

## CONTENTS

<i>TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH</i> .	3
<b>I. Petrosyan.</b> The Author and the Book: the Turkish Translation of Sa'dī's <i>Gulistān</i> .	3
<b>V. Bobrovnikov.</b> <i>Ittiḥāq</i> Agreements in Daghestan in the Eighteenth — Nineteenth Centuries	20
<i>PRESENTING THE COLLECTIONS</i> .	28
<b>I. Zaytsev.</b> Turkic Manuscripts in the State Public Historical Library in Moscow .	28
<i>CONSERVATION PROBLEMS</i>	32
<b>M. Cailleteau, L. Feugère.</b> Problems of the Restoration of a Fragment of Kouang King Illustration (Mg 17 669)	32
<i>PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT</i> .	38
<b>B. Moor, E. Rezvan.</b> Al-Qazwīnī's ' <i>Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa Gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt</i> : Manuscript D 370 .	38
<i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> .	69
<i>Manuscripta Orientalia</i> in 2002, vol. 8, Nos. 1—4 (list of contributions) .	71

### Front cover:

"The story of the Dragon island (*jaẓīrat al-tinnīn*)", miniature from '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* by Zakariyā' b. Muḥammad b. Mahmūd al-Qazwīnī (ca. 1203–1282), manuscript D 370 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 988/1580, Baghdad school, fol. 64 a.

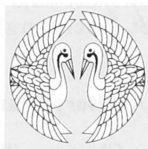
### Back cover:

**Plate 1.** "The giant snake or dragon (*thu' bān*)", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 219 a.

**Plate 2.** "The cat with the wings of a bat, Island of Java (*jaẓīrat al-zābih*) dweller", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 60 a.

**Plate 3.** "The old Jew" (*al-shaykh al-yahūdī*)", miniature in the same manuscript, fol. 71 a.

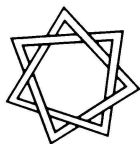
THESA PUBLISHERS  
IN CO-OPERATION WITH  
ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH  
OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES  
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



# Manuscripta Orientalia

*International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research*

Vol. 8 No. 4 December 2002



**THESA**  
**St. Petersburg**

Michel Cailleteau, Laure Feugère

## PROBLEMS OF THE RESTORATION OF A FRAGMENT OF KOUANG KING ILLUSTRATION (MG 17669)

This painting from Dunhuang belongs to the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques and is one of the oldest from Dunhuang, most probably from the eighth century. The *sūtra* of the contemplation of Amitāyus has been very often depicted on paintings and on the walls of sixty caves. Shan dao is said to have painted more than 200 representations of the Pure Land of Amitāyus, one of the oldest being on the wall of cave 393 (Sui period, 581—618).

Paradise is depicted in the centre, and on either side — Bimbisāra's and Ajātaśatru's stories and the vision of Queen Vaidehī, in which Śākyamuni himself teaches her sixteen meditations (sunset, water changed into ice, etc.). A palace and pavilions surround Amitābha's triad; on the terrace musicians are playing, accompanying a dancer.

Fragment MG 17669 offers a very interesting representation of this scene of paradise, however, its very poor condition made the interpretation of the painting rather difficult. Michel Cailleteau has achieved a remarkable result in the restoration of this painting, which now allows a better understanding of the scene.

In the upper part we can see two small Buddhas on clouds. The pavilions show a great economy of lines, but their bases are prominent. Amitābha is shown with a gesture of starting the wheel of the law. At the bottom, on the right, there is a *kinari* (human-headed bird) with two heads, similar to that in another representation of the Pure Land of Śākyamuni in London (Stein collection, ch. XXVIII 00—4). The eight representations of Bimbisāra's story on the right side follow the usual order in this type of paintings, while on the left only eleven scenes of the visions of Queen Vaidehī are partly discernable.

