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Nie Hongyin

**A Unique Tangut Primary Reader
*Brief Collection by Taizong kept
in the IOM RAS***

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Abstract: The previously undesiphered manuscript inv. № 5875 preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, proves to be the Tangut version of a primary reader. Its Chinese original is an inconsistently miscellaneous compilation of ancient literary allusions and contemporary folk maxims. The text is composed by different literary style of antithetical couplet and ordinary prose without a consistent subject. Although its Chinese original has not been found yet and the whole text has not been thoroughly deciphered so far, narrations and translations may be provided as many as possible in the present paper in order to lay a foundation for further studies.

Key words: Tangut; translation; primary reader; antithetical couplet; folk maxim

Introduction

The Tangut manuscript introduced here was found by Kozlov expedition in Khara-khoto and now preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, with its inventory number 5875. It was first reported by (GORBACHEVA and KYCHANOV 1963, 24) as *Taizu Jiqian Wen* 太祖繼遷文 (A book of Jiqian, the First Emperor) and was characterized as a record of some government affairs about the first founder of the Xixia Dynasty, Jiqian (963–1004). The manuscript has not been put into any descriptive catalogue so far because its text seems too difficult to be deciphered. The facsimile of the Tangut original was published with the title *Taizong Zeyao Wen* 太宗擇要文 (A book of brief collection by Taizong, the Second Emperor).¹ (NISHIDA 1999, 12) translated the first two sentences

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¹ See *Ecang Heishuicheng Wenxian* 俄藏黑水城文獻 (Heishuicheng manuscript collected in Russia) vol. 11, p. 112–116, Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1999.

into Japanese and pointed out that the text was by no means related to historical facts about Jiqian, but the nature of the whole booklet remains unknown. Although ten couplets were translated and commented later (NIE 2012), we are still not able to solve the problem completely. Because it has been said that this manuscript is one of the most puzzling texts for Tangutologists to read over, the present paper intends to provide the translations and narrations as more as possible in order to lay a primary foundation for further studies.

The manuscript in question consists of ten folia, fragmentary from the fifth folio on. The first six folia are written in comparatively structured running hand, but the following are in illegible cursive hand. The calligraphic style shows that the original was not transcribed by one and the same person. At the beginning of the booklet there are no colophons by authors or dates, but only a Tangut title *thej tsu tshji tsjir-jwir* 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰡𐰣𐰩𐰰 on the first line, which was translated into Chinese by Nishida as *Dazu Yaoxuan Wen* 大祖要選文 (A book of important collection by the First Emperor). Of course the actual meaning of the title remains unclear to us, but we can definitely say that the Tangut proper noun *thej tsu* should be translated into Chinese as *taizong* 太宗 (the Second Emperor), not *taizu*. We base on the fact that the word *thow thej tsu* 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰡𐰣 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰡𐰣 is used for Emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (598–649) in the Tangut version of the *Commentaries of Sunzi's Art of War* (LI 1997, 789). Another character needs to be mentioned is *jwir* 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰡𐰣 (writing, book), which is used here as a suffix of book title beyond its lexical meaning,² for this reason we should better translate the title as “Brief Collection by Taizong” (hereafter BCT).

According to the parts I am able to read, it may be said with certainty that the BCT is a compilation inconsistently miscellaneous of ancient literary allusions and contemporary folk maxims. Plentiful ancient Chinese literary allusions show that the text must have been translated from Chinese, but so far nobody have found its Chinese original in any materials available, so we have to work out some tentative reconstruction of the Chinese contents. Needless to say, no matter how we try our best on making the reconstructions closer to the ancient literary style, it is impossible for us to reconstruct the Chinese original exactly, especially to reconstruct the folk maxims.

² It seems to be a traditional custom that Non-Chinese people take a word of the same usage attached to a book title, e.g., *bitig* (writing, book) in Uyghurian and *bithe* (writing, book) in Manchu.

danger to himself, sent troops to attack the State Xu and destroyed it. Therefore King Wenwang⁹ reigned over the world by his kind and polite behavior, while Yanwang lost his state also by his kind and polite behavior.

Han Gaozu indicates the founder of Han Dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 BC.). As for the story concerning his arrogance, see his biography in volume 8 of *Shiji*:¹⁰

The emperor said: “Each nobleman and general dare not hide from me, all tell me the case: What is the reason why I acquire the world? What is the reason why Xiang Yu¹¹ loses the world?” Gao Qi and Wang Ling answered: “Your Majesty insults others arrogantly, while Xiang Yu respects others kindly. Your Majesty ordered others to capture cities and territories, then gave them as awards, enjoying the benefits with the world. Xiang Yu did not take this way; he injured heroes, suspected sages. This is the reason why he lost the world”.

The subject of the following couplet is not related to the previous one and advises people not to be addicted to gambling games. It mentions two names: Liu Yi 刘毅 (*ljiw gji* 胤統) and Tao Kan 陶侃 (*thē khā* 儻慨) in Jin Dynasty.

Folio 1, line 3-4:

胤統鞣蕤攷鞣緋嶸級樞駢鞣鞣,
儻慨彌菱□鞣鞣鞣鞣鞣鞣鞣鞣。

[Liu Yi got a capital crime for concentrating himself on *chupu*,¹²
Tao Kan distinguished himself for throwing the gambling devices¹³ into river.]

⁹ Wenwang here indicates Zhou Wenwang 周文王 (approximately 1152–1056 BC.), named 姬昌, the founder of Zhou Dynasty.

¹⁰ Chinese original: 上曰: “列侯, 諸將毋敢隱朕, 皆言其情: 我所以有天下者何? 項氏之所以失天下者何?” 高起, 王陵對曰: “陛下慢而侮人, 項羽仁而敬人。陛下使人攻城掠地, 因以與之, 與天下同其利; 項羽不然, 有功者害之, 賢者疑之, 此所以失天下也。” (史記·高祖本紀)

¹¹ Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BC.), generally called Xichu Bawang 西楚霸王, was a leader of uprising against Qin Dynasty, being defeated by Liu Bang at last.

¹² *Chupu* 樗蒲 (Tang. *thja wju liu* 鞣蕤攷, gamble throwing) is an ancient dice game with five small wood blocks, coloring black on one side and white on the other. According to the combination of different colors, the awards are divided into five grades: The first grade award is called *lu* 盧 (all black), the second *zhi* 雉 (pheasant, four black and one white), those beside the two (including *heidu* 黑犢, black calf) came to nothing.

¹³ Gambling device (Tang. *khēj lhjor* 彌菱, game table) here might be basin of the dice.

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

劉毅專心樗蒲而獲死罪，
陶侃投博江水而美名揚。

Liu Yi (?–412), a general of Song Dynasty in the Southern Dynasties Period, was known for his insolence. He prepared to launch an insurrection against Emperor Wudi (Liu Yu), but was defeated ahead of time. The story may be found from his biography in volume 45 of *Jinshu*.¹⁴

After then they gathered together at the eastern mansion for an unrestrained dice gambling with millions of money per game. When others played *heidu* and went back, only Liu Yu¹⁵ and Liu Yi left behind. Yi played a *zhi* and then lifted his clothes and walk around the stool with a great rejoicing, calling Yu to sit together and said: “It is not that I am unable to get a *lu*, merely I do not want to play that.” Yu disliked his words, so he grasped the five wood blocks for a long while and said: “As the elder brother, let me answer you.” Soon afterwards, four blocks were black but one kept turning. Yu shouted harshly and it immediately became *lu*. Yi felt extremely unpleasant, his face turned as black as iron, but he said calmly: “I already know that you will not coordinate with me!” After he went to the western defense, although he was back to share the responsibility for governing Shan Prefecture, he immediately lost the authority in royal court. Considering his limited transaction and position, he intended to await an opportunity to overturn Yu by his powerful force, but failed at last.

Tao Kan (259–334) was a famous minister and general of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The relevant story comes from his biography in volume 66 of *Jinshu*.¹⁶

Tao Kan was intelligent by nature, diligent in official jobs, courteous and polite, obeying human relations ... Once there were assistants who delayed their affairs by chatting or gambling, he ordered someone to take back their liqueur sets and gambling devices and then throw them into river. General assistants were punished. He said: “*Chupu* is merely a game for swineherds!”

