay a fine of one roll of silk. Whichever monk strikes another monk, [in the case of] a light [blow the fine is] five rolls of silk, [in the case of] a moderate [blow] ten rolls of silk, [in the case of] an excessive [blow] fifteen rolls of silk.

## 14

### NANAI-VANDAK

### *Letter to the Noble Lord Varzakk*

ca. 313

*From the oasis towns of Sogdiana, between the Amu and Syr Rivers, many merchants traveled east to trade. One of them, Nanai-vandak, wrote from the Hexi Corridor (now in China's Gansu Province) to a friend and relative in Sogdiana. The letter never reached its destination and in 1907 was found by Aurel Stein, a British explorer and*

*Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, ed. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, trans. Nicholas Sims-Williams (New York: Harry N. Abrams, with the Asia Society, 2001), 49.

*archaeologist, in the ruins of a watchtower on the Great Wall west of Dunhuang. It reveals a great deal about the nomadic invasions of China that disrupted trade and the commercial networks of Sogdian traders, including their financial transactions. Judging from this letter, how risky was it to carry out the long-distance trade along the Silk Road?*

To the noble lord Varzakk son of Nanai-dhvar of the family Kanakk, 1,000 and 10,000 blessings and homage on bended knee, as is offered to the gods, sent by his servant Nanai-vandak. And, sirs, it would be a good day for him who might see you happy and free from illness; and, sirs, when I hear news of your good health, I consider myself immortal! And, sirs, Armat-sach Jiuquan is safe and well and Arsach in Guzang is safe and well. And, sirs, it is three years since a Sogdian came from "inside."<sup>1</sup> I settled Ghotam-sach, and he is safe and well. He has gone to . . . and now no one comes from there so that I might write to you about the Sogdians who went "inside" how they fared and which countries they reached. And, sirs, the last emperor, so they say, fled from Luoyang because of the famine and fire was set to his palace and to the city, and the palace was burnt and the city [destroyed]. Luoyang is no more, Ye is no more! Moreover . . . as far as Ye (these same Huns [who] yesterday were the emperor's subjects! And, sirs, we do not know whether the remaining Chinese were able to expel the Huns [from] Changan, from China, or whether they took the country beyond. And [. . . in . . . there are] a hundred freemen from Samarkand . . . in . . . there are forty men. And, sirs, [. . . it is] three years since [. . . came] from "inside" . . .

And from Dunhuang up to Jincheng . . . to sell, linen cloth is going [=selling well?], and whoever has unmade cloth or woolen cloth . . .

And, sirs, as for us, whoever dwells in the region from Ji[ncheng] up to Dunhuang, we only survive so long as the . . . lives, and we are without family, old and on the point of death. If this were not so, [I would] not be ready to write to you about how we are. And, sirs, if I were to write to you everything about how China has fared, it would be beyond grief: there is no profit for you to gain from it. And, sirs, it is eight years since I sent Saghrak and Farr-aghath "inside" and it is three years since I received a reply from there. They were well . . . , but now, since the last evil occurred, I do [not] receive a reply from there about how they have

<sup>1</sup>Came from China.

fares. Moreover, four years ago I sent another man named Artikhuvandak. When the caravan left Guzang, Wakhushakk . . . was there, and when they reached Luoyang . . . the Indians and the Sogdians there had all died of starvation. [And I] sent Nasyan to Dunhuang and he went "outside"<sup>2</sup> and entered Dunhuang, but now he has gone without permission from me, and he received a great retribution and was struck dead in the . . .

Lord Varzakk, my greatest hope is in your lordship! Pesakk son of Dhruwasp-vandak holds . . . statters of mine and he put it on deposit, not to be transferred, and you should hold it . . . sealed from now on, so that without my permission . . . Dhruwasp-vandak . . .

[Lord] Nanai-dhvar, you should remind Varzakk that he should withdraw this deposit, and you should both count it, and if the latter is to hold it you should add the interest to the capital and put it in a transfer document, and you should give this too to Varzakk. And if you think it fit that the latter should not hold it, then you should take it and give it to someone else whom you do think fit, so that this money may increase. And, behold, there is a certain orphan . . . and if he should live and reach adulthood, and he has no hope of anything other than this money, then, Nanai-dhvar, when it is heard that Takut has departed to the gods, the gods and my father's soul will be a support to you!, and when Takhsich-vandak is grown-up, give him a wife and do not send him away from you. . . . And when you need cash, then you should take 1,000 or 2,000 statters out of the money.