The painting is composed on four pieces of silk, sewn together: the largest piece is bordered on the left by a selvaige; another piece is sewn along the centre on 88 cm height, and a selvaige on the right side. Above are two small pieces, sewn together, of 17.5 cm width each (see *fig. 1*). The whole painting was framed by a stripe, some stitches of which are still visible on the selvaige.

Today its measurements have changed in comparison with those indicated by Nicolas Vandier in his “Bannières

de Touen Houang” (1976): height — 121 cm, and width is 88 cm, not 91.5 cm. The reason is that Michel Cailleteau has brought some shreds closer together. However, since the bottom part of the painting is missing, its original length remains unknown.

The work, an adhesive distemper painted on silk, is coated with a layer of several sheets of paper of Far Eastern origin, joined on the edges. This support appears to have been fixed along the edges on a wood pulp board.

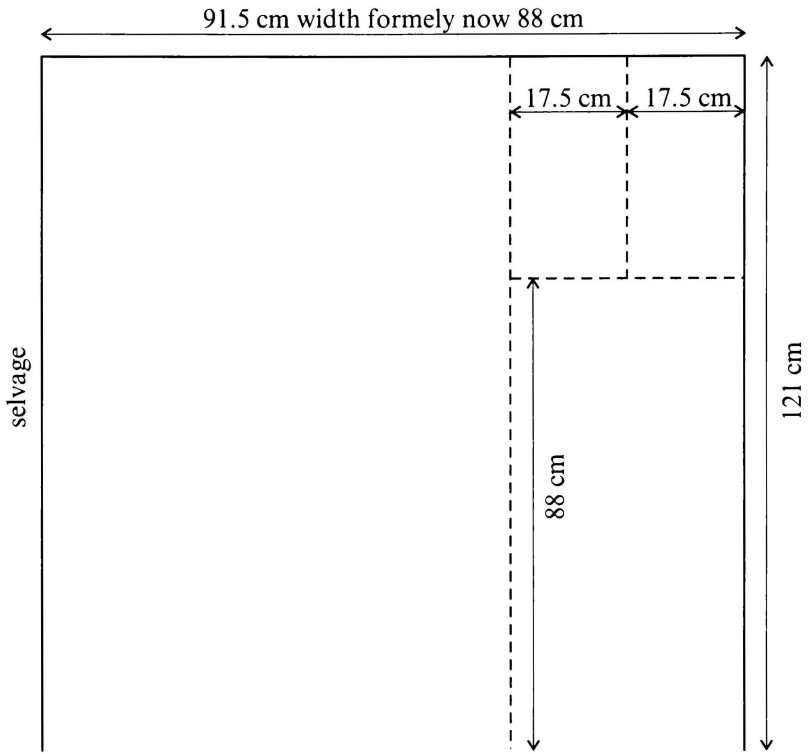
At first sight, the work presents a species of a sequence of slashed strips arranged in a more or less parallel way, letting appear fragments of the personages of the Buddhist pantheon, and framing the face of the Buddha located in the middle of the axis of the composition. Otherwise, the composition would have been asymmetric and even anarchic in many places. Only an experienced eye of the expert could restore the geometry of the composition and the initial arrangement of the various iconographical elements.

One may suggest that the painting was in a critical condition at the time of its discovery, the silk support in particular being torn, dirty, and with a number of lacunae. An old restoration may have stopped some physical degradations, but, unfortunately, created many new others. The craftsman who sought to save the painting worked too fast and not enough carefully. As a result, the losses had increased. The painting's fragments were placed mostly at random in the course of time, often with overlappings, with a resulting confusion, which made it difficult the painting's reading. The situation had become even worse with the appearance of other changes: most of the colours, especially in the lower part, had darkened, largely because of putting adhesive during the first phase of the lining. Moreover, the adhesive had fixed irreversibly the dust accumulated during the centuries. The volume of the losses is too great to make the restoration of the original an easy work. It is to be noted that in addition to the paper's dusty look, its rather cold whitish tint, has spoiled the impression of delicate and shaded colours of the painting, weakened by previous alterations.

