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# From the Editor

## THE DISCOVERY OF TWO TANGUT SUTRAS

In June 1990, Martin Heijdra, the Gest Library's bibliographer, discovered two hitherto-unnoticed Tangut sutras in the library's rare book room. This is an important discovery: these may be the only portions of Tangut sutras to exist in North America, since most extant Tangut works are held by libraries in Europe (especially those in Paris and Leningrad), in China, and to a lesser extent in Japan.

Placed inside these two sutras are librarians' notes written on strips of paper, indicating that these sutras may have been purchased in Peking well before 1940; thus they are part of the old Gest Library collection, which the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton purchased from McGill University in Montreal in 1937. Since its arrival in Princeton at that time, the collection has been housed and administered as part of Princeton University Library. Dr. Nancy Lee Swann, who was curator of the Gest Library, first in Montreal, and then, from 1931 to 1948, in Princeton, and Dr. Hu Shih, a famed Chinese scholar and curator of the Gest Library from 1950 to 1952, attempted to identify these two sutras. The two works remained uncatalogued, however, since Tangut, the language in which they are written, has long been a dead language, and it is only in the last two decades that real progress has been made in deciphering its script.

The Tangut people were of Tibeto-Burmese stock. They lived in northwestern China, their state covering areas of modern Kansu, Ningsia, Shensi, and Inner Mongolia. A semi-independent Tangut regime emerged as early as the late ninth century. Its rulers in the tenth and eleventh centuries rapidly developed its economy, military forces, and culture. In 1036, they ordered the adoption of the newly invented Tangut script, a complicated writing system based loosely on the principles of Chinese writing. Two years later the Tangut king proclaimed the independence of his Tangut empire, which flourished for two centuries. In 1227, however, Chinggis Khan led his armies in an attack on the Tangut state that obliterated it, killing or dispersing much of its population. The Tangut language and its

script fell into disuse in the centuries that followed, except within Buddhist circles where they were kept alive, surviving until perhaps the fifteenth century.

According to Mr. Heijdra, the two sutras are both in the accordion-type binding that is also standard for Chinese Buddhist sutras. One is *chüan* 77 of the *Hua-yen ching* (Garland sutra) and is printed from movable wooden type. The major characteristics of this volume appear to be identical with those of the *Hua-yen ching* preserved in the Beijing Library, which, however, possesses only *chüan* 59 to 75 and 78 to 90. *Chüan* 5 to 10 of the same sutra are held by the library of the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies, Kyoto University, in Japan. Modern scholars believe that this edition was produced during the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and is therefore later than the famous woodblock edition of the *Tripitaka* in the Tangut language printed at Hangchow around 1302 during the Yüan dynasty.

The other sutra found in the Gest Library is *chüan* 4 of the *Lien-hua ching* (Lotus sutra). It lacks a cover, but has a beautiful frontispiece woodblock illustration showing a group of Buddhas. This volume is perhaps from an earlier Yüan-dynasty woodblock edition, of which the Beijing Library holds *chüan* 2 and 3. Another possibility is that it could belong to the 1302 edition of the *Tripitaka*.

All these attributions, however, are tentative. Mr. Heijdra will have the two sutras photographed so that copies can be sent to experts on Tangut history, in the hope of establishing their identity. They complement in an interesting way the Tangut items included among the Tun-huang fragments described by Judith Ogden Bullitt in "Princeton's Manuscript Fragments from Tun-huang" (*Gest Library Journal*, vol. 3, nos. 1–2, 1989, pp. 7–29).

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The editor is delighted to announce that the *Catalogue of Traditional Chinese Books in the Gest Oriental Library of Princeton University*, prepared by Peter Ch'ang, vice director of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, and Wu Che-fu, associate curator in charge of the Rare Books Section in the same museum, with the assistance of members of the Gest staff, has been published by the Commercial Press in Taipei. It is a handsomely produced book, in Chinese, of 914 pages. The next issue of the *Gest Library Journal*

will carry a short article about this important new publication. In the meantime, inquiries about it may be directed to Antony Marr, curator of the Gest Library.

#### VISITORS TO THE LIBRARY

In the past year, the Gest Library hosted several distinguished visitors. In early June, Yasushi Hirano, professor of Japanese history at Ibaraki University, Japan, visited the library. One month later, Dr. Michael Y. K. Ying, dean of the College of Humanities, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Taiwan, visited the library during his stay in Princeton, from July 23 to July 27.

