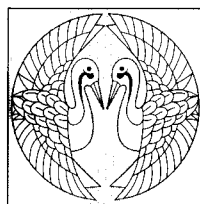


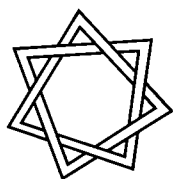
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TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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“THE ALTAR RECORD ON CONFUCIUS' CONCILIATION”, AN UNKNOWN TANGUT APOCRYPHAL WORK

The work in question was discovered by the well known Russian scholar N. A. Nevsky (1892—1937) at the beginning of the 1930s. In his paper “The Tangut script and its collections”, published in 1935 and devoted to the Tangut manuscripts in the then Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, he pointed out that “besides Confucian ideas, the Tangut absorbed Daoism too, for the quotations from Lao-zi, Zhuang-zi, Lie-zi, Huainan-zi are abundant ... in the collection of quotations. Also, there is a number of translations of small apocrypha claiming the victory of Daoist ideas over Confucianism and at times depicting Confucius and his disciple Zi Lu as being fairly ridiculous. But such works are scarce in our collection. The “Records on the Altar of Confucius' Conciliation” might be an example of such sort of literature” [1].

It is not quite clear why N. A. Nevsky has not included this composition in the inventory. By 1959, when the author of the present article was commissioned to continue the inventory of the Tangut part of P. K. Kozlov's Khara-Khoto collection, a manuscript of the “Records” had been listed among not discovered items. My 35-years work in the manuscript fund makes me conclude that despite its frequent moves, from the Russian Geographic Society to the Asiatic Museum, and later from the Institute of Oriental Studies, then located on the premises of the Academy of Sciences Library, to the new lodgings on Dvortsovaya embankment, 18, no item has been lost. Everything ever mentioned by the previous students of the collection — A. I. Ivanov, V. L. Kotvich, N. A. Nevsky, A. A. Dragunov, and Z. I. Gorbacheva — has been re-found in the manuscript fund. The text in question was also re-discovered later, identified by the present author and listed in the inventory under No. 3781. Afterwards, when bringing together scattered fragments of various writings, it was given call number Tang. 426, No. 3781.

The text represents a “butterfly”-bound manuscript containing 72 pages. The pages measure 8.0 × 13.5 cm, 5 lines per page with 9 characters per line. As is usual in such manuscripts, the text written in a half-cursive script is present on recto folios only. The paper is grey, thin, of bad quality. The edges of the manuscript are crumpled, bent, or torn off, which makes it difficult to read the text. At the end

of the manuscript the title of the composition — “The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation, one *juan*” — is mentioned again. Until recently, the book was in quite unsatisfactory condition. After restoration, done in the studio of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, its condition is good (see *fig. 1*).

Only a few leaves with the text copied out by Nevsky from this Tangut composition, and with Chinese equivalents provided by him, survive from the time of the scholar's work on the text, so the present article is in fact the first attempt to give necessary information about this most interesting Tangut work. It should be noted that Nevsky's judgement that it represents an apocryphal work containing criticism of Confucian ideas, and that it might be a translation from Chinese, turned out to be correct.

“The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation” (the name “Records on the Altar of Confucius' Conciliation”, which was given to the writing by Nevsky, is also acceptable) tells us the story of the meeting of some one who is called in the text the Old Man (*laoren* in Chinese) with Zi Lu, one of Confucius' disciples, and with Confucius himself. I retell here only the principal contents of the composition.

The Old Man, who came from far away (it is not said whence exactly), was decorating an altar. Unfortunately, no information about this altar is provided in the text despite its mention in the title of the work. When Confucius' disciple Zi Lu appeared in the story, the Old Man was leaving the altar singing, which made Zi Lu anxious that this singing would disturb his Master Confucius, who was not far off. Not willing to speak to Zi Lu, the Old Man approached the tree on the river bank, where he went on with his singing and dancing. Then Zi Lu came up to him and said: “Old Man, you are in the old age, your hair is grey, but neither your sons nor grandsons accompany you. And you have no staff to rest your hand upon. Why, having left your house, are you wandering alone in the deserted area in the time when not everyone ventures to come here?” He also told the Old Man that his Master Confucius was not far from them.

On hearing out Zi Lu, the Old Man closed his eyes and said nothing. Zi Lu therefore raised his voice and the Old

Man became frightened, opened his eyes and said at last: "My reverence for the Commander! My reverence for the Commander!" Zi Lu felt himself offended and said: "I am an educated man and versed in etiquette. Why are you calling me Commander and bowing before me?"