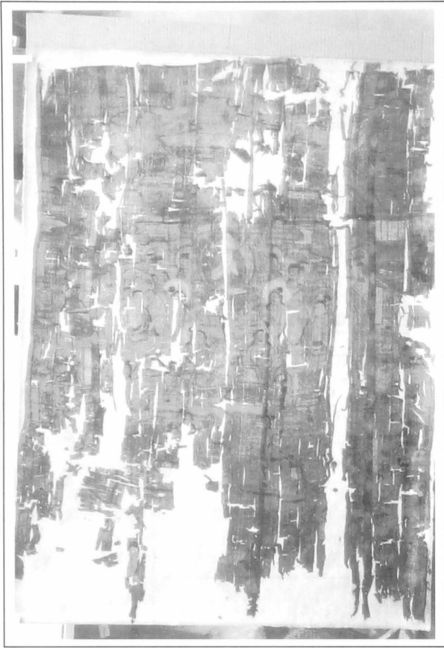
### The restoration process

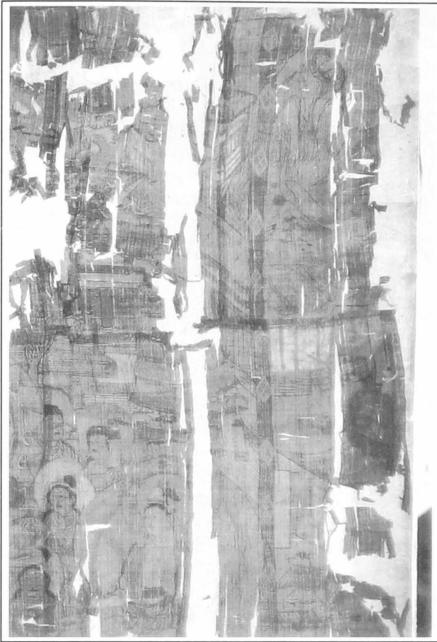
The condition of the painting seemed too poor to be improved. Besides, the general removal of the paper was impossible because of the silk's degradation. In this condi-

tions, the decoating was performed in a restricted manner: after the process of selection, according to their sizes which allowed safe handling, some pieces of painted silk have