In mid-July, the Gest Library hosted Tang Yijie, professor and president of the International Academy of Chinese Culture in Peking. During his visit to the library, Professor Tang did research on the *Chi-sha pan Ta-tsang ching*, a Buddhist canon in Chinese translation which consists of 1,532 sutras in 6,362 *chüan*. The cutting and printing of the whole set started as early as ca. 1225 and was not completed until 1349. Both Dr. Hu Shih, curator of the Gest Library in the early fifties, and Professor Ch'ü Wan-li, who compiled "A Catalogue of the Chinese Rare Books in the Gest Collection of the Princeton University Library" (1974), did some preliminary research on the work. Professor Tang hopes that his study will further the knowledge of this Buddhist canon.

Wang Zengyu, professor of Chinese history at the Institute of History, Academy of Social Sciences, China, was a visiting fellow in the Department of East Asian Studies, Princeton University, from June to November. A specialist in Sung history who has published numerous articles on the institutions, the military, and the economy of the Sung dynasty, Professor Wang was invited to Princeton by the Cambridge History of China project. During his stay in Princeton, he also kindly contributed an article, "Sung Historical Documents Preserved in the *Yung-lo ta-tien*," to the *Gest Library Journal*; it will appear in the next issue.

#### THE CONTRIBUTORS

Martin Collcutt is professor of Japanese history and director of the Program in East Asian Studies at Princeton University. He did his undergrad-

uate studies at Cambridge University in England, then lived in Japan for some years before going on to graduate studies at Harvard University. His doctoral dissertation became the important book *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan* (1981). As his many publications show, he has broad interests in the cultural history of Japan, extending to literature, art, and religion, as well as in the political and social bases of the civilization. His contribution to this issue of the *Gest Journal* draws on all these fields of his special expertise.

Wang Liqi (Wang Li-ch'i) is a professor in the History Department at Peking University (Beijing Daxue), consulting editor at the People's Literature Publishing Company, special research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China, and a member of many associations and advisory boards. The *Gest Library Journal* is pleased to offer an article by this eminent Chinese scholar, which has been translated and adapted by his son, our editor, Dr. Wang Zhen-ping.

Professor Wang, born in Szechwan Province, now approaches his eightieth birthday. His career in scholarship reflects the continuity of the best in modern Chinese scholarship through a century of vicissitudes. After graduating in the Department of Chinese at Szechwan University in 1937, he went on to do graduate research at the Chinese Humanities Research Institute at Peking University. During the anti-Japanese war he returned to teach in Szechwan, the base of resistance in unoccupied China. At the end of World War II he returned to Peking, taking up his position at the university at that time.

In a lecture at Princeton two or three years ago a professor from the History Department at Peking University was explaining the difficulties that most young Chinese, whose educations have been repeatedly interrupted by the disorders of recent decades, face in reading classical Chinese texts. "But," he added, "we have made a special effort to confront this problem: we have invited the famous senior scholar, Professor Wang Liqi, to tutor our students in the reading of old texts." (The visitor did not know that Wang Zhen-ping was in the audience.) That a scholar of Professor Wang's eminence would undertake such a relatively low-level but absolutely crucial task tells us much about his sense of responsibility to the cultural tradition. It also reveals how far that tradition has declined in our time. When Professor Wang was himself a college student in the 1930s, instruction at that level

was part of middle-school education; all college students in the humanities and most in other fields as well had at least read the major monuments of the classical tradition, and had memorized large portions of them. Nowadays most college students, even those in the humanities, are totally unfamiliar with the entire corpus of classical writings.

Much of Professor Wang's career has been devoted to preparing definitive punctuated and annotated editions of the major literary monuments, enabling younger scholars in China and abroad to gain easier access to them, and to the basic methods of scholarship. In such widespread fields as history, philosophy, poetics, and literary criticism, as well as vernacular fiction and drama, his accomplishments in meticulous textual research are indeed impressive. The breadth of his scholarly expertise is virtually unmatched among scholars of our time. His publications include twenty major books and more than one hundred scholarly articles. He truly embodies the import of the old Chinese term: "*Yi-tai hung-ju*," or "the master scholar of our time."

