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# Pelliot Tibétain 986: New Approaches to a Tibetan Paraphrase of a Chinese Classic among Dunhuang Manuscripts

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## Introduction

Among the Tibetan manuscripts found in “Cave 17” in Dunhuang there are some – namely Pelliot tibétain 986, 987, 988 and 1291 – which contain versions of certain Chinese Classics. These texts have already been translated and analysed. However, some fundamental questions remain: Why were they created in the first instance? And did they form part of an official translation project of non-Buddhist Chinese documents? The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to show that these texts were composed in an official context and were not the result of a single scribe’s initiative or of a writing exercise. For this purpose, I focused on Pelliot tibétain 986, which is distinct in its peculiarities and which provides information useful for the study of Tibetan versions of non-Buddhist Chinese texts. The paper will succinctly present the existing work, the document’s historical context and list the Chinese Classics demanded by the Tibetan court in the eighth century, before commenting on its physical appearance, structure and content. In the final analysis it shall be argued that this document was composed upon official request in Dunhuang.

## Chinese Classics among Tibetan Dunhuang Documents

The discovery by Abbot Wang (Wang daoshi 王道士) in June 1900 of the so called “Library Cave”, also known as “Cave 17”, offered the world a huge amount of documents, mainly manuscripts, providing new perspectives on the history and culture of pre-classical Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Among these documents, a group of Tibetan paraphrases and translations of Chinese texts are striking due to their peculiarities.

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1 I wish to thank my PhD supervisors, Professor Brandon Dotson and Professor Pierre Marsone, for their advice and support. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers of the present article for their suggestions and comments.

2 It seems that the cave was inadvertently opened by workers on 22 June 1900, during restoration works. For a biography of Abbot Wang (1850–1931) and more details on the discovery of the “Library cave”, see Rong Xinjiang *title here?* 2001, pp. *here?* 52–55.

All are non-Buddhist texts and provide examples on how the Chinese Classics were internalised into the Tibetan language in Dunhuang. These manuscripts, nowadays kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (shelf marks Pelliot tibétain 986, 987, 988 and 1291) are familiar to linguists and Tibetologists. Pelliot tibétain 986, a paraphrase of the *Shujing* 書經 (*The Book of Documents* or *Classic of History*, also known as *Shangshu* 尚書), was analysed in an article by Huang Bufan 黃布凡,<sup>3</sup> who provided a transliteration of the whole document, as well as translation and commentary. South Coblin dedicated two articles to this document, providing a transliteration and a translation,<sup>4</sup> as well as a comparison with the Chinese original text and an index with Tibetan words and expressions.<sup>5</sup> Chen Jian 陳踐 and Wang Yao 王堯 transliterated the whole document in 1983,<sup>6</sup> whereas it seems that Yoshiro Imaeda and Ariane Spanien, who also worked on Pelliot tibétain 986, never published the result of their studies.<sup>7</sup>

Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 both present paraphrases and translations of Confucian maxims taken from the *Liji* 禮記 (*Classic of Rites*) and the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*). Both documents, according to Rolf Stein,<sup>8</sup> are translations and paraphrases of Confucian maxims circulating in Dunhuang at that time. These maxims were part of a collection titled *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教 available in Dunhuang at that period.<sup>9</sup> Pelliot Tibétain 1291, firstly identified by Yoshiro Imaeda as a translation of the

