

Persian Translating at the Ming Court

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Abstract

Persian was used in tributary activities at the Ming court, in letters from tributary rulers, and in the Emperor's edicts to tributary rulers. Surviving documents and historical records show Persian was used for communications with Hami, Turfan, Samarkand, Herat and other Central Asian countries, with Tibet, and with countries along the sea route to Calicut and Hormuz. It was used for tributary letters, edicts and petitions, stele inscriptions and other documents.

A Persian college was one of ten language translating colleges established within the Hanlin Academy. The colleges recruited and trained officers for translating and other duties within the court secretariat.

Court records show that tributary activity took place on a large scale during the reigns of the Yongle and Xuande emperors (1403-1436). Zheng He's voyages stimulated tributary missions from maritime countries as far as Calicut and Hormuz, and a series of exchanges took place with countries along the route to Herat, capital of the Timurid Empire. This was the time of greatest activity for Persian translators.

Tributary activity decreased after that time, but a small number of Chinese translations of Persian letters show that Persian was used for petitions and tributary letters during 1472-1512. These are embedded within a collection of bilingual language testing materials, which were later incorporated into the *Huayiyiyu* collection of bilingual wordlists and exemplary texts. The original Persian letters are lost. The word-for-word Persian glossings of the Chinese texts are not documents of tributary use, but texts used for official testing of students within the Persian College. They don't indicate what the standard of translating from Chinese into Persian was at that time.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled Persian Translating at the Ming Court has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature are indicated in the thesis.

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Introduction

This thesis is an overview of the information that can be known about Persian translating, bringing together the evidence of surviving documents, previous scholarship and more recently published studies to examine what can be known about the Persian translators, their recruitment and training, their translating methods and the kind of work they did. Relics of Ming court translating attracted the attention of bibliophiles in the Qing dynasty, and European orientalists took an interest in various aspects of Persian translating, but no comprehensive study has been made. The history of Ming tributary relations has been studied in detail, but questions of the languages used are seldom addressed. Some mistakes and misunderstandings by earlier students can be corrected by a closer reading of source texts, and in light of recently published information, to provide a more accurate picture.

The pivotal role of the person of the emperor at the centre of the cosmic order found expression in the rituals of the Ming court. Tribute rituals and the presence of envoys at the court projected the emperor's power beyond the borders.¹ He brought harmony and order to the world through his utterances, which had a sacred significance. Translating his words into other languages ensured they were understood by far-off subjects. When the tribute ritual was performed, submissive letters from tributaries had also to be communicated to the Emperor. Thus translating was an integral part of the tributary process. Appropriately for a duty so intimate to the Emperor, it fell to the scholars of the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlinyuan* 翰林院) to ensure that translations of the best quality were done, recruiting properly educated, trained and qualified translators in the many languages of tributary lands. As the Yongle Emperor enlarged his influence over the world he knew, colleges were established within the Hanlin Academy to train translators in Persian, Mongolian, Nüzhen, Tibetan, Indian, Baiyi (Tay), Uighur, Burmese, Babai (Chiangmai), and Thai, to serve the tributary process and the Emperor's communications with foreign lands.

Persian was one of the languages used in the tributary process, and was used in communications with more countries than any of the other languages, however there is

¹David Robinson, 'The Ming Court', in Robinson, David M. ed., *Culture, Courtiers and Competition: the Ming Court (1368- 1644)*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 27.

nothing to indicate it had particular status among them. Officers of the colleges were all of the same status. Persian translators worked alongside translators of other languages. Letters from the Timurid Empire, Moghulistan and Hami arrived in Uighur as well as Persian, and replies were sent in both languages, translators and calligraphers working together on the same long silk scrolls. Persian played an important part in communicating edicts to countries along the sea route to Hormuz, but as an adjunct to languages of those countries such as Thai and Tamil. In other documents it is used alongside Tibetan, Mongolian and Tay. Persian doesn't appear alone in any surviving documents, but preceding or following other languages. Persian translators probably had a greater volume of work to do than the others, especially during *Yongle* when tribute missions from many Central Asian and maritime countries increased. Because of their role in serving the Emperor's requirements in the tributary ritual, all the colleges were maintained, officers were appointed, and skill testing was carried out until the end of the dynasty, though only occasional tribute missions arrived, and few edicts to foreign lands were issued in the last one hundred and fifty years.

Schools in Muslim communities educated men in Persian. The route to the cultural capitals of Samarkand and Herat was open for most of the Ming period, and the poetry, history and grammar books produced there must have been read by those men, and they must have written letters and poems in Persian, but no trace of that culture survives, except some inscriptions on tombstones.² A few translations of the words of the Yongle Emperor made by court translators are the only surviving Persian documents from the Ming Dynasty.

A high standard of Persian translating already existed at the court when the colleges were established in 1407. The few surviving texts are from that time. The translators were highly educated in Persian and Chinese, and had passed the civil service examinations. Their work is not only grammatically correct, but it also adheres faithfully to the Emperor's original words. It can't be proven that the language skills of the Persian translators deteriorated, as there is nothing that reveals the standard of

²Chen Dasheng 陈达生 ed., *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao shike* 泉州伊斯兰教石刻 (Islamic inscriptions at Quanzhou), (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1984), nos 1-70.

Persian towards the end of the dynasty. The surviving translations show that a high standard of work was placed before the Emperor.

Historians are debating whether Marco Polo spoke Persian as a *lingua franca* when he was employed at the Mongolian court, and whether Persian was an official language of the Yuan government.³ However the records state clearly that an Imperial Muslim College, *Huihui Guozixue* 回回國子學 was established alongside the Chinese and Mongolian Colleges,⁴ and young men of the official class were selected to be trained to work as translators. Official documents of all kinds, including edicts, patents, letters and orders were created in several languages, including Persian, however none of these documents have come down to us, and only a few *paizi* 牌子 safe-passes bearing Persian words survive to attest to the use of Persian in the Yuan Empire.⁵ The situation is somewhat different for the Great Ming Empire. Several records describe the arrangements made at the Ming court for the translation of documents into Persian and other languages, and a small number of texts, translations from Chinese into Persian, and from Persian into Chinese, survive to show that Persian was used in communications with countries along the Silk Road to the west, with Tibet, and with maritime countries along the sea route to Calicut and Hormuz.

While no original Persian tributary documents survive, several edicts and letters to Tibetan leaders from *Hongwu* and *Yongle* have been preserved, and are held in the Tibetan archives.⁶ They are presented on large scrolls, some of fine golden yellow paper patterned with dragon-and pearl design, some of silk brocade in broad stripes of

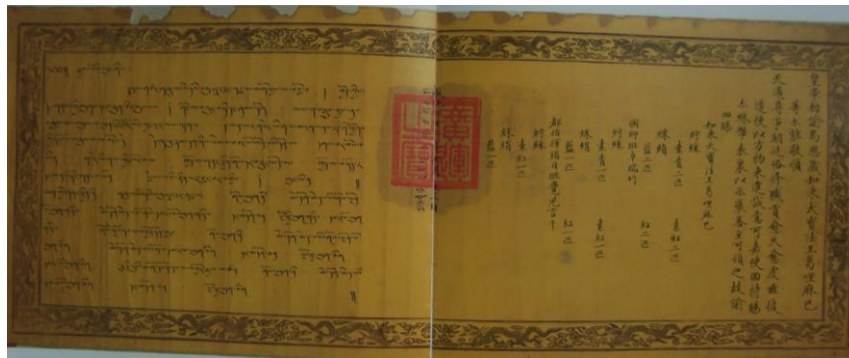
³David Morgan has summarised the arguments for this proposition, which was first expressed by Pelliot and Yule: Morgan, David, 'Persian as a Lingua Franca in the Mongol Empire', in Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), pp. 160-170. However, Stephen Haw has refuted all the somewhat scanty arguments; Marco Polo's supposed use of Persian terms, the use of the term *Huihui* in a Persian context, and Persian inscriptions on a small number of *paizi* safe-passes, arguing that Turkic, not Persian, was the *lingua franca* of the semuren in the Great Mongolian Empire, and the language that Marco Polo spoke. Stephen Haw, 'The Persian Language in Yuan-Dynasty China: A Reappraisal', *East Asian History* 39 (Dec., 2014), pp. 5-32.

⁴Thomas T Allsen, 'The Rasūlid Hexaglot in its Eurasian Cultural Context', in Peter B. Golden ed., *The King's Dictionary, the Rasūlid Hexaglot* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 37, traces the references to the Persian College in *Yuan shi*.

⁵Igor de Rachewiltz, 'Two Recently Published *P'ai-tzu* Discovered in China', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36 (1982), pp. 414-417.

⁶*Xizang lishi dang'an huicui* 西藏歷史檔案薈萃 (A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet), compiled by the Archives of the Tibet Autonomous Region (Shekou: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1995), nos. 23-30.

different colours, and some on plain white paper backed with silk. A letter of 1453 in Chinese and Mongolian enumerating imperial gifts of silk, held in the Topkapi Museum, is also on dragon and pearl patterned yellow paper.⁷ These Tibetan documents serve to show what edicts to other countries looked like, and we can suppose that those containing Persian translations were written on scrolls of the same type.



Edict on gold paper issued to Karmaba by Emperor Chenghua in 1486. *Xizang lishi dangan huicui*, pl. 30.



Edict on multicoloured silk issued to Lhatshangkyab by Emperor Yongle in 1413. *Xizang lishi dangan huicui*, pl. 25.



Edict on white paper backed with silk issued to Kavzhiba by Emperor Yongle in 1413. *Xizang Lishi Dangan Huicui* pl.25.

When Zhu Yuanzhang's forces rode into Khanbalik, an amnesty was proclaimed and officers of the former regime were employed in the new administration at Nanjing. Linguists from the Muslim College probably translated the letters of accession that

⁷Francis Woodman Cleaves, 'The Sino-Mongolian Edict of 1453 in the Topkapi Sarayi Müzesi', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13, (1950), pp. 431-436.

were sent overland to Samarkand and by sea to Calicut. The records show that a small amount of tribute activity took place for most of *Hongwu*, but it increased greatly in frequency during *Yongle*. Throughout that reign the capital hosted thousands of visitors, as ambassadors and sometimes rulers themselves arrived with large retinues.

The Ming History, *Ming shi* 明史, provides information about tributary activity the activities of Persian translators in chapters on foreign countries.⁸ A guide to this history is Bretschneider's *Mediaeval Researches*, published in 1910, which contains his annotated translations of all the chapters relating to the Western Regions.⁹ The Ming Veritable Records *Ming shilu* 明實錄, compiled from daily court records, give a more detailed picture¹⁰ This work was never published in imperial times, but a photolithograph of a privately held manuscript copy published in 1940 gave impetus to research.¹¹ Indexes list contacts with Central Asian countries¹² and countries along the sea route to Hormuz.¹³ The Great Ming Statutes *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典, contains information about the translation of documents and tribute activity.¹⁴ These records together provide a meticulous account of envoys to tributary countries and tribute missions from them, from which the amount of translating activity at the court can be gauged.

The foreign languages college, *Siyiguan* 四夷館, was established in 1407,¹⁵ when the Yongle Emperor had begun large-scale missions by sea to Calicut and by land to Samarkand and Herat, and the resulting flood of tribute bearers to the court made it

⁸Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al. eds., *Ming shi* 明史, 1736; rpt. 28 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), vols 324-332.

⁹E. Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources. Fragments towards the knowledge of the geography and history of Central and Western Asia from the 13th to the 17th century* (London: Kegan Paul, &c., 1910).

¹⁰*Ming shilu* 明實錄, 1418-mid 17th century. Facsimile rpt. of Guoli Beiping tushuguan cang hongge chaoben, 133 vols (Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1961-66).

¹¹Wolfgang Franke, 'The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty', in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank eds., *Histories of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 75-76.

¹²Watanabe Hiroshi, 'An Index of Embassies and Tribute Missions from Islamic Countries to Ming China (1368-1466) as recorded in the Ming Shi-lu, Classified According to Geographic Area', *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 33 (1975), pp. 285-347.

¹³Geoff Wade, trans., *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore), <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl>.

¹⁴*Da Ming huidian* 大明會典, Li Dongyang 李東陽 et al. comp. (Taibei: Zhongwen shuju, 1963).

¹⁵*Ming shi* 74, p. 1797.

necessary to begin training large numbers of translators and to give them substantive posts. It contained separate colleges for Mongolian, Nüzhen, Tibetan, Xitian (Indian), Huihui (Persian), Baiyi (Tay)¹⁶, Gaochang (Uighur), and Miandian (Burmese). Two more colleges, for Babai (Chiangmai) and Xianluo (Siamese), were added later. *Siyi guan ze* 四夷館則, the Regulations of the Siyiguan, a compilation of official documents made progressively between 1543 and 1688, contains edicts, regulations, precedents and name lists relating to teachers, students, courses and examinations, as well as rules for secondment to other departments.¹⁷ The organisation it describes is not a translating bureau, where documents would be received, translated and checked, but rather a collection of translating training colleges staffed by teachers, where translators were trained, tested, and conferred rank, to be seconded as required for translating, calligraphy and editing work within the *Neige* 內閣, the great secretariat where documents were drafted. Unfortunately the compilers of *Siyiguan ze* could not locate any materials for the period before 1490, and we cannot see what the Siyiguan was like during *Yongle* when it was busiest, and a continuous flow of documents put pressure on the college, and enrolment and testing provided a steady supply of translators. The texts which survive from *Yongle* show that translating at that time was done by people for whom Persian was a native language, or who knew Persian very well.

Timur's empire and the Great Ming Empire both emerged from the breakup of the Mongolian Empire. The *Hongwu* Emperor established relations with Timur, and a series of tribute missions is recorded in the Ming annals. A Chinese translation of a Persian letter to the Emperor from Timur recorded in the Ming History, the only translation of a Persian tribute document which survives from the *Hongwu* period, shows a high level of translating skill. Timur inexplicably detained subsequent envoys, and tribute relations discontinued for the rest of Taizu's long reign. When Zhu Di usurped the throne and proclaimed *Yongle*, a series of major embassies and tribute missions soon began with Timur's successors Khalil and Shah Rukh. The Persian

¹⁶The language of Baiyi, identified as Mäng² Maaw², a country of the Dai 傣 peoples in present-day south-west Yunnan. See Chapter 3.

¹⁷Lü Weiqi 呂維祺 ed., *Siyiguan ze* 四譯館則 (Taipei: Wenhai chuban she, 1985). Cf. Franke *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History*, p. 205.

translations of two letters from the Yongle Emperor to Shah Rukh at his capital at Herat, together with two of Shah Rukh's letters in reply, are preserved in a Persian historical work *Zubdat al-tavārīkh*, compiled by Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, historian at the court of Shah Rukh, who copied several of them into his history.¹⁸ He also gives a valuable description of the letters, providing us with the useful information that all of the letters from the Chinese Emperor were written in three languages, Chinese, Persian, and Uighur. These letters attracted the attention of orientalist in the eighteenth century and the Persian texts and a translation were published by William Chambers in 1786,¹⁹ and the Persian texts with a French translation by Blochet in 1910.²⁰

Historians including Morris Rossabi,²¹ Joseph Fletcher,²² and Shao Xunzheng 邵循正²³ have used these letters to interpret Great Ming's relationship with the Timurid Empire. Detailed studies of Ming relations with the Timurid Empire have been published by Ralph Kauz²⁴ and Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜.²⁵ A diary record by Ghiyās-al-Dīn Naqqāsh, the painter, a member of a large tribute mission from several Central Asian princes which arrived at the new capital at Beijing in 1420, provides vivid pictures of all aspects of the magnificent tributary ceremonies.²⁶ His account is preserved in several Persian histories, and has been translated into European languages and English since the eighteenth century.²⁷

¹⁸Ḥāfiz Abru, *Zubdat al-tavārīkh*, Sayyid Javādī ed. (Tehran, 1993), vol. 3, pp. 460 ff.

¹⁹William Chambers, 'An Account of Embassies and Letters That Passed Between the Emperor of China and Sultan Shahrock, Son of Amir Timur', in *The Asiatick Miscellany*, vol. 1 (2 vols) (Calcutta, 1785-86), pp. 100-125.

²⁰Edgar Blochet, *Introduction à l'Histoire des Mongols de Fadl Allah Rashid ed-Din* (Leyden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac & Co., 1910), pp. 247-8.

²¹Morris Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), pp. 27ff.

²²Joseph F. Fletcher, 'China and Central Asia, 1368-1884', in J. K. Fairbank ed., *The Chinese World Order, Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 206-224.

²³Shao Xunzheng 邵循正, 'You Ming chuye yu Tiemuer diguo zhi guanxi' 有明初叶与帖木儿帝国之关系 (Relations with the Timurid empire at the beginning of the Ming period), in *Shao Xunzheng lishi lunwen ji* 邵循正历史论文集 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1985), pp. 80-99.

²⁴Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden, China, Iran und Zentralasien im Spätmittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2005).

²⁵Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, *Hailu yu Lulu, Zhongguo gu shidai dong xi jiaoliu yanjiu*, 海路与陆路, 中古时代东西交流研究 (Maritime and Continental Routes between East and West) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011).

²⁶K. M. Maitra, trans., *A Persian Embassy to China, being an extract from Zubdatut Tawarikh of Hafiz Abru*, intro. L. Carrington Goodrich (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, 1970).

²⁷These versions are discussed in Chapter 2, the Timurid Empire.

The Tsurphu scroll on display in the Lhasa Museum is a written record, accompanied by pictures, of phenomena of Vajrayana energy witnessed at a great Buddhist *Pudu* 普渡 ceremony for the salvation of all souls, especially those of the dead,²⁸ conducted by the fifth Tibetan Karmapa at Nanjing in 1407 at the request of the Yongle Emperor. The Chinese text, authored by the Emperor himself, is accompanied with Persian, Tay²⁹, Tibetan and Mongolian translations, proclaiming his greatness to Tibet and neighbouring countries.³⁰ The scroll resided at the Tsurphu Monastery at some distance from Lhasa, where Hugh Richardson photographed it in 1949,³¹ and Luo Wenhua 罗文华³² and Patricia Berger³³ have commented on it in recent times. The publication in 2000 of a set of high quality photographs of the entire scroll allows the text and images to be studied in detail.³⁴ Luo Aili 骆爱丽 and Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜 have published a study of the Persian language in the scroll.³⁵

Another surviving document is the Yongle Edict, *Yongle chiyu* 永乐敕谕, an edict of the Yongle Emperor in 1407 granting security to one Mir Haji 米里哈只, a Muslim living in China. It is the only surviving example of an imperial edict from the Ming period. It shows that Persian was used not only for communications with other countries, but also for matters within the borders of the empire. The edict is in Chinese, with Persian and Mongolian translations, and is held at *Puhading yuan* 普哈丁园

²⁸Pudu means broadly exercising Dharma power to save all creatures. 辞海: 普渡, 佛家语。广施法力以救济众生曰普渡。

²⁹The language of Baiyi, identified as Mäng² Maaw², a country of the Dai 傣 peoples in present-day south-west Yunnan. See Chapter 3.

³⁰David M. Robinson, 'The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols' in Robinson, David M. ed. *Culture, Courtiers and Competition: the Ming Court (1368 - 1644)*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 374.

³¹Hugh Edward Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', in *High Peaks, Pure Earth. Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture* (London: Serindia Publications, 1998), pp. 335-378.

³²Luo Wenhua 罗文华, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu dazhai changjuan' 明大宝法王建普度大斋长卷, *Zhongguo Zangxue* 中国藏学 1 (1995), pp. 89-97.

³³Patricia Berger, 'Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa's Visit to the Chinese Capital', in Marsha Weidner ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 145-169.

³⁴Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu changjuan' 噶玛巴为明太祖荐福图长卷, in *Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu* 宝藏: 中国西藏历史文物, vol. 3 (Yuanchao shiqi, Mingchao shiqi), (Beijing: Zhaohua chubanshe, 2000), pp. 96-115.

³⁵Luo Aili 骆爱丽 and Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, 'Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu Huihuiwen chutan' 噶玛巴为《明太祖荐福图》回回文初探 (A preliminary survey of the Persian text in the Tsurphu Scroll), *Xibei minzu yanjiu* 西北民族研究 48, 1 (2006), pp. 52-63.

Puhading Garden, a mosque complex in Yangzhou. A facsimile is held in the Renmin Wenhua Gong 人民文化宫, the People's Cultural Palace, in Beijing, but has not been put on display or published. Only an unclear black and white photograph has been published, in which the Persian and Mongolian texts are not clear enough to read.

Lists of officers after 1490 show that while *Siyiguan* translators and teachers often remained permanently in positions which were hereditary, passing to members of the same family, the two senior *tidu* 提督 supervisory posts were treated as career stepping-stones, few officers staying in those positions for more than a year or two. One of them, Wang Zongzai 王宗載, made use of his time there in 1578-9 to put together information gleaned from documents stored in each of the *Siyiguan* colleges at that time into a work entitled *Siyiguan kao* 四夷館考, which was evidently intended as a preparation-book for *kao* 考 testing at the Translating College.³⁶ It reveals what materials were stored in each of the language colleges at that time, providing tribute histories and information about geography, local products and customs for each of the countries dealt with by each of the colleges. The Persian College stored information not only about Hami, Turfan and Samarkand, but also Champa, Japan, Cambodia, Java and Malacca, indicating the Persian College was responsible in some way for communications with them. Liang Chu 梁儲, a Hanlin scholar who was promoted to the position of *shangshu* 尚書, Chief Minister, in the Board of History during the reign of the unruly Zhengde 正德 Emperor (1491-1521), was in charge of the agencies which had charge of drafting imperial documents, including preparing Chinese translations of foreign language letters, and translating the Emperor's edicts into foreign languages. Submissions collected in his *Yuzhou yi gao* 鬱洲遺稿 (Manuscripts bequeathed by Yuzhou) provide information confirming that Persian was used in communications with maritime countries.³⁷

The expeditions led by Zheng He 鄭和 brought tribute bearers from countries along the sea route to Calicut on the west coast of India, and later from Hormuz and Arabia.

³⁶Wang Zongzai 王宗載 comp., *Siyiguan kao* 四夷館考, (from Oriental Society 1924 imprint), (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1972).

³⁷Liang Chu 梁儲, *Yuzhou yi gao* 鬱洲遺稿 (Manuscripts bequeathed by Yuzhou), (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1973), *juan* 1, p. 10ff.

Several geographical works created following the voyages contain information about the use of Persian in communications with these countries. Chief among these is *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 by Ma Huan 馬歡, a Persian translator who took part in Zheng He's fourth, sixth and seventh voyages.³⁸ Ma Huan takes care to note the presence of Muslims in each place, and their status in the society, and occasionally provides information about writing systems. J. V. G. Mills' *Ma Huan, Ying-Yai Sheng-lan, "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores" (1433)* summarises the sources for the voyages.³⁹ The novelisation of some of Ma Huan's and Fei Xin's material by Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 in *Sanbao taijian xiyang ji tongsu yanyi* 三宝太监西洋记通俗演义 in 1597, is supplemented by personnel lists, letters and tribute lists which are not authentic documents but bravura inventions of the author, which scarcely add to the historical record.⁴⁰

A surviving document, the Galle Stone, is a stele erected in Ceylon (*Xilan* 西蘭) by Zheng He in 1411, which contains a record of donations to temples in Chinese, with Tamil and Persian translations. The text, translations and calligraphy were done at the court in Nanjing in 1409, and the stone was made in Nanjing and carried to Ceylon by Zheng He. Soon after the stone was found in a culvert at Galle in 1911 the scholars of the British Empire were mobilized, rubbings made, and transcriptions and translations of the Chinese text by Edmund Backhouse, the Tamil by S. Paranavitana and the Persian by Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad were published.⁴¹ The three language texts indicate variously that gifts were donated to Buddha, Vishnu and Mohammed. The stone now stands in the Colombo Museum, but no rubbing or image of the Persian text has been published, and only the transcription by Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad is available for study. Several scholars have studied these texts, including Xiang Da 向

³⁸Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 ed., *Ma Huan 馬歡, Yingyai shenglan jiaozhu* 瀛涯勝覽校注 (Overall survey of the ocean's shores annotated), (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1962).

³⁹J. V. G. Mills, trans. and ed., *Ma Huan, Ying-Yai Sheng-lan, "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores [1433]"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁴⁰Luo Maodeng 羅懋登, *Sanbao taijian xiyang ji tongsu yanyi* 三宝太监西洋记通俗演义 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985).

⁴¹Edward W. Perera, 'The Galle Trilingual Stone', *Spolia Zeylanica* (The Colombo Museum) 8 (1913), pp. 122-132.

達,⁴² and recently Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖.⁴³ The 600th anniversary of the Zheng He voyages prompted publications on every aspect of Zheng He, following a great symposium in Nanjing in 2005.⁴⁴ Liu Yingsheng's contribution was to point out the importance of the Galle stone as evidence of the use of Persian as a language of international communication for the voyages.⁴⁵ Liu Yingsheng's other works deal with the history of Chinese relations with maritime and Central Asian countries.⁴⁶

The busy time for translators, when ambassadors and their entourages came to the capital in their thousands, lasted until the Xuande 宣德 Emperor commissioned Zheng He's final voyage in 1431, and sent a large scale mission to Herat and Samarkand, and several of the smaller kingdoms adjacent to them in 1432. These brought a final series of tribute bearers, but no tribute missions came from beyond Southeast Asia after that, and when Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, bearers of tribute and letters even from countries in the Southern Ocean decreased to a trickle.

Tribute relations with Timurid rulers in Herat also discontinued, however tribute missions from Samarkand, Turfan and elsewhere, accompanied by large numbers of merchants seeking trade, continued to arrive at Jiayuguan 嘉峪關. Many sojourned at Ganzhou 甘州 and Suzhou 肅州, where border officials sorted them out and gave them permits to enter. Four tribute letters, together with five petitions from Hami and other places within Ming jurisdiction, which can be dated between 1472 and 1512, were translated from Persian into Chinese, and the Chinese translations have survived

⁴²Xiang Da 向達 ed., *Gong Zhen: Xiyang fanguo zhi* 鞏珍: 西洋番國志 (Gong Zhen: Records of foreign countries in the Western Ocean), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), pp. 50-52.

⁴³Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖, *Mingdai renwu yu chuanshuo* 明代人物與傳說 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue, 1997), pp. 192ff.

⁴⁴The International Forum in Memory of the 600th Anniversary of Zheng He's Expeditions (*jinian Zheng He xia xiyang 600 zhounian guoji xueshu luntan* 纪念郑和下西洋 600 周年国际学术论坛).

⁴⁵Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, 'Mingchu Zhongguo yu Yazhou zhongxibu diqu jiaowang de waiwen yuyan wenti' 明初中国与亚洲中西部地区交往的外文语言问题 (On the Diplomatic Language in the Communication between China and Midwestern Asia in Ming Dynasty), in *Chuancheng wenming, zou xiang shijie, heping fazhan, jinian Zheng He xia Xiyang liubai zhounian guoji xueshu luntan lunwenji* 传承文明, 走向世界, 和平发展; 纪念郑和下西洋 600 周年国际学术论坛论文集 (Carry on Civilization, Open to the World, for Peace and Development; Proceedings of the International Forum in Memory of the 600th Anniversary of Zheng He's Expeditions), (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005), pp. 104-113.

⁴⁶Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, *Hailu yu Lulu, Zhongguo gu shidai dong xi jiaoliu yanjiu* 海路与陆路, 中古时代东西交流研究 (Maritime and Continental Routes between East and West), (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011).

by their inclusion as *laiwen* 來文, exemplary bilingual language texts, in the Persian section of the *Huayiyiyu* 華夷譯語 word-list collections. These are the only surviving examples of the work of Persian translators after the *Yongle* period. The chapters on Hami and Turfan in *Ming shi* give a detailed account of Great Ming's loss of control over Hami and the subsequent breakdown of relations with the rulers of Moghulistan, which are the historical background to several of the letters in the *laiwen*.⁴⁷ Paul Pelliot in his classic work *Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'Histoire des Ming* applied his scrutiny to these chapters and associated works to solve a problem of the identity of Sayyid Husain, a prince of Hami who became a favourite of the dissolute Zhengde 正德 Emperor (1491-1521), and whose name appears in one or more of the Persian *laiwen*.⁴⁸

The Persian *laiwen* texts have baffled scholars. They are not original Persian letters, or even Persian translations, but deliberate word-for-word Persian glossings of the Chinese translations of original Persian letters, created for testing students of the *Siyiguan* at regular tests called *ke* 課. This might have been soon after the appointment of supervisors to oversee the language colleges in 1494.⁴⁹ Several of the Persian *laiwen* letters can be dated between 1472 and that time. Another possible date is the supervisorship of Yang Zishan 楊子山 and Zhang Jisheng 張季升 who instituted the keeping of records and personnel lists in 1516-1519.⁵⁰ Evidently collections of *ke* texts were made, using the Chinese translations stored in each language college, and glossing them in the language of that college, not grammatically, but following the Chinese word order closely. The glossing has something to do with the way the testing was carried out, and doesn't represent general ignorance of correct grammar at the college. Collections of *ke* texts later provided the exemplary *laiwen* texts which were appended to vocabulary lists in the *Huayiyiyu* collections, which, as they include Thai texts, must have been made after the establishment of the Thai college in 1579.

⁴⁷These are discussed in chapter 5 The Persian *laiwen*.

⁴⁸Paul Pelliot, *Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming* (Leiden: Brill, 1948) (T'oung Pao 38).

⁴⁹*Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 3r. (p. 45). Cf. Wild, Norman, 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan', p. 625.

⁵⁰*Siyiguan ze* 18, pp. 3rv.

Dushu minqiu ji 讀書敏求記 (A record of earnest search while reading books) compiled by Qian Zeng 錢曾 between 1669 and 1674, is an annotated catalogue of 601 rare books in his family's possession at that time, many of which he had inherited from a collection made by his famous great-uncle Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 during the last decades of the Ming Dynasty.⁵¹ Another bibliographical work by Qing scholar Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶,⁵² entitled *Guquanshanguan tiba* 古泉山館題跋 (Prefaces and postscripts from Ancient Spring Mountain Hostel), also includes descriptions of rare books in his library.⁵³ These works provide important information about the collections of *ke* testing texts which were later adapted as *laiwen* for the *Huayiyiyu* compilation. Liu Yingsheng has published an annotated edition of the *Huayiyiyu* Persian word lists,⁵⁴ and the Japanese scholar Honda Minobu has published a transcription of the Persian *laiwen*.⁵⁵ The Persian *laiwen* are translated into English for the first time in this thesis.

Jean Joseph Marie Amiot, the Jesuit missionary in Beijing, translated a selection of the *Huayiyiyu laiwen* into French in the 1770s.⁵⁶ If he had translated all of them, it would have become apparent to him that most of the *laiwen* are not tribute letters or petitions, but tribute lists, 方物狀 *fangwuzhuang*, which were declaimed at audiences listing the goods brought, and the gifts bestowed. The lists of tribute items are all inserted into the same few formulas, which use the same wording each time. These were not translations from Persian like the other letters, but lists composed in Chinese by officers of the Board of Rites. Because they were also glossed in Persian for *ke* testing,

⁵¹Qian Zeng 錢曾, Ding Yu 丁瑜 eds., *Du shu min qiu ji* 讀書敏求記 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe 书目文献出版社, 1983), pp. 189ff.

⁵²Qu Zhongrong was the son-in-law of the bibliophile Qian Daxin 錢大昕. See Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, p. 154.

⁵³Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶, *Guquanshanguan tiba* 古泉山館題 (Prefaces and postscripts from Ancient Spring Mountain Hostel), in Jia Guirong 賈貴榮 and Wang Guan 王冠 eds. *Song Yuan ban shumu tiba jikan* 宋元版書目題跋輯刊, vol. 1. (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), pp. 326-328. Cf. Pelliot, *Le Hoja*, p. 279.

⁵⁴Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu* “回回館雜字”与“回回館譯語”研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008).

⁵⁵Honda Minobu 本田實信, 回回館譯語に就いて, *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)* (Hokkaido University, 1963).

⁵⁶Le Père Amiot, ‘Suppliques et lettres de créance envoyées de pays des Hoei-hoei, Adressées à l'Empereur de Chine’, in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages &c. des Chinois par les missionnaires de Pe-kin* (Paris: Chez Nyon, 1776-1814), vol. 14 (1809), pp. 242-248.

earlier scholars have mistaken them for tribute letters. The lists are of interest because while *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 (Great Ming Statutes), contains unenumerated lists of types of tribute items from each country, these lists are enumerated, giving us an understanding of the amounts of tribute presented at each audience, and providing a glimpse into audiences at the Ming court.

Chapter One

The Translating Colleges

The Translating Colleges (*Siyiguan* 四夷館), consisted of ten language colleges established to meet the special purpose of proclaiming the *Yongle* Emperor's greatness beyond the borders of his empire. It provided a corps of skilled translators who could translate his edicts to all tributary countries, and translate their returning tributary letters and petitions. We can know little about the Imperial Muslim College at the Yuan court, except that it trained personnel for a wide range of tasks within the administration. Although some of those linguists were probably recruited to work at the first Ming Emperor's court, no corresponding college was set up, and forty years elapsed before the idea of translating colleges formed in the Yongle Emperor's mind. The model he chose was not based on the former Muslim College, but was a comprehensive array of eight, later ten colleges, whose duties were primarily to serve the needs of tributary rituals. The Persian college was one of the ten colleges, and the Persian translators had the same status as the other language translators. That status was considerable, because translators, although their official rank was quite low, were members of the Hanlin Academy, and their work brought them close to the Emperor.

Tribute letters

The tributary process included a series of ritualised activities designed to impress ambassadors with the grandeur of the imperial court, including meeting the ambassadors at the border, conveying them to the capital, entertaining them at banquets and giving gifts.⁵⁷ The most important element in the ritual was the audience before the Emperor, where the *koutou* was performed and the tribute letter (*biao* 表) and list of tribute items (*fangwuzhuang* 方物狀) were proclaimed. The Great Ming Statutes describe the ritual for presentation of tribute letters.

The Master of Ceremonies calls for the tribute letter to be brought in, and ushers carry the table in through the eastern gate and proceed to the middle of

⁵⁷Zhang Wende 张文德, 'Ming yu Zhongya Tiemur Digu de liyi wanglai' 明与中亚帖木儿帝国的礼仪往来, *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 3 (2005).

the hall. The inner assistants assist the proclaiming of the tribute letter, and the outer assistants order the ambassadors to kneel. When the proclamation of the tribute letter and the proclamation of the list of local goods are done, the foreign ambassadors prostrate themselves, rise, and bow four times.

典儀唱進表，序班舉表案，由東門入，至於殿中。內贊贊宣表，外贊令蕃使跪，宣表，宣方物狀訖，蕃使俯伏，興，四拜。

This ceremony ended, the Emperor rises and departs, to the accompaniment of music, and the other participants file out in order.⁵⁸

The Board of Rites *Libu* 禮部, as well as organising state ceremonies, rituals and sacrifices, and administering civil service recruitment examinations, had the responsibility of receiving envoys from tributary states.⁵⁹ This duty became onerous during the Yongle period, when the work of greeting envoys at the borders, providing transport and hostelry, and organising audiences and entertainments for them, employed thousands of people, including the interpreters *tongshi* 通事 who were provided at every stage of a tribute mission from the furthest border to the capital. The *Huitongguan* 會同館 hostelrys also had a highly practical system of interpreter training, and produced their own vocabulary books (see below). However translating the tributary letters and other documents in foreign languages brought by the envoys, and the translating the Emperor's edicts to foreign rulers was done in the secretariat where imperial documents were drafted, by officers of the Hanlin Academy.

Translating in the Hongwu period

The practice of translating between Persian and Chinese was probably inherited from the Yuan dynasty. The Yuan History *Yuan shi* 元史 records that an Imperial Muslim College, *Huihui Guozixue* 回回國子學 was established alongside the Chinese and Mongolian Colleges during Kubilai's reign, and young men of the official class were selected to be trained to serve as translators (*yishi* 譯史) in various government

⁵⁸*Da Ming huidian* 58, 10v.

⁵⁹For a description of *Libu* and guide to *Daming Huidian* see Charles O. Hucker, 'Ming Government', in Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, *The Ming Dynasty* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 84ff.

offices.⁶⁰ Among them would have been Persian translators and calligraphers engaged in preparing documents for tributary and other international communications with the Ilkhanate and with countries along the sea route to Chola (Coromandel) in southern India, as discussed below. *Yuan shi* records that there were more than fifty students at the college in 1325,⁶¹ and it evidently kept training linguists until the end of the dynasty.

These translators were classed as *semuren* 色目人, the official name for the administrative class of non-Mongolian peoples from the lands to the northwest, Central Asia and elsewhere who served the Yuan administration, often in positions which Chinese people could not take.⁶² Contrary to the legend that the occupying Mongolian armies were driven out of China following a great uprising on mooncake day, the fifteenth of the eighth month in 1368, there was in fact no great exodus. The fall of Yuan was so protracted, and complicated by accompanying civil wars among Chinese contenders for the throne, that flight would have been difficult for Mongols and *semuren*, including *Huihui* 回回人, Muslims who spoke Turkish and Persian. Serruys' study of the court records shows that many of them were absorbed into military and civil positions.⁶³ The general amnesty (*da she tianxia zhao* 大赦天下詔) proclaimed by the Emperor on 23 September 1368, several days after the conquest of the Yuan capital Dadu 大都, contained encouraging information for the non-Chinese officers of the former administration.

*All Mongols and semuren who have talent and ability will be employed, because they are our children (赤子 chizi), as they live in our land.*⁶⁴

蒙古色目人，既居我土，即吾赤子，有才能者一體擢用。

Nanjing, which had been proclaimed the capital just a few weeks earlier, soon became a destination for many former Yuan officers, who were moved to positions in the newly established Zhongshusheng, Liubu, and Hanlinyuan later in the same month.

⁶⁰*Yuan shi* 81, p. 2028.

⁶¹*Yuan shi* 81, pp. 2028-9.

⁶²See a complete discussion of this term in Bao Yinhu 薄音湖 ed., *Menggu shi cidian* 蒙古史詞典 (A Dictionary of Mongolian History), (Huhehot: Nei Menggu daxue chubanshe, 2010), p. 203.

⁶³Henry Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations during the Ming Volume I, The Mongols in China during the Hong-Wu Period* (Brussels: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1959), p. 19.

⁶⁴*Taizu shilu* 34, p. 9v. cf. Serruys, *The Mongols in China During the Hong-Wu Period*, p. 57.

*It was proclaimed that Dadu Circuit be changed to Beiping Prefecture. It was ordered to recruit former Yuan officials and send them to the capital at Nanjing.*⁶⁵

詔改大都路為北平府。命徵元故官送至京師。

Serruys points out that the new dynasty did not have a civil service ready to assume office at the court at Nanjing, and the structure and officers of the former court were adopted.⁶⁶ Translating would have been done in the Secretariat, *Zhongshusheng* 中書省, an administrative centre on the Yuan model, established by Zhu Yuanzhang when, after campaigning for over three years, he retired from military command, proclaimed himself Wu Wang 吳王 and began to establish his capital in Nanjing in 1364, four years before the proclamation of Great Ming.⁶⁷ It was staffed with prime ministers and senior ministers at first, second and third levels, and a host of more junior officers. The Hanlin Academy was established in 1367, just a few months before the proclamation of *Hongwu*.⁶⁸ It provided literary, editorial, and scholarly assistance of all kinds to the Emperor and the court, drafting proclamations and other state documents, compiling histories and other works, and expounding the histories and classics to the Emperor. It was staffed by various grades of *xueshi* 學士, scholars, from third level downwards. When tribute letters in foreign languages arrived, it was their duty to have them translated. While many of the officers from the former court would have been Chinese, there would also have been *semuren* among them, possibly including teachers and officers from the Imperial Muslim College.

No college was set up to correspond to the Muslim college, and the Persian translators work was now limited to the Emperor's tributary communications. The only continuity with the previous dynasty was in the standard of skills in language and translating brought by the translators. The Yuan History records that a script called *istifi* script (*yisitifei wenzi* 亦思替非文字) was taught at the Muslim College.⁶⁹ There is debate about the meaning if *istifi*. Han Rulin 韓儒林 suggested it meant Persian

⁶⁵*Taizu shilu* 34, p. 11r. (0619).

⁶⁶Serruys, *The Mongols in China During the Hong-Wu Period*, p. 135.

⁶⁷*Taizu shilu* 4, p. 3r. (0045).

⁶⁸*Taizu shilu* 23, p. 11r. (0775).

⁶⁹*Yuan shi* 81, p. 2028.

script.⁷⁰ However, others find records in the Yuan History that the use of *istifi* was limited, not widely known, and not the same thing as Persian.⁷¹ A widespread theory is that *istifi* is a kind of accounting code, used in the administration of trade at the borders.⁷² The absence of any documents containing examples of the code, or information about the existence of the code in the records of Central Asian countries with which it was supposedly used, make this impossible to prove. The idea that it means Arabic script is proposed by Stephen Haw who cites an Arabic linguistic source:

‘Istifi’ is an Arabic word. ‘Istifa ... comes from the root verb [in Arabic] *safa*, which means to be clear or pure, or to select the best. In the Qur’an, Allah *istifa* (chose) his messengers and prophets’⁷³

Thus, Haw proposes *istifi* script was the script that had been ‘chosen’ to write down the words of God in the holy Quran; that is, the Arabic script.⁷⁴

Neige 內閣

The Hongwu Emperor carried out a great and bloody purge in 1380, the thirteenth year of his reign.⁷⁵ Suspecting the secretariat and his prime ministers of usurping his power, he completely abolished the *Zhongshusheng* secretariat and the prime ministerial positions, ruling on his own account in direct contact with his chief ministers, and organising the administration in a group of six halls, *dian* 殿, each headed by a *daxueshi* from the Hanlinyuan, who formed an official corps around the emperor, although their official rank was not high. This organisation became known as the *Neige* 內閣, inner chamber.⁷⁶ The Hanlin Academy translators who had worked in the *Zhongshusheng* now carried out their duties in the *Neige*.

⁷⁰Han Rulin 韩儒林, ‘Suowei “yisitifei wenzi” shi shenme wenzi’ 所谓亦思替非文字是什么文字, in *Qiongluji* 穹庐集 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), pp. 292-3.

⁷¹Wang Jianjun 王建军, ‘Yuandai Huihui Guozijian yanjiu 元代回回国子监研究’, *Huizu Yanjiu* 回族研究 1 (2004), pp. 35-41.

⁷²Mozafar Bakhtyar, ‘Yisitifei kao’ 亦思替非考, in Ye Yiliang 葉奕良 ed., *Yilangxue zai Zhongguo lunwen ji* 伊朗學在中國論文集 (1) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1993), pp. 44-50.

⁷³O. Leaman, ed., *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 324.

⁷⁴Stephen Haw, ‘The Persian Language in Yuan-Dynasty China: A Reappraisal’, p. 28.

⁷⁵Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming Government, the Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 81-82.

⁷⁶Hucker, *Ming Government*, p. 82.

The Great Ming Statutes (*Da Ming Huidian* 大明會典) inform us that the two departments within the *Neige* where documents were drafted were the *Zhichifang* 制敕房, edicts office, and the *Gaochifang* 誥敕房, patents office. Translating documents was part of the duties of the second of these. *Da Ming Huidian* provides a list of the tasks undertaken by *Hanlinyuan* scholars and other officers, which includes the following:

Everything which is managed in the Neige: Items including edicts, proclamations, patents, appointment documents, the Emperor's precious writings, the jade register genealogy, lecture texts, stele inscriptions and memorial documents, all secret writings, and drafts of Palace edict credentials, are drafted in the Zhichifang.

*Civil service patents, and also translations of imperial orders into foreign languages as well as accompanying documents for letters from foreign countries, and other items such as drafts of Military Board achievement awards and credentials for official inquiries are drafted in the Gaochifang.*⁷⁷

凡內閣所掌。制敕, 詔旨, 誥命, 冊表, 寶文, 玉蝶, 講章, 碑額, 及題奏揭帖等項, 一應機密文書, 各王府敕符底簿, 制敕房書辦。

文官誥敕, 及番譯 敕書, 並四夷來文揭帖, 兵部紀功, 勘合底簿等項, 誥敕房書辦。

Accompanying documents for letters from foreign countries (*siyi laiwen jietie* 四夷來文揭帖) indicates translations of foreign letters made for presentation at the court together with the original letters. This shows that translating both into and out of foreign languages was done as part of the work of the *Gaochifang*. Translators and calligraphers worked producing translations of imperial orders into other languages, and copying them in neat calligraphy onto rich paper or silk scrolls, as well as making Chinese translations of incoming letters as *jietie* for presentation at court.

Translating projects during *Hongwu*

In addition to tribute documents, several other translating projects were also carried out in the *Hanlinyuan* in the *Hongwu* era. The library in the Yuan court at Dadu was transported to Nanjing, and the beginnings were made of a project to translate some of the books.

⁷⁷*Da Ming huidian* 221, pp. 6v-7r. (pp. 2939-40).

*Now at the beginning of Hongwu, when the generals pacified the Yuan capital, several tens of thousands of documents and books of all kinds were collected, and all presented to the court at Nanjing, where they were stored in the book repository. ... Among them were several hundred books from the Western Region in a foreign language and script which no one could understand.*⁷⁸

爰自洪武初，大將軍平元都，收其圖籍，經傳子史，凡若干萬卷，悉上進京師，藏之書府。...其間西域書數百冊，言殊字異，無能知者。

The most successful projects were the Mongolian word-lists and sample letters in *Huayiyiyu* 華夷譯語, and the transcription and translation of *Yuanchao mishi* 元朝秘史 The Secret History of the Mongols,⁷⁹ which were begun in 1382, by several Hanlin officers including Huo Yuanjie 火原潔, an expositor or rector (*shijiang* 侍講), who was Mongolian, and Mashāyikh 馬沙亦黑, a compiler (*bianxiu*) 編修, a Muslim from Samarkand, who knew Mongolian.⁸⁰

There is no doubt that the books from the Western Region included Persian and Arabic works. Scholars including Wu Bozong 吳伯宗 were instructed to sort them in 1380, the thirteenth year of Hongwu, and the translation of several astronomical and calendrical works ensued,⁸¹ including two Persian works, a Muslim calendar, *Huihui lifa* 回回曆法, and an astrological work *Tianwenshu* 天文書. The same Mashāykh who worked on the Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* project also took part in this work. Wu Bozong wrote a preface to *Tianwenshu* providing information about the translators, in which Mashāykh is described as Senior Muslim (Huihui) Master (*Huihui dashi* 回回大師). This title shows that he was a Persian language specialist who had high status in the *Hanlinyuan*. If Mashāyikh was among those officers of the former regime employed following the amnesty, this title might have been retained from his old position in the Imperial Muslim College at the Yuan capital. The preface explains the collaborative way the work was done, the Persian speakers providing verbal translations to other scholars, who made the polished Chinese version. The Emperor

⁷⁸*Mingyi tianwenshu* 明譯天文書, in Sun Yuxiu 孫毓修 comp., *Hanfenlou biji* 涵芬樓秘笈 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1917), 2nd preface, p. 1.

⁷⁹Igor de Rachewiltz describes this process in *The secret history of the Mongols: a Mongolian epic chronicle of the thirteenth century*, Introd. p. 22ff.

⁸⁰For identification and transcription of these names see Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, pp. 230-35, Serruys, *The Mongols in China During the Hong-Wu Period*, p. 144, and Allsen, Thomas T., *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 173.

⁸¹These are described in Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, p. 173.

himself insisted on plain, exact translating, and this is borne out in the succinct Chinese translation of *Tianwenshu*. This plain, exact style of translating is evident in all the translated texts which have come down to us.

*By observing the constellations the self can be examined, virtue cultivated, and thereby the mind of Heaven followed, and the mandate of the people established. Therefore Imperial observatory functionaries (lingtailang) officer Haidar and officer Adawuding, Senior Persian (Huihui) Master officer Mashāyikh, and officer Muhammad⁸² and others were all summoned to Court. The books stored there were taken out and those dealing with astronomy, yin-yang and calendar-making were chosen to be translated in turn. And this command was also made to them. "You, men of the Western Regions, are accustomed to practising your original language, and you also understand Chinese. Convey these books to the literate scholars orally, and you scholars, extract their meaning, and edit them into written Chinese. Make sure you express them directly, without ornamenting them or leaving anything out". The officers received this command respectfully, and an office was opened at the right of Youshunmen Gate. They cut and polished each other's work, and stayed close to the original injunction, not daring to make the slightest addition or omission. The translation of *Tianwenshu* was finished in the second month of the following year, and a fair copy was written out to be presented at Court. A decree commanded Wu Bozong to write this preface to it.⁸³*

庶幾觀象，可以省躬修德，思患預防，順天心，立民命焉。遂召欽天監靈臺郎（臣）海達兒，臣阿荅兀丁，回回大師臣馬沙亦黑，臣馬哈嘛等，咸至于廷，出所藏書，擇其言天文陰陽曆象者，次第譯之。且命之曰，爾西域人，素習本音，兼通華語，其口以授儒。爾儒，繹其義，輯成文焉。惟直述，毋藻繪，毋忽。臣等奉命惟謹，開局於右順門之右。相與切摩，達厥本指，不敢有毫髮增損。越明年二月，天文書譯既，繕寫以進。有旨命臣伯宗為序。

The court records for the first Ming Emperor's long reign show that tribute activity, while continuous, did not provide the Hanlinyuan translators a great amount of work.⁸⁴ Three or four missions that may have concerned the Persian translators arrived each year. Every year or two years for most of the reign a tribute mission arrived from Champa, Java or Thailand. While these presented letters in their own languages, replies, where there were no translators of those languages, were in Persian, as

⁸²The text states that officer Mashāyikh and officer Muhammad are two different people, both names preceded by the designation *chen* 臣, however Pelliot cites an edict of 1382 showing that it is one person, named Mashāykh Muhammad. Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, p. 234.

⁸³*Mingyi tianwenshu*, 2nd preface.

⁸⁴*Shilu* records of tribute activity with South East Asia and the Indian Ocean are collected in Chiu Ling-yong et al., *Ming shilu zhong zhi Dongnanya shiliao*.

discussed below. Letters with Chola and Calicut would have been in Persian, however exchanges made with those countries at the beginning of the reign did not continue. Although letters were sent to Timur in Samarkand at the beginning of the reign, no reply came until 1387, the twentieth year of Hongwu, when a series of tribute missions began, six missions arriving in eight years. The last of these brought a famous letter from Timur, of which the Chinese translation is preserved in the records, and is discussed below. Relations with Samarkand were brought to an end by the detention of Ming envoys in 1395 and again in 1397, to be resumed during *Yongle*.

The Translating College

The first Ming Emperor died in 1398, and was succeeded by the legitimate heir Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, his eldest son's eldest son, his own eldest son having died. The new Emperor's rule, with the reign title *Jianwen* 建文 was soon usurped, following a period of civil war, by his uncle Zhu Di 朱棣, the old Emperor's fourth son by a lesser concubine. Zhu Di ascended the throne in July 1402. He erased the *Jianwen* reign title from the records, making 1402 the 35th year of Hongwu, and proclaimed the reign of *Yongle* 永樂, eternal happiness, the following year, in 1403. The next two decades saw a great increase in tribute-trade activity. In 1402 edicts of accession were sent to Annan, Xianluo, Java, Liuqiu, Japan, Xiyang (Calicut), Sumendala and Champa.⁸⁵ A letter carried to Timur in Samarkand in the same year began the process of restoring tribute relations with the Western Regions.⁸⁶ In 1403, the first year of *Yongle*, officers were sent bearing gifts to Korea, Annan, Champa, Siam, Liuqiu, Cambodia, Java, Sumendala and Calicut,⁸⁷ and the first mission was sent to Malacca, to prepare the way for establishing a base there.⁸⁸ Tribute missions began arriving in the second year of the reign, and in the third year, 1405, Zheng He led the first great expedition to Calicut in southern India. In 1407, soon after Timur's death, a tribute mission from his successor Khalil in Samarkand arrived, beginning a series of large-scale tributary exchanges with countries in the west.⁸⁹ By the time Zheng He's first fleet returned in

⁸⁵*Taizong shilu* 12a, p. 7r. (0205).

⁸⁶*Ming shi* 332, p. 8609.

⁸⁷*Taizong shilu* 22, p. 2v. (0408).

⁸⁸*Taizong shilu* 24, p. 5v. (0440).

