

## The St. Petersburg Bilingual Documents and Problems of Chronology

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[1 Title] Ladies and gentlemen, today I would like to talk about some Chinese-Khotanese bilingual documents in the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg and elsewhere, which will be, I hope, suitable for the theme of our symposium, “A Meeting of Cultures”.

Before presenting my own material, however, I think it is necessary to give you a general idea about what is known, or what we think is known, of the historical background of these documents. In order to do so, I would like to briefly outline the attempts to place these and other Khotanese documents within an absolute time frame, attempts which, I believe, culminated in the admirable article of 1997 [2 Zhang and Rong 1997] by Professors Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang on “Khotan between the Second Half of the 8th Century and Early 9th Century”, which does not seem to have attracted the attention it deserves outside China and Japan. For example Professor Skjærvø’s otherwise extremely useful *Catalogue* of 2002 unfortunately chooses to ignore their results in discussing Khotanese kings and their reigns.<sup>1</sup>

Studies trying to establish the exact dates of the Khotanese kings mentioned in the documents and thereby to obtain a yardstick with which to judge the relative chronology of Khotanese manuscripts have been made from time to time since the 1910s, most of which are, as we see now, partly or wholly, based on insufficient evidence or false assumptions. A proper understanding of the historical data of these Khotanese documents from the Khotan area (that is, those other than Dunhuang manuscripts) started, I believe, with Professors Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang’s identification in 1987/88a of the Khotanese place name *gaysāta* and Jiéxiè 傑謝 in the Chinese documents from the same area bearing Tang dates in the second half of the 8th century [3 Dx 18930]. Some of the Khotanese documents are dated from the reign

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<sup>1</sup> Skjærvø’s arguments (*Catalogue*, p. lxvii and fnn. 3 and 4) against Zhang and Rong 1997 appear to have little cogency. The reason Stein thought the site was abandoned shortly after 790 is simply because it was the year of the latest dated Chinese documents found there. An oversight of Wùkōng’s report caused an impossible claim that the accession of Viśa’ Kīrttā was in 784; see Lévi et Chavannes (1895) and Zhang and Rong (1997) 356.

of the king Viśa' Vāhaṃ on the one hand, and on the other, it is known from Chinese sources that Yùchí Yào 尉遲曜 became king of Khotan sometime after 755 and was still reigning there in 787 (possibly but less likely in early 788) when the Chinese pilgrim Wùkōng 悟空 visited Khotan on his way back from India. With this identification [**4 Yuchi Yao 尉遲曜 = Viśa' Vāhaṃ**] of Viśa' Vāhaṃ and Yùchí Yào, Professor Skjærvø presented in 1991 a chronology of Khotanese kings both before Yùchí Yào and after him, which he still largely maintains in the *Catalogue* of 2002.

An important point made by Zhang and Rong in another article in 1988 was that the Chinese part of the bilingual document Hedin 24 [**5 Hedin 24**] follows the regular style of Chinese chancellery documents, so that the year at the end cannot be the regnal year of a Khotanese king as previously supposed by Pulleyblank, but must be a Tang era (*niánhào*). As for the reading of the actual year, although they could show that Pulleyblank's 五十四 “fifty-four” was impossible, they did not come to a conclusion at this point, giving only the last character 四 “four”.<sup>2</sup>

The next step on the right track towards the solution of the complicated problem of chronology was, I might say, the distinction I made in my article of 1996 between two different ways of the notation of the year in the Chinese documents. On the one hand we have Hedin 24, a number of Hoernle and Stein Chinese documents as well as St. Petersburg Chinese documents (including a bilingual sales contract of a camel [**6 Dx 18926 etc.**]) from the Khotan area which employ the Tang era such as dàli 大曆 (766-779 in the capital, and some more years in Khotan as the news of the change of *niánhào* takes time to reach there) with a numeral, while on the other a small number of Chinese documents such as Hedin 15, 16 and Dumaqu C, D [**7 Dumaqu C and D**] indicate the year by one of the twelve animals of the animal cycle. [**8 Dates in the second group**] The use of the twelve year animal cycle alone, and not the sexagesimal cycle, is a feature of the Dunhuang Chinese documents under Tibetan rule. So it is natural to assume that the absence of the Tang era and the use of the animal cycle indicate that Chinese influence came to an end and the Tibetans are in power in