And Wan-razmak sent to Dunhuang for me 32 vesicles of musk belonging to Takut so that he might deliver them to you. When they are handed over you should make five shares, from which Takhsich-vandak should take three shares, and Pesakk should take one share, and you should take one share.

This letter was written when it was the year 13 of Lord Chirth-swan in the month Taghmich.

<sup>2</sup>Went out of China.

## A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms

ca. 416

*Around 399, Faxian, a Chinese Buddhist teacher, and several junior Buddhist monks set out on a pilgrimage to India to learn the true Buddhist doctrine. Faxian, who was about sixty years old at the time, was the first Chinese Buddhist to reach India. His party traveled through the oasis towns of the Takla Makan Desert and the rugged mountains of the Upper Indus Valley; on the way home, Faxian and the monks went by sea, stopping at a port in Southeast Asia. On his return to China, Faxian wrote a detailed account of his trip. In this passage, he describes Khotan, an oasis state on the southern edge of the Takla Makan Desert. To observe Khotan's famous Buddhist festival, Faxian and several others in the group remained there for three months, waiting for the festival to begin. Therefore, his description of this Silk Roads oasis is much more detailed than the descriptions of those he merely passed through. Once again the material wealth of Buddhist monasteries is confirmed. From Faxian's stay in Khotan, what can you infer is the significance of the oasis city on the Silk Road?*

Having been on the road for one month and five days, we reached Khotan. This is a prosperous country, and the people there are affluent. They all follow Buddhist laws and enjoy playing and listening to Buddhist music. There are tens of thousands of monks, most of whom follow Mahayana teachings. All the monks receive food from public kitchens (and thus do not need to beg for food themselves). In this country people's homes are not all concentrated in one location (as in most of China), but are spread out at some distance from each other, and every household is marked by its own small stupa.<sup>1</sup> The smallest ones are about two zhang in height.<sup>2</sup> There is a Buddhist hostel for guest monks and other

<sup>1</sup>A tower housing relics of the Buddha.

<sup>2</sup>About twenty feet.

travelers. The king settled Faxian and his companions at a Sangharāma. This Sangharāma, called Gomati, is a Mahayana monastery. The sound of a gong summons the three thousand monks to their meals. All enter the dining hall ceremonially and sit down in a designated order. The entire hall is totally in silence; even the noise made by vessels is absent. When a monk wants a servant to add more food, he does not call out to him, but raises his hand to summon him.

Huijing, Daozheng, and Huida proceeded to Jiecha Guo [Tashkurgan?], but Faxian and others decided to stay for three months so that they could observe the parade of the Buddha statues.

There are fourteen large monasteries and numerous small ones in the country. On the first day of the fourth month, the people of the city start by sweeping the streets and decorating its lanes. A huge, heavily decorated tent is pitched on top of the city gate, where the king, the queen, and the palace women take up residence. Since Gomati monastery follows the Mahayana doctrine, which is the king's favorite school, its monks march first in the parade. The monastery is about three or four *li*<sup>3</sup> from the city. A four-wheeled wagon is used to support a superstructure as tall as three zhang, and this framework holds the statues. The wagon looks like a moving palace, decorated with the Seven Treasures,<sup>4</sup> silk banners, and canopies. A statue of the Buddha stands in the wagon, attended by two bodhisattvas. Heavenly beings, carved and then enameled with golden and silver materials, are hanging above the Buddha. When the wagon stopped a hundred steps from the city gate, the king came out of the gate from a side door to meet the Buddha statue. He took off his crown and put on a new set of clothes. Holding flowers and bundles of incense, the king walked barefoot to meet the Buddha. He touched the feet of the Buddha with his head, then spread the flowers and burned the incense. When the wagon proceeded through the gate, the queen and palace women strewed flowers from above. Every monastery provided a different, but also beautifully decorated array of wagons and statues. It took a whole day for one monastery to parade its statues. Having started on the first day of the month, the parade finished on the fourteenth day. After the parade was over, the king and queen returned to their palace....

The kings of the six states east of the Pamir Plateau give all of their precious belongings away to support Buddhism. Humans hardly ever enjoy such things themselves.

<sup>3</sup> About two miles.

<sup>4</sup> A sacred combination of seven gems and other precious materials that Buddhists donate to the Buddha in order to receive merits in their next life.