⁸⁹*Taizong shilu* 68, p. 11r. (0963).

1407, the decision to establish the Translating Colleges (*Siyiguan* 四夷館) had been made.

No records tell us who first petitioned the Emperor to train translators. Probably senior scholars in the Hanlin Academy, understanding the Emperor's intention to increase international activity, realised the need. Perhaps the effort required to produce the many documents carried by Zheng He motivated them. Some fresh *semuren* talent probably came to Nanjing with Zhu Di from his fiefdom in Yanjing, but evidently there was a shortage of the type of highly educated bilingual *semuren*, inherited from the former regime, who had done the work in the *Hongwu* era. Setting up colleges within the Hanlinyuan provided a systematic process for recruiting talented translators into the Hanlinyuan and giving them official positions there.

The Ming History tells us the year, but not the month the first eight colleges of the *Siyiguan* were established. Two more were added later:

*The Siyiguan handled the business of translating documents. In 1407, the fifth year of Yongle, foreign countries were presenting tribute at court, and eight colleges were specially established: Mongolian, Nüzhen, Tibetan, Xitian (Indian) Huihui, (Persian) Baiyi (Tay), Gaochang (Uighur) and Miandian (Burmese). A Babai college was added during Zhengde, and a Xianluo (Thai) College was added during Wanli.*⁹⁰

四夷館掌譯書之事。自永樂五年，外國朝貢，特設蒙古，女直，西番，西天，回回，白夷，高昌，緬甸八館。正德中增設八百館。萬曆中，又增設暹羅館。

This makes it clear that the purpose of the colleges was to provide translating services to the court for dealing with tribute missions. A date concerning the establishment of the *Siyiguan* is recorded in the Veritable Records:

On 26 April 1407, the day Guiyou in the third month of the fifth year of Yongle, the Board of Rites was ordered to select thirty-eight students from the Imperial College (Guozijian), Jiang Li and others, to be attached to the Hanlinyuan to

⁹⁰*Ming shi* 74, p. 1797. Cf. Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, pp. 226-7.

*learn translating, each given a dan of rice per month. When examinations are held, they are ordered to take the examination and also translate the essays they have done. Those who pass are allowed to enter public service. A college was established outside Right Chang'an Gate to accommodate them.*⁹¹

永樂五年三月癸酉。命禮部選國子生，將禮等三十八人，隸翰林院習譯書。人月給米一石。遇開科，令就試，仍譯所作文字。合格準出身。置館予長安佑門之外處之。

This tells us that the Siyiguan was set up within the Hanlinyuan, and that it was a training college, to provide a pathway for translators to enter public service (*chushen* 出身). The text indicates that the candidates were examined by writing their regular examination essays in Chinese, then translating them into foreign languages (仍譯所作文字). This is stated more clearly by Ming scholar Qiu Jun 邱濬, whose Confucian treatise on practical statecraft *Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補 (Supplement to 'the Abundant Meanings of the Great Learning'), presented to the throne in 1487, includes a chapter entitled *Managing foreigners* (*Yu waifan* 馭外藩), which gives information about Siyiguan personnel.

*First they are created from provincial examination graduates (juren), and when they attend the Board of Rites Examinations they translate the interpretation of the classics they have done into foreign writing. The few who pass can join their names to the jinshi list, and are conferred civil appointments, but they translate documents as before. After this the outstanding ones are selected so that they can specialise in their skill. When they are done, they are examined by the senior officials of the Six Boards, and those who pass receive cap and belt. After three more years they are conferred office.*⁹²

初以舉人為之，其就禮部試，則以蕃書譯其所作經義。稍通者得聯名于進士榜，授以文學之職，而譯書如故。其後又擇俊民俾專其業藝。成會六部大臣試之，通者冠帶，又三年授以官。

⁹¹Taizong shilu 65, p. 3v. (0920).

⁹²Qiu Jun 邱濬, *Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1988), *juan* 145, pp. 14-15.

This makes it clear that candidates were *juven* 舉人, provincial examination graduates. At the examinations they had not only to write the demanding series of essays on the prescribed Neoconfucian curriculum, but were also required to translate one or more of the essays they had written into their other languages, a task requiring a high level of language ability. It also shows that the translators had to master not only foreign language skills, but also the Neoconfucian dogma, historical and administrative knowledge, and composition and calligraphy skills in Chinese, required to pass the regular examinations.

Thirty-eight students were distributed among eight colleges at the outset, making only a small number in each, however more translators would be needed for Persian, which was used for communications with several countries, than for Burmese and Baiyi, and it's likely there were varying numbers of students in each college.

The Language Colleges

The colleges must have been established for the eight languages which were most used in the *Neige* at that time. Translators already working in the *Neige* probably formed at least part of the teaching staff. The Baiyi 白夷 College was established to translate correspondence with Baiyi, identified as Mäng² Maaw², a country of the Dai 傣 peoples in south-west Yunnan, in present-day Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture (*Dehong Daizu Jingpozu Zizhizhou* 德宏傣族景颇族自治州). Two Pacification Offices (*xuanweisi* 宣慰司) were established there in Yuan, which were combined into a single *xuanweisi*, under the command of the local chieftain, in 1384, the seventeenth year of *Hongwu*.⁹³ Two officers, Li Sicong 李思聰 and Qian Guxun 钱古训, sent there to sort out a border incursion into Mian in 1396, the twenty-ninth year of *Hongwu*, presented the court an account of its geography, customs and routes, later published as *Baiyi zhuan* 百夷, (An account of Baiyi). It includes the following information about written messages:

⁹³Qian Guxun 钱古训, annotated by Jiang Yingliang 江应樑, *Baiyi zhuan jiao zhu* 百夷传校注 (An Account of Baiyi annotated), (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1980). Jiang Yingliang's introduction, p. 22.

*Chinese script is not used. Incisions are made on bamboo or wood for small matters, while for important business Burmese (Mian) writing is used, which is written horizontally.*⁹⁴

無中國文字，小事刻竹木，大事作緬書，皆旁行為記。

The script is in fact Tay script, also called Shan script, which has many elements similar to Burmese (*Mian* 緬) writing, however the languages are different and the scripts are not interchangeable.⁹⁵ Clearly it is the Tay script which is meant here, and which was the script taught in the Baiyi College. The establishment of the college reflects the political power and military might of Mäng² Maaw², and its importance to the Ming court at that time. One of the texts of the multilingual Tsurphu scroll, produced in the year the college was founded, is the earliest surviving example of writing in Tay script.⁹⁶

The year of the establishment of the Babaiguan 八百館 is recorded as 1511, the sixth year of Zhengde.⁹⁷ Babai is the kingdom of Lanna, whose capital was Chiangmai. It is not known why it was established at that time.

The need for a Thai College (*Xianluoguan* 暹羅館) was communicated to the throne in a petition by Liang Chu 梁儲 in 1515,⁹⁸ but it was not until 1579, the seventh year of Wanli, that several tributary ambassadors were retained as teachers, students recruited and a *Xianluo* college set up.⁹⁹ The most detailed account of the establishment of the *Xianluo* College is in *Siyiguan kao*. The presence of the *Xianluo* ambassador-teachers gave the incumbent *Tidu* 提督 supervisor Wang Zongzai 王宗載 the opportunity to record information about that country, which grew into his compilation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 80.

⁹⁵Christian Daniels, 'Script Without Buddhism: Burmese Influence on the Tay (Shan) script of Mäng² Maaw² as Seen in a Chinese Scroll Painting of 1407', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 9, 2 (2012), pp. 147-176.

⁹⁶Ibid, p. 170.

⁹⁷*Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 3r. (p. 45).

⁹⁸See below.

⁹⁹Zhang Wende 张文德, 'Cong Xianluoguan de sheli kan Mingchao houqi yu Xianluo de wenhua jiaoliu' 从暹罗馆的设立看明朝后期与暹罗的文化交流, *Dongnanya congheng* 东南亚纵横 11 (2009), pp. 118-9.

¹⁰⁰The compilation of *Siyiguan kao* is discussed in Chapter 5 The Persian *Laiwen*.

*In the tenth month of 1578, the sixth year of Wanli, Neige Senior Scholar Zhang and others petitioned according to a submission from Tidu shaoqing supervisor Xiao Lin, asking for an additional Xianluo college to be established in the Siyiguan. Ten hereditary students, Ma Yingkun and others, were selected by examination and sent to study at the college.*¹⁰¹

萬曆六年十月該內閣大學士張等題據提督少卿蕭稟呈，請於本館添設暹羅一館，考選世業字第馬應坤等十名送館教習。

After a period of preparation, the college was opened the following year, in 1579.

The Persian College

Siyiguan kao contains the following note, probably appended when Wang Zongzai was compiling the work in 1578-9, about the countries whose documents were handled by the Persian College.

*Translating foreign letters from countries near Huihui such as Turfan, Mecca and Samarkand was done by the Persian College in olden times. Islam was also practised in countries such as Champa. Japan, Cambodia, Java and Malacca, and the Persian College also took over the translating of any foreign language tribute documents. These are all listed below.*¹⁰²

其附近諸國如土魯番，天方，撒馬爾罕，舊隸本館譯番。此外如占城，日本，真臘，瓜哇，滿刺加諸國，皆習回回教，遇有進貢番文，亦屬本館代譯。今具列于後。

And elsewhere:

*Islam is also practiced in Turfan, Arabia (Mecca), Samarcand, Champa, Japan, Cambodia (Zhenla), Java and Malacca, and it falls to this College to take charge of translating for them.*¹⁰³

附吐魯番，天方，撒馬爾罕，占城，日本，真臘，瓜哇，滿刺加諸本皆習回回教，遇本館代譯焉。

This curious statement is partly true. There is no evidence that Persian was ever used in communications with Japan. There was no Japanese college because, as with Annan and Korea, Chinese was used.¹⁰⁴ It is probable however that correspondence with the other countries listed by Wang Zongzai did fall to the Persian College to deal with.

¹⁰¹Wang Zongzai 汪宗載 comp., *Siyiguan kao* 四夷館考, (from Oriental Society 1924 imprint), (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1972), pt 2, pp. 21v-22r.

¹⁰²*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 1v.

¹⁰³*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 2v.

¹⁰⁴Japan is discussed in Chapter 4 The Western ocean.

Letters survive showing that Persian was used in dealings with Turfan, Mecca, and Samarkand.¹⁰⁵ Islam had come to Champa and Cambodia at that time, but it is not known what chancellery arrangements they had. Champa, Java and Malacca, however, are all along the sea route to Calicut, the great mart on the southwest coast of India, and thence Hormuz and beyond. There is evidence that in most of the kingdoms along the routes travelled by Zheng He's fleets there were Muslim communities with learned scholars who could provide secretarial services to local rulers, writing letters in Persian for presentation to the Chinese court, and translating the court's Persian edicts and letters into local languages.¹⁰⁶ However not a single example of tribute letter or edict remains as evidence of this practice. The stele erected in Sri Lanka by Zheng He bearing inscriptions in Chinese, Tamil and Persian is the only surviving testimony to the use of Persian as an international language along the route to the Indian Ocean. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

Siyiguan kao provides information about letters from Hami in the chapter dealing with Gaochangguan 高昌館, the Uighur College.

*There are standard (true) and cursive writing, which are quite like Mongolian script. Persian language is also regularly adopted. ... The land of Hami is close to Gaochang, and translating is basically done by the Gaochangguan, but there are many Muslims (huihuiaren) among them, and some also use Muslim script when they present tribute, therefore it is also done by the Huihuiguan. This should temporarily be distinguished.*¹⁰⁷

字書亦有真草，頗似韃靼字。亦常借用回回語言。....哈密地近高昌，本屬高昌館譯審，但其中多回回人，入貢時，亦有用回回字者，故又屬回回館。此當臨時分別也。

Three peoples lived in Hami:

*Huihui, Uighurs and Qara-Qoï reside together all three in the same city. They don't value race or kind, nor are they subordinate to each other.*¹⁰⁸

哈密有回回，畏兀兒，哈刺灰，三種共居一城。種類不貴，不相下。

¹⁰⁵These are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 5 below.

¹⁰⁶This view is expressed by Ma Jianchun 马建春, 'Alabo, Bosi yuwen zai Yuan Ming liang chao guanfangde jiaoxi yu yunyong' 阿拉伯, 波斯语文在元明两朝官方的教习与运用, *Jinan shixue* 暨南史学 9 (2009), pp. 250ff.

¹⁰⁷*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 1v.

¹⁰⁸*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 3r. Pelliot discusses the name *Qara-Qoï* in *Le Hōja*, pp. 130-133.

The Persian *Huihuiguan laiwen* and Uighur *Gaochangguan laiwen* collections in *Huayiyiyu* each contain letters from Turfan and Hami in the last decades of the fifteenth century, showing that both Persian and Uighur were used for tribute and petition purposes in both places then.¹⁰⁹ No Persian documents from Turfan or Hami survive from the *Hongwu* and *Yongle* periods. Regular tribute is recorded during those times, and Hami was established as a *wei* 衛, garrison, and became the furthest outpost of the Ming empire in the western regions during *Yongle*.¹¹⁰ This generated edicts, patents and petitions in Chinese, Uighur and Persian, the work involving translators and calligraphers from both colleges.

Recruitment of Teachers

Sometimes recruitment of teachers was done at local level. The solution in 1504 when the Burmese College had run out of teachers was to send abroad for some.

*In 1504, the seventeenth year of Hongzhi, because the study of translating had ceased to be passed on in the Burmese college, a message was sent to regimental magistrates in Yunnan to obtain people to be teachers.*¹¹¹

弘治十七年因本館譯學失傳行雲南鎮巡官取人教習。

Another way of recruiting was retaining members of tribute missions. *Siyiguan kao* describes a situation sometime after 1440 in the *Zhengtong* era when six members of a tribute mission from Burma were retained as teachers, and again in 1504, the seventeenth year of *Hongzhi*, when three Burmese envoys were given an official rank.

*... three of them were retained as professors in the Burmese college; all being conferred the position of usher (xuban).*¹¹²

三名留本館教授。俱授序班職事。

This was the method used later in the dynasty when in 1515 Liang Chu 梁儲, the *shangshu* who looked after document drafting and translating in the Neige, submitted a proposal to the Zhengde Emperor concerning the translating of Siamese documents.

¹⁰⁹These are discussed in Chapter 5 The Persian *Laiwen*.

¹¹⁰Idem.

¹¹¹*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 15a.

¹¹²*Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 15a.

When an envoy from the King of Xianluo came to the capital recently, no-one could read the text of a memorial on golden leaves he brought as tribute. Translating has been difficult several times. It has been found that when foreign texts from Babai, Damian and other places failed to be transmitted in recent years, the Neige drew up a proposal that Lanzhege, the headman on a mission here, should be retained for some time to teach in the College, and it was successful. The best course is, according to the example of Lanzhege, to retain one or two among those foreigners from Xianluo, and send several hereditary student candidates from officials of the colleges in the Siyiguan to the college and order them to study and on the day it is complete, send these same foreigners back, according to the precedent.¹¹³

今次有暹羅國王差人來京，進貢金葉表文無人識認，節次審譯不便。及查得近年八百大甸等處夷字失傳，該內閣具題，暫留差來頭目藍者哥在館教習，成效合。無比照藍者哥事例，予暹羅國來夷人內選留一二名，在館並各館官下世業子弟數名，送館令其教習，待有成之日，將本夷照例送回。

This shows that the practice had been used for Babai and was proposed again for Miandian. These retained envoys would have been educated senior officials of their own countries, who possibly knew some Chinese as well. No doubt they were called on by the Gaochiguan to provide translations of documents when necessary, while they were carrying out their teaching duties.

The situation would have been different in the Persian College. The workload of its translators was greater than that of the other colleges, as they translated documents for Hami, Turfan, Samarkand, Herat, and countries beyond as far as Mecca, as well as for the countries along the sea route to Calicut and beyond. There was probably a substantial corps of *semuren* descendants working as translators in the Neige, or as officials elsewhere, or as private scholars, who could fill the teaching positions. Clearly however, the options of retaining Persian translators from tribute missions or of recruiting *ad hoc* translators who were not graduates also existed.

***Siyiguan ze* 四夷館則**

Siyiguan ze 四夷館則, the regulations of the Siyiguan, is a compilation of official documents made progressively between 1543 and 1688.¹¹⁴ Translations of a portion of

¹¹³Liang Chu, *Yuzhou yi gao* 1, p. 9 v.

¹¹⁴Paul Pelliot traces the authorship and editions of this work in Pelliot, Paul, 'Sseu yi kouan tsö ("Règlements du Bureau des traducteurs") par Lu Wei-k'i' (book review), *T'oung Pao* 26 (1928), pp. 53ff.

these documents form the main content of Norman Wild's 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan'.¹¹⁵ It has sections containing edicts and memorials, appointments, regulations, instructions for officials, salaries and allowances. There are detailed, apparently complete lists of officers for the years 1490 to 1630, which are discussed below, however *Siyiguan ze* includes no detailed records for the 83-year period from the establishment of the colleges in 1407 until 1490, the third year of *Hongzhi*. That was the busiest time for translators in all the colleges, but no information has survived to tell us how many officers there were, their names, rank and titles, or what procedures were followed. An inscription recorded in *Siyiguan ze* tells how this information first began to be collected:

*Senior officers in the Neige established the positions of Director and Sub-Director of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, one of each, to double the duties of supervision. They are Mr Yang Zishan and Mr Zhang Jisheng at this time. These gentlemen conferred together, saying, the relocations of the Translating College and the appointments of its officers have disappeared with the passage of time, and there is nothing that can be examined, so they are lost to our generation. If nothing is planned now, what will posterity be able to see?*¹¹⁶ *Therefore a stone was erected on the left side at the front of the Great Hall, listing the names of those who served as officers, about a thousand people in total. The left side was left empty, so that those who came afterwards could continue to be written there.*¹¹⁷

內閣大臣建置太常寺卿少卿各一員，為提督重其職也。今為楊君子山，張君季升。二君相與謀，曰館之遷設，官之建置，歲月已漫，無可考，吾輩更失。今弗圖，後嗣何視。爰樹石于堂之左序，而列任官之名氏，凡若千人。虛其左，俾後來者續書焉。

Yang Zishan and Zhang Jisheng served as Director and Sub-Director respectively and were together in office in the years 1516-1519. They were able to collect records going back more than twenty years, starting from 1490, shortly before the supervisory positions were established. Evidently there was a lack of coordination among the colleges before the appointment of the supervisors, and records were not kept.

¹¹⁵Norman Wild, 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan 四夷(譯)館 (Bureau of Translators)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11, 3 (1945), pp. 617-640. Wild's introduction is useful, but his translation of *Siyiguan ze*, published by L. Carrington Goodrich after Wild's death, must only be a first draft of what would have become a more finished version. While serving as an overall guide to the Chinese text, it omits the section headings accompanying each notice in the Chinese text, losing the format of the original. Some sections which contain interesting information are not included, and several details are not translated accurately.

¹¹⁶Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, pp. 226-7.

¹¹⁷*Siyiguan ze* 18, pp. 3rv.

Siyiguan ze contains information to construct a detailed picture of the operations of the colleges from 1490 onwards. It shows a hierarchy of officers who, though few in number, implemented a program selecting, training and examining students, and making them available for secondment to translating duties in the Neige. The lack of such lists for the first eighty-three years makes it impossible to determine the identities of translators and teachers in that period, but the positions and titles of the officers as they are described in *Siyiguan ze* probably existed within each college from the beginning.

Supervisory positions

Siyiguan ze sets out five levels of office in the Salaries and Allowances (奉稟 *fengbin*) Section.¹¹⁸ The senior officers were *tidu* 提督, supervisors, who bore the titles *Taichangsi qing* 太常寺卿 Director of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, senior third grade, and *Taichangsi shaoqing* 太常寺少卿 Sub-director of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, senior fourth grade. These positions were established in 1494.¹¹⁹ While the *Siyiguan* was established within the Hanlinyuan, and remained under its administration throughout the Ming Dynasty, the titles of its officers were all adopted from other agencies of the court, some within the Board of Rites (*libu* 禮部). The titles of the *Siyiguan* Supervisors led to the erroneous inclusion of the *Siyiguan* in the chapter describing *Taichangsi* 太常寺, the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, in *Ming shi*.¹²⁰ *Taichangsi* was an agency closely related and indirectly subordinate to the Board of Rites, in charge of sacrificial rites and music, under a director, *qing* 卿, senior third grade. The head of the *Siyiguan* had the same title and rank as the head of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. The position of director, *Taichangsi qing* was removed in 1546, and the sub-director *Taichangsi shaoqing* was Supervisor *tidu* of the *Siyiguan* after that time.

Siyiguan ze lists the names of all the supervisors, with brief details about their place of origin, the year they became *jinshi*, the year they took office in the *Siyiguan*, and their

¹¹⁸*Siyiguan ze* 8, pp. 1r. (p. 147).

¹¹⁹*Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 3r. (p. 45). Cf. Wild, Norman, 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan', p. 625.

¹²⁰*Ming shi* 74, p. 1797.

subsequent promotions.¹²¹ It is apparent from these lists that the posts were stepping stones to other more exalted positions. The first *tidu qing* appointed in 1494 evidently stayed in that position for thirteen years, as the second wasn't appointed until 1507, but after that there was a regular turnover, with new appointments made every one, two or three years, with some exceptions, until the end of the dynasty. Each entry shows the officer being promoted into the position and then having a subsequent career as Senior Secretary (*shangshu* 尚書) in one of the boards, or Senior Scholar *daxueshi* (大學士) in the Hanlinyuan, or other high positions. Similarly, the lists of assistant supervisors also show new appointees every few years, sometimes every one or two years, with 146 officers holding that position in 136 years between 1494 and 1630, and in almost all cases going on to similar senior positions as the *tiduqing*. There are no cases where the same man was promoted from *tidu shaoqing* to *tidu qing*. It is apparent that the men who took these positions were not language specialists, but career bureaucrats.

A third supervisory title is *Shangbaosi qing* 尚寶司卿, fifth grade. This *qing* takes his title from *Shangbaosi* 尚寶司, the Seals Office, which maintained, issued, and supervised the use of state seals, also headed by a *qing*, director. This is evidently the title of a supervisory position in the Siyiguan, however although the position is included in the Salaries and Allowances section, none of the name lists include anyone with this title. Only a tally of names of teachers and students in the ten colleges, 十館師生較閱姓氏 appended to *Siyiguan ze*, (which evidently was made at some time after the establishment of the tenth *Xianluo* or Thai College in 1579) shows a teacher in the Indian College with the title 教師尚寶司卿 *Jiaoshi Shangbaosi qing* Teacher-director of the Seals Office.¹²² This unique example shows the highest level to which a teacher might rise.

Positions in the colleges

In the salaries section of *Siyiguan ze*, for several items such as firewood allowance &c. Siyiguan officers are classified into two levels, officials of the supervisory hall

¹²¹*Siyiguan ze* 6, p. 1r. (p. 81) ff.

¹²²*Siyiguan ze* 20, p. 3v. (p. 376).

tidutang guan 提督堂官, and teachers in the ten colleges, *shiguan jiaoshi* 十館教師.¹²³ This shows that in fact no designation for translators existed, and the accountants classified the officers in the Persian college and the other colleges as teachers, not translators. However it seems likely that college personnel did ongoing teaching work, but were also called on to carry out work in the Gaochifang as required. The positions in the colleges were as follows:

Guanglusi shucheng jiaoshi 光祿寺署丞教師 Director-teacher of the Court of Imperial Entertainments. This junior seventh grade position is described in the Salaries and Allowances (*fengbing* 奉稟) Section.¹²⁴ The title is also adopted from another agency, *Guanglusi* 光祿寺, the Court of Imperial Entertainments under the *Libu* Board of Rites, which provided food and drinks at state banquets and ceremonies.

Guanglusi shuzheng jiaoshi 光祿寺署正教師 Drafting assistant (*shuzheng* 署正) - teacher of the Court of Imperial Entertainments. This designation does not appear in the Salaries and Allowances Section, but is applied to several officers in name lists. It implies both translating and teaching work.

Guanglusi shucheng 光祿寺署丞 Director of the Court of Imperial Entertainments, the same title as above, but without the designation *jiaoshi*, teacher.

Honglusi zhubu 鴻臚寺主簿 Registrars of the Court of State Ceremonial, junior eighth grade. This title is adopted from *Honglusi*, the Court of State Ceremonial which was responsible for ritual aspects of state functions. It is one grade higher than the similarly named *Honglusi xuban* 鴻臚寺序班 junior ninth grade. The title *Honglusi zhubu* is given to teachers at a later time, and it is probable that these were teaching positions too.

Honglusi xuban 鴻臚寺序班 Usher of the Court of State Ceremonial, junior ninth grade. This title is also adopted from *Honglusi* the Court of State Ceremonial. A similar title *tongshi xuban* 通事序班, interpreter-usher was given to spoken

¹²³*Siyiguan ze* 8, p. 4r. (p. 153).

¹²⁴*Siyiguan ze* 8, p. 2v. (p. 151).

interpreters in the Huitongguan.¹²⁵ The duties of the *xuban* are not clear, but they probably worked in the teaching programme and did translating for the Neige as required.

Siyiguan ze provides lists of names of men appointed to official positions in each of the colleges between 1490 and 1627 (names of officers and their positions in the ten colleges, *shiguan guan zhi ming* 十館官職名).¹²⁶ In contrast with the fast turnover in supervisory *tidu qing* and *tidu shaoqing* positions, these officers were recruited in groups at long intervals, and must have served in the colleges for most of their careers. The lists show only a small number being promoted to higher positions elsewhere, such as *zhichifang banshi* 制敕房辦事 etc. There must have been intakes in 1490, 1509, 1537, 1566, 1578, 1605 and 1627, because all officers listed were appointed in one of those years.

The lists in *Siyiguan ze* show that there were only small numbers of officers in each college between 1490 and 1627. A comprehensive study of all the colleges is outside the scope of this study. The following count shows the numbers for the Persian college. In 1490, the 3rd year of *Hongzhi* when our records begin, five men were appointed to the Persian College, two *Guanglusi shuzheng jiaoshi* and one *Guanglusi shucheng* 光祿寺署丞, A fourth officer, whose position in the Persian College is not named, was later promoted as a *Zhichifang banshi*, functionary of the Zhichifang drafting office. A fifth officer simply titled *jiaoshi*, teacher, was previously a *jun dudu* 軍都督, military commissioner. Three of the five were teachers. It is not clear whether the other two did translating tasks or were also part of the teaching staff. Six more appointments were made nineteen years later in 1509, the fourth year of *Zhengde*. Two were teachers, *Guanglusi shuzheng jiaoshi*, and three were *Honglusi xuban*, ushers of the Court of State Ceremonial. One other officer, whose position in the Persian college is not noted, was promoted as a *shibu*.

The Persian college must have been staffed by very old men, because in the following fifty-seven year period only one appointment is recorded, in 1537, the 16th year of

¹²⁵See Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming*, p. 378.

¹²⁶*Siyiguan ze* 7, pp. 1r. ff.

Jiaqing. This officer's position in the Persian college is not noted, and he was later promoted as a *zhichifang banshi*. It was not until 1566, the 45th year of *Jiaqing*, that four more officers were appointed, one *Guanglusi shuzheng*, one *Guanglusi shucheng*, and two *Honglusi zhubu*. After this there was another long period of inactivity, with only one appointment made in the next 39 years, a *Honglusi xuban* in 1578, the 6th year of *Wanli*. It was not until 1605, the 32nd year of *Wanli*, that six more appointments were made. One, whose position in the Persian College is not noted, was promoted as a *zhichifang banshi*. Three were *Honglusi zhubu jiaoshi*, and two were *Honglusi xuban*. A tally of names of teachers and students in the ten colleges (*shiguan shisheng jiaoyue xingshi* 十館師生較閱姓氏) appended to *Siyiguan ze*, which was made at some time after the establishment of the tenth Xianluo College in 1578 includes the names of two of the *zhubu jiaoshi* teachers, and the name of one of the *xuban* also appears in this tally, but promoted to *zhubu jiaoshi* too. Another twenty-two years pass before the final recorded appointment of a *Honglusi xuban jiaoshi* in 1627, the 7th year of *Tianqi*.

This shows that there were only about half a dozen or so appointed officers in the Persian College at any time after 1490. There is an overall diminution in the status of the teachers during the period of these records. The positions *shucheng*, *shuzheng*, *zhubu* and *xuban* all appear with teacher, *jiaoshi*, added. The tally lists contain names of teachers and students. There are no lists that specifically identify translators or calligraphers. It is possible that this work was done by officers with titles *shucheng*, *shuzheng*, *zhubu* and *xuban*, and that the teachers did translating too.

The list of names of officers reveals the hereditary nature of the positions after 1490. Officers with the surname *Li* 李 from Licheng Prefecture 歷城縣 in Shandong were appointed to the Persian college in 1490, 1509, two in 1566, and three in 1605. Officers with the surname *Gong* 龔 from Xiangfu Prefecture 祥符縣 in Henan were appointed in 1509, 1578 and 1605. Officers with the surname *Shao* 邵 from Renhe Prefecture 仁和縣 in Zhejiang were appointed in 1566, 1605 and 1627. Officers with the surname *Ma* 馬 from Datong Prefecture 大同縣 in Shanxi were appointed in 1509

and 1566. It is likely that fifteen of the twenty-four appointments recorded in this period were made from just five families.

Students

Student translators, *yizisheng* 譯字生, were recruited from the *Guozijian*, and sometimes from among the children of the bureaucracy, but this avenue was cut off in 1459 and again in 1542. A system of hereditary students, *shiye zidi* 世葉子弟, became customary, and many students and instructors entered this way.¹²⁷ Tally lists discussed below show one or two *yiziguan* and as many as fifteen *yizisheng* in each language college.¹²⁸ A submission to the throne of 1490 recorded in *Siyiguan ze* describes a nine-year training period.

*The third year of Hongzhi (1490). With respectful obedience. The duties of the Translating College students are to work solely at basic skills, to be well versed in foreign languages, and to know foreign scripts perfectly, to provide for whatever work needs to be done. After three years they are sent to the examination officials in the Board of Rites to sit for examinations. Those who pass become supported or salaried students (food and grain students), and are given a dan (about 72 kilograms) of grain a month. When three more years of study have passed, they attend another examination, according to the previous example, and those who pass at the top level are given a cap and girdle, and become translator-officials, and are still given a dan of grain. After three more years have passed, those who pass at the top level in the examinations are conferred the official position of xuban, usher.*¹²⁹

弘治三年。...欽依。四夷館子弟務要專工習學本等藝業，精通夷語，諳曉番文，以備應用。..... 三年後本院行移禮部會官考試。中者作食糧子弟，月給米一石。習學又過三年後，仍照前例會考，中優等者，與冠帶作譯字官，仍給米一石。又過三年後，會考中優等者，授以序班職事。

This shows a progression from *yizisheng* to *yiziguan* 譯字官 to *xuban* 序班. The same submission suggests that it was at the level of *xuban* that translators were called on to make translations in the *Gaochifang*:

*After nine years, those who pass the examination at the top level are conferred an official position at the lower eighth grade, and practise translating to provide services as required.*¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ma Jianchun, Alabo, *Bosi yuwen zai Yuan Ming liang chao guanfangde jiaoxi yu yunyong*, p. 258.

¹²⁸ *Siyiguan ze* 20, p. 2r. ff.

¹²⁹ *Siyiguan ze* 1, pp. 1v-2v. (p. 45). See the same information also at *Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 5r. (p. 59).

¹³⁰ *Siyiguan ze* 1, pp. 1v-2v. (p. 45).

至九年考中優等者授以從八品職事習譯備用。

Testing

A memorial of 1653 recorded in the prologue of *Siyiguan ze* describes a system of regular testing in use at the Siyiguan. Recruitment for work in the *Neige* was done on the basis of the test results.

*According to the old rule, for officers and students of translating, apart from daily teaching and practise, there were monthly testing, seasonal examinations and yearly inspections, and they were each given grades, which were forwarded to the inner halls (the Hanlin Academy). Whenever it happened that men were needed for the History College, the Gaochifang, or as copyists, they were recruited from the officers of the ten colleges.*¹³¹

舊例，譯學官生除逐日教習外，有月課，有季考，有歲參，分別等第，開送內院，凡遇史館，誥敕，謄錄需人，亦於十館職官選用。

A short notice in *Siyiguan ze* gives details about seasonal testing 季課 *jike*.

*Submission of seasonal tests. Item. Testing (...) when translating officers are first appointed in the nine colleges. The Supervisors issue three questions every month, nine in a season, to be issued to the officers for translating into foreign and Chinese scripts. These are entered into a register and submitted at the end of each season. The Hanlinyuan (tang) types are submitted to the Neige where they are held. They are not needed after appointment to positions.*¹³²

季課進呈。一。九館初授譯字官□□課。每月提督官出題三道，季九道，發□各官譯出番漢字，登簿季終呈。堂類呈內閣收執，授職之後不用。

Clearly these are written tests, as they deal with foreign and Chinese scripts. The Persian and Chinese *laiwen* texts in the *Huayiyiyu* evidently derive from *ke* 課 collections of these test questions, as discussed below.¹³³

Siyiguan kao 四夷館考

Just as the *ke* collections take their title from the *ke* tests, it is possible the monthly and seasonal *kao* examination included examination of knowledge about each of the tributary nations, and gave its name to *Siyiguan kao*, a collection of information that

¹³¹ *Siyiguan ze*, introduction, p. 2v. (p. 16).

¹³² *Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 5r. (p. 59).

¹³³ This is discussed in Chapter 5.

could serve as preparation for such an examination. *Siyiguan ze* describes the procedure for these examinations:

*Ceremonial procedure for monthly kao examinations. Item: monthly examinations on the sixteenth of every month. Students of that college sit in order, holding their examination booklets and listen to the teacher give out the question. When the examination is done names and grades are listed and submitted to the Hanlinyuan (tang 堂).*¹³⁴

月考儀節。一。每月十六日月考。本館諸生執試卷序坐，聽師出題。試畢定名第呈堂。

*Ceremonial procedure for seasonal kao examinations. Item: a notice is put up in the Siyiguan several days before the examination, and each student in the ten colleges is provided with a coloured examination booklet. On this are written the student's name and the name of his college. These are sent to the Committee Office (Weiting 委廳), where the names are covered over and sealed. They are given serial numbers using the first ten characters of the Thousand Character Classic, one character for each college. The names are written on them on removable tags, and on the day, when the names are chanted out and the booklets are distributed, the tags are removed and the numbers are used. The numbers and names are entered onto a page in the register. One day before, the serial numbers are given to the tables and benches. They are seated in order, separated into colleges. The questions are given out when the doors have been sealed. They all leave when the booklets have been handed in. On the day the results are announced several names at the first level are sent to the Neige to await employment. The others are dealt with in order.*¹³⁵

季考儀節。一。季考先數日本館出示先三日十館諸生各備一色試卷面寫某館譯字生某人投遞委廳彌封鈐印用天地玄黃宇宙洪荒日月十字編號每館一字上用浮籤書名至日唱名散卷折去浮籤仍用號簿一扇開寫某號某人先一日交桌凳編號隔十館序坐封門畢出題交卷畢齊散發案之日一等數名送閣候用除者以次發落。

Wang Zongzai 王宗載 became supervisor, *tidu*, of the Siyiguan in 1578, the sixth year of Wanli. His title was *Taichangsi shaoqing*, junior director, but he was in charge because the office of *Taichangsi qing* was abolished after 1539. His name, with a brief career resume, appears in the list of Siyiguan supervisors in *Siyiguan ze*.¹³⁶ The list shows that the positions had a constantly changing incumbent, as officers served one or two years and then were promoted. Wang Zongzai, like the others, stayed only a

¹³⁴*Siyiguan ze* 10, p. 7v. (p. 181).

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶*Siyiguan ze* 6, p. 6r.

short while, and was promoted and replaced by another *tidu* the following year 1579. Among his duties was the organisation of the *kao* examinations. A paragraph in the *Xianluo* (Thailand) section of *Siyiguan kao* describes how he used his leisure time to work with one of the *Xianluo* ambassadors retained as teachers for the newly-established Xianluo College, composing an account of that country.

*At that time Wang Zongzai, in times of leisure from his office of supervising ke testing, worked with the interpreter Wowenquan to write down an account of that country's customs and products, as follows.*¹³⁷

時宗載承乏提督課業之暇因令通事握文源且述彼國之土風物產如左。

This account of *Xianluo* grew into *Siyiguan kao*. A copy of *Siyiguan kao* seen by G. Déveria prior to 1896 was a manuscript copied by a student in the Babai College,¹³⁸ showing that it was a book for students to use. It included a preface by Wang Zongzai dated 1582, the tenth year of Wanli. The only published edition of *Siyiguan kao* is the same one described by Pelliot, published without Wang Zongzai's preface, in 1924.¹³⁹ A French translation of the preface, from an unpublished source, was published by Déveria in 1896:

*The Emperor had only reigned six years when, despite my lack of merit, I was promoted to the position of Supervisor of the Translating College. There I met a Siamese envoy whose arrival at the court had motivated the creation of a new section in our college. When I had the smallest moment of free time I made use of it to keep the company of this person. The summary of what I learned from him about the geography, itineraries, commercial resources, language and customs of his country are as concise as if you saw them in your hand. Given this first result, I wanted to proceed the same way with the Mongolian (Dada) and other Colleges, but my requests for information were fruitless.*¹⁴⁰

(L'Empereur régnait depuis six ans lorsque, malgré mon peu de mérite, je fus élevé aux fonctions d'administrateur du Collège des Interprètes. Je m'y rencontrai avec un envoyé dont l'arrivée à la Cour avait motivé la création d'une nouvelle section dans notre école. Quand j'avais le moindre instant de libre, j'en profitais pour me rendre auprès de ce personnage. La somme de ce que j'appris de lui sur la géographie, les itinéraires, les ressources commerciales, le langage et les coutumes de son pays est aussi nette que si on le voyait dans la main; vu ce premier résultat, j'ai voulu procéder de la même manière pour les

¹³⁷ Wang Zongzai, *Siyiguan kao* 2, pp. 21v-22r.

¹³⁸ Gabriel Déveria, 'Histoire du College des Interprètes de Péking (fragment)', in *Mélanges Charles de Harlez* (Leiden: Brill, 1896), p. 96.

¹³⁹ See Bibliography: Wang Zongzai 汪宗載, *Siyiguan kao* 四夷館考.

¹⁴⁰ Déveria, 'Histoire du College des Interprètes de Péking', p. 98.

bureaux Tatan et autres, mais de ce côté mes demandes de renseignements sont restées infructueuses.)

Wang Zongzai's preface, a model of composition, as would be expected of a *shaoqing* promoted as a governor, argues point by point the need not only for language knowledge in creating tributary documents, but also for knowledge about the countries themselves, lest errors should be made and the Empire, rather than inspiring awe, should be taken advantage of.

*These are the considerations which led me to compile our ancient archives, and put together with them in order all the official accounts of events having to do with foreigners under the present dynasty. The translations of the Siyiguan colleges inform us about the conditions in which foreign states are formed and disappear, the degree of accessibility of the mountains and rivers in their territories, their commercial resources, and the diversity of their customs and speech. Added to this are summaries of their acts of submission or resistance to the empire, and their military vicissitudes. These form a series of notices which should find their place at the head of the vocabulary lists of each college. Beginners will find there what they need in order to understand the countries they are dealing with. In that way I will have provided an important supplement to the teaching which our translators receive.*¹⁴¹

(Telles sont les considérations qui m'ont amené à compiler nos anciennes archives, et à coordonner, en les contrôlant, tous les comptes rendus officiels des faits se rapportant aux étrangers sous la dynastie actuelle. Les traductions de chacun des bureaux du Collège des Interprètes nous renseignent sur les conditions dans laquelle les états étrangers se sont formés ou ont disparu, sur le degré d'accessibilité des montagnes et des fleuves de leurs territoires, sur leurs ressources commerciales et sur la diversité de leurs coutumes et de leurs parlers. En ajoutant à ces données un résumé de leurs actes de résistance ou de soumission envers la Chine, et des vicissitudes de leurs choses militaires, nous formons ainsi une série de notices devant trouver leur place en tête du vocabulaire spéciale à chacun des bureaux du Collège. Les commençants y trouveront ce qu'il leur faut pour connaître les pays dont ils auront à s'occuper, et j'aurai de la sorte apporté un supplément assez important à l'enseignement que reçoivent nos interprètes.)

It was evidently a study reference book used by translating students in the colleges.

Zhang Wende points out that it circulated in the form of handwritten copies, so it was

¹⁴¹From the French translation by Devéria in 'Histoire du College des Interprètes de Péking', p. 100.

¹³⁷Zhang Wende 张文德, 'Wang Zongzai ji qi "Siyiguan kao"' 王宗载及其《四夷馆考》 (Wang Tsung-Tsai and His Ssu I-Kuan K'ao), *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu* 中国边疆史地研究 10, 3 (2000), p. 1.

not listed in the catalogue of proscribed books during the Qianlong period in Qing.¹⁴² This country knowledge was needed when members of the Siyiguan accompanied officials on foreign missions.

*Requests from important officers. Item. If an important officer on an imperial mission has business in a foreign country and petitions to ask for a translator, and it is approved, the resume booklets of those in the colleges who are well-versed in the foreign language and who are familiar with foreign matters, are selected and sent to the Hanlin Academy for a choice to be made.*¹⁴³

重臣奏討。一。國家敕命重臣有事外國，奏討通譯人員准，院手本，於各館職官內選其諳曉番文熟知彝情者，送院揀選。

Other duties of translators

Skilled calligraphers from the Siyiguan were seconded to fill shortages in the Hall of Literary Culture (*Wenhuadian* 文華殿), the Emperor's personal secretariat, in the Imperial History Bureau (*Guoshiguan* 國史館), and in the Imperial Titles Office (*Gaochifang* 誥敕房) working directly under the Grand Secretaries. This brought the translator-officials into the heart of the Court apparatus, and into contact with the great men of each age.

Less prestigious, and perhaps to be avoided were postings to border stations. Only two notices of such postings appear in *Siyiguan ze*. A translator-official refused to take up a post meeting tribute envoys at the Mongolian border station Xifengkou (喜峯口), and a student translator who agreed to go was promoted as translator-official in his stead. Another translator-official was sent to Yanghe station in Shanxi.¹⁴⁴ These positions were organised triennially, the governor of the border post notifying the Bingbu of their requirements, they notifying the Libu, then through the Hanlinyuan to the Siyiguan.

Officers of the Siyiguan also took part in the compilation of *Ming shilu*, the Veritable Records. The Records of several of the Ming reigns are preceded by lists of officers

¹⁴³*Siyiguan ze* 3, p. 1v. (p. 62).

¹⁴⁴Norman Wild, 'Materials for the Study of the Ssu I Kuan', p. 629.

involved in their compilation.¹⁴⁵ *Wuzong shilu*, compiled between 1522 and 1525 lists ninety-seven, who include 1 *Guanglusi Shucheng*, 3 *Honglusi Zhubu*, 12 *Xuban* and 2 *Yiziguan*. Franke points out that the majority of the compiling officers always belonged to the Hanlin Academy, and few or none came from other offices,¹⁴⁶ and so the titles in these lists must be of *Siyiguan* officers, seconded for some period of time to the compilation project. Even a Vice-minister of the Seal office *Shangbaosi Shaoqing* listed there could have been a *Siyiguan* officer, as this seldom-seen title is also among those listed in *Siyiguan ze*. That would make a total of nineteen officers from the nine language colleges established at that time, who must have worked on the complete and detailed record of tribute missions, embassies, and foreign relations contained in the Veritable Records. Their skills would have been needed for sorting and collating the bilingual documents relating to each visit, summarizing their content, and determining and recording the correct Chinese forms of country names, and names of sovereigns, principal ambassadors and sometimes interpreters, which are carefully copied into the record, probably using the Chinese translations of the diplomatic letters as their guide, and using the transliterations of names created by *Siyiguan* translators.

Siyiguan officers also carried out copying work. An entry in *Siyiguan ze* describes how officers were selected from the *Siyiguan* colleges and seconded temporarily to the History Bureau, while retaining their college positions.

*Selection for employment in the History Bureau. Item. When compilation is done in the History Bureau, the Hanlin Academy receives a notice from the Neige, asking for resume booklets (shouben) to select officers to do copying. The resumes are chosen of those among the officers in the ten colleges who are expert in kaishu script, and sent on for selection to be made. Those in the category of teachers are not excluded. When the original copying duties are completed, they return to work in the colleges.*¹⁴⁷

史館揀用。一。史館纂修本院奉內閣題請手本取官謄錄。於十館職官內選其精通楷書者手本送院，轉送揀用。係教師者不妨。原務錄畢，復館辦事。

¹⁴⁵Wolfgang Franke, 'The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)', in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank, eds., *Histories of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 742-3.

¹⁴⁶Franke, 'The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)', p. 742.

¹⁴⁷*Siyiguan ze* 3, p. 2r. (p. 63).

This item makes it clear that officers were selected to do copying, *tenglu* 謄錄. This could mean that the Siyiguan officers were only called in when the compilation had been done, and good calligraphers were needed to make the two fair copies of the work. A similar item describes officers seconded for copying duties in the *Gaochifang*, drafting office, and the History Bureau.

*Selection and allocation. Item. It was a rule in former years that when there was a shortage of people to do copying in the Gaochifang drafting office and the History Bureau, translating officers from the Siyiguan were selected through public examination and allocated to the Neige. This practice was observed for a long time.*¹⁴⁸

選掄起送。一。先年事例。遇誥敕房，史館謄錄缺人合將四彝館譯字官員從公考選起送內閣。遵行已久。

Conclusion

The colleges were established in 1407 according to an innovative model, devised by the Yongle Emperor specifically to facilitate all aspects of his communications with rulers of tributary countries. The important task of translating the Emperor's words called for the highest level of skill, and the teachers who staffed the colleges put students through a rigorous system of training and testing in language, country knowledge and calligraphy, to provide a high standard of service in the administrative halls close to the Emperor. The location of the colleges within the Hanlin Academy gave them a high status, and ensured that only the best-educated candidates could attend them, but in organisation all the colleges had the same official status, with no language distinguished above the rest. As the following chapters will show, Persian translators usually worked alongside translators of other languages to produce grand multilingual documents. Clearly systems of recruitment, testing and coordination existed within the Hanlin Academy from the beginning, but it is only after the appointment of supervisors and record-keeping ninety years later that a picture emerges. Although tributary activity decreased greatly in the middle part of the dynasty and almost ceased in the last part, the colleges' function of service to the

¹⁴⁸*Siyiguan ze* 3, p. 2r. (p. 63).

Emperor ensured that they continued to train and test translators throughout the dynasty.

Chapter Two

The Timurid Empire.

The relationship between the Great Ming Empire and the Timurid rulers of Samarkand and Herat produced the greatest volume of work for the Persian translators at the court. Embassies accompanied each other back and forth for almost ten years during the rule of Timur, and throughout the rule of Shah Rukh and his successors. The court records give a detailed account of the letters, the names of sovereigns, the names of ambassadors, lists of gifts and other vital information which enable the whole of the tributary relationship to be traced in detail, and the workload of the translators to be gauged. These records also preserve a single example of the work of the court Persian translators, the translation into Chinese of a Persian letter from the chancellery of Timur, showing both the style in which the Persian letter was drafted, and the skill with which the translators rendered it into Chinese. As the only surviving example, it represents the larger number of translations from Persian into Chinese made at the court.

The abbreviated Chinese court annals are supplemented by information in *Zobdat al-tawārik* of Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru who wrote his chronicle at the time the tribute missions were still active, and copied two letters from Zhu Di to Shah Rukh into his history, which are translations from Chinese into Persian made by court translators. They enable us to evaluate the language skills and translating methods of the translators, and they also represent hundreds of translated letters which have not survived.

Historians writing in English have created dramatic scenarios for the letters between Great Ming and the Timurid Empire. Timur's letter is supposed to be a forgery, Timur to have been incensed by Hongwu's reply, Shah Rukh is supposed to have been offended by the haughty tone of Yongle's letter, and his reply is read as a rebuke, which the palace officials must surely have hidden from the Emperor. None of these assertions have any basis in the records. All that we can know is that although the establishment of tribute relations with Timur proved unsuccessful, relations of warm personal friendship were soon established between the Yongle Emperor and Shah

Rukh. The Persian histories give eyewitness accounts of the magnificence of the tribute missions in both capitals.

The Hongwu period

When Zhu Yuanzhang established himself as the first Ming Emperor, he sent envoys to invite rulers of central Asian countries to send embassies:

*In the time of Hongwu, Taizu wished to communicate with the countries in the Western Regions, and sent several messengers bearing imperial letters, but nobody arrived from the rulers of those far places.*¹⁴⁹

洪武中太祖欲通西域，屢遣使招諭，而遐方君長未有至者。

Letters proclaiming the new dynasty were sent to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asian countries and as far as Calicut in south India in 1369, the second year of Hongwu,¹⁵⁰ so it is likely that messengers were also sent to the west at that time. The letters on fine silk scrolls which they carried, were addressed not to Timur, but his predecessor, Amīr Ḥusayn, the grand-nephew of Chaghatay ruler Amir Qazaghan, who proclaimed himself head of the Chaghatay Ulus at a great *khuriltay* convocation in 1364, and who was fortifying a new capital at Balkh when the letters were sent in 1369.¹⁵¹ The subsequent struggle for power with Timur explains why there was no early response, but when Timur was victorious and set up his capital at Samarqand in 1370, it is surprising that campaigning, first within Chaghatay, then in Moghulistan and Khorasan distracted him from sending a tribute mission to the Chinese Emperor. It was only after twenty years, and more than halfway through Taizu's reign, that regular communications began:

*In the ninth month of the twentieth year of Hongwu, 1387, Timur first sent a Huihui Mulla Hafiz and others to the court, making tribute of fifteen horses and two camels. These ambassadors were ordered to be banqueted and given eighteen ding of silver. Tribute of horses and camels was made every year from then.*¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹*Ming shi* 332, p. 8598.

¹⁵⁰*Taizu shilu* 38, p. 11r.

¹⁵¹Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 50-55.

¹⁵²*Ming shi* 332, p. 8598.

二十年九月，帖木兒首遣回回滿刺哈非思等來朝，貢馬十五駝二。詔宴其使，賜白金十有八錠。自是頻歲貢馬駝。

Following this commencement of relations, *Ming shilu* records tribute missions arriving from Samarkand in 1388, 1389, 1391, and 1392.¹⁵³

Throughout the time of this series of missions Timur was campaigning continuously against his former ally Tokhtamish, as well as making invasions into Moghulistan. While the court followed him wherever he went on campaigns, it is likely that the tribute missions, and the commercial caravans which accompanied them, set out from Samarkand. Timur's administration was designed to govern both a unified military state and also a traditional Chaghatay tribal confederation through two chancelleries or *dīwāns*, the *dīwān-i a'lā*, the Persian chancellery, and *dīwān-i buzurg*, the one that looked after the Turko-Mongolian, Chaghatay documents.¹⁵⁴ The practice of Timurids sending tribute letters in both Persian and Uighur, and Chinese emperors proclaiming edicts to Timurids in Persian and Uighur probably began at this time.

A letter from Timur to Charles VI of France written in 1402 preserved in the French archives, is in Persian. It is on a plain sheet of paper 47 cm x 20 cm, written in black ink, except the salutation at the beginning and the title of the recipient are in gold ink. There is a wide margin of about 5 centimetres on the right side and the writing continues right up to the left edge of the paper. The imprint of Timur's signet ring covers the final words.¹⁵⁵

Timur's tribute letter

Large numbers of Muslim merchants from Samarkand had been sojourning in Ganzhou and Suzhou since the fall of Yuan. The supervisory officials there advised the court to send them back, and in 1392 the Emperor ordered those who wished to go to be returned.¹⁵⁶ Following this act of generosity, in the eighth month of 1394, the twenty-seventh year of *Hongwu*, Timur's ambassador Dervish 迭力必失 arrived at

¹⁵³These records are listed in Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden, China, Iran und Zentralasien im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 53-60, and Liu Yingsheng, *Hailu yu lulu*, pp. 316-17.

¹⁵⁴Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, pp. 167-170.

¹⁵⁵Silvestre De Sacy, 'Observations on a Correspondence between Tamerlane the Great and Charles the sixth, King of France', *The Monthly Magazine, or British Register* 38, pt 2 (1814), pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁶*Ming shi* 332, p. 8598.

