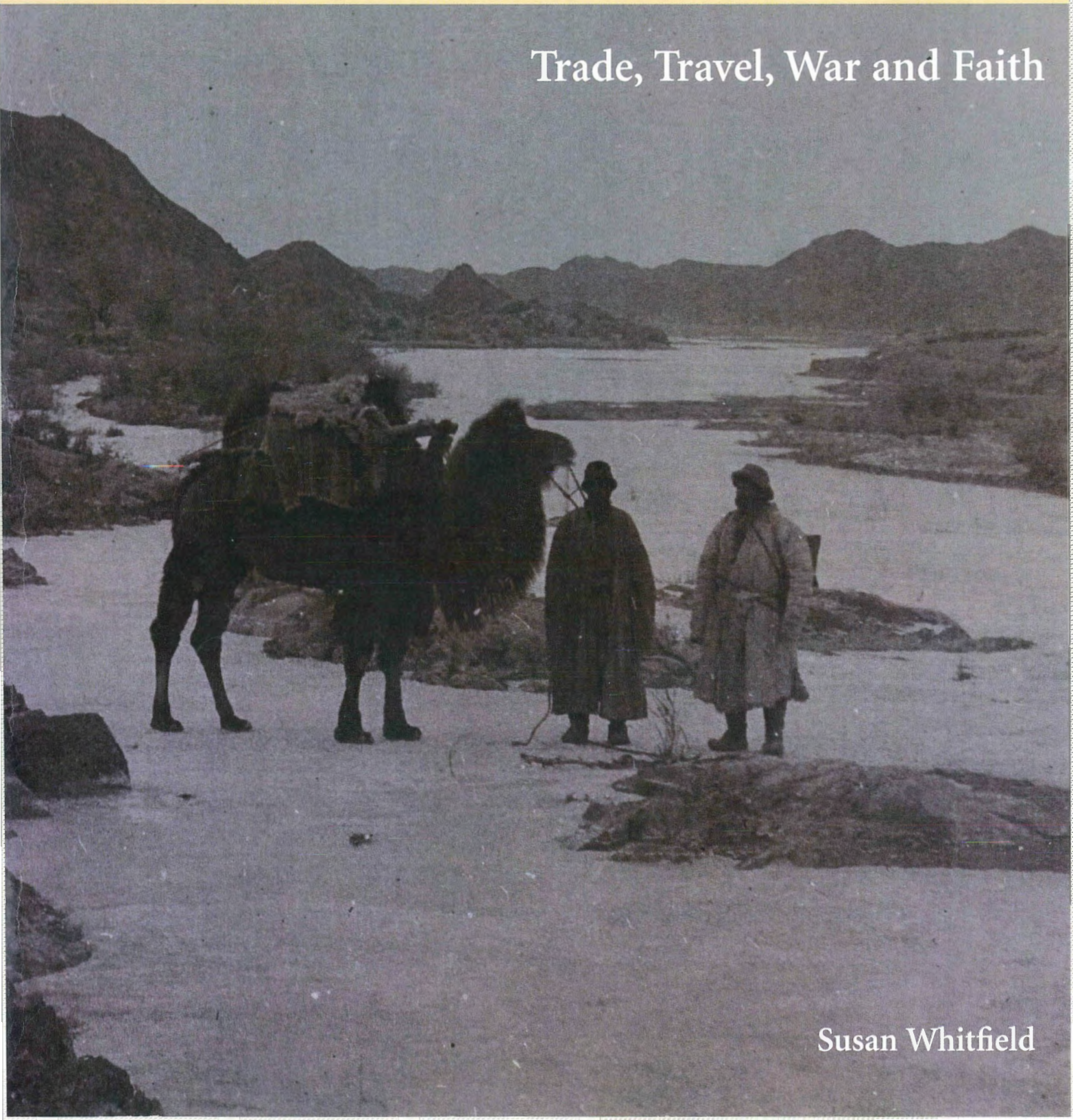


THE SILK ROAD

Trade, Travel, War and Faith



Susan Whitfield

The Silk Road
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THE TIBETAN
MILITARY SYSTEM
AND ITS ACTIVITIES
FROM
KHOTAN TO LOP-NOR