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<sup>2</sup> The agreement of the month and day between Chinese and Khotanese (閏四月四日 and *še(') semjsījsa 4mye haḍai* “second Simjsīṃjsa [= 4th] month 4th day”) recurs, without exception, in other bilingual documents such as Hedin 15, 16, Dumaqu C, D, and Dx 18926 + SI P 93.22 + Dx 18928. The position of the intercalary month in the calendar cannot be used for determining the year, since the evidence of Dunhuang Chinese documents shows that the calendar there differed in this point from that of the Tang capital; see Kumamoto (1986).

Khotan. But exactly when that happened it was impossible to say. The latest Chinese documents in the first group was dated in the 6th year of zhēnyuán 貞元, that is, 790. The Tibetan occupation of Khotan must have taken place sometime after that. Even under Tibetan rule the use of the Chinese language along with Khotanese seems to have continued as the second group of documents show. Some of the personal names in these documents are shared by a group of Khotanese documents from clearly the Tibetan period (most of the Or. 11252 and Or. 11344 groups, some Hedin documents) as well as Hedin Tibetan documents published by Professor Takeuchi.

A difficulty that I could not solve at the time was the existence of the same personal name in both groups above. The author of Hedin 24, Fù Wéijìn 富惟[謹]<sup>3</sup> with the title of pànguān 判官, occurs in Hedin 15, 16 and Dumaqu C, D, [**9 panguan Fu Weijin**] which are dated in the 11th / 12th months of a Snake year and the third month of a Horse year in the Chinese part and in the matching months / days of the 35th and 36th regnal year (*kṣunä*) of an unnamed king in the Khotanese part. Since the official Fù bears the same title in Hedin 24 under Chinese rule as well as in the other documents in the Tibetan period, these documents should not be separated by so many years, certainly not by decades. But how is that possible?

Shortly after my article of 1996 the study by Professors Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang (1997) mentioned at the beginning made a veritable breakthrough. They evaluated the stage that had been reached quite rightly, saying “these studies have contributed to a greater or lesser degree to the understanding of the documents, but as to the chronology of them none has drawn a conclusion that can convince everyone”. The solution they offered hinges on a new reading of Hedin 24 (based on a new photo obtained from Stockholm). The correct date of Hedin 24 is, according to them, zhēnyuán 貞元 14th year, which is 798, making this the latest dated document under Chinese rule. [**10 Date in Hedin 24**] It is amazing that, once this date is established, all the difficulties seem to melt away and everything can be seen in a clearer perspective. It is a great pity that Professor Rong decided not to come at the last moment. Anyway, I would like to summarize their brilliant demonstration.

According to their interpretation, the content of the Chinese text of Hedin 24 is a report by the official Fù, who, having been informed that some local people around

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<sup>3</sup> The third character is lost. It is restored after Hedin 15, 16 and Dumaqu C, D. In these four bilingual documents he is *hvū phanä-kvanä* in Khotanese.