¹⁴ Chinese original: 後於東府聚樗蒲大擲，一判應至數百萬。余人並黑犢以還，唯劉裕及毅在後。毅次擲得雉，大喜，褰衣繞床，叫謂同坐曰：“非不能盧，不事此耳。”裕惡之，因授五木久之，曰：“老兄試為卿答。”既而四子俱黑，其一子轉躍未定。裕厲聲喝之，即成盧焉。毅意殊不快，然素黑，其面如鐵色焉，而乃和言曰：“亦知公不能以此見借！”既出西籬，雖上流分陝，而頓失內權，又頗自嫌事計，故欲擅其威強，伺隙圖裕，以至於敗。（晉書·劉毅傳）

¹⁵ Liu Yu (363–422), i.e., Song Wudi 宋武帝, was the founder of the Song Dynasty in Southern Dynasties Period.

¹⁶ Chinese original: 侃性聰敏，勤於吏職，恭而近禮，愛好人倫 ... 諸參佐或以談戲廢事者，乃命取其酒器蒲博之具，悉投之于江，吏將則加鞭撻，曰：“樗蒲者，牧豬奴戲耳！”（晉書·陶侃傳）。

如... 服... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 敬... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 後... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 敬... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 後... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 敬... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 後... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 敬... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 後... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...
 敬... 氣... 精... 氣... 而... 後... 類...

Fig. 2
The second folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*

Many key words in the next three couplets are written so perfunctorily that the characters cannot be recognized one by one. What may be read is a story of a certain person in Jin Dynasty who entertained himself without stop even when his mother was dying. These three couplets are followed by the story of how Emperor Yao 堯 (*jiw* 堯) examining Shun 舜 (*sjwi* 舜) to be his successor.

Folio 1, line 8 — Folio 2, line 1 (Fig. 2)

麟席皦皦， 蕤翮翮翮翮翮翮□□□翮；
 曠剡翮曠， 翮曠翮曠翮曠翮曠翮曠。

[King Yao got false accusation when Shun collected firewood¹⁷ and drew water¹⁸ he harmed]

Emperor Shun was reported benevolence and selected as a sage when he lifted a flag in pasturage¹⁹ and fields.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

堯王得讒，塗廩穿井時害 ...
 舜帝告善，巡狩耕田中拔擢智人。

The above narration of Yao and Shun, who were legendary Chinese sage emperors, might have been deduced from the first volume of *Shiji*,²⁰ but with some serious errors caused by the compiler or Tangut translator's misunderstanding of Chinese classics:

Shun ploughed at the Mount Lishan ... Gusou²¹ still wanted to murder him. Gusou ordered Shun to climb up for mending a granary, then he set fire below to burn the granary. Shun protected himself with two bamboo hats, getting down and leaving, so he got survived. After that Gusou ordered Shun to dredge a well, and Shun dug a hiding hole with an exit on a

¹⁷ Tangut *sji sjj tshjij kjwi* 蕤翮翮翮 (collecting wood and grass = collecting firewood) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *tulin* 塗廩 (mending a granary).

¹⁸ Tangut *zjir kha* 翮翮 (drawing water) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *chuanjing* 穿井 (dredging a well).

¹⁹ Tangut *gjwi tsjij sju lhew* 翮曠翮曠 (lifting a flag in pasturage) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *xunshou* 巡狩 (inspection tour), a rite for an emperor just acceded to the throne.

²⁰ Chinese original: 舜耕歷山 ... 瞽叟尚復欲殺之，使舜上塗廩，瞽叟從下縱火焚廩。舜乃以兩笠自扞而下，去，得不死。後瞽叟又使舜穿井，舜穿井為匿空旁出。舜既入深，瞽叟與象共下土實井，舜從匿空出，去 ... 堯老，使舜攝行天子政，巡狩。(史記·五帝本紀)

²¹ Gusou, meaning “old blind man”, is the name of Shun's father. He disliked Shun and plotted murdering him repeatedly but failed at last.

side wall. When Shun went deep, Gusou and Xiang²² filled in the well with dirt, but Shun went out through the hiding hole and left ... Yao, in his old age, let Shun act temporarily for the government affairs as an Emperor, engaging in an inspection tour.

The following sentences continue the subject of Yao and Shun, in which the stories concern Ji Kang 嵇康 (*khji khow* 覆繡), Liang Hong 梁鴻 (*ljow xǔ* 穉舜), Zhao Qi 趙岐 (*tshjiw khji* 飢糲) and Taigong 太公 (*thej kow* 甌餅), who suffered hard lives before they became famous for their moral qualities.

Folio 2, line 1–2:

甌餅飢糲：
覆繡穉舜，穉舜甌餅；
飢糲甌餅，甌餅穉糲。

[Moral persons sought benefit:²³

Ji Kang hammered iron, Liang Hong was employed for pounding grain;
Zhao Qi sold pancakes, Taigong sold flour.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

德者尋利：
嵇康鍛鐵，梁鴻賃舂；
趙岐販餅，太公賣麵。

Ji Kang (224–263), as an outstanding ideologist and literati in the Wei-Jin Period, was one of the famous “Seven sages in bamboo grove” (Chin. *zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢) and the founder of the Metaphysic School. His anthology has been preserved till nowadays. The story of hammering iron comes from his biography in volume 49 of *Jinshu*.²⁴

Ji Kang, living a poor life in his early years, hammered iron for self-supporting together with Xiang Xiu²⁵ under a big tree. Zhong Hui²⁶ from the Yingchuan Prefecture, a noble junior of keen-witted competence and talented eloquence, went to meet him. Kang did not receive him politely and hammered without stop.

²² Xiang was the younger son of Gusou and was indulgent by his father.

²³ “Seeking benefit” (Tang. *gij ju* 覓敝) here means “finding some way to support one’s life”.

²⁴ Chinese original: 初，康居貧，嘗與向秀共鍛於大樹之下，以自贍給。潁川鍾會，貴公子也，精練有才辯，故往造焉。康不為之禮，而鍛不輟。(晉書·嵇康傳)。

²⁵ Xiang Xiu (approximately 227–272), a literati in the Wei-Jin Period, was one of the famous “Seven sages in bamboo grove” in accompany with Ji Kang.

²⁶ Zhong Hui was a famous minister in State Wei of the Three Kingdom Period, one of the chief commanders in the war to destroy State Shu.

Liang Hong, lived in the 1st c. AD, was a poor hermit in the Eastern Han times and became famous with his wife through the idiom *ju an qi mei* 舉案齊眉 (raising a serving table to brow). The story of pounding grain comes from his biography in volume 83 of *Houhanshu*.²⁷

Liang Hong then arrived to Wu Prefecture and served to a rich man Gao Botong, living at a side room and being employed for pounding grain. Whenever back at home, his wife prepared food for him by raising a serving table up to her brow and dared not look up in front of him. Botong found this with a surprise and said: “That servant should not be an ordinary person because he makes his wife to respect him like this.” Thus he let Hong live in the main house.

Zhao Qi 趙岐 (?–201), also written Zhao Qi 趙岐, a scholar at the end of the Eastern Han Period, was framed and had to leave his official position to a remote area where he wrote his famous commentaries to *Mencius*. The relevant story may be found in his biography in volume 64 of *Houhanshu*.²⁸

At the end of Han Dynasty, Zhao Qi went to Hejian Prefecture escaping from calamity, where nobody knew his name. Then migrating to Beihai Prefecture, he often wore a cotton trouser to sell pancakes at the market. Sun Binshuo²⁹, in his twenties at that time, entered the market in an oxcart and accompanied by two guardsmen on horse. Seeing Qi, he expected that he was not an ordinary person, and asked him: “Are the pancakes cooked by yourself?” Qi said: “I resell them.” Binshuo said: “For how much money do you buy it? For how much money do you sell it?” Qi said: “Thirty for buying, also thirty for selling.” Binshuo said: “Your intellectual feature shows me that you are not a pancake seller. There might be a reason.” Then he opened the back door of the cart and turned back to the two guardsmen, ordering them to get down from their horses and help Qi to get on the cart.

