

TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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TANGUT BUDDHIST BOOKS: CUSTOMERS, COPYISTS, AND EDITORS

In the colophons of Tangut-language books from the dead city of Khara Khoto, references have survived to more than 400 people involved in ordering Buddhist books, copying them, editing (collating) them, or carving boards for woodcut editions. An analysis of this information is of interest not only to specialists, but to all scholars who study the processes by which manuscripts and early print materials were created the world over.

In the course of working on this paper, the author studied over 160 references to customers, 125 references to copyists, 10 references to carvers and 14 to editors (collators), who are mentioned in the Tangut materials found in Khara Khoto. In the form of brief information about the social and professional status of these people we have first-hand data about those individuals who made possible the appearance of Buddhist books in the Tangut (Xi Xia) language.

It is known that Buddhist books from Khara Khoto in the Tangut language belong entirely to the time of the Tangut state of Xi Xia (982—1227). There are no books in P. K. Kozlov's collection which date from the Yuan dynasty or from the beginning of the Ming dynasty. The earliest Buddhist book among those dated is from 1084; the latest is from 1222. Although texts which date from 1226 have been discovered in the famous *suburgan*, the major source for the collection, it is generally accepted that the construction of the *suburgan* dates to 1222 or a little bit later. Buddhist books were placed there during the burial of a distinguished person. It is possible that various non-Buddhist books made their way to the *suburgan* later, under threat of invasion by Chingiz Khan; such books were placed above the burial site and the Buddhist books. This is possibly the reason why P. K. Kozlov asserted that in the placement of books in the *suburgan* he observed chaos (above) as well as strict order (below).

In all likelihood, a woman was buried in the Khara Khoto *suburgan*. L. N. Menshikov holds that this could be the empress Lo, a Chinese woman, widow of the well-known emperor Ren-xiao. She allegedly found herself in exile in Khara Khoto after his death. We have no information on empress Lo's exile from the capital, and the assumption of L. N. Menshikov, if tempting, requires addi-

tional argumentation. Empress Lo is mentioned only twice in Tangut texts. On a folio of the *sūtra Fo shuo chāngāhan jīng* we find a stamp in red vermilion which contains the following: "Dedicated to the task of teaching pure truth, the widow empress Lo of the Great state [of the descendants of those who came from] the White Heights. She made an addition to the already existing Great *Tripiṭaka* in the Tangut language. The newly copied [*sūtra*] is located in the monastery's archive of *sūtras*. Heavenly prosperity unto the ages upon what is read and those who make sacrifices". The xylograph edition of the *sūtra* titled *Ren wang hu go boruo bolomido jing* indicates that this *sūtra* was distributed by the empress Lo in 1194. This is, in our view, still insufficient basis to claim that empress Lo was buried in the *suburgan*.

It is well known that participation in the reproduction of Buddhist canonical texts was recognized as a service which improved the believer's *karma*. For this reason, the customer was the central figure on the every-day level of distributing Buddhist books. His money made possible the acquisition of paper, brushes (*qalam*), and Indian ink; he paid for the work of copyists. The customer had to be a man of means, although we have references to orders for a single *juan* of *sūtra* submitted by a group of people, or orders for a copy of a section or half of a *juan*. References to many customers consist only of their names. There is also a sufficient number of cases where we learn about the social position of the customer. (We do not discuss here the emperors of Xi Xia as customers of copies and editions, or the distribution of *sūtras* to the population).

Thus, we find the following among customers: monks — 31 persons (slightly less than half of all customers). Among them: 6 persons who left their families (it is said of one of them that he left his family at age 12); 5 *śramaṇas*; 4 followers of *dhyāna*; 2 hermits; 1 *āyushman*; 2 nuns; 1 person "accepting orders" in the administration of Buddhist *saṅgha*; 1 prior; 1 "expert in texts"; 1 "student of the pure faith"

Among those customers about whom we learn more, one seventh are women. Aside from nuns, they were: 8 individuals simply called "lady"; 1 lady with the title *fu ren* (madame); 1 "woman of faith".