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- 3 Huang Bufan 黃布凡 (1981): “*Shangshu* sipian guzangwen yiwen de chubu yanjiu” 〈尚書〉四篇古藏文譯文的初步研究. *Yuyan yanjiu* 語言研究 1: 203–232.
- 4 Coblin, South (1991a): “A Study of the Old Tibetan Shangshu Paraphrase, Part I.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111.2: 303–322.
- 5 Coblin, South (1991b): “A Study of the Old Tibetan Shangshu Paraphrase, Part II.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111.3: 523–539.
- 6 See Chen Jian 陳踐 and Wang Yao 王堯 (1983): *Tun hong nas thon pa'i gna' bo'i bod yig shog dril*. Beijing: Minzu 民族, pp. here? 114–128. However, I do not follow Chen Jian and Wang Yao's transliteration since it contains few errors and reconstructs large portions of the original Tibetan manuscript without providing sources or explanations.
- 7 See Coblin 1991a, p. 303. Imaeda gave a short overview of Pelliot tibétain 986 and provided a translation of several sentences of the Tibetan document in 1985. Cf. Imaeda Yoshiro 今枝由郎 (1985): “Chūgoku-Indo koten *Shokyō* – *Sengokusaku* – *Rāmāyana*” 中国インド古典〈書經〉 – 〈戦国策〉 – <ラーマヤナ>. In: *Tonkō kogo bunken* 6 / 敦煌胡語文獻 6: 557–573. Tokyo: Daitō 大東).
- 8 Stein, Rolf (1992): “Tibetica Antiqua VI. Maximes confucianistes dans deux manuscrits de Touen-houang.” *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 79.1: 9–17.
- 9 See Stein 1992, p. 10, n. 2. A Dunhuang manuscript copy, in Chinese, of the collection *Taigong jiajiao* is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France under the shelf mark P 3069. The identification of both Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 with *Taigong jiajiao* is also confirmed by an article published in China (Nie Hongyin 2005). A recent study states that some phrases of Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 are derived from the *Liji* and the *Lunyu* but confirms that the majority of the manuscripts was translated from the *Taigong jiajiao* (Sa'er ji and Saren gaowa 2017). Moreover, it seems that Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 were parts of *gNa' the'i kong gi stan pa'*, a newly identified Tibetan Dunhuang manuscript, belonging to the Nakamura Fusetsu collection. This Tibetan translation of the *Taigong jiajiao* was intended to popularise Confucian virtues to children. See Sa'er Ji and Saren Gaowa 2017 provide here the whole title?

*Zhangguo ce* 戰國策 (*Strategies of the Warring States*), was later interpreted by Ma Mingda as being a translation of the *Chunqiu houyu* 春秋後語 (*Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*) by Kong Yan 孔衍.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the fourth chapter of Pelliot tibétain 1287 (“*Old Tibetan Chronicle*”) should be considered as an addition to the list – for two reasons: firstly, it is not in its entirety dedicated to a Chinese text, but only in its fourth part. Secondly, it is a Tibetan original and not a translation or a paraphrase from the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*, by Sima Qian 司馬遷),<sup>11</sup> but probably from the “*Liezhuan*” 列傳.<sup>12</sup> However, it has also been argued that it could be based on the *Wenxuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), or one of its commentaries.<sup>13</sup>

Despite having been previously analysed the texts were not considered as a corpus of translations of non-Buddhist texts coming from China. All the Chinese books paraphrased or translated in Tibetan, namely the *Shujing*, *Liji*, *Lunyu*, *Chunqiu houyu*, and *Wenxuan*, were considered as canonical texts by the Tang and were widely used by scholars and officials. Some also circulated at the Tibetan court, request for copies to be sent via the Princess of Jincheng (Tib. Kim sheng kong co, Ch. Jincheng Gongzhu 金城公主).

### Interest by the Tibetan Court of Chinese Classics

Chinese sources testify a strong demand by the Tibetan court for certain Chinese texts in 730–731, coinciding with a diplomatic mission by the Princess of Jincheng to the Chinese capital. A letter preparing the ground for the upcoming treaty with the

10 See Ma Mingda 馬明達 (1984): “P.t. 1291 hao Dunhuang zangwen wenshu yijie dingwu” P.t.1291 號敦煌藏文文書譯解訂誤. *Dunhuangxue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊 6: 14–24, in contrast to Imaeda Yoshiro 今枝由郎 (1980): “L’identification de l’original chinois du Pelliot tibétain 1291 – traduction tibétaine du *Zhangguo ce*.” *Acta Orientalia (Hungarica)* 34: 53–68. The identification with the *Chunqiu houyu* has been confirmed in a recent study by Shen Chen 沈琛 (2015): “P.t. 1291 hao Dunhuang zangwen xieben *Chunqiu houyu* zai yanjiu” P.t.1291 號敦煌藏文寫本〈春秋後語〉再研究. *Wenxian* 文獻 5: 69–89. Shen Chen’s article provides a critical translation as well as an index of Tibetan terms and their Chinese equivalents.