Taigong, i.e., Jiang Taigong 姜太公 (approximately 1156–1017 BC.), named Lü Shang 呂尚 or Lü Wang 呂望, also called Taigong Wang 太公望, was an outstanding politician and strategist who directed Emperor Zhou

²⁷ Chinese original: 梁鴻……後至吳，依大家皋伯通，居廡下，為人賃舂。每歸，妻為具食，不敢於鴻前仰視，舉案齊眉。伯通察而異之，曰：“彼傭以使其妻敬之如此，非凡人也。”乃方舍之於家。(後漢書·梁鴻傳)。

²⁸ Chinese original: 漢末，趙岐避難逃之河間，不知姓字。又轉詣北海，著絮巾褲，常於市中販胡餅。孫賓碩時年二十餘，乘犢車將騎入市，觀見岐，疑其非常人也，因問之：“自有餅耶？”岐曰：“販之。”賓碩曰：“買幾錢？賣幾錢？”岐曰：“買三十，賣亦三十。”賓碩曰：“視處士之望，非買餅者，殆有故。”乃開車後戶，顧所將兩騎，令下馬扶上之。(後漢書·趙岐傳)。

²⁹ Sun Binshuo, active in the second half of the 2nd c., was the governor of the prefecture where he made a close friendship with Zhao Qi.

Wuwang to overthrow Shang Dynasty thus became the founding father of Zhou Dynasty. As for the legend of his early years, we can only find the reference in two commentaries of *Shiji*. one is attached to the text “Lü Shang was trapped in Jijin” (*Lü Shang kun yu Jijin* 呂尚困於棘津) by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 in volume 124.³⁰

Taigong Wang sold foods in Jijin in nearly seventy years of age.

“Selling foods in Jijin” was recorded by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 as “selling drinks in Mengjin”³¹ in his commentary to “Lü Shang was already poor and old at that time” (*Lü Shang gaichang qiongkun nianlaoyi* 呂尚蓋嘗窮困年老矣) in volume 32 of *Shiji*. It is noticeable that the canonical histories only mentioned selling foods or drinks but not “selling flour”. The story of Taigong selling flour is widely spread among the people nowadays might be deduced by later generations.³²

The following couplet says that farming should be the basis for rulers in governing a country. Three names are mentioned there: Lu Xigong 魯僖公 (*lu xji njij* 篋翊席), Shun 舜 (*sjwi* 瞽) and Yu 禹 (*giu* 禿).

Folio 2, line 3–4:

篋翊席篋翊翊祗綴隨翳叢篋,
瞽禿虬翊篋禱禱禱禱禱禱禱禱.

[That King Lu Xigong³³ engaged in farming led the state abundant,
That Emperor Shun and Yu based on agriculture led the masses peaceful.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

魯僖公務稼穡而國阜，
舜禹帝本農耕而民安。

Lu Xigong (?–627 BC.), named Ji Shen 姬申, was the 18th monarch of State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period, reigning for 33 years. The relevant story comes from chapter *The 21st year of Xigong* in *Zuozhuan*.³⁴

³⁰ Chinese original: 太公望行年七十，賣食棘津云。(史記正義·游俠列傳)。

³¹ Chinese original: 賣飲於孟津。(史記索隱·齊太公世家)。

³² An untraceable folk legend said that Taigong was extremely unlucky in his early years. When he sold flour, wind blew his flour away; when he sold salt, rain melted his salt away.

³³ Tangut *njij* 席 (king) is used here to render Chinese *gong* 公 (Duke), because Tanguts had not the conception of Five Titles for Nobles (*gong* 公, *hou* 侯, *bo* 伯, *zi* 子, *nan* 男) of Pre-Qin Period. Of course it will be better if the Tangut phonetic transcription *kow* 翊 is used in *Huangong* 桓公 as shown below.

³⁴ Chinese original: 夏，大旱。公欲焚巫尪。臧文仲曰：“非早備也。修城郭，貶食省用，務穡勸分，此其務也。巫尪何為？天欲殺之，則如勿生；若能為旱，焚之滋甚。”公從之。是歲也，饑而不害。(左傳·僖公二十一年)。

There was a bad drought in summer. The King intended to burn down a witch Wang.³⁵ Zang Wenzhong³⁶ said: “This is not the way for restraining drought. What should be done is to mend city walls, economize foods and expenses, engage farming and advise to alms. What use is it to burn down a witch Wang? If the Heaven intends to kill the masses, they should not be born; if a witch can bring drought, things should be even worse after burning her down.” The King followed his expostulation. That year there was poor harvest but not disastrous.

Shun, as one of the ancient “Five Emperors” in legend, was venerated as the originator of morality in China. The story of his farming can be seen in the first volume of *Shiji*.³⁷

When Shun ploughed at the Mount Lishan, all people at Lishan vacated their field boundaries; when he fished on the Lake Leize, all people on Leize vacated their locations; when he made potteries beside river, there were not any defective items beside the river. His residence became a village in the first year, became a town in the second year and became a metropolis in the third year.

Yu was the founder of Xia Dynasty, being famous for his taming the flood and establishing the institution of the Nine Administrative Divisions (Chin. *Jiuzhou* 九州). The story of his farming can be seen in Chapter 14 of *Quotations of Confucius*.³⁸

Yi³⁹ was good at archery, Ao⁴⁰ was good at punting, but both of them did not die a natural death. Yu and Ji⁴¹ obtained the whole world by farming personally.

The following subject turns to liquor commandments, in which the two names are mentioned Zifan 子反 (*ts# xiwã* 鬲儼) and Bi Zhuo 畢卓 (*pi tsiow* 紆劬).

³⁵ Burning somebody to death is a method to prevent disasters in ancient China.

³⁶ Zang Wenzhong (?–617 BC.) was an enlightened minister assisting four monarchs of State Lu.

³⁷ Chinese original: 舜耕歷山，歷山之人皆讓畔；漁雷澤，雷澤上人皆讓居；陶河濱，河濱器皆不苦窳。一年而所居成聚，二年成邑，三年成都。（史記•五帝本紀）。

³⁸ Chinese original: 羿善射，募蕩舟，俱不得其死然。禹稷射稼而有天下。（論語•憲問）。

³⁹ Yi, usually called Hou Yi 后羿 (King Yi), was a legendary hero in archaic times. As a skillful archer, he shot down nine of the ten suns in severe heat weather but was killed by his apprentice at last.

⁴⁰ Ao was a legendary figure in Xia Dynasty. He was able to punt a boat on the ground with his unusual strength, but at last was killed by the seventh generation from Yu.

⁴¹ Ji 稷, usually called Hou Ji 后稷 (King Ji), was venerated as the ancestor of farming and the deity of grains in Chinese legend.

Folio 2, line 4–5:

報席叢纓精斃，報羸羸羸羸羸羸羸；
 緜緜駁駁紆紆，報靚靚靚靚靚靚靚。

[General Zifan of the King of State Chu killed himself for being drunken by accident and being defeated;
 Minister Bi Zhuo of Jin Dynasty was captured for stealing liquor when he was drinking excessively.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

楚將子反，誤醉戰敗而自盡；
 晉臣畢卓，盜酒造飲以遭擒。

Zifan (?–575 BC.), named Ce 側, was the commander in chief of the troops of State Chu in the Spring and Autumn Period. His story of drinking comes from chapter *The 16th year of Chenggong* in *Zuozhuan*.⁴²

Guyang Shu⁴³ offered liquor to Zifan, Zifan was drunk and could not meet the King. The King said: “The Heaven will destroy the State Chu. I cannot stay here.” Then he fled at night ... When the troops went back to Xia, the King ordered someone to tell Zifan: “Earlier you, my senior minister, lost the troops because the King was absent. Please do not think it as your fault, it is my guilt.” Zifan saluted twice and said: “If the king grants death to a minister, he will be immortal. My soldiers really fled, it is my guilt.” Zizhong⁴⁴ told Zifan: “It is already known that you lost your troops before. Why do not you find some way?” Zifan answered: “Although there were few ministers doing so before, as a minister assisting the King, how dare I do anything injustice? A minister lost the King’s troops, how dare I escape the death?” The King ordered somebody to stop him, but he died before the messenger’s arrival.

⁴² Chinese original: 谷陽豎獻飲於子反，子反醉而不能見。王曰：“天敗楚也夫！余不可以待。”乃宵遁 ... 楚師還，及瑕，王使謂子反曰：“先大夫之覆師徒者，君不在。子無以為過，不穀之罪也。”子反再拜稽首曰：“君賜臣死，死且不朽。臣之卒實奔，臣之罪也。”子重復謂子反曰：“初隕師徒者，而亦聞之矣！盍圖之？”對曰：“雖微先大夫有之，大夫命側，側敢不義？側亡君師，敢忘其死？”王使止之，弗及而卒。（左傳•成公十六年）。

⁴³ Guyang Shu, named Guyang, was a close servant of Zifan. The word *shu* 豎 (mean guy) is a derogatory term attached by traditional historians for his entrapping the host by liquor.