The Old Man answered: "You, Zi Lu! Your body is tough and strong. You have a clear and resolute voice, your speech is as the wind howls — "Ugh, ugh" — and your face is fierce. Who is so arrogant, is he really an educated man?" After that the Old Man remarked that here, in the South, educated people conduct themselves in a different fashion.

Then Zi Lu stepped in front of the Old Man and asked him respectfully what the rules of etiquette (*li*) in the South were. The Old Man explained to him that in the South in the relations between a Master and his disciple, the one at the top does not claim to be a ruler. Being wealthy, he does not keep his treasure secret, and being poor, does not rob and steal. The strong one does not oppress the weak. It is believed that telling the truth, reverence for the old, love for the young (*xiao*), and faithfulness (*zhong*), are true treasures". After that the Old Man declared that Zi Lu cannot be considered an educated man and asked Zi Lu about his Master. Zi Lu said: "Confucius has established hymns, taught eloquence and rules of etiquette (*li*). He composed the book *Lun-yu*, improved the rules of dispute, the relations between the ruler and his officials, the high and low. He has established the rites of offerings to Heaven and Land. Accompanied by three thousand people, he travelled all the states over and established there the rules of etiquette (*li*). His fame exceeds all the limits. These are the virtues of my Master Kong!"

The Old Man asked: "Could your Master become the ruler of the state, be a help to the emperor?" Zi Lu was at a loss for an answer and the Old Man went on: "In olden days all people were notable for their reverence for the old, love for the young (*xiao*), and faithfulness (*zhong*). The ruler governed his people by the heavenly virtue (*de*), while the people were devoted to the ruler. That is why, though the ruler and state enjoyed tranquillity, no songs of praise were heard anywhere. The state was rich, but nobody talked about this. The rules and customs of etiquette (*li*) were kept everywhere ... The people were prosperous and proved to act in accordance with their nature, ... behaved themselves properly without knowing the ruler's laws. Later, etiquette (*li*) was changed by the rulers, they put on the suit of armour while governing the state. And acting wildly, like beasts, they deprived the Celestial Empire of its former tranquillity. This is the reason for calamities and the beginning of bloody wars".

Further the Old Man explains to Zi Lu that "laws of life ... are inculcated independently, by themselves". It is like a spider that "does not explain how his web was made". He added that "to demand etiquette be kept or the Way of saintly Sages ... be restored is a vain enterprise". He also said that his Master Confucius, be he affected by the ills of life, would be incapable of overcoming them.

These words of the Old Man made Zi Lu suffer. Deep in thought, he returned to his Master.

Confucius was then playing the lute. He noticed Zi Lu was worried and asked him: "Why do you look so sad?" Zi Lu told him about his meeting with the Old Man and about his words.

Confucius got angry. He called Zi Lu too young to understand the very essence of his Master's teaching. He also

clarified that if the matter concerned the essence of the notion *Dao*, what was concealed did not manifest itself. After that Confucius desired to see the Old Man. He went to the river and saw a boat and the Old Man in it, dressed in a robe of grass and straw hat. He was murmuring something. Confucius listened to him attentively and heard him saying: "I am in sorrow, I am in sorrow, a stupid man. The stupid man now has reason to seek love, now that the reasons for greed and anger have disappeared. Am I asleep or awake?"

The Old Man pushed off from the bank with the pole to go away, but Confucius asked the Old Man not to leave him. The Old Man obeyed. Then Confucius approached him and said: "My family name is Kong, my personal name is Qiu. Ten *li* away from here there is a town, that is my state ... I heard golden, pleasing words. My soul is enlightened because of your convincing words. I would like to descend and attend you ... By making good and learning books one cannot understand what *Dao* and *de* are. Worthless rules (*shi*) and etiquette (*li*), can they be compared with the great *Dao* of a hermit? ... I have found the sacred wise Way (*Dao*). In former times I travelled all over the world, I explained the laws (*fa*) to the rulers, established the rules of etiquette (*li*) necessary for governing the state. They did not understand at once what I was speaking about ... I am now over 69 years old, and I want to retire and study!"

The Old Man replied: "Your humanity, duty, the rules of etiquette (*li*), knowledge, faithfulness — I don't know what they are. I composed a song of my own, I am pouring out wine, drinking it, enjoying myself, and making merry amid fog and clouds".