11 Takeuchi 1985, p. 141. Revise notes 11 and 12, which one should have the whole title?

12 “*Liezhuan*” 列傳, no. 16, more precisely. Chapter four of Pelliot tibétain 1287 is an episode taken from the biography of Ping Yuanchung, prince of Chao. In this extract, Ping Yuanchung has a conversation with Mao Sui before leaving for battle in Chu. In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the episode is rendered as a conversation between Khyung po Spung sad Zu tse and Seng go Myi chen. See Takeuchi Tsuguhito 武内紹人 (1985): “A Passage from the Shih Chi in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.” In *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization: Proceedings of the 1982 Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies held at Columbia University*, edited by Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein, pp. 137 and 141.

13 One could add Pelliot tibétain 1283, possibly a paraphrase or a Chinese text in Tibetan rendering about filial piety. Ditto for Pelliot tibétain 1058 *verso*, on Confucian morals (as suggested by Brandon Dotson). Other Chinese originals are translated in Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts, for example Pelliot tibétain 992 and 1284, both translations of a Chinese Dunhuang document titled “Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu yi juan 孔子項託相問書一卷”. See Michel Soymié (1954): “L’entrevue de Confucius et de Hiang T’o.” *Journal Asiatique* 242: 331.

Tang empire, mentions several presents and a request for Chinese texts.<sup>14</sup> The eleventh-century encyclopedia *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 relates:

“The Tibetans presented a memorial, saying: ‘The princess asks for a copy of the *Maoshi*, and *Liji*, as well as of the *Zuozhuan* and of the *Wenxuan*.’ The emperor ordered the imperial library to make a copy of these texts. Yu Xulie [an official working in the Editorial Service of the Palace Library], presented a memorial to the ruler telling him that it was not appropriate to make these copies, [however, his] memorial was not considered.”<sup>15</sup>

By comparing this passage with different Chinese sources, it is possible to create a list of the texts requested by the Tibetan court:

<i>JTS</i> 舊唐書 <sup>16</sup>	<i>Shijing</i> (in the version of <i>Mao</i> ) <i>Liji</i> <i>Zuozhuan</i> <i>Wenxuan</i>
<i>XTS</i> 新唐書 <sup>17</sup>	Five Classics
<i>ZZTJ</i> 資治通鑑 <sup>18</sup>	<i>Maoshi</i> <i>Chunqiu</i> <i>Liji</i>

Paul Demiéville confirms that list (the *Liji*, *Shijing* and *Chunqiu*), stating that “some other sources add the *Shujing*, the *Zuozhuan* and *Wenxuan*”.<sup>19</sup> All the texts mentioned in these lists are part of the canonical classics, except for the *Wenxuan*, an anthology of Chinese poetry and literature compiled in the sixth century. The *Wenxuan* became popular during the Tang dynasty and became an essential text for passing the official examinations.<sup>20</sup>

14 Demiéville maintains that these texts were not sought for by the princess in person, but were intended for the Tibetan court (Demiéville (1952): *Le Concile de Lhasa*. Paris: PUF, 226, n. 1). Is the reference correctly written here? With ()?

15 吐蕃使奏云：公主請《毛詩》、《禮記》、《左傳》、《文選》各一部。制令秘書省寫與之。正字于休烈上疏諫言不可，疏奏不省 (CFYG, 11334).

16 時吐蕃使奏云：公主請《毛詩》、《禮記》、《左傳》、《文選》各一部 (JTS, 5232).

