
TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

E. I. Kychanov

“THE ALTAR RECORD ON CONFUCIUS' CONCILIATION”, AN UNKNOWN TANGUT APOCRYPHAL WORK

The work in question was discovered by the well known Russian scholar N. A. Nevsky (1892—1937) at the beginning of the 1930s. In his paper “The Tangut script and its collections”, published in 1935 and devoted to the Tangut manuscripts in the then Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, he pointed out that “besides Confucian ideas, the Tangut absorbed Daoism too, for the quotations from Lao-zi, Zhuang-zi, Lie-zi, Huainan-zi are abundant ... in the collection of quotations. Also, there is a number of translations of small apocrypha claiming the victory of Daoist ideas over Confucianism and at times depicting Confucius and his disciple Zi Lu as being fairly ridiculous. But such works are scarce in our collection. The “Records on the Altar of Confucius' Conciliation” might be an example of such sort of literature” [1].

It is not quite clear why N. A. Nevsky has not included this composition in the inventory. By 1959, when the author of the present article was commissioned to continue the inventory of the Tangut part of P. K. Kozlov's Khara-Khoto collection, a manuscript of the “Records” had been listed among not discovered items. My 35-years work in the manuscript fund makes me conclude that despite its frequent moves, from the Russian Geographic Society to the Asiatic Museum, and later from the Institute of Oriental Studies, then located on the premises of the Academy of Sciences Library, to the new lodgings on Dvortsovaya embankment, 18, no item has been lost. Everything ever mentioned by the previous students of the collection — A. I. Ivanov, V. L. Kotvich, N. A. Nevsky, A. A. Dragunov, and Z. I. Gorbacheva — has been re-found in the manuscript fund. The text in question was also re-discovered later, identified by the present author and listed in the inventory under No. 3781. Afterwards, when bringing together scattered fragments of various writings, it was given call number Tang. 426, No. 3781.

The text represents a “butterfly”-bound manuscript containing 72 pages. The pages measure 8.0×13.5 cm, 5 lines per page with 9 characters per line. As is usual in such manuscripts, the text written in a half-cursive script is present on recto folios only. The paper is grey, thin, of bad quality. The edges of the manuscript are crumpled, bent, or torn off, which makes it difficult to read the text. At the end

of the manuscript the title of the composition — “The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation, one *juan*” — is mentioned again. Until recently, the book was in quite unsatisfactory condition. After restoration, done in the studio of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, its condition is good (see *fig. 1*).

Only a few leaves with the text copied out by Nevsky from this Tangut composition, and with Chinese equivalents provided by him, survive from the time of the scholar's work on the text, so the present article is in fact the first attempt to give necessary information about this most interesting Tangut work. It should be noted that Nevsky's judgement that it represents an apocryphal work containing criticism of Confucian ideas, and that it might be a translation from Chinese, turned out to be correct.

“The Altar Record on Confucius' Conciliation” (the name “Records on the Altar of Confucius' Conciliation”, which was given to the writing by Nevsky, is also acceptable) tells us the story of the meeting of some one who is called in the text the Old Man (*laoren* in Chinese) with Zi Lu, one of Confucius' disciples, and with Confucius himself. I retell here only the principal contents of the composition.

The Old Man, who came from far away (it is not said whence exactly), was decorating an altar. Unfortunately, no information about this altar is provided in the text despite its mention in the title of the work. When Confucius' disciple Zi Lu appeared in the story, the Old Man was leaving the altar singing, which made Zi Lu anxious that this singing would disturb his Master Confucius, who was not far off. Not willing to speak to Zi Lu, the Old Man approached the tree on the river bank, where he went on with his singing and dancing. Then Zi Lu came up to him and said: “Old Man, you are in the old age, your hair is grey, but neither your sons nor grandsons accompany you. And you have no staff to rest your hand upon. Why, having left your house, are you wandering alone in the deserted area in the time when not everyone ventures to come here?” He also told the Old Man that his Master Confucius was not far from them.

On hearing out Zi Lu, the Old Man closed his eyes and said nothing. Zi Lu therefore raised his voice and the Old