Confucius answered: "I heard that it was not easy to find a light pearl in the sea. Is it possible to understand the Heavenly Way (*Dao*) at once?" And he bowed his head and cried. Then the Old Man laughed and said: "The Great *Dao* is formless and soundless. It establishes the order in the world, ... determines what is to be found or lost. Why is it so difficult to find? You must make yourself free from your passions and wishes. If you receive knowledge of *Dao* from the bottom of your heart, you will become pure ... If your body works hard, you will find *Dao* fully ... Laziness of your body will lead to losing *Dao* ... And if you find it, you will be the master of your own ... Look in your own heart, if there is joy in it, do act then ... A man who seeks to perform deeds is like moonlight reflected in the water — when the water is clean, the Moon is visible; when the water is dirty, the Moon is invisible. If your heart is pure, you become the master of your own, you become fearless, joyful, ... you do not feel your old age, you become young. You are sitting and the fields in front of you turn into the sea. You are standing, in deep contemplation, and become the master of the sea waters. You need nothing of the outer world. From your self, from your own heart you obtain what you need".

After these words the Old Man pushed off from the landing-place, sailed a bit and then turned round to Confucius: "Adhere to this truth. That is what is known as adherence to the truth".

In the words of the text, "knowledge came to Confucius, his heart became enlightened and obtained its foundation". He even had sung the following song of his own:

Inexhaustible is knowledge of Heaven and Earth.
Though I created the art of eloquence (*cai*)
and rules of etiquette (*li*) like those of the olden days,
I did not act in accordance with the Way (*Dao*),

So I have lost my good fortune,
 I taught a false teaching all over the countries,
 Leading three thousand disciples, I reached the bank
 of the river,
 But I did not care ... to ask about the crossing.
 I am now ceasing my teaching and renouncing my former
 delusions.

Unfortunately, in retelling the contents of the work, I was forced to omit those passages of the text where it was corrupt and completely incomprehensible because of numerous lacunae, or where the translation presented insurmountable difficulties. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the core of the narration in the Tangut text is close to that in the 31st chapter in Zhuang-zi. It contains an account of Confucius and his disciples who once took rest among apricot-trees. The account runs that an old fisherman came up to them to listen to Confucius' playing the lute and singing. When Confucius finished his song, the old man asked his disciples, Zi Gong and Zi Lu, about their Master. Zi Lu told him that he was a native of the Lu realm and that his family name was Kong, while Zi Lu said that Confucius was "a devoted and faithful man", that he "carried out humanity and duty", "improved etiquette and music", and "was busy with regulating the rules of decency".

Then the fisherman learns that Confucius does not possess any land and is not a counsellor to the ruler, after which he leaves the company, saying: "He may be a humane man, though I am afraid he will be unable to protect himself. Burdening his mind so much, exhausting his body, he is destroying what is true in him. Oh, how far away did he move from the Way!"

Zi Gong told his Master about the old man and Confucius decided to talk to him. He reached the fisherman at the lake when he was about to sail away in a boat. Confucius asked the old man to give him instructions. He then complained that he was 69 years old, that he had been studying from an early age but had met no one who would be able to present him High Teaching. The fisherman said that Confucius was on the wrong way, for, not being invested with the authority of the ruler, and not being an official, he was improving etiquette and music on his own, thus being busy with what had nothing to do with him. He also advised Confucius to take to self-perfection.

The contents of the Tangut text and the above passage in Zhuang-zi, particularly when it deals with the fisherman's instructions, seem to coincide only partly, though at times both of the texts are rather close to each other. It concerns also the passage in Zhuang-zi containing a discourse on true feelings. Here I present this discourse in translations by V. V. Malyavin and L. D. Pozdneeva:

"False tears will move nobody. False anger, be it even most terrible, will frighten no one. False love, if even plenty of smiles are there, will remain without response. True sorrow is silent. But it causes a feeling of sorrow in others, without one sound being produced. True anger does not reveal itself, but it makes one afraid of it. True love will be mutual without any smiles" [2].

"Affected tears will not produce grief even when in sorrow. Affected anger inspires nobody with fear even before the great. False love reveals no concord even in smile. When in true sorrow, one does not express his grief loudly but is plunged in his sor-

row silently. When in true anger, one does not demonstrate it outwardly, but inspires fear in others. When in true love, true concord reigns, smiles being unnecessary" [3].

One can compare these translations with the following passage in our manuscript:

"False anger inspires nobody with fear. False intimacy makes distant. Artificial tears do not cause sorrow, artificial merry-making brings no joy. Why is that? Because all this is inspired by man himself, and all invented by man on his own cannot be a norm of etiquette (*li*). What makes others truly frightened does not reveal itself. True tears cannot make one glad, true joy cannot make one sorrow" [4].