⁴⁴ Zizhong (?–570 BC.), named Yingqi 嬰齊, Zifan’s brother, was also a minister in State Chu.

Bi Zhuo, lived in the first part of the 4th century, was an officer in Ministry of Personnel in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, being famous for delaying his jobs by drinking. The story of his stealing liquor may be found in volume 49 of *Jinshu*:⁴⁵

Bi Zhuo, as an official in the Ministry of Personnel, often postponed official jobs by drinking wine. A neighbor official brewed wine, drunken Zhuo went among the jars at night to steal and drink it, but was caught by wine guards. Next morning, when the guards had found that it was Bi from the Ministry of Personal, the guards unbundled him hastily. Then Zhuo led the host to drink beside the jars, and after that he became drunken and left home.

The next two stories, essentially showing the uninhibited life of intellectuals in Wei-Jin Period, seem to be lend for liquor commandments here, in which the second person name mentioned is undoubtedly Liu Ling 劉伶 (*ljiw lhew* 詭藪), the first name should be Ziquan 子泉 (*tsh tshjwǎ* 精藪) but the second character was written as *to* 藪 by a slip of pen.⁴⁶

Folio 2, line 5–7:

精藪 瓊瓊 瓊瓊, 瓊瓊 瓊瓊, 瓊瓊 瓊瓊 瓊瓊;
瓊瓊 瓊瓊 瓊瓊, 瓊瓊 瓊瓊, 瓊瓊 瓊瓊 瓊瓊 瓊瓊 瓊瓊。

[Ziquan was fond of wine, intending to be buried beside a pottery workshop on deathbed.

Liu Ling liked deer, finding wine in a rich family and one *hu*⁴⁷ per drinking was insufficient.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

子泉嗜酒, 臨卒彌留, 願葬陶家之側;
劉伶好鹿, 尋酒富家, 一斛一飲解醒。

Ziquan, generally called by his surname Zheng Quan 鄭泉 (*tshjij tshjwǎ* 瓊藪) in the Tangut version *Forrest of Categories* (SHI ET.AL. 1993, 183), was a minister Taizhong Dafu 太中大夫 of State Wu in the Three Kingdoms

⁴⁵ Chinese original: 卓 ... 為吏部郎, 常飲酒廢職。比舍郎釀熟, 卓因醉夜至其甕間盜飲之, 為掌酒者所縛, 明旦視之, 乃畢吏部也, 遽釋其縛。卓遂引主人宴於甕側, 致醉而去。(晉書·畢卓傳)。

⁴⁶ Tangut *to* 藪 is never used for phonetic transcription.

⁴⁷ *Hu* 斛 is an ancient Chinese unit of measure (≈ 20 liters).

Period. He was often sent to State Shu as an envoy for negotiation but merely being famous as a liquor mania. His story comes from *Wushu* 吳書 quoted by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 in his commentary attached to “Zheng Quan interviewed Liu Bei in Baidi City” (*Zheng Quan pin Liu Bei yu Baidi* 鄭泉聘劉備於白帝) in volume 47 of *Sanguo Zhi*:⁴⁸

Zheng Quan, a given name Wenyan, from Chenjun Prefecture, was erudite and unusually ambitious but fond of liquor in nature ... On his deathbed, Quan told his relatives: “Do bury me beside a pottery workshop. Maybe I shall turn into soil after one hundred years and fortunately be taken for making wine jars. So it will really satisfy my heart.”

Liu Ling lived in the 3rd c. and was one of the “Seven sages in bamboo grove”, being famous for his uninhibited attitude to reclusion. The well known story of him comes from volume 49 of *Jinshu*:⁴⁹

Liu Ling ... often travelled on a deer cart with a pot of wine and ordered someone to follow him with a spade, telling: “Bury me if I die.” He disregarded his body like this. Once he was very thirsty and asked his wife for wine. His wife poured out wine and destroyed the drinking set, admonishing with tears: “Drinking too much is not the way for keeping health. You must quit it down.” Ling said: “Well, but I cannot quit it by myself except giving an oath to ghosts and gods. So you may prepare wine and meat.” His wife obeyed him. Ling kneeled down and prayed: “Liu Ling is well-known for drinking by nature. One *hu* per drinking and five *dou*⁵⁰ is insufficient. Be careful, women’s words can never be obeyed.” Then he took wine and meat, and was drunken highly again.

The following subject emphasizes that natural disaster cannot be withstood merely by a king’s ability and morality. Two names are mentioned there: Tang 湯 (*thow* 纒) and Yao 堯 (*jiw* 麟).

⁴⁸ Chinese original: 鄭泉字文淵，陳郡人。博學有奇志，而性嗜酒……泉臨卒，謂同類曰：“必葬我陶家之側，庶百歲之後化而成土，幸見取為酒壺，實獲我心矣。”（三國志·吳主傳注）

⁴⁹ Chinese original: 劉伶……常乘鹿車，攜一壺酒，使人荷鍤而隨之，謂曰：“死便埋我。”其遺形骸如此。嘗渴甚，求酒於其妻。妻捐酒毀器，涕泣諫曰：“君酒太過，非攝生之道，必宜斷之。”伶曰：“善！吾不能自禁，惟當祝鬼神自誓耳。便可具酒肉。”妻從之。伶跪祝曰：“天生劉伶，以酒為名。一飲一斛，五斗解醒。婦兒之言，慎不可聽。”仍引酒御肉，隗然復醉。（晉書·劉伶傳）

⁵⁰ *Dou* 斗 is an ancient Chinese unit of measure (≈ 2 liters).

Folio 2, line 7–8:

纒纒綈綈，紉紉綈綈綈綈；
 纒纒綈綈綈綈？紉紉綈綈綈綈？

[Emperor Tang had sagacity, but there was seven years drought.
 Was not Emperor Yao virtuous? Why there was nine years flooding?]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

湯有睿智，卻為七年大旱；
 堯非仁德？何泛九載洪災？

Evidently the above couplet is derived from a famous statement by a Han minister Chao Cuo 晁錯 (200–154 BC.) in volume 24 of *Hanshu*:⁵¹

The reason why there were not starvations during nine years flooding in Emperor Yao or Yu's times and seven years drought in Emperor Tang's times is that there were lots of accumulations and prearranged preparations.

It is inexplicable that in a few parts of BCT there are not any stories of the ancients and their literary style are not consistent with the context. Obviously these statements are not historical quotations, but folk maxims which are irrelevant with the subject and their sources cannot be found in any traditional Chinese records. It is reasonable to suspect that these couplets might not have come from traditional classics, but blends inserted by later authors or transcribers. The following couplet is a metaphor to emphasize that hard environment helps one to be strong and comfortable condition makes one to be weak.

Folio 2, line 8 — Folio 3, line 2: (Fig. 3)

纒纒紉紉，纒纒紉紉纒纒；
 纒纒紉紉，纒纒紉紉纒纒。

[The branches of a pine at bottom of the valley are not withered in cold, because the growing place makes it forceful;
 The leaves of a willow in the garden fall of meeting dew,⁵² because the planting place results it in failure.]

⁵¹ Chinese original: 堯禹有九年之水，湯有七年之旱，而國無捐瘠者，以畜積多而備先具也。(漢書·食貨志下)。

⁵² According to the common sense, here the word “dew” (Tang. *wər* 蔀) might be a miswritten “frost” (Tang. *nja* 霰).

Chinese reconstruction:

松生涧底，經寒枝不枯，植強處之故；
柳植園中，霜霜葉即落，植敗處之故。

This topic is objected in the next couplet, where the support from the bigwigs is regarded as the essential condition for succeeding.

Folio 3, line 2–3:

𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗，𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗；
𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗，𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗。

[Growing in dung, the flowers of hibiscus⁵³ bloom in the morning and fall in the evening;

Growing in front of a palace, the *mingjian* grass⁵⁴ blooms in one day and wither after a month.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

木蓮花糞中生，故朝開夕落，
明見草殿前長，故日放月枯。

The next subject turns unaccountably to calling for humility:

Folio 3, line 3:

𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗，
𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗𪛗。

[A virtuous man will be excellent when praised by others,
A beautiful woman will be ugly if boasting herself.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

男行人譽則妙，
女美自誇則醜。

⁵³ The flowers of hibiscus (Chin. *mulian* 木蓮 or *mufurong* 木芙蓉) bloom only for a very short time, but I do not know whether ancient people believed that they grow in dung.