## SONG YUN AND HUI SHENG

### *The Mission of Song Yun and Huisheng*

ca. 547

*In 518 the Northern Wei empress dowager sent two Buddhist monks, Song Yun and Huisheng, to India to make a pilgrimage on behalf of the royal family. They took many treasures, including silk banners and incense pouches, to donate to Buddhist establishments on the way, and they made a record of the treasures received and owned by these monasteries. Their record is preserved only because it was included by Yang Xuanzhi in his Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang, a book that blamed the collapse of the Northern Wei on the rulers' patronage of Buddhism and the extravagance of Buddhist monasteries. The following excerpts describe Song Yun and Huisheng's encounter with the ruler and peoples of Khotan and with a group of nomads called Yeda—Hephthalites in Western records—as well as their destination, Gandhara, a Buddhist land then under nomadic rule. Notice the descriptions of the customs and dress of these peoples. What evidence do you find of the exchange of goods and ideas on the Silk Roads?*

In the neighborhood of Wenyili,<sup>1</sup> there was a house in which a man known as Song Yun resided. He was from Dunhuang and had once accompanied the monk Huisheng on a trip to the Western Regions. In the eleventh month of the first year of the Shengui era,<sup>2</sup> the empress dowager had sent Huisheng, who was then one of the monks at Chongli Monastery, to the Western Regions in order to acquire Buddhist scriptures. His expedition brought back 170 different kinds of scriptures, and all of them are wonderful Mahayana texts.

<sup>1</sup> In the city of Luoyang.  
<sup>2</sup> 518.

Yang Xuanzhi, *Luoyang Qielan Ji* [Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang] (Shanghai: Guji Chubanshi, 1978), 251–52, 271, 288–89, 317–18, 329. Translated by Xinru Liu.

They had departed from the capital city of Luoyang and then traveled for forty days before reaching Chiling,<sup>3</sup> which was located on the Northern Wei's westernmost border and was the site of an imperial military garrison. . . .

In the state of Yutian,<sup>4</sup> the king wears a gold crown shaped like the red comb on a rooster's head. Hanging behind it is a piece of silk two *chi*<sup>5</sup> long and five *cu*<sup>6</sup> wide. His honor guards carry a drum, a bugle, a golden gong, a bow and arrows, two halberds, and five spears. No fewer than one hundred royal guards carrying knives stand around him. Women in this country wear trousers, tighten their blouses with belts, and gallop on horses just like men. The people there cremate their dead and build Buddhist stupas over the buried bones. Mourners cut their hair and scar their faces to express their grief. After their hair grows back to a length of four cun, they return to their usual routine. The only body that is not cremated is the body of the king, which is put in a coffin and buried in the wild, where a temple is then built for carrying out sacrificial ceremonies. . . .

By the beginning of the tenth month of the year, they entered the territory of the Yeda.<sup>7</sup> Mountains and lakes were spread out on a vast landscape. The people do not live in walled cities. Instead, they live like nomads. They build their homes out of felt and often move their tents in order to find ample amounts of water and grass.<sup>8</sup> They move to cool places in the summer and warm locations in the winter. They are not literate, do not practice any rites, and do not have any formal education. They do not understand the cosmological cycles at all. In their rough version of a calendar, they count twelve months as a year, and every month is the same length. There is no leap year in their calendar. They receive tribute from many countries, as far south as Dieluo,<sup>9</sup> as far north as the Turks, as far east as Yutian, and as far west as Persia. As many as forty-some states come to pay tribute to them on ritual occasions. The king sits in a large felt tent about forty square *bu*<sup>10</sup> in area and the walls of the tent are covered with woolen rugs. The king wears a robe made

<sup>3</sup> Now Mount Rivala in Qinghai Province.

<sup>4</sup> Khotan, an oasis city on the southern rim of the Takla Makan Desert.

<sup>5</sup> A *chi* is roughly one foot.

<sup>6</sup> A *cu* is roughly one inch.

<sup>7</sup> "The territory of the Yeda" was better known as Tukharistan. It was located in what

is now northern Afghanistan.

<sup>8</sup> Water and grass for their livestock.

<sup>9</sup> Not identified.