Taizu's court, bringing tribute of two hundred horses, and a letter. It was Timur's sixth regular tribute mission. Only the Chinese translation of the letter survives, but its style suggests the original letter was Persian, and it was probably translated at the Chinese court. The translated letter so pleased the Emperor that it was copied into the daily records and later into *Ming shi*.¹⁵⁷ It was included in a *Siyiguan kao* compilation, now lost, from which a French translation was published by the Jesuit missionary Jean Joseph Marie Amiot in Beijing in 1777.¹⁵⁸ It is the only surviving example of Persian tributary correspondence at the Ming court from the *Hongwu* period, and the only example of translating from Persian into Chinese for the whole of the early Ming period.

The Chinese text is a competent example of translating skill, showing us the standard of Persian-Chinese translating was high. It is in a polished literary style, frequently falling into parallel phrases, and sometimes couched in Chinese bureaucratic terminology. The translation was made by someone who not only understood Persian, but who could also write polished literary Chinese, or it could have been done collaboratively, one person reading and interpreting the Persian and another making a polished Chinese version, the same way that the *Tianwen* classic was translated fourteen years earlier. It is possible that Mashāykh, the Senior Persian (Huihui) Master *Huihui Dashi* 回回大師 in the Hanlinyuan whose Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* was published five years earlier in 1389 was still active, and had a role in the making of this translation.¹⁵⁹ The translator's note at the end explaining the world-reflecting cup shows the care that was taken to ensure the Emperor understood the message. No English translation has been published since Bretschneider's in 1910,¹⁶⁰ so I have made a plain version here.

I respectfully submit in reply that the Great Emperor of Great Ming has received Heaven's bright mandate, and united the four seas. Your human-kindness and virtue flood everywhere, your grace nourishes all creatures, and ten thousand countries look up to you. They all know that Heaven above,

¹⁵⁷The Chinese text of this letter is in *Ming shilu* 8, p. 3420, and also in the chapter on Samarkand in *Ming shi* 332, p. 8598, (English translation in Bretschneider, vol. 2, p. 258).

¹⁵⁸Amiot, *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les, sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages &c des Chinois par les missionnaires de Pe-kin*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁹See Chapter 1 The Siyiguan.

¹⁶⁰For German translation see Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, p. 64.

wishing that all beneath heaven should be peacefully ruled, specially commanded Your Majesty the Emperor to emerge and take up your destiny and be the chief of millions.

Your light is broad and great, it shines like Heaven's mirror, and it shines on all whether near or far. Your servant Timur, secluded ten thousand miles away, respectfully hears of the greatness of the sacred imperial virtue, which surpasses that of all ancient times. Your majesty has all the blessings that there have not been since ancient times. Nations which did not submit have all submitted to your majesty. Dark lands in far off regions in distant places have been made clear and bright. All old people are secure and happy, and the young grow up and succeed them. The good all receive blessings and the evil all know fear.

And now you bestow the special grace on distant countries, that all merchants can come to China, and our ambassadors have viewed your wealthy cities and strong battlements, as if they were coming out from darkness, and suddenly seeing the sun. Whence such happiness as this?

I have again received your imperial letter graciously troubling to enquire about making our post stations connect with each other, and making the roads free of obstructions, so that people from distant countries may benefit by it. I respectfully see that your sacred mind is like a world-reflecting cup, which has made your servant's mind clear and bright. The tribes in your servant's country felt great rejoicing and gratitude when they heard the sound of your compassionate virtue. Your servant has nothing with which to repay your favour, only to pray to heaven to grant you long life and happiness as eternal as the heaven and earth.

(A world-reflecting cup; so called from an old tradition in that country, of cups with penetrating brightness, in which the affairs of the world can be seen reflected.)

*When the emperor received the letter he was delighted with its literary style.*¹⁶¹

恭惟大明大皇帝受天明命，統一四海，仁德洪布，恩養庶類，萬國欣仰。咸知上天欲平治天下，特命皇帝出膺運數，為億兆之主。光明廣大，昭若天鏡，無有遠近，咸照臨之。臣帖木兒僻在萬里之外，恭聞聖德寬大，超越萬古。自古所無之福，皇帝皆有之。所未服之國，皇帝皆服之。遠方絕域，昏昧之地，皆清明之。老者無不安樂，少者無不長遂，善者無不蒙福，惡者無不知懼。今又特蒙施恩袁國，凡商賈之來中國者，使觀覽都邑，地池，富貴雄壯，如出昏暗之中，忽睹天日，何幸如之。又承敕書恩撫勞問，使站驛相通，道路無壅，遠國之人咸得其濟。欽仰聖心，如照世之杯，使臣心中豁然光明。臣國中部落，聞慈恩音，歡舞感戴。臣無以報恩，惟仰天祝頌聖壽福祿，如天地永永無極。世杯者，其國舊傳有杯光明洞徹，照之可知世事，故云。帝得表，嘉其有文。

¹⁶¹Ming shi 332, p. 8598.

The submissive tone of the letter has led to claims that it is a forgery, it being thought impossible that proud Timur would write such a letter to the Emperor of China.¹⁶² However it is unlikely that a forgery, presumably presented by somebody impersonating an ambassador, could occur in the highly regulated tribute system that surrounded the Emperor. It is also unlikely that a plainer letter from Timur was embellished with fine phrases by the translator.¹⁶³ All other examples of Ming court translating show a careful and exact rendering, without any addition or omission, and there is no example of translators daring to embellish a communication to the Emperor. The fine phrases were created by the secretaries of the Persian Divan at Timur's court in Samarkand, but the sentiments expressed are Timur's. The phrase *I have again received your imperial letter* shows that this is a reply to a letter from the Ming Emperor. The references to peace and commerce made possible by his universal kindness, virtue, grace and light, are in keeping with the official tributary policy of that time. The references to the merchants who have seen the wonders of China, and the final phrases

The tribes in your servant's country felt great rejoicing and gratitude when they heard the sound of your compassionate virtue. Your servant has nothing with which to repay your favour, only to pray to heaven to grant you long life and happiness as eternal as the heaven and earth

express a deep gratitude, which Zhang Wende suggests is related to the recent repatriation of the Muslim merchants.¹⁶⁴ This gratitude was expressed again when a second tribute of horses, numbering a thousand, was made in the same year, and *chao* paper money was given in repayment.¹⁶⁵ The following year, 1395, the Military Commander *geishizhong* 給事中 Fu An 傅安 and others were sent bearing letters and

¹⁶²Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, p. 27. "The letter...was undoubtedly forged by a Central Asian merchant, ...It is inconceivable that Tamerlaine, who aspired to world conquest, could have written such a fawning, self-deprecatory missive" Also Rossabi, 'The Ming and Inner Asia' in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, p. 247, "the Hong-wu emperor had faith in these forged missives &c."

¹⁶³Fletcher, 'China and Central Asia', p. 20, "whether a real letter from Timur was "translated" into Chinese by a merchant, or by a Ming official too frightened or too servile to render the original or whether, as is less likely, the letter is a total fiction remains unknown."

¹⁶⁴Zhang Wende 张文德, 'Lun Ming Taizu shiqi dui Tiemuer wangchao de waijiao zhengce' 论明太祖时期对中亚帖木儿王朝的外交政策, *Guizhou Shifan Daxue xuebao* 贵州师范大学学报 2 (2002), p. 70.

¹⁶⁵*Ming shi* 332, p. 8598.

silk brocade to reward Timur, taking 1500 soldiers with them. But Timur had the ambassadors detained, and refused to send any more tribute missions to China. Fu An was not to return until 1407.¹⁶⁶ Several historians have concluded from this that the letter the Ming emperor wrote in reply was so overbearing that Timur was offended and detained the envoys, breaking off diplomatic relations. As Rossabi expressed it, “the Emperor’s letter to Tamerlaine, in which he referred to the latter as a vassal, enraged the Central Asian ruler, who immediately seized Fu An and the rest of the embassy”.¹⁶⁷ However there are no records to indicate that it was the letter which angered Timur. Most importantly, the letter no longer exists, and we cannot know what it said or what terms the Emperor used to address Timur.¹⁶⁸ Another embassy was sent two years later in 1397, headed by Chen Dewen 陳德文, who was also detained.¹⁶⁹ Nothing was heard of Fu An or Chen Dewen and their entourages for many years. No further embassies were exchanged during the lifetime of Taizu.

Communications during Yongle

The Ming History records that Chengzu sent an embassy even before his proclamation of *Yongle*:

*When Chengzu ascended the throne officials were sent bearing letters with the imperial seal, and silk brocades as gifts for the prince, but he still did not respond to the command.*¹⁷⁰

成祖踐阼，遣官齎璽書綵幣賜其王，猶不報命。

The Veritable Records record that this was in the twelfth month of the thirty-fifth year of *Hongwu*, six months after Chengzu ascended the throne, that is, just at the beginning of 1403. The preparation of these letters was done at the same time that the Emperor’s letters of accession were sent to the maritime countries along the route to Calicut. These were the first Persian translating tasks carried out for the new Emperor. Five years had passed since Chen Dewen departed with his letter. During this interval, the Persian translators, calligraphers and interpreters at the court had little to do. But

¹⁶⁶Ibid. p. 8609.

¹⁶⁷Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸Liu Yingsheng, *Hailu yu lulu*, p. 318.

¹⁶⁹*Ming shi* 332, p. 8609.

¹⁷⁰*Ming shi* 332, p. 8609.

when they began to draft their versions of these letters, the great whirlwind of *Yongle* had descended on them, and a vastly increased amount of translating work soon led to the establishment of the Translating Colleges. This was the first in a continuous series of embassies to countries in the Western Regions that was to continue until Chengzu's death twenty years later.

The presence of Chengzu's first ambassadors in Samarkand is recorded in some detail in the travel journal of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, a knight of Madrid, who was a member of an embassy sent to Timur's court at Samarkand by the Spanish monarch Henry III of Castille, who sent embassies to several eastern countries around that time. Clavijo set out in May 1403, arriving at Samarkand in September 1404, where his embassy was given a gracious reception by Timur. He encountered the Chinese ambassadors at the court at Samarkand in September 1404, and witnessed their public humiliation, when they were moved to a place below the Spanish ambassadors at a banquet. Clavijo gives a version of the verbal message brought by the Chinese ambassadors, which reflects what was in the letter:

*When the lord departed from the city to make war on the Turk and destroy Damascus...he intended to be absent from the city, fighting his enemies for seven years....When the lord returned to the city, the ambassadors from Cathay arrived, with orders to say that the lord held that land subject to the emperor of Cathay, and to demand the payment of tribute every year, as it was seven years since any had been paid. The lord answered that this was true but that he would not pay it.*¹⁷¹

The last tribute was Timur's 400 horses which had accompanied the letter in 1394, a little over seven years earlier, allowing six months' journey time. It is typical of the Yongle Emperor that he began his diplomatic venture with a large scale mission. Clavijo states that as many as 800 camels, laden with merchandise, came from Cambalu (Khanbalik) to Samarkand in the month of June and they were detained by Timur when he heard the ambassador's demand for tribute. This large commercial caravan probably travelled together with the diplomatic mission.

¹⁷¹*Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand*, trans. C. R. Markham (London: Hakluyt, 1859), p. 172.

Clavijo gives minute details of the wonders of Samarkand, and the splendour of the lifestyle of Timur and his people. The account of the Spanish ambassadors' first meeting with Timur describes the way the letter they carried was presented.

*The letter which the king had sent was held before the lord, in the hand of his grandson; and the master of theology (one of the Spanish delegation) said, through his interpreter, that no one understood how to read the letter except himself, and that when his highness wished to hear it, he would read it. The lord then took the letter from the hand of his grandson, and opened it, saying that he would hear it presently, and that he would send for the master, and see him in private, when he might read it and say what he desired.*¹⁷²

Evidently the letter was in Latin, which the master of theology would interpret into Spanish, or Frankish, and Timur's court interpreters would then interpret it into Persian or Turkish. No written Persian translation of the letter was made.

Although Timur treated the Chinese ambassadors disdainfully, they were not detained like the previous embassies, but were sent back. It was at this time Timur declared war on China, marched as far as Otrar, and died. *Ming shi* takes up the story:

*In the third year of Yongle, 1405, Fu An had still not returned when the court heard that Timur was leading troops eastwards, taking the route through Bishbalik (Moghulistan), ...and so orders were sent to Song Sheng, Commander-in-Chief in Gansu, to be on the alert.*¹⁷³

永樂三年，傅安等尚未還，而朝廷聞帖木兒假道別失八里率兵東。敕甘肅總兵官宋盛儆備。

It was evidently the returning Chinese embassy which brought the news of Timur's planned attack on China. Timur, though old and unwell, set out with an army of 200,000, ostensibly to attack China. This plan was hardly feasible, as it would involve subjugating Moghulistan, which he had failed to do several times before, followed by a six month march by stages through desert country. The army never left Central Asia. Timur died at Otrar at the beginning of his campaign in February 1405, and no further invasion of China was ever planned.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷²Ibid. p. 133.

¹⁷³*Ming shi* 332, p. 8599.

¹⁷⁴V.V. Barthold, *Four studies on the history of Central Asia*, trans. T. and V. Minorsky (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956-62), vol. 2, pp. 53-54.

Communications with Khalīl

Although Timur had designated his grandson Pir Muhammad as heir elect, this wish was not followed, and another grandson Khalīl-Sultan quickly asserted himself, taking possession of the capital Samarkand and the keys of Timur's treasure-house, just one month after his death. A major battle against Pir Muhammad in February 1406, a campaign against foes to the north and the conclusion of a peace with his uncle Shah Rukh, Timur's son, who had possession of Timur's empire in Khorasan, Persia, and Azerbaijan, and whose capital was Herat, left Khalīl in power in Samarkand, and in an uneasy truce not only with Shah Rukh, but also with other rival princes.¹⁷⁵

Khalīl wasted no time in re-establishing the tributary relationship. The *Shilu* records that the mission from Khalīl arrived in Nanjing in the sixth month of 1407.

When Khalīl the ruler heard that His Majesty had assumed his position, an Ambassador Khodaidad was sent to conduct Fu An and the others back, and tribute of local goods was made. Fu An and the others said that the original Fuma Timur had died, and Khalīl, who was Timur's grandson, had succeeded him. Thereupon Bai'aerxintai¹⁷⁶ and others were ordered to go to condole for Timur and present Khalīl a letter with the Emperor's seal, silver and brocades, and lesser amounts were presented to the members of his Ulus.¹⁷⁷

其頭目哈里聞上即位，乃遣使臣虎歹達送安等還，並貢方物。。。安等言元駙馬帖木兒已卒，哈里嗣之，乃帖木兒之孫。遂命指揮白阿兒忻台等往祭帖木兒而賜哈里璽書，銀，幣，並賜其部屬有差。

This states clearly that the *xishu*, (璽書) a letter with the Emperor's seal, was addressed and sent to Khalīl in Samarkand, and the Ming court had not yet begun relations with Shah Rukh Behadur in Herat.

The Ming History now records a brisk exchange of embassies, each accompanying the other back and forth.

After that tribute was paid promptly every year or second or third years.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 53-58.

¹⁷⁶This name is discussed in the Yongle Emperor's first letter to Shah Rukh below.

¹⁷⁷*Taizong shilu* 68, p. 11r. (0963).

¹⁷⁸*Ming shi* 332, p. 8600.

During the Yongle period, from 1403 until 1424, *Ming shilu* records twenty tribute missions from the Timurid Empire, from Shah Rukh in Herat, and from Samarkand, where first Khalīl and later Ulugh Beg ruled. Missions usually arrived every year, sometimes every two years, and sometimes twice in one year, alternating between a mission from Herat, or a combined mission from Herat and Samarkand one year, and a mission from Samarkand alone the next. The missions brought tribute mainly of horses, but also leopards, lions, and camels, as well as local products, receiving silver, paper money, silk and silk garments in return.¹⁷⁹

Timur's court at Samarkand and Shah Rukh's court at Herat were centres of learning and intellectual activity. Learned men were retained at the courts to be secretaries, poets, historians, masters of instruction, and producers of literary works.¹⁸⁰ The works of several historians provide information about the practices of the translators. Shah Rukh, seeking to emulate the Il-Khans, commissioned Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru¹⁸¹ to write a series of universal histories in the manner of Rashid-al-Din.¹⁸² The last of these, *Zobdat al-tawārik* brings the record to the year 1426.¹⁸³ Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru had access to court records and archives, and at some time after 1420 he sorted through the coloured silk scrolls stored in the court archives and selected two letters from the Chinese Emperor Chengzu and made a summary of a third, for inclusion in his history, as well as two letters from Shah Rukh to Chengzu, and some interesting information about visits of embassies and the languages of the documents. The two letters from Chengzu are the only surviving examples of Persian translations of Chinese imperial letters made by the translators at the Ming Court. 'Abd-al-Razzāq's chronicle *Maṭla'-'e sa'dayn va majma'-'e baḥrayn*, a history of Persia, Khorasan and the Timurid empire completed in 1470¹⁸⁴ contains the same material relating to relations with China,

¹⁷⁹Morris Rossabi, 'Two Ming Envoys to Inner Asia', *T'oung Pao* 62 (1976), pp. 1-34. Rossabi lists the tribute missions from Central Asian countries recorded in the Veritable Records.

¹⁸⁰For a description of the court see Hanaway, William L., 'Secretaries, Poets and the Literary Language', in Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), pp. 96-97.

¹⁸¹Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. S. K. Ḥājī Sayyed Jawādi, 2 vols, (Tehran, 1993).

¹⁸²Charles Melville, 'The Mongol and Timurid Periods' in Charles Melville ed. *Persian Historiography*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), p. 191.

¹⁸³*Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 5, pp. 507-509; <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hafez-e-abru>.

¹⁸⁴C. P. Haase, "Abd-Al-Razzaq Samarqandi," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 2, pp. 158-160.

copied closely from *Zobdat al-tawārik* of Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru.¹⁸⁵ *Maṭlaʿ-*e* saʿdayn* became a popular work, and in the eighteenth century it was read by European scholars, whose attention was drawn to the entries concerning communications with China. Translations of these sections were published by William Chambers in 1786,¹⁸⁶ and the Persian texts with a French translation by Blochet in 1910.¹⁸⁷ An edition of some parts of *Maṭlaʿ-*e* saʿdayn* published in 1946-1949¹⁸⁸ has been used by Joseph Fletcher,¹⁸⁹ and Shao Xunzheng 邵循正.¹⁹⁰ Since then the publication of a critical edition of *Zobdat al-tawārik* by S. K. Ḥājj Sayyed Jawādi in 1993 has made Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru's earlier text available for study. Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru gives the following information about the letters from the Chinese Emperor:

Every time these letters were brought before his highness the Sultan, may God exalt his reign, there were three documents, with three kinds of writing in each: the first in the well-known script in which this document is written, and in Persian language; and another in Mongolian script, which is Uighur script, in Turkish language; and another in Khitaiian script, and in the language of the Khitai people. The meaning was the same in all three scripts. And there was another document, in which were listed all the things which had been sent, such as animals, gifts and rarities, in the same three languages and scripts. And there was one other document which seemed to be a passport, also in the same three languages

¹⁸⁵ Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, Kamal al-Din, *Maṭlaʿ-*I* saʿdayn wa majmaʿ-*I* bahrayn*, 2 vols, Vol. 2, pts 1-3, ed. Muḥammad Shafīʿ (Lahore 1946-1949).

¹⁸⁶ William Chambers, 'An Account of Embassies and Letters That Passed Between the Emperor of China and Sultan Shahrock, Son of Amir Timur', in *The Asiatick Miscellany*, vol. 1 (2 vols) (Calcutta, 1785-86), pp. 100-125.

¹⁸⁷ Edgar Blochet, *Introduction à l'Histoire des Mongols de Fadl Allah Rashid ed-Din* (Leyden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac & Co., 1910), pp. 247-8.

¹⁸⁸ Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, Kamal al-Din, *Maṭlaʿ-*I* saʿdayn wa majmaʿ-*I* bahrayn*, 2 vols, Vol. 2, pts 1-3, ed. Muḥammad Shafīʿ (Lahore 1946-1949).

¹⁸⁹ Joseph F. Fletcher, 'China and Central Asia, 1368-1884', in J. K. Fairbank ed., *The Chinese World Order, Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 206-224.

¹⁹⁰ Shao Xunzheng 邵循正, 'You Ming chuye yu Tiemuer diguo zhi guanxi' 有明初叶与帖木儿帝国之关系, (Relations with the Timurid empire at the beginning of the Ming period), in *Shao Xunzheng lishi lunwen ji* 邵循正历史论文集 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1985), pp. 80-99.

and scripts. And the date, month and year were written as from the beginning of the Emperor's reign.¹⁹¹

مکاتیب ایشان هر کرت که پیش حضرت سلطنت شعاری - خلد الله تعالی ملکه - آورده اند، سه مکتوب بوده و در هر مکتوبی سه نوع خط، یکی بدین خط مشهور که این سواد نبشته شد به عبارت فارسی و دیگری به خط مغولی که خط ایغوران است به زبان ترکی و دیگری به خط ختای و زبان اهل ختای. مضمون هر سه خط یکی و مکتوب دیگر که هر چه فرستاده بودند از جانوران و تقوزات و هدایا از تنسوقات در آن مکتوب مفصل گردانیده همچنین به هر سه زبان و هر سه خط و یک مکتوب دیگر بر مثال خط راه هم به همین طریق به هر سه زبان و هر سه خط و تاریخ ماه و سال از ابتدای حکومت آن پادشاه نبشته.

This tells us that the ambassadors presented three letters; the imperial letter, a letter listing the gifts, and a letter of safe conduct, each written in three languages, Chinese, Persian and Turkish in Uighur script. The Chinese version came first, probably followed by the Persian version and the Turkish last. With these three versions set out one after the other, the scroll of the imperial letter would have been quite long. All the tributary documents that survive to us are in several languages, and this statement confirms that the letters written to Samarkand and Herat were in three languages.

The use of Persian side by side with Uighur was a practical response to letters from the Timurid Empire, which arrived in both Uighur and Persian. This practice began in Timur's time, when the two divans were established, and was continued by the courts of Shah Rukh and his successors. Zhang Wende has noted that in Ming official records two Chinese words for Herat appear. *Halie* 哈烈 is the form used by the translators of the Persian College. Another form *Heilou* 黑婁 derives from translations made by the Uighur College. This shows that letters from Herat arrived in one or both of these languages. *Shilu* records the Uighur form *Heilou* for tribute missions as late as 1500. A tribute list bearing the name *Heilou* which is preserved in *Gaochanguan ke* is also from the second half of the sixteenth century, showing that Uighur was used for tribute communications until that time.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹Hāfez-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. Jawādi, vol. 2, p. 699.

¹⁹²Zhang Wende 张文德, "'Mingshi Xiyu zhuan' Heilou kao' 《明史·西域传 黑婁考》, *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 1 (2001), p. 31.

Communications with Shah Rukh

It was not until 1408, the sixth year of *Yongle*, that Fu An 傅安 travelled, first to Samarkand, and then further on to Herat to make the first official contact with Shah Rukh.

*When they took their leave to return, Commander (geishizhong) Fu An and others were sent to travel with them, to bestow fourteen lined silk brocade garments upon their King Khalīl, and to give lesser amounts to the leaders in Herat and elsewhere.*¹⁹³

辭歸遣給事中傅安等偕行賜其王哈里綵幣十四表裏，併賜哈烈等處頭目有差。

When he returned the following year 1409, the seventh year of *Yongle*, ambassadors from Herat came to China with him, and others joined them on the way, so that a large tribute of five hundred and fifty western horses was made, for which they were given varying amounts of paper money. Fu An and the others were sent to accompany them back again, and take gifts of silk to the rulers of Samarkand and Herat.

*Commander (Geishizhong) Fu An and others returned from Herat and Samarkand. Ambassadors Mulla and others were sent from Herat and elsewhere, and places such as Huozhou which they passed through sent ambassadors, to make tribute of five hundred and fifty horses in total. They were presented with different amounts of chao paper money. Subsequently Fu An and others were sent to convey Mulla and the others back to their countries. The rulers of those places were presented with brocades and silks.*¹⁹⁴

給事中傅安等自哈烈撒馬爾罕還，哈烈等處遣使臣麼賚等並所經火州等處各遣使貢西馬共五百五十匹，賜鈔各有差。尋遣安等送麼賚等還國。並賜其酋長錦綺綵幣。

These missions were of a preliminary nature, as it is not until April 1410 that mention is made by name of Shah Rukh, who sent several of his chiefs to make tribute that year. The Veritable Records record the establishment of proper relations with Shah Rukh in Herat and the delivery of an interesting and important letter:

Shah Rukh Bahadur in Herat sent his chief Mierjila and others to make tribute of local goods. They were given varying amounts of rewards. Shah Rukh

¹⁹³*Taizong shilu* 78, p. 1r. (p. 1053).

¹⁹⁴*Taizong shilu* 93, p. 8r. (p. 1241).

*Bahadur is Timur Fuma's fourth son. At that time he was mobilising troops against his nephew Khalīl, and so when the ambassadors returned, His Majesty sent Duzhihui Bai'aerxintai and others, bearing an imperial letter, to go and proclaim an edict to him.*¹⁹⁵

哈烈沙哈魯把都兒遣頭目迷兒即刺等貢方物。賜賚有差。沙哈魯把都兒元帖木兒駙馬等四子。時與姪哈里構兵。因其使還上遣都指揮白阿兒忻台等齎敕往諭之。

The letter, the first from the Yongle Emperor to Shah Rukh, marks the beginning of a personal correspondence which lasted throughout the reign. The Chinese letter is preserved in a shorter form in the Veritable Records, while Hāfez-e Abrū records a longer version of the same letter in its Persian translation. The Chinese letter is often described as a shortened version, or summary, however elements in the Chinese letter indicate it is not a summary derived from a longer Chinese version, but the first draft, perhaps made in the presence of the Emperor and under his direction, which was copied into the daily record, and thus found its way into the Veritable Records. This draft was then enlarged upon, with a diplomatic message about post stations added, references to the earlier embassies and gifts made, and names of ambassadors added, before being translated into Persian and Uighur and copied onto official scrolls. So what survive are the Chinese first draft, preserved in *the* Ming records, and the Persian translation of a longer Chinese version preserved in *Zobdat al-tawārik*.

The Chinese text

Heaven gives birth to people, and sets up sovereigns for them, enabling everyone to lead their lives. I rule all under heaven, and look on all with the same kindness, not differentiating between far and near. I have sent several ambassadors to present edicts to you. You are able reverently to provide due tribute, and cherish and unite your people, secure at the western frontier. I admire this very much. However recently I have heard that you have been mobilising troops against your nephew Khalīl, and making him your enemy. I am disappointed about it. People who are relatives in one family are generous with grace and love for each other, sufficient to restrain insults from outside. If you are on bad terms with those close to you, how can there be concord with those distant? From now on hostilities should cease, and flesh and blood should remain intact, to enjoy the happiness of peace together.

¹⁹⁵*Taizong shilu* 101, p. 3v.

*And he was presented with coloured silks. Khalīl was also given an imperial edict in a letter, ordering him to withdraw his troops and be on friendly terms with his relatives. He was also given coloured silks.*¹⁹⁶

天生民而立之君，俾各遂其生。朕統御天下，一視同仁，無間遐邇，屢嘗遣使諭爾。爾能虔修職貢，撫輯人民，安於西徼，朕其嘉之。比聞爾與從子哈里構兵相仇，朕為惻然。一家之親，恩愛相厚，足制外侮。親者尚爾乖戾，疏者安得協和。自今宜休兵息民，保全骨肉，共享太平之福。

因賜綵幣表裡，并敕諭哈里令罷兵睦親，亦賜綵幣。

The Persian translation

The blunt, imperious style of the shorter Chinese draft is softened and made more friendly-sounding in the longer translated version, while the stern command and moral exhortation concerning Khalīl are moderated and considerably shortened. Details of previous tributary activity, names of envoys and lists of gifts are added. Joseph Fletcher, calling this a “haughty document”, notes that it uses the royal we and addresses Shah Rukh in the second person singular, and uses condescending terms.¹⁹⁷

A study of the letter and a Chinese translation were made by Shao Xunzheng 邵循正¹⁹⁸, and a recent study of the Persian language of the letter was made by Liu Yingsheng.¹⁹⁹ Several English translations have been published since Chambers’ fine version in 1786. I have made a plain version.²⁰⁰ The portions of the Persian letter which are in the shorter Chinese version are highlighted.

The great Emperor of Great Ming commands this letter be sent to the lands of Samarkand, to Shāh Rukh Behādūr. We believe that the Lord on high created all beings that are between heaven and earth, so that they might all be comfortable and content. With the support of the decree of the Lord on high, we have become the lord of the kingdoms on the face of the earth, and we rule

¹⁹⁶This letter is recorded in the Veritable Records, *Taizu shilu* 101, p. 3v. (1316), and in the chapter on Herat in *Ming shi* 332, p. 8610.

¹⁹⁷Fletcher, *China and Central Asia*, p. 211.

¹⁹⁸Shao Xunzheng 邵循正, ‘You Ming chuye yu Tiemuer diguo zhi guanxi’ 有明初叶与帖木儿帝国之关系, (Relations with the Timurid empire at the beginning of the Ming period), in *Shao Xunzheng lishi lunwen ji* 邵循正历史论文集 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1985), pp. 80-99.

¹⁹⁹Liu Yingsheng ‘Baiaerxintai ji qi chushi’, *Hailu yu lulu*, pp. 326-328.

²⁰⁰Several translations of this letter have been published. The first was by E. Quatremère in *Notices et extraits* 14, p. 213ff. William Chambers in ‘An Account of Embassies and Letters That Passed Between the Emperor of China and Sultan Shahrock, Son of Amir Timur’, in *The Asiatick Miscellany*, vol. 1, pp. 100-125. German translation in Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, pp. 96-97.

*them in obedience to God's command. For this reason we make no distinction between far and near, we look upon all equally. Before now, we have heard that you are very intelligent and perfect, you are superior to all others, and you obey the orders of the Lord on high. You devote your care to the happiness of your subjects and the fostering of your armies, and you convey benefits and favours to all. We are very happy because of this. We sent an ambassador to grant you robes of honour of flowered silk. When the ambassador arrived there you were very respectful to our orders and you showed very clear favour to us, and all great and small were happy. You immediately sent an ambassador to bring us your homage, and a gift of horses and goods, to show your loyalty to us. We see that you are worthy of our praise and favour. Previously, when the era of the Mongols came to an end, your father Timur Fuma, obeying the decree of God on high, showed service to our great Emperor Taizu, and never stopped sending gifts and ambassadors. Because of this he gave security to the people of those lands, and made wealth for all. We see you show that you are following the intentions and policies of your good father. Now we have sent Duzhihui Bai'aerxintai, together with the millenarii, commanders of a thousand Suchu and Tang Zheng²⁰¹ and the centenarius, commander of a hundred Kuan Che,²⁰² with congratulations, robes of honour of silk with gold and red silk, and other things, to make our sincerity clear. From now on we will send people to go back and forth, so that the roads will not be obstructed, and they can carry on trade and make gains as they wish. **Sultan Khalil is your brother's son. You should show him good fostering so that the rights of your nephew are put in place. You should sincerely show obedience to me. This is what is proclaimed to you.***

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سواد مکتوب پادشاه ختای

دای منگ پادشاه معظم نامه ارسال می فرماید به دیار سمرقند، مر شاه رخ بهادر را. ما فکر می کنیم خداوند تعالی جمیع خلائق بیافرید آنچه در میان آسمان و زمین است تا هر یکی به راحت و رفاهیت باشند. ما به تائید امر خداوند تعالی، خداوند ممالک روی زمین گشته ایم به متابعت حکم الهی جهاننداری می کنیم. سبب این میان دور و نزدیک فرق نمی کنیم، همه را برابر و یکسان نگاه می داریم. پیش از این شنیدیم که تو نیک عاقل و کاملی و از همگنان بلندتری به امر خداوند تعالی اطاعت می نمائی، رعایا و عساکر را پرورش داده درباره همگنان احسان و نیکوئی رسانیده، سبب آن نیک شاد گشتیم، علی الخصوص ایلچی فرستادیم تا کمخا و ترقو خلعت رسانید. چون که ایلچی آنجا رسید، تو نیک تعظیم امر ما نموده و مرحمت ما را نیک ظاهر گردانیده همه خرد و بزرگ شاد گشته اند. فی الحال ایلچی فرستادی تا خدمت و تحفه اسبان و متاعهای آن دیار رسانیدن به جد صدق نمودن ترا دیدیم که شایسته ستایش و نوازش باشی. بیشتر دور مغول به آخر رسید، پدر تو تیمور فوما به امر خدای تعالی اطاعت آورده تایی زو پادشاه اعلائی ما را خدمت نموده و تحفه ایلچیان منقطع نگردانیده. سبب این مردمان آن دیار را امان داده و همگنان را دولتمند گردانیده، دیدیم که تو به همت و روش پدر نیک متابعت نموده ئی اکنون دو جیحون بای از کسان و هزاره سو جو و وانگ چنگ، صده سون قون جی با جمعهم فرستادیم با تهنیت و خلعت کمخاها و ترغوها و غیرها با صدق ما ظاهر گردد. بعد از این کسان فرستیم

²⁰¹Shao Xunzheng identifies the name *Wank Chink* in the Persian text as Tang Zheng 唐鉦, a *pingshi* 評事, judge of the administrative court, who was sent by Emperor Taizu on a mission to Bishbalik in 1391, the 24th year of Hongwu. *Ming shi* 332, p. 8606.

²⁰²Shao Xunzheng identifies Sun Kun Chi in the Persian text with Kuan Che 寬徹, a *zhushi* 主事 Director, who was sent on several missions including the one to Bishbalik in 1391. Ibid.

²⁰³Hāfēz-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. Jawādi, vol. 2, p. 461.

تا آی و رو کنند تا راه منقطع نشود تا تجارت و کسب به مراد خویش کنند. خلیل سلطان برادر زاده تست، می باید که وی را نیکو تربیت نمائی تا حق زادگی خویش به جای آورده باشی. تو می باید که به صدق و رای ما متابعت نمائی این است که اعلام گردانیده می شود تو می باید که به صدق و رای ما متابعت نمائی این است که اعلام گردانیده می شود.

Liu Yingsheng notes that the Persian translation is fluently done, apparently by a native speaker of Persian, who is accustomed routinely to producing high quality translations.²⁰⁴ It was done three years after the Tsurphu scroll, possibly by the same translator.²⁰⁵ There are several similarities: like the Tsurphu Scroll, it is in a grammatically correct, plain style, clearly following the Chinese original closely; the Emperor's title at the beginning of the letter *Da Ming Huangdi* 大明皇帝, *the Emperor of Great Ming*, is somewhat overtranslated, rendered as *the Great Emperor of Great Ming*, *Dāy Mīng pādshāh-i mu'azzam* دای مینگ پادشاه معظم *mu'azzam*, great, supreme. This same over-rendering of the Emperor's title is used in the Tsurphu scroll.²⁰⁶ Chinese titles such as *fuma* and *duzhihui* are transliterated, not translated,²⁰⁷ even though Persian equivalents exist which would have been more comprehensible to the recipient. *Fuma* 駙馬, imperial son-in-law, used to represent Timur's title *güregen*, adopted at his legitimising marriage to a princess of the line of Chinggis Khan,²⁰⁸ is transliterated, and not translated. This avoidance of changing titles conferred by the Emperor by translating them is also shown in the Tsurphu scroll, where long Buddhist titles are transliterated, when translated terms exist.²⁰⁹

Shao Xunzheng 邵循正, studying both Chinese and Persian texts, correctly identified the name *dū jīhūn bāy āz kasān* دو جیحون بای از کسان, the Military Commander who led the mission, as *Duzhihui Bai'aerxintai* 都指揮白阿兒忻台 in the Ming records.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴Liu Yingsheng, 'Baiaerxintai ji qi chushi' 白阿儿忻台及其出使, in *Hailu yu lulu*, p. 325.

²⁰⁵See Tsurphu Scroll chapter.

²⁰⁶See Chapter 3.

²⁰⁷Liu Yingsheng, 'Baiaerxintai ji qi chushi', *Hailu yu lulu*, pp. 326-7.

²⁰⁸H.R. Roemer, 'Timur in Iran', in Jackson, Peter, and Lockhart, Laurence eds. *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 6, The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 41.

²⁰⁹See Chapter 3.

²¹⁰Shao Xunzheng 'You Ming chuye yu Tiemuer diguo zhi guanxi', pp. 90-91.

He reconstructs the name as Bai al-Hintai, and Liu Yingsheng reconstructs it as Bay Arkintay, but neither of these forms is satisfactory.²¹¹

The letter addresses the ruler with his own title of *Shāh Rukh Behādur*, making no reference to him as a subordinate. The presentation of this letter marked the Chinese Emperor's acknowledgement of Shah Rukh's status and power, laying a basis for the warm relations which were to develop in future. A great welcome was given to the Chinese ambassadors when they arrived at Herat.

*At that time ambassadors from the land of China arrived, from before Dai Ming Khan, the Emperor of Chin and Machin. By royal command the city and bazars were decorated in full splendour....The Amirs by custom went out to meet them, considering their arrival a blessing to themselves.*²¹²

در این ولا از ولایت ختای ایلچیان از پیش دای منگ خان پادشاه چین و ماچین رسیدند. فرمان همایون به نفاذ انجامید تا شهر و بازار را آذین بندن.
امرا به رسم استقبال بیرون رفتند و مقدم ایشان را بر خود مبارک داشت.

The Herat court annals briefly describe the process of the audience; first the handing over of the gifts, then the delivery of the verbal message, and finally the delivery of the letters. Shah Rukh read the letter immediately and was satisfied with it.

*His royal highness gave hearing to these letters as usual and showed understanding of their details with careful intelligence.*²¹³

حضرت سلطنت شعاری مکتوبات ایشان را اصغا فرموده دقایق آن را به فکر دوربین ادراک نمود.

Shah Rukh's letters to the Ming Emperor

This sense of satisfaction with the embassy is also shown in the two letters, in Persian and Arabic, which Shah Rukh sent back to the Chinese emperor urging him to convert

²¹¹Liu Yingsheng, 'Baiaerxintai ji qi chushi', *Hailu yu lulu*, pp. 327. Neither suggests a possible language source of the name. Igor de Rachewiltz comments as follows: "The name is a puzzle. I think that Bai is his surname Chinese style: it was used by many Mongols in the past to 'render' their clan name, like Borjigin. But it is also a common Turkic word meaning 'rich' used in combination with another word in proper names. But the rest of the name does not make sense to me, The final -tai is a common suffix in Mongol proper names (but not in Turkic), but I cannot find any Mongol or Turkic name resembling *Arkintai or *Arkintai; besides, the intermediate -hin- is very odd because in the 14th c. the character HSIN was used to transcribe the foreign sound HIN (as in Hindu) which in Uighur-Mongolian script could only be written IN (they had no sign for H). The result is therefore unsatisfactory for either language. I think the solution must be elsewhere." (Personal email).

²¹²Hāfez-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. Jawādi, vol. 2, p. 457.

²¹³Hāfez-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. Jawādi, vol. 2, p. 461.

to Islam. These are also preserved by Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū.²¹⁴ The Arabic and Persian letters are not an original and its translation, but two separate letters, expressing similar ideas quite differently.

Because both of the letters consist mainly of expositions of Muslim faith, and express the wish that the Chinese Emperor would embrace the faith, they have been interpreted as patronising ripostes to Chengzu's letter.²¹⁵ In fact the overall sentiments expressed in the letters are affection and friendship.²¹⁶ Beginning with the words "There is no God but God and Mohammed is his Apostle", the Arabic letter states how the Supreme Being in his wisdom sent the prophets and the Koran, and established powerful leaders, who have the duty of supporting the faith and

*To found mosques and colleges, alms-houses and places of worship in all parts of our dominions, that the study of sciences and the laws ...may not be discontinued.*²¹⁷

This is followed by a simply expressed wish:

*I cherish the hope that your majesty and the nobles of your realm will unite with us in these matters and will join us in establishing the institutions of the sacred law.*²¹⁸

In the Persian letter Shah Rukh alludes to the earlier relationship with his father Timur:

*Ambassadors from those parts have lately arrived here, have delivered us your majesty's presents, and brought us news of your welfare and of the flourishing state of your dominions. The affection and friendship which subsisted between our respective fathers, is revived by this circumstance, as indeed it is proverbial that, "the mutual friendship of fathers creates a relationship between their sons".*²¹⁹

This is Shah Rukh's first declaration of affection and mutual friendship. The later letter from Chengzu to Shah Rukh shows that this declaration was accepted and reciprocated. The wish for Chengzu's adoption of the faith is again expressed mildly:

²¹⁴Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, ed. Jawādi, vol. 2, pp. 464-5, 466-7. Chambers, 'An Account of Embassies and Letters' pp. 112-4, 115-8. German translations in Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, pp. 102-4.

²¹⁵Fletcher, 'China and Central Asia', p. 211.

²¹⁶Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, p. 103-5.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*

²¹⁸*Ibid.*

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 118ff.

*And I have faith that by the goodness and favour of God your Majesty also will in these countries make the law of Mohammed, the Apostle of God, the rule of your administration, and thereby strengthen the cause of Islam, that this world's few days of sovereignty may in the end be exchanged for an eternal kingdom.*²²⁰

Both letters also express the message which is found in all the letters that we know of; that communications remain open between the two empires for the purpose of commerce.

Ming shilu records the return of Bai'aerxintai in the fifth month of the eleventh year of *Yongle*, 1413, with a large following of ambassadors from Herat, Samarkand, Shiraz, Andegan, Andkhui, Turfan, Karakhodja, Lukchak, Kashgar and other places,²²¹ providing a sudden rush of work for the Persian and Uighur translators as they tackled the documentation for the tribute ritual. Their most important task was translating Shah Rukh's Arabic and Persian letters into Chinese, to be presented at the court, and perused by officials in charge of foreign relations.

Imperial missions to Herat

These tributes were responded to with an equally large return mission sent to accompany the ambassadors back early in 1414, bearing imperial letters, and patterned silks in repayment of their willingness to send tribute.²²² None of the letters have been preserved. This return mission was led by the palace eunuch Li Da 李達, and included Chen Cheng 陳誠, who, in the course of the journey, produced two works. *Xiyu xingcheng ji* 西域行程記 (Record of a journey to the Western Regions), is a valuable day-by-day travel log giving information about distances, stopping-places, climate and other brief information for the entire route from Suzhou via Samarkand to Herat, showing that the journey took nine months.²²³ *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域藩國志 (Tributary Countries of the Western Regions), a description of Herat and the cities of Central Asia. Both are still extant. Morris Rossabi has translated parts of the second work into

²²⁰Chambers, 'An Account of Embassies and Letters', p. 119.

²²¹*Taizong shilu* 140, 6r. (p. 1690).

²²²*Ming shi* 332, p. 8610.

²²³ Translated in Michel Didier, *Chen Cheng (1365-1457), Ambassadeur des Premiers Empereurs Ming*, (Paris, Éditions Peeters, 2012), pp. 268-314.

English,²²⁴ and it is the subject of a study by Felicia J. Hecker.²²⁵ Although there is nothing to suggest Chen Cheng was a speaker of Persian, he takes pains throughout this work accurately to transcribe Persian words which he encountered into Chinese character script. Hecker counts a total of thirty-two words, and restores a list of twenty-three. Most interesting of these is Chen Cheng's 朗兒歌 *lanerge*, which Hecker restores as 朗歌兒, Persian *langar* لنگر, travellers' rest-house. Hecker notes that the Persian words are useful expressions such as titles, currency and days of the week, which would constitute a kind of Persian phrase-book for Chinese diplomats, and would have made a useful contribution to the Siyiguan translation bureau.²²⁶ Only two of the twenty three words are to be found in the dictionary word-list *Huihuiguan zazi* 回回馆杂字,²²⁷ so Chen Cheng's work evidently was not used as a source when that dictionary was compiled.

Although Chen Cheng led two subsequent missions to Herat and Samarkand, there is nothing in the historical records to indicate Chen Cheng was the leader of this mission, as these historians erroneously state.²²⁸ *Ming shilu* lists the personnel as follows, indicating the mission was led by Li Da:

*Palace Eunuch Li Da, Board of History Assistant Secretary Chen Cheng, Board of Revenue secretary Li Xian, Zhihui Lanjin Halan and others were sent to accompany the ambassadors back to Herat and elsewhere.*²²⁹

遣中官李達，史部員外郎陳誠，戶部主事李暹，指揮藍金哈藍，護送哈烈等處使臣。

A subsequent letter from Emperor Chengzu to Shah Rukh in 1418, also preserved by Hāfez-e Abru, refers to this mission, stating repeatedly that it was led by Li Da.

²²⁴Morris Rossabi, 'A translation of Ch'en Ch'eng's Hsi-yü fan-kuo chih', *Ming Studies* 17 (Fall 1983), pp. 49-59. For full French translation see Michel Didier, *Chen Cheng*, pp. 321-382.

²²⁵Felicia, J. Hecker, 'A Fifteenth Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 3, 1 (Apr., 1993), pp. 85-98.

²²⁶Hecker, 'A Fifteenth Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat', pp. 91-92. Also Liu Yingsheng, *Hailu yu lulu*, p. 312.

²²⁷Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu* "回回馆杂字" 与 "回回馆译语" 研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008), pp. 28-325.

²²⁸Rossabi in 'Two Ming Envoys to Inner Asia', p. 18, states "The Ming emperor on October 12 ordered Ch'en Ch'eng to lead an expedition to the towns and capitals of Central Asia"; also Hecker, 'A Fifteenth Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat' p. 86, describes Chen Cheng as "mission leader", assisted by the others. This gives an unwarranted status to Chen Cheng, and reduces that of Li Da. Cf. Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, p. 107.

²²⁹*Taizong shilu* 143, p. 2b. (1706).

*We formerly sent as envoys Amīr-i-sarāy (palace eunuch) Lī Dā with his retinue. They reached the Sultan. ... Lī Dā and his retinue have returned and have reported. Everything has become right, clear and evident to us, and the Sultan's envoys Beg Būqā and the rest have returned, together with Lī Dā and his retinue.*²³⁰

Ambassadors from Herat accompanied them back to China, and when these ambassadors returned to Herat again Chen Cheng was made leader of the mission that was sent to accompany them, bearing a letter, departing in 1416.²³¹ This was the first mission led by him.²³² His arrival at Shah Rukh's court is recorded by Ḥāfez-e Abru who describes their arrival in May 1417, attended by three hundred horses, and bringing an abundance of rare gifts, and a painting.²³³

A painting of a horse

A number of gifts and a painting of a horse were sent by the Emperor to one of the Amirs at Shah Rukh's court:

*When those ambassadors had arrived the first time, Amir Sayyid Terkhān had sent back with them a bay horse for the Chinese Emperor. The Emperor was extremely pleased with the horse, expressing many thanks for it, and sent Amīr Sayyid Ahmad Turkhān many things in return, including a picture of the horse painted with extreme beauty by Chinese artists, with two grooms holding the horse, so that the skilled hands of artists seem incapable of depicting it.*²³⁴

در کرت اول که ایلچیان ایشان آمده بودند، به وقت مراجعت امیر سید ترخان اسب بوری به جهت پادشاه ختای فرستاده بود و پادشاه را آن اسب به غایت پسند افتاده در عوض آن شکر بسیار گفته بود و جهت امیرسید احمد ترخان چیز بسیار فرستاده و صورت اسب نقاشان ختای در غایت خوبی کشیده بودند با دو اختاجی که آن اسب را گرفته بودند، چنانکه نقاشان چابک دست از مثل تصویر آن عاجز بودند.

The Tsurphu scroll, presented as an imperial gift to the Fifth Karmapa of Tibet ten years earlier, provides an indication of what this painting was like. It would have been a fine painting on a silk-bound scroll, including a text, perhaps the Emperor's own words, commemorating the occasion of the gift, in Chinese, accompanied by Persian and Uighur translations, produced by translators, calligraphers and artists working together. The picture, like the Tsurphu scroll, would have been executed in fine style to proclaim the magnificence of *Yongle*.

²³⁰Fletcher, 'China and Central Asia', p. 213.

²³¹*Ming shi* 332, p. 8610.

²³²Michel Didier, *Chen Cheng (1365-1457), Ambassadeur des Premiers Empereurs Ming*, p.187.

²³³Ḥāfez-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, Jawādi ed. p. 665.

²³⁴Ḥāfez-e Abrū, *Zobdat al-tawārik*, Jawādi ed. p. 666.

Another letter from the Yongle Emperor to Shah Rukh

Chen Cheng returned from Herat accompanied by an envoy, Ardashīr Tavāchy, and when this envoy returned to Herat in 1418, once again it was Li Da who accompanied him there, again bearing a letter. This letter is the second and last of the productions of the Persian translators preserved by Hāfeẓ-e Abru, who had the original scroll before him when he copied the letter into his history. He reiterates that the letters were all in Persian, Turkish in Uighur script, and Chinese.

Recent translations of this letter have been made by Joseph Fletcher and Ralph Kauz.²³⁵ The plain, accurate Persian translation, with the odd phraseology of literal translation, is similar in style to the letter of 1412, and might have been done by the same translator. It is longer than the other letter, but contains several of the same elements. Like the earlier letter, it praises Shah Rukh, saying that because of his wisdom the men of that realm have grown rich, and ends with the wish that envoys and merchants should continue to come and go. It refers to the mission sent in 1414, making it clear that it was also led by Li Da, and expresses thanks for the presents of a lion, horses and a leopard sent at that time. It talks at length about seven falcons sent with other things as gifts this time. It differs from the letter of 1412 in that while the earlier letter is addressed simply to “Shah Rukh Bahadur”, this is addressed to “Sultan Shah Rukh.” Instead of the Persian “tu” (تو), the singular form of “you” used in the earlier letter, the respectfully impersonal “sultān” (سلطان), “you, Sultan”, is used throughout. The Emperor’s earlier claim to rulership of the world is not repeated, and while the earlier letter speaks of Shah Rukh’s homage and loyalty to the Chinese Emperor, this one speaks only of his homage to the command of the Lord Most High. The relationship between the two rulers is described as friendship in the closest terms:

*In manly fashion men have befriended one another. Our friendship is heart to heart, reflecting like a mirror, although there be such a distance between us.*²³⁶

The change from assertion of imperial authority to declaration of manly friendship implying an understanding of equality, was achieved through the exchange of ambassadors bearing verbal messages, letters, and gifts over a period of eight years.

²³⁵Fletcher, ‘China and Central Asia’, pp. 212-14. See German translation and study in Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, pp. 125-6.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 213.

With the constantly expressed wish that the roads should remain open for commerce put into practice, trade and cultural exchange reached a high point during these years. Fletcher notes this letter importantly shows that in order to promote commerce, Chengzu was flexible enough to use a double standard, as far as the neo-Confucian myth of the world suzerainty of the Emperor is concerned, maintaining that myth at home, but abandoning it in his relations with Shah Rukh. According to the official myth foreigners could trade with China only by petition to the Son of Heaven and recognition of his authority. “When a foreign ruler would not acquiesce in the language of Chinese myth, the Chinese emperor could and did abandon his posture of world supremacy to address that ruler on equal terms”.²³⁷

Ambassadors of Timurid princes in Beijing

The return embassy, which set out from Herat on 24 November 1419, went to the Emperor’s newly built capital at Beijing, arriving on 14 December 1420, a little more than one year later. It was a large-scale mission including ambassadors from Shah Rukh, his sons Baysunqur in Herat and Ulugh Beg in Samarkand, Prince Suyurghatmish, Amir Shah Malik, and the King of Badakhshan, seven in all. They were later joined on the road by an ambassador sent by another of Shah Rukh’s sons, Prince Ibrahim Shah. Each ambassador was accompanied by a large number of merchants, who were registered as their servants, and waited on them. Shah Rukh’s ambassadors each took one hundred retainers with them, and those of the other princes fifty or sixty each, making a total of about five hundred and twenty people in the embassy. One of Baysunqur’s ambassadors, Ghiyāth-al-Dīn Naqqāsh, kept a daily diary recording the details of the journey, their entertainment at government expense along the ninety-nine *yam* stages between Suzhou and Beijing and their sojourn in Beijing. Their accommodation at the Huitongguan is described in detail. It is a unique and valuable eyewitness account of all aspects of the diplomatic process, including the audience with the Emperor and the presentation of the letters, the banquets hosted by the emperor, the presentation of gifts by the Emperor to the ambassadors, and the Emperor’s informal gift of a gerfalcon to each of the ambassadors.