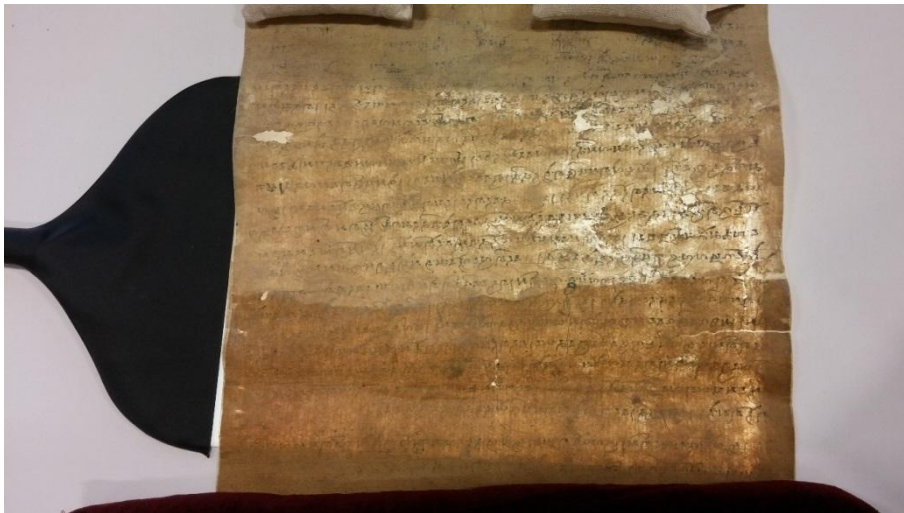
17 See the translation in Pelliot 1961, p. 102. In the canon, the list of the Five Classics 五經 includes the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Poetry*), *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*), *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) that since the third century was joined with the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, an extension of the *Chunqiu*, as well as the *Shujing*.

18 吐蕃使者稱公主求《毛詩》、《春秋》、《禮記》 (ZZTJ, 6913).

19 Paul Demiéville does not provide the titles of his sources (Demiéville 1952, p. 187, n. 1). Do we need () here for the reference?

20 See Knechtges 1982, 54. Do we need here the whole title?

Upon close scrutiny, at least some of these books match the Tibetan texts discovered in Dunhuang, in particular the *Liji* and *Lunyu* (partially translated in Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988), the *Shujing* (paraphrased in Pelliot tibétain 986) and a portion of the *Wenxuan* (fourth chapter of Pelliot tibétain 1287). Even if the sheer physical distance between the court in central Tibet and the garrison of Dunhuang made it difficult to establish a direct link between the Chinese originals and the Tibetan texts kept in Dunhuang, it is certain that Tibetan officials had access to a corpus of the Chinese Classics, and that they probably used it as base for their translations and paraphrases.<sup>21</sup> It is also worth noting that many aristocratic families sent their sons to the Chinese Imperial University to study the Chinese Classics, as attested by several Chinese sources. The *XTS* says: “Then [Srong btrsan sgam po] sent children of the nobles [to Chang’an], asking [for them] to enter the Imperial University and learn the *Shi[jing]* and the *Shu[jing]*.”<sup>22</sup> The *TZY* affirms that there were, more than eight thousand children of foreign nobles who were residing at the Chinese capital, including Tibetans, where they attended the Imperial University (*TZY, juan 1*). Furthermore, at the beginning of the eighth century: “[the Emperor]



decreed that the Tibetan kings or qaghan’s descendants wishful to learn the Confucian Classics, should be attached to the Imperial School in order to study.”<sup>23</sup>

### Pelliot tibétain 986 – Its Physical Appearance

Fig. 1: *Verso* of Pelliot tibétain 986 (copyright: Bibliothèque nationale de France)

<sup>21</sup> Takeuchi 1985, pp. 141–142.

<sup>22</sup> 仍遣酋豪子弟，請入國學以習《詩》、《書》(*JTS, juan 196*). The same passage can also be found in *XTS*, 6074.

<sup>23</sup> 敕吐蕃王及可汗子孫。欲習學經業。宜附國子學讀書 (*THY, juan 36*).