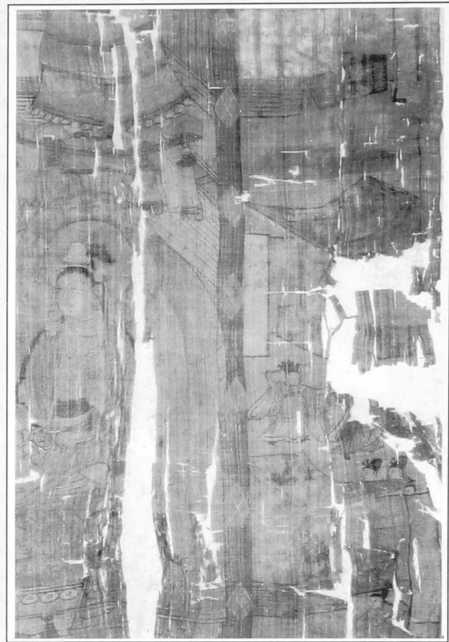


*Fig. 1*

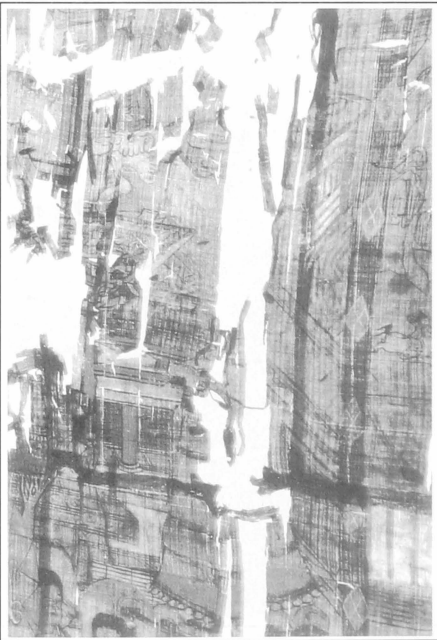
*Fig. 2**Fig. 3**Fig. 4**Fig. 5*



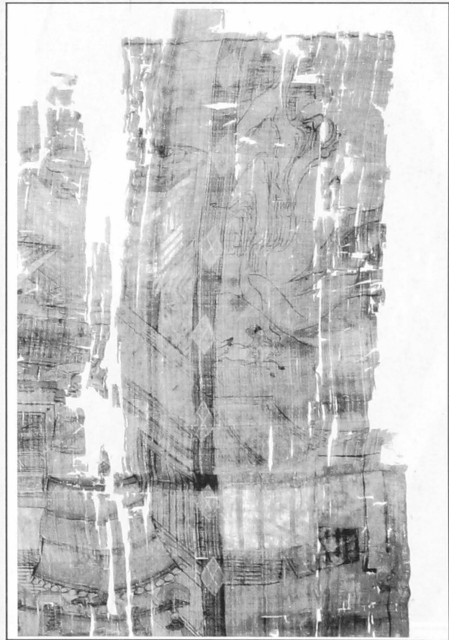
*Fig. 6*



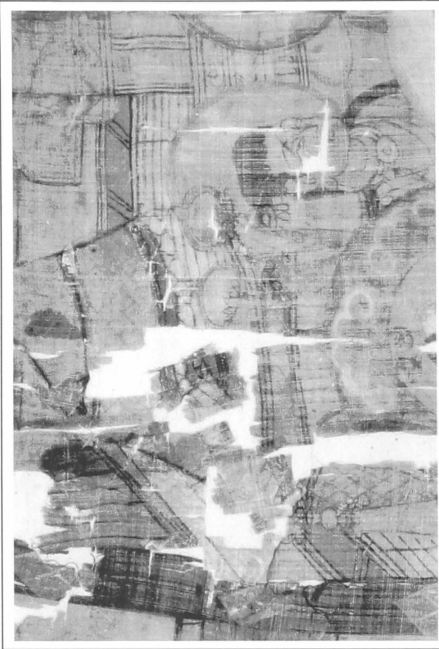
*Fig. 7*



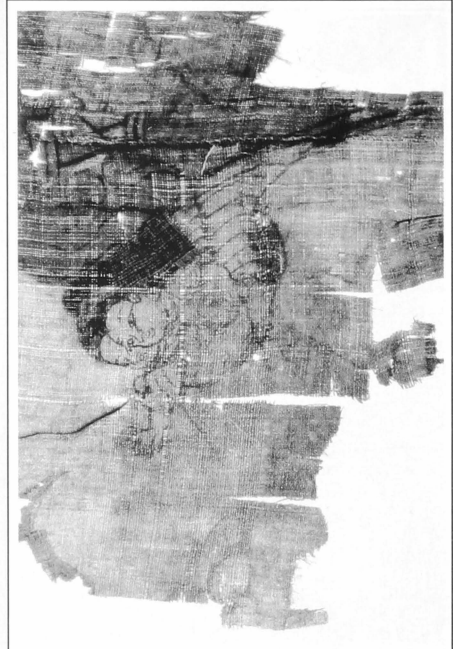
*Fig. 8*



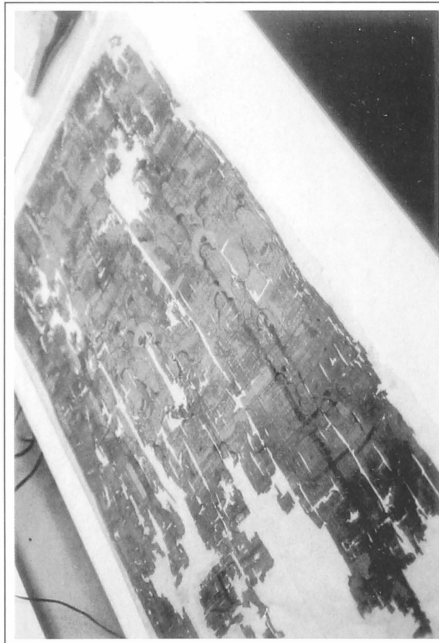
*Fig. 9*



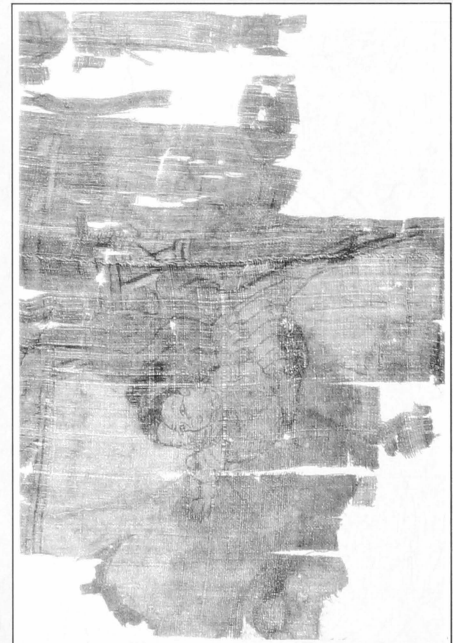
*Fig. 11*



*Fig. 13*



*Fig. 10*



*Fig. 12*

been decoated. After this was done using a "preservation pencil" (an ultra-sonic humidifier operating with a warmth generator), the pieces have been unfolded, depending on their condition, placed in the plan and then on the paper support. (The adhesive was methylcellulose mixed up with hydroxypropyl cellulose.)

The left part, which was shifted with an eye to the whole composition, has been decoated and then adjusted in a more consistent manner. The thinning of the supporting paper has been made under totally dry conditions. The transparency thus obtained allowed a lining using a slightly tinted layer of Tengujo (6 gram), which resulted in obtaining a paper tone more in harmony with the silk. The work was fitted up on a rigid support made of a polycarbonate sheet covered with a conservation board. A good flatness was thus achieved, which improved the reading of the painting.

With the aid of these two joint actions, local treatment and a slightly tinted support, Michel Cailleteau has also been able to improve a general view of the painting and made it legible. Cleaning has revealed gilding on the large parasol on the left. The