TSUGUHITO TAKEUCHI

The Tibetan Empire (seventh to mid-ninth century) occupied and ruled the Southern Route of the Silk Road and most of the Hexi Corridor, including Khotan, Lop-Nor, and Dunhuang, for over fifty years from the late eighth to the mid-ninth centuries. The newly acquired territories were divided into several administrative units called *khrom* 'military district government': e.g., Tshal-byi *khrom* in the Lop-Nor area and Kwa-cu *khrom* including Dunhuang.¹ Small kingdoms like Khotan (? – c.1006) were allowed to retain their regimes under Tibetan colonial domination. Tibetan armies, including previously subjugated Sumpa and Zhangzhung elements, were sent and stationed there, and local peoples, such as Chinese, Khotanese, 'A-zha (i.e. Tuyuhun), and Mthong-khyab, were recruited *in situ* and incorporated into the Tibetan military system.

While the outline of the Tibetan administrative system has gradually become understood, details such as, for example, how Tibetan armies were dispatched, how local peoples were recruited, what were their duties, and so on, have remained unknown. A systematic and well-organized administrative system would have been indispensable for Tibetans to rule Central Asia – a territory far away from its homeland – for over half a century.

Among the Old Tibetan texts unearthed in Central Asia, the wooden slips (henceforth woodslips) from the Khotan and Lop-Nor areas are the most informative primary sources for the present

subject, because many of them were used by military officials and soldiers. The largest collection of Tibetan woodslips is found in the Stein Collection in the British Library, which houses about two thousand three hundred. In this paper I wish to introduce some of the woodslips relevant to the Tibetan military system in an attempt to depict how the Tibetan military administration of Central Asia actually functioned.

Old Tibetan woodslips – analysis of shape and content

Old Tibetan woodslips were mostly excavated from the ruined forts of Mazar-tagh and Miran. Mazar-tagh is located to the north of Khotan along the Khotan river, while the Miran site is situated to the west of Lake Lop. They were the military bases of the Tibetan administration of the Khotan and Lop-Nor areas, respectively. Naturally, the woodslips mainly concern military affairs, though there also exist a few slips regarding Buddhism, other religious texts (which include prominent use of the word *bon*), and divination.

Since paper was already prevalent at the time, woodslips were used for specific purposes which are more suitable for wood, e.g., tallies, soldier tablets, tags, military dispatches. One of the important characteristics of woodslips is their physical form or shape. The shape of a woodslip conforms with its function and usage. For example, Fig. 1 shows an example of a letter cover with a seal case, which is always at the left end. The form of address is written from



Fig. 1 Tibetan woodslip letter with seal case. By the time of the Tibetan occupation of the eastern Silk Road in the late eighth century paper was prevalent, but woodslips were used for specific purposes which were more suitable for wood, such as tallies, soldier tablets, tags, and military dispatches. A common form was a letter with a seal case, such as shown here. The seal case is always at the left end and the address is written from left to right. The content is written on the second and sometimes the third slip, which were joined to the covering case with strings.

The British Library, IOL Tib N 691 and 684 (top), 1629 (middle) and 1521 (bottom)

Fig. 2 Wooden knife.

Woodslips only had a temporary use and, once finished with, they were often refashioned into useful everyday items such as a knife, as shown here, for use by the soldiers garrisoned in the fort.

The British Library, IOL Tib N 1061

left to right. As is shown in Fig. 1, the content is written on the second and sometimes the third slip, which were joined together with strings. Another form of letter was attached by string to goods like an invoice.