Mazar Tag had a news of imminent invasion, instructs that the people and livestock be evacuated to Phema, and this rather extensive action was later approved by the Vice Governor (jiédūfùshǐ 節度副使), which is the title borne by the king of Khotan under Chinese rule. The whole report is dated in the fourth intercalary month, fourth day of zhēnyuán 貞元 14th year (798). And the second key to the solution is Hedin 21, which is, according to them, closely related to Hedin 24. It is dated in the fourth intercalary month, twenty-eighth day, presumably of the same year (which makes it just two weeks later than Hedin 24), [11 Hedin 21] and is issued from the king of Khotan, ordering, in answer to the request from the officials of Cira, to send weapons and equipments to Phema. And luckily in this document the year is called the thirty-second of the reign of an unnamed king. I might add that, if this is indeed a letter of Yùchí Yào 尉遲曜 = Viśa' Vāhaṃ, as Zhang and Rong claim, we may be witnessing his own signature here [12 Hedin 21]. These two documents, Hedin 24 and Hedin 21, together depict a desperate political situation under the menace of invasion, which turned out to be the reality within a few years, as the documents such as Hedin 15, 16, Dumaqu C and D mentioned above show that the Tibetans were in power in the 35th and 36th regnal years of presumably the same king.

Thus, it is for the first time that the two elements of the chronology, the Tang era and the regnal year of a Khotanese king, are linked on the basis of something more than a speculation, with the consequences that the first year of the reign of this king (Viśa' Vāhaṃ) is 767 which is a Sheep year and that the Tibetan invasion occurred within or shortly after 798 but before 801.

[13 Table]<sup>4</sup>

	<i>1st year</i>		<i>sheep</i>	<i>767</i>
Hedin 24		<b>zhēnyuán 貞元 14</b>	<i>tiger</i>	<b>798</b>
Hedin 21	<b>32nd year</b>		<i>tiger</i>	<i>798</i>
Hedin 15, 16, Dumaqu C	<b>35th year</b>		<b>snake</b>	<i>801</i>
Dumaqu D	<b>36th year</b>		<b>horse</b>	<i>802</i>

You might ask why anybody else (including myself) didn't think of such an elegant solution. I would say that at least I was under the impression that, since the latest dated Chinese documents known were those in 790 (zhēnyuán 貞元 6th) published by Chavannes and Maspero, Hedin 24 must be earlier than that. The new

<sup>4</sup> The data in bold-face are actually found in the documents. The rest are the consequences from them.

scenario removes the major difficulty in their earlier article of 1988. Zhang and Rong used to argue for the sheep year of 755 as the beginning of Viśa' Vāhaṃ's reign. I, among others criticized them that, since the Rebellion of An Lushan began in the 11th month of that year, it could only have been known in Khotan at least many months later, whereupon the reigning king Yùchí Shèng 尉遲勝 departed with an army to support the Tang emperor, leaving the country to the care of his younger brother who was Yùchí Yào 尉遲曜 = Viśa' Vāhaṃ. Now his reign would begin 12 years later in the next Sheep year. Although the Tang Court approved in 764 the request of Yùchí Shèng that his brother Yào would be permanently appointed king of Khotan, a careful examination of the use of Tang eras west of Dunhuang proves that the successive changes of the era at the Court after 764 were not known until 767 because the Tibetans occupied the areas in between. The picture Zhang and Rong have drawn of the situation up to and after the Tibetan invasion of Khotan seems to me altogether plausible. Thus the Tibetan forces came in waves from the north and the east rather than from the west. After Dunhuang fell to them in 786, Bišbaliq and Kuča resisted their aggression until the middle of the 790s, sometimes taking the city back after having been overrun once. Khotan may have been one of the last city-states to go under Tibetan rule. Even after that the local administration with the same king and lower officials such as pànguān Fù appears to have remained largely untouched. The population, including the Chinese residents with their families, must have lived there as before. It seems that all the pieces of the complicated jigsaw puzzle have finally fallen in their proper places. For example, Zhang and Rong 1997, 355, point out that the envoys of the Tang Court, who departed before the era was changed to dàlì 大曆 in the eleventh month of 766 (thus with no knowledge of the change), arrived in Khotan in the first month of 767 and that Viśa' Vāhaṃ was only then informed of his appointment as king back in 764. It makes sense that 767 was considered the first year. With the regnal years of Viśa' Vāhaṃ established, the years of other kings, with less certain data, could be estimated with more confidence than before. It looks like a perfect solution.