²³⁷Ibid., pp. 216-18.

An abridged version of this diary is preserved in *Zobdat al-tawārik* of Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, who compiled his history in the years immediately following the return of the embassy. He states in a brief introduction that the text he quotes is “the substance, and a summary” of Ghiyāth-al-Dīn’s diary.²³⁸ Ghiyāth-al-Dīn describes the audience with the Emperor, where they were instructed by Maūlānā (His Worship) Hājī Yūsuf, whom they called by the title Qāzī, Judge, who knew Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Mongolian and Chinese, and was the interpreter between the Emperor and the envoys.²³⁹ His knowledge of Mongolian suggests he was of *semuren* heritage, perhaps one who had lived in Yanjing and held high rank as a reward for service to Zhu Di in his coup for the throne in 1400-1403, although his presence in the officer corps could also have been hereditary. The closeness of his relationship with the Emperor is shown in a later incident at a hunt, when the Emperor was thrown and hurt by one of the horses presented by Shah Rukh. When he threatened to execute all the ambassadors, Hājī Yūsuf was able, with others, to approach him and persuade him to pardon them.²⁴⁰

Also with Hājī Yūsuf were several other Muslims who knew Arabic and Persian, and who were followers or dependants of Hājī Yūsuf.²⁴¹ These could have been interpreters from the *Huitongguan*, or officers from the military or elsewhere, also serving as interpreters on this occasion. Clearly Hājī Yūsuf, seconded from senior military duties to serve as the principal liaison officer for the envoys, would only have interpreted for them on occasions when the Emperor was involved, while more junior interpreters at the *Huitongguan* would have organised their daily activities, transport and so on.

An officer read out “a written paper in Chinese, saying the envoys had come from a distant country as representatives of the Padshah and his sons, bringing presents for the Emperor, and had come to the foot of the throne to offer homage”. This paper was the list of tribute items, (*fangwuzhuang* 方物狀), couched in a formula prepared in

²³⁸K. M. Maitra trans., *A Persian Embassy to China, being an extract from Zubdatut Tawarikh of Hafiz Abru*, new intro. L. Carrington Goodrich (New York: Paragon, 1934; rpt. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, 1970).

²³⁹Maitra, *A Persian Embassy to China*, p. 60.

²⁴⁰*Ibid.* pp. 104-5.

²⁴¹*Ibid.* pp. 59-60.

Chinese by Board of Rites officials.²⁴² The envoys, instructed by Hājī Yūsuf and the others, then prostrated themselves, touched the ground with their heads three times, and then immediately held up with both hands the letters from their respective princes, which they had wrapped in pieces of yellow silk.

*His worship the Qazi came and took the letters, and gave them to a eunuch who was in front of the throne. The eunuch took them before the emperor's throne, and the emperor took them and opened them, and looked at them, and gave them back to the eunuch, and the emperor came down from the throne and sat on a chair.*²⁴³

The letters were not declaimed on this occasion, perhaps because there were so many, or possibly, as they had just arrived in Beijing, the translations had not been made yet. Only the indispensable tribute lists were declaimed.

Communications after the *Yongle* period

Two more missions arrived from the Timurid Empire during the last years of the Yongle Emperor's life, from Herat in 1422, and from Samarkand six months before he died on 12 August 1424.²⁴⁴ His grandson, who became the Xuande Emperor, waited several years before sending a large scale mission led by Li Gui 李貴 to Shah Rukh in Herat, and to Samarkand and several of the smaller kingdoms adjacent to them in 1432.²⁴⁵ This was one year after the commissioning of Zheng He's final voyage, and like it, was designed to stimulate tribute activity. It led to a series of missions, as each mission accompanied the other back, Li Gui travelling to Herat and back a second time. The return of Zheng He's final voyage also brought many tribute bearers to court, and it was the last period of heavy workload for the Persian translators. The last recorded embassy from Herat was in 1438, while Shah Rukh still ruled.²⁴⁶ When he died in 1447 the rule of the empire devolved to Ulugh Beg in Samarkand.²⁴⁷ An

²⁴²These documents are discussed below and in Chapter 5.

²⁴³My translation. See Persian text in Quatremère, 'Notice de l'ouvrage persan qui a pour titre: *Matla-assaadein*', p. 324. The text translated by Maitra says the letters were handed to a eunuch, omitting the sentence about the Emperor opening them and looking at them. Maitra, *A Persian Embassy to China*, p. 61.

²⁴⁴*Ming shi* 332, p. 8609.

²⁴⁵*Ming shi* 332, p. 8610.

²⁴⁶*Ming shi* 332, p. 8611.

²⁴⁷H. R. Roemer 'The Successors of Tīmūr' in Jackson, Peter, and Lockhart, Laurence eds. *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 6, The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 103.

embassy and letter were sent to Ulugh Beg shortly before his murder in 1449.²⁴⁸ Embassies from his successor Abū Saʿīd are recorded in 1457, and from Abū Saʿīd's son Sulṭān Aḥmad bearing two lions in 1483.²⁴⁹ Embassies recorded from Samarkand in 1501, and several during the Zhengde reign 1506-1522 could have been from Muḥammad Shaybānī, the Uzbek ruler who conquered Samarkand in 1501.²⁵⁰ A mission from Babur, who briefly recaptured Samarkand, is recorded in 1512.²⁵¹

Conclusion

The history of relations with the Timurid Empire shows that while the tributary relationship with Timur was short and ultimately unsuccessful, for reasons which cannot properly be understood, the relationship between Chengzu and Shah Rukh, once established, moved quickly to an unusually high level of equality and warm friendship, while still within the format of tributary submission, and embassies were received with great magnificence by both emperors. The court translators played an important role in making the friendship possible. Tribute missions which arrived at the Ming capital almost every year throughout *Yongle* often included ambassadors from six or more princes, each bearing letters, providing a steady amount of work to do. Letters were in Uighur as well as Persian, and translators of both languages worked to produce Chinese versions for the Emperor, collaborating on the Emperor's letters in reply. The warmth of the friendship gave rise to long personal letters, which were translated by linguists fluent in Persian, who were used to producing translations of a high standard, which were plain and correct, expressing the Emperor's words exactly. The warm relationship did not survive the deaths of the friendly emperors, but became tenuous, although occasional tribute missions continued until the Timurids finally lost control of Samarkand.

²⁴⁸ *Ming shi* 332, p. 8599.

²⁴⁹ *Ming shi* 332, p. 8600.

²⁵⁰ Roemer 'The Successors of Tīmūr', p. 120.

²⁵¹ Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, p. 244.

Chapter Three

The Persian Language Text in the Tsurphu Scroll

The Tsurphu scroll

The Tsurphu scroll, currently displayed at the Tibet Museum in Lhasa, is a large scroll 49.68m long and 66cm wide, which contains forty-nine paintings depicting the miraculous phenomena observed when the Tibetan Fifth Karmapa carried out a Buddhist ceremony on behalf of Emperor Zhu Di's late parents at Linggusi 靈谷寺 monastery at Nanjing in 1407. In Chinese it is called *Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu* 噶瑪巴為明太祖荐福圖 (Pictures of the Karmapa performing a ceremony for Ming Emperor Taizu). The pictures are interspersed with 21 sections of text describing the depicted phenomena in Chinese, Persian, Tay, Tibetan and Mongolian. The Persian, Tay, Tibetan and Mongolian texts are translations of the Chinese text. The Persian text is one of a very small number surviving from the Ming period. The scroll resided at the Tsurphu Monastery, the principal monastery of the Tibetan Karmapa sect, eighty kilometres west of Lhasa. A Qing handbook on Tibet, *Wei Zang tongzhi* 衛藏通志 (Complete gazetteer for guarding Tibet), compiled in the *Jiaqing* 嘉慶 period (1522-1567), describes it as follows:

*In the great temple beyond the north-western mountains in primary Tibet... is stored a hand-scroll, more than twenty zhang in length, on which are painted pictures of the Halima (Karmapa) reciting the scriptures at Linggusi Temple at the beginning of Yongle.*²⁵²

前藏西北山後大寺... 藏手卷一軸, 長二十余丈, 乃繪永樂初哈立瑪誦經靈谷寺圖。

Tibetologist Hugh Richardson was shown the scroll during a visit to Tsurphu in 1949, when he resided in Lhasa as the diplomatic representative of the Indian Government.

²⁵²*Wei Zang tongzhi* 衛藏通志 (Complete gazetteer for guarding Tibet), compiler unknown (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936). Cited by Luo Wenhua, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu da zhai changjuan', p. 90.

His special camera was damaged, and he took only a couple of photographs of the first sections of the scroll, with what appears to be a Brownie Box camera.²⁵³



Hugh Richardson's photographs of sections of the scroll.
The Pitt Rivers Museum. <http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/photo>.

²⁵³For some of Richardson's images see The Tibet Album, "Tsurphu scroll", 5 Dec. 2006. The Pitt Rivers Museum. Accessed 21 Dec. 2014 <http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/photo_2001.59.6.57.1.html>.

Perhaps because it is in the Arabic alphabet, expressing Persian پ (p) with ب (b), گ (g) with ک (k), and چ (ch) with ج (j), he identified the Persian text as Arabic.²⁵⁴ The Rgyal-dbang Karma-pa at the monastery provided him with a copy of the Tibetan text, of which he published a transcription and translation. He comments:

It is written in the 'bam-yig script and appears to be a translation, passage by passage, of the Chinese original, but there are so many deviations from normal grammar and usage that it can hardly be the work of a Tibetan...

and suggests that it indicates the employment of Chinese or Mongol translators of Tibetan at the Ming court.²⁵⁵ Scholar Han Rulin 韩儒林 has noted that the Chinese transcription of Karma in the Karmapa's title as Halima 哈立麻 in the scroll and Ming records must have been transcribed from Mongolian, because Tibetan *ka-* was pronounced *qa-* in Mongolian, which was transcribed 哈 *ha* in Yuan and Ming times.²⁵⁶ This supports the possibility that there was a Mongolian translator of Tibetan at the court.

The scroll remained at the Tsurphu Monastery until Tibet came under Chinese control in 1959. The Tibetan Autonomous Region's newly-formed Committee for the Management of Cultural Objects carried out a survey of cultural artefacts the same year, and it was moved to the Norbulingka Palace in Lhasa.²⁵⁷ The first black-and-white image of a single section of the scroll was published 26 years later in 1985.²⁵⁸ Eight pictures were published in colour when the scroll was displayed at an exhibition of Sino-Tibetan art at the Palace Museum in Beijing in 1992.²⁵⁹ Luo Wenhua 罗文华 of the Palace Museum studied the text of the scroll at that time, and published the Chinese and Tibetan texts in 1995. He supposed the Persian text to be Chagatai,

²⁵⁴Hugh Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', p. 345.

²⁵⁵Hugh Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', p. 345.

²⁵⁶Han Rulin 韩儒林, 'Mingshi Wusizang Dabao Fawang kao' 明史乌斯藏大宝法王考, in *Qiongluji* 穹庐集 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), p. 488.

²⁵⁷Luo Wenhua 罗文华, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu dazhai changjuan' 明大宝法王建普度大斋长卷, *Zhongguo Zangxue* 中国藏学 1 (1995), p. 90.

²⁵⁸Wen Zhu 文竹, 'Xizang difang Ming feng ba wang de youguan wenwu' 西藏地方明封八王的有关文物 (Cultural artefacts related to the eight Kings enfeoffed by Ming in the Tibetan region), *Wenwu* 文物 9 (1985), pp. 89-90.

²⁵⁹*Xizang wenwu jingcui* 西藏文物精粹 (A selection of Tibetan cultural artefacts), (Beijing: Forbidden City Publishing House of the Palace Museum, 1992), pp. 52-53, pl. 26.

Uighur written in Arabic letters.²⁶⁰ Based on these materials Patricia Berger published a study of the scroll's imagery, Buddhist iconography and political significance, together with an English translation of the Chinese text, in 2001.²⁶¹ The scroll was put on permanent display in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa when it opened in 2000.²⁶² A set of clear colour photographs of the entire scroll, including pictures and text, was published in the same year.²⁶³ The Persian text can be read in its entirety from these photographs. Only a few words are illegible where the scroll is slightly torn at the top and bottom of the first section of text. All the other sections can be read clearly. An initial survey of the language of the Persian text by Luo Aili and Liu Yingsheng published in 2006 is discussed below.²⁶⁴

The scroll is a verbal and pictorial record of phenomena that were deemed to have occurred during and after the Buddhist ceremony. The exquisite artwork leads the viewer almost to overlook that it is a political document recording confirmation of the *Yongle* Emperor's legitimacy. Although he was the first Ming Emperor's fourth son by a concubine, by ordering the ceremony for his parents the Emperor and Empress he asserted that his mother was the Empress and his reign was legitimate.²⁶⁵ Like many of his projects, it was carried out on a grand scale. Descriptions of auspicious phenomena were included in court records since ancient times, but the scroll text expands this practice from a brief record into a sustained and detailed account of events taking place over the fourteen days of the *pudu* ceremony and during the following month. The text is in 21 sections, each describing one day, except one section describes two days. Each section of text is presented in five languages, Chinese, Persian, Tay, Tibetan, and Mongolian. The alternation of vertical and horizontal scripts makes a balanced composition. Persian is in second place beside Chinese, although Tibetan, also written horizontally, could have been put there. The placement of Mongolian last reflects its status as the language of the previous

²⁶⁰Luo Wenhua, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu da zhai changjuan', p. 97.

²⁶¹Berger, 'Miracles in Nanjing', pp. 145-169.

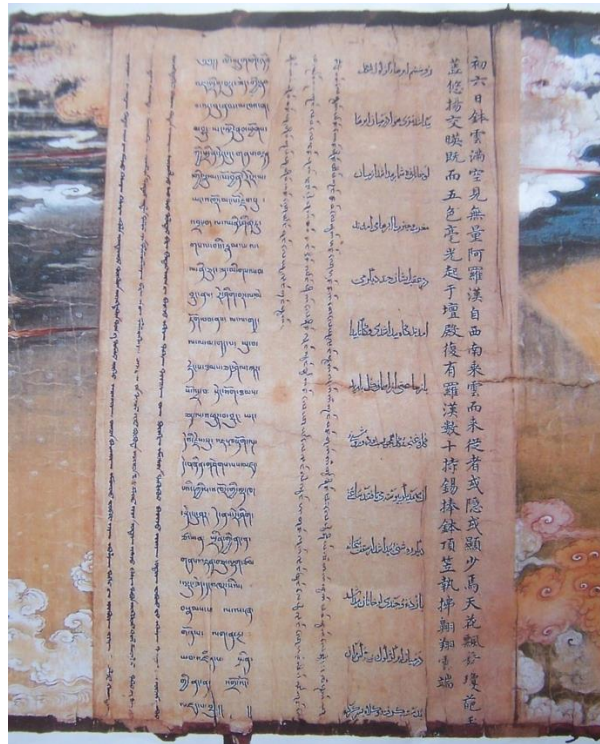
²⁶²Michael Henss, 'The New Tibet Museum in Lhasa', *Orientalism* 31, 2 (Hong Kong, 2000), pp. 62ff.

²⁶³'Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu changjuan' 噶瑪巴為明太祖荐福圖長卷, in *Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu* 宝藏: 中国西藏历史文物, Vol. 3, Yuanchao shiqi, Mingchao shiqi (Beijing: Zhaohua chubanshe, 2000), pp. 96-115.

²⁶⁴Luo Aili and Liu Yingsheng, 'Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu Huihuiwen chutan'.

²⁶⁵Patricia Berger, 'Miracles in Nanjing', pp. 149-150.

dynasty.²⁶⁶ The third language, Tay, is the language of Baiyi 百夷, identified as Mäng² Maaw², the nation of the Dai people of southern Yunnan. The Baiyi college was established to train translators in this language in the same year that the scroll was made. Presumably it was translators from Mäng² Maaw², who copied out this earliest known specimen of Tay characters.²⁶⁷



A section of the scroll showing the alternation of vertical and horizontal scripts
Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 96.

The pictures

Most sections of text are followed by one or two pictures, but some are followed by four, five, six and eight pictures. These generally illustrate the preceding text, but in several cases they are not related to the text.

²⁶⁶Luo Aili and Liu Yingsheng, 'Gamaba wei Ming Taizu jianfu tu Huihuiwen chutan', p. 55.

²⁶⁷Christian Daniels, 'Script Without Buddhism: Burmese Influence on the Tay (Shan) Script of Mäng² Maaw² as Seen in a Chinese Scroll Painting of 1407', p. 170.

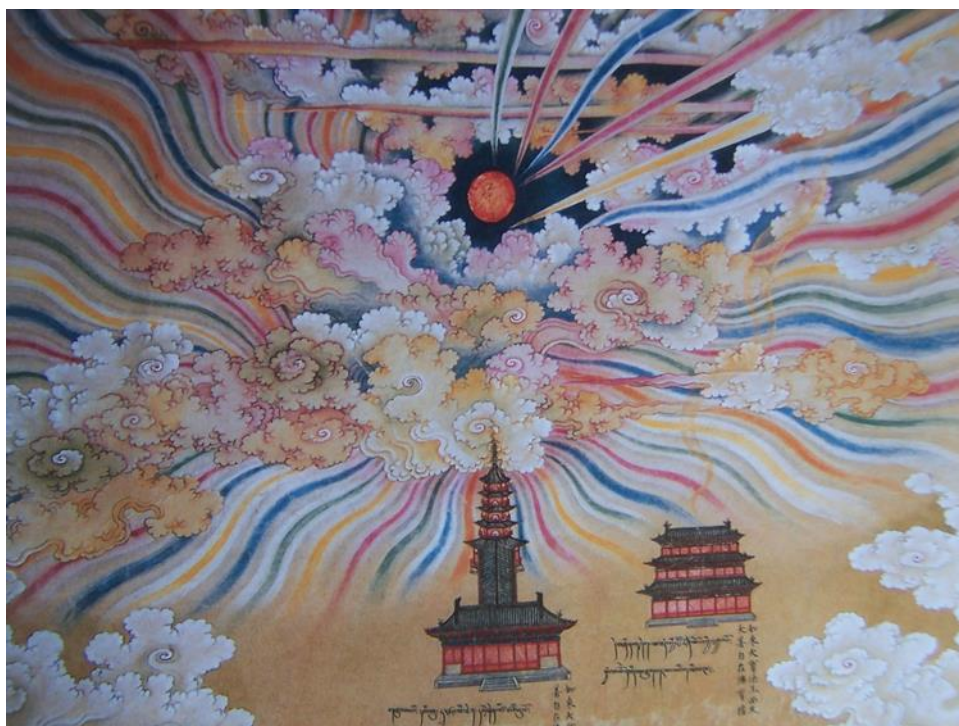


Sections of the scroll showing the alternation of text and pictures.
Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, pp. 96-97

They are astonishingly varied depictions of coloured clouds and rays of light. Clouds in brighter pastel colours appear against layers of cloud in darker colours, against which constantly varied beams, haloes and arcs of coloured light are shown. Showers of flowers or sweet dew, and fruit trees and cranes also appear. Each painting shows a different and artistically engaging variation of these elements.



Picture in Tsurphu Scroll. Baozang: *Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, p. 100.



Picture in Tsurphu Scroll. Baozang: *Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, p. 100.

Although no variation in overall style is discernible, the scale of the whole work and the varied elements within each picture suggest that several artists worked on the project. Their identities are still unknown. Luo Wenhua points out that the multi-coloured halos of striped and wavy light are of the Tibetan *thangka* art tradition, while the trees and figures are distinctively Chinese in style.²⁶⁸ The clouds, which are an important part of each picture, are also of a type which appears in *thangka* pictures, as are the images of buildings which appear in each picture.²⁶⁹

Two Linggusi Monastery buildings are shown labelled in Chinese and Tibetan. On the central axis of each picture except one, a building with a tower is labelled *the Mandala hall where the Rulai Dabao Fawang Xitian Dashan Zizai Fo carried out his good works* 如來大寶法王西天大善自在佛建好事壇場. On the right of this, in every picture except one, a three storied building is labelled *the Precious Hall of the Rulai Dabao Fawang Xitian Dashan Zizai Fo*. 如來大寶法王西天大善自在佛寶樓. These labels serve to place the titles conferred on the Karmapa by the Emperor at the centre of each picture.²⁷⁰



A section of the scroll showing the labels on the buildings in every picture.

²⁶⁸ Luo Wenhua, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu da zhai changjuan', p. 91.

²⁶⁹ See examples in Yang Shuwen, Zhang Jiayan, An Xu, and Luo Dan, eds., *Buddhist Thang-ka Art of Tibet: The Biographical Paintings of 'Phags-pa* (Beijing: New World Press, 1987), pp. 29, 131, &c.

²⁷⁰ Baozang: *Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, pp. 96-115.

Baozang : Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 132.

In several pictures one, two or three other unlabelled buildings are also depicted along the axis. In three of the pictures the Beamless Hall *Wuliangdian* 無梁殿, built at Linggusi by the Hongwu Emperor in 1381, and which still stands there, is shown, identifiable by its fluted arches.



*The Beamless Hall is the blue building at the bottom of the picture.
Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 126.*



The Beamless Hall in 2012 (photograph G. Ford).

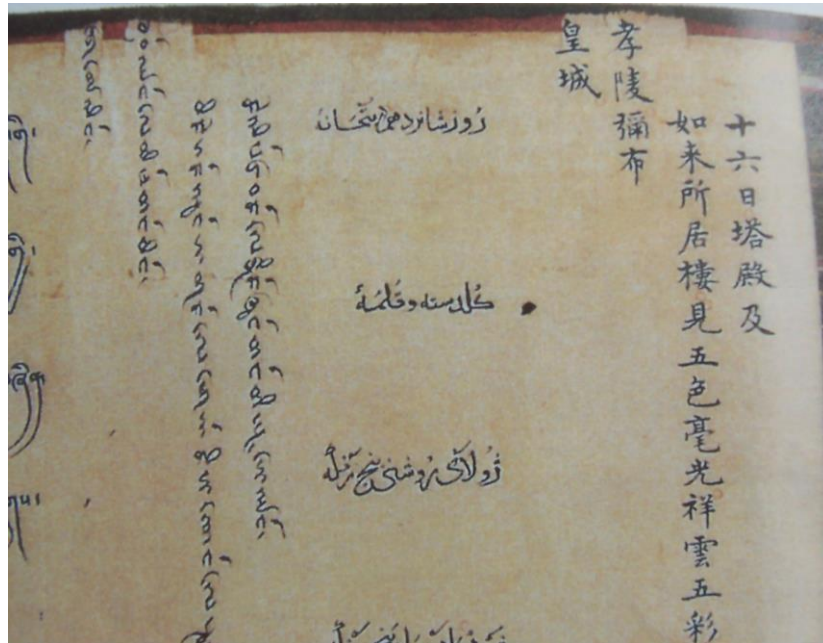
A high level of calligraphic skill is displayed in the Tsurphu scroll. It is in an elegant Nakhsh script, by a practised calligrapher. It is written with the Arabic alphabet, expressing Persian پ (p) with ب (b), گ (g) with ک (k), and چ (ch) with ج (j). There are no mistakes or visible erasures. Close examination shows the scroll is not made up of the various language versions made on separate sheets and then glued together, but is made of long unbroken sheets of paper containing several paintings and calligraphy in the five languages on the same sheet. Each calligrapher had to be careful not to make errors that would spoil the work of the ones who worked on the same sheet before him. It was safest in this case to do the calligraphy on the sheets first, so that they could be recopied if mistakes were made, and then hand the sheets to the artists to add the paintings last. There is one error that must only have become apparent when the calligraphy and paintings had all been completed, and the paper scroll was ready to be glued to the silk backing and a narrow binding strip added along the top and bottom edges. It was found that in the horizontally written languages, Chinese, Uighur and Mongolian, in some places where the Emperor's name and the names of the imperial palace and tomb are elevated two Chinese character spaces above the top margin, they come too close to the edge of the paper, and are obscured by the binding strip. This happens at the very beginning of the scroll, where the first characters of the Emperor's title, and those of his father and mother, are partly covered.²⁷¹



The first characters of the Emperor's title, and those of his father and mother, partly covered by the binding strip. *Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, p. 97.

²⁷¹Ibid., vol. 3, p. 97.

Small sections of the binding strip have been cut away to reveal the text in another of these places.²⁷²



The binding strip cut away to reveal the text.
Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 113.

Elsewhere the Emperor's name has been prudently elevated only one character space, avoiding the problem. The calligraphers must have been fearful of the Emperor's reaction if he noticed the mistake.

The Karmapa's visit to the Ming court

Lavish patronage of Tibetan Buddhism by the imperial family was a court practice adopted from the Mongolian rulers.²⁷³ The Hongwu Emperor, who was a monk in his youth, wrote and published several Buddhist writings, and organised a printing of the Tripitaka, the Buddhist Canon, in 1372, just four years after the founding of his dynasty. Yongle also wrote several Buddhist works, and carried out a printing of the one hundred and eight volumes of the Tibetan Kangyur, *Translations of the Sayings of Buddha*, in 1410 and a second printing of the Tripitaka in 1420.²⁷⁴ The records of

²⁷²Ibid., vol. 3, p. 104.

²⁷³David M. Robinson, 'The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols' in Robinson, David M. ed., *Culture, Courtiers and Competition: the Ming Court (1368 - 1644)*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 371.

²⁷⁴Jia Cuo, 'Lasa xian cang de liangbu Yongle ban Ganzhuer', p. 87.

Tibetan titleholders in *Ming shi* state that Zhu Di knew about Dezhin Shegpa, the fifth Karmapa, while he was still installed as the Prince of Yan at Beiping.

*There was a monk Halima, and his countrymen acclaimed him Lama, because of his knowledge and skills. Chengzu first learned his name when he was the Prince of Yan.*²⁷⁵

有僧哈立麻者國人以其有道術，稱之為尚師。成祖為燕王時，知其名。

Soon after his ascension to the throne, he sent the eunuch Hou Xian 侯顯 to fetch him from Tibet to the capital at Nanjing. The Veritable Records record this:

*Yichou, the second month of the first year of Yongle. 10.3.1403. Hou Xian, a Junior Eunuch in the Rites Inspectorate, was sent to Tibet bearing letters and gifts, to meet the Great Master Halima. The Emperor, while sojourning in Tibet, had heard common report of the singular excellence of his knowledge and practice, and because of this sent people to meet him.*²⁷⁶

遣司禮監少監侯顯賚書，幣往烏思藏，徵尚師哈立麻。蓋上在藩邸時，素聞其道行卓異，至是遣人徵之。

The Emperor's letter to the Karmapa is preserved in Tibetan records:

*My father and both parents of the queen are now dead. You are my only hope, essence of Buddhahood. Please come quickly. I am sending as an offering a large ingot of silver, one hundred silver coins, twenty rolls of silk, a block of sandalwood, one hundred and fifty bricks of tea and ten pounds of incense.*²⁷⁷

Hou Xian's biography in *Ming shi* contains information about the visit. It describes the journey of almost four years to Tibet and back, and the Karmapa's reception at Nanjing:

The Emperor heard that Halima, the Lama of the Buddhist Sangha in Tibet, was skilled in the Buddhist path, and was good at magic, and wished him to come and meet him, and so he communicated with the countries in the west. Hou Xian was ordered to carry letters and gifts and go and fetch him, choosing strong

²⁷⁵ *Ming shi* 331, p. 8572.

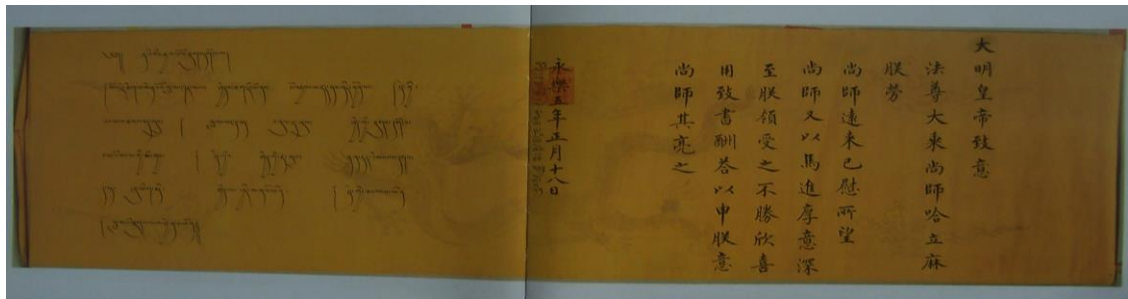
²⁷⁶ *Taizong shilu* 17, p. 5v. (0310). See also *Ming shilu Zangzu shiliao*, p. 116. This useful compilation excerpts all entries in Veritable Records relating to Tibet. There are four entries concerning Halima's visit to Nanjing.

²⁷⁷ Karma Thinley, *The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet* (Boulder, Colorado: Prajna Press, 1980), p. 72. Tibetan chronicles which contain the Tibetan letter, and indications of the lost Chinese version, are noted by Elliot Sperling, 'The 5th Karma-pa and the relationship between Tibet and the early Ming', in Aris M. and Aung San Suu Kyi eds., *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson, Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies* (Oxford: Aris and Philips, 1979), p. 286, n. 31. The Tibetan text of the letter is in Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', p. 368.

men and sturdy horses to travel as escort. Hou Xian received this mission in the fourth month of 1403, the first year of Yongle, and travelling by land for thousands of miles, came back with the Monk at the beginning of the twelfth month of 1406, the fourth year of Yongle. Captain of the City Guard, Muxin the Imperial Son-in-law, was ordered to ride out and welcome them. The Emperor received him in the Fengtian Hall, and favoured him abundantly. Most of the insignia and horse trappings were made of silver and gold, and the roadways were magnificent.²⁷⁸

侯顯者司禮少監。帝聞烏思藏僧尚師哈立麻有道術，善幻化，欲至一見，因通迤西諸番。乃命顯齎書幣往迓，選壯士健馬護行。元年四月奉使，陸行數萬里，至四年十二月始與其僧偕來，詔駙馬都尉沐昕迎之。帝延見奉天殿，寵賚優渥，儀仗鞍馬什器多以金銀為之，道路烜赫。

The Ming Veritable Records provide the date of his arrival. He was immediately received at an audience with the Emperor.²⁷⁹ A letter of thanks from the Emperor for a gift of horses presented by Karmapa at the audience is preserved in the Archives of the Tibet Autonomous Region. It is written in Chinese and Tibetan on dragon and pearl-damasked yellow paper, and dated more than eighteen days after the audience. It is the only surviving letter of thanks from a Ming emperor, and provides an example of a type of document which would have been made in many languages, when gifts were given.



Letter of thanks from the Emperor for a gift of horses presented by the Fifth Karmapa. *Xizang lishi dangan huicui*, pl. 24.

*The Great Ming Emperor sends his thoughts to Halima, Lama of Mahayana Buddhism. I am affected that you have fulfilled my hopes by coming so far. You also presented horses at your audience. My appreciation is great and deep. I have ordered that they should be accepted, with great pleasure. Please accept this letter of thanks. Eighteenth day of the first month of the fifth year of Yongle (1407).*²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸Hou Xian's biography in *Ming shi* 192, p. 7769.

²⁷⁹*Taizong shilu* 62, p. 4v. (0896).

²⁸⁰*Xizang Lishi Dangan Huicui*, pl. 24.

大明皇帝致意法尊大乘尚師哈立麻。朕勞尚師遠來已慰所望。尚師又以馬進，厚意深至，朕領受之，不勝欣喜，用致書酬答以申朕意，尚師其亮之。永樂五年正月十八日。

The day after the audience, a banquet was held and gifts were bestowed on Karmapa,²⁸¹ and more gifts were forthcoming in the following weeks²⁸²

The great ceremony at Linggusi Monastery

The Karmapa was in Nanjing for ten weeks before the ceremony was held:

Gengyin, the second month of the fifth year of Yongle. 14.3.1407. The Great Master Halima received the command to marshall the monks at Linggusi and hold a great pudu feast,²⁸³ a mass of universal salvation, to provide blessings to the late Emperor Taizu and the late Empress Xiaoci.²⁸⁴

尚師哈立麻奉命率僧於靈谷寺建普度大齋，資福太祖高皇帝，孝慈高皇后。

The practice of holding Buddhist ceremonies for the salvation of all souls, especially those of the dead, at Linggusi temple, was begun by the Hongwu Emperor at the beginning of his reign. In the ninth month of 1368, the first year of his reign, Hongwu summoned more than ten great Buddhist monks to the Chiang-shan temple (later the Linggusi temple) to perform a great Buddhist mass to pray for the deliverance of the people who perished in the wars preceding his victory. The same service was repeated in the third month of the following year, and was continued every year in the early years of his reign.²⁸⁵

Tibetan sources give precise details of the Karmapa's *pudu*, which took the form of teaching. "He bestowed on the Emperor and Empress the empowerments of the red *Avalokiteśvara*, *Vajrakiilaya*, *Guhyasamāja*, *Maitreya*, *Vajradhātu*, *Hevajra*, *Tārā*, *Vairocana*, *Bhaiṣajyaguru* and the thousand armed *Avalokiteśvara*. During these weeks Dezhin Shegpa revealed the miraculous nature of enlightened energy, revealed by the accomplishment of these *vajrayāna* teachings.²⁸⁶ The displays of *vajrayāna*

²⁸¹ *Taizong shilu* 62, p. 4v. (0895).

²⁸² *Taizong shilu* 63, p. 3r. (0905).

²⁸³ 辞海: 普渡, 佛家语。广施法力以救济众生曰普渡。 *Pudu* means broadly exercising Dharma power to save all creatures.

²⁸⁴ *Taizong shilu* 64, p. 1v. (0910).

²⁸⁵ *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, p. 899.

²⁸⁶ Thinley, *The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet*, p. 73.

energy invoked by Dezhin Shegpa are depicted in the scroll. The eunuch Hou Xian's biography contains an unofficial report of the phenomenal apparitions which took place during the *pudu* feast. Several elements in this report, the green birds, green lions, and white elephants, are not recorded in the scroll text:

*A great Pudu feast was held at Linggu Si temple in the second month of the fifth year of Yongle to confer blessings on the late Emperor and Empress. It was said that auspicious clouds, heavenly flowers, sweet dew, sweet rain, green birds, green lions, white elephants, white cranes and propitious relic lights were all seen on successive days, and Sanskrit chanting and heavenly music was heard coming down from the sky.*²⁸⁷

五年二月建普度大齋於靈谷寺，為高帝，高后薦福。或言卿雲，天花，甘露，甘雨，青鳥，青獅，白象，白鶴，及舍利祥光，連日畢見，又聞梵唄天樂自空而下。

The rites were held for fourteen days, from the fifth day until the eighteenth day of the second month of the fifth year of *Yongle*, 1407. Most of the phenomena which occurred during this time were observed at the Linggusi Monastery, especially at the tower, mandala hall and the residence hall that had been built for the Karmapa. On the thirteenth day of the month, the eighth day of the ceremony, two rays of light of wisdom (*huiguang* 慧光) were also seen at the imperial tumulus where the former Emperor and Empress were buried, and at the imperial palace. Two weeks after the conclusion of the rites, on the third day of the third month, a vegetarian banquet was held at Linggusi monastery, attended by more than twenty thousand monks, and the Karmapa was given a new title:

*Dingsi, the third month of the fifth year of Yongle (18.4.1407). The Great Master Halima was granted the title of Wanxingjuzu Shifangzuisheng Yuanjuemiaozi Huishanpuying Youguoyanjiao Rulai Dabao Fawang Xitiandashan Zilaifo, (Sufficient in all actions, most outstanding in all directions, complete in enlightenment and knowledge, whose wisdom and goodness spreads abroad, who preaches in all countries, the Tathagatha Great Treasure King, Heaven-good self-existing Buddha), to lead Buddhist teaching in the Empire; he was given a seal and a patent, as well as gold, silver, chao paper money, coloured silk, cassocks woven with gold and pearls, gold and silver vessels and saddle horses.*²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷Ming shi 192, p. 7769.

²⁸⁸Taizong Shilu 65, p. 1r. (0915).

封尚師哈立麻為萬行具足十方最勝圓覺妙智慧善普應佑國演教如來大寶法王天善自在佛，領天下釋教。賜印，誥及金，銀，鈔，綵幣等物。織金珠袈裟，金銀器皿，鞍馬。

The length of this title with eight elements had a precedent in the title conferred posthumously on the Yuan Imperial Tutor Phagspa which had nine elements.²⁸⁹ Senior members of his entourage were given lesser titles:

*It was commanded that his disciple Bolongpu Wasangr Jialingzhen should be the Guanding yuanxiu jinghui Daguoshi (Imperial tutor), Gaoriwalin chanpo should be Guanding tongwu hongji Daguoshi (Imperial tutor), and Guoluan lougeloujian zangbalizangbu should be Guangding hongzhi jingjie Daguoshi (Imperial tutor). They were all given seals, patents, silver, chao paper money, coloured silk vestments and other goods, and they were feasted at Huagaidian Hall.*²⁹⁰

命其徒孛隆逋瓦桑兒加領真為灌頂圓修淨慧大國師，高日瓦領禪伯為灌頂悟弘濟大國師，果樂羅葛羅監藏巴里藏卜為灌頂弘智淨戒大國師，皆賜印，誥，銀，鈔，綵幣等物。宴於華蓋殿。

More phenomena were observed during this enfeoffment ceremony, which are also depicted and described in the scroll. On the following day, the fourth day of the third month, the nineteenth of April, when the Karmapa went to the imperial palace to convey his thanks, and the day after that, the fifth day of the month, the twentieth of April, when the Emperor went to a final vegetarian banquet at Linggusi Monastery, still more phenomena were observed, which are also duly described and depicted in the scroll.

It was six days after this final vegetarian feast, on the 26th April 1407, that the Emperor ordered the selection of the first students to be trained as translators in the Translating College. It is possible that the Emperor had already begun planning a project for a great multilingual scroll to record the phenomena, and that the need for a team of translators for the task, just at the time when Zheng He's voyages had begun and relations with Samarkand and Herat were commencing, was a factor in the decision to establish the college.

²⁸⁹Song Lian 宋濂 ed., *Yuan shi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), p. 4518.

²⁹⁰*Ibid.*

Hou Xian's biography informs us that an ode was also written in commemoration of the events at Linggusi:

*The Emperor was greatly delighted by these phenomena. The court officials expressed congratulations, and some scholars, including Hu Guang, offered up a poem called Hymn of Auspicious Omens Responding to Sacred Filiality.*²⁹¹

帝益大喜，廷臣表賀，學士胡廣等咸獻聖孝瑞應頌詩

The title of the poem by Hu Guang 胡廣 bears the satisfactory implication that the apparitions at Linggusi were a reward for the filial piety of the emperor to his parents, confirming his claim to legitimacy as the son of Zhu Yuanzhang and Empress Ma. The poem is mentioned again in the note on Karmapa in the section on enfeoffed Tibetan clergy in the Ming History.

*Hu Guang offered up Hymn of Auspicious Omens Responding to Sacred Filiality. The Emperor continued it, making it into a Buddhist song, which he ordered to be performed in song and dance at the Palace.*²⁹²

廣乃獻聖孝瑞應頌。帝綴為佛曲，令宮中歌舞之。

The extended Buddhist song continued by the Emperor seems to be the same poem which is included in the Emperor's preface printed at the front of each volume of the *Yongle* edition of the Tibetan *Kangyur*, which the Emperor had printed three years later in 1410, and where he claims the poem as his own. The beginning of the poem reads as an ode to the Karmapa, with references to *Rulai* and *juzu* which are a play of words on the title conferred on him.

When Tathagatha (如来 Rulai) expounds on the Truth, the Dharma sound fills everywhere,

*The Ganges River flows in the world, one and all are sufficiently prepared (具足 juzu).*²⁹³

如来演義諦，法音遍充周，世界恒河流，一一皆具足。

²⁹¹ *Ming shi* 192, p. 7769.

²⁹² *Ming shi* 147, p. 4125.

²⁹³ The whole poem is published in Jia Cuo, 'Lasa xian cang de liangbu Yongle ban Ganzhuer', pp. 85-88.

The Karmapa's pilgrimage to Wutaishan and return to Tibet

Eight days after the ceremony the Karmapa brought his visit to Nanjing to an end and set out to make his pilgrimage to Wutaishan 五臺山 in Shanxi, the home of Mañjuśrī, Wenshu 文殊, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.²⁹⁴ Several phenomena of rays of coloured light were observed as the Karmapa was leaving Linggusi monastery to begin his journey on 28 April, the thirteenth day of the third month. After the departure of the Karmapa, the Emperor prayed to see visions as he had done before, and was rewarded with more phenomena on the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth days of the same month (30 April-3 May). These are also described and depicted in the scroll. The Karmapa stayed at Wutaishan for one year, and then returned to Nanjing before setting out on the return journey to Tibet. It is probable that the scroll was created during the time he was at Wutaishan.²⁹⁵ If so, he might have carried it back to Tibet with him. Before he left Nanjing the Emperor also bestowed on him a black Vajra hat, *Vajra mukut*, a replica of one he had seen hovering above his master's head during a ceremony.²⁹⁶ The fifth Karmapa died of smallpox a few years later at the age of 31. Succeeding incarnations of the Karmapa maintained tributary relations with the Ming court throughout the dynasty.²⁹⁷

The text

There are 21 sections of text. The first 13 describe apparitions on the 14 days while the *pudu* was being held from the fifth to the eighteenth day of the second month. Days nine and ten are in the same section. The next three sections deal with apparitions on the three days following the Karmapa's enfeoffment, the third fourth and fifth days of the third month. One section describes the apparitions on the day of his departure for Wutaishan on the thirteenth day of the third month. The last four describe the apparitions seen by the Emperor in the company of Hong Qi on the fifteenth, sixteenth seventeenth and eighteenth days of the third month, after the Karmapa had left.

²⁹⁴Zhencheng 鎮澄, *Qingliangshan zhi* 清涼山志 (China: unknown publisher, 1933), *juan* 3, p. 23.

²⁹⁵Luo Wenhua, 'Ming Dabao Fawang jian pudu da zhai changjuan', p. 91.

²⁹⁶N. Douglas, and M. White, comp., *Karmapa: The Black Hat Lama of Tibet* (London: Luzac & co, 1976), p. 62.

²⁹⁷Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', pp. 347ff.

No mention of the scroll, the artist or the author of the text is made in Chinese sources. The vividness and detail of the descriptions suggest it was written soon after the events they describe. The Tibetan sources state that it was composed by the Emperor Chengzu himself.²⁹⁸ The Chinese text is written in impersonal mode, with no pronoun to indicate the identity of the author, but in the Persian translation the first person singular possessive pronoun-suffix is used in referring to the late Emperor and Empress, “pidaram, my father” and “mādaram, my mother”, as discussed below, showing that the translator understood the author was the Emperor.

The presentation of a copy of another of the Emperor’s own works, a collection of hymns praising the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, to the Great Xiantong Monastery at Wutaishan, was the occasion of another series of phenomena of auspicious light, with Mañjuśrī riding on a lion on one day, followed by thousands of *luohans* appearing and disappearing on the next. The Emperor adds that he ordered artisans to paint pictures of them and reproduce the hymns alongside them.²⁹⁹ This is a similar project to the Tsurphu scroll. It is not known whether it was completed, but it is probable that the Emperor’s command was obeyed and the artwork made, but it has since been lost.

The Persian text

The Persian translation is plain, accurate, and sometimes simplified. The somewhat high-flown descriptive language of the Chinese text is rendered in plain terms. Luo Aili 骆爱丽 and Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜 have published an initial survey of the Persian text, pointing out that the overall text, choices of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure, as well as the practised, fluent calligraphy, indicate that the translator’s first language was Persian, or he knew Persian very well.³⁰⁰ Several Chinese names, titles and Buddhist terms transliterated accurately in Persian letters, show the translator also knew Chinese well. The titles of the Emperor and his father and mother which appear at the beginning of the scroll are simplified, and expressed in a mixture of Persian and

²⁹⁸Thinley, *The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet*, p. 74. He suggests that several copies of the scroll were made: “He commissioned talented artists to represent them in painting on large rolls of silk, one of which was kept at Tsurphu.”

²⁹⁹Zhengchen, *Qingliang shan zhi* 5, p. 4.

³⁰⁰Luo Aili and Liu Yingsheng, ‘Gamaba Wei Ming Taizu Jianfu Tu Huihuiwen chutan’, p. 55.

transliterated Chinese terms, indicating the translator did not have a ready glossary of accurate court titles, but created a mixture of plain Persian equivalents and transliterated Chinese words as he came to each title. The Emperor's title has been overtranslated as *the Great Emperor of Great Ming* with the addition of *mu‘azzam*, great, supreme.³⁰¹

大明皇帝

Dāy Mīng, pādshāh-i mu‘azzam

دای مینگ پادشاه معظم

The same formula is also used in the two letters to Shah Rukh and in the Persian inscription on the Galle Stone in Sri Lanka.

The Chinese title of the Emperor's father *The Emperor's deceased father, the former Emperor Taizu* 皇考太祖高皇帝 *Huangkao Taizu Gao Huangdi* is translated as *my father, the exalted Emperor Taizu*.

皇考太祖高皇帝

Pidaram Tāy Zū pādshāh-i ā‘lá

پدرم تای زو پادشاه اعلی

The use of a plain term *pidaram*, *my father*, to render the more specific 皇考 *the Emperor's deceased father*, is a short-cut which the translator considered acceptable. This possessive “my” confirms that the Emperor is considered to be the author of the text. The Chinese word *gao* 高, used by an emperor to mean the previous emperor, has been translated as *ā‘alī*, “high, exalted”.³⁰²

The title of the Emperor's mother *the Emperor's deceased mother former Empress Xiaoci* 皇妣孝慈高皇后 *Huangbi Xiaoci Gao Huanghou* is simplified as *my mother, Empress Xiaoci*.

皇妣孝慈高皇后

Mādaram Hīyāw Heh Khwāng Khū

³⁰¹Ibid.

³⁰²Ibid.

مادر م هیاو هه خوانگ خو

My mother is *mādaram*. The translator has not attempted to express *huanghou*, empress, in Persian but transliterated it *khwāng khū*.

The titles in the Tibetan translation are no more precise. 大明皇帝 *Da Ming Huangdi* is rendered accurately as *ta'i ming rgyal po*, the *Emperor of Great Ming*. The *Emperor's deceased father*, the former Emperor Taizu becomes simply *tha'i ju rgyal po chen po*, the *great Emperor Taizu*, and the *Emperor's deceased mother* former Empress Xiaoci simply as *byams pa'i yum btsun*, *graciously-loving queen mother*.³⁰³

Interestingly, the Persian transliteration of Karmapa, *Karmā bā* does not appear to be from Chinese 哈立麻巴 *Halimaba*, but from Tibetan *Karma ba*.³⁰⁴ The long Chinese title conferred on the Karmapa, *Rulai Dabao Fawang Dashan Zizai Fu*, is transliterated accurately as *Rūlāy dāy bāw fā wāng dāy shan zū zāy fū*. This title is also simply transliterated in the Tibetan text, although Tibetan translated equivalents for each of the Buddhist elements of the title exist,³⁰⁵ and it is also transliterated in the Tay text.³⁰⁶ This indicates a sort of taboo that titles such as this, conferred by the Emperor, embodied his sacred power, and translators dared not alter them.³⁰⁷

Although he translated an essentially Buddhist text, the translator had a limited knowledge of Buddhist terminology. Two other languages of the scroll, Tibetan and Mongolian, possess rich Buddhist vocabularies, and studies of those texts will probably show that the translators dealt more accurately with Buddhist terms. The Persian translator uses precise Persian words for buildings. *Butkhāna*, Buddhist temple, is used for the temple at Linggusi, *kilīṣah*, church, the derivative of *ecclesia*, is used for the mandala hall, the central building in most pictures, and *qalimah*, hall, for the Rulai's residential hall, the building at the right side in most pictures. Several words are transliterated, including *zūyī* for *ruyi* 如意, sceptre, and *shāli* for *sheli* 舍利, relic. The Chinese expression *carry out a great pudu feast* 修建普渡大齋 is rendered for

³⁰³Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', p. 370.

³⁰⁴Luo Aili and Liu Yingsheng, 'Gamaba Wei Ming Taizu Jianfu Tu Huihuiwen chutan', p. 55.

³⁰⁵Richardson, 'The Karma-pa Sect, A Historical Note', p. 370.

³⁰⁶Christian Daniels, 'Script Without Buddhism: Burmese Influence on the Tay (Shan) Script of Mäng² Maaw² as Seen in a Chinese Scroll Painting of 1407', p. 170.

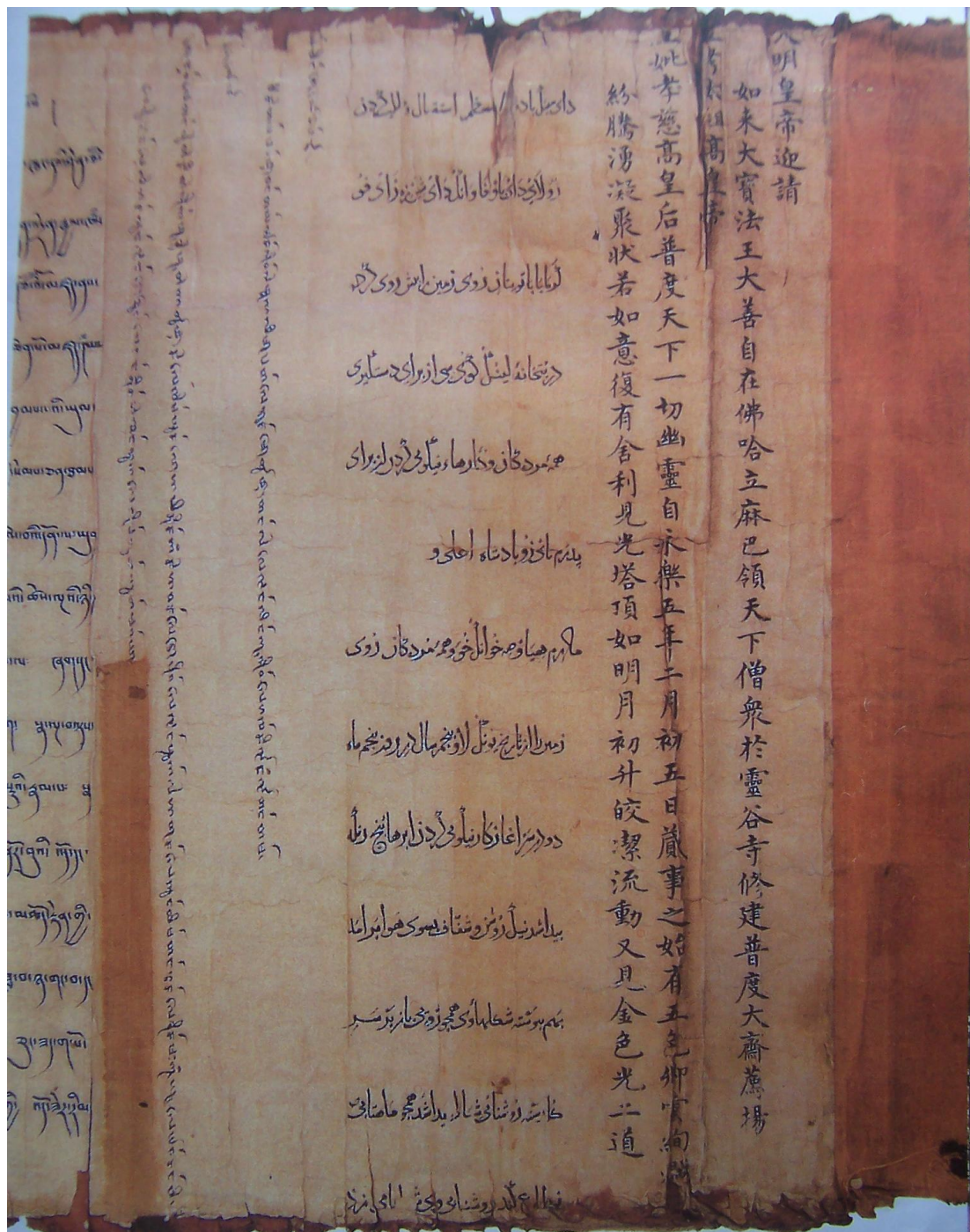
³⁰⁷Dr Igor De Rachewiltz provided me with this information.

the helping of all the dead and doing good works, āz barāyi dastgīrī hamih murdagān va kār-hāya nīkūyi kardan. The expression *doing good works* is the same as that used in the Chinese label on the central building in each picture, *the Mandala hall where the Rulai Dabao Fawang Xitian Dashan Zizai Fo carried out his good works (jian haoshi 建好事).*

Samples of the Persian text

Transcription and analysis of the entire Persian text are outside the scope of this study. Publication and comprehensive studies of all five language texts will provide insight into the translation of imperial titles and Buddhist terms, while revealing the abilities and practices of the translators. The text is repetitive, as one show of phenomena after another is duly recorded. The following excerpts are transcriptions of the first three sections and the final section of the text, recording the first three days and the final day. The first section is the most interesting because it records the occasion of the feast, provides the titles of the protagonists, and gives the date and year.