From a material point of view, Pelliot tibétain 986 is an interesting document: it is quite a big scroll, measuring 200 cm by 31 cm and, in contrast to other Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts, its paper seems to be of a very good quality. The first 17 lines of the text are fragmentary, but the remaining part of the document is complete.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the text has an adjustment in the first portion of the text: a supplementary layer of paper has been added in order to allow for better support during writing. The pictures which the Bibliothèque nationale de France kindly let me take (fig. 1) show clearly in the light-box that it is not a change-over.

The paper has been reinforced for maximum strength, which is visible from the *recto* of the document. At line 61, the text starts to be readable, in contrast to the first portion of the text which is less legible because of the damaged paper. Furthermore, the text-less *verso*, has 9 lines traced on it for Chinese characters, each column measuring 2 cm in width. This means that the manuscript was firstly meant to be used (or maybe reused) for a Chinese text. Supplementary proof that the document was considered important is provided by the fact that the *verso* was never reused for a Chinese text, despite the character lines. This forms a stark contrast to the majority of the Tibetan Dunhuang documents, which were written on the *verso* of Chinese documents.

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24 An analysis of the paper composition has not been performed on the document. A digitised version of the manuscript can be found in the internet catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France at the address <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8303448z.r=pelliot%20tib%C3%A9tain%20986?rk=21459;2>

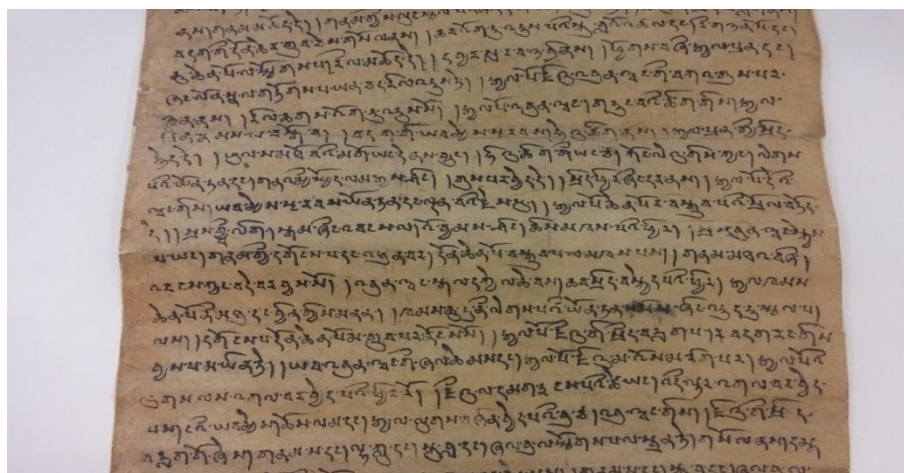


Fig. 2: *Recto* of Pelliot tibétain 986, with changeover and script clearly visible (copyright: Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The writing itself also suggests that the document has been composed with an official purpose (fig. 2). The writing is clear and the whole text is well written and organized; the changeovers are carefully handled and the text written over 158 lines in *dbu can* has been composed by two scribal hands (the hand-change is located at line 24). The writing style, following the classification of Sam van Schaik, is the type “Official 1”, which was widespread during the Tibetan rule of Dunhuang and was employed for official and/or historical documents. This type of writing was used in Dunhuang and emanated by the Tibetan central authorities.<sup>25</sup> The layout of the text, scrupulously done, equally suggests that the manuscript was not the result of a writing exercise.

### Pelliot tibétain 986 – Its Layout

Pelliot tibétain 986 is a paraphrase of three *Shujing* chapters,<sup>26</sup> collated in the last part of the text, under the title “Zhou shu” 周書. This section speaks about the conquest of the Shang dynasty by the Zhou, which happened in the eleventh century BCE. These chapters contain the discourses of King Wen of the Zhou dynasty (周文王) to his soldiers: King Wen orders them to follow him into battle and, in the last

25 The types of scripts found in Tibetan manuscripts can be consulted at this address: [http://idp.bl.uk/education/paleography/tibetan/script\\_types.html](http://idp.bl.uk/education/paleography/tibetan/script_types.html). Accessed 15 June 2017.