<sup>10</sup> *Bu* is a loosely used unit, about two yards in length, which means the tent was about 160 square yards.

of silk brocade and sits on a golden chair that has four golden feet in the shape of phoenixes. Knowing that the ambassador had come from China's Great Wei Empire, the Yeda king knelt down twice to express his homage after he received the imperial edict. When the king provides a banquet for his guests, there is one man who loudly announces that the guests can come in, and when it is over, he loudly announces that it has ended. That is the only ritual associated with the banquet, and there is no such thing as musical performances. The queen of Yeda also wears a silk brocade robe which is so long that three *chi* of it would have been dragging across the floor were it not for the servant who followed her and held it up off the floor. She wears an eight-*chi*-long scarf that is folded into the shape of a cone, and attached on top of this scarf is a three-*chi*-long horn that is beautifully decorated with colored jade. The queen rides in a carriage whenever she goes outside, and in the tent she sits on a golden chair supported by four legs, and the bottom of each leg is shaped like the six-tusked white elephant<sup>11</sup> as well as a lion. When she moves, the wives of major ministers hold up her parasol. It appears that these women also wear a kind of cone-shaped scarf that hangs down and has a round shape like a parasol. After observing their outfits, one noticed that they too mark their status in the hierarchy by their apparel and their adornments. Among all the barbarians, they are the superpower. They do not believe in Buddhism, but worship many gods. They slaughter animals and eat raw meat, with utensils made out of the Seven Treasures.<sup>12</sup> The tribute gifts that come from countries subject to their power are numerous and precious and often are rarities. The country of Yeda is about twenty thousand li<sup>13</sup> from the Chinese capital at Luoyang. . . .

In the middle of the fourth month of the first year in the Zhengguang era,<sup>14</sup> they entered the country of Gandhara.<sup>15</sup> Its landscape is similar to that of Uddiyana,<sup>16</sup> and its former name was Yeboluo. The country also has been conquered by the Yeda, who established a teqin<sup>17</sup> as a

<sup>11</sup> The six-tusked white elephant was an incarnation of the Buddha in one of his former lives.

<sup>12</sup> A sacred combination of seven gems and other precious materials that Buddhists donate to the Buddha in order to receive merits in their next life.

<sup>13</sup> About ten thousand kilometers or six thousand miles.

<sup>14</sup> 520.

<sup>15</sup> The region around Peshawar and Taxila in what is now northern Pakistan.

<sup>16</sup> In Pakistan's Swat Valley.

<sup>17</sup> The title of a chief in the Turkish language. It appears that the Yeda (Hephthalites) borrowed this title from a Turkish neighbor or appointed a Turkish chief as the ruler of Gandhara.

king. Now a second-generation teqin is ruling the country. He is cruel in nature and has killed many people. He does not believe in Buddhism, but makes sacrifices to demons and other deities. The people in the country belong to the Brahman caste and have faith in Buddhism, and read its scriptures all the time. They are really unhappy about being ruled by this king. The king considers himself brave and powerful, and therefore he has been engaged in a territorial war with Jibin<sup>18</sup> for three years now. On the battlefield, the king deploys seven hundred war elephants, with ten soldiers on each elephant carrying knives and forks. Knives also are bound to the tusks of the war elephants in order to attack his enemies. He spends most of his time on the frontier and rarely comes back to the center to run the country. The troops are tired, and people are exhausted and complain a lot. . . .

When Huisheng left the capital in Luoyang, the empress dowager had entrusted him with one thousand banners. Each was made of multicolored silk and was a hundred chi in length.<sup>19</sup> She also gave him five hundred brocade bags for incense. Princes and courtiers also contributed two thousand [silk] banners. From Yutian to Gandhara, Huisheng had donated these gifts to each of the Buddhist shrines and ceremonial locations that he encountered. Among the gifts of the empress dowager, the only thing he had left was one banner of one hundred chi, which Huisheng had saved for the stupa of King Sibi.<sup>20</sup> Song Yun also donated two slaves, one man and a woman, to the Queeli Stupa, so that they could sweep and clean the stupa. Huisheng, meanwhile, hired skilled artisans to copy the image of the Queeli Stupa and the illustrated stories of the Shakyamuni<sup>21</sup> on the four major stupas, and he used some savings from his travel fund to pay for these expenses.

<sup>18</sup>In Kashmir, north of India and Pakistan.

<sup>19</sup>About thirty yards.

<sup>20</sup>A wise king mentioned in the Buddhist *Jataka*, stories that illuminate the previous lives of the Buddha.

<sup>21</sup>Another name for Buddha. Literally, the wise man of the Shakya people.