In 2002 Professors Zhang and Rong published twenty-one pieces of Chinese documents from the Khotan area [14 Zhang and Rong 2002], which were unknown outside Russia until a few years before, and even within Russia only a handful of specialists had ever seen them.<sup>5</sup> Among them are five manuscripts with both Chinese

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<sup>5</sup> To be added to them is Дх 1461, whose one side has a Chinese document and the

and Khotanese written on them.<sup>6</sup> I have published one of them (Дx 18926 + SI P 93.22 + Дx 18928), a sales contract of a camel dated in 781 in Tang era. It is written in the format of regular contracts in Chinese and an interlinear translation in Khotanese is added. Of two small scraps (Дx 18930 and Дx 18931) I've shown you one with the place name *gaysāta*. In another fairly large sheet (Дx 18916) unfortunately the Chinese part and the Khotanese part appear to have no relation to each other. It looks like someone pasted a sheet with a Chinese document to another with a Khotanese one to use the empty space on the other side for an unrelated Khotanese text. And today I would like to show you the last manuscript (Дx 18927) [15 Dx 18927]. The interpretation of its Chinese part is naturally based on Professors Zhang and Rong's.

### Дx 18927

#### [16 Dx 18927 text]

1. 守捉使牒傑謝百姓紇羅捺供行軍入磧
2. 打駝麻卅斤 順 hvī hīvī kṣau ṣṭi 40 kiṇa
3. 建中六年十二月廿一日行官魏忠順抄 順
4. || salī 10 8 (mā)ṣta cuātaja haḍā 10 ttiṇa beḍa gaysātajä vikausä kaṃhā
5. hauḍe 10 6 sā kiṇa gvī tcyāṃ-kvinä nāte thīṣī hīyāṃ dva akṣa<ra> 順

#### [17 Translation of the Khotanese part]

[Translation of the Khotanese part]

2. It is a voucher of Hvī. 40 *jin* 斤 (< kṣṇ).  
4/5. Year 18, the Cvātaja (1st) month, 10th day. At that time Vikausa of Gaysāta gave hemp, 16 hundred *jin*. General Gvī took two (hundred?) of the Thī-ṣī's.<sup>7</sup> Signature 順

The date of the Chinese document is jiànzhōng 建中 6th year (785), twelfth month, twenty-first day. In the Tang capital the era had been changed to zhēnyuán 貞元 in that year, but it was not yet known in Khotan. In the Chinese part there's a minor difference from Zhang and Rong's reading. It concerns the first character of the

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other an unrelated Khotanese document. This piece has been known since Men'sikov's *Catalogue* in 1963/67 (Vol. 1, p. 659), where the Khotanese part, actually an order of summon by a local official, is described as "a writing in 'vertical Brāhmī' script in Sanskrit. A prayer text (incantation?)".

<sup>6</sup> See Kumamoto (2001) and Kumamoto (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> A Chinese title? See *thyänä ṣī* and *thiṇä ṣī* in Khot (IO) 74.vii (KT 5, 310, #683) a6 (*Catalogue* 442).