⁵⁴ The real meaning of the Tangut word *mij kja* 𪛗𪛗 is unknown. Here I transcribe it as *mingjian* phonetically because in China it was a sort of grass used for flowering lawn. Perhaps people think that it may be planted on the ground in front of a mansion.

The following couplet turns back to the previous style, which tells the stories of civilians how to catch an eye of noblemen and get promoted. Two persons are mentioned: Feng Xuan 馮諼 (*xjow xjwã* 馮繡) and Ning Qi 寧戚 (*nji tshji* 甯虢).

Folio 3, line 3-4:

馮繡擬闢甯戚
甯戚擊角而求得見

[Feng Xuan claimed necessities by rapping on the sword,
Ning Qi hoped to be interviewed by knocking an ox horn.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

馮諼彈劍以望所需，
寧戚擊角而求得見。

Feng Xuan, also written Feng Huan 馮驩, was a sponger (Chin. *shike* 食客) of Mengchang Jun⁵⁵ during the Warring States Period. He excessively asked for many privileges, but helped his host a lot with prestige and political safety. The relevant story comes from volume 11 of *Zhanguo Ce*.⁵⁶

There was a man in State Qi, Feng Xuan, poor and not able to support himself. He asked someone to entrust Mengchang Jun for allowing him to be a house guest. Mengchang Jun asked: “What is the guest good at?” He said: “The guest is good at nothing.” Mengchang asked: “What he can do?” He said: “He can do nothing”. Mengchang Jun received him with a smile and said: “Well.” People around thought that Mengchang Jun looked at him as worthless and then gave him poor food. After some time, Feng Xuan leaned to a column and rapped his sword, singing: “Long scabbard, let us

⁵⁵ Tian Wen 田文 (?–279 BC.), titled Mengchang Jun (Viscount Mengchang), was a nobleman in State Qi. As one of the “Four lords of the Warring States period”, He was famous for adopting talents, and then became the Prime Minister of the State Qi and Wei in succession but was out of political jam at last.

⁵⁶ Chinese original: 齊人有馮諼者，貧乏不能自存，使人屬孟嘗君，願寄食門下。孟嘗君曰：“客何好？”曰：“客無好也。”曰：“客何能？”曰：“客無能也。”孟嘗君笑而受之曰：“諾。”左右以君賤之也，食以草具。居有頃，倚柱彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！食無魚。”左右以告。孟嘗君曰：“食之，比門下之客。”居有頃，復彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！出無車。”左右皆笑之，以告。孟嘗君曰：“為之駕，比門下之車客。”於是乘其車，揭其劍，過其友曰：“孟嘗君客我。”後有頃，復彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！無以為家。”左右皆惡之，以為貪而不知足。孟嘗君問：“馮公有親乎？”對曰：“有老母。”孟嘗君使人給其食用，無使乏。於是馮諼不復歌。（戰國策·齊策四）。

leave! There is no fish for eating.” People around reported that. Mengchang Jun said: “Give him fish, as to guests in my place.” After some time, Feng Xuan rapped his scabbard again and sang: “Long scabbard, let us leave! There is no cart for going out.” All people around laughed at him and reported that. Mengchang Jun said: “Give him a cart, as to guests in my place.” Thereafter Feng Xuan raised his sword in the cart and met his friend, saying: “Mengchang Jun treated me as a guest.” After some time, he rapped his scabbard again and sang: “Long scabbard, let us leave! There is nothing to support my family.” All people around hated him for his greed and insatiate demands. Mengchang Jun asked: “Has Mister Feng relatives?” They answered: “He has an old mother.” Mengchang Jun ordered someone to support her accommodation. Thereupon Feng Xuan did not sing again.

Ning Qi in the Spring and Autumn Period, lived in the second half of the 7th c. BC., was frustrated in his early years but became one of the major ministers and finally assisting King Qi Huangong⁵⁷ The story comes from volume 5 of *Xinxu*:⁵⁸

Ning Qi fed an ox under the hackery, feeling grief when catching sight of Huangong. Then he knocked the ox horn and immediately sang a song of Shang.⁵⁹ Huangong heard him and grasped his servant’s hand, saying: “I am so amazed that the singer must not be an ordinary person!” Huangong ordered the cart behind to carry him back. The servant asked for instruction, Huangong said: “Give him clothes and hat, I shall interview him.” Ning Qi was then interviewed and talked to Huangong how to govern within the border. When being interviewed the next day, Ning Qi talked to Huangong how to possess the world. Huangong was particularly pleased and willing to promote him.

There are not any stories in the following sentences, which merely tell the restraint and leadership of monarchs on the masses.

⁵⁷ Huangong (?–643 BC.), named Xiaobai 小白, as the King of State Qi, was one of the “Five Hegemons” in the Spring and Autumn Period.

⁵⁸ Chinese original: 寧戚飯牛於車下，望桓公而悲，擊牛角，疾商歌。桓公聞之，扶其僕之手曰：“異哉！此歌者非常人也。”命後車載之。桓公反至，從者以請。桓公曰：“賜之衣冠，將見之。”寧戚見，說桓公以合境內。明日復見，說桓公以為天下。桓公大說，將任之。（新序·雜事五）。

⁵⁹ Shang (approximately 1060–1046 BC.) is the second Dynasty in archaic Chinese History.

Folio 3, line 4–5:

剡纒齏纒瓨，瓶苳霰茲甃。
齏甃霰纒瓨，齏甃霰纒瓨。

[Monarchs are like containers, masses are like water.

If the container is round, water will be round; if the container is quadrate, water will be quadrate.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

君者器也，民者水也。
器圓則水圓，器方則水方。

Here the word “container” is used as a general term for both plate and pot. This maxim first appears in the chapter 12 of *Xunzi*, reading: “Monarchs are like plates, if the plate is round, water will be round; Monarchs are like pots, if the pot is quadrate, water will be quadrate.”⁶⁰ By contrast, a quotation in volume 73 of the *Yiwen Leiju* is much closer to that in BCT, which reads: “Monarchs are like plates, masses are like water. If the plate is round, water will be round; if the plate is quadrate, water will be quadrate.”⁶¹

The aim of the next couplet is to specify the above metaphor, in which the two figures concerned are Huangong 桓公 (*xwã kow* 禛駟) and Zoujun 鄒君 (*tshew njij* 報席)⁶² respectively.

Folio 3, line 5–7:

禛駟禛禛禛禛禛禛，瓶苳纒纒瓨瓨；
報席甃甃甃甃甃甃，甃甃甃甃甃甃。

[Huangong was fond of wearing purple clothes, therefore all the masses wore so.

Zoujun was fond of wearing feather hat⁶³, therefore all the officials wore so.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

桓公好服紫而民庶人人盡服，
鄒君好冠纓而臣宰所在皆冠。

⁶⁰ Chinese original: 君者，盤也，盤圓而水圓；君者，盂也，盂方而水方。(荀子·君道)。

⁶¹ Chinese original: 荀卿子曰：君者盤也，民者水也，盤圓則水圓，盤方則水方。(藝文類聚，卷七十三)。

⁶² There might be a slight error of Tangut transcription, for the Chinese *zou* 鄒 should be pronounced *tsew*, not *tshew* in Tangut.

⁶³ Tangut 甃甃 (feather) is a misunderstanding of Chinese *ying* 纓 (hatband).

Both stories come from chapter 32 of *Hanfeizi*:⁶⁴

King Qi Huangong was fond of wearing purple clothes, therefore people of the whole state were in purple. At that time, five plain color clothes were not equal to one purple in price. Huangong worried about that and said to Guan Zhong⁶⁵: “That I am fond of wearing purple makes purple extremely expensive and the people of the whole state are fond of purple endlessly. How can I face stop this?” Guan Zhong said: “If intending to stop this, why does not Your Majesty try to give up wearing purple? Telling servants around: I dislike the smell of purple⁶⁶. Just when people around coming in purple, you have to say: Draw back a little, for I dislike the smell of purple.” Huangong said: “Well.” In one day there were not any officials wearing purple, in the next day nobody wore purple in the capital, after three days nobody wore purple within the borders.