It should be noted that despite the resemblance the passage in the Tangut text and the text in Zhuang-zi differ slightly from each other. First, while the discourse dealing with the nature of the true in Zhuang-zi is addressed to Confucius, that one in the Tangut text is addressed to Zi Lu. Secondly, "four calamities" ("misfortunes" in Malyavin's translation or "evils" in the translation by Pozdneeva) are mentioned in the words addressed by the Old Man to Zi Lu. Besides, if these "calamities" are only mentioned in the Tangut text, there is a detailed account of them in Zhuang-zi. And in our manuscript it is Confucius and Zi Lu who take part in the conversation with the Old Man, in Zhuang-zi they are three: Confucius, Zi Lu, and Zi Gong. Above all, the Chinese text lacks the name of the place where the meeting with the old fisherman takes place, an apricot-tree grove is mentioned solely. The Tangut text makes mention of a town in the state of Confucius, and one can guess that the meeting takes place either in the Lu realm or somewhere not far from it.

Is it possible to suppose that the Old Man of the Tangut text is Lao-zi? As is known, there exists a controversy about a possible meeting of Confucius with Lao-zi. Of the recent works touching on the problem we can refer, for example, to one in which both traditional Chinese and Western scholarship are brought together. In his book entitled "Lao Zi. The book and the man", the Chinese scholar Paulus Huang, who works at present in Finland, argues that meetings of Confucius with Lao-zi took place in fact. He even dates them. According to him, the first was in 535 B.C. when Confucius was 17 years old, the second — in 522 B.C. when he was 30, the third — in 501 B.C. when Confucius was at the age of 51, and the last one — in 495 B.C. when the Master was 57 [5]. The Tangut text and Zhuang-zi tell us that Confucius met the Old Man at the age of 69, i.e. their meeting could occur in 483 B.C.

It is usually denied that the fisherman in the 31st chapter in Zhuang-zi can be identified as Lao-zi. The Russian scholar L. D. Pozdneeva considers him to be merely an anonymous person. As for V. V. Malyavin, he provides no comments on the subject. The Tangut text tells us nothing about the Old Man's occupation, though we cannot state it with certainty, since first folios (or, possibly, one folio) in our manuscript are missing. We are only told that the meeting of Confucius with the Old Man takes place at an altar. However, a conversation between them seems to hint at the origin of the Old Man from the South, for he explains to Zi Lu what an educated man originating from the South