## HUILI AND YANZONG

### *The Life of Xuanzang*

ca. 664-688

*Xuanzang, called the Dharma Master by his disciples, was a Chinese Buddhist monk who made a pilgrimage to India. He began his trip in 629, when the newly established Tang dynasty was at war with the Western Turks, a nomadic tribe then located near China's western frontier. Although the Chinese court had forbidden any traffic across this border, Xuanzang persevered on his journey, eventually reaching India and then returning to China. He made detailed observations on the geography, climate, and customs of every country he traveled through. Several decades later, two of his disciples, Huili and Yanzong, wrote a biography of Xuanzang. They included personal details of his journey to India based on what they heard from the teacher and what they observed of his career in China. The following passages record Xuanzang's experience in the oasis state of Gaochang and his meeting with the Yabgu Khan, a Turkish chief who held hegemonic power over Central Asia on the steppe and in the oasis towns of the deserts from the Chinese border to the Aral Sea. Xuanzang was impressed by the material culture that he observed in the territories of this steppe ruler. What does this account reveal about Chinese attitudes toward the people of oasis towns and the nomads of the steppe?*

#### [Gaochang]

On the next day, the king had a huge tent pitched to open the lecture series. More than three hundred people were seated in the tent. The queen mother and palace women, and the king with his generals and ministers, were seated in their own sectors of the tent to attend my lectures. At the beginning of every lecture, the king came out to meet the Dharma Master, holding the incense burner. When the two reached the Dharma throne, the king knelt down for the Dharma Master to step on

Huili and Yanzong, *Daxienshi Sanzangfashi Zhuan* [Biography of Xuanzang, the Dharma Teacher of the Great Monastery of Compassion], ed. Sun Yutang and Xie Fang (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 21, 27-28. Translated by Xinru Liu.

his back to ascend to the throne. In this way the Master lectured every day [for a month].

After the lecture series, the king recruited four novice monks to attend the Dharma Master. The king had thirty sets of liturgical clothes made for the Dharma Master. Because the weather in the Western Lands was cold, the king had several sets of face covers, gloves, boots, socks, and other accessories made. He provided one hundred *liang*<sup>1</sup> of gold, thirty thousand silver coins, five hundred bolts of silk damask, silk tabby, and other silk weaving textiles. The gift was intended to pay for a round trip expenses to India and a stay all together for twenty years. He also provided thirty horses and twenty-five laborers to accompany the Master. The head officer of his palace would accompany the Master to the headquarters of the Yabgu Khan, the king of the Western Turks. The king wrote twenty-four letters—every letter was attached to a bolt of heavy damask—to Kucha and other oasis states on the road to the west. He also prepared a special package of gifts for Yabgu Khan, including five hundred bolts of damask and other light weave and two carts of fruits. His letter to Yabgu Khan says: "The Dharma Master is your humble slave's brother who wants to go to the Brahman Country<sup>2</sup> to learn the Dharma. May your highness Khan protect the Dharma Master in the same way as you protect your humble slave. Also please order the states to the west to provide postal horse service to send him to cross the border [of your territory]."

### [Yabgu Khan]

Emerging from the snow mountains, the Dharma Master saw a great, clear lake. The circumference of the lake was from fourteen hundred to fifteen hundred *li*.<sup>3</sup> It was elongated in shape, the length of north-south direction being shorter than that of the east-west direction. On the bank of the lake, one sees only waves of water. Even when wind is still, the waves are as high as a few *zhangs*.<sup>4</sup> Following the coast of the lake to the northwest, in about five hundred *li*, the Dharma Master reached Suyab city, where the Dharma Master came upon Yabgu Khan, who was on his hunting trip with a large horde of horse-riding warriors. Wearing a robe of green damask, exposing his hair, the khan bound his head with

<sup>1</sup> One *liang* is approximately 150 ounces.

<sup>2</sup> India.

<sup>3</sup> The circumference was between three hundred and four hundred miles.

<sup>4</sup> One *zhang* is about three yards.

a piece of white silk about one *zhang* in length. The two hundred or so advanced officials [*Daguan*] surrounding him all wore robes of colorful brocade and braided their hair. All lower officers and soldiers wore fur and wool, holding spikes with oxtail brooms and arches. There were so many camels and horses that one could not see the end of the horde. Receiving his greetings, the khan was delighted, saying: "I am right in the middle of my hunting trip and will be back to my palace soon. You, Dharma Master, please go ahead to my place and wait for me." He thus ordered Damazhi, an advanced official, to escort the Master to his headquarters to settle in.