That Monarch Zoujun⁶⁷ was fond of long hatband and all people around wore it and it made a long hatband very expensive. Zoujun worried about that and asked people around. People around said: “The reason of expensiveness is that Your Majesty is fond of wearing it, so the masses wear it as well.” After that, Zoujun shortened his hatband and went out, thus nobody wore long hatbands within the state.

The following two lines on folio 3 are beyond my ability to decipher word by word. What follows in folio 4 (**Fig. 4**), not in connection in context with the previous folio, is a folk maxim without rhythm, telling not to be hypercritical too much.

⁶⁴ Chinese original: 齊桓公好服紫，一國盡服紫。當是時也，五素不得一紫。桓公患之，謂管仲曰：“寡人好服紫，紫貴甚，一國百姓好服紫不已，寡人奈何？”管仲曰：“君欲止之，何不試勿衣紫也？謂左右曰：吾甚惡紫之臭。於是，左右適有衣紫而進者，公必曰：少卻，吾惡紫臭。”公曰：“諾。”於是日，郎中莫衣紫；其明日，國中莫衣紫；三日，境內莫衣紫也。……鄒君好服長纓，左右皆服，長纓甚貴。鄒君患之，問左右。左右曰：“君好服，百姓亦多服，是以貴。”君因先自斷其纓而出，國中皆不服長纓。（韓非子·外儲說左上）。

⁶⁵ Guan Zhong (approximately 723–645 BC.), named Yiwu 夷吾, as the Premier of State Qi, was the most outstanding politician in the Spring and Autumn Period. He assisted King Qi Huangong in reform to make his State rich and its military force efficient. Under his instruction, Qi became the most powerful State at that time.

⁶⁶ It is said that the purple dyestuff was extracted from the root of comfrey and there was a frowzy smell brought about in the process of extraction.

⁶⁷ State Zou is generally called Zhu 邾, was a small dependent state to State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period. The monarch of State Zou mentioned here remains unknown except his surname Cao 曹.

Folio 4, line 1–2:

□□□蕤鬣毳羸，絀循羸羸？
 循鬣羸鬣，絀循羸鬣？
 鬣鬣羸鬣，絀循羸鬣。

[A single tree dried up (in the forest), does it hurt the forest?
 A single grass drifting in the sea, is it fault of the sea?
 Just as a bristle on fur, one seeks a flaw by blowing the fur.⁶⁸]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

(叢林間) 枯一株樹，而何害於林？
 大海內漂一株草，豈歸罪於海？
 譬如皮生硬毛，吹毛求疵一般。

In the following, the literary style returns to the antithetical couplet. First, the regularity of natural world is emphasized.

Folio 4, line 2–3:

綱罽羸羸，羸羸羸羸；
 羸羸羸羸，羸羸羸羸。

[Four seasons are changing, Spring and Autumn take the regularities of life;
 Five Elements⁶⁹ are succeeding, water and fire manifest their gentle natures.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

四季更迭，春秋有生滅之理；
 五行相襲，水火顯柔和之性。

According to natural regularities, monarchs should govern all things on earth by their virtue and morality.

Folio 4, line 3–4:

羸羸羸羸，
 羸羸羸羸。

⁶⁸ It seems that this metaphor is derived from the Chinese idiom *chui mao qiu ci* 吹毛求疵 (seeks a flaw by blowing the fur), which means one constantly focused on the smallest defects of others.

⁶⁹ “Five Elements” in traditional Chinese philosophy, including metal, wood, water, fire and earth, are said to be the basic factors to form all the matters in the universe.

[It is a devotion to breed Five Cereals,⁷⁰
It is a merit to manage all things.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

養五穀為信，
治萬物成功。

Folio 4, line 4–5:

鞞𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳，𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳。
𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳，𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳。

[Wind and rain depend on benevolence, *yin* and *yang*⁷¹ accord with virtue.
Governing affairs depends on yin and yang, enlightening multitude relies
on benevolence.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

風雨依乎仁，陰陽合於德。
依陰陽治諸事，以仁義化庶民。

The following topic turns back to telling historical stories, emphasizing the importance of governing the country by law at first. The figures mentioned are Zhengshu 鄭叔 (*tshjij síow* 𦉳𦉳) and Guanghan 廣漢 (*ko xā* 𦉳𦉳).

Folio 4, line 5–7:

𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳，𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳；
𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳，𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳。

[Because Minister Zhengshu made the laws lenient, many bandits gathered
in bush;

For Eastern⁷² Guanghan had a severe majesty, all bullies within Jingzhao
City⁷³ were wiped out.]

⁷⁰ “Five Cereals” is a Chinese joint name for grain crops, including rice, millet, barley, wheat and bean.

⁷¹ *Yin* and *yang*, as the fundamental of ancient Chinese philosophy, indicate the negative and positive which constitute the universe and determine the cosmic order by their combination.

⁷² Tangut word *njij dzji* 𦉳𦉳 (east-cover) is inscrutable to decipher. Here I tentatively translated it as “eastern” by considering that Guanghan was a native of Zhuo Prefecture 涿郡 (now in Hebei Province) which located to the east of the Capital Jingzhao.

⁷³ “Jingzhao”, now Xi’an City, was written mistakenly as *tshjiw kij* 𦉳𦉳 (Chin. *zhaojing* 兆京) by a careless Tangut transcriber.

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

大臣鄭叔律令寬鬆，而草莽之中盜者多集；
東方廣漢威儀剛猛，故京兆城內豪強盡絕。

Zhengshu, also called Taishu, a minister of State Zheng, was the son of Zichan. Zichan, named Gongsun Qiao 公孫僑, as Prime Minister of State Zheng, was one of the most outstanding politicians in the Spring and Autumn Period. The story about his son comes from chapter *The 20th year of Zhaogong* in *Zuozhuan*:⁷⁴

Zichan of State Zheng was ill, he told his son Taishu: “After I die, you for sure will administrate the politics. Only a virtuous leader can govern the masses by lenience, and do not exceed severity. Fire is severe; the masses look out and fear it, so few of them die there. Water is weak, the masses go close and disregard it, so lots of them die there. For this reason, lenience is more difficult.” After several months Zichan died of illness. When Taishu became the administrator, he did not care severity, but took lenience, then bandits increased in State Zheng.

Guanghan, having his surname Zhao 趙, lived in the first century BC., was the governor of the capital and one of the most famous upright officials in Western Han Dynasty. The relevant story comes from his biography in volume 76 of *Hanshu*:⁷⁵

Guanghan was a man of force, being proficient in official affairs. In meeting officials or masses, sometimes he did not sleep until daybreak ... As the governor of Jingzhao Prefecture, he ruled clever and honestly, severely restraining bullies and giving official position to ordinary people. The masses have thought back of him and have praised him so far.

A folk maxim about not taking ill-gotten gains is inserted between the contexts.

Folio 4, line 7:

覓利藏骸，
蝦蟆藏骸？

[It is not obtaining to get a sword on the roadside,
Is it stashing to hide properties into the tomb?]

⁷⁴ Chinese original: 鄭子產有疾，謂子太叔曰：“我死，子必為政。唯有德者能以寬服民，其次莫如猛。夫火烈，民望而畏之，故鮮死焉。水懦弱，民狎而翫之，則多死焉，故寬難。”疾數月而卒。太叔為政，不忍猛而寬，鄭國多盜。（左傳·昭公二十年）。

⁷⁵ 廣漢為人強力，天性精於吏職。見吏民，或夜不寢至旦 ... 為京兆尹廉明，威制豪強，小民得職。百姓追思，歌之至今。（漢書·趙廣漢傳）。

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

道旁得劍不為取，
墓裏有財豈為藏？

The following couplet emphasizes that extravagance will definitely lead the country to decline and fall, in which the two figures mentioned are Lu Zhuanggong 魯莊公 (*lu tsiow kow* 筵笏駢) and Xia Kangdi 夏康帝 (*xia khow dzjwɿ* 頡頏劓):

Folio 4, line 8 — Folio 5, line 1:

筵笏駢頡頏劓駸，頡頏劓駸駸駸駸。
頡頏劓駸駸駸駸，駸駸駸駸駸駸駸。

[It is because Lu Zhuanggong's palace was gorgeous that the state became weak and disordered at last.