personal name *hélúonà* 紇羅捺 (< *ɣuət lâ nât*), a transcription of the Khotanese name *Rruhadatta*, [18 **Khotanese name in Chinese transcription**] who appears also as a guarantor in the camel contract of 781. The character represents some sort of onset glide in the Iranian initial r-sound unfamiliar to Chinese, and I preferred this form over Zhang and Rong’s reading *qì* 訖 (< *kjət*) with a different radical [comparison] because, in addition to phonological reasons, the former character is also used in Xuán Zàng’s Travels [19 **大唐西域記**] in the transcription of *Rōb* (modern *Rūi*) / *Samingān* in Bactria.<sup>8</sup> In the Khotanese part, line 2 appears to be an abbreviated translation of the Chinese text. The personal name *Hvī* must represent the surname of *Wèi Zhōngshùn* 魏忠順 (< *ŋjuəi*) [20 **魏忠順**]. Such nasal velar initials, called *Yímǔ* 疑母, are known to be represented in the *Brāhmī* transcription of Chinese both by *h-* and by *g-*. The second text in lines 4 and 5 are by a different hand. The personal name *Vikausa* occurs many times in the documents from *Gaysāta* including the camel contract mentioned above.<sup>9</sup> The general<sup>10</sup> [21 **Called Jiangjun “general”**] *Gvī* would be, when the fluctuation in the representation of the initial *ŋ-* is considered, the same *Wèi Zhōngshùn* in the Chinese part. The close connection between the Chinese text and the Khotanese text in lines 4 and 5 is evident from the character *shùn* 順 appended as the signature both after the Chinese text (twice) and after the Khotanese text. In all three places the writing is characteristic and distinct from the same character used as the signature of General *Zhāng Shùn* 張順 in SI P 103.14 (who appears also in the Chinese text of *Dx* 18916). [22 **A different signature**]

From the appearance of the manuscript it is fairly evident that the Chinese text was written first and the Khotanese in lines 4 and 5 was added sometime (but not a very long time) later. The date in Khotanese, the first month, tenth day, is most likely to be just a few weeks after the date in Chinese, the twelfth month, twenty-first day in the year 785. From this an inevitable conclusion would be drawn that the year in Khotanese, the 18th regnal year, is 786.<sup>11</sup> [23 **Dates of Dx 18927**] However, in the

<sup>8</sup> 紇露·悉泯健國 in Vol. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Reconstructed on the basis of the Chinese transcription.

<sup>10</sup> *jiāngjūn* 將軍 (< *tsjəŋ kjuən*). It is also found in SI P 103.14.1 *tcy(ā)ṃ-kunä* and *Dx* 18916r.1 *tcyāṃ-kvi’nä*. Apparently the title is used in a loose manner referring to a Chinese official.

<sup>11</sup> A Khotanese year began in all probability in what corresponds to the fifth Chinese month, *hamdyaja*, as the list of the months in the *Siddhasāra* shows; see Bailey (1937), 930ff. However, when the year starts is irrelevant in the present matter as we are dealing with what corresponds to the Chinese first month of 786, which is the 18th

solution of Zhang and Rong that I described earlier, 786 was the 20th year of the reign of Viśa' Vāhaṃ. The 18th regnal year in their scheme is 784. The Khotanese text bearing the date of the 18th year would have no way to be written after the Chinese text dated in 785.

So obviously something is wrong here. The reading of 𑖃x 18927, both in the Chinese part and in the Khotanese part [**24 Dates of Dx 18927**], is quite clear for this kind of documents. It doesn't seem to leave much room for emendation.

A rather tempting idea that might salvage the whole scheme with only a minor modification would be to assume that under Tibetan rule the animal cycle used was different from that of China, being behind by two. However, it is established since Pelliot's study in 1913 that the sexagesimal cycle of the Tibetan chronology is in perfect agreement, as far as the year is concerned, with that of the Chinese after 1027.<sup>12</sup> Even before that the close association of the Old Tibetan Kingdom with Tang China makes it highly unlikely that a two year lapse in terms of the animal cycle existed in the Tibetan calendar used in the 9th century Khotan. So this should be excluded.

Let us then try to retrace our argument. Hedin 15, 16, Dumaqu C and D written under Tibetan rule assure us that the 35th and 36th regnal years of a king were a Snake year and a Horse year, respectively. Hedin 24 was written not many years earlier under Chinese rule, because of pànguān Fù. No document could have been written under Tibetan rule as issued from jiédūfùshǐ 節度副使. Whether Hedin 21, written in the 32nd regnal year, belongs to the same year as Hedin 24 may not be one hundred percent certain. But the fact that the same intercalary month occurs only about three or four times in a century along with the contents of the two documents make it more likely than not that they are indeed from the same year.