26 Amongst Western scholars, Edward Shaughnessy and Michael Nylan have been extensively working on the *Shangshu/Shujing*. See Shaughnessy, Edward (1993): “*Shang shu* 尚書 (*Shu ching* 書經).” In *Early Chinese Texts. A Bibliographical Guide*, edited by Michael Loewe. Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 376–389.

chapter, the conquest of the Shang is successfully accomplished.<sup>27</sup> The *Shujing* narrates the events in three successive chapters, named the *The Great Speech* (“Taishi” 泰誓), the *Speech at Mu* (“Mushi” 牧誓) and the *Successful Completion of the War* (“Wucheng” 武成).<sup>28</sup> The first part of the “Taishi” chapter is divided in three parts: a first part (*shang* 上), a middle one (*zhong* 中) and a final one (*xia* 下). The Tibetan text, composed over 158 lines, is arranged as follows: from line 1 to line 28, the first section of the Tibetan text corresponds to the central part (*zhong*) of the “Taishi” chapter, whereas lines 28 to 68 are part of its third part (*xia*). The third section of the Tibetan manuscript, lines 68–90, covers the “Mushi” chapter of the Chinese text. The fourth section of the Tibetan text, from line 90 to line 157, corresponds to the “Wucheng” chapter of the Chinese text. The fact that the scroll, damaged in the upper side, starts with the second part of the “Taishi” chapter, suggests that the first part (*shang*) of the same chapter was also present. This is also confirmed by the first line of the manuscript, which states: “that was the second chapter.”<sup>29</sup>

Another proof of the completeness of Pelliot tibétain 986 is found at the bottom of the manuscript (fig. 3), which states: “volume six of the *Shangshu* is finished”.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore highly probable that Pelliot tibétain 986 was part of an entire paraphrase of the *Shujing*. In many editions of the *Shujing*, the “Taishi”, “Mushi” and “Wucheng” were printed together as the sixth *juan* (volume) of the text.<sup>31</sup> We may thus safely assume that Pelliot tibétain 986 was originally a translation of *juan* six of the *Shujing*.

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27 For more details on the historical background of the Shang conquest by the Zhou dynasty, see Michael Loewe and Edward Schaughnessy (eds.) (1999): *The Cambridge History of Ancient China. From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Should the family names of the author put before their names?

28 A complete translation of the *Shujing* was produced by James Legge in 1865 and by Couvreur in 1897. Should we put here the whole title as in the bibliography?

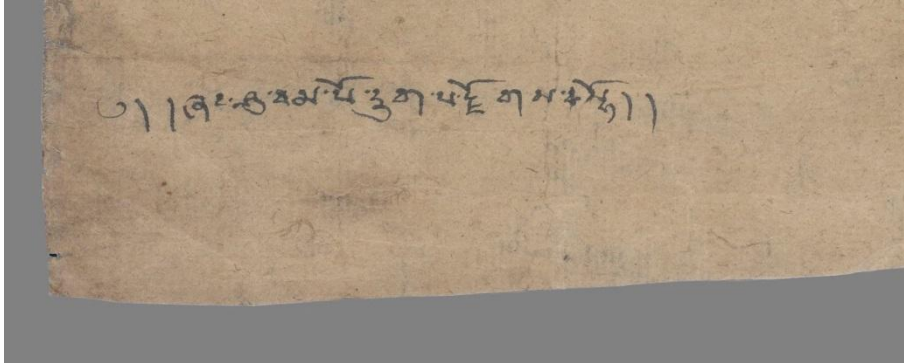
29 In the Tibetan manuscript, we find the following sentence: *ste le'u gnyis pa'o /.*

30 The Tibetan manuscript reads: *zhang shu bam po drug pa rdzogs sto //*. The word *bam po* means ‘volume’.

31 Coblin 1991a, p. 304

Fig. 3: The last line of the *recto* of Pelliot tibétain 986 (copyright: Bibliothèque nationale de France)

Therefore, an examination of the layout of the manuscript shows the paraphrase of



the text to be complete and carefully organised. It is clear that Pelliot tibétain 986 was considered an important document and not merely a writing exercise accomplished on a single scribe's initiative. This is also confirmed by the content of the manuscript: by reading the text we can see that Pelliot tibétain 986 meaningfully translates some Chinese key terms such as *dao* 道, *de* 德 or *tianming* 天命.