Emperor Xiakang's palace was beautiful that the masses became indigent and perished.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

魯莊公殿堂華美，故國家衰弱至於亂；
夏康帝宮室莊嚴，故民庶匱乏致滅亡。

Lu Zhuanggong (706–662 BC.), named Ji Tong 姬同, was the 16th monarch of State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period. The Tangut word *pju rjir* 頡頏 (palace) seems to originate from Chinese *tai* 臺 (tower, high platform), see chapter *The 32nd year of Zhuanggong in Zuozhuan*.⁷⁶

King Zhuanggong built a tower close to the Zhangs⁷⁷, where he saw Mengren⁷⁸ and intended to fornicate with her but was refused. Then he got her promise to be his concubine and took an oath by cutting arms.

According to *Zuozhuan*, the later political turmoil in State Lu was caused by the feuding among Zhuanggong's three younger brothers, which was irrelevant to building the gorgeous palace.

Xiakang, generally called Taikang 太康, was the second emperor of Xia Dynasty in legend. It was said in *Lisao* 離騷 by Qu Yuan that he lost the country for his indulgent amusement: *Xiakang yu yi zizong* 夏康娛以自縱 (Xiakang amused himself with indulgence).

⁷⁶ Chinese original: 公築臺臨黨氏，見孟任，從之闕。而以夫人言，許之，割臂盟。(左傳·莊公三十二年)。

⁷⁷ “Zhangs” here indicate the family of minister surnamed Zhang.

⁷⁸ Mengren was the firstborn daughter of minister Zhang.

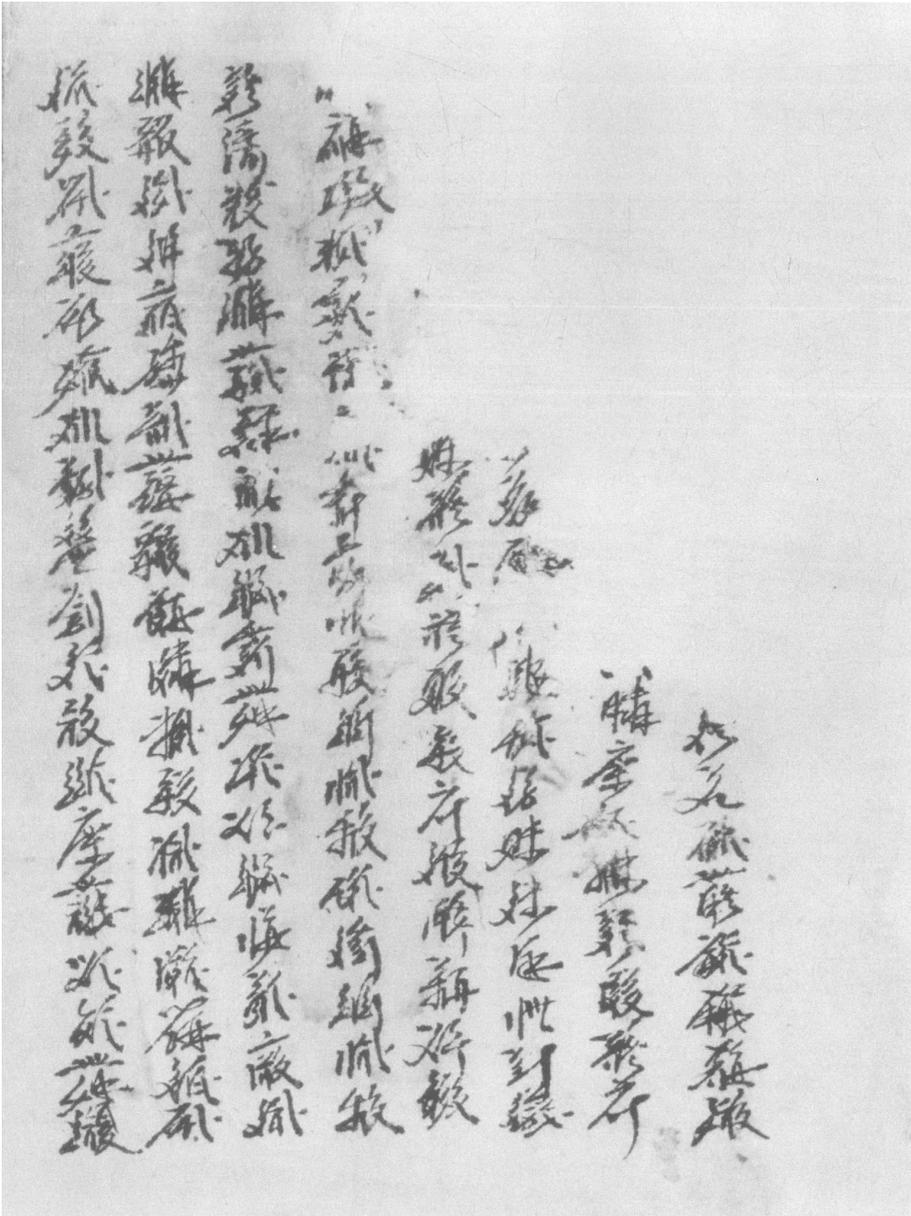


Fig. 6
The sixth folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*

The next couplet follows the former subject of advocating a simple life and objecting to luxury, in which the first figure mentioned is Yao 堯 (*jiw* 麟) but the second one, *tsow wē tshjow* 穉孳莪, is quite incomprehensible. Here, I believe that the second character of the name is a mistake caused by the similarity of two Chinese characters. Considering the Tangut *wē* 孳 is always used to transcribe Chinese *wen* 文 which is similar to *tai* 太 in appearance, especially shown in cursive handwriting, we may decide that the original must have been Zuo Taichong 左太冲 under the help of Chinese classics.

Folio 5, line 1–2:

麟駸孳死穉孳莪, 穉莪散孳孳;
穉孳莪穉孳莪, 穉孳孳穉孳.

[The masses heaped praise on Emperor Yao for he made soil steps and thatched huts.

Family members heaped irony to Zuo Taichong for he complimented luxury buildings.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

堯天子造土階茅茨, 民庶齊聲讚歎;
左太冲愛屋舍莊嚴, 鄉人交口譏訾.

The legend about Yao making soil steps and thatched huts for himself to live in can be found in volume 74 of *Jiutangshu*.⁷⁹

In the past Tang Yao lived in a thatched hut with soil steps, Xia Yu wore poor clothes and ate simple food. I know that things like these cannot reappear nowadays.

Zuo Taichong, i.e., Zuo Si 左思 (approximately 250–305), was one of the most famous writers in Western Jin period. His literary work *Sandu Fu* 三都賦⁸⁰ was spread widely at that time, but it seems that there were people who sneered at him, as recorded in the second volume of *Shishuo Xinyu*.⁸¹

When Zuo Taichong just finished his work *Sandu Fu*, somebody at that time heaped irony to him.

⁷⁹ Chinese original: 昔唐堯茅茨土階, 夏禹惡衣菲食. 如此之事, 臣知不可復行於今. (舊唐書•馬周傳).

⁸⁰ *Sandu Fu* 三都賦 is a joint title of his antithetical prose for the capitals of Wei, Shu, Wu in the Three Kingdoms Period. In these works the prosperity of the cities are excessively complimented by flowery rhetoric.

⁸¹ Chinese original: 左太冲作三都賦初成, 時人互有譏訾. (世說新語•文學四).

The next two sentences, not in antithetic genre, are metaphors comparing to the advice that it should not treat noblemen as common people.

Folio 5, line 2–4:

馭帥藏穀配既孰，蠶繭飄祀敢慨？
 覈椳繆峰嶷，殺穡瓶窺駭駭？

[To feed a swift horse as precious jade, is it the way to go together with the horses before or after it?

To treat a sword equal to gold of ten thousand *liang*⁸² in price, is it used as a tailor's needle?]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

餵養千里寶玉馬，豈與首尾之馬並馳？
 萬兩金價劍，豈同裁縫之針？

In the following there come two famous stories of Emperor finding sages at unobserved places, but some characters on the original are lost:

Folio 5, line 4-6:

龍翬駭□□豕豨發彥彥，殺縹席絳殺頰□藪□；
 □□□□□黼稱敢敏敏，敢雉繆翳悛駭□□□。

[Taigong, as a fisher beside the (Weishui) River, was invited to be Prime Minister by Zhou Wenwang;
 (Fu Yue), as a walling worker in..., was promoted directly to be a minister by Yin Gaozong.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

太公，渭水河濱捕魚者也，周文王請而為丞相；
 傅說，□□□中版築之人，殷高宗逕擢為大夫。

The legend of Jiang Taigong Lü Shang's fishing recorded in volume 32 of *Shiji*:⁸³

⁸² *Liang* 兩 is a Chinese unit of measure (≈ 14 grams at that time).