The khan took another three days to return, and he summoned the Dharma Master to an audience. The khan lived in a great tent, decorated with golden ornaments. Its splendor was so dazzling that it caused people to wince. All advanced officials were seated on two long rugs, and their brocade silk attire was impressive. Guards stood behind them. As he looked around, the Dharma Master thought that even though the khan was only a nomadic king, his court was quite elegant.

When the Dharma Master was about thirty steps outside the khan's tent, the khan came out to meet him. After exchanging greetings through interpreters, they both were seated. As fire worshippers, the Turks did not sit on wooden chairs because wood embodies fire. They all sat on heavy cushions, but set up an iron cross-leg chair covered with cushions for the Dharma Master. Soon a Chinese envoy and a Gaochang envoy were led in with official letters and gifts. The khan examined the gifts and was very pleased. He asked them to be seated and ordered wine served and music played. The khan, his ministers, and the envoys drank wine, and grape juice was served to the Dharma Master. Thus, all urged others to drink; wine was poured into bowls and goblets, accompanied by musical melodies of various styles of the region. Even though the music was not Chinese, it was quite pleasing to the senses and feelings. After a short while, food was served; cooked fresh lamb and veal were set in front of the people. They made special vegetarian food for the Dharma Master, including pancakes, cream, crystal sugar, honey, grapes, and so forth. After they ate, they again filled the cups with grape juice for the Dharma Master, asking him to lecture on Dharma. The Dharma Master thus taught them the "Ten Virtues concerning compassionate lives," and the *Paramita* [the way of transferring to] liberation. After the lecture, the khan raised his hand to his forehead, happily accepting the teaching.

The Dharma Master stayed with the khan for several days. The khan tried to persuade the Master to stay there: "You, Master, do not need to

go to India. That place is very hot, the weather in the tenth month<sup>5</sup> is similar to that of the fifth month<sup>6</sup> here. Looking at your complexion, I am afraid your body cannot take that heat. People there are dark in skin and undignified, that is, not good looking." The Dharma Master replied: "I want to go there to look for the sacred tracks of the Buddha and learn the Dharma." The khan therefore searched in his troop for one who understood Chinese and other languages. A young man who had been in Chang'an for several years and learned Chinese was made the interpreting officer. The khan had several state official letters written, and he ordered the interpreting officer to escort the Dharma Master to Kapisa.<sup>7</sup> He also provided a liturgical robe made of red damask and fifty bolts of plain silk. The khan and his ministers marched more than ten li to see the Dharma Master off.

<sup>5</sup> November.

<sup>6</sup> June.

<sup>7</sup> Begram, in Afghanistan.

## 18

### *Inventories Excavated from a Turfan Cemetery Mid-Seventh Century*

*During the first half of the seventh century, a new kind of inventory began to appear in Central Asian graves. Near Turfan, an important station on the Silk Roads, archaeologists have found written contracts made with the gods and buried with the deceased. These contracts include an inventory of the goods that the deceased was offering to the gods. Rather than being placed in the graves, the goods were presumably given to various Buddhist institutions, thereby providing the deceased with merits that would aid in the next life. Some inventories recorded the good deeds that the deceased had performed; these, too, would bestow merits and help ensure a good position in the next life. The inventories help modern*

National Bureau of Antiquaries, *Turfan Chutu Wenshu* [Documents Excavated from Turfan] (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1983), 4:32-33, 7:66-74. Translated by Xinru Liu.

*readers envision the funeral rites performed by Buddhist monks and the variety of goods received by Buddhist institutions. In the inventories, can you find items that would be used in daily life, or commodities that could have been traded for profit?*

#### **Tang Zhuanghui, ca. 641**

One set of silk damask blouse and pants, one set of fine silk shirt and pants, a pair of brocade covered boots

One *jiaojiu* [?] belt, one white silk scarf, one bundle of white cotton cloth, one knife with a buffalo horn handle

One red robe, one crown decorated with a dragon, one white silk shirt, one set of white silk shirt and pants

One pillow in the shape of a cock, one face cover made of Persian brocade, one set of goggles with lenses of silver sieve, one jade container for the "climbing to heaven" silk rope<sup>1</sup>

One thousand pieces of white silk, ten thousand pieces of variously colored silks, an abundant amount of gold and silver

One set of bow and arrows in a bottle gourd container, a piece of the climbing to heaven silk rope as long as 100,009,000 *zhang*<sup>2</sup>

[My soul] wants to go either to the far end of the east sea, or to the far end of the west sea. Witnessed by Zhang Jiangu and recorded by Li Dingdu, thus no one should stop me [from disposing of these belongings in this way].