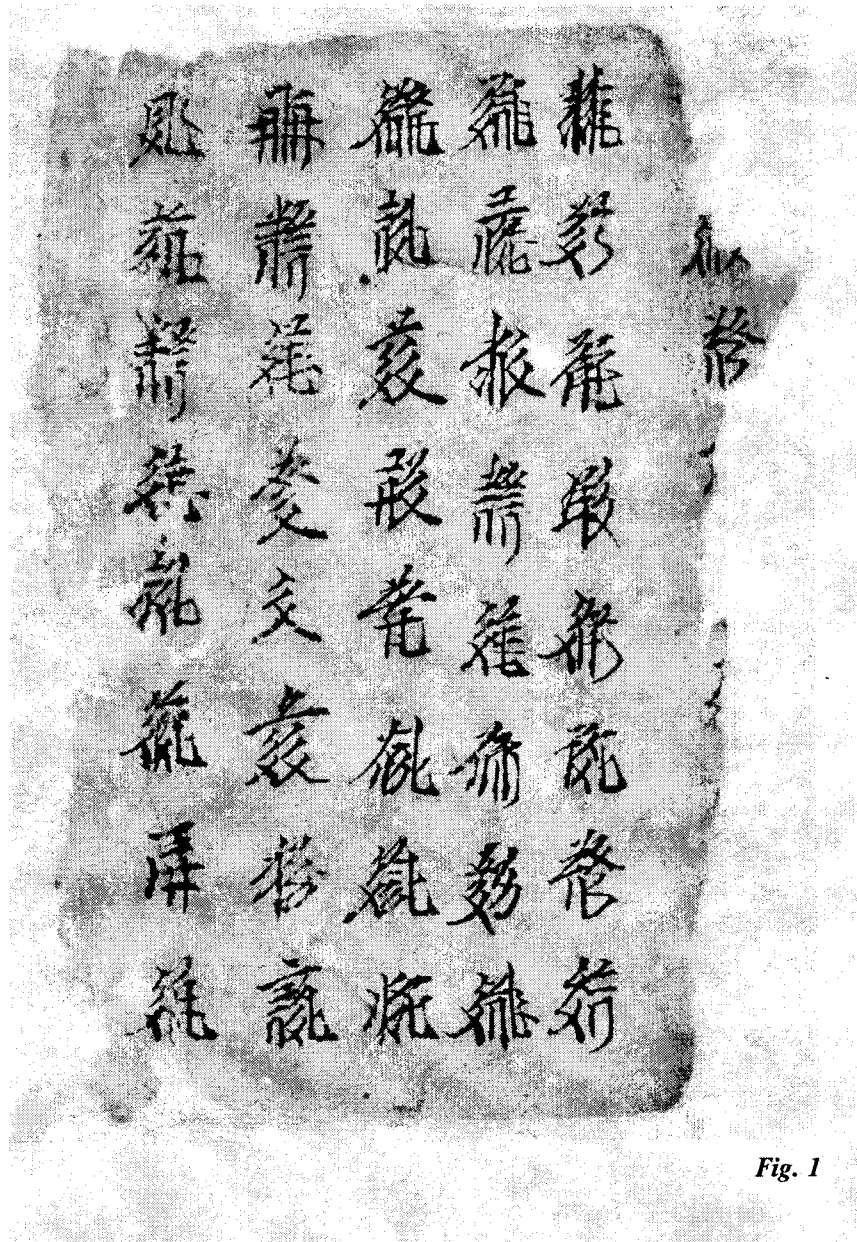


Fig. 1

should be. It is known that Lao-zi was a native of the southern state Chu, so there is some ground for identification of the Old Man with Lao-zi.

Not being an expert in the biographies of both Confucius and Lao-zi, as well as in the question of their meetings, real or mythical, I would not, however, completely deny the possibility of identifying the Old Man with Lao-zi. Surely, the text of the 31st chapter in Zhuang-zi is employed in the Tangut text only as a plot invention aimed at the criticism of Confucian teaching and the establishment of Lao-zi's views. Regrettably, we are unable to compare the text of the 31st chapter in Zhuang-zi with that in the Song edition which is contemporary to the Tangut state Xi-Xia (982—1227). This version of Zhuang-zi, comprising commentaries by Lu Hui-qing, has been discovered among Tangut manuscripts and block-prints in Khara-Khoto. But the manuscript of Zhuang-zi found there is, unfortunately, lacking the 31st chapter. At the same time, this find could be only one more proof of the popularity of the Daoist ideas in the Tangut state.

The Tangut text poses one more problem unsolved so far. It is not clear whether it represents a Tangut translation of the Chinese writing of the same title, which has not come to us, or an original Tangut work, composed, or more exact, compiled by Tangut adherents to Daoism, with borrowing made from the 31st chapter of Zhuang-zi.

It seems impossible to solve this problem at the present state of our knowledge of Tangut script and its links with Chinese literature of the period. Nevertheless, my own experience in the field of the Tangut literature studies makes me think that we still do not have an original Tangut writing but a Tangut translation of some not extant Chinese work. It should be added also that it remains obscure whether this hypothetical Chinese work was an original composition or a hitherto unknown version of the 31st chapter of Zhuang-zi. In the near future the author of the present article plans to make a full Russian translation of the Tangut text in question and intends to publish it in facsimile with the necessary research and commentaries.

Notes

1. N. A. Nevskii, *Tangutskaia filologiya. Issledovaniia i slovar' v dvukh knigakh* (Tangut Philology. Investigations and a Dictionary in Two Books) (Moscow, 1960), i, p. 87.
2. Zhuang-zi, *Le-zi*, in Russian (Moscow, 1995), p. 266. — *Filosofskoe nasledie*, vol. 123.
3. "Mudretsy Kitaia. Yang Zhu, Le-zi, Zhuang-zi" ("The sages of China. Yan Zhu, Le-zi, Zhuang-zi"), *Peterburg. XXI vek* (St. Petersburg, 1994), p. 346.
4. "The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation", a manuscript in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, call number Tang. 426, No. 3781, pp. 22—3.
5. P. Huang, *Lao Zi. The Book and the Man* (Helsinki, 1996). — *Studia Orientalia*, 79.

Illustrations

- Fig. 1. "The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation", manuscript Tang. 426, No. 3781 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, p. 34 (after restoration), 8.0 × 13.5 cm.