⁸³ Chinese original: 呂尚蓋嘗窮困，年老矣，以魚釣奸周西伯。西伯將出獵，卜之，曰：“所獲非龍非羆，非虎非羆，所獲霸王之輔。”於是周西伯獵，果遇太公於渭之陽。與語，大說，曰：“自吾先君太公曰：當有聖人適周，周以興。子真是邪？吾太公望子久矣。”故號之曰太公望，載與俱歸，立為師。(史記·齊太公世家).

Lü Shang, being destitute in his early age, came into contact with Zhou Xibo⁸⁴ by fishing when he was old. Xibo would go hunting and divined for it, the answer was: “The proceeds will be neither dragons, nor a tiger, nor a bear, but an assistant for ruling the state.” Then Zhou Xibo went hunting and really met Taigong on the north bank of the Weishui River⁸⁵, talking with him and being greatly delight, he said: “My ancestor monarch Taigong⁸⁶ said that there should be a sage coming to Zhou and Zhou Dynasty would be prosperous with him. It is really you? My Taigong has expected you for a long time.” For that, Xibo named him Taigong Wang, went back with him in a cart and appointed him as preceptor.

The legend of Fu Yue’s walling recorded in volume 3 of *Shiji*:⁸⁷

Emperor Wuding⁸⁸ saw a dream with a sage named Yue. He looked at all the ministers and officials for a person he saw in the dream, but all of them were not him. Thus he ordered officials to search for the sage among the civilians and then found Yue in Fuyan⁸⁹ when Yue was serving sentences as a walling worker there. Wuding interviewed him and said: “It is just him.” By receiving and talking with him, Wuding found that he was really a sage, and then appointed him to be Prime Minister, bringing a great order throughout the state. Thus Wuding gave him a surname according to Fuyan and named him Fu Yue.

The upper left part on folio 5 and the upper right part of folio 6 (**Fig. 6**) are fragmentary, and I am not able to decipher the relevant lines word by word. What we can see with certainty is there mentioned a story of Emperor Shun and a short phrase “fearing the four knowings” (Tang. *ljir nwə kjə* 罔卮報, Chin. *wei sizhi* 畏四知), the latter evidently comes from the story of Yang Zhen 楊震 (?–124) in volume 84 of *Houhanshu*:⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Zhou Xibo is the title of Ji Chang 姬昌 before he overthrew Yin Dynasty and became King Zhou Wenwang. “Xibo” means “Earl in the West”.

⁸⁵ Weishui 渭水 is a river near Chang’an (now Xi’an City).

⁸⁶ Here the word “Taigong”, including the next one, does not indicate Lü Shang, but a certain ancestor of Xibo. “Taigong” means “grandfather”.

⁸⁷ Chinese original: 武丁夜夢得聖人, 名曰說. 以夢所見視羣臣百吏, 皆非也. 於是廼使百工營求之野, 得說於傅巖中. 是時說為胥靡, 築於傅巖, 見於武丁. 武丁曰: “是也.” 得而與之語, 果聖人. 舉以為相, 殷國大治. 故遂以傅巖姓之, 號曰傳說. (史記·殷本紀).

⁸⁸ Wuding, the 23rd Emperor of Yin (Shang) Dynasty in legend, is priced to be the Lord of Resurgence at that time.

⁸⁹ Fuyan is an ancient name of place to the east of Pinglu County, Shanxi Province.

⁹⁰ Chinese original: 楊震 ... 當之郡, 道經昌邑, 故所舉荊州茂才王密為昌邑令, 謁見. 至夜, 懷金十斤以遺震. 震曰: “故人知君, 君不知故人, 何也?” 密曰: “暮夜無知者.” 震曰: “天知, 神知, 我知, 子知. 何謂無知?” 密愧而出. (後漢書·楊震傳).

Guanghan was especially good at getting realities by *gouju*⁹⁴. *Gouju* means that if anyone want to know the price of a horse, he should ask about that of a dog first, then that of a goat, then that of an ox, then that of a horse at last, weighing their prices analogically, thus he knows a real price of a horse.

Wuma Qi (521–? BC.), named Shi 施 with a given name Ziqi 子期, was one of the disciples of Confucius and famous for his diligence. His story can be found in the second volume of *Hanshi Waizhuan*:⁹⁵

In administrating Shanfu County⁹⁶, that Zijian⁹⁷ played zither without leaving the hall brought Shanfu in order. That Wuma Qi went out and back accompanied by stars, doing everything personally without staying also brought Shanfu in order.

The last four folia of BCT are too fragmentary in illegible cursive handwriting to be recognized, in which I can only read out a character *dǎjwa* 𠄎 (finish) indicating the end of the text. After that there is a fragmentary prose which might be estimated as a postscript of the booklet, but its content remains unknown to us.

Nature of the manuscript

Although a complete satisfying translation is not given in the present paper, the above narrations and translations do not show any relations between BCT and Emperor Tang Taizong. The parallel facts may be found in folk literature of Northwestern China at that time, since we see that in materials excavated from Dunhuang there are manuscripts entitled *Taigong Jiajiao* 太公家教 (Family instructions by Taigong) and *Wuwang Jiajiao* 武王家教 (Family instructions by Emperor Wuwang) which both have nothing to do with Jiang Taigong and Wuwang in early Zhou Dynasty. Actually we all know it is a tradition in ancient China that folk authors used to insert the names of famous historical figures in the title of their own productions.

There are various primary readers excavated from the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang⁹⁸, in which we cannot find a creation in the same literary style

⁹⁴ *Gouju* 鉤距 is a sort of ancient weapon with a hook at the top of a long pole. Here it was used as a metaphor for saying something in a roundabout way.

⁹⁵ Chinese original: 子賤治單父, 彈鳴琴, 身不下堂, 而單父治。巫馬期以星出, 以星入, 日夜不處, 以身親之, 而單父亦治。(韓詩外傳卷二)。

⁹⁶ Ancient Shanfu County locates in today's Heze City of Shandong Province.

⁹⁷ Fu Zijian 宓子賤 (?–445 BC.) was another disciple of Confucius.

⁹⁸ Some of the works were selected and studied by Zheng and Zhu (2002). According their classification, perhaps our BCT might be put into the “Primary readers of the morality”.

of BCT, i.e., there are not any works compiled by the style of mixing ancient allusions and current maxims. What is more, although there are not any consistent subjects throughout the text, BCT shows a distinctive feature from others else in Dunhuang that it might have been made more specifically for noble children, not common people, with the purpose of expecting them to increase their historical knowledge and understand some principles in the meantime for assisting monarchs in future. This explains the fact that in BCT there mentions lots of monarchs, administrators and other outstanding persons but no moral preaches given by a senior to juniors as those in *Taigong Jiajiao* and *Wuwang Jiajiao*.

In the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, RAS, there is a plentiful collection of original Tangut maxims compiled by a Xixia official scholar (Kychanov 1974), in which we cannot find any couplets identical with those collected in BCT. If we believe that almost all of the folk maxims spread in Xixia are included there, we may estimate with some certainty that those in BCT are intrinsic in its Chinese original, but I have no idea how to explain why the folk maxims were inserted into ancient literary allusions to form a book discordant in literary style. Maybe the Chinese original was finished by two persons, the first one was the start-up author and the second one was a careless transcriber who mixed two different manuscripts together to form a miscellaneous basis for the Tangut translator to rely on.

Comparing with most authors of the primary readings in Dunhuang, the educational level of the BCT author is evidently high. Even we may estimate him as a learned official in government of Tang or Song Dynasty than a private teacher in backcountry, whose social role determined his vision limited within elites than ordinary masses. Accordingly, the readers presupposed by the author in his compilation might have been descendants of noble families, not of common villagers, because what the latter need most is to cultivate the awareness of respecting the old and having the ability of running the household industriously and frugally, while a high post with matched salary is an elusive dream for most of the common people in their whole life. So far it has been not difficult to understand that the narrow readers of BCT determined it being given cold shoulder by civilians, and it is just this imperfection made it being not preserved until nowadays as the numerous manuscripts of primary readers in Dunhuang.

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