Section 1, the fifth day of the second month



Section 1 of Tsurphu Scroll text. Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 113.

Chinese text

大明皇帝迎請如來大寶法王大善自在佛哈立麻巴領天下僧眾於靈谷寺修建普度大齋，薦揚皇考太祖高皇帝，黃碧孝慈高皇后，普度天下一切幽靈。自永樂五年二月初五日藏事之始，有五色卿雲絢爛紛騰涌凝聚，狀若如意。復有舍利見光塔頂，如明月初升，皎潔流動。又見金色光二道。

*The Emperor of Great Ming welcomed the Tathāgatha, the Great and Precious Dharma King, Great Goodness, Self-abiding Buddha, Halima, inviting him to lead all the monks in the Empire and proceed to Linggu Monastery to conduct a mass of universal salvation, in honour of the late Imperial Father the Emperor Taizu, and the late Imperial Mother the Empress Xiaoci, and for the universal salvation of all the spirits of the dead under heaven. From the fifth day of the second month of the fifth year of Yongle, when preparations began, propitious five-coloured clouds floated up quickly and coalesced in a shape like a ruyi sceptre. Then relics were seen shining at the top of the tower, like a bright, newly-risen moon, clear and flowing. Two rays of golden light were also seen.*³⁰⁸

Persian text

دای مینک پادشاه معظم استقبال ولایه کردن

Dāy mīnk, pādshāh-i mu'azzam īstiqbāl-i walāyat kardan

The great Emperor, Day Ming, making welcome to his land

رولای دای باو فا وانک دای شن زو زای فو

Rūlāy dāy bāw fā wānk dāy shan zū zāy fū

Rulai Dabao Fawang Dashan Zizai Fo

کرمابا با توین روی زمین را ایشان روی کرد

Karmā bā bā tūyin rūyi zamīn rā īshān rūyi kard

Karma-ba, to bring the Buddhist monks of the land

³⁰⁸The entire Chinese text has been translated into English by Patricia Berger in 'Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa's Visit to the Chinese Capital', pp. 162-166. The translations here are my own, based partly on those of Patricia Berger.

در بتخانه لینگ کوی سی از برای دستگیری

dar butkhānah-i Līnk Kūyī Sī āz barāyi dastgīrī-i

into the temple of Linggusi for helping

همه مردکان و کارهای نیکوی کردن از برای

hamih murdagān va kār-hāya nīkūyi kardan āz barāyi

all the dead and performing good-works for

پدرم تای زو پادشاه اعلی و

Pidaram Tāy Zū pādshāh-i ā‘alī va

My father, Taizu, the Great Emperor and

مادرم هیائو هه خوانک خو و همه مردکان روی

Mādaram Hīyāw Heh Khwānk Khū va hamih murdakān rūyi

My mother, Xiaoci Huanghou and all of the dead on

زمین را از تاریخ رونک لائو پنجم سال در روز پنجم ماه

zamīn rā āz tārikh-i Rūnk Lāw panjum sāl dar rūz-i panjum māh-i

the earth, on the date of *Yongle*, the fifth year, on the fifth day, of the second month.

دو در سر آغاز کار نیکوی کردن ابرها پنج رنگ

dū. Dar sar āghāz kār-i nīkūyi kardan ābr-hāy panj rank

At the beginning of doing the good works, clouds of five colours

پیدا شد نیک روشن و شفاف بسوی هوا بر آمد

paydā shud, nīk rūshan va shaffāf b-sūyi havā bar āmad

appeared, of brilliant light and transparency, in the sky.

بهم پیوست شکلهای همچو زوی باز بر سر

Biham payvast shakl-hā ū hamchū zūī. Bāz bar sar-i

They joined together to make shapes like a *ruyi*. On top of the

کلیسه روشنای شاک پیدا شد همچو قاماری

kilīṣah rūshanāy shāk paydā shud hamchū qāmārī

church there appeared a particle of light like a moon

(...) بلند روشنای وی شعلهای زد

(...) buland rūshanāy ū shu‘l-hāyi zad

(...) its great light shot flames

Section 2: The sixth day of the second month.

Section 2 of Tsurphu Scroll text. Baozang: *Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, p. 96.

Chinese text

初六日鉢雲滿空，見無量阿羅漢自西南乘雲而來，從者或陷或顯。少焉，天花飄舞，瓊葩玉蕊，悠揚交換。既而五色毫光起於壇殿，復有羅漢數十，持錫捧鉢，頂笠執拂，翱翔雲端。

On the sixth day clouds shaped like alms-bowls filled the sky, and countless Alohan were seen coming from the southwest riding on clouds, appearing and disappearing one after another. For a short time, heavenly flowers floated and danced, and changed places distant and far. Then a five coloured something light rose from the Mandala Hall, and several tens more of lohans, holding staffs and clutching alms-bowls, wearing bamboo hats and grasping fly-whisks, hovered at the ends of the clouds.

Persian text

رو(ز) ششم ابرها کژکول شکل

Rū(z)-i Shishum ābr-hā kazhkūl shikl

(On) the sixth day, clouds shaped like begging-bowls

پیدا شد سوی هوا در میان ابرها

paydā shud sūyi havā, dar miyān-i ābr-hā

appeared in the sky, amongst the clouds

لوخانا بی شمار پیدا شد از میان

lawkhānā bī shumār paydā shud, āz miyān-i

luohans without number appeared from between

مغرب و جنوب با ابرهای آمدند

maghrib va junūb bā ābr-hāyi āmadand.

the west and the south, coming with clouds.

در عقب ایشان چند دیگر می

Dar ‘aqab īshān chand dīgar mī

Several others came from behind them

آمدند کاه پیدا شدی و کاه (ی) ناپیدا

āmadand gāh-i paydā shoday va gāh-i nāpaydā.

Sometimes (they) were visible, and sometimes invisible

باز ساعتی از ایشان گل بارید

Bāz sā‘atī āz īshān gul bārīd

Then for one hour (a while) flowers rained (down) from them

گل و غنچه گل همچو یسب بود شیوع رفت

gul va ghashchah-i gul hamchū yashab būd shiyū‘u raft,

flowers and flower-buds like jade spread out,

از هم دیگر پیوستی یافتند ساعتی

āz ham dīgar payvastī yāftand sā‘atī

they joined together (and) for an hour (a while)

دیگر روشنی پیدا شد از سقف بتخانه

dīgar rūshanay paydā shud āz saqf butkhānah.

another light appeared on the roof of the temple.

باز ده و چندی لوخانان پیدا شد

Bāz dah-ū chandī lawkhānān paydā shud

Then more than ten *luohans* appeared

در میان ابر کژکول و چوب و مگس ران

dar miyān-i ābr kazhkūl va chub va magas-rān

among the clouds, taking a begging-bowl, a (walking) stick and a fly-swat

بدست گرفت و کلاه بسر گرد

bidast girift va kalāh bisar gard

in their hands and placing a hat on (their) head.

Section 3: The seventh day of the second month

Section 3 of Tsurphu Scroll text. *Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu*, vol. 3, p. 97.

Chinese text

初七日甘露降，色如凝酥，味香而美。俄五色雲見，金枝玉花，璀璨熠燿。

On the seventh day sweet dew fell, the colour of thick butter, with a beautiful fragrance. Suddenly five-coloured clouds were seen, and jade flowers on golden branches, gleaming and sparkling like gemstones.

Persian text

روز هفتم

Rūz-i haftum

The seventh day

ترانکبین بارید

Tar-angubīn bārīd

manna rained down

رنگ وی همچو روغن گاو و

Rang-i-vay hamchū rūghan-i gāv va

Its colour like butter (cow-oil) and

شیرین طعم و خوش

shīrīn ta‘m va khūsh-

sweet-tasting and nice-

بوی ناگاه ابر پنج

būy, nāgāh ābr panj

smelling, suddenly a cloud of five

رنگ پیدا شد شاخ

rang paydā shud shākh

colours appeared, whose rays

وی همچو زر و گل وی

ū hamchū zar va gul ū

were like gold and flower(s), they

همچو یسب نیک

hamchū yashb, nīk

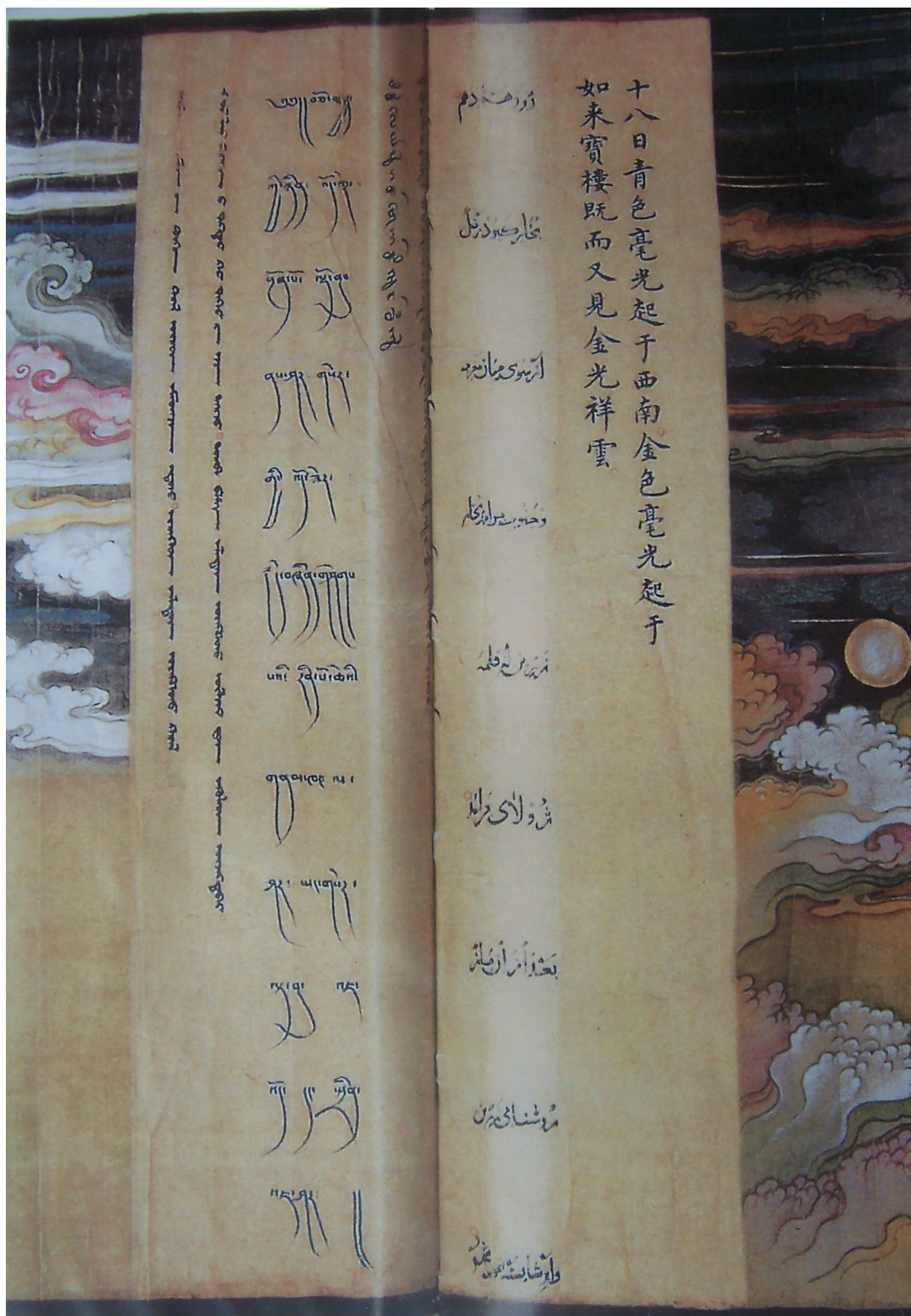
were like jade, brilliantly

روشن و شفاف

rūshan va shaffāf

bright and transparent

Section 21: The eighteenth day of the third month



Section 21 of Tsurphu Scroll text. Baozang: Zhongguo Xizang lishi wenwu, vol. 3, p. 114

Chinese text

十八日，青色毫光起於西南，金色毫光起於如來寶樓既而又見金光祥雲。

On the eighteenth day blue light rose in the southwest and golden light rose at the Tathāgatha's Precious Hall. Then more golden light and lucky clouds were seen.

Persian text

روز هژدهم

Rūz-i Hizdahum

The eighteenth day

بخار کیودرنک

Bukhār-i kabūd-rang

a blue-coloured mist

از سوی میان مغرب

āz sūyi miyān-i maghrib

came from between the west

و جنوب بر آمد و بخار

va junūb bar āmad, va bukhār-i

and the south, and a mist of

زرین از قلمیه (قلمرو؟)

zarīn āz qalimah

gold came out from the Hall

رولای بر آمد

Rūlāy bar āmad.

of the Rulai.

بعد از آن باز

ba‘d āz ān bāz

After that,

روشنای زرین

rūshanāy zarīn

golden light

و ابر شایسته پیدا شد

va ābr-i shāyistah paydā shud.

and a superb cloud appeared.

A Trilingual stele in Tibet

Dughlat Muhammad Haidar, the Moghul prince who wrote the history of Moghulistan, *Tarikh-I-Rashidi*, brought the narrative of his homeland up into his own time in his concluding chapters, when, expelled from Moghulistan, he took refuge with his cousin Babur in India, and served him as Governor of Kashmir. During that time he added to his book a chapter on Tibet which included comments concerning religious beliefs such as pure consciousness and reincarnation, linking them in a tolerant spirit with Muslim beliefs. He recorded that he saw a Persian inscription in Tibet:

Another was at Zunka, a region of Tibet where zedoary is found. I saw there an order from the ruler of Cathay written in Chinese. In one corner the contents were written in Tibetan, and in another it was written in Persian. It said that it had been three thousand years or more since Shakyamni brought idolatry to that nation. There were other obscure phrases no one was capable of understanding. This much I remember, and the rest had to do with repairs to the idol temple. In any case, it indicated that Shakyamuni had been three thousand years ago and there was a date in the order but it was not a hegira date, and was in a system not known to us. The order was so worn that it must have been at least a hundred years old. God knows best. I went to Zunka in Rabi‘ 940 (September-October 1533).³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Mirza Haydar Dughlat's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi: a history of the khans of Moghulistan*, English translation & annotation by W.M. Thackston, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1996), 416. p. 182. I am grateful to Dr. Anya King of the University of Southern Indiana for making me aware of this record.

The identity of Zunka is unknown. The stele evidently stood in a temple. Muhammad Haidar's estimate that the stone was not more than a hundred years old in 1533 is only approximate, and it is possible the stone had stood there since the *Yongle* era, somewhat more than a hundred and twenty years.³¹⁰ The layout of the stone suggests the languages were disposed similarly to those in the Galle Stone erected by Zheng He in Ceylon, the vertical Chinese inscription taking up the right side, Tibetan written above on the left side, with Persian below it on the left side. Like the Galle stone, it would have been carved in Nanjing or Beijing and transported to its location. The three language texts would have been put together in the *Neige* by translators and calligraphers, and written out on a single sheet of paper from which the stone engravers made a facsimile. The use of Persian would have been appropriate in Ladakh, or at some place adjacent to Moghulistan and Kashgar, however it seems unlikely that Emperor Chengzu would have repaired a temple further away than southern (Dbus) Tibet, and the transportation of a stele to northern Tibet would have been difficult. It is more likely that the stele was seen at a temple close to Lhasa, perhaps the Tsurphu Monastery, and was possibly erected there in the years immediately following the Karmapa's visit. Tibetan records state the Karmapa returned to Tsurphu and rebuilt many shrines and stupas, and completely renovated all the living accommodation there.³¹¹

Edict to Mir Haji

Another surviving document, which was produced at the same time as the Tsurphu scroll, is an edict of the Yongle Emperor granting safety to one Mir Haji. The edict is in Chinese and Persian, and like the Tsurphu scroll includes a Mongolian translation. It is held at *Puhading yuan* 普哈丁园 Puhading Garden, a mosque complex in Yangzhou. A facsimile is held in *Renmin Wenhua Gong* 人民文化宫, the People's Cultural Palace in Beijing, but has not been put on display or published.³¹² Only an unclear black and white photograph has been published, in which the Persian and

³¹⁰The use of Chinese and Persian shows it was made during Ming. Yuan edicts to Tibet were typically in Mongolian and Tibetan written in Phags-pa script. *Xizang lishi dang'an huicui* (A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet), 1-6.

³¹¹Douglas and White, *Karmapa: The Black Hat Lama of Tibet*, p. 64.

³¹²中国宗教网 www.chinareligion.cn.

Mongolian texts are not clear enough to read.³¹³ The Chinese text is reproduced as an inscription on a stone in the Qingjing Mosque 清淨寺 in Quanzhou, and on a similar stone, now broken, at Fuzhou Mosque 福州清真寺, and at mosques in Suzhou 苏州, Xi'an 西安 and Songjianxian 松江县 in Jiangsu.



The inscription in the Qingjing Mosque at Quanzhou. <http://zh.wikipedia.org.qingzhengsi>

The Chinese text can be read from the inscriptions.

*Edict to Mir Haji. I think that people who are sincere and good must quietly assist the imperial system by respecting Heaven and serving the Emperor, and giving guidance to good people. Therefore Heaven rewards them with good fortune, and they enjoy boundless happiness. You, Mir Haji, have long followed the teachings of Muhammad, you are forthright and good, and you guide good people and also respect Heaven and serve the Emperor. With your continuing loyalty and good and kind action, your goodness deserves praise. Now I bestow on you a special imperial edict to protect and support you wherever you are. No officers or military personnel or any person at all shall insult or molest you. Anyone who dares to deliberately disobey my command by insulting or molesting you will be punished for that crime. The eleventh day of the fifth month of the fifth year of Yongle.*³¹⁴

諭米里哈只。朕惟人能誠心好善者，必能敬天事上，勸率善類，陰翊皇度。故天錫以福，享有無窮之慶。爾米里哈只，早從馬哈麻之教，篤志好善，導引善類，又能敬天事上，益效忠誠，眷茲善行，良可嘉尚。今特授爾以

³¹³Chen Dasheng, *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao shike*, pp. 7-8.

³¹⁴Ibid.

諭敕，護持所在。官員軍民，一應人等，毋得慢侮欺凌。敢有故違朕命，慢侮欺凌者，以罪罪之。故諭。永樂五年五月十一日。

Production of the Tsurphu scroll probably began soon after the departure of the Karmapa on his pilgrimage to Wutaishan on the thirteenth day of the third month in 1407 and this edict was issued just eight weeks later on the eleventh day of the fifth month. It is possible that the same translators and calligraphers worked on both texts. Apart from Tibetan examples it is the only surviving example of an imperial edict from the Ming period. The identity of the recipient cannot be known from the Chinese text, as he is addressed only by his titles, Mir for *Amir*, king, and Haji, a Mecca pilgrim. The publication of the Persian and Mongolian texts will provide a fuller version of the name. Letters from Misr, Egypt, in the *Huihuiguan laiwen* adopt the practice of using the title, which precedes the proper name, to serve as a shortened form of the title and name, as here.³¹⁵

Conclusion

The scroll was produced as a gift to a tributary nation, and as with other tributary documents, the Emperor's words were translated to ensure they were understood. It brings five languages together, proclaiming the Emperor's greatness to Tibet and its neighbours, Yunnan, Mongolia and the Timurid Empire. The reason for giving Persian precedence before Tibetan on the scroll can only be guessed at. Perhaps it was because Persian was understood in more than one country. The scroll was produced in the year the colleges were established, in the same year as the Mir Haji Edict, two years before the Galle stele inscription and several years before the letters to Shah Rukh. Thus all the surviving documents we have are from within this short period of intensifying tribute activity. They all show the same plain, correct translating style, carefully following the Emperor's words, and ensuring that titles are in the Chinese form pronounced by him.

³¹⁵See Chapter 5.

Chapter Four

The Western Ocean

Communications with the Western Ocean

Little material evidence remains to show that Persian was a language of tributary correspondence with the countries along the sea-route from China to Calicut and Hormuz during the Ming Dynasty. No example of a letter or edict in Persian has survived, and no original paper documents of any kind have survived. The *Yongle* Emperor financed Zheng He's expeditions with the primary purpose of spreading awareness of his greatness, and his empire's wealth and power.³¹⁶ For that purpose edicts would have been expressed in several languages, in fine calligraphy, on fine paper or silk scrolls, as the other surviving documents show. The historical records indicate that translating between Chinese and Persian was part of those communications, alongside the languages of the countries themselves. The inscription on the trilingual stele erected in Ceylon by Zheng He, which puts Persian alongside Chinese and Tamil, is the only surviving example of that practice.

The Chola kingdom on the east coast of south India, which gave its name to the Coromandel Coast, (*Cholamandalam* in Tamil, literally *the realm of the Cholas*), represented the extent of Song emperors' far-flung greatness for several centuries, as Song naval power grew.³¹⁷ It is called Zhunian 注輦 in the Song History. A record of a tribute mission from there in 1015 states that interpreters were employed at the audience, and a Chinese translation of the tribute letter is recorded, but it is not stated what language the letter was in. The presence of a junior ambassador with the name

³¹⁶Edward L. Dreyer, *Zheng He, China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 61.

³¹⁷Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), pp. 41-48.

Abu Qasim (薄加心) suggests Persian might already have been used at that time.³¹⁸ Tribute was presented in 1020, 1033, and 1077.³¹⁹

The Yuan court's missions to southern Asia were part of Qubilai Khan's strategy to maintain communication links with the Ilkhāns in Persia, and his aspiration to be recognized as the great khan of the Mongol Empire. Qubilai relied on the sea route for communications with the Il Khanate, because his wars with his brother Aṛīq Böke and later Qaidu and the Chaghatai rulers made communications via Samarkand impossible. Tribute relations were established and enforced with naval power with the countries along the route to Hormuz, via Champa, Java, Semudera, Chola, then known as Ma'bar, and Quilon.³²⁰

The Arabic name *Ma'bar* معبر “the crossing” is expressed as *Mabaer* 馬八兒 in the Yuan annals, which show that country declared itself a vassal sometime before 1279, and envoys from both sides travelled to and fro.³²¹ The Yuan court dispatched about sixteen missions to India between 1272 and 1296, most visiting either Ma'bar or Quilon on the southwestern Malabar coast of India. In the same period, eighteen embassies from India are recorded to have arrived at the Yuan court, a majority from Ma'bar and Quilon.³²²

Marco Polo called it Maabar, “the finest and noblest Province in the world”.³²³ Abu Ali 不阿里, who is recorded in *Yuan shi* as *Zaixiang* 宰相, Prime Minister of Mabaer, is quoted as saying;

*All the gold and pearls of all the Muslim countries come from this country, and all the other Muslims (Huihui) come to trade here.*³²⁴

凡回回國金珠具盡出本國，其餘回回盡來商賈。

³¹⁸*Song shi* 宋史 (Song History), Tuotuo 脱脱 et al. comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), ch. 489, p. 14096 and p. 14101 (note). Cf. Liu Yingsheng, *Hailu yu Lulu*, p. 32.

³¹⁹*Song shi* ch. 489, p. 14098.

³²⁰Sen Tansen, ‘The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, *Asia Major*, third series vol. 19, no. 1/2, *China at the Crossroads: a Festschrift in Honour of Victor H. Mair* (2006), p. 301.

³²¹*Yuan shi* 210, p. 4668.

³²²Listed in Sen Tansen, ‘The Yuan Khanate and India’, p. 302.

³²³Polo, Marco, *The book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, concerning the kingdoms and marvels of the East*, tr. and ed., Sir Henry Yule, rev. Henri Cordier (London: Murray, 1921), vol. 2, p. 331.

³²⁴*Yuan shi* 210, p. 4669.

This same Abu Ali migrated to China, where his funerary stele inscription *Bu Ali shendao beiming* 不阿里神道碑铭 was collected in the *Zhonganjiji* 中庵及集 collection of Yuan scholar Liu Minzhong 刘敏中. It states that his ancestors migrated to Xiyang from Qalhāt, a trading centre opposite Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.³²⁵ This establishes that Xiyang was another name for Ma‘bar at that time, and also shows that the native Chola princes employed Muslims as ministers in their governments in Yuan times. Liu Yingsheng points out that while the Islamisation of northern India was carried out by armed conquest, Islamisation of the Ma‘bar region was carried out by Muslim commercial forces. He supposes that Mabaer’s submission to Yuan was probably brought about by pressure from the rich Muslim merchants in the south of India.³²⁶ Chola maintained independence from the Delhi Sultanate and other northern Muslim sultanates, preserving its Hindu temples and way of life.³²⁷ However the Chola kings probably employed Persian translators for correspondence with the sultanates, and with the Yuan court.

The first record of Persian used in correspondence with this region is contained in the Ma‘bar chapter in *Yuan shi* 元史, which states that while Ma‘bar submitted to Yuan, the adjoining kingdom of Quilon (Julan 俱藍), did not. In 1279, in the second month of the sixteenth year of *Zhiyuan*, the *Darughachi* Yang Tingbi 楊挺璧, who led four missions to Ma‘bar and Killon, was sent to summon Julian, which capitulated when he arrived there in the third month of the seventeenth year of *Zhiyuan*, 1280.³²⁸ The ruler showed his submission to Great Yuan by writing a letter in Persian.

*Binadi, the ruler, ordered his brother Kennaquebulamusheng to write a letter of submission in Huihui script, which he entrusted to Tingbi to submit to the court, saying he would send ambassadors to present tribute the following season.*³²⁹

國主必納的令其弟肯那卻不刺木省書回回字降表，附挺璧以進，言來歲遣使入貢。

³²⁵Liu Yingsheng ‘An Inscription in Memory of Sayyid Bin Abu Ali. A Study of Relations between China and Oman from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century’ in Elisseff, Vadime ed. *The Silk Roads, Highways of Culture and Commerce* (UNESCO, 2000), pp. 122-126. Cf. ‘Cong Bu Ali Shendao Beiming kan nan Yindu yu Yuanchao ji Bosiwan de jiaotong’ 从 «不阿里神道碑铭»看南印度与元朝及波斯湾的交通 in *Hailu yu Lulu*, pp. 20-69.

³²⁶Ibid. p. 27.

³²⁷Sastri, Nilakanta, *A History of South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 266.

³²⁸Sen Tansen, ‘The Yuan Khanate and India’ pp. 299-326.

³²⁹*Yuan shi* 210, p. 4669.

In doing this Binadi followed the example of Ma‘bar which submitted earlier, and evidently wrote its letters in Persian too.



Sea routes to Calicut and Hormuz. (Wiki commons).

Calicut

Chola power in south-east India was eclipsed by the restoration of the ancient Pāndya dynasty just at that time,³³⁰ and by the beginning of Ming it had become a province of the Vijayanagar Empire.³³¹ The Ming court received some missions from this country, now called Suoli 瑣里, Chola, for some time, but the time of its greatness had passed. Guli 古里, the Kingdom of Calicut (Arabic *Qāliqūt*) in the part of India called Kerala on the Malabar Coast, ruled by the Hindu Zamorin (Samuthiri) dynasty, was already established in Yuan times, and had risen to prominence as an important trading centre. At the time of Taizu's accession the Zamorin ruler was at the zenith of power, with all

³³⁰Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 266.

³³¹*Ibid.*

princes and chieftains of Kerala north of Cochin acknowledging his suzerainty.³³²

‘Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī went there on a mission from the Timurid Emperor Shah Rukh somewhat later, in 1442. Setting out from Muscat on the Gulf of Oman, he made Calicut his first landfall in Hindustan, describing it as :

*... a port which brings together merchants of every city and country.... It is a city inhabited by infidels... Many Musulmans live there and they have built two cathedral mosques, where they assemble every Friday for prayer. They have a Kāzī, a religious man, and for the most part they belong to the sect of Shāfi’ī.... When I had my audience with the Sāmūrī (Zamorin), the assembly consisted of 2000 or 3000 Hindus, and the chief Musulmans were also there.*³³³

Chinese traders plied there, and it was a natural destination for an envoy. The records indicate it was directly with the ruler of Guli that the Hongwu emperor first communicated. At that time Calicut was called Xiyang 西洋, the Western Ocean.

*Envoys were sent with an edict of accession to exhort the countries of Japan, Champa, Java and Xiyang.*³³⁴

遣使以即位詔諭日本，占城，瓜哇，西洋諸國。

The following year, in the sixth month of 1370, the third year of Hongwu, envoys were sent bearing an edict to many countries. The edict, quoted in full in *Shilu*,³³⁵ is the earliest court document we know which was translated into several languages, including Persian. Ambassadors arrived from Calicut in 1370,³³⁶ and Chola in 1372, when the Emperor addressed the officers of the *Zhongshusheng* secretariat, saying that these countries were distant, and need send tribute seldom.³³⁷ This was evidently heeded, because no more tribute missions from either place arrived during *Hongwu*.

Even before *Yongle* was proclaimed in 1403, Emperor Zhu Di sent an edict of accession to the maritime countries, including *Xiyang*, at the same time enjoining the Board of Rites to facilitate tribute-trade with them.³³⁸ We can assume the *Xiyang* to which this edict was sent was Calicut. Wang Gungwu, noting the confusion

³³²M.G.S. Narayanan and K.K.N. Kurup eds., *Kerala Historical Studies* (Calicut: Calicut University, 1976), p. 41.

³³³Elliot and Dowson, ‘Matla’u-s Sa’dain, of Abdur Razzaq’, p. 98ff.

³³⁴*Taizu shilu* 38, p. 11r. (0775).

³³⁵*Taizu shilu* 53, p. 9r. (1049).

³³⁶*Taizu shilu* 56, p. 7v. (1100).

³³⁷*Taizu shilu* 71, p. 1rv. (p. 1313)

³³⁸*Taizong shilu* 12a, p. 7r. (0205).

concerning this name, points out the importance of an interview between the Yongle Emperor and a group of Muslims from *Xiyang* in 1403, the first year of *Yongle*, in the establishment of a trading base at Malacca, and tributary and trade relations with Guli. *Shilu* records this comment by the Emperor:

Lately the Muslim Haji and others from the Western Ocean were at Siam when our mission arrived, and they followed the mission back to the court. Such distant foreigners who know respect for China are indeed praiseworthy. Now that they are being sent home, the Ministry of Rites should give them the credentials to ensure the officials on the way will not obstruct them. From now on all foreign nations who wish to come to China may be allowed to do so. (Wang Gungwu's translation)³³⁹

Six days after this the Emperor ordered the Eunuch Yin Qing 尹慶 to set out to Malacca, Cochin and other countries with gifts for their rulers.³⁴⁰ This mission, preparatory to the great enterprise led by Zheng He, went to Quilon, the country adjacent to Calicut but which was independent from it, and probably to Calicut itself, because an ambassador returned with him, as shown by a subsequent report in *Shilu*:

*Zainuli Abiding the chief of Sumendala, Bailimisula (Parameswara) the chief of Malacca, and Shamidi (Samuthiri) the chief of Guli all sent ambassadors accompanying the eunuch envoy Yin Qing, to present tribute at court.*³⁴¹

蘇門答刺國酋長宰奴里阿必丁，滿刺加酋長拜里迷蘇刺，古里國酋長沙米的俱遣使隨奉使中官尹慶朝貢。

The record goes on to say the three chiefs were enfeoffed as princes and given seals, patents and silk garments. This is the first use of the term *Guli*. Records of banquets proffered to these ambassadors use the expressions *Xiyang*³⁴² and *Xiyang Guli*.³⁴³ When Zheng He's first great fleet set out its destination was Guli, which became a base for later voyages to Hormuz, Africa and Mecca. Ma Huan, who went on Zheng He's fourth, sixth and seventh voyages, takes pains in *Yingya shenglan* to point out that *Xiyang* is Guli:

³³⁹*Taizong shilu* 24, p. 3r. (0435). (Cf. Wang Gungwu, 'The Opening of Relations between China and Malacca, 1403-05', in Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Admiral Zheng He and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), pp. 8ff. Wang Gungwu doubts *Xiyang* is Chola, but does not identify it with Guli. He expresses it with a question mark, as Hsi-yang (Chola?)

³⁴⁰*Taizong shilu* 24, p. 5v. (0440).

³⁴¹*Taizong shilu* 46, p. 2rv. (0711).

³⁴²*Taizong shilu* 46, p. 4v. (0716).

³⁴³*Taizong shilu* 47, p. 3r. (0721).

*The country of Guli; this is the great country of Xiyang...The great country of Xiyang is exactly this place.*³⁴⁴

古里國。即西洋大國。... 西洋大國正此地也。

He notes that Muslims hold positions of authority there.

*The great head-men are Muslims, who do not eat pork.*³⁴⁵

大頭目是回回人，皆不食豬肉。

The use of Persian in correspondence with maritime countries

In the chapter entitled the Persian College *Huihuiguan* 回回館 in *Siyiguan kao* the following note, probably appended when Wang Zongzai was compiling the work in 1578-9, makes an interesting comment about the countries whose letters were handled by the Persian College.

*Translating foreign letters from countries near Huihui such as Turfan, Mecca and Samarkand was done by the Persian College in olden times. Islam was also practised in countries such as Champa. Japan, Cambodia, Java and Malacca, and the Persian College also took over the translating of their foreign language tribute documents. These are all listed below.*³⁴⁶

其附近諸國如土魯番，天方，撒馬爾罕，舊隸本館譯番。此外如占城，日本，真臘，瓜哇，滿刺加諸國，皆習回回教，遇有進貢番文，亦屬本館代譯。今具列于後。

Wang Zongzai states in his preface that he compiled the work from archives of each of the colleges.³⁴⁷ Evidently information about Japan and the other countries was stored in the Persian College at that time, which formed the basis of the *Huihuiguan* chapter. Chinese was used in letters to Japan, but there is evidence that the other countries listed, Champa, Cambodia, Java and Malacca, used Persian. Liang Chu 梁儲, a Hanlin scholar who was promoted to the position of Chief Minister in the Board of History during the reign of the unruly Zhengde 正德 Emperor (1505–1521), was in charge of the *Zhichifang* and the *Gaochifang*, the agencies in the *Neige* which had charge of drafting imperial documents. Part of the work of the *Gaochifang* was preparing

³⁴⁴Ma Huan, *Yingya shenglan*, Feng Chengjun ed., p. 42.

³⁴⁵Ibid.

³⁴⁶*Siyiguan kao* 1. p. 10v.

³⁴⁷See Chapter 1 The Translating College.

Chinese translations of foreign language letters, and translating the Emperor's edicts into foreign languages.³⁴⁸ The most interesting of the submissions collected among his works is this one, undated, but collected between other chronologically dated submissions of the end of the tenth year and the beginning of the eleventh year of *Zhengde*, 1515-16. This is already a hundred years after *Yongle*, but it notes practices which probably existed since that time.

Officer Liang Chu and others respectfully propose temporarily retaining men from afar to teach, in order to facilitate translating work. As Shen Dongkui, Tidu of the Siyiguan and Qing of the Taichang Si has reported, and Wang Xiang, teaching zhubo of the Huihuiguan and others have reported,³⁴⁹ we venture to inform you that this College translates Persian specifically, but whenever tribute documents from maritime countries like Champa, Xianluo and elsewhere are encountered, the translating work is also undertaken by this College. However the local languages and scripts are different from Persian, and in the course of translating them, the spoken words of the interpreters are relied on completely, and as for items such as issuing imperial orders and giving return gifts, Persian script is used for all of them.³⁵⁰

臣梁儲等謹題（暫留遠人教習以便審譯事）。據提督四夷館，太常寺卿沈冬魁等呈，該回回館教習主簿王祥等呈，竊照本館專一譯寫回回字，凡遇海中諸國如占城，暹邏等處進貢來文，亦附本館帶譯。但各國土語，土字與回回不同，審譯之際，全憑通事講說，及至降敕回賜等項，俱用回回字。

This tells us that maritime countries sent ambassadors bearing letters in their local languages, and the interpreters who accompanied the tribute missions from those countries explained the meaning of the letters in Chinese to the Persian College officers, who made Chinese versions of them for presentation at the court. In the other direction, imperial edicts and letters accompanying imperial gifts were all translated into Persian.

An entry in the Veritable records of 1487, the 23rd year of *Chenghua* concerning communications with Xianluo, Thailand, tells us that tribute letters were presented in Thai and Persian together at first, and that later Persian alone was used.

³⁴⁸See Chapter 1 The Translating College.

³⁴⁹Shen Dongkui, Tidu of the Siyiguan and Qing of the Taichang Si is the senior officer of the entire Siyiguan. Wang Xiang, teaching recorder of the Huihuiguan is a more lowly position. See Siyiguan chapter.

³⁵⁰Liang Chu, *Yuzhou yi gao* 1, p. 10rv.

*Longbolaluekun Xiliyoudiya, (Somdet Phra Boromma Trailokanat), King of Xianluo, sent ambassador Kunfanyue and others bearing a gold leaf tribute letter, to bring tribute and give thanks for gracious favour. And they also spoke about an old precedent that the foreign script of Xianluo and Persian script are used together. Recently there were some differences between a gold-leaf tribute letter seeking enfeoffment, and the matching document. The King suspected a mix-up by the men of his country who wrote the foreign script, and begged that they could be checked and compared. But the foreign script of the tribute letter text was difficult to read, and so that country was commanded to carry out an investigation itself. And it was also ordered to prevent mix-ups by only allowing Persian script to be used in future, and the difficult-to-read foreign script must not be written*³⁵¹

暹羅國王隆勃刺略坤息利尤地亞遣使臣坤泛悅等齎金葉表文入貢謝恩之，且言舊例本國番字與回回字互用，近者，請封金葉表文及勘合咨文，間有同異，國王疑國人書番字者之弊，乞賜查辦，而表文番字難於辨識，乃命本國自行究治。仍令今後止許用回回字樣，不得寫難識番字，以絕弊端。

The inclusion of Java in the *Huihui* section of *Siyiguan kao* indicates that archives of Java were kept in the Persian College, and that like Champa and Xianluo, letters to and from Java fell to the Persian college translators to deal with. Ma Huan records the presence of Muslims in Java:

*There are three classes of people in the country. The first is the Muslim people who have all migrated to this place from foreign countries in the west, for commerce. They are all clean and proper in in everything concerning clothing and food. (The second class is Chinese people from Guangzhou and Quanzhou) ... Many of them follow the Muslim religion, doing penances, and keeping fasts.*³⁵²

國有三等人。一等回回人。皆是西番各國為商流落此地。衣食註事皆清致。.... 多有從回回教門受戒持齋者。

We can assume this was the case for Java, Borneo, and the countries en route to Guli, and that the full load of translating for all of these countries fell to the Persian College. However all of the documents which survive from *Yongle* are in three or more languages, and it must be assumed that translators were also recruited to create documents in languages for which there was no college. The stele in Sri Lanka is an example, where Chinese and Persian versions are accompanied by a Tamil version

³⁵¹*Xiaozong shilu* 2, p. 14v.

³⁵²Ma Huan, *Yingyai shenglan*, Feng Chengjun ed., p. 11.

which would have been made in the halls of the Neige, by a Tamil linguist, possibly an interpreter, working alongside a translator from the Persian college.

Champa, like most Southeast Asian countries, began to follow a Hindu influenced civilisation from the first century AD. Kufic inscriptions from 1039 prove Muslims were established there as traders at that time, however Maspero argues that widespread conversion did not happen until after the fall of Champa to Annam in 1470. While Sanskrit was the chief language of poets and historians, the sovereign had a large court with various pandits, astrologers and chamberlains, and Persian secretaries could have been among them.³⁵³

Xianluo, Thailand, was the most frequent tribute-bearer, sending 18 missions during *Yongle*, and it remained the most constant, continuing to send missions until the end of the dynasty. It is strange that a Xianluo College was not established until 1578. Java (17 missions), and Champa (15 missions) were among the frequent arrivals in *Yongle*. Zhenla and Cambodia, sent seven missions.

The establishment of the entrepot of Malacca by the fugitive Prince Parameswara, the conversion of the royal family to Islam and the establishment of Malacca as an important Islamic cultural centre coincided with the Ming Emperor's decision to establish a trading base there when Zheng He's expeditions began.³⁵⁴ Malacca was given a special status when an inscribed stone enfeoffing a mountain in Malacca as *Zhenguo zhi Shan* 鎮國之山, the mountain which guards the country, was carried there on Zheng He's first expedition in 1405,³⁵⁵ beginning regular tribute missions, which arrived every year or second year until 1425, then continued more seldom until the occupation of Malacca by Portuguese forces in 1511. Some confusion exists among historians about the identities of the first Malaccan rulers, because of differences in Malay, Chinese and Portuguese sources. Wang Gungwu has shown that in addition to embassies, *Ming shilu* correctly records missions to the Court led by the

³⁵³ Georges Maspéro, *The Kingdom of Champa, A translation of chapter 1 of Le royaume du Champa* (New Haven: Yale University, 1946), p. 26. Cf. Meillon, G., "Čam", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 25 June 2016 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1588>

³⁵⁴ Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas*, pp. 107-111.

³⁵⁵ *Taizong shilu* 47, pp. 4rv. (0723).

rulers themselves. Parameswara came in 1411, accompanied by his consort, his son and a retinue of 540 persons. His son Megat Iskandar Shah arrived in 1414, to announce his father's death, and visited again, with his consort, son and retinue in 1419, and the third ruler Sri Maharaja came to report his father's death in 1424.³⁵⁶ These royal visits generated edicts, and letters accompanying gifts and other honours in Chinese with Persian translations.

Zheng He's voyages

The scale and importance of Zheng He's voyages overshadow other voyages which were made during *Hongwu* and *Yongle*. Historians first worked out the destinations of each voyage from Zheng He's biography in *Ming shi* and the edicts and accounts recording the departures and return of each voyage in *Ming shilu*, and Pelliot made an exhaustive analysis of the voyages,³⁵⁷ however there is an error in *Ming shilu*, also repeated in *Ming shi*, which combines two voyages and invents another. As a consequence several of Pelliot's conclusions concerning these earlier voyages were incorrect. The problem was solved by the publication in 1935 of an inscription on a tablet erected by Zheng He and his companions in the temple of Tian Fei 天妃 the Celestial Concubine in Liujiajiang 劉家江 in Jiangsu province on 14 March 1431, preserved in a collection *Wudu wensui xuji* 吳都文粹續集 by Qian Gu 錢穀, a scholar of the Jiaqing period (1522-1566). This was followed by the publication in 1937 of another inscription by Zheng He on a recently discovered stone which once stood at Sanfengtasi 三峰塔寺 temple near Nanshan 南山 in Fujian province.³⁵⁸ These inscriptions provide correct dates for the voyages.³⁵⁹ The first three, all to Calicut, set out in 1405, 1407 and 1409, at two-year intervals, the fleet setting out again soon after its return each time. The next three, setting out in 1413, 1417, and 1421, at four-year intervals, went to Hormuz and countries beyond, and the final

³⁵⁶Wang Gungwu, 'The First Three Rulers of Malacca, 1403-05', in Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Admiral Zheng He and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 34ff.

³⁵⁷Paul Pelliot, 'Les grands voyages maritimes chinois au début du XVe siècle', *T'oung Pao* 30 (1933), pp. 237-452.

³⁵⁸Translations of these inscriptions in Dreyer, *Zheng He, China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty*, pp. 191-199.

³⁵⁹Jan J. L. Duyvendak, 'The true dates of the Chinese maritime expeditions in the early 15th century', *T'oung Pao* 34 (1939), pp. 341-412.

voyage, ordered by the Xuande Emperor, set out in 1431, also going as far as Hormuz.³⁶⁰

Tribute missions from beyond Semudera, including from Ceylon, Calicut, Hormuz and Aden, all arrived with Zheng He's returning fleets, and in most cases went back with the next fleet. No tribute missions arrived from these countries independently of Zheng He's fleets. For the Persian translators this meant a heavy workload to a short deadline each time, to prepare Chinese translations of as many as sixteen tribute letters, in time for the audience ceremony at court. Another busy time preceded their departure, also in large groups, when many edicts and letters accompanying gifts had to be translated into Persian and other languages.

The first fleet arrived back at Nanjing in October 1407, just a few months after the establishment of the Translating Colleges. *Ming shilu* lists Semudera, Calicut, Malacca, Quilon, Aru on the east coast of Sumatra, among others, as countries which sent ambassadors in Zheng He's suite.³⁶¹ *Ming shilu* also records not only that the ambassadors were rewarded with silk and copper coins but also the kings of those countries were given brocades, gauzes and saddled horses and other items. The gifts to the kings would have been accompanied with letters in Chinese and Persian, and possibly other languages. This was a busy time for the Persian translators, who were working on the Tsurphu scroll and preparing to open tributary relations with Prince Khalil in Samarkand at the same time.

Zheng He's second fleet returned in 1409. A tribute mission from Calicut is recorded in that year.³⁶² Confusion exists in *Shilu* concerning Zheng He's second voyage, but it is likely the Calicut mission travelled with Zheng He's returning fleet. Missions from other countries have probably been omitted from the records as a result of the confusion. The third fleet, returning from Calicut in 1411, brought ambassadors from ten countries, including Java, Burma, Malacca, Semudera, Cochin, Calicut and several smaller kingdoms.³⁶³ The fourth fleet returned in 1415 bringing tribute bearers from

³⁶⁰ See detailed description of the voyages in Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas*.

³⁶¹ *Taizong shilu* 71, p. 1r. (0987).

³⁶² *Taizong shilu* 94, p. 5v. (1252).

³⁶³ *Taizong shilu* 117, p. 2rv. (1487-8).

Calicut, Cochin, Malacca and smaller kingdoms. This was the first expedition to travel as far as Hormuz, but no ambassador from there is recorded.³⁶⁴

The return of the fifth voyage in 1419 is not recorded in *Shilu*, but tribute bearers from seventeen countries, including Malacca are recorded, with a list of rich gifts,³⁶⁵ and a further list is recorded of tribute bearers from sixteen countries including Hormuz, Aden, Dhufar, La'sa, Brava, Mogadishu, Calicut, Cochin, Ceylon, Lambri, Semudera, Aden, Malacca and Coimbatore.³⁶⁶ It is evident that these ambassadors travelled to China with Zheng He's returning fleet. The sixth voyage returned in 1422, when the records list tribute bearers from Xianluo, Semudera, Aden, and other countries.³⁶⁷ If this abbreviated list includes Aden, it can be assumed ambassadors from Calicut, Hormuz and other countries beyond Malacca also came. A Ministry of Rites memorial of 1423 informed the throne that there were one thousand two hundred people in the capital associated with missions from sixteen Western Ocean countries including Hormuz. The Emperor ordered that they be well looked after at the Huitongguan, and that they be given the value of their trade goods in *chao* paper money.³⁶⁸

Zheng He's seventh and final voyage, setting out in 1431, the sixth year of *Xuande*, went principally to Hormuz. When the fleet returned to China in 1433 it carried ambassadors bearing tribute from ten countries, including Semudera, Ceylon, Keqin, Calicut, Hormuz, Aden, Mecca and smaller kingdoms.³⁶⁹ This provided the last great workload for the Persian translators. The ambassadors stayed in Beijing until 1436, when *Shilu* records that they were all sent back to their countries carrying imperial documents.

*The envoy Gebumanduluya and others from the 11 countries of Calicut, Semudera, Sri Lanka, Cochin, Mecca, Jiayile, Aden, Hormuz, Zufaer, Ganbali and Cambodia, were sent back to their countries with the Javanese envoy Guo Xin and others. It was also ordered that the 11 envoys including Gebumanduluya bear back Imperial orders with edicts for their kings.*³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴*Taizong shilu* 168, pp. 1v-2r. (1870-1).

³⁶⁵*Taizong shilu* 216, p. 1r. (2155).

³⁶⁶*Taizong shilu* 233, p. 5r. (2255).

³⁶⁷*Taizong shilu* 250, p. 8v. (2344).

³⁶⁸*Taizong shilu* 263, p. 2r. (2403).

³⁶⁹*Xuanzong shilu* 105, p. 1r.

³⁷⁰*Yingzong shilu* 19, p. 9r.

遣古里蘇門答刺錫蘭山柯枝天方加異勒阿丹忽魯謨斯祖法兒甘巴里真臘十一國使臣葛卜滿都魯牙等同爪哇使臣郭信等回國。…仍命葛卜滿都魯牙等十一使齎敕諭其王。

Translating the letters they carried was the last great multilingual project involving Persian translators, and it marks the end of the time of great industry for the Persian College. Ambassadors from Java, Xianluo and Champa continued to come after that, but only one or two missions arrived each year, and in some years none at all. Ambassadors from Malacca came regularly every few years, right up until its fall to Portuguese forces in 1511. The deposed Sultan sent a final gold leaf tribute letter in 1521.³⁷¹ Champa continued sending tribute until its fall to Annam, when an ambassador from the already deposed ruler brought in desperation a gold leaf tribute letter and was escorted back safely in 1543.³⁷² Xianluo was the only maritime country which sent tribute in the last hundred years of the dynasty. *Shilu* records missions every ten years or so until the final recorded mission from Xianluo in 1621, the first year of *Tianchi*.

*The country of Xianluo brought tribute of a gold leaf letter and local products. They were feasted according to precedent.*³⁷³

暹羅國進貢金葉表文及方物。宴齎如例。

Persian translators on Zheng He's fleets

A number of accounts were written of the countries visited by the fleets. Chief among these is *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 by Ma Huan 馬歡, a Persian translator who took part in Zheng He's fourth, sixth and seventh voyages. Other accounts, *Xingcha shenglan* 星槎勝覽 by Fei Xin 費信, the recently re-discovered *Xiyang fanguo zhi* 西洋番國志 of Gong zhen 鞏珍, and *Xiyang chaogong dianlu* 西洋朝貢典錄 by Huang Xinzeng 黃省曾 all follow the format, and include much of the content of Ma Huan, as well as providing additional information.³⁷⁴ Unlike the others however, Ma Huan takes care to note the presence of Muslims in each place, and their status in the society, and occasionally provides information about writing systems.

³⁷¹ *Shizong shilu* 3, pp. 14v-15r.

³⁷² *Shizong shilu* 275, p. 6r.

³⁷³ *Tianji shilu* 29, p. 2v.

³⁷⁴ These are described in Pelliot, 'Les grands voyages maritimes chinois au début du XV^e siècle', pp. 248ff., and Mills, *Ma Huan, Ying-Yai Sheng-lan*, pp. 37ff.

It is clear from these accounts that interpreters and translators were among the personnel on the voyages. A list of personnel relating to the final voyage in *Xuande*, included in an essay *Xia Xiyang* 下西洋, in the collection *Qianwenji* 前聞記 of Zhu Yunming 祝允明 published about 1500, includes interpreters *tongshi* 通事,³⁷⁵ but doesn't indicate how many were employed. Zheng He and the other commanding officers would have required high level interpreters with them to negotiate with officials and sovereigns at each place. Other interpreters would have been needed to manage provisioning and shore leave for large numbers of personnel at each place.

The novel *Sanbao Taijian Xiyang Ji Tongsu Yanyi* 三宝太监西洋记通俗演义 *The well-known romance of the Grand Eunuch Sanbao's record of the Western Ocean* by Luo Maodeng 罗懋登 has a preface by the author dated 1597, showing it was completed more than one hundred and sixty years after Zheng He's final voyage.³⁷⁶ It describes a single voyage, visiting real and imagined countries, involving episodes with ghosts, spirits and fairies, and descriptions of battles, with comic dialogue and clever and learned wordplay interspersed within the narrative. Information from the works of Ma Huan and Fei Xin is ingeniously woven into the narrative, or formulated into dialogue. Early chapters of *Xiyang ji* contain scenes set at the court of the Yongle Emperor as he prepares for the voyage. A register is brought forward, wherein these personnel are listed. The entry concerning translators is:

*The Translating College (Siyiguan) has entered the names of foreign document translators, ten in total, into the register.*³⁷⁷

四夷館點通譯番書某共十員進呈。

However the tantalising possibility that Luo Maodeng had access to a document providing this information must be balanced against his talent for invention.