On the other hand, the reading of the date of zhēnyuán 貞元 14th year in Hedin 24 is, in my opinion, cannot be said to be a hundred percent certain even in the new photograph [**25 Hedin 24 last part**]. What is clear is the characters “four” 四 and what looks like “ten” 十 just above, but above them one can only say that the traces are not incompatible with zhēnyuán 貞元. In fact the manuscript was not properly

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regnal year of Viśa' Vāhaṃ according to our text.

<sup>12</sup> See also Laufer 1913; Schuh, 1973, 142.



conserved when I saw it in the early 90s, and small bits were dangling around holes and tears, so that what appears to be strokes of a character may not represent their correct relative positions. It would not be impossible, although less likely, that the number was originally “twenty-four” 二十四. But even if such an era were to be used in Khotan in ignorance of the situation in the Tang capital, it would have been a Mouse year (808), while Hedin 24 must have been written in a Tiger year.

In this line of argument the only alternative that I can offer, although I don’t much like it, is to separate the reign of Viśa’ Vāhaṃ from those documents related to pānguān Fù (Hedin 24 and others). We are assured by Wùkōng 悟空 that Viśa’ Vāhaṃ was still around in 787, which will be the 19th regnal year on the new evidence instead of 21st. The highest number of the regnal year with Viśa’ Vāhaṃ’s name actually mentioned instead of an unnamed king is still 20.<sup>13</sup> The highest number of the regnal year of a king that we know certainly to be Viśa’ Vāhaṃ, although unnamed, is 22.<sup>14</sup> This would be 790 in the new counting. If his reign ended shortly after that, the documents with the regnal years 32 to 36 would belong to one of the next kings. In that case the only possibility of the Tiger year which would end in “four” or “fourteen” in the Chinese era [26 **Other possibilities** 1] would be 834, which would be zhǎngqìng 長慶 14th year (actually tàihé 太和 8th year), much too late into the Tibetan period, and the traces on Hedin 24 do not seem to favor it.

It looks like we have reached an impasse. In order to find a way out, let us again try to cast doubt upon another assumption on which our argument has been based. Hedin 21 with the date of the 32nd regnal year and fourth intercalary month was taken as belonging to the same year as Hedin 24. Certainly the contents of both documents seem to match, but one couldn’t deny that a similar situation might have arisen over and over again. The same intercalary month actually doesn’t prove that the two are in the same year, especially if one considers the possibility of switching from one calendar, say local Chinese, to another, Tibetan.<sup>15</sup> A phrase in Hedin 21, *hā ttāguttau pīḍakā pastem haude* “I deigned to give an order (*lit.* letter *or* document) in Tibetan” was dismissed by Zhang and Rong as irrelevant, but it could mean that the document was written under Tibetan rule. Thus, provided that we can separate the year of Hedin

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<sup>13</sup> Or. 6397/1, *KT* 2.66, *Catalogue*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> SI P 103.31; Or. 6395.1 *KT* 5.3. The official Sīḍakā, who flourished under Viśa’ Vāhaṃ, is involved in these documents.

<sup>15</sup> Recall that, although they are in agreement as to the year, months and days are a

21 from that of Hedin 24, the earliest Tiger year which is the 32nd regnal year of the next king would be 822, the first year being the Sheep year of 791. [27 Other possibilities 2] In that case the date of the Chinese document of Hedin 24 would be 809, which is yuánhé 元和 fourth year. In this scenario pànguān Fù appears to have kept his position without promotion at least for 15 years.

This last solution is admittedly not as neat as that of Zhang and Rong's, which, however, cannot be maintained in the face of the new evidence. In the past 20 years the two Professors of Beijing and myself have been amicably criticizing each other on the matter of Khotanese chronology. We have seen many ups and downs, and I think this is definitely a down. I regret that it is my lot to spoil their beautifully built edifice. But some day another, unexpected piece of new evidence may come up for another and better solution. Who knows?

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