traces of clay became visible on the left side, at the bottom, and one of the visions of Queen Vaidehī. After the restoration, all colours came to be brighter and more vivid, and some details appeared to be clear at the bottom, where one can now see two Buddhas standing on the left. The figure of Buddha on the right is partly destroyed, but one can discern an offering gesture of his right arm.

Unfortunately, Michel Cailleteau was unable to enlarge the visible area of main representation of the Buddha seated in the centre of the composition, as the adhesive proved to be too strong.

### Bibliography

*Les Arts de l'Asie Centrale: la collection Pelliot du Musée Guimet* (Paris, 1995), p. 319, pl. 17.

### Illustrations

- Fig. 1. Schema of fragment MG 17669.
  - Fig. 2. General view of fragment MG 17669 (before restoration).
  - Fig. 3. The fragment after restoration, with the lining support. The support is made of polycarbonate.
  - Fig. 4. Lower right-hand part after restoration.
  - Fig. 5. Vaidehī and her husband (stitches from the missing border are guessed).
  - Fig. 6. Upper right-hand part with a scene of Bimbisāra (before restoration).
  - Fig. 7. The same fragment after restoration.
  - Fig. 8. Bimbisāra hunting. upper right-hand corner (before restoration).
  - Fig. 9. The same scene after restoration.
  - Fig. 10. In the process of restoration (after bringing together the two parts, and before lining).
  - Fig. 11. A fragment of architecture detail with a parasol.
  - Fig. 12. *Kinarī* (before restoration).
  - Fig. 13. *Kinarī* after restoration.
-