#### Pelliot tibétain 986 – Its Content

As seen above, the *Shujing* is part of the canon of the Chinese Classics. Of the many interesting details which could become the object of academic examination, I wish to examine how the author of the paraphrase decided to translate the Chinese terms *dao*, “path / way” *de*, “virtue” and *tianming*, “Mandate of Heaven”. These philosophically and politically intricate concepts have been translated, throughout the whole document, as *chos* or with other meaningful Tibetan expressions. The chosen passages also prove that the Tibetan document is a paraphrase of the Chinese original text, and not its direct translation or adaptation.<sup>32</sup> The consistency shown in the translation of these terms proves that the Tibetan scribes chose terms and expressions which rendered the original Chinese sense of these words. This suggests semantic coherence and a certain familiarity with Chinese concepts. In several passages of the text, I noticed the following translations:

- In line 6 of the Tibetan document, we find the phrase *^in gyl rgyal po c'lu yang // chos lugs las 'gal ba*, which can be translated, as “Ci'u, king of In [the Shang dynasty] behaved in an incompatible way / in contradiction with the law / the

<sup>32</sup> Pelliot tibétain 986 is, as attested by Coblin, a paraphrase including interpretative passages taken not only from the *Shujing*, but also from its commentaries. See Coblin 1991a: p. 305. (I don't know how this reference should be structured. I fit needs the whole title or not) (Tabs needed)

- rules.” The Chinese original reads: 尚王受力行無度, *du* 度 meaning “law / rule.”<sup>33</sup>
- In line 19, the Tibetan term *spyod lam* (“the path / the way of activities”) is used to translate the Chinese *de* 德.
  - In line 32, the Tibetan manuscript gives the paraphrase: *gnam gyI chos gsal bar shes pa yin bas // legs nyes chos lugs dang /*, which could be translated by “as [you] clearly know the order / rule of Heaven, the good and the bad rules /”; the same phrase in the Chinese document is: *tian you lei dao jue lei wei zhang* 天有顯道厥類惟彰.<sup>34</sup> In this phrase, the expression *tiandao*, “the way of Heaven” is translated in Tibetan by *gnam gyi chos*, literally “the order of Heaven”. *Dao* is here translated as *chos*, the fundamental concept of order or, later, the Buddhist Dharma.
  - In line 55, the Tibetan text provides the following translation: *rgyal po’I spyod lam*, “the path of a ruler”. The Chinese document uses the term *jundao* 君道, “the way of a ruler”.

As attested in Coblin’s index, the Chinese term *dao* is translated into Tibetan by the terms *chos*, *chos lugs*, *spyod lam* or *rgyal lugs*. These four expressions designate the order, the way, or the path of (appropriate) behaviour, and the way of a sovereign, respectively, which cover the same range of meanings as the Chinese term *dao*.<sup>35</sup>

We could extend this comparison further into other Tibetan manuscripts with Chinese translations or versions. Stein says that the term *chos* present in Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 seems to be a translation of the Chinese term *dao*.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, a further interpretation was presented by Frederick Thomas,<sup>37</sup> where the Chinese term *dao* is rendered in Tibetan as *dahu*. We can therefore see that Pelliot tibétain 986 provides an evolution in our understanding of key terms such as *dao* or *de*. It is of course incorrect to affirm that the Tibetan key term *chos* is an exclusive translation for the Chinese word *dao*. Nonetheless, we can see from Pelliot tibétain 986 that *chos*, or in other cases *spyod*, meaning “behavior”, was adopted as a meaningful translation for the Chinese terms *dao* or *de*.<sup>38</sup>