Please follow the law and the statute!

#### **Xinfu, 672**

Please note:

These are the merits accumulated by my father-in-law<sup>3</sup> when he was alive. After he became ill last year, he did the following meritorious things.

On the twenty-third day of the twelfth month, he invited twenty monks to recite Buddhist sutras, and at the same time he donated a horse to

<sup>1</sup> An imaginary rope the deceased could use to climb up to heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 300,027,000 yards, or roughly 170,480 miles.

<sup>3</sup> *Xinfu* means "new bride," so the writer of this inventory is a young and faithful daughter-in-law.



the Buddha. He [also donated] one set of yellow silk damask robes and skirts in order to confess his sins and obtain remission of them.

On the first day of the first month of this year, he invited ten Buddhist monks to turn [the wheel of] sutras<sup>4</sup> every day until the eve of the seventh day. On that day, in addition, he invited fifty monks to recite sutras and donated one silver plate weighing twenty *liang*<sup>5</sup> to the monastery, and on that same day he made a confession and received a remission of his sins.

After the eighth day of the first month, he invited ten monks to turn [the wheel of] sutras through the eighteenth day, [which means] altogether [?] spins of the *Great Prajñā* [?] Sutra [Diamond Sutra].

On the thirteenth day of the first month, he invited twenty nuns and monks to recite sutras and made a confession and received a remission of his sins.

My elder brother<sup>6</sup> at Anxi has burned incense and made wishes [on his behalf]. At the same time he invited Fosheng, the Teacher of Meditation, to read the *Vajra Prajñā* [?] Sutra a thousand times [?]. That day he also provided a vegetarian feast for the monks, who then recited various sutras for six [?], and he went to confession. [He] also offered, [in front of] many people, eighty rolls of silk so that a mural portraying Vimalakīrti,<sup>7</sup> Manjusī,<sup>8</sup> and other bodhisattvas could be painted on the southern wall of the Buddha Hall in the Beitian Monastery at Anxi. Please be advised that he also pledged that he would contribute additional merits on his father's behalf.

On the seventh day of the second month, ten monks and nuns were invited to [hear his confession] and remit his sins.

During the night of the seventh day, on the night before my father-in-law passed away, he made an oath to donate to the Matreya Buddha Monastery, Xuanjue Si, a large, seven *hu*<sup>9</sup> white lion [sculpture] as its permanent property. A hundred monks were invited to recite sutras and two monks were invited to perform rituals for seven days. A forty-nine

<sup>4</sup>Buddhists believe that the recitation of sutras by the monks creates many merits for the patron who sponsors the performance. They also believe that turning a stone wheel on which the words of the sutra are carved is tantamount to the sutra's being recited by humans. Thus the turning of the carved wheel is a mechanical way to repeat sutras many times, thereby creating many merits for the patron.

<sup>5</sup>About twenty-six ounces.

<sup>6</sup>The elder brother is most likely the writer's husband, who had been assigned to an official position at Anxi and thus was not home at the time. Chinese women call their husbands or lovers "elder brother," and men call their wives or lovers "younger sisters."

<sup>7</sup>A lay Buddhist sage.

<sup>8</sup>The bodhisattva of wisdom.

<sup>9</sup>About 70 liters or 18.5 gallons. A *hu* is a unit for measuring grains.

*chi*,<sup>10</sup> five-colored banner was made. On the eighth day, after serving a vegetarian feast, according to the wishes made by my father-in-law, many people were invited to witness the donation of the large sculpture, the white lion. Luotong the Dharma Teacher was invited to receive his confession and to remit his sins. Thereafter Luotong the Dharma Teacher was invited to ordain my father-in-law as a bodhisattva. And again he made his confession.

Please note.

On the eighth day, after the gathering of people had dispersed, Meng the Meditation Teacher was invited to hear his oath of practicing Buddhism. By the second hour of early morning, the confession was made. At that time, my father-in-law donated a pair of double-layer silk trousers to two monks carrying out the ceremony. He soon passed away [on the evening of the eighth day]. Immediately a yellow banner was made, with a copy of the *Sutra of Happy Rebirth* on it. The banner was taken to the monastery to be hung there. Forty-nine lamps were also lit there in the morning and in the evening. Two monks performed a rehearsal of the confession for my father-in-law while the lamps were lit. Meanwhile, three monks were reciting [?] sutras. My father-in-law deserves to be reborn in any of the pure lands located in all ten regions of the universe.