The first translators we know of are Ma Huan 馬歡 and Guo Chongli 郭崇禮 who travelled on Zheng He's fourth voyage. While the first three voyages all made Calicut their furthest destination, the fourth was on a larger scale, and went on to Hormuz and

³⁷⁵ Cited in Gong Zhen 鞏珍, *Xiyang Fanguo zhi* 西洋番國志, (Xiang Da 向達 ed.) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), p. 56.

³⁷⁶ Luo Maodeng, *Xiyang ji*, p. 19.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., *Xiyang ji* 3, p. 203.

Aden. Zheng He had two years to prepare for this voyage, and there is evidence he made special preparations. While Ma Huan did not go on the previous voyages, he could have taken part in the preparation of the many documents to be carried, including edicts, patents, letters accompanying gifts, and Persian texts for stele inscriptions.³⁷⁸

A postface (*houxu* 後序) to Ma Huan's *Yingya Shenglan* provides information about the two Persian linguists:

*(Guo) Chongli is a man from Renhe in Hangzhou, and Ma Zongdao (Ma Huan) is a man from Guiji in Guangdong. Both believe in the religion of Mecca in the Western Regions, and are really outstanding gentlemen. When formerly Emperor Taizong ordered Grand Eunuch Zheng He to conduct the treasure ships to countries in the Western Ocean to read proclamations and bestow gifts, the two gentlemen were chosen to go along because they were good at interpreting foreign languages.*³⁷⁹

(郭)崇禮乃杭之仁和人，宗道乃越之會稽人，皆西域天方教，實奇邁之士也。昔太宗皇帝敕令太監鄭和，統領寶船往西洋諸番，開讀賞賜，而二君善通番語，遂膺是選。

However Ma Huan makes it clear that he was not an interpreter, but a translator. Unlike the *tongshi*, who provided spoken interpreting, his role was dealing with proclamations, letters and tribute lists in Chinese and Persian. In his preface to *Yingya shenglan* he states:

*In Guisi, the eleventh year of Yongle, Taizong, the Wen (文 erudite) Emperor commanded principal envoy Grand Eunuch Zheng He and others to command treasure ships to read proclamations and bestow largesse in the countries of the Western Ocean. I humbly provided small service to the envoys by translating foreign documents.*³⁸⁰

永樂十一年癸巳，太宗文皇帝敕命正使太監鄭和等統領寶船，往西洋諸番開讀賞賜，余以通譯番書，忝備使末。

As Guo Chongli was Ma Huan's colleague he was probably a translator too. The postface says they both went on three voyages, and it is known that Ma Huan accompanied the fourth, sixth and seventh voyages. Nothing is known about

³⁷⁸Xu Gongsheng, 'Zheng He baochuan chidu "sanshier zi" jiedu', p. 4.

³⁷⁹Cited in Ma Huan, *Yingyai shenglan*, Feng Chengjun ed., p. 72.

³⁸⁰Ibid., introd. p. 1.

translators on the other voyages. To be chosen for the specialised task of translating Persian documents, the two men must have been among the bilingual officers who worked in the *Neige*, and were possibly graduates of the Persian College. The college had been in operation for five years at that time, and Ma Huan, who must have been no older than twenty five when he made the first voyage,³⁸¹ and Guo Chongli might have been students at the college in the first years of its operation. Both Muslims, they might have been descendants of earlier *semuren* translators, and entered the profession as hereditary students. Ma Huan's preface, and the work itself, show that he was an educated scholar of the type recruited into the colleges. They are written in a plain, learned *wenyan* style, and the work also contains a fine poem describing a voyage which Mills has described as *kiplingesque*, and rendered in gilbertian couplets.³⁸² None of the Persian texts they created on their journeys survive.

There is evidence that Zheng He recruited language personnel directly from the Muslim community. A stele in the Yangshi mosque in Xi'an bearing an inscription titled "A record of the restoration of the Yangshi (goat market) Mosque in Xi'an" (*chongxiu Xi'an Yangshi Da qingzhen jingsi ji* 重修西安羊市大清真淨寺記) which was erected in 1523, the second year of *Jiaqing*, recalls a famous visitor more than one hundred years earlier, when Zheng He was planning the fourth voyage, the first which would go beyond Calicut to Hormuz.

*In the fourth month of 1413, the eleventh year of Yongle, Grand Eunuch Zheng He, accepting an imperial command to carry out missions in the Western Regions and Arabia, made his way out to Shaanxi seeking faithful messengers who could assist him in translating languages, and he took Hasan, a superintendent of this Mosque, among them.*³⁸³

永樂十一年四月，太監鄭和奉敕差往西域天方國，道出陝西，求所以通譯國語可佐信使者，乃得本寺掌哈三焉。

This indicates that Hasan was just one of several translators and interpreters who were recruited during the Shaanxi trip.

³⁸¹Mills, *Ma Huan, Ying-Yai Sheng-lan*, p. 34.

³⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁸³This stele still stands at the Da Xuexi Xiang Mosque 大学习巷清真寺 in Xi'an. The text here is cited in Ma Jianchun, *Alabo, Bosi yuwen zai Yuan Ming liang chao guanfangde jiaoxi yu yunyong*, p. 251.

The *tongshi* were given a high degree of responsibility. Ma Huan records interpreters leading what would be the final Ming delegation to Mecca.³⁸⁴

*Grand Eunuch Zheng He and others respectfully received the sacred court's mission to go to report imperial edicts and bestow largesse to foreign countries in 1430, the fifth year of Xuande. When a division of the fleet reached Calicut, Grand Eunuch Hong Bao (洪保) met envoys from Mecca who had gone there, and so chose seven people, interpreters and others, to go there in the ship of that country, to bestow goods including musk and porcelain. They went there and returned to China in one year.*³⁸⁵

宣德五年蒙聖朝差正使太監內官鄭和等往各番國開讀賞賜，分宗到古里國時，內官太監洪，見本國差人往彼，就選差通事等七人齎帶麝香，磁器等物，附本國船隻到彼，往回一年。

The Calicut stele

Zheng He's second voyage, whose destination was Calicut, was with the purpose of bringing it firmly into the tribute system by investing its ruler as *Wang* 王, giving official titles to its principal officers and erecting a stele.³⁸⁶ The fleet set out in January or February 1408, allowing the translators only a few months to prepare the Persian letters and produce the multilingual imperial scrolls to accompany the gifts to each tributary country on the route. It is likely the stele they carried, like the later one surviving in Sri Lanka, was carved of Tangshan marble at Nanjing, the inscribers using the calligraphy provided by the translators as their model. If it was made in a similar way to the stone erected in Ceylon two years later, and the stone in Tibet described by Muhammad Haidar, the stele would have borne inscriptions in three languages; Chinese, the language of Calicut, Malayalam,³⁸⁷ and Persian. The stele no longer survives, but the Chinese text, or a summary of it, has been recorded in several works. Ma Huan who did not go on this expedition, but would have seen the stone on later voyages, records the erection of the stele and its text as follows:

In the fifth year of Yongle, the Court ordered the chief envoy, the eunuch Zheng He, to bear imperial edicts, and present the king of this country with a letter

³⁸⁴Cf. Liu Yingsheng, 'Mingchu Zhongguo yu Yazhou zhongxibu diqu jiaowang de waiwen yuyan wenti', p. 113.

³⁸⁵Ma Huan, *Yingyai shenglan*, Feng Chengjun ed., p. 72.

³⁸⁶Dreyer, *Zheng He, China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty*, p. 59.

³⁸⁷For a brief history and description of Malayalam see R. E. Asher, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994), vol. 3, p. 202.

*patent and a silver seal, also promoting the chieftains to official grades with caps and girdles. When the treasure ships arrived there, a stele pavilion was built and a stone set up saying: more than a hundred thousand li away from China, our peoples and things are all alike, and splendour and brilliance are our common custom. This stone has been engraved here to proclaim it to thousands of generations forever.*³⁸⁸

永樂五年，朝廷命正使太監鄭和齎詔敕賜其國王誥命銀印，及陞賞各頭目品級冠帶。寶船到彼，起建碑亭，立石云，去中國十萬餘里，民物咸若，熙皞同風，刻石于茲，永示萬世。

Gong Zhen's *Xiyang fanguo zhi* contains an abridged version of Ma Huan's text,³⁸⁹ and a slightly different version is quoted in *Xiyang chaogong dianlu* 西洋朝貢典錄.³⁹⁰ Luo Maodeng's novelisation of Zheng He's voyages, *Sanbao taijian xiyang ji tongsu yanyi* contains a pastiche version, created from Ma Huan's text with the addition of a phrase from Counsels of the Great Yu (大禹謨 *Da Yu mo*) in the Confucian canon.³⁹¹

The Galle Stone

A stele inscribed in Chinese, Tamil and Persian set up in Ceylon by Zheng He on his third voyage in 1410, now on display in the Colombo Museum in Sri Lanka, is the only material evidence we have of the use of Persian in communications with maritime countries. It was discovered in Galle, an ancient port city on the southwest coast of Ceylon in 1911, where it lay face down covering a culvert. It was soon recognised as the one left by Zheng He. It must have lain previously with the Tamil and Persian texts exposed, and the Chinese text covered, because only the Chinese text is completely readable. However enough can be distinguished of the Tamil and Persian texts to show they are translations of the Chinese text, an invocation to Buddha with thanks for calm seas, followed by a list of gifts.

³⁸⁸Ma Huan, *Yingyai shenglan jiaozhu*, p. 43.

³⁸⁹Xiang Da ed., *Gong Zhen: Xiyang fanguo zhi*, p. 28.

³⁹⁰Huang Xingzeng, *Xiyang chaogong dianlu*, vol. 3, p. 4v.

³⁹¹Xiang Da suggests Luo Maodeng's version seems most real. *Gong Zhen: Xiyang fanguo zhi*, p. 28.



The Galle Stone in Colombo Museum. (Wikimedia Commons).

The stone is dated the seventh year of Yongle, 1409, showing that it is the one recorded by Fei Xin in the Ceylon chapter of *Xingcha zhenlan*:

*In the seventh year of Yongle, (1409) the Emperor ordered the chief envoy Grand Eunuch Zheng He and others to bear imperial edicts, gold and silver offering-vessels, coloured silks and precious gold-woven banners as offerings to temples there. An inscribed stone was also put up, to exalt the rule the Emperor planned.*³⁹²

永樂七年皇上命正使太監鄭和等齎捧詔敕，金銀供器，彩粧，織金寶幡布施於寺，及建石碑，以崇皇圖之治。

Galle was the major trading port in south-western Ceylon at that time, and there can be no doubt Zheng He's fleets stopped there. However nearby was Devundara, the city of gods, a vast temple precinct and busy trading port on the southernmost promontory of Ceylon. A great gilt roof was a landmark for mariners.³⁹³ It was a likely location for an imperial memorial. The Tamil text on the stone has *Tenavarai nayanar*, the lord, or master of Devundara and *Tenavarai Alvar*, the Alvar, or Vishnu devotee-saint of Devundara, which bear this out. The stele must have stood there for one hundred and seventy-eight years before the precinct was looted and destroyed by Portuguese forces, driven by fanatical Christian impulses and greed, in 1588.³⁹⁴ An account by Fernão de

³⁹²Fei Xin, *Xingcha shenglan* (Feng Chengjun ed.), p. 30.

³⁹³W. I. Siriweera, *A Study of the Economic History of Pre-Modern Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1994), pp. 142-3.

³⁹⁴P. E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese 1505 – 1658* (Tellippalai, Ceylon: American Ceylon Mission Press, 1920), pp. 108-9.

Queyroz, a Portuguese missionary, written between 1671 and 1686, partly from the accounts of earlier travellers, indicates the stone survived the destruction and stood among the ruins until the seventeenth century:

*Half a league beyond Maturê (Matara) there was a Pagode, which next to that of Triquilemale was the one of greatest resort in Ceylon, where are found stone pillars (padroês) which the Kings of China ordered to be set up there with Letters of that nation as a token, it seems, of their devotion to those Idols... On this spot the Kinglets in Times past had their Court, calling it Janūra, which means 'City of God'. The Portuguese called it Tanavarê from the name of a neighbouring village in which lived the dancing girls of that Pagode.*³⁹⁵

While the author mistook the meaning of the name of Tenavaram, it is clear that this location is meant. If a stone with a Chinese inscription was known to be there, as no other stele is known to have been set up in Ceylon by a Chinese Emperor, it must have been the one put there by Zheng He, which found its way to the culvert in Galle at a later time. The survival of the stone suggests it was not located within any of the temples, which were destroyed, but stood in some public place.

The stone is four feet nine inches (144.8 cm) tall, and two feet six inches (76.2 cm) wide, surmounted by dragons.³⁹⁶ The three texts are all on one side of the stone, enclosed within a narrow border patterned with curliques. The Chinese text, which can be read in its entirety, runs vertically the full length of the stone on the right side. The transcription by Edmund Backhouse and his tutors published in 1912 appears to preserve the format of the original Chinese inscription. The Tamil text runs horizontally at the top half of the left side of the stone, with the Persian horizontally below it, indicating Chinese as the main language, with the local language second, and Persian last.

³⁹⁵Fernão de Queyroz, *The temporal and spiritual conquest of Ceylon*, trans. S. G. Perera (Colombo: A.C. Richards, 1930), p. 35.

³⁹⁶Liu Yingsheng, 'Mingchu Zhongguo yu Yazhou zhongxibu diqu jiaowang de waiwen yuyan wenti', p. 107.



Image of rubbing, Perera, 'The Galle Trilingual Stone', Plate 1

The same format was probably also used in other inscriptions bestowed during Ming, such as the Calicut stele, steles enfeoffing mountains, and the Tibetan inscription described in Mirza Haidar's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.

Liu Yingsheng points out that carving the dragon-ornamented stele and inscribing the three languages would have been impossible in the short time Zheng He stayed in Ceylon, and the stone was probably inscribed in Nanjing and transported to Ceylon. The imperial stone-quarry at Tangshan 汤山 near Nanjing, where the immovable sections of a giant stele commissioned by Zhu Di still lie, could have been the source

of the stone.³⁹⁷ The date in the inscription, the second month of the 7th year of *Yongle*, 1409, is that of the imperial decree, made before Zheng He set out at the end of that year. The letters of the Tamil text are unusually small in size, some less than a quarter of an inch in height and breadth.³⁹⁸ As with other multilingual documents such as the Tsurphu Scroll, the three texts were written on the same sheet of paper from which the engraver made a facsimile, and the calligrapher had to reduce the size of the Tamil characters to fit them into the allocated space. This work was done in the *Gaochiguan*, bringing together several drafters, translators and calligraphers, including those from the Persian College.

Photographs and ink impressions of the stele texts were distributed to several scholars immediately after its discovery, and a transcription and translation of the Chinese text by Edmund Backhouse was soon published.³⁹⁹ Xiang Da, the editor of Gong Zhen's *Xiyang fanguo zhi*, published another transcription made from rubbings in either the Bodleian Library or the British Museum in 1936.⁴⁰⁰ These must have been the original rubbings made in 1911. His transcription contains some variant readings. These and other variant readings have been collated and a Chinese text established by A. Chandima and Wu Yuanlei.⁴⁰¹

The Emperor of Great Ming sent the Great Eunuchs Zheng He, Wang Guitong and others to proclaim his speech to the World Honoured Buddha, saying, we worship the merciful and honoured one whose perfect brightness is broad and great, whose way extends to sublime mystery, whose law permeates human relationships, who has gone through kalpas like sand in a river, all returning to vast change, whose ability and goodness, intelligence and strength are mysterious and without end. The island of Ceylon lies in the southern sea. Its Buddhist temples are lofty, their feeling of spirit is all apparent. Recently we sent ambassadors to proclaim our edicts among all foreigners. We relied deeply

³⁹⁷Ibid., p. 108-9.

³⁹⁸Ibid., p. 332.

³⁹⁹Perera, 'The Galle Trilingual Stone', pp. 125ff. and Plate 1.

⁴⁰⁰Xiang Da 向達 ed., *Gong Zhen: Xiyang fanguo zhi* 鞏珍: 西洋番國志, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), p. 50.

⁴⁰¹A. Chandima, 查迪瑪, Wu Yuanlei 武元磊, 'Zheng He Xilan bei xin kao' 鄭和錫蘭碑新考, *Dongnan Wenhua* 東南文化 1 (2011), p.75.

on merciful protection for the sea route to be open. Men and ships came and went safely and smoothly without hindrance. We give gifts in return for this eternal great goodness. We order the Bhuddhist temple to be adorned with gold, silver, precious banners of silk woven with gold, incense burners, flower vases, silk garments, lamps and candles to fulfil our donation. May the World Honoured One accept them.

Total account of gifts donated to the Standing Buddha and other temples on the Island of Ceylon. One thousand qian of gold, five thousand qian of silver, fifty rolls of coloured silk cloth, fifty rolls of coloured gauze, four pairs of precious banners of silk embroidered with gold, of which two pairs red, one pair yellow, and one pair blue. Five antique copper incense burners with gold inlaid bases, five pairs of antique copper flower vases with gold inlaid bases, five pairs of brass candlesticks with gold inlaid bases, five brass lamps with gold inlaid bases. Five gold inlaid laquer boxes, five pairs of gold lotus flowers, 2500 catties of fragrant oil, ten pairs of wax candles, ten sticks of sandalwood incense.

Respectfully enacted on the first day of jiaxu, the second month, in jichou, the seventh year of Yongle (1409).

大明 / 皇帝遣太監鄭和王貴通等昭告于 / 佛世尊，曰：仰惟慈尊，圓明廣大。道臻玄妙，法濟群倫。歷劫河沙，悉歸弘化。能仁慧力，妙應無方。惟錫蘭山介乎海南，言言梵 / 刹，靈感翕彰。比者，遣使詔諭諸番。海道之開，深賴慈祐。人舟安利，來往無虞。永惟大德，禮用報施。謹以金銀織金紵絲寶旛， / 香爐，花瓶，紵絲表裡，燈燭等物布施佛寺，以充供養。惟 / 世尊鑒之。 /

總計布施錫蘭山立佛等寺供養： / 金壹阡錢，銀伍阡錢，各色紵絲伍拾疋，各色絹伍拾疋，織金紵絲寶旛肆對，內紅貳對，黃一對，青一對。 / 古銅香爐伍個餞金座全，古銅花瓶伍對餞金座全，黃銅燭台伍 對餞金座全，黃銅燈盞伍個餞金座全。 / 硃紅漆餞金香盒伍個，金蓮花陸對，香油貳阡伍佰斤，臘燭壹拾對，檀香壹拾炷。 / 蚩永樂柒年歲次己丑二月甲戌朔日謹施。

The inscription is made up of two texts. The first is the edict, probably made in the presence of the Emperor with the assistance of his tutors. This is followed by a list of

gifts, probably made by officers of the Board of Rites. There is a slight difference between them: the gift of silk garments promised in the edict does not appear in the following list of gifts.

The remnant Tamil and Persian texts were published in 1933.⁴⁰² A transcription and translation of the Tamil text by S. Paranavitana show that it is a close translation of the Chinese text, and lists the same votive items. The Tamil text, according to Paranavitana, is “hardly grammatical”, and contains several unusual words and clerical errors. This suggests the text was written by someone unused to translating, but who could write Tamil characters, possibly a *Huitongguan* interpreter, or an educated Tamil gentleman who had contact with the Hanlinyuan and was called into service. Carved stone bas-reliefs and architectural elements found at Quanzhou (Zaitun) include images of Vishnu from Vishnaite temples or shrines existing there in Ming times, which attest to a Tamil trading community established there.⁴⁰³ The translator and calligrapher of the Tamil text could have been an educated man connected to that community.

The Persian text of the Galle Stone

The Persian text is the most damaged of the three, and only single words and fragments of lines are legible. A transcription and translation of the Persian text were made by Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad in Hyderabad in the twenties, probably from a rubbing made by the British authorities in Ceylon soon after the stone was found in Edwardian times. No other transcriptions or images of the Persian or Tamil texts have been published. Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad’s Persian transcription is at present the only text available for study.⁴⁰⁴ It shows that the Persian text follows the Chinese closely.

⁴⁰²S. Paranavitana, ‘The Tamil Inscription on the Galle Trilingual Slab’, *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (London: Frowde, 1912-1933), vol. 3, pp. 331-341.

⁴⁰³Chen Dasheng and Denys Lombard, ‘Foreign Merchants in Maritime Trade in Quanzhou (‘Zaitun’): Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, in Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin eds., *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 20-21.

⁴⁰⁴The text is exactly as published. M. Ahmad’s translation is at variance with the text in some places, so I have made a translation. A modern electronic scanning study of the stone will establish a better text.

1

2 Bādshah Mu‘azzam ba ḥukm farmān Ming

The great Pādshah, by royal order.....Ming

3 faristāda shuda az barāay ta ‘zīm

has been sent to pay homage.....

4 barāay isti‘ānat ummid ‘zimati ba‘īd

..... to seek help

5

6 ma‘lūm gashtā ast

.....has been made apparent

7az barāay ānki.....

.....for which.....

8gashtā wa īn karāmāt

.....has done, and these miracles

9faristāda shuda dāsht

.....have been sent

10ma‘lūm gashtā az bahrī ta‘zīm dāsht

.....is made apparent, in order to do homage

11zar baft ‘ūd-dān wa gul-dān wa raughani chirāgh

.....gold worked incense burners, and flower vases and oil lamps

12 hind a az barāay ghaure khāṣ Sharīf hadīyā faristādā shud tā

and to manifest his high honour sends these gifts

- 13nūre Islām.....
 *light of Islam*.....
- 14ke az barāay aqsām ke guzrānīdā ast attafšīl ..
 *the details of what is provided are listed*
- 15zar hazār mithqāl .. Nuqrā panj hazār mithqāl ... zarkārā
 *gold one thousand misqal, silver five thousand misqal ... gold-worked*
- 16pinjāh ‘dad zar-baft chahār ... ‘ud-dāni-mis panj ‘dad
 *five in number gold-wrought four ... copper incense burners five in number.*
- 17 Kursī surkh zar nishān panj ‘dad .. gul-dān panj juft kursi surkh zar nishān
 *stands coated with red gold five items, flower vases five itemsstands coated with red gold*
- 18 chirāgh-dān qadīm panj ‘dad .. kursī
 *antique lamp-stands five in numberstands*
- 19 surkh zar nishān panj ‘dad ... chobī surkh zar nishān panj ‘dad
 *coated with red gold five in number... of wood, coated with red gold five in number*
- 20 raughane chiragheke
 *oil lamps*
- 21tārikh...
 *date*
- 22 .. haftum sāl ... yakum māh
 *seventh year.....first day of the month*

The missing first line would contain *Day Ming*, making the over-translated formula *Dāy mīng pādshāh-i mu'aẓẓam*, the Great emperor of Great Ming, which is the same formula used in the Tsurphu scroll and the two letters to Shah Rukh. The transcription *bādshāh* suggests that like the Tsurphu scroll text, the inscription might use the Arabic alphabet, using b ب for p پ, k ك for g گ and j ج for ch چ. This can be confirmed when a better image of the text is published.

The last two characters of the name of the Grand Eunuch following Zheng He's at the beginning of the inscription are unclear, and Backhouse provided the reading *Wang Qinglian* 王清濂 (clear waterfall). The reading *Wang Guitong* 王贵通 was first proposed by Tetsuro Yamamoto 山本達朗, and Xiang Da's transcription provides the same. Wang Guitong was the name of the eunuch Wang Jinghong 王景弘 at the time he accompanied Zheng He on his voyages.⁴⁰⁵ The name Jinghong was not conferred on him until the end of *Yongle*, perhaps by the Emperor, in a similar conferral to that of Zheng He's name.⁴⁰⁶ The new name was used retrospectively in historical records, and this stele is one of the few examples of the use of the former name.

The three texts differ in one detail: towards the end of the dedicatory section of the inscription, where the Chinese text has the words *wei shizun jian zhi* 惟世尊鑒之 *May the World Honoured One accept them*, the Tamil text has *Tenavarai Alvar*,⁴⁰⁷ the Vishnu devotee-saint of Tenaverai, the Tamil name for Devundara. This clearly refers to a Vishnaite deity. The Persian text, as transcribed by Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad, has *nūre Islām*, *light of Islam*, at that place in the text. *Light of Islam* could indicate either Allah, the light of the heavens and the earth,⁴⁰⁸ or in abstract, the light of religious knowledge.⁴⁰⁹

The words at the beginning of the list of votive items in the Chinese text show that the gifts were intended for more than one temple in the precinct:

⁴⁰⁵Gong Zhen, *Xiyang fanguo zhi*, (Xiang Da ed.), p. 50.

⁴⁰⁶See a study of Wang Jinghong's career in Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖, *Mingdai renwu yu chuanshuo* 明代人物與傳說 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue, 1997), pp. 192ff. and details of Tetsuro Yamamoto's identification of this name, p. 193.

⁴⁰⁷*Aalvar*, the twelve Vishnu devotee-saints.

⁴⁰⁸*Koran* 24:35.

⁴⁰⁹Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, p. 351.

Total account of the offerings donated to Standing Buddha and other Temples on the island of Ceylon.

总计布施锡兰山立佛等寺供养

Such a Buddhist temple at Tenaveram must have been one of the recipients, while a Vishnaite holy place and a mosque or Muslim shrine were the others. Joseph Needham supposed that three identical sets of gifts were given to representatives of three religions,⁴¹⁰ but the Chinese text makes it clear that the list is the total account (*zongji* 总计) of the gifts, which are to be shared among several temples. Only some of the gifts, such as lamps and oil, were suitable for Muslim holy places.

Other engraved stones

Another possible source of work for the Persian translators was the practice of enfeoffing mountains (*fengshan* 封山) in tributary countries. Sacrifices to the Five Sacred Mountains and Four Sacred Rivers were among the duties of the Son of Heaven from ancient times. It was the first Ming Emperor who first included mountains and rivers of Korea, Vietnam and Ryukyu in these sacrifices, and instituted a system delegating sacrificial duties to officers in provincial centres.⁴¹¹ This made the practice an instrument of tributary policy. The Yongle Emperor enfeoffed a mountain in Malacca in 1405 as *zhenguo zhi shan* 鎮國之山,⁴¹² one in Borneo in 1408, as *zhenguo zhi shan* 鎮國之山,⁴¹³ and one in Kezhi in 1416 as *zhenguoshan* 鎮國山.⁴¹⁴ Each of these was on the occasion of the investiture of the ruler as *Wang*, or the presentation of a seal and patent. Stones were erected in each place, whose inscriptions are all preserved in *Shilu*. It is recorded that the Emperor created the *bei* inscriptions himself, however the erudition displayed in each case suggests Hanlin Yuan authorship. Each is a long Confucian prose composition quoting classical works, expressing the Emperor's moral philosophy, and welcoming the new country,

⁴¹⁰ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 4 (3), *Civil Engineering and Nautics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 523. Levathes accepts this. *When China Ruled the Seas*, p. 113.

⁴¹¹ Wang Gungwu, 'Ming Foreign Relations: Southeast Asia', p. 305.

⁴¹² *Taizong shilu* 47, pp. 4rv. (0723).

⁴¹³ *Taizong shilu* 86, pp. 1r-2v. (1133-4).

⁴¹⁴ *Taizong shilu* 183, pp. 1r-2r.

followed by an inscription 銘 *ming*, in verse, also long.⁴¹⁵ It is not clear if both parts appeared on the stones, or only the poems. Inscribing the whole text would have required a large stone and small writing, especially if it was expressed in several languages. However in all other known examples the sacred words of the Emperor are translated into several languages. It is unlikely he sent inscribed stones to those places in Chinese only, and it is likely that versions in Persian and local languages were made, as on the Galle stone and the stele in Tibet, but there is no way to verify this.

Tribute lists and letters in *Xiyang ji*

Luo Maodeng's novel *Xiyang ji* contains twenty-four tribute lists, presented to Captain Sanbao by rulers at each place. Each list contains from a few to more than twenty items, including animals, birds, precious stones, cloth, incense, medicines and foods. Each item is quantified, and many are followed by explanations of their properties or value. Several have subsidiary lists of provisioning foodstuffs for the fleet. The inclusion of spectacles or eyeglasses in a tribute list of Malacca would be an early example of this common tribute item. Citations by Ming authors of the provenance of spectacles from both the Western Regions and Malacca are discussed by Duyvendak.⁴¹⁶ However the tribute goods do not match the lists of tribute items in *Da Ming huidian*,⁴¹⁷ nor do they conform to the tribute list (*fangwuzhuang* 方物状) format, indicating they are not authentic, but bravura inventions of the author. They are accompanied by eighteen submission letters *xiangshu* 降書 from sovereigns of real and fictional countries. All begin with exactly the same formula and consist of twenty or more congratulatory and submissive phrases in the same high poetic register and strictly parallelistic literary style. Like the tribute lists, the submission letters originate from Luo Maodeng's imagination, and are not the work of Persian translators.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵The Malacca text is described in Wang Gungwu, 'The Opening of Relations between China and Malacca, 1403-05', p. 16, and translated in Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas*, p. 109.

⁴¹⁶Duyvendak, 'Desultory Notes on the Hsi-yang chi', pp. 6-15, provides citations of spectacles in several works. To these can be added two examples in *Huihuiguan laiwen*, nos. XV, XXV.

⁴¹⁷*Da Ming huidian*, 97-98.

⁴¹⁸See this debate in Dreyer, Zheng He, *China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty*, pp. 178, 220.

Letters on gold leaves, *jinyebiao* 金葉表

The records contain frequent mention of tributary letters from most of the maritime countries in the form of *jinyebiao*, letters on gold leaves. These were written in the languages of each country, which the Persian translators translated, relying on the interpreters who accompanied the missions.⁴¹⁹ Shilu also records examples written in the language of Xianluo accompanied by a Persian version.⁴²⁰

The earliest recorded example of a letter on gold leaves arrived at the Yuan court from Ma'bar (Chola), in 1282.

*The country of sent an ambassador bringing tribute of a gold leaf letter and local goods.*⁴²¹

馬八兒國遣使以金葉書及土物來貢。

The first to the Ming court, from Xiyang, arrived with tribute of panthers and textiles in 1370.⁴²² While it was simply recorded without comment, two subsequent *jinyebiao*, both in 1371 were described as follows:

*Ada'azhe, King of Champa sent his officer Dabanguabunong to Court bearing a tribute letter, saying Annam has invaded their border. The tribute letter was of gold leaves more than one foot long and five inches wide, inscribed with the writing of that country, which the translators translated. Its meaning is as follows: &c.*⁴²³

占城國王阿答阿者遣其臣答班瓜卜農來朝奉表，言安南侵其土境，表用金葉，長一尺餘，闊五寸，俾以本國書，俾譯者譯之。其意曰：

This tribute mission is also recorded in *Siyiguan kao*, where the same letter is described as a *jinyebiao*.⁴²⁴ The translation which follows it is of interest because it is the earliest example of translation from a foreign language into Chinese carried out at the Ming court. The Hanlin scholars, perhaps working with the interpreters accompanying the mission, made a polished but clearly exact rendering, submissive phrases rendered in neat four-word groups, and practical matters expressed in a concise literate style.

⁴¹⁹Liang Chu, *Yuzhou yi gao* 1, p. 10rv. See note 348 above.

⁴²⁰*Xiaozong shilu* 2, p. 14v.

⁴²¹*Yuan shi* 12, p. 248.

⁴²²*Taizu shilu* 56, pp. 7v-8r. (1100).

⁴²³*Taizu shilu* 67, pp. 4v-5r. (1260).

⁴²⁴*Siyiguan kao* 1, p. 15r.

A letter with an accompanying document arrived from the King of Borneo one month later in the same year, described as follows:

*The letter was of gold, the accompanying document of silver, both carved with foreign writing, in a script resembling Uighur.*⁴²⁵

表用金，箋用銀，皆刻番書，字體彷彿回鶻。

Jinyebiao also arrived from Champa, Java, Malacca, Srivijaya, and Xianluo. About forty five in total arrived from most of the maritime countries throughout the Ming reigns.

There is no discernible motivation for sending a *jinyebiao* instead of a simple tribute letter written in Persian on paper, but clearly they served a ceremonial purpose. Their most frequent use was in the first fifteen years of *Hongwu*, when two or three came every one or two years, and rather fewer in the later part of the reign. None were sent after the beginning of *Yongle* until one from Cambodia in 1414, one from Sulu, accompanying a visit from the ruler's wife and 340 attendants, and one each from Cambodia and Malacca in 1419.

All four in *Yongle* are recorded as *jinlü biaowen* 金縷表文, gold thread letters letters. Clearly there was uncertainty about what to call them, and this was deemed a more correct term. In any case, the term *jinyebiao* 金葉表 is used again after 1435. One arrives every few years, with some longer gaps, becoming more infrequent until the last one from Xianluo in 1621. Examples in the National Palace Museum show that they continued to be used in the Qing (see below). The most frequent senders were Xianluo and Champa which continued the practice throughout the dynasty. Java sent one every few years at the beginning of *Hongwu*, and then no more.

As discussed in Chapter one, these golden letters would have been in the indigenous court languages of each place, accompanied by another letter in Persian. A palm-leaf manuscript collected by Myanmar scholar U Thaw Kaung is a record of a mission sent by the Myanmar king Maha-damá-ya-za-dí-patí (r. 1733-1752) to the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795) of the Qing Dynasty. It states the Myanmar king sent two letters, one written on a gold plate addressed to the Chinese emperor and the other on

⁴²⁵*Taizu shilu* 67, p. 6v. (1264).

a silver plate addressed to the empress, the queen mother, both shaped like palm-leaf manuscripts. Another Myanmar scholar, Chen Yi-sein discovered what seems to be the letter on silver in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. It is the only surviving example of a letter of this type. The text of the palm-leaf manuscript U Thaw Kaung found has not been published, but it states the dimensions and weight of the gold-plate letter and states that it contained twelve lines of writing. The silver leaf letter contains lists of tribute gifts.⁴²⁶

Records of land grants and donations on copper plates reproducing the shape of palm leaves or other writing materials were widespread in southern India, the earliest examples being from the fourth century AD.⁴²⁷ This practice spread with Indian civilisation to the countries of South East Asia, where copper plate inscriptions imitating the details of palm leaf originals became widely used in Java and elsewhere.⁴²⁸ A gold plate in the shape of a piece of palm leaf cut into a long rectangle for writing could be called a gold leaf letter, *jinyebiao*, and it is probable that many of them were of that type.

However another *jinyebiao* preserved in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, presented to the Qianlong Emperor in the Qing dynasty, is of a completely different type. It is written on a single thinly beaten sheet of gold, which was rolled or folded and put into a bag woven with silk and gold threads, sealed with an amber seal, all presented in a fine box of dark wood inlaid with mother of pearl. The inscription in Siamese has not been studied; however an accompanying Chinese tribute list identifies a gold-leaf tributary document sent from the Siamese King Taksin, whose envoy submitted tribute on the 26th day of the fifth lunar month of 1781.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶U Thaw Kaung, 'Palm-leaf Manuscript Record of a Mission Sent by the Myanmar King to the Chinese Emperor in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 6 (2008), pp. 3ff.

⁴²⁷Salomon, Richard, *Indian Epigraphy, A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 113-14.

⁴²⁸De Casparis, J. G., *Indonesian Paleography* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 5ff.

⁴²⁹National Palace Museum Website: documents. <http://npm.gov.tw/exh96>.



Gold-leaf tributary document in the National Palace Museum. <http://npm.gov.tw/exh96>

Conclusion

The use of Persian translating in tributary communications with maritime countries was inherited from the Mongolian court, where letters were translated by linguists of the Muslim College. The first Ming Emperor had no need to rule the sea route to Persia, and there was little work from those countries for the translators to do until the Yongle Emperor began sending Zheng He on his expeditions to the western ocean. For thirty years these brought back ambassadors, rulers and their families from ten or more countries at two- or four-yearly intervals, usually returning them with the following expedition, and it fell to the Persian translators to make the Emperor's edicts understood to their sovereigns. In communications with other countries the Persian translators worked alongside colleagues from the Uighur, Tibetan and other colleges. As there were no colleges for the languages of maritime countries, the Persian translators had the responsibility of working with the interpreters who accompanied ambassadors, or with other linguists, to make translations of their gold leaf letters and other documents into Chinese. None of the other colleges had this

multilingual duty to perform. Tribute from distant countries ended with the last of Zheng He's expeditions, and the workload was reduced after the last shipload of ambassadors was sent back in 1436. However tribute continued from countries as far as Malacca for nearly one hundred years, until the advent of Portuguese power in 1521, and the Persian translators must have continued to translate the Emperor's edicts to Xianluo (Thailand) into Persian until the establishment of the Thai College in 1579. The use of Persian in tribute relations with maritime countries ended at that time.

Chapter Five

The Persian College *Laiwen*

Huayiyiyu 華夷譯語 is a collection of bilingual word-lists, arranged topically, for each of the languages of the translating colleges, each accompanied by a small number of *laiwen*, examples of tributary documents in Chinese and the language of each college. The *laiwen* which accompany the Persian word lists are the only surviving translated Persian documents from after the *Yongle* period. However they tell us a great deal, because they served three different purposes through time. They began as accompanying documents, *laiwen jietie* 來文揭帖, Chinese translations of Persian tribute letters and petitions, presented at the courts of Ming emperors together with their Persian originals.⁴³⁰ At a later time these Chinese translations, together with a larger number of Chinese language tribute lists, were provided with word-for-word Persian glossings, to be used as materials for the regular testing of students and junior translators in the Persian College. Still later, when the *Huayiyiyu* was compiled, and *laiwen*, examples of bilingual court letters were needed, some of these bilingual test texts were used. Thus a number of Chinese tributary documents from the second half of the fifteenth century have come down to us, which provide interesting information about historical events and tributary practice of that time. Accompanied by Persian glossed texts, they tell us about the way students were tested at the Persian College and in the other colleges. Finally the compilation of *Huayiyiyu* gives us a glimpse of the colleges towards the end of the dynasty.

Huayiyiyu 華夷譯語

The first bilingual language learning material made at court was produced during the time of the first Ming Emperor, before the Translating College was established. Huo Yuanjie 火原潔 and Mashāykh 馬沙亦黑 were ordered to write it in 1382 and it was published in 1389. Also entitled *Huayiyiyu* 華夷譯語, it consists of a bilingual Mongolian and Chinese word list with 844 entries under 17 topic headings. It has an

⁴³⁰*Da Ming huidian* 221, p. 7r. (p. 2940).

appended section containing 12 Mongolian *laiwen*, exemplary letters, of which seven are authentic Mongolian letters to the court and five are Chinese imperial letters translated into Mongolian. It is not clear whether the Hongwu emperor wished *Huayiyiyu* volumes to be created in other languages. The Mongolian language is transcribed phonetically in Chinese character script, like the Mongolian text of *Yuanchao mishi* 元朝秘史, *The Secret History of the Yuan Dynasty*.⁴³¹ The nine years taken to create the Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* show that it was only carried on slowly or intermittently. Of course Mashāykh and the other compilers had the larger and more taxing work on *The Secret History* to do at the same time.

It was not until the Siyiguan was established in 1407 that the work of compiling the complete set of *Huayiyiyu* in each of the languages of the eight colleges was begun.⁴³² They consisted at first only of bilingual word-lists called *zazi* 雜字 (collected words), forming a series which was called *Huayiyiyu*, the same name as that of the Mongolian word list compiled in the *Hongwu* period. The adoption of that name for these new works indicates the title *Huayiyiyu* had become a generic term for bilingual word lists. Either it was already generic when the Mongolian dictionary was made, implying the existence of other *Huayiyiyu* now lost, or the Mongolian dictionary was so well-known that its title became used generically.⁴³³

Supplementary vocabulary lists, *Zengxu zazi* 增續雜字, were later added, together with collections of *laiwen* 來文, bilingual versions of tribute letters, petitions and tribute lists. The inclusion of Thai (*Xianluo*) word lists and *laiwen* shows that this was done at some time after the establishment of the *Xianluo* college in 1579. The original word lists, together with the supplementary lists and *laiwen* are all written in the various foreign scripts as well as in Chinese. *Huayiyiyu* editions have attracted interest and been collected by scholars in several countries since the eighteenth century, and copies are held in universities and libraries in London, Paris, Berlin, and Tokyo, as well as in China. A bibliography compiled by Endo Mitsuaki 遠藤光曉, Takashi

⁴³¹ Antoine Mostaert, *Le matériel Mongol du Houa I I Iu* 華夷譯語 *de Houng-ou (1389)*, I. De Rachewiltz ed., (Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques vol. 18) (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1977).

⁴³² Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 13.

⁴³³ Ibid.

Takekoshi 竹越孝, Sarashina Shinichi 更科慎一 and Feng Zheng 馮蒸⁴³⁴ lists twenty-six manuscripts and printed editions of *Huayi yiyu* collections which contain different combinations of *zazi*, *zengxu zazi* and *laiwen* in the ten languages of the *Siyiguan*. *Zazi* and *laiwen* exist for all the languages.

The Huitongguan and the *Huitongguan ben*.

While the *Siyiguan* had charge of translating written documents for the Emperor, the Huitongguan hostelry (*Huitongguan* 會同館) was responsible for providing spoken interpreting for foreign embassies, and bilingual word lists were also compiled for this purpose. Unlike the *Siyiguan* texts, these are not written in foreign scripts, but the foreign words are transcribed phonetically in Chinese characters. The word lists follow similar principles to the *Siyiguan ben* in that they are arranged topically under headings, but differences in the number of topics and in the vocabulary included, show these two types of word list were compiled separately and independently.⁴³⁵ This kind of word-list was made in several of the same languages as the *Siyiguan* lists; Jurchen, Mongolian, Uighur, Siamese, Baiyi, Tibetan and Persian, and in several additional languages; Japanese (*Riben* 日本), *Liuqiu* (琉球), Korean (*Chaoxian* 朝鮮), and the languages of Annam (*Annan* 安南), Champa (*Zhancheng* 占城), and Malacca (*Manlajia* 滿刺加). The bibliography compiled by the Japanese scholars lists ten manuscripts and prints containing collections of different combinations of these languages.⁴³⁶

***Huihuiguan yiyu* 回回館譯語**

Several manuscripts and printed editions of *Huayi yiyu* contain Persian word lists and *laiwen* under the title *Huihuiguan yiyu* 回回館譯語.⁴³⁷ They include *zazi* (雜字), a

⁴³⁴Fukumori Takahiro 福盛貴弘 and Endo Mitsuaki 遠藤光曉 eds., *華夷譯語論文集* (Collected essays on the *Huayi yiyu*), (Tokyo: 大東文化大學語學教育研究所 Daito Bunka University Language Education Institute, 2007), pp. 198-200.

⁴³⁵Liu Yingsheng provides tables showing *Siyiguan ben* topic headings in 6 of the 8 languages and *Huitongguan ben* topic headings in 4 of the languages, from which he concludes that the topic headings in both works mostly follow the topic heading tradition of the *Huayi yiyu* made during *Hongwu*, though there are differences in the order and number of headings. Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, pp. 12-13.

⁴³⁶Fukumori Takahiro and Endo Mitsuaki eds., *Collected essays on the Huayi yiyu*, pp. 201-202.

⁴³⁷Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, pp. 15-17.

Persian word-list possibly compiled in the *Yongle* period, *zengxu zazi* (贈續雜字), an additional list compiled later, and the *laiwen*, all in Siyiguan editions containing Persian script. There is also a *zazi* word list of the Huitongguan type, with the Persian words transcribed phonetically in Chinese character script. These four items were collated, edited, transcribed and published in a preliminary study by Honda Minobu in 1963.⁴³⁸ A detailed study of the three word-lists containing facsimiles of original manuscripts was published by Liu Yingsheng in 2008.⁴³⁹ Liu Yingsheng's publication does not include the *laiwen* texts.

Zazi contains 777 terms grouped under eighteen *men* 門 or headings:

天文門 (tianwenmen). Astronomy, 40 terms.

地理門 (dilimen). Geography, 56 terms.

時令門 (shilingmen). Times and seasons, 41 terms.

人物門 (renwumen). People, 65 terms.

人事門 (renshimen). Human activities, 98 terms.

身體門 (shenti men). The Body, 50 terms.

宮室門 (gongshi men). Dwellings, 25 terms.

鳥獸門 (niaoshou men). Birds and animals, 49 terms.

花木門 (huamu men). Flowers and trees, 42 terms.

器用門 (qiyong men). Utensils, 50 terms.

衣服門 (yifu men). Clothing, 26 terms.

飲食門 (yinshi men). Food and drink, 33 terms.

⁴³⁸ Honda Minobu 本田實信, 回回館譯語に就いて *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)*, (Hokkaido University, 1963).

⁴³⁹ Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*.

珍寶門 (zhenbao men). Precious objects, 18 terms.

聲色門 (shengse men). Sounds and colours, 17 terms.

文史門 (wenshi men). Literature and history, 17 terms.

方隅門 (fangyu men). Directions, 24 terms.

數目門 (shumu men). Numbers, 18 terms.

通用門 (tongyong men). General purposes, 108 terms.

These topic headings are the same as the seventeen headings used in the Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* word-list which was made in the *Hongwu* period, with the addition of one extra heading, 文史門 *wenshi men*, literature and history,⁴⁴⁰ indicating that the earlier work was used as a model for the later *Huayiyiyu* lists. The additional word list *Zengxu zazi* contains 233 Persian words grouped under the same eighteen headings, in the same order. Some of the vocabulary in *Zengxu zazi* appears to be derived from the *laiwen* texts, as discussed below. The *Huitongguanben zazi* contains 674 words grouped under 17 of the same headings arranged in a different order with slight differences in the titles of some of the headings.

***Huihuiguan laiwen* 回回館來文**

While the *laiwen* in the earlier Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* contains original Mongolian letters and original Chinese edicts translated into Mongolian, the *Huihuiguan laiwen* are not original Persian documents, but Chinese translations of Persian documents which have been re-translated word-for-word or glossed back into Persian. Honda Minobu collated and edited the *laiwen* and published transcriptions of 26 *laiwen* in 1963.⁴⁴¹ These texts are published in romanised transcription only. The Persian *laiwen* have not been published in Persian script or facsimile. No translations or studies of the Persian *laiwen* have been published.

⁴⁴⁰The topic headings of the earlier Mongolian word list are analysed in Mostaert, *Le matériel Mongol du Houa I I Iu* 華夷譯語 *de Houng-ou* (1389), p. 14. See also Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁴¹Honda Minobu 本田實信, 回回館譯語に就いて *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)*, (Hokkaido University, 1963), pp. 64-73.

Tribute lists

Only a small number of the *laiwen* are Chinese translations of tributary letters or petitions. Seventeen of the twenty-six *laiwen* are not translations of Persian letters at all, but examples of *fangwuzhuang* 方物狀, local goods lists, which were lists of tribute items compiled by Board of Rites (*Libu* 禮部) officers to be declaimed at audiences. Edicts of *Hongwu* prescribing rituals for tribute audiences describe how the tribute lists were declaimed.⁴⁴² They were an indispensable element of the tribute audience ritual, while the declaiming of a tribute letter could be waived. The lists would have been generated in Chinese within the Board of Rites, and would not have existed in Persian form originally. However many of these lists were later glossed in Persian and other languages to create language testing material, which was still later included in the *Huayiyiyu*, as described below.

There are two types of Chinese-language tribute formats, into which information is inserted. Twelve *laiwen* are examples of the same short tribute form, into which are inserted names of countries, ambassadors, names and quantities of tribute offerings, and names of presents requested in return. Five of the *laiwen* are examples of the same slightly longer tribute form, into which names of countries, ambassadors, names and quantities of tribute offerings, and names of presents requested in return are inserted. This is similar to the short tribute form, but has a longer preamble.

Tribute gifts are itemised in each form, giving the name of the gift followed by a number and a measure-word, as in “韃靼馬二匹 (*dada ma er pi*), Mongolian horses, two head”. *Ming shi* records the procedure whereby these itemised lists were generated.

*According to former practice, when foreigners' tribute goods arrived, border officers inspected them and entered items into their lists, and the Board of Rites officials gave return gifts on the basis of these lists. Trade was allowed to be carried out freely with those things not included in the lists.*⁴⁴³

故事，諸番貢物至，邊臣驗上其籍，禮官為按籍給賜。籍所不載，許自行貿易。

⁴⁴²See Chapter 1.

⁴⁴³*Ming shi* 332, p. 8623.

Border officers were present at Hami 哈密, Jiayuguan, 嘉峪關, the entry to China proper, Suzhou 肅州, the first major city within the wall, (present-day Jiuquan Municipality 酒泉市 in Gansu Province), where there was an important lodging-house for foreign envoys (夷館 *yiguan*), and Ganzhou 甘州 (present-day Zhangye Municipality 張掖市 in Gansu Province). Only a set number of people within an envoy were permitted to go to Beijing, while the rest were forced to sojourn at Suzhou and Ganzhou.⁴⁴⁴ The account of the embassy sent by Shah Rukh to the court of the Yongle Emperor in 1419-1422 indicates that it was at Ganzhou where the gifts destined for the Emperor were taken away, and it might have been at this location that the lists were first compiled.⁴⁴⁵

The short and longer form tribute lists in the *laiwen* would have been filled in in Chinese by the Board of Rites officials from the lists made by the border officers, and the sections of the forms where tribute is itemised and enumerated were probably copied directly from these border lists.

Tribute letters and petitions

Only nine of the *Huihuiguan laiwen* are not tribute lists, but tribute letters and petitions. Four of them are tribute letters from foreign rulers which make complimentary statements about the Emperor, name tribute offerings and request presents. Five of them are not tribute letters, but petitions from Hami and elsewhere within the empire. The Chinese texts of these letters are the most interesting of all the *laiwen* texts because they are authentic translations from original Persian letters, made by the translators of the Persian College for presentation before the Emperor, showing the standard of translating at that time. They also contain intrinsically interesting information. Some contain names and events which enable them to be dated. These Chinese translations are formal and succinct, with personal and place names properly rendered, and are admirable examples of translating work. The original Persian texts from which these translations were made do not appear, but instead they are glossed word for word in Persian in the same way as the tribute lists.

⁴⁴⁴Kazuo, Enoki, 'Su-chou in Late Ming', in *Studia Asiatica, The Collected Papers of the Late Dr. Kazuo Enoki* (Tokyo, Kyuko-Shoin, 1998), p. 538.

⁴⁴⁵Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 1, p. 278.

The *laiwen* texts

Not all manuscripts and printed copies of *Huayiyiyu* which are extant contain the final *laiwen* section. Honda Minobu collated twenty six *laiwen* from four manuscripts.⁴⁴⁶

They are as follows:

1. Tribute letter from Sultan Ahmad Khan of Moghulistan. Possible dates 1478-1488 or 1497-1504.
2. Petition from Sayyid Ḥusain, *Dudu* of Hami, about a mosque. Possible date 1494-1515.
3. Petition about an ambassador's stipend. Possible date 1499
4. Tribute letter from Sultān Zamān Wang of the land of Balkh. Cannot be dated.
5. Holy devotee Khwājah Hamdūng's request for a travel permit. Cannot be dated.
6. Personnel request for confirmation of *dudu* status from Maulā Ḥasan of Hami Garrison. Possible date before 1511.
7. Tribute letter from Ja'far Ṣādiq Wang of Baṣra. Possible date before 1508.
8. Hami's appeal for help against the attack by Sultan 'Ali. Possible date 1473.
9. Tribute letter from Egypt. Possible date 1468-1481.

(None of the following lists of tribute can be dated).

10-12 Lists of tribute from Samarkand.

13-15 Lists of tribute from Mecca.

16-18 Lists of tribute from Turfan.

19-21 Lists of tribute from Hami.

⁴⁴⁶The manuscripts are described in detail in Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, pp. 14-22.

22. Longer list of tribute from Turfan.

23-24 Longer lists of tribute from Samarkand.