33 The Chinese passages reads: “Shou Emperor, of the Shang family, strives to violate all laws [...]”. Translation by Couvreur (1999), p. 177. (Translation from French is mine). **This line needs a tab**

34 The Chinese passages reads: “the law imposed by heaven on the human race is manifest, and its different articles are very clear [...]”. Translation by Couvreur (1999), p. 177. (Translation from French is mine). **These lines need a tab**

35 Coblin 1991b, pp. 525–526.

36 Stein 1992, p. 12. Nie Hongyin says that, in Pelliot tibétain 988, the Tibetan term *chos* translates the Chinese *li* 禮 “rites”; Nie Hongyin 2005, pp. 79–80.

37 Thomas, Frederick William (1926): “A Chinese Buddhist Text in Tibetan Writing.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 58.3: 508–526 and *idem*. (1927): “A Second Chinese Buddhist Text in Tibetan Characters.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 59.2: 281–306.

38 It is noteworthy to mention that the Tibetan text misspells or inverts, in few occasions, the names of the Chinese rulers mentioned in the original Chinese text; for instance at lines 11, 12, and 13, where Ci’u and Kher, the Tibetan version of Zhou 紂 and Jie 桀 respectively, are inverted

## Conclusion

From the analysis of the historical context as well as its physical appearance, its layout and its content, we can see that Pelliot tibétain 986 can be considered an official Tibetan version of the *Shujing*. The paper was of good quality, it was reinforced in order to allow a better support for writing, and, both the *recto* and the *verso* present characteristics proving that the document was probably composed in an official context and was not the result of a single scribe's initiative or writing exercise. This assumption is confirmed by the analysis of the writing style, which seems to follow an official pattern, as well as by the coherent and meaningful translation of political and philosophical key concepts, placing the document in the context of official translations. We do not know how the Chinese Classics, and therefore Pelliot tibétain 986, ended up in Dunhuang; we also do not know if these texts arrived through the same Tibetan court which made a request of their copies in 731, or if they are the result of a translation and paraphrase of the Chinese Classics produced in Dunhuang itself. It is also difficult, at this stage of the research, to say if Pelliot tibétain 986 was part of a larger translation project of non-Buddhist texts.<sup>39</sup> Strikingly, in the case of the *Shujing*, we have a request for a copy from the Tibetan court and we also possess the exact same text in Chinese and in Tibetan.<sup>40</sup> My assumption, from the above examination, is that Pelliot tibétain 986, was probably supported by the Tibetan authorities in Dunhuang, or realised in the context of an official translation – perhaps one sponsored by leading official families.

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### Abbreviations

*CFYG* – Wang Qinruo 王欽若 *et al.* (2006): *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe 鳳凰出版社.

*JTS* – Liu Xu 劉昫 *et al.* (1986): *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.

*THY* – Wang Pu 王溥 (1955): *Tang huiyao* 唐會要. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.

*TZY* – Wang Dingbao 王定保 (1936): *Tang zheyen* 唐摭言. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.

*XTS* – Song Qi 宋祁, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 *et al.* (1975): *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.

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comparing to the Chinese original version of the text. I take this as a mistake maybe due to an unfamiliar scribe with the document, and not a sign of incompetence of the author of the paraphrase. [Tab needed here.](#)

<sup>39</sup> A further step in this direction could be a comprehensive analysis and comparison with the Tibetan versions of the Rāmāyaṇa found in Dunhuang (IOL Tib J 737.1, IOL Tib J 737.2, IOL Tib J 737.3, Pelliot tibétain 981, and Pelliot tibétain 983). [Tab needed here](#)

<sup>40</sup> I am referring here to the Chinese Dunhuang document Stein 799, which is a portion of the *Shujing*, presenting the same chapters as Pelliot tibétain 986. Even if the proximity with Pelliot tibétain 986 is striking, I am not able, at the present stage, to affirm that Pelliot tibétain 986 is a paraphrase of Stein 799. This is the object of currently undergoing research.

ZZTJ – Sima Guang 司馬光 *et al.* (2011): *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.

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