
CONSERVATION PROBLEMS

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MANUSCRIPT 2547 AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE: CHINESE PELLIOT COLLECTION (STUDY AND RESTORATION PROJECT)*

Manuscript 2547 (see *fig. 1*) kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France contains three sets of texts. The first one (leaves 1—13) has been identified by comparing them with other manuscripts [1] as a copy of the *Zhai Wanwen*, a collection of eulogies, some of which were used by state administration on ceremonial occasions. The official titles mentioned in the table of contents indicate that these eulogies must have been composed before 710, under Zhongzong's second reign. The second text in the manuscript consists only of one leaf (leaf 14) [2] comprising eulogies for the use in the Area Administration office (*dufufu*) of Liangzhou; one of the eulogies can be dated to Xuanzong's reign, i.e. between the 17th and the 27th year of Kaiyuan (729—739). (The whole manuscript must have been copied at this time.) The third text on leaf 15 is a fu-

neral oration dedicated to the Buddhist monk Yixing [3], mathematician and astronomer [4], who died 25 November 727 and whose state burial was performed twenty-one days later in the countryside east of the capital Chang'an.

The manuscript contains fifteen folded leaves in all. Only the inner sides of the leaves have text written by a single copyist in a fine, neat and small-size handwriting. The text is in columns (18 to 20 mm wide).

The manuscript was repaired several times: it bears the signs of an old restoration (8th century). In our days it was restored twice, in 1954 and 1964, at the Bibliothèque nationale, when the leaves were lined with paper and chiffon without removing the binding. The study of the manuscript and its presentation became possible after partially removing the chiffon that came off without any difficulty.

Technical description of the manuscript

1. Leaves. Only the fragments of the manuscript's leaves are now surviving (see *fig. 2*). The paper is buff, fine (90 μ) mulberry paper [5] (see *fig. 3*), with laid marks discernible in oblique light. The original height of the leaves was 278 mm, which was established by the size of the guards which saw no restoration. Unfortunately, the guards are so badly damaged that their original length remains unknown, the longest surviving one measures 466 mm (the part to the right of the fold is only 54 mm long), but it is not the original length. However, it was suggested that the first leaf might have been 864 mm long [6].

The folded leaves are either a single piece of paper or two pieces with an overlap of three to seven millimetres. Unlike the "butterfly" or "flutter" types of manuscripts, the layout of our manuscript bears no resemblance to that usual in booklets: the text may be found either on the very fold of the leaf (see *fig. 4*) or very near the fold (see *figs. 5* and *6*). It makes us suggest that originally the manuscript was

a scroll which was later cut up into unequal segments. This is evident from the fact that the overlaps' place differs from leaf to leaf [7]. The cutting up of the original scroll became possible because of the small size of the writing. The transformation of the scroll into a booklet had demanded the folding of these segments and the mounting of the folded leaves on guards.

2. Mounting on guards. In order to stack the leaves in such a way that the text should be not hidden at the folds, a guard was stuck on each folded leaf. The guards are seen in the upper and lower part of the manuscript if looked at the edges of the leaves; in the lower part they are visible between the sixth and ninth leaves where the guards escaped stitching. They are also visible if looked at the damaged back of some folded leaves. Each guard is an off-cut of about 50 mm wide and 278 mm long, the last measure corresponds the height of the leaves. Off-cuts are folded

* This study has been started on the advice of Monique Cohen, Head of the Oriental Manuscripts Department at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The work was carried out in collaboration with H  l  ne Vetch, who has helped us with text analysis, and Nathalie Pingaud, a technician at the laboratory of analysis (in Richelieu) of the Biblioth  que nationale de France. C  cile Sarrion, who is in the photographic service of the library, is responsible for the production of the drawings.