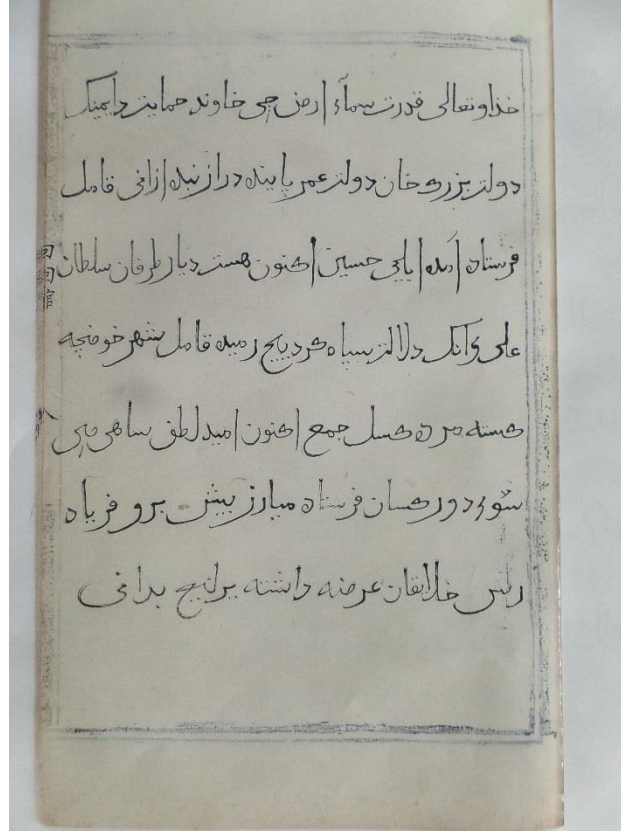
25. Longer list of tribute from Turfan.

26. Longer list of tribute from Samarkand.

The Ming manuscript *Huayiyiyu* text held in the Tōyō Bunko in Tokyo, which Honda Minobu calls B, or the Tōyō Bunko text, contains the original *Huihuiguan zazi* vocabulary, but without the additional *zengxu zazi* vocabulary, and 30 *laiwen*. The manuscript is a collaborative product of the translators and calligraphers of the colleges. It consists of 18 fascicules in two dark blue cloth boxes with the title 華夷譯語舊鈔本, an old *Huayiyiyu* manuscript. The fascicules are bound in dark blue paper covered with fine, dark blue silk. It contains *laiwen* for nine colleges, Persian, Mongolian, Nūzhen, Tibetan, Gaochang (Uighur), Babai, Baiyi (Tay), Miandian (Burmese) and Xianluo (Thai), only excluding Xitian (Indian). There are word lists for each language, some complete and others incomplete, indicating the manuscript as it exists is an incomplete set. Each of the languages is written in fine, fluent calligraphy indicating it was made collaboratively in the palace, by officers of the translating colleges.⁴⁴⁷ It is the earliest of the manuscripts, possibly even an exemplar from the time the *Huayiyiyu* was first compiled. The inclusion of Thai *laiwen* indicates that was at some time after the establishment of the Thai College in 1579. The manuscript shows that a high level of calligraphic skill still existed in each of the colleges at that time. Liu Yingsheng notes that the Persian script is written in a practised and fluent way with a wooden pen, a *kalam*, while the Chinese script is written with a brush. This indicates that B was copied at an earlier time when wooden pens were still being used at the Persian College. The later manuscripts that have been found are all written with

⁴⁴⁷The Toyo Bunko collection is based on the former library of the Edwardian sinologist George Ernest Morrison, and the manuscript could have come into his possession at the auctions which were held in Beijing following the looting of the imperial palaces in 1900-1901 after the downfall of the *Yihetuan* 義和團 (Boxer) movement.

a brush. Mistakes made by adding or leaving off dots, numerous in later manuscripts, are few in this one, and there are fewer mistakes overall in the Persian.⁴⁴⁸



Persian Laiwen 8 in the Toyo Bunko *Huaiyiyu* manuscript.

A copy of *Huihuiguan yiyu* now in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, which Honda Minobu calls text A, or the Berlin text, is part of a *Huaiyiyu* taken back from China by Friedrich Hirth in the 19th century. It includes the main vocabulary list, and is the only surviving text which includes the additional *zengxu zazi* vocabulary list. It contains 16 *laiwen* of the short or longer tribute list type. A third *Huaiyi yiyu* text, which Honda Minobu calls C or the Paris text, is a Qing manuscript held in the Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.⁴⁴⁹ There are 17 items in the *laiwen* section. This text has phonetic readings in Latin letters and Latin definitions written alongside the Chinese definition of each Persian word in the vocabulary, and short Latin and French annotations here and there, which show it was

⁴⁴⁸Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 15.

⁴⁴⁹Photographic images of this manuscript are reproduced throughout Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*.

the copy used by the Jesuit missionary Jean Joseph Marie Amiot in Beijing in the 1770s and 1780s.⁴⁵⁰ This is corroborated by the French translations of the Persian *laiwen* published by Père Amiot, which are precisely the same texts, and in the same order, as those in this manuscript.⁴⁵¹ Amiot conducted perhaps the broadest survey so far by translating into French the Chinese texts of the *laiwen* of seven of the colleges, Huihui, Xifan, Xianluo, Gaochang, Baiyi, Miandian and Babai.⁴⁵² The Qing manuscript he used does not contain the Mongolian or Nüzhen *laiwen*. To these he added a quite monumental work, a complete translation of a now-lost *Siyiguan kao* compilation. A fourth manuscript, which Honda Minobu calls F, is a Qing dynasty manuscript held in the Naikaku Bunko in Tokyo; its contents and the order of the *laiwen* are the same as in C.

***Huihuiguan ke* 回回館課**

Although only this small number of tributary documents from the Persian College was included in *Huihuiguan laiwen*, a larger number of similar documents was included in a collection which has not come down to us. A bibliographical work entitled *Dushu minqiu ji* 讀書敏求記 (A record of earnest search while reading books) compiled by Qian Zeng 錢曾 between 1669 and 1674, is an annotated catalogue of 601 rare books in his family's possession at that time, many of which he had inherited from a collection made by his famous great-uncle the biographer and antiquarian Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 during the last decades of the Ming Dynasty.⁴⁵³ Qian Zeng describes a work entitled *Huihuiguan ke* 回回館課 (Persian College lessons).

Huihuiguan ke 3 juan. When foreigners offered tribute of camels, horses, jade, and suf (woollen cloth), requesting articles such as linen cloth, silk woven with gold, tea and medicines, they wrote memorials in foreign script. The Huihuiguan translated these into Chinese in serial order (zhupian 逐篇). They were compiled into three juan and stored in the Palace (Tianfu 天府). It is not known

⁴⁵⁰Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 18.

⁴⁵¹Le Père Amiot, 'Suppliques et lettres de créance envoyées de pays des Hoei-hoei, Adressées à l'Empereur de Chine', in *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages &c des Chinois par les missionnaires de Pe-kin*, vol. 14 (1809), pp. 242-248.

⁴⁵²Amiot, *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, vol. 14, pp. 239ff.

⁴⁵³Arthur W. Hummel ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1943-44), pp. 148-9 and 157.

*in what year they flowed down among the people and came into our possession. They have been preserved to prove changes in translating (tongwen).*⁴⁵⁴

回回館課三卷。諸番進貢駝馬玉石梭負(for 角)，求討膝欄織金段茶藥等件，皆寫番書表奏。回回館以中國字逐篇譯之，輯成三冊，藏之天府。不知何時流落人間，為子所得。存之以徵同文之化。

No copies of *Huihuiguan ke* are known to exist now. However the similarly named *Gaochangguan ke* 高昌館課 (Uighur College lessons), also in three *juan*, which still exists, contains eighty-seven examples of the same kind of texts as in the *laiwen*.⁴⁵⁵ It is probable that *Huihuiguan ke* also contained a similar number of texts which, in conformity with the examples in *Gaochangguan ke*, were word-by-word translations or glossings into Persian based on Chinese texts, as *Huihuiguan laiwen* are. The type of tribute and request memorial which Qian Zeng describes is the same as the examples in *Huihuiguan laiwen*. Some or all of the *laiwen* in the *Huihuiguan laiwen* collections might have been drawn from *Huihuiguan ke*.

Three Mongolian *laiwen* texts translated by Henri Serruys are all of the tribute form type. Serruys comments that the Mongolian texts are grammatically incorrect, so they are probably word-for-word glossings, too.⁴⁵⁶ Twenty Jürčēn *laiwen*, mostly of the tribute form type, were translated by Grube in *Die Sprache und Schrift der Jučen*.⁴⁵⁷

Paul Pelliot was baffled by the word for word Persian glossing, thinking the *laiwen* texts indicated a lack of grammar knowledge on the part of the Persian translators:

*... they were most often made mechanically from vocabularies by people who in reality did not know the essential rules of the languages they were charged with dealing with. These pseudo-translations could have been made at the very moment to be presented to the Emperor. It is less possible but not excluded that in some cases we are dealing with school exercises of uncertain date.*⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴Qian Zeng, *Du shu min qiu ji*, p. 59r.

⁴⁵⁵The Uighur texts of this work are transcribed in Latin letters in Hu Zhenhua 胡振华, Huang Runhua 黄润华, *Mingdai wenxian "Gaochangguan ke": Ladingwen zimu yizhu* 明代文献《高昌馆课》：拉丁文字母译著 (The Gaochangguan ke documents transcribed in Latin letters), (Wulumuqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1981).

⁴⁵⁶Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations during the Ming*, pp. 454-5.

⁴⁵⁷Wilhelm Grube, *Die Sprache und Schrift der Jučen*, (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1896), pp. 106-145.

⁴⁵⁸Pelliot, *Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain del'histoire des Ming*, p. 277.

Ligeti also regarded the *laiwen* as examples of poor grammar knowledge on the part of the translators, although he notes that Siyiguan translators were capable of a correct standard when sending letters abroad:

*We are aware that alongside the innumerable official and often private embassies which arrived from the countries of Turkestan and even Iran to present themselves at the Ming court, a certain number of Chinese embassies went to visit far-off “tributary” countries to encourage their kings and bring them gifts. Then those embassies, too, had their bilingual credential letters. The few specimens that have remained to us allow us to glimpse that in these cases, the foreign language version must have been prepared with special care. Unfortunately no Uighur document of that category has been conserved until our time.*⁴⁵⁹

Ligeti thought the Uighur *Gaochangguan laiwen* were hastily re-translated letters made by the translators to satisfy the requirement that ambassadors present letters in foreign languages:

*To what ends and in what circumstances were our sino-uighur documents manufactured? Today you would hardly risk being mistaken by affirming that they served in some way as justificatory objects in the hands of tribute ambassadors presenting themselves at the court.*⁴⁶⁰

However this is not borne out by the uniformity of the glossings, which are of the same style throughout. If retranslations had been made at different times by different translators, some variation would be evident. In a recent essay, Liu Yingsheng also concluded that the *laiwen* show a lack of understanding of correct grammar:

*These 26 letters were not real diplomatic letters. They must have been models or patterns used by the teachers of the School for Persian Education. All of these are full of grammatical mistakes, which prove that in the mid-Ming period the teachers at this school no longer understood Persian language very well. Based on this, I believe that Persian had stopped being the main diplomatic language of the Ming government by the mid-Ming period.*⁴⁶¹

The problem with this analysis is the proposition that the translators of the Siyiguan didn't know the grammar rules of their languages. It is improbable that the entire staff of the ten colleges of the Siyiguan should collectively and comprehensively lose their knowledge of the grammar of their various languages. It is also unlikely that

⁴⁵⁹Louis Ligeti, 'Documents Sino-Ouigours de Bureau des Traducteurs', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 20 (1967), p. 254.

⁴⁶⁰Ligeti, 'Documents Sino-Ouigours de Bureau des Traducteurs', p. 262.

⁴⁶¹Liu Yingsheng, 'A Lingua Franca along the Silk Road: Persian Language in China between the 14th and the 16th Centuries', in Ralph Kauz ed., *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: from the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), pp. 87-95.

competent linguists could not be found at a time when the roads were open and tribute-bearers and traders were arriving regularly from Central Asia, Turfan and Hami. The Chinese versions of the small number of letters and petitions show that Persian letters which arrived were translated competently into good Chinese which is formal and concise, indicating that the translators did have knowledge of Persian, not just relying on their vocabularies.

Ke 課

In fact Pelliot was close to the mark when he suggested the *laiwen* could be school exercises. I believe that the *laiwen* in each language were drawn from collections of *ke* 課, which were texts used for testing students of the Siyiguan colleges in a type of test called a *ke* 課. A memorial of 1653 recorded in the prologue of *Siyiguan ze* describes a system of regular testing in use during the Ming dynasty:

*According to the old rule, for officers and students of translating, apart from daily teaching and practice, there were monthly testing (yueke 月課), seasonal examinations and yearly inspections, and they were each given grades, which were forwarded to the inner halls (the Hanlin Academy). Whenever it happened that men were needed for the History College, the Gaochiguan, or as copyists, they were recruited from the officers of the ten colleges.*⁴⁶²

舊例，譯學官生除逐日教習外，有月課，有季考，有歲參，分別等第，開送內院，凡遇史館，誥敕，謄錄需人，亦於十館職官選用。

Another short notice in *Siyiguan ze* gives details about seasonal testing, (*jike* 季課).

*Submission of seasonal tests. Item. Testing (...) when translating officers are first appointed in the nine colleges. The Supervisors issue three questions every month, nine in a season, to be issued (to) the officers to be translated into foreign and Chinese scripts. These are entered into a register and submitted at the end of each season. The tang type, the best of them, are submitted to the Neige where they are held. They are not needed after appointment to positions.*⁴⁶³

季課進呈。一。九館初授譯字官□□課。每月提督官出題三道，季九道，發□各官譯出番漢字，登簿季終呈。堂類呈內閣收執，授職之後不用。

These were written tests, as they dealt with foreign and Chinese scripts. Some evidence of this system has been preserved in a bibliographical work by Qing scholar

⁴⁶²*Siyiguan ze*, introd. p. 2v. (p. 16).

⁴⁶³*Siyiguan ze* 2, p. 5r. (p. 59).

Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶,⁴⁶⁴ entitled *Guquanshanguan tiba* 古泉山館題跋 (Prefaces and postscripts from Ancient Spring Mountain Hostel), which includes descriptions of rare books in his library. One of these, *Ming Wanli Fanguan yiwen* (明萬曆番館譯文, Translations from the Tibetan College during Wanli in Ming), consists of a course of forty-five exercises, nine for each of five seasons from winter 1575 to winter 1576. They are Chinese texts each followed by a Tibetan translation. The subject matter of the texts, congratulations on the Emperor's accession, requests for succession of princes or abbots, tribute letters and requests for medicines, shows that they are Chinese translations of Tibetan letters being used for re-translation into Tibetan, like the *laiwen* in the *Huayiyiyu* collections. They are corrected in vermilion ink, and each bears the words *duiguo* 對過, checked or verified. They have the names of three *xuban* 序班 assistants Yang Hongze 楊弘澤, Zhan Wenxiang 單文相 and Li Yan 李言, indicating that the task of checking these exercises fell to the most junior of the Translating College officers. The exercises are carefully done on ornamented paper, and the whole is possibly a dossier of work presented at a *suican* 歲參, or yearly inspection.⁴⁶⁵

In addition to the written tests, *Siyiguan ze* describes the procedure for *yanke* 驗課, which appears to be a test of spoken translation at sight:

*Ceremonial procedure for yanke testing. Item. In the same hall, when entry into the hall is completed, lots are drawn for testing of ke. Each student holds the ke, stays in place a while then goes forward and bows once. He is either tested on the ke (驗課 yanke), or given a face to face examination (面試 mianshi). When it is done, he waits for his reward and penalty to be summed up, bows once and withdraws.*⁴⁶⁶

驗課儀節。一。本堂升堂畢掣籤驗課。諸生持課，置几上一揖，或驗課或面試，事畢候賞罰總，一揖而退。

⁴⁶⁴Qu Zhongrong was the son-in-law of the bibliophile Qian Daxin 錢大昕, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, p. 154.

⁴⁶⁵Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶, *Guquanshanguan tiba* 古泉山館題跋 (Prefaces and postscripts from Ancient Spring Mountain Hostel), in Jia Guirong 賈貴榮 and Wang Guan 王冠 eds. *Song Yuan ban shumu tiba jikan* 宋元版書目題跋輯刊, vol. 1. (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), pp. 326-328. Cf. Pelliot, *Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming*, p. 279.

⁴⁶⁶*Siyiguan ze* 10, p. 7v. (p. 182).

This indicates that the *ke* was the actual text issued by the supervisor, which the student was to take in his hand and translate orally at sight.

The term *ke* 課 suggests that collections such as *Huihuiguan ke* and *Gaochangguan ke* are in fact collections of texts used at these tests. Elsewhere Qu Zhongrong describes another book in his collection, *Tongwentang Fanyiguan ke* 同文堂番譯館課, which is evidently another collection of *ke*. Inserted into this book were slips of paper, with the words *Huihuiguan ke wu juan* 回回館課五卷, five fascicules of Persian College *ke*, *Miandianguan ke jiu juan* 緬甸館課九卷, nine fascicules of Burmese College *ke*, and *Baiyiguan ke si juan* 百譯館課四卷, four fascicules of Baiyi (Tay) College *ke*.⁴⁶⁷ One collection of *ke*, *Gaochangguan ke* 高昌館課, still exists⁴⁶⁸ As we know of collections of *ke* for four of the languages, it is probable they existed for all the languages.

***Gaochangguan ke* 高昌館課**

Like the *Huihuiguan laiwen*, the 87 texts in *Gaochangguan ke* are all based on Chinese texts, glossed with Uighur word-equivalents, almost always following the Chinese word order. They are of the same three types as the *Huihuiguan laiwen*. 65 of the *ke* are tribute lists, of which no original Uighur versions existed, but which would have been created directly in Chinese. The forms are of several types, but all repeat the same formulae, changing only the name of the country, the ambassador, the tribute gifts enumerated with measure words, and the return gifts requested, not enumerated. While all the *Huihuiguan laiwen* tribute forms include both tribute items and items requested in the one form, here there are often two separate forms, one for the tribute, and another for the request of return gifts. Fourteen pairs of such forms are included in *Gaochangguan ke*.

Thirteen of the *ke* are composite tribute letters, which begin with translations of the diplomatic flourishes of original Uighur letters, then conclude with a standard list of tribute items. These are the work of the Uighur College translators. Only nine of the *ke* are petitions, some connected with tribute activity, others from officers requesting promotions for themselves or relatives. The Chinese texts of these petitions are the

⁴⁶⁷ Qu Zhongrong, *Guquanshanguan tiba*, p. 329.

⁴⁶⁸ Hu Zhenhua, *Mingdai wenxian "Gaochang guan ke" Ladingwen zimu yizhu*.

most interesting of all the texts, as they are examples of the work of the translators of the Gaochangguan. They are concise and competent, and appear to have been done by translators with a good knowledge of both languages.

The tribute forms and petitions refer to rulers in Turfan and Hami, and are from the same period as the Huihuiguan *laiwen*, approximately 1475 to 1512, showing that both Uighur and Persian were being used in Turfan, Hami and the cities of Uighuristan at the end of the fifteenth century. Louis Ligeti translated a total of 41 Gaochangguan *laiwen* from two editions of *Huayiyiyu*.⁴⁶⁹ These are all either tribute lists or composite translated tribute letters with formal endings, and are of the same type, and glossed in the same style, as the *Gaochangguan ke* texts. Ligeti apparently did not realise that the *laiwen* he translated were glossed tribute forms, but thought they were tribute letters.

The texts in *Gaochangguan ke* are of exactly the same type as in *Gaochangguan laiwen*. The *Huihuiguan laiwen* texts also conform to the same type. They are all Chinese documents glossed strictly word for word in the other language. The same proportion of tribute lists, composite tribute letters and petitions is apparent in each. These would have been collections of Chinese texts used for testing translating in each of the languages, probably maintained by the Tidu Supervisor whose duty it was to set the test questions.

The creation of the glossed *ke* collections evidently took place when a decision was made to create uniform testing materials for all of the language colleges. This might have been soon after the appointment of supervisors to oversee the language colleges in 1494. Several of the Persian *laiwen* letters can be dated between 1472 and that time. A possible date is the supervisorship of Yang Zishan 楊子山 and Zhang Jisheng 張季升 who instituted the keeping of records and personnel lists in 1516-1519. Possibly their zeal also instituted the testing. The supervisors evidently saw a need to establish uniform testing for all languages, and the glossed texts were a somewhat clumsy, bureaucratic answer to that need. The supervisor, who was a career bureaucrat, not a linguist, would have chosen Chinese texts from each college, and ordered them to be

⁴⁶⁹Louis Ligeti, 'Documents Sino-Ouigours de Bureau des Traducteurs', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 20 (1967), pp. 254-306, and 21 (1968), pp. 45-108.

glossed, and kept in collections to be used for testing. No doubt they also circulated in manuscript collections among the students, who used them to prepare for the *ke* tests. Collections of *ke* in each language must have become part of the regular teaching and testing material of the Colleges. At a later time when the *Huayiyiyu* collections were made, and exemplary bilingual texts were needed, the *ke* which existed in collections for each language were conveniently drawn on, even though they were not properly bilingual texts.

The Persian *laiwen* texts

The Persian *laiwen* do not represent examples of poor grammar, but a deliberate effort to gloss each Chinese word with a Persian word. Honda Minobu first made the observation that the Persian words closely follow the original Chinese word order.⁴⁷⁰ The uniformity of the glossing throughout the twenty five *laiwen* indicates that they were all done at the one time, possibly by the same translator, and for a specific purpose. The formal parts of the short and longer tribute lists are all glossed with exactly the same Persian words. If the glossing were done at different times and by different translators, some variation would be apparent. This indicates that the glossing was all done at one time. The Persian is written with the Arabic alphabet, using b ب for p پ, k ك for g گ and j ج for ch چ. With some exceptions, the glossing is accurate and confident, done by someone who had a sure knowledge of most of the words, however Persian words are deliberately chosen to correspond with each Chinese word or part of a word, sometimes making strange combinations. For example in *Laiwen V* the expression *jingjin* 經今 *until now* is glossed in Persian as *qur'ān aknūn*, *Koran now*. This is a deliberate substitution of *qur'ān*, 經 holy book, for 經 *jing*, until. The only exceptions to this strict format are Persian prepositions, which are placed in correct Persian order before their nouns as in *pish daiming khan*, before the Great Ming Emperor, and adjectives which follow their nouns in correct Persian order as in *asb Mughal*, a Mongolian horse. Personal names and names of countries are given their correct Persian equivalents. Chinese measure-words are either given judiciously chosen Persian equivalents or transcribed. Chinese

⁴⁷⁰Honda Minobu, *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)*, p. 152.

possessives *de* 的 and *zhi* 之 are regularly transcribed into the Persian text, as *dī* and *jī*, as if to leave no part of the Chinese text unglossed.

The Uighur texts in *Gaochangguan ke* and *Gaochangguan laiwen* are done with the same deliberate word-for-word glossing. They were evidently created at the same time and according to the same principles as the *Huihuiguan laiwen*, glossing Chinese texts with Uighur word-equivalents, almost always following the Chinese word order. Measure words in the tribute forms follow Chinese word order and are either translated or transcribed, as in *Huihuiguan laiwen*. Chinese doublets are usually represented with two Uighur words. A large number of Chinese words, from five to ten in each text, are translated and then also transcribed, the Chinese sounds represented in Uighur letters. The transcriptions are preceded by a cursive Uighur letter b which serves as a bracket or parenthesis.⁴⁷¹ The same Chinese words 差 qāy, 京 ging, 討 taw, 賜 si, 望 ong &c. are transcribed again and again in many of the letters. This remains to be explained. The method and style of the glossing is uniform throughout, indicating it was all carried out at the one time as part of the same project, and not by different people at different times.

This indicates the *ke* were prepared as a testing resource. Each candidate was evidently expected to carefully gloss his way through the text, being careful to translate each word, and leaving nothing out. While this method was used for testing, there is no evidence that the same style was used in real translations made in the *Neige* to convey the Emperor's edicts to far places, and the *ke* cannot be used as a standard of the translators' grammar knowledge. Despite their peculiarity, they include several interesting language items, discussed below.

The third stage of the preservation of the texts occurred when the *ke* texts were adopted to serve as *laiwen* when the compilation of the *Huayiyiyu* took place. Evidently the earlier Mongolian *Huayiyiyu* served as a model, with bilingual word-lists to be accompanied by small collections of bilingual court documents. The existence of already glossed collections of *ke* in most of the languages meant the problem of finding texts and translations in each language was easily solved. The

⁴⁷¹Hu Zhenhua, *Mingdai wenxian "Gaochang guan ke"*, p. 1.

inclusion of Thai (Xianluo) *laiwen* in *Huayiyiyu* shows that it was compiled after the establishment of the Xianluo College in 1579.

The historical background of the *Huihuiguan laiwen*

Several of the Persian *laiwen* refer to Turfan and Hami. Those desert oases were important because of the great wealth that passed through them, and the cities, still ruled by Uighur princes in the first half of the dynasty, were inhabited by a diverse merchant population of Persians, Turks, Uighurs, Mongolians and other nations and tribespeople.⁴⁷² Tribute and commerce from all the countries of the west passed through Turfan and then Hami, before making a twenty-five-day desert crossing to Jiayuguan, and then on to Suzhou and Ganzhou. It was important that its rulers should welcome and assist travellers.⁴⁷³ Tribute missions from Turfan did not begin until 1406, the fourth year of *Yongle*. Thirteen tribute missions arrived one every one, two or three years until 1430, and then at longer intervals after that.⁴⁷⁴ The letters they brought, in Uighur language and script, were translated by officers from the Gaochangguan.

Tarikh-i-Rashidi, Mirza Haidar's record of the Khans of Moghulistan, describes two parts of Moghulistan; Moghulistan proper, which was steppe-land and mountain pastures encompassing the eastern spur of the Tianshan Mountains, northward to the southern shore of Lake Balkash, and eastward to Bishbalik, and a southern part he calls Kashgar, which included *Alti-Shahr*, the six oasis cities of Kashgar, Yangi Hisar, Yarkand, Khotan, Turfan and Aksu, on the edge of the Tarim Basin. While these cities remained stable and populated, strict adherence to Mongol nomadic custom kept the Khans and their people on the move with their livestock and tents, allowing the fine cities and surrounding towns in Moghulistan proper to become derelict, and putting the cultivated land over to pasture. Chen Cheng, who passed through there in 1414 describes it:

⁴⁷²Morris Rossabi, 'Ming China and Turfan, 1406-1517', *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1972), pp. 20.

⁴⁷³*Ming shi* 329, p. 8513.

⁴⁷⁴Rossabi, 'Ming China and Turfan, 1406-1517', pp. 211.

*Within its borders there are only a few places, Luchen, Huozhou, Turfan, Kashgar and Almaliq which have something of districts, habitations, fields, gardens and streets. In other locations although there are the former sites of derelict cities, their collapsed walls and ruined ramparts are all overgrown, and most people live among the mountain valleys.*⁴⁷⁵

The Khans and princes moved about, warred, hunted and feasted, and resorted to the six cities, which remained centres of commerce and learning. The Khans of Moghulistan were islamised since Tughluk-Timur, the first Khan of Moghulistan became a Muslim at the age of 24, in 1354.⁴⁷⁶ It was Tughluk-Temür's youngest son Khizir Khwāja, who became Khan in 1389, who brought Turfan into the Moghul realm, but it was not the only capital.

*Khizr-Khwaja Khan made victorious raids on Turfan and Qara Khwaja, which are inside Cathay, and which are the greatest citires in that realm, and brought them into the domains of Islam, as they are now. The capital of the Moghul Khans, after Kashgar, is there.*⁴⁷⁷

Khan Ways expelled the chief of Turfan in 1422, and we are told of him irrigating crops with well water at Turfan.⁴⁷⁸ Esen Buqa became ruler of eastern Moghulistan in 1428 followed by his brother Yunus in 1462. A mysterious ruler called Sultan 'Ali is identified with Yunus, but this is uncertain, as discussed below. Sultan Aḥmad, whose name is on one of the tribute letters in the Persian *laiwen* became ruler in 1478. His long rule lasted until Sultan Mansur became Khan in 1504. Despite repeated attacks on Hami carried out by these rulers, except for some short periods, tribute missions, compelled by commercial imperatives, continued to arrive throughout this time.⁴⁷⁹ Both Uighur and Persian were used. Letters in Uighur from Turfan bearing the names

⁴⁷⁵Chen Cheng, Zhou Liankuan eds., *Xiyu xingcheng ji, Xiyu fanguo zhi*, pp. 102-3.

⁴⁷⁶*Tarikh-i-rashidi* 6b; Thackston p. 4.

⁴⁷⁷*Tarikh-i-rashidi* 18b; Thackston p. 18.

⁴⁷⁸*Tarikh-i-rashidi* 23b; Thackston p. 24.

⁴⁷⁹Rossabi, 'Ming China and Turfan, 1406-1517', pp. 218, 221-2.

of Yunus Wang, Sultan ‘Ali Wang, Sultan Aḥmad and Sultan Mansur are collected in *Gaochangguan ke*.⁴⁸⁰

The practice began during *Yongle* of enfeoffing the legitimate rulers of Hami as *Zhongshun wang* 忠順王 (Loyal and Obedient Prince), and giving them patents and a gold seal. Hami was also made a *wei* 衛 or military post, and several of its princes were made *dudu*, 都督 military overseer, *dudu qianshi* 都督簽事 assistant military overseer, *duzhihui* 都指揮 military commander, and *baihu* 百戶 centenarius.⁴⁸¹ Thus Hami became the furthest outpost of the Ming Empire in Central Asia. This system worked well, and tribute missions arrived frequently during *Yongle*. After the death of the Yongle Emperor, there was an attempt to limit tribute missions to one per year.⁴⁸² This convenient arrangement with Hami continued for thirty four years after the death of the Yongle Emperor, but was brought to an end in 1460, the fourth year of Tianshun 天順, when the Hami *Zhongshun Wang* Bolod Temür (*Boluo Tiemuer* 勃羅帖木兒) died without leaving a son, and his mother Nu’undaşiri (*Nuwendashili* 弩溫答失里) became regent.⁴⁸³ No acceptable ruler could be found, and the situation deteriorated until 1473, the eighth year of *Chenghua* 成化, when Sultan ‘Ali of Turfan, taking advantage of the situation, attacked Hami, capturing the dowager princess, stealing the gold seal, and taking the former king’s granddaughters as his concubines.⁴⁸⁴ Laiwen VIII, a petition calling for help against Sultan ‘Ali’s attack on Hami, must date from this year, and it is the earliest date which can be established for any of the Persian *laiwen*.

The identity of Sultan ‘Ali remains a mystery. This *laiwen* confirms the name used in the Ming records, but the history of the Khans of Moghulistan makes no mention of a Sultan ‘Ali, and does not allude in any way to the invasion of Hami. Yunus Khan was the ruler of Moghulistan at that time, and so historians identify him as Sultan ‘Ali, but

⁴⁸⁰Hu Zhenhua, Huang Runhua, *Mingdai wenxian “Gaochangguan ke”: Ladingwen zimu yizhu*, pp. 9, 11, 14, 16, 31, 32, 33, 65, 70.

⁴⁸¹*Ming shi* 329, p. 8512.

⁴⁸²*Ming shi* 329, p. 8513.

⁴⁸³These events are summarised in Lam, Yuan-chu, ‘Memoir on the Campaign against Turfan: an annotated translation of Hsü Chin’s *P’ing-fan shih-mo* written in 1503’, *Journal of Asian History* 24, 2 (1990), pp. 110-12.

⁴⁸⁴*Ming shi* 329, p. 8516.

this cannot explain why, as the Khan, no exploits of Yunus in Hami have been written into the history.⁴⁸⁵ In fact there is little to identify Yunus with Turfan. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* records that he wished to stay in Aksu but when the Moghuls threatened to look elsewhere for a chief, the Khan repented and resolved not to pine for towns and cities any more.⁴⁸⁶ The possibility remains that Yunus did not lead the attack on Hami, and that Sultan ‘Ali is a different person. Among the glossed tribute lists in *Gaochangguan ke*, one lists tribute from Sultan ‘Ali Wang, and another from Yunus Wang.⁴⁸⁷

Yunus was succeeded by his son Sultan Aḥmad in 1478 who continued the attacks on Hami. In 1492 Shanba 陝巴 was established as *Zhongshun Wang*, at Hami, with a seal and robes, and several *dudu qianshi* and *dudu* were assigned to support him. But Aḥmad attacked Hami again the following year, and took Shanba captive to Turfan. The court decided to shut off tribute with Turfan in 1495,⁴⁸⁸ and 172 of Aḥmad’s ambassadors were detained. There were three ethnic groups living in Hami, Muslims (回回 *Huihui*), Uighurs (畏兀兒 *Wei wuer*) and Qara Qoi (哈刺灰 *Hala hui*),⁴⁸⁹ each having its own *dudu*. These three peoples of Hami migrated *en masse* to Ganzhou, within the Jiayuguan barrier. Hanshen’s younger brother, the Uighur Dudu Yanke Bola (Yanke beila 奄克孛剌) was put in overall charge of Hami matters, with Muslim Dudu Sayyid Ḥusain (Xieyi Huxian 寫亦虎仙) and Qara Qoi Dudu Baidielimishi 拜迭力迷失 supporting him and leading their own peoples. Sayyid Ḥusain is mentioned in one and possibly more of the Persian *laiwen*. He was possibly the author of Laiwen II, a petition requesting temple status for a newly renovated mosque in Ganzhou, which possibly dates from this period, as it is a time when Muslims were fleeing Hami and moving to the safety of the Chinese cities. In 1497, the tenth year of *Hongzhi*, Yanke Bola sent Sayyid Ḥusain to pay tribute at Court. *Ming shi* records that he was rude and overstayed his welcome:

⁴⁸⁵Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, p. 222.

⁴⁸⁶*Tarikh-i-rashidi* 31b, Thackston p. 33.

⁴⁸⁷Hu Zhenhua, Huang Runhua, *Mingdai wenxian “Gaochangguan ke”: Ladingwen zimu yizhu*, pp. 31, 32.

⁴⁸⁸Rossabi, ‘Ming China and Turfan’ p. 220. Cf. Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden*, pp. 238-239.

⁴⁸⁹Wang Zongzai, *Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 3. Pelliot discusses this group in Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, p. 132.

*There was no prince (wang 王) at Hami at that time, and Yanke Bola served as its leader. In 1497, the tenth year of Hongzhi, he sent Sayyid Husain and others of his associates to come and pay tribute, and they were given presents of five thousand pieces of silk to repay their expenses. But the ambassadors stayed for a long time, and displayed a lot of boastful and disorderly conduct, so that Xu Qiong 徐瓊, an official in the Board of Rites, made an extreme complaint about their misdeeds, and they were expelled.*⁴⁹⁰

時哈密無王，奄克孛刺為之長。十年遣其黨寫亦虎仙等來貢，給幣帛五千酬其直，使臣猶久留，大肆咆哮。禮官許瓊等極論其罪，乃驅之去。

When Shanba was released in 1497 and returned to Kuyu, Yanke Bola and Sayyid Husain were ordered to return and support him and he was ordered to go back to Hami.⁴⁹¹ The Turfan ambassadors, who had been detained since tribute relations were shut off in 1495, were released and sent home in 1499.⁴⁹² Laiwen III, in which an ambassador sent by Aḥmad, who has been living at the Court's expense, seeks an extension of his and other ambassadors' stipends until they have left China, could be from this year, which is the latest definite date for any of the *laiwen*. Sultan Aḥmad died and his brother Mansur became Sultan of Turfan in 1504. It would have been as Shanba's envoy that Sayyid Husain made another tribute mission in 1508, the third year of Zhengde. *Ming shi* records a second example of his misconduct during this visit, when he caused trouble by bypassing the interpreters and translators of the Huitongguan and the Persian College. Evidently none of the *laiwen* are from this trip.

*In 1508, the third year of Zhengde 正德, Sayyid Husain brought tribute, however he did not travel together with the interpreters (tongshi 通事), but holding the original documents from the border officers submitted them himself at the court. The Senior Interpreter Wang Yong was angry, and submitted a request that he be investigated and punished. But Chief Sayyid also memorialised about Wang Yong's demands. Wang Yong was one who waited on the Leopard House,⁴⁹³ and he was unrestrained and unreasonable. It was ordered that Sayyid should not be investigated or punished, and both were given warning edicts.*⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁰ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8520.

⁴⁹¹ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8520.

⁴⁹² *Ming shi* 329, p. 8532.

⁴⁹³ The Leopard House (Baofang 豹房) was a palace which the Emperor built for himself outside the city. He spent most of his time there, surrounded by his favourites, seldom returning to the harem in the Imperial Palace. Mao Qiling 毛奇齡, *Ming Wuzong waiji* 明武宗外記 (Shanghai, Shen Zhou guo Guang she, 1947), p. 13, and Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, p. 83.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8520.

正德三年，寫亦虎仙入貢，不與通事偕行，自攜邊臣文牒投進。大通事王永怒，疏請究治，寫酋亦奏永需求。永供奉豹房，恃寵恣橫。詔勿究治，兩戒諭之。

Ming shi records that in 1511, the sixth year of *Zhengde*, following a thaw in relations between Mansur and the Court, Sayyid Ḥusain and Dudu Manhalasan were ordered to escort back to Turfan Zhen Tiemuer 真帖木兒, a royal prince, Sultan Ahmad's son, who as an envoy of Turfan had been detained at the Chinese border during the closure of tribute relations with Turfan.⁴⁹⁵ The name Manhalasan 滿哈刺三 in the Chinese records appears to be a transposition of Manla Hasan 滿刺哈三, which is the name of Maula Hasan, the writer of Laiwen VI, a petition seeking documentary verification of his *dudu* status. As *Ming shi* records that he was a *dudu* in 1511, then the petition must be from some time before this, and can be no later than this. In winter of 1515, the tenth year of *Zhengde*, Sayyid Ḥusain brought tribute to the court at Beijing again,⁴⁹⁶ probably for the last time. This is the latest possible date for the Mosque petition, and for the short tribute form bearing the name Ḥusain, and the latest possible date which can be proposed for any of the *laiwen*.

Thus the earliest date for the Persian *laiwen* is 1473, the year Sultan 'Ali invaded Hami, and the latest is 1515, Sayyid Ḥusain's last tribute mission, which could relate to any of the Ḥusain letters. This period of forty-two years represents a time frame within which the dates of the other letters can be guessed at, and the date of compilation of the *Huihuiguan ke* and other *ke* collections, and the subsequent *Huayiyiyu* compilations must be later than this.

In 1516, the eleventh year of *Zhengde*, Sayyid Ḥusain and Maula Hasan were ordered to Turfan again, this time to return a hostage and a seal which had been stolen.⁴⁹⁷ It was apparently at this time that Sayyid Ḥusain formed a close association with Mansur which led to accusations of treason against him. The following year, 1517, the twelfth year of *Zhengde*, he was imprisoned for treason (*neiying* 內應), taken to Beijing in fetters and put in the Board of Punishments prison, where he languished for two years. In 1519, he managed through bribery to obtain a meeting with the Emperor. He and

⁴⁹⁵ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8521.

⁴⁹⁶ Wang Zongzai, *Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8522.

his nephew Mīr Muhammad somehow became immediate favourites, were given the Imperial Surname Zhu, and accompanied the Emperor on his progress south to Nanjing. He remained under the Emperor's personal protection for three years. It wasn't until the Zhengde Emperor died and the Jiaqing Emperor took over in 1522 that Sayyid Ḥusain was executed together with his nephew.⁴⁹⁸

Paul Pelliot in his essay *Le Hōja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming* sorts out a problem of compilation in the chapter on the Portuguese (*Fulangji* 佛朗機, Franks) in *Ming shi*, where Khwaja Hasan (Huoze Yasan 火者亞三), an interpreter from Malacca employed by the Portuguese ambassador Thomé Pires during his ill-fated diplomatic mission in 1520, is stated to have become the Emperor's intimate friend during the Emperor's sojourn in Nanjing. Pelliot shows that in the compilation of *Ming shi* Khwaja Hasan has been mistakenly confused with Mīr Muhammad, the nephew of Sayyid Ḥusain. Khwaja Hasan was in fact executed at Canton together with other members of Pires's mission, and never met the Emperor. It was Sayyid Ḥusain who became the Emperor's intimate. He was installed and feasted at the Huitongguan, accompanied the Emperor to Nanjing, and was openly insubordinate to court officials.⁴⁹⁹

The period in which the glossed *ke* texts were compiled coincides with the Zhengde Emperor's reign 1506-1522. An interesting statement in *Ming shi*, made about Khwaja Hasan, but by whom Sayyid Ḥusain is meant, is:

*The Emperor learned his language from time to time as a pastime.*⁵⁰⁰

帝時學其語以為戲。

The languages the Emperor learned from Sayyid Ḥusain, an Islamised prince of Hami, would have been Uighur and Persian. There is other evidence that the Zhengde Emperor was interested in languages in a short collection of historical anecdotes by

⁴⁹⁸ *Ming shi* 329, p. 8523. Bret Hinsch, in *Passions of the Cut Sleeve, the Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 142, suggests there was a sexual relationship between the Emperor and Sayyid Ḥusain, but doesn't provide any evidence for it.

⁴⁹⁹ Pelliot, *Le Hōja*, pp. 154-8.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ming shi* 325, p. 8430.

the Qing scholar Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 entitled *Ming Wuzong waiji* (明武宗外記, Unofficial notes about Wuzong of Ming) which states:

His Majesty was proficient in all the Sanskrit language in the Buddhist sutras, and promoted Rin-che Pal-den (Valuable Glory),⁵⁰¹ the Chan Master of the Dalongshan Temple as Imperial Tutor.⁵⁰²

上于佛經梵語無不通曉，乃陞大隆善寺禪師星吉班丹為國師。

An anonymous gazetteer of information about Tibet compiled some time after 1795, entitled *Wei Zang tongzhi* 衛藏通志 (Complete Gazetteer for Guarding Tibet), while commenting on Tibetan Buddhist titles which Wuzong had bestowed upon himself, repeats the words about his Sanskrit proficiency, adding further information about his language learning activities:

In the sixth month of the fifth year of the Zhengde period of Wuzong of Ming the Emperor styled himself Da Qing Fawang, Great Blessings Dharma Prince. He was proficient in all the Sanskrit language in the Buddhist sutras. After this the Emperor studied (xi 習) Mongolian (Dadayu 韃靼語) and named himself Kubilai. He studied Persian (Huihuiyu 回回語) and named himself Majīd-Allah (妙吉敖爛), “Glorious Allah”. He studied the language of the Tibetan monks (Fansengyu 番僧語, i.e. Tibetan), and named himself Rin-che Pal-den (Valuable Glory) (Lingji bandan 領吉班丹).⁵⁰³

明武宗正德五年六月。帝自稱大慶法王。帝於佛經梵語無不通曉。...其後帝習韃靼語，自名忽必烈，習回回語，自名妙吉敖爛，習番僧語，自名領吉班丹。

In each case Wuzong’s language learning was accompanied by religious enthusiasm. Thus while he learned Persian he also embraced Sufism, prohibited pork, and proclaimed the superiority of Islam.⁵⁰⁴ One record shows he recruited from Gansu 20 each of Mongolian, Muslim and Tibetan males under the age of 15 who knew Chinese and could write their own languages, to attend him.⁵⁰⁵ His spiritual and sybaritic approach to language learning seems very different from the uniform testing on

⁵⁰¹ *Xingji Banda* 星吉班丹 must be an error for *Lingji Banda* 領吉班丹, as the name appears in the Gazetteer for Guarding Tibet, *Wei Zang tongzhi*, vol. 1 pp. 16. Prof. Igor de Rachewiltz suggested to me the Tibetan title Rin-che Pal-den (‘Valuable Glory’).

⁵⁰² Mao Qiling, *Ming Wuzong waiji*, p. 14.

⁵⁰³ *Wei Zang tongzhi* 1, pp. 20rv. For the Tibetan name see note 504 above.

⁵⁰⁴ Teik, Toh Hoong, ‘Shaykh ‘Ālam: the Emperor of Early Sixteenth-century China’ *Sino-Platonic Papers* no. 110, October 2000. http://www.sino-platonic.org/complete/spp110_wuzong_emperor.pdf. pp. 1-10.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6.

glossed texts which might have been instituted during his reign, and it is hard to imagine him taking a personal interest in it. The *laiwen* are from the period following the invasion of Hami in 1473, the latest possible datings being 1511 or 1515 in the middle of the *Zhengde* reign. The inclusion among the *laiwen* of documents relating to Sayyid Ḥusain supports a compilation date in the *Zhengde* reign, as they might not have been included in a work compiled following his execution as a traitor after the *Zhengde* Emperor's death in 1521.

The *Huihuiguan laiwen* texts

The following are the Chinese and Persian texts in the Toyo Bunko manuscript,⁵⁰⁶ followed by Honda Minobu's transcriptions.⁵⁰⁷ The translations are from the Chinese text. The Persian glossings cannot be grammatically translated, and can only be understood by following the Chinese text word by word.

Laiwen I Tribute letter from Sultan Ahmad

No country name appears in this *laiwen* but it is evidently from Ahmad, who became Sultan of Turfan after the death of his father Sultan 'Ali in 1478.⁵⁰⁸ He sent tribute missions to the Ming Court until 1488, when the Emperor gave orders for Turfan embassies to be detained at Ganzhou, following Ahmad's attack on Hami and his killing of the Hami ruler Hanchen. Special missions bearing gifts of lions were sent in 1490 and 1491, but it was not until 1497 that regular tribute relations were resumed, until Ahmad's death in 1504. The letter must date either from the period 1478-1488 or the later period 1497-1504. None of the letters or tribute lists mention tribute gifts of lions, so the 1490 and 1491 missions are apparently not represented in these *laiwen*. This Chinese text appears to be a composite letter made up from translated portions of Ahmad's original letter and formal tribute-list phrases.

Before the Great Ming Emperor Sultan Ahmad Wang makes a petition. I am willing to exert strength with the Court. Now a petition is made requesting golden armour, golden helmets, sādāf and arrows, gold painted bows, carts decorated in all colours, porcelain vases decorated in all colours, pipas, guitars, flutes, and other items. Now I send ambassador ilchi Khwajah Māḥmā,

⁵⁰⁶Rare manuscript 华夷译语钞本 18 册 XI-5-2 Toyo Bunko, Tokyo.

⁵⁰⁷Honda Minobu, *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)*, pp. 64-73.

⁵⁰⁸*Ming shi* 329, p. 8515.

Ambassador Far' Alī, and others to bring tribute of argumaq horses, two; Mongolian horses two; and geldings, three. When they have gone, how will generosity be bestowed. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

大明皇帝前，速壇阿黑麻王奏。我情願與朝廷出氣力，今奏討金甲，金盔，金鞘刀，撒袋，箭描，金弓，各樣顏色粧的車，各樣顏色粧的磁瓶。琵琶，箏，笛，等件。今差使臣火只馬黑麻副（ ）阿力等，進貢阿魯骨馬二匹，韃靼馬二匹，驢馬三匹，去了怎生恩賜。奏得聖旨知道。

پیش دایمینک خان سلطان احمد وانک عرضه میدارید، ما براضی داده درگاه قوت برآمده، اکنون عرضه
تلبیده جوشن زررین، خود زررین، زر نیام کارد، ساداق تیر، زر نقش کمان، هرالوان رنگه‌ها آرایشی
دی کردون، هر الوان رنگه‌ها آرایشی دی کوزه، لاجودی، رباب، ایتغان، نای، دیکرالواع، اکنون
فرستاده ایلجی خواجه ماحم، ایلجی فرع علی غیره، تقدیم ارعوماق دو سر، اسب مغول دو سر، اخته
سه سر، برو شد، چگونه لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیغ بدانی

[p]īsh Dāimīn[g] Khan Sultān Aḥmad Vān[g] ‘arḡah mī-dārīd, mā ba-rāzī dādah
dar[g]āh quvvat bar-āmadah, aknū(n) ‘arḡah ṭalbīdah jaushan zarrīn, khūd zarrīn, zar
niyām kārđ, sādāgh tīr, zar naqsh kamān har ālvān ran[g]hā’ ārayishī dī [g]ardūn har
ālvān ran[g]hā’ ārayishī dī kūzh lājūr dī rabāb aitughān nāy dī[g]ar alvā’ aknūn
firistādah īl[ch]ī khwājah māḥmā īl[ch]ī far’(sic) ‘alī ghairah taqdīm ar’ūmāq dū sar
asb mughūl dū sar akhtah sih sar burau shud [ch]i[g]ūnah luṭf dihad ‘arḡah dāshtah
yarlīgh bi-dānī

1. The Persian text carefully follows the Chinese word order throughout, except *before the Great Ming Emperor* pish Dāimīng Khan, and *Mongolian horses*, asb mughūl, follow Persian word order.
2. The Mongolian and Turkish word *khān* is used to gloss *emperor* (皇帝 *huangdī*) in all the *laiwen*, instead of the Persian word *pādshāh*, which is used in the Tsurphu scroll, the letters to Shah Rukh and the Galle stone in Ceylon during *Yongle*. *Pādshāh* is listed in the main *Zazu* vocabulary, while *khān* appears in the additional *zengxu zazi* vocabulary, and could have been copied there from these *laiwen*.
3. *vān[g]* is a transcription of the Chinese *wang* 王, king.
4. *sādāgh* ساداق, a bow-case, transcribed in Chinese as *sadai* 撒袋. It appears twice in lists of tribute items from Turfan in *Da Ming huidian*.⁵⁰⁹ Serruys

⁵⁰⁹ *Da Ming huidian*, 107, p. 14r (p. 1609) and 112, p. 6r. (p. 1655).

notes several records of Mongolian Tumed tribute which include this item.⁵¹⁰ In this letter gold *sādāgh* are requested from the court as gifts.

5. *ar'ūmāq dū sar*. Two *argumaq* horses. *Argumaq* is a Turkish word for fast crossbred horses.⁵¹¹ The enumeration follows Chinese word order. The measure word for horses *pi* 匹 is represented by Persian *sar* “head”.

Laiwen II Petition from Sayyid Husain about a mosque

Sayyid Husain, a Muslim prince of Hami, first appears in 1491, the fourth year of *Hongzhi* 弘治, when the *Siyiguan kao* 四夷館考 records that he was sent from Hami to Turfan bearing an imperial letter for Ahmad.⁵¹² He must already have been a member of the Garrison personnel at that time, to be sent on that errand by the Ming court, but it is not until 1494 that we read of him being enfeoffed, like many of the Muslim, Uighur and Qara Qoi elite of Hami, as a military overseer with the title of *dudu* 都督.⁵¹³ Thus 1494 is the earliest possible date for this letter. The latest is 1515, Sayyid Husain's last tribute mission. This petition could have been made at any time until then. The mosque cannot be identified. A possible candidate is the The Multicolored Mosque *Huasi Qingzhensi* in Linxia City 临夏市 in Gansu, built during *Chenghua* 1465-1487.⁵¹⁴

Hami ambassador Dudu Sayyid Husain memorialises before the Great Ming Emperor. There are mosques built within cities in some places which have been given temple status by the Court. Now at an old-built mosque which was outside the city of Suzhou, on auspicious days, Muslims have gone into the mosque and burned incense and disciplined themselves, to worship heaven and pray for your Divine Life to be extended for thousands of years. Now we look up to you beseeching that the Court will view us with pity and give this mosque temple status. This is all the Court's welfare. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

哈密使臣都督寫亦虎仙，大明皇帝前奏。有各處城裏蓋的禮拜寺，蒙朝廷都與了寺額。今肅州城外原有舊蓋的禮拜寺，有好日期，回回人去寺裏焚修，拜

⁵¹⁰H. Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming II*, pp. 208-9.

⁵¹¹For the etymology of this word see Zhong Han 钟焯, 'Aluguma yi ci de yuyuan yu benyi' 阿鲁骨马一词的语源与本义, *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 1 (2005), p. 63.

⁵¹²Wang Zongzai, *Siyiguan kao* 2, p. 3.

⁵¹³Goodrich ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 1152.

⁵¹⁴Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects* (Richmond: Curzon Press 1999), p. 119.