The divine banner that is forty-nine *chi* in length, ordered by my father-in-law before he passed away, was ready yesterday. It will be displayed on the seventh ceremonial day.

Please be advised.

Yesterday I returned to the stupa where I found a note behind the gate that was handwritten by my father-in-law, saying that he still needs to have the one hundred volumes of the *Nirvana Sutra* recited an additional two and half times to complete his virtuous work. I thus invited the verger of the monastery, Zhang the Meditation Teacher, to recite half time the twenty volumes of the *Nirvana Sutra*. I also invited him to recite one set of the *Lotus Sutra* [*Saddharmapundarīka*] and one set of the *Golden Light Sutra*. The seventh-day ritual [ceremony] was performed, and [?] a monk recited forty volumes of the *Nirvana Sutra* once and provided [my father-in-law] a remission of his sins. Since the seventh day of the month, during which time the lamps have been lit in the morning and in the evening for the remission of his sins, two monks have been invited to recite sutras continuously, without interruption.

<sup>10</sup>About fifty feet long.

By the twenty-first day of this month, forty monks had been invited to do one recitation of the forty volumes of the *Nirvana Sutra*. Adding all the performances together, the *Nirvana Sutra* has thus been recited [two] and half times [a hundred] volumes in all.

Today the *Nirvana Sutra* is being recited again, and the following items are being donated to the Buddhist Three Treasures.<sup>11</sup>

- A horse is for the Buddha
- A set of saddles is for the Dharma
- One robe made of yellow silk brocade
- One silk scarf
- One blouse made of yellow cloth
- One man's hair cover made of silk crepe
- One blouse made of black cloth
- One half-sleeved blouse made of plain silk damask
- One long-sleeved blouse made of rough silk
- One belt made of refined copper
- One knife with a handle made of *chenxiang*<sup>12</sup> and a gold-covered rim.
- One pair of boots with felt
- One boot connecting band [?] made of two-colored silk damask
- One pair of double-layer pants made of white silk
- One pair of white silk pants
- One white silk shirt
- One pair of white silk pants
- One pair of fine silk stockings
- One skirt made of dark green silk damask
- One belly cover [*moñu*?] made of purple and yellow striped gauze
- One red silk gauze shawl
- One purple silk damask jacket hemmed with brocade
- A pair of five-colored embroidered silk shoes
- One pair of dark green silk damask stockings with brocade band

The donation of these goods has been witnessed by the above mentioned gathering.

- One skirt made of double-layer purple silk damask
- Two shawls of double-layer green damask
- One double-layer shirt of skin colored silk

<sup>11</sup> The Three Treasures are the Buddha, the *sangha*, and the dharma.

<sup>12</sup> *Aquilaria agallocha*, a fragrant tropical wood.

The above goods have been donated by the new bride [myself] for my father-in-law.

All the goods listed here were donated to the Buddhist Three Treasures on the twenty-second day of the second month of this year, in front of a gathering of people.

Please be advised.

When my father-in-law was ill, he donated a bundle of silk floss to Meng the Meditation Teacher for reciting the *Golden Light Sutra* to the various heavenly gods.

Please be advised.

*Message to my father-in-law:*

*I have carefully checked and recorded here all the merits you accumulated during your life. All the merits added under your name after you had passed away have also been listed here. Please take this inventory of merits with you to confirm them in the future. Please try to be reborn into the divinely pure lands of Buddha instead of seeking to be reborn into this world where one still goes through rebirth cycles. The estate, including all the land, gardens, houses, wives, sons, daughters, slaves, servants, and so forth, are illusions, and not one of them is real. Father, you were constantly reading Buddhist sutras and studying their meaning, so you should understand this truth. It is only because the paths of the living and the dead lead in different directions that I am afraid that [after your departure] you have become confused. You were ordained [as a bodhisattva] at the moment of your departure, plus you have so many accumulated merits. These are all good reasons that you should try to move up and strive to get into a better place to be reborn. Please do not descend to the low places of this world due to your attachment to your loved ones.*

*I have honestly recorded [your meritorious behavior] and provided all the details, big and small. Please leave the Three Realms<sup>13</sup> and ascend to the Supreme Realm.*

*Whatever category of rebirth you enter, please let us know by sending us a message in our dreams.*

<sup>13</sup> The Three Realms are earth, atmosphere, and heaven.