For this issue of the *Gest Library Journal* Professor Wang contributes a short scholarly notice about the recent coming to light of two previously unnoticed *chüan* ("books") of the *Yung-lo ta-tien*. A compilation of complete texts and portions of texts in existence during the reign of the early Ming dynasty Yung-lo emperor (r. 1402–1424), it was prepared in one manuscript copy, in an effort to preserve the best of all the literature known at that time. More than two thousand scholars worked on it for five years. It comprised 22,877 *chüan*, bound in 11,950 stitched volumes of large page size. In the sixteenth century another complete set was produced, a manuscript copy matching the quality and format of the original set. The original set disappeared soon thereafter; some scholars speculate that it may be found in the tomb of the Chia-ching emperor who died in 1567, if that still-intact tomb is ever excavated. The copy was preserved in the imperial palace, through the change of dynasties and into the nineteenth century, when what remained of it was scattered in the plunder of Peking carried out by the British and French armies at the close of the Second Opium War, in 1860. Single volumes of it became collectors' items. The Gest Collection contains two *chüan* in two stitched volumes. They are described by Dr. Hung-lam Chu in his notes for the Special Catalogue Issue of the *Gest Library Journal* (vol. 2, no. 2, 1988, pp. 78–81), with an illustration. (See also Ch'ü Wan-li, "A Catalogue of the Chinese Rare Books in the Gest Collec-

tion of the Princeton University Library," in *Ch'ü Wan-li hsien-sheng chüan-chi*, vol. 13 [Taipei: Lien-Ching ch'u-pan shih-yeh kung-ssu, 1983].) No more than thirty to forty percent of the *Yung-lo ta-tien* remains in existence today. In recent years photolithographic reprints of the extant volumes available in public collections have appeared in Taiwan and in mainland China. Their value for scholarship is high. In many cases they represent the only existing copies of works otherwise totally lost, and in others they are the earliest extant copies of works otherwise known only in later abridgments or inferior editings. Wang Liqi's work has frequently drawn on this resource for materials relevant to his scholarly editing of texts. Here he reports on one of two important *chüan* newly come to notice whose content is of special significance for the study of Sung-dynasty (A.D. 960–1279) history.

F. W. Mote

Cui Jian-ying, who contributes a second article on the organizing, cataloguing, and handling of traditional Chinese woodblock-printed books, is head of the Division of Special Collections, Library of the Academy of Sciences, Beijing. He also serves as research scholar for the Committee of Research on Old Editions of the Association of Chinese Libraries and as adviser to the Institute for the Historical Study of Chinese Seismology. His first article, "The Scope of the Term 'Shan-pen,' the Identification of Woodblock Editions, and the Organization of Catalogues, in Relation to Traditional Chinese Books," was published in the last issue of the *Gest Library Journal* (vol. 3, no. 3, 1990, pp. 35–60).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editor of the *Gest Library Journal* would like to acknowledge his indebtedness to the many persons who helped prepare this issue of the journal. Cao Shu-wen, a disciple of Professor Cui Jian-ying and a specialist on Chinese rare books who is now working for the Gest Library in Princeton, helped clarify and elaborate certain important points made in Professor Cui's article, "The Identification of Woodblock-Printed Chinese Books." She was also instrumental in finding the appropriate illustrations for the article.

As part of an effort to solicit articles for the journal, the editor wrote to

various Japanese scholars. Haruko Wakabayashi, a doctoral candidate in the Department of East Asian Studies, Princeton University, translated the letter from English to Japanese and Professor Collcutt carefully polished the Japanese translation.

The Gest Library recently received a xerox copy of the *Meng-shui chai ts'un-tu* (Documents preserved in the Meng-shui Hall) from Xian-en Ye, director of the Division of Economic History, Institute of History, Kwangtung (Guangdong) Academy of Social Sciences, China. An extremely rare Chinese work, the *Meng-shui chai ts'un-tu* contains judgments made by officials in Kwangtung Province during late Ming times. This work will provide valuable materials for scholars interested in the social history of the Kwangtung area. Professor Ye also kindly agreed to write an article for the *Gest Journal*, introducing the work to Western readers.

The editor's gratitude is also extended to Ralph Meyer, publication manager and a computing specialist in the Department of East Asian studies. Thanks to Mr. Meyer's help and patience, the editor was able to complete his work using a complicated word-processing program, which, although immensely helpful, from time to time proved puzzling and frustrating.