天祝延聖壽萬萬年。今仰望朝廷可憐見，將這禮拜寺給與寺額，都是朝廷的福利，奏得聖旨知道。

قامل ایلجی دودو سید حسین بیش دایمینک خان عرضه میدارید هست هر جای شهر استرقاع دی اداب
نیاز مسجد عنایت درکان همه داده شد مسجد بیشانی اکنون سو جیوشهر بیرون اول هست کهنه قاع دی
ادب نیاز بوی بسوزد نیاز استمان دعاکو کوینده عمر تمن تمن سال اکنون امید واری درگاه رحم نماع
زیانک این آدب نیاز مسجد بدهد داده مسجد بیشانی همه ازانی همه درگاه دی دولت سود عرضه داشته
یرلیغ بدانی

Qāmul īl[ch]ī dūdū sayyid ḥusain [p]īsh dāīmīn[g] khan ‘arḥah mī-dārīd hast har jāy
shahr astar qā’ dī adab niyāz masjid ‘anāyat dar[g]ān hamah dādah shud masjid
[p]īshānī aknūn sū jīū shahr bīrūn avval hast kuhnah qā’ dī adab niyāz būy bi-sūzad
niyāz āstmān du’ā-[g]ū [g]ūyandah ‘umr tuman tuman sāl aknūn umīd vārī (sic)
dar[g]āh raḥm numā’ ziyān[g] īn adab niyāz masjid bi-dihad dādah masjid [p]īshānī
hamah azānī hamah dar[g]āh dī daulat sūd ‘arḥah dāshtah yarlīgh bi-dānī

1. *adab niyāz masjid* is a word-by-word gloss for *libaisi* 禮拜寺.
2. *masjid [p]īshānī*, the mark of a mosque.
3. Suzhou 肅州 is transliterated *Sūjīyū*.
4. A short section of the Chinese text 有好日期，回回人去寺裏 is omitted in the Persian glossing.
5. 將 is transliterated *ziyāng*.

Laiwen III Petition about an ambassador’s stipend.

This second letter bearing Aḥmad’s name is a petition by an ambassador of Sultan Aḥmad who has been living at the expense of the court, seeking an extension of the court stipend for himself and other ambassadors who will be leaving China. He could have been one of the 127 ambassadors who were detained in 1492 and released in 1499. That would date this petition in 1499, as it is from the ambassadors at the time they are leaving. That there were a number of ambassadors concerned in this petition is shown by the translator’s use of the pluraliser *mei* 每 in “your servants” *nubimei* 奴婢每,⁵¹⁵ glossed in Persian as *banda[g]ān*, plural of *bandah*.

Sāli-bāshī, an ambassador sent here by the Wang of Turfan in the west, petitions before the flooding happiness of the Great Ming Emperor. It was Sultan Ahmad

⁵¹⁵Hu Zhenhua, *Mingdai “Gaochang guan ke”* p. 115 and elsewhere gives examples of this plural, and also *nimei* 你每; you, plural, p. 144.

Wang who sent your servant, acting in obedience to the court, to proceed beneath the Golden Doorway and knock my head and bring tribute. We have been well-treated. Everything your servants have worn and eaten since entering the border is from the Court. Now it is hoped that the Court will have pity on us. When your servants arrive at Ganzhou, may our stipends not be stopped until your servants have gone outside the border. Petitioning so that the sacred command will be known.

迤西土魯番王差來使臣撒里把失，大明皇帝洪福前奏，有速壇阿黑麻王差奴婢，為歸順朝廷，赴金闕下叩頭進貢。蒙重賞賜了，奴婢每自入境來穿的喫的都是朝廷的。今仰望朝廷可憐見，奴婢每若到甘州，將廩給休住了，待奴婢每出境。奏得聖旨知道。

طرف مغرب طرفان وانک فرستاده آمده ایلجی سالی بائی بیش دایمینک خان دولت بزرک عرضه میدارد
هست سلطان احمد وانک فرستاده بنده برای انقیاد درگاه به زیراستانه زرین سر زده تقدیم عنایت کران
تشریقهاش شد بندکان از درآمده نواحی آمده پوشش دی حورده دی همه ازانی درگاه دی اکنون امید وارم درگاه
رهم نماع بندکان اگر رسیده قمجی زیانک علوفه مکن باش شد صیافت بندکان برآمده نواحی عرضه داشته
یرلیغ بدانی

ṭaraf-maghrib ṭurfān vān[g] firistādah āmadah īl[ch]ī sālī-bāshī [p]īsh dāīmīn[g] khan
daulat buzur[g] ‘arṣah mī-darad hast sulṭān aḥmad vān[g] firistādah bandah barāy
inqiyād dar[g]āh bah zīr āsitānah zarrīn sar zadah taqdīm ‘anāyat [g]īran tashrīfhā
shud banda[g]ān az dar-āmadah navāhī āmadeh pūshīsh dī khūrdah dī hamah azānī
dar[g]āh dī aknūn ‘umīd vāram dar[g]āh raḥm numā’ banda[g]ān a[g]ar rasīdah qamjū
ziyān[g] ‘alūfah ma-kun bāsh shud shiyāfat banda[g]ān bar-āmadah navāhī (borders)
‘arṣah dāshtah yarlīgh bi-dānī

1. *Taraf-i maghrib*, towards the west, is an epithet of Ṭurfān, but it has been mistakenly included as a country name in *Zengxu zazi*, evidently copied from this *laiwen*.

Laiwen IV Tribute letter from Sulṭān Zamān Wang of the land of Balkh.

Abū Sa‘īd’s son Sulṭān Aḥmad ruled the Timurid Empire 1469-94, so Zamān, whose identity is unknown, must be his subordinate in Balkh.

Sulṭān Zamān Wang of the land of Balkh petitions the Great Ming Emperor. Your empire’s lands eternally flourish. Your justice and reason are equal to Taizong of Tang (Noshirwan the Just). Your servant acts according to the old

principle, not daring to rebel or disobey. Now your servant has been sent to bring tribute of western (Arabian) horses, two head; hoping and beseeching to receive benefits.

白勒黑地面速壇宰蠻王，奏大命皇帝。國土永昌，公道如唐太宗一般。奴婢蒙本國王照舊道理而行，不敢悖逆。今差奴婢進貢，西馬二匹，望乞收受便益

ديار بلخ سلطان زمان وانك عرضه ميدارد دایمینك خان مملكت خاك يونك چانك عدل طریقت جون
نوشوان یکسان بنده عنایت عین مملکت وانك بمثال کهنه طریقتها ره رفته نه یارند مخالف یاغی اکنون
فرستاده بنده تقدیم اسب تازی دو سر امید که قبول بغندارید اسانی شود

Diyār balkh sulṭān zamān vān[g] ‘arṣah mī-dārad dāīmīn[g] khān mamlakat khāk
yūn[g] chān[g] ‘adl ṭarīqat [ch]ūn nūshvān yaksān bandah ‘anāyat ‘ain mamlakat
vān[g] ba-miṣāl kuhnah ṭarīqathā’ rah raftah nah yārand mukhālif yāghi aknūn
firistādah bandah taqdīm asb tāzī dū sar umīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārid āsānī shavad.

1. Most of the Persian text follows the Chinese word for word, but *asb taazi*, Arabian horses, follows Persian word order.
2. 永昌 *yongchang* eternally flourish, is transcribed in Persian as yūn[g] chān[g].
3. 望乞 *wang qi* hoping and beseeching. 望 is translated as *umīd* and 乞 is transcribed as *kih*. This curious doublet is used in several of the *laiwen*.
4. *Nūshvān yaksān, Equal to Noshirwan the Just*. We cannot know to which historical figure the original Persian letter alluded. The translator rendered it as 唐太宗 *Taizong of Tang*. In the Persian gloss it is *nūshvān*, which must be an abbreviated or miscopied form of *noshīrvān*, which goes with the previous word justice, ‘*adl*, to form an allusion to *Noshirwan i-Adil* or Noshirwan the Just, one of the titles of Khosrau I, the twentieth Sassanid Emperor, during whose reign from 531 to 579 the Sassanid Empire reached its peak of glory and prosperity.⁵¹⁶ This is the only instance of the translation of a culturally bound idiom in the *laiwen*. The translator who did the Persian glossing must have known or been able to guess the original Persian allusion.

⁵¹⁶Percy Molesworth Sykes, *A History of Persia* (London: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 449ff.

Laiwen V Khwājah Hamdūng's request for a travel permit.

This is Amiot's *13ième supplique*. It is the only example of a petition from beyond the tributary circle, although Khwājah Hamdūng might have travelled to China with a diplomatic mission. There is no way to date it.

Khwāja Hamdūn(g) of the land of Damascus petitions before the Great Ming Emperor. Your servant is a devotee. For more than forty years until now I have not used fire to prepare food, but have only eaten fruits. Now I hope that the royal kindness will have pity and give your servant a written letter to travel everywhere for religious purposes. Wishing the sacred lifetime will last for myriads of years.

敵米石地面火只罕東，大明皇帝前奏，奴婢是出家人，經今四十餘年不用煙火食，只用果子。今望聖恩憐憫與奴婢一紙文書，各處遊方行走。祝延聖壽萬萬歲。

دیار دمشق خواجه همدونک بیش دایمینک خان عرضه میدارد بنده ازانی درویشان قران اکنون چهل زیادت سال نه بایسته بخار آتش نعمت همین بایسته میوه هاع اکنون امید لطف شاهی رهم فرماید داده بنده یک کاغز نامه‌اع هرجان سیاحته اطراف رفته دویده دعاگویند عمر شاهی تمن تمن سالکی

Diyār dimishq khwājah hamdūn[g] [p]īsh dāīmīn[g] khān ‘arṣah mī-dārad bandah azānī darvīshān qur’ān aknūn [ch]ihil ziyādat sāl nah bāyistah bukhār ātish na’mat hamīn bāyistah mīvahhā’ aknūn umīd luṭf shāhī raḥm farmāyīd dādah bandah yak kāghaz nāmhā’ har jān siyāhatah āṭrāf raftah dawīdah du‘ākawand ‘umr shāhī tuman tuman sāla[g]ī

1. *Darvīshān*, devotee, for 出家人. This is a rare instance where a single Persian word is given, instead of word-by-word glossing.
2. 經今 *until now* is glossed in Persian as *qur’ān aknūn*. This is a deliberate use of *qur’ān*, to gloss *jīng* 經 holy book for *jīng* 經 *until*.
3. 用 *yong* once meaning “used” and once “eaten” is glossed both times with Persian *bāyistah*, necessary, needful.
4. The words corresponding to 各處遊方行走 *to travel everywhere for religious purposes* are omitted in the Persian text.

VI Personnel request from Maulā Ḥasan of Hami Garrison

This is Amiot's 14^{ème} *supplique*. Maulā Ḥasan is a prince of Hami, enfeoffed by the court as *Dudu*, senior military officer in charge of the *Wei* at Hami, who petitioned the court in Persian, seeking official confirmation of his status. *Ming shi* records a mission by Dudu Maulā Ḥasan to Turfan in 1511, so this letter is from before then (see above).

Ambassador Manlā or Maulā Ḥasan of Hami garrison before the high throne petitions: your servant originally had the office of assistant chief commissioner (dudu qianshi). Now royal kindness has been received, promoting your servant to the office of chief commissioner (dudu). There is the rule that the imperial orders should be re-issued and the names changed. I beg to receive favour according to the old rule.

哈密衛使臣滿刺哈三，上位前奏，奴婢原是都督簽事職事，今蒙聖恩陞奴婢都督職事，有例該更敕，換名，乞照舊例便益。

قامل وی ایلجی منلا حسن بیش بالاع تخت عرضه میدارد، بنده اول ازانی دودو سیام شی مرتبه کار، اکنون عنایت لطف شاهی، منصب بنده دودو مرتبه کار. هست قولی لایق پاس فرمان، بدل نام، که بمثال قولی کهنه اسانی شود

Qāmul vai īl[ch]ī manlā ḥasan [p]īsh bālāyi-takht ‘arḡah mī-dārad bandah avval āzānī dūdū siyām shī martabah kār aknūn ‘anāyat luṭf shāhī manṣīb bandah dūdū martabah kār hast qaulī lāyiq pās farmān badal nām kih miṣāl qaulī kuhnah āsānī shavad

1. Vai transcribes *wei*, garrison.
2. Persian follows Chinese word for word, except for [p]īsh bālāyi-takht *before the high throne*, luṭf shāhī *royal kindness*, and qauli kuhnah *the old rule*, which follow Persian word order.
3. *Dudu* 都, Chief Commissioner or military overseer is transcribed into Persian as *dūdū*. *Qianshi* 簽事, assistant, is transcribed into Persian as [ch]iyām shī.
4. The Chinese double *office* 職事 is glossed with Persian *martaba* مرتبه *office* and *kār* equivalent to 事 *matter*.
5. *Qi* 乞 “beg” is transcribed kih. Elsewhere the translated-transcribed doublet *umīd kih* “hoping and entreating” appears.

Laiwen VII Tribute letter from Ja'far Ṣādiq Wang of Baṣra.

This is Amiot's 15^{ème} *supplique*. The monarch Ja'far Ṣādiq can't be identified, but he was probably a ruler of Basra before it was incorporated into the Savaḡid Empire in 1508. It is an example of a composite tribute letter, where the initial diplomatic flourishes are evidently translated from the Basra sovereign's letter, while the latter part consists of standard tribute list phrases.

The Great Ming Emperor is as bright as the sun and moon. His will surpasses earth and sky, far and near under heaven there is no place where it does not reach. Your servant is Ambassador Maimūn sent here by Ja'far Ṣādiq Wang of the land of Baṣra now bringing to court gold coin (spotted) leopards, one pair; entreating according to the rule to be rewarded with benefits.

大明皇帝，明同日月，志過乾坤，天下遠近，無所不至，奴婢是白思勒地面，者法兒撒的革王差來使臣買模，今進金錢豹一對，乞照例給賞便益。

دایمینک خان روشن برابر افتاب ماه، همت کدشته سماع ارض، روی زمین دور نزدیک، نیست شوی نه رسید. بنده ازانی دیار بصره، جفار صادق وانک فرستاده آمده ایلجی میمون، اکنون کشش یوز قار یک دوع، که بمثال قولی بدهد تشریفهای آسانی شود

Dāīmīn[g] khān raushan barābar āftāb māh himmat [g]uzashtah samā' arṣ rūy zamān dūr nazdīk nist shūy nah rasīd bandah āzānī diyār baṣrah jafār ṣādiq vān[g] firistādah āmadah īl[ch]ī maimūn aknūn kashish yūz-qār yak dū' kih ba-miṣāl qaulī bedahad tashrīfhāy āsānī shaved

1. rūy zamān, on earth, for 天下. This is also used in the Tsurphu scroll translation. (See Tsurphu scroll chapter).
2. 白思勒地面 *Baisile dimian* the land of Baṣra is glossed *diyār Bashrah* following Persian word order, not Chinese.
3. 無所不至 *wu suo bu zhi* there is no place where it does not reach is glossed *nist shūy nah rasīd*, where *shūy* is a transcription of *suo*.
4. 差來 *chai lai*, sent here, is glossed *firistādah āmadah* “, sent come”.
5. *Kih* here transcribes 乞, entreating

Laiwen VIII Hami's appeal for help against the attack by Sultan 'Ali

This letter refers to the invasion of Hami in 1473.

The letter

Born of highest heaven, heaven and earth's master and protector, Great Ming Immense Fortune Emperor, may your fortune and life last long. Your servant is Ilchi Husain, sent here from Hami. Now Sultan Ali Wang of the land of Turfan has led an army and attacked the city and reservoirs of Hami, killing many people. Now royal kindness and pity zī sū (cixu 慈恤,) for far off people are hoped for, for a general to be sent to go there to help. Making the petition to know the command.

上天化生，乾坤之主，護佑，大明洪福皇帝，福壽延長。奴婢是哈密差來使臣虎仙，今有土魯番地面速壇阿力王，引兵攻圍哈密城池，殺死人眾。今望聖恩慈恤遠人，遣將前去救濟生靈。奏得聖旨知道。

خزاوند تعالی قدرت سماع ارض جی خاوند حمایت، دایمینک دولت بزرک خان، دولت عمر پاینده دراز، بنده ازانی کامل فرستاده آمده ایلجی حسین، اکنون هست دیار طرفان سلطان علی وانک، دلالت سپاه کرد بیج رمیده قام ل شهر خوضچه، کشته مرده کسی جمع، اکنون امید لطف شاهی صی سوع دور کسان، فرستاده مبارز بیش برو فریاد رس خلائقان، عرضه داشته برلیع بدانی

khuzāvand-ta'ālā qudrat samā' arẓ jī khāvand ḥimāyat dāīmīn[g]daulat buzur[g] khān
daulat 'umr pāyandah darāz bandah azānī qāmul firistādah āmadah il[ch]ī ḥusain
aknūn hast diyār ṭurfān sulṭān 'alī vān[g] dalālat sipāh kard-bīj-ramīda (sic) qāmul
shahr ḥauẓchah kushtah murdah kasī jam' aknūn umīd luṭf shāhī zī sū' dūr kasān
firistādah mubāriz [p]īsh burau faryād r? s (sic) khālā'iqān 'arẓah dāshtah yarlīgh bi-
dānī

1. The Persian version follows the Chinese word order closely, reproducing Chinese grammar forms such as *firistādah mubāriz pish burau (baran)* send a general forward to go 遣將前去, and *daulat 'umr pāyandah darāz* (may your) good fortune and life extend long 福壽延長, and *samā' arẓ jī khāvand*, master of heaven and earth 乾坤之主, where *jī* is a transliteration of 之.

2. *khuzāwand-i-ta'āla* is made up of *khazāwand*, a dialect form of Persian *khudāwand* (king, lord),⁵¹⁷ and *ta'āla* (highest). The same dialect form *khuzāwand* appears in the additional word list *Zengxu zazi*.⁵¹⁸
3. *ḥauṣchah*, reservoirs. This diminutive form of *ḥauṣ* also appears in *Zengxu zazi*.
4. Now we hope your royal kindness will pity far-off people 今望聖恩慈恤遠人 is rendered *aknūn umīd luṭf shāhi zī sū kasān*, where *zī sū* is a simple transcription of 慈恤, pity.
5. *luṭf shāhi* royal kindness follows Persian, not Chinese word order.

Laiwen IX Tribute letter from Egypt

Within the period identified by the other *laiwen*, the sender of this *laiwen* is probably Al-Malik al-Ashraf Sayf al-dīn Qāyṭbāy, who was the eighteenth Burji Mamluk Sultan of Egypt from 1468 to 1496. His reign fell into two parts, first a period of consolidation of power and travel and rich patronage of cities up to 1481, then a period of internal rebellion, outbreaks of plague, which decimated the population, and attacks by the Ottoman Empire, which was eventually to conquer Egypt.⁵¹⁹ It is likely the embassy bearing this letter was sent in the earlier period. Qāyṭbāy's title of honour Malik ملك, king (*mailike* 脉力克) would have appeared first on his letter, and was evidently chosen by the Huihuiguan translator to serve as a shortened form of his name in the Chinese translation. The phrase *according to the example of my father and grandfather* could refer to two earlier tribute missions from Egypt recorded in *Ming shi*, one in the middle of *Yongle*, and another in 1441, the sixth year of *Zhengtong* 正統.⁵²⁰ The monarch who sent the first embassy is not named. It could have been al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj, who ruled from 1399 to 1412, the son of al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq, (the founder of the regime of the Circassian Mamlūks or Burji Sultans who ruled Egypt from 1382 to 1517), or his successor al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh who

⁵¹⁷Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 325.

⁵¹⁸It is the first word under the first heading, Astronomy (Tianwen men). See below.

⁵¹⁹Petry, C. F., *Twilight of majesty: the reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashrāf Qāyṭbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993, pp. 73-88.

⁵²⁰*Ming shi* 332, p. 8619.

ruled from 1412 to 1421.⁵²¹ The 1441 embassy is recorded as from Prince Sultan Ashraf, (*Wang suolutan Ashilafu* 王鎖魯檀阿失刺福), who can be identified as Ashraf Sayf al-dīn Barsbāy, who was the ninth Burji Mamluk sultan of Egypt from AD 1422 to 1438.⁵²² Barsbāy's title of honour Ashrāf اشراف exalted, noble, which would have appeared first on his letter, was chosen by the Huihuiguan translator to represent his full name. There is a problem with the date of this mission, which Bretschneider tries to explain by observing that although this monarch died in June 1438, it is not unlikely that the envoy did not reach China until three years later.⁵²³ However this same mission is mentioned in the Turfan chapter in *Ming shi* as passing through Turfan on its return journey in 1441,⁵²⁴ and it is possible that the date is mixed up, and it arrived in China earlier. The record informs us that the Egyptian missions travelled by the overland, not the sea route.

Master of the world, the Emperor rules all living people in the world; none does not gladly submit. All obtain courage and faith. Mailike, King of the small country of Mishr petitions (zou). Now according to the example of my fathers and grandfathers I have specially sent Ambassador Guri to bring argumak horses, three, hoping to receive benefits according to the rule.

世主皇帝統理天下生民，罔不悅服，咸得膽仰。微小蜜思兒國王脉力克奏，今照我父祖的例，特差使臣古禮，進阿魯骨馬三匹。望照例收受便益。

جهان خاوند ضیبت طریقتہ روی زمین زاده رعیت، وانک نہ خشنون فو، همکان یافتہ مناظرہ، کمترہ مصر مملکت وانک ملکہ عرضہ میدارد، اکنون بمثال ما پدر جد دی قولی، علی الخصوص فرستادہ ایلجی کری کشش ارعوماق سہ سر، امید بمثال قولی قبول بغندارید آسانی شود

Jahān khāvand zābt tariqatah rūy zamīn zādah ra'īyat, vān[g] nah khushnūn fū, hama-[g]ān yāftah manāzīrah, kamtarah miṣr mamlakat vān[g] malikah 'arṣah mī-dārad. aknūn ba-miṣāl mā padar jadd dī qaulī, 'alā'l-khuṣūṣ firistādah īl[ch]ī [g]urī kashish ar'ūmāq sih sar umīd ba-miṣāl qaulī qabūl bi-ghandārid āsānī shavad

⁵²¹Garcin, Jean-Claude, 'The regime of the Circassian Mamlūks', in Carl F. Petry ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 291-2.

⁵²²Garcin, 'The regime of the Circassian Mamlūks', pp. 293-4.

⁵²³Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches* 2, pp. 308-9.

⁵²⁴*Ming shi* 329, p. 8529.

1. Persian words follow the Chinese words one by one. Chinese *none does not gladly submit* 罔不悅服 (*wang bu yue fu*) is rendered *vān[g] na khushnūd fū*, where *wang* and *fu* are transcribed and the other words translated.
2. Chinese *according to the example of my father and grandfather* 照我父祖的例 (*zhao wo fu zu de li*) is rendered *ba-miṣāl mā padar jadd dī qaulī*, where *dī* is a transcription of Chinese possessive *de*.

Short tribute forms

The remaining seventeen *laiwen*, Laiwen X-XXIV are not letters, but are all examples of shorter and longer form tribute lists, *fangwuzhuang* 方物狀 in which the same formula is used, with the insertion of different information. Twelve of the *laiwen* are examples of the same shorter tribute form, and five are examples of the same longer tribute form.

Three short tribute forms list tribute from Samarkand.

Laiwen X

Ambassador 'Ali of Samarkand before the Great Ming Emperor presents two camels and fifty jin of jade hoping they are acceptable, and requesting coloured silks and fever medicine, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

撒馬兒罕阿力使臣，大明皇帝前，進貢駝二隻，玉石五十斤，望乞收受。求討
各色段子，熱藥。望乞恩賜。奏得聖旨知道。

سمرقند ایلی علی بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم اشتر دو جی، یشم سنک بنجاه من، امید که قبول بغندارید،
درخواستن هر رنگ توار، کرم دارو، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Samarqand īl(ch)ī ‘alī (p)īsh dāīmin(g) khān taqdīm ushtur dū jī, yasm san(g) (p)anjāh mann, ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd, dar-khwāstan har ran(g) tuvār (g)arm dārū, ūmīd kih luṭf dihad, ‘arṣa dāshtāh yarlīgh bi-dānī.

1. Measure word for camels *er zhi* transliterated *dū jī*.
2. The translated-transcribed doublet *ūmīd kih* for 望乞 is used in all the tribute forms.

Laiwen XI

Ambassador Hāfīz of Samarkand before the Great Ming Emperor presents six western horses, and one hundred small swords, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gold woven cloth and tea leaves, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

撒馬兒罕哈非子使臣，大明皇帝前，進貢西馬六匹，小刀一百把。望乞收受，求討織金段子，茶葉。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

سمرقند ایلجی حافظ ببش دایمینک خان تقدیم اسب تازی شش سر، کارد حرد یک صد دسته، امید که قبول بغندارید، درخواستن توار زربفت چایه، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Samarqand īl(ch)ī Hāfīz (p)īsh dāmin(g) khan taqdīm asb tāzi shash sar kārđ khurd yak sad dastah ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd, dar-khwāstan tuvār zar-baft chā yah ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. īlchī Hāfīz of Samarqand is also named as tribute-bearer in Laiwen XXIII.
2. In Persian western horse *asb tāzi* is in Persian word order. The measure word for knives is *dastah*, handle. Tea leaves is transliterated as *chā yah*.

Laiwen XII

Ambassador Darvīsh of Samarkand before the Great Ming Emperor presents two argumaq horses and two western horses, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting silks, chiffons and tea leaves, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

撒馬兒罕得兒月失使臣，大明皇帝前，進貢阿魯骨馬二匹，西馬二匹。望乞收受，求討段子絹茶葉望乞恩賜奏得聖旨知道。

سمرقند ایلجی درویش پیشدایمینک خان تقدیم ارعوماق دو سار، اسب تازی دو سر، امید که قبول بغندارید، درخواستن توار تورقو، چایه، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Samarqand īl(ch)ī darvīsh (p)īsh dāmin(g) khan taqdīm ar’ūmāq dū sar asb tāzi dū sar ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd, dar-khwāstan tuvār tūrqu chā yah ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. *Asb tāzi* in Persian word order.

Three short tribute forms list tribute from Mecca (*Tianfang* 天方).

Laiwen XIII

Ambassador Tāj'ud-dīn of Mecca before the Great Ming Emperor presents one hundred and fifty catties of jade, and ten western horses, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gauze cloth, tea leaves, porcelain bowls and plates., hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

天方國使臣塔主丁, 大明皇帝前, 進貢玉石一百五十斤, 西馬十匹. 望乞收受, 求討羅段, 茶葉, 磁碗, 磁盤, 望乞恩賜, 奏得聖旨知道.

مملکت کعه ایلجی تاج الدین بیشدایمینک خان تقدیم سنک یشم یک من بنجاه, اسب تازی ده سر, درخواستن لای قطع, چایه, کاشه لاجوردی طبق لاجوردی, امید که لطف دهد, عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Mamlakat ka'bah il(ch)ī tāj'ud-dīn (p)īsh dāīmīn(g) khan taqdīm san(g) yashm yak sad (p)anjāh mann asb tāzi dah sar, dar-khwāstan lāy qat' chā yah kasha lājūrdī tabaq lājūrdī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad 'arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. *kasha lājūrdī tabaq lājūrdī*, porcelain bowls and plates, follow Persian noun-adjective word order.

Laiwen XIV

Ambassador Nūru'd-dīn of Mecca before the Great Ming Emperor presents ten ar'ūmāq horses and two hundred catties of jade, and requesting gold woven cloth and gauze chiffon, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

天方國使臣奴兒丁, 大明皇帝前, 進貢阿魯骨馬十匹, 玉石二百斤, 求討織金段子, 羅絹, 望乞恩賜, 奏得聖旨知道.

مملکت کعه ایلجی نورالین بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم ار عوماق ده سر, یشم سنک دویست من, درخواستن توار زربفت, لای تورقو, امید که لطف دهد, عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Mamlakat ka'bah il(ch)ī nūru'd-dīn (p)īsh dāīmīn(g) khan taqdīm ar'ūmāq dah sar yashm san(g) duvist mann, dar-khwāstan tuvār zar-baft lāy tūrqū ūmīd kih luṭf dihad 'arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. hoping they are acceptable, 望乞收受 *ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd* is omitted in this list.

Laiwen XV

Ambassador 'Alā'u'd-dīn of Mecca before the Great Ming Emperor presents ten pieces of sūf, fifty catties of jade and twenty pairs of eyeglasses, and requesting

gold woven cloth, gauze of all colours, wine, and gold document paper, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

天方國使臣阿老丁，大明皇帝前，進貢梭甫十段，玉石五十斤，眼鏡二十副，求討織金各色羅段茶葉酒金箋紙望乞恩賜奏得聖旨知道。

مملکت کعبه ایلجی علی الدین بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم صوف ده قطعه، یشم سنک بنجاه من، عنایت بیست
فو، درخواستن زربفت هر رنگ لای قطعه، کاغز زر شاش، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Mamlakat ka'bah īl(ch)ī 'alā'u'd-dīn (p)īsh dāimin(g) khan taqdīm sūf dah qat'ah
yashm san(g) (p)anjāh mann 'anayat bist fu, dar-khwāstan zar-baft har ran(g) lāy
qat'ah, kāghaz, zar shāsh, ūmīd kih luṭf dihad, 'arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

- 1 *ṣūf* is a fine woollen cloth.⁵²⁵ The measure word *piece* is translated to Persian equivalent, and catty to Persian weight measure *mann*.
2. Here and in Laiwen XXV are interesting examples of spectacles used as tribute items. The Chinese word used here is *yanjing* 眼鏡, which appears in the list of tribute items from Tianfang recorded in *Da Ming Huidian*.⁵²⁶ No quantities of tribute items are recorded in the *Da Ming Huidian* lists, and this letter and Laiwen XXV each provide quantities of twenty pairs of this valuable item. Tribute of spectacles from Samarkand is also recorded in the tribute lists in *Da Ming Huidian*.⁵²⁷ Duyvendak cites several authors, showing that spectacles did not come to China until the Ming dynasty, when they arrived as tribute, or as trade items associated with tribute missions, both from the Western Region, and by sea from Malacca. The earliest mention is possibly at some time during the Yongle period, and the latest in the Jiaqing period, probably later than this text.⁵²⁸ All other citations give Chinese translations or transcriptions of this word. The scribe has mistakenly written 'anayat عنایت for 'aīnak عینک, spectacles. An earlier Chinese usage *aidai* 愛戴 from a literary word meaning

⁵²⁵For a history of *ṣūf* in China in Yuan and Ming see Ma Jianchun 馬建春, *Dashi, xiyu yu gudai Zhongguo* 大食, 西域与古代中国 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2007), pp. 410-11.

⁵²⁶*Da Ming huidian* 107, p. 13v. (p. 1610).

⁵²⁷*Da Ming huidian* 107, p. 14v. (p. 1609).

⁵²⁸Duyvendak, J. J. L., 'Desultory Notes on the Hsi-yang chi', *T'oung Pao* 42 (1953), pp. 6-15. Duyvendak's dating of the earliest citation to 1410 is not reliable, as the information about tribute lists in Luo Maodeng's novelisation of Zheng He's voyages *Xiyang ji* which he bases this on is at least partly fictional. See Chapter 4.

“misty, unclear” is used in connection with Malacca,⁵²⁹ however this is from a tribute list in Luo Maodeng’s novel *Xiyang ji* 西洋記, which is probably fictional. (See chapter 4).

3. The Chinese measure word *fu* 副 for spectacles is transcribed *fū* in Persian.
4. Persian *zar shāsh* for gold document paper.

There are three short forms for tribute from Ṭurfān.

Laiwen XVI

Ambassador Aḥmad of Ṭurfān before the Great Ming Emperor presents one hundred catties of jade, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gold woven cloth of all colours and tea leaves, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

土魯番使臣阿黑麻，大明皇帝前，進貢玉石一百斤。望乞收受，求討織金各色段子，茶葉。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

طرفان ایلجی احمد بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم یشم سنک یک صد من، امید که قبول بغندارید، درخواستن زربفت هر رنگ توار، چایه، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Ṭurfān īl(ch)ī aḥmad (p)īsh dāīmin(g) khan taqdīm yashm san(g) yak sad mann ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd, dar-khwāstan zar-baft har ran(g) tuvār chā yah, ūmīd kih luṭf dihad, ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. Ilchī Aḥmad of Ṭurfān is also the name of the tribute-bearer in Laiwen XXV.

Laiwen XVII

Ambassador Shams al-Wan of Ṭurfān before the Great Ming Emperor presents two western horses and one camel, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gold woven cloth and porcelain bowls and plates, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

土魯番使臣陝西丁，大明皇帝前，進貢西馬二匹，駝一隻。望乞收受，求討織金段子，磁碗磁盤。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

طرفان ایلجی شمس الوان بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم اسب تازی دو سر، اشتر یک جی، درخواستن توار زربفت، کاشه لاجوردی طبق لاجودی، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Ṭurfān īl(ch)ī shamsu’ d-dīn (p)īsh dāīmin(g) khan taqdīm asb tāzī dū sar ushtur yak jī, dar-khwāstan tuvār zar-baft kasha lājūrdī tabaq lājūrdī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

⁵²⁹Duyvendak, ‘Desultory Notes on the Hsi-yang chi’, p. 7.

Laiwen XVIII

Ambassador Muḥammad of Ṭurfān before the Great Ming Emperor presents five western horses, and one hundred small knives, hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gold woven cloth, wine, and gold document paper, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

土魯番使臣母罕默大明皇帝前進貢西馬五匹小刀一百把望乞收受求討織金段子酒金箋紙望乞恩賜奏得聖旨知道。

طرفان ایلجی محمد بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم اسب تازی پنج سر، کارد خرد یک صد دسته، امید که قبول بگذارید، درخواستن توار زر بافت، کاغز زر شاش، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته برلایع بدانی

Ṭurfān īl(ch)ī Muḥammad (p)īsh dāmin(g) khan taqdīm asb tāzī (p)anj sar kārd khurd yak sad dastah ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd, dar-khwāstan tuvār zar-baft kāghaz zar shāsh ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

Three short forms list tribute from Hami.

Laiwen XIX

Ambassador Ḥasan of Hami before the Great Ming Emperor presents two Mongolian horses and two hundred small knives, and requesting gold woven cloth and summer cloth, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

哈密使臣哈三，大明皇帝前，進貢達馬二匹，小刀二百把，求討織金段子，夏布。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

قامل ایلجی حسن بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم اسب مغول دو سر، کارد خرد دویست دسته، درخواستن توار زربافت، کندیر، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته برلایع بدانی

Qāmūl īl(ch)ī Ḥasan (p)īsh dāmin(g) khan taqdīm asb mughūl dū sar kārd khurd duvīst dastah, dar-khwāstan tuvār zar-baft kandīr ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. *Xiabu* 夏布 summer cloth is hempen cloth, linen, worn in summer for coolness.⁵³⁰ Persian *kandīr* from *kand* کند hemp.

⁵³⁰ See 买布卖布网 MBUMBU.com

Laiwen XX

Ambassador Hajī of Hami before the Great Ming Emperor presents two diamonds and two ar'ūmāq horses hoping they are acceptable, and requesting gold woven cloth, wine and gold document paper, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

哈密使臣哈只，大明皇帝前，進貢金鋼鑽二塊，阿魯骨馬二匹，求討織金段子，灑，金箋紙，望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

قامل ایلجی حاجی بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم الماس دو پاره، ارعوماق دو سر، درخواستن توار زر
بفت، کاخز، زر شاش، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Qāmul īl(ch)ī Hajī (p)īsh dāimin(g) khan taqdīm ālmās dū pārah ar'ūmāq du sar, dar-
khwāstan tuvār zar-baft, kāghaz, zar shāsh, ūmīd kih luṭf dihad, 'arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg
bi-dāni

1. *dū pārah*, two pieces for 二塊.
2. Persian *kāghaz*, wine, indicates 酒 is meant for 灑 in the Chinese text.

Laiwen XXI

Ambassador Husain of Hami before the Great Ming Emperor presents two camels and ten western horses, and requesting gold woven cloth, gauze and summer cloth, hoping that kindness will be shown. Petitioning for the sacred command to be known.

哈密使臣虎仙，大明皇帝前，進貢駝二隻，西馬十匹，求討織金羅段，夏布。望
乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

قامل ایلجی حسین بیش دایمینک خان تقدیم اشتور دو جی، اسب تازی ده سر، درخواستن زربفت لای،
قطع کندیر، امید که لطف دهد، عرضه داشته یرلیع بدانی

Qāmul īl(ch)ī Husain (p)īsh dāimin(g) khan taqdīm ushtur dū jī, asb tāzī dah sar, dar-
khwāstan zar-baft lāy qat' kandīr, ūmīd kih luṭf dihad 'arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. Ilchi Husain is possibly Sayyid Husain, the Dudu of Hami, who carried out tribute missions in 1497, 1508 and 1512.

Longer tribute forms

There are five tribute forms all in the same longer format for Turfan and Samarkand: These don't appear in the Toyo Bunko manuscript. The transcriptions were made by Honda Minobu from the copy of *Huihuiguan yiyu* in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, which he calls text A, or the Berlin text.

Laiwen XXII

Ambassador Ali of Turfān, with others, before the Great Ming Emperor, makes a petition, and now your servant, in accordance with the old rule, goes beneath the golden gateway, knocks his head and makes tribute of five argumaq horses and one hundred catties of jade, hoping that they are acceptable, requesting before the court gold-woven cloth, Korean cloth, coloured soft woollen cloth and tea leaves, hoping that kindness will be shown, making a petition to know the command.

土魯番使臣阿力等，大明皇帝前奏。今奴婢照舊例赴金門下叩頭，進貢阿魯骨馬五匹，玉石一百斤，望乞收受。朝廷前求討織金段子，高麗布，各色絨線，茶葉等物。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

turfān ilchī ‘alī ghairah (p)īsh dāimin(g) khān ‘arzah mī-dārad, aknūn ba-misāl qaulī kuhna bah zīr dar zarrīn sar zadah taqdīm ‘arūmāq (p)anj sar yashm san(g) yak sad mann ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd pish dar-gāh dar-khwāstan tuvar zar-baft har ran(g) abrishim rishtah (cha yah ūmīd kih) luṭf dihad, ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. *zīr dar zarrīn*, beneath the door of gold, follows Persian word order.
2. Persian words *cha yah ūmīd kih* are omitted from the text.

Laiwen XXIII

Your servant Hāfiz of the land of Samarkand, before the Great Ming Emperor, makes a petition, and now your servant, in accordance with the old rule, goes beneath the golden gateway, knocks his head and makes tribute of western horses, Mongolian horses, diamonds and other goods, hoping that they are acceptable, requesting before the court floral patterned gold-woven silk, wine and gold document paper, hoping that kindness will be shown, making a petition to know the command.

撒馬兒罕地面奴婢哈非子，大明皇帝前奏。今奴婢照舊例赴金門下叩頭，進貢西馬，達馬，鋼鑽等物。望乞收受，朝廷前求討織金花樣段子，酒，金箋紙等物。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

samarqand bandah ilchī Hāfiz (p)īsh dāimin(g) khān ‘arzah mī-dārad, aknūn ba-misāl qaulī kuhna bah zīr dar zarrīn sar zadah taqdīm asb tāzī asb mughūl almās (ch)īzī dī(g)ar ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd pish dar-gāh dar-khwāstan zar-baft (g)uldār tuvār kāghaz zar shāsh dī(g)ar (ch)īzī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arza dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

1. Hāfiz of Samarqand is also the name of the tribute-bearer in Laiwen XI.

Laiwen XXIV

Your servant Muḥammad, ambassador of Samarkand, before the Great Ming Emperor, makes a petition, and now your servant, in accordance with the old rule, goes beneath the golden gateway, knocks his head and makes tribute of two hundred catties of jade and three hundred small knives, hoping that they are acceptable, requesting before the court gold-woven silk, Korean cloth, fever medicine, tea leaves and other goods, hoping that kindness will be shown, making a petition to know the command.

哈密地面奴婢母罕默，大明皇帝前奏。今奴婢照舊例赴金門下叩頭，進貢玉石二百斤，小刀三百把。望乞收受，朝廷前求討織金段子，高麗布，熱藥，茶葉等物，望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

samarqand bandah īlchī Muḥammad (p)īsh dāmin(g) khān ‘arṣah mī-dārad, aknūn ba-misāl qaulī kuhna bah zīr dar zarrīn sar zādah taqdīm yashm san(g) dū sad mann kārd khurd sih sad dastah ūmīd kih qabūl bi-ghandārīd pish dar-gāh dar-khwāstan zar-baft tuvār kitān (g)arm dāru chā yah dī (g)ar (ch)īzī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

Laiwen XXV

Ambassador Aḥmad of Turfan, before the Emperor, makes a petition, and now your servant, in accordance with the old rule, goes beneath the golden gateway, knocks his head and makes tribute of ten lengths of suf, twenty pairs of eyeglasses, and five Mongolian horses, hoping that they are acceptable, requesting before the court gold-woven flower-patterned silk, tea leaves and other goods, hoping that kindness will be shown, making a petition to know the command.

土魯番使臣阿黑麻，大明皇帝前奏。今奴婢照舊例赴金門下叩頭，進貢梭甫十段，眼鏡二十副，達馬五匹，望乞收受，朝廷前求討織金花樣段子，茶葉等物。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

turfan īl(ch)ī Muḥammad khān (p)īsh arṣah, aknūn ba-misāl kuhna qaulī bah zīr dar zarrīn sar zādah taqdīm suf dah qat’ ‘ainak bist fu mughul asb (p)anj sar ūmīd kih bi-ghandārīd qabūl dar-gāh pish dar-khwāstan zar-baft guldar tuvār chā yah dī (g)ar (ch)īzī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad ‘arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

Laiwen XXVI

Your servant Tāju’d-dīn of the land of Samarkand, before the Emperor, makes a petition, and now your servant, in accordance with the old rule, goes beneath the golden gateway, knocks his head and makes tribute of fifty catties of jade and five hundred small knives, hoping that they are acceptable, requesting

before the court gold-woven silk, porcelain bowls and plates and other goods, hoping that kindness will be shown, making a petition to know the command.

撒馬兒罕地面奴婢塔主丁，大明皇帝前奏。今奴婢照舊例赴金門下叩頭，進貢玉石五十斤，小刀五百把。望乞收受，朝廷前求討織金段子，瓷碗磁盤等物。望乞恩賜，奏得聖旨知道。

samarqand īl(ch)ī tāju'd-dīn khān (p)īsh arṣah, aknūn ba-misāl kuhna qaulī bah zīr dar zarrīn sar zadah taqdīm yashm san(g) (p)anjāh mann khurd kārd (p)anj sad dastah ūmīd kih bi-ghandārīd qabūl dar-gāh pish dar-khwāstan zar-baft tuvār lājūrdī kāsha lājūrdī tabaq dī(g)ar (ch)īzī ūmīd kih luṭf dihad 'arṣa dāshtāh yarlīg bi-dāni

The relationship between the word-lists and the *laiwen*

Less than half of the words in the Persian *laiwen* texts are found in the Persian *Zazi* and *Zengxu zazi* word lists. For example in Laiwen VIII, Hami's appeal for help against Sultan 'Ali, twenty-two of the fifty-four words are found in the word-lists. Most of the 777 words in the Persian *Zazi* are vocabulary items of a general nature, not restricted to the language of decrees and petitions. Many of the entries are pairs or opposites; high-low; easy-difficult; far-near, showing the first word-list was compiled using principles other than gathering words from documents. However there is a clear relationship between *Zengxu zazi* and *laiwen*. Fifty-one of the two hundred and thirty-three words in *Zengxu zazi* are found in the *laiwen*, and some or all of these could have been copied into to *Zengxu zazi* from the *laiwen*. Several examples support this. The first entry under the first topic heading *Tianwen men* 天文門 (Astronomy) is the expression "highest heaven" as follows:

خداوند تعالى (khuzāwand-i-ta'āla), 上天，黑咱灣得。忒阿刺 (shangtian, heizawande te'ala)

which is made up of *khuzāwand*, a dialect form of Persian خداوند *khudāwand*, (king, lord),⁵³¹ and ta'āla, (highest). The same dialect form *khuzāwand* appears in Laiwen VIII, the letter from Hami seeking help against Sultan 'Ali's attack in 1473.⁵³² In the

⁵³¹Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 325.

⁵³²Honda Minobu, *On the Hui-hui-kuan I-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary)*, p. 67.

letter from the Yongle Emperor to Shah Rukh preserved in the *Zubdat al-tavārīkh* of Ḥāfiz Abru, the standard form *khudāwand-i-ta'āla* appears four times. The presence of the same dialect form in both the *laiwen* and *zengxu zazi* suggests either that it was copied directly into the word list from the Hami letter, or that the same translator, or translators who were users of the same dialect, worked both on the glossing of the *laiwen* and on the compiling of the word list.

Laiwen VIII concerning Sultan 'Ali's attack on Hami contains several words which are found in *Zengxu zazi*. The word *hauzcha*, used for the reservoirs Sultan 'Ali was destroying, while it appears in *Zazi* as “حوض (hauz) 潭 (pool)”, is included in the *Zengxu zazi* with the diminutive *-cha* as حوضچه (hauzcha) 池 (pond), as it is in the *laiwen*.⁵³³ The transcribed Chinese word 王 *wang*, king, enfeoffed prince, is used in the titles of foreign sovereigns in Laiwen I, III, IV, VII, VIII, and IX, and appears as the 29th entry in *Zengxu zazi* as a transcribed Chinese word وانگ (wang) 王.⁵³⁴ Another correspondance between *Zengxu zazi* and the *laiwen* is the Turkish word *khān*, which is used for “emperor” in all the *laiwen* except one, and appears disguised as a Persian word as the 197th entry in *Zengxu zazi* as خان (khān) 皇帝,⁵³⁵ while the Persian word *pādshāh* which is used for “emperor” in the Persian translations in the Tsurphu Scroll, the letters written to Shah Rukh and the Galle Stone in Ceylon in the Yongle period, appears in *Zazi* as پادشاه (*pādshāh*), 君. A cluster of entries in *Zengxu zazi* under the second topic heading *Dili men* 地理 (Geography) also reveals a relationship between the *laiwen* and the word list. Ten place names are listed as the eighth to seventeenth entries as follows:

مملکت کعبه (Mamlakat-i-ka'ba), 天方國, 滿刺克忒喝百 (Arabia, Mecca)

قامل (Qāmul), 哈密, 喝木勒 (Hami)

طرفان (Turfān) 土魯番, 土兒法恩 (Turfan)

بدخشان (Badakhshān) 巴丹沙 (Badakhshan)

⁵³³Liu Yingsheng, *Huihuiguan Zazi yu Huihuiguan Yiyu yanjiu*, p. 53 and p. 331.

⁵³⁴Ibid., p. 334.

⁵³⁵Ibid., p. 389.

بلخ (Balkh) 白勒黑, (Balkh)

دمشق (Dimashq) 敵米石, 底米石革 (Damascus)

تर्फ مغرب (Ṭaraf-i-maghrib) 迤西, 忒勒夫. 默額力卜 (in the direction of the west, Mecca)

مصر (Miṣr) 密思兒, 密思兒 (Egypt)

خراسان (Khurāsān) 虎刺桑, 虎刺撒恩 (Khorasan)

سمرقند (Samarqand) 撒馬兒罕, 撒默兒敢得 (Samarkand)

Eight of these ten names appear as tribute senders or petitioners in the *laiwen*. Only Badakhshan and Khorasan do not. Only one of the place names in the *laiwen*, Basra, does not appear in this list. So it seems likely these names were copied into the *Zengxu zazi* from a grouping of *laiwen* slightly different to those in our manuscripts, but containing most of the same letters.

Another interesting cluster under the *Tongyong men* 通用門 (general purpose) heading is two consecutive entries 157, and 158, بمثال (ba-miṣāl), 照, (zhao, according to), and قولى (qaulī), 例 (lì, rule), which make up the phrase ba-miṣāl qaulī, according to the rule, found in Laiwen VI and IX.

Conclusion

The texts in *Huayiyiyu* show that Persian was used for tributary and petition purposes with Hami, and for tributary purposes with Moghulistan, Samarkand and other westward countries throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, however it was not the only language used. The letters in *Gaochangguan laiwen* and *Gaochangguan ke* show that Uighur also continued to be used in Hami, Turfan, and their nearby cities until the end of the fifteenth century. Translators from both colleges collaborated to create documents. It was after the appointment of Translating College Supervisors in 1494 that the keeping of records and uniform testing of students began. The method of testing using word-for-word glossed texts doesn't indicate that the translators had fallen into bad grammar. On the contrary, the translations into Chinese show that the

linguists still knew their languages and cultural knowledge, and practised the same exact style of translating in that direction as their predecessors had done. No translations into Persian survive by which we can judge their skills in the other direction. Harsh judgement of the Persian glossings is out of place. They simply show us a method of language testing which was used in the colleges through the second half of the Ming era. The compilation of *Huayiyiyu* in the reign of the Wanli Emperor shows that all the colleges were still active, and able to put word lists together, but the numbers of exemplary texts needed in each language were unavailable at that time when few tribute missions came, so the old collections of *ke* tests had to be used. However the fine, fluent calligraphy in each language in the Ming manuscript copy shows that skill at least was still practised to a high standard in the colleges after 1579.

Conclusion

The practice of employing Persian translators at court was inherited from the Great Mongolian Empire, but no counterpart of the Yuan Imperial Muslim College existed to induct new translators during the first forty years of the dynasty. When the Translating College was established at the beginning of the *Yongle* Emperor's reign, it was according to a new and unique model, conceived, like many of his projects, on a grand scale, to train translators in an array of eight, and later ten of the languages used in tributary communications, to ensure the Emperor could address tributary rulers in their own languages, and understand the messages they sent. The colleges were training organisations staffed by teachers, where translators were trained to the high standards of the Hanlin Academy, and called on to work in the main secretariat.

None of the languages had the status of an imperial language (*guoyu* 國語) like Manchurian and Mongolian during the Qing Dynasty,⁵³⁶ and although Persian was used in many countries, it was not a lingua franca in China. In the transition from the old Mongolian administration in Khanbalik to the Ming court at Nanjing Persian underwent a diminution in status, from an important language used by a powerful administrative class to one practised by a small number of translators, its use limited to the Emperor's communications with rulers and subjects in the Western Regions, along the sea-route to Hormuz, and with Tibet. All the languages of the colleges were restricted to the same purpose of service to the Emperor, and can be described as court tributary languages.

While the absence of college records before 1490 has deprived us of the edicts concerning the establishment and operation of the colleges, and the lists of personnel which would reveal numbers and ethnic origin of Persian translators during the time when tribute and translating were at a peak, however the few surviving translations into Persian are all from that time, and are the work of accomplished bilingual officers. They show that a high standard of translating was practised, and care was taken that the Emperor's words were rendered accurately.

⁵³⁶Pamela Kylie Crossley, 'The Conquest Elites of the Ch'ing Empire', in Willard Peterson ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 9*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 327-8.

The establishment of testing at the end of the fifteenth century occasioned the preservation of the handful of translations from Persian into Chinese of that time as test papers, later collected into the *Huayiyiyu* wordlist collection, which are the basis of our knowledge about Persian translating at the end of the 15th century. Together with the translations in the other languages, they show that the colleges were still active at that time, and that documents in the languages of the colleges were still being produced, although in smaller numbers. The establishment of testing at that time reveals a determination to maintain uniform standards in all languages.

It was conservative unwillingness to depart from old example in matters pertaining to the Emperor which kept the colleges established, in their original format, long after the need for them was past. Small numbers of officers continued to be appointed in each college until the end of the dynasty, and if occasionally letters did arrive, officers within the ramshackle *apparatus* were evidently ready to translate them, although no documents survive to show what translating was done in the last one-hundred-and-fifty years. The Tibetan seasonal tests recorded by bibliophile Qu Zhongrong show testing was still being done in 1576, and Wang Zongzai states he compiled *Siyiguan kao* in moments of leisure from supervising *ke* testing in 1579.⁵³⁷ The *Huayiyiyu* manuscript in the Toyo Bunko, the only production of the colleges after 1579, is evidence that fine calligraphy was still practised in each language.

There are several future studies which will cast more light on the activities of the court translators. Publication of new images of the Galle stone texts, and publication of the Persian and Mongolian texts of the Mir Haji edict, will give an impetus to research. A comprehensive study of all the languages in the *Huayiyiyu* will reveal more about tribute and translating in the 15th century.

⁵³⁷ Wang Zongzai, *Siyiguan kao* 2, pp. 21v-22r.

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