Reuse is another important feature of woodslips. The surface of used woodslips was often shaved away so that there was a blank surface for new writing. But old woodslips were also made into wooden tools, such as knives, spoons and spatulas (Fig. 2 and cats. 110–2). Sometimes one edge was rounded and charred, probably to make it soft (cat. 112). According to my colleague, a specialist in Japanese woodslips, these resemble those found in toilet ruins in Japan – so they could be a contemporary ‘toilet paper’. Stein stated in his report² that the rooms excavated at Miran and Mazar-tagh were distinguished by a bad smell, to which these scrapers may have contributed.

These wooden tools bear witness to the daily life of Tibetan soldiers and their families alongside the artefacts unearthed from the same ruins, e.g., scale armour, bows and arrows, wooden keys, leather pouches, wooden weaving sticks and spinning whorls, wooden combs, fishing nets, slings, felt and woollen bags, woven rugs, and shoes (see cats. 109, 113–5).³ Here I will focus on one typical type of woodslip, namely tallies used in the Khotan area.

‘Hill-stationing’ (*ri-zug*) slips

Cats. 101–4 display a particular type of tally stick. One side is painted red and has had several short and long notches cut into it. Sometimes the word *nas* ‘barley’ is inscribed on them. A wedge is cut away at the bottom right and there is a string-hole on the left. Nearly eighty of these items were found at Mazar-tagh and they thus form a group which I call ‘the *ri-zug* slips’.

On the left side are written place names, often ending with *rtse* ‘mountain peak’. They are places for *ri-zug* or hill-stationing of

watchmen. F. W. Thomas translates *ri-zug* as ‘mountain sickness.’⁴ *zug* is the perfect stem of the intransitive verb *’dzug-pa* ‘to be pricked and to place or put down’; it came to mean ‘torment, illness’ in Western dialects, which Jäschke learned at Kyelang and included in his dictionary.⁵ But, Tibetans would not get mountain sickness in the low Taklamakan desert. Thus, *zug* should be understood in its original sense, ‘place, put down’ – thereby ‘settle’. Around Mazar-tagh, there are many hills or *tāghs* to which watchmen were stationed for a certain period: I have identified over forty.

These watchmen were sent as a unit called a *tshugs*, which is another derivation from the verb *’dzug-pa*. One *tshugs* consisted of four men, the *tshugs-pon* ‘commander’, *’og-pon* ‘sub-commander’, *byan-po* ‘cook’, and *byan-g.yog* ‘assistant cook’. Cat. 104 shows a woodslip listing these members. The inclusion of cooks may at first seem strange, but is understandable because this is not a combat unit. Also, they must have been in charge of logistics in general, not just cooking. (Interestingly, in sixth-century Japan every soldier was accompanied by a cook during military campaigns and Stein and his Indian surveyor each had their own cook on their expeditions).

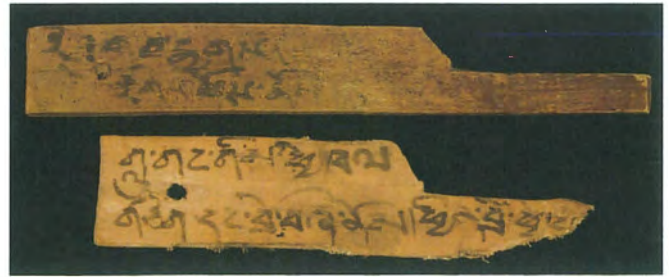
How were the woodslips made and used? According to my colleague, Professor Tateno, a specialist in the study of Japanese woodslips, the triangular piece must have been cut out before the bottom right corner was removed. This is supported by the fact that we have found woodslips from which the triangular piece had been cut out, but the bottom right corner has not yet been removed.

Cat. 101 shows a woodslip in the very first stage of production, where a *ri-zug* location is written, but no notches or wedges have been cut away. Cat. 102 is in the next stage of production, when the notches have been cut. This shows how the notches function: long notches are cut all the way across down to the bottom edge, while

Fig. 3 Wood tally listing provisions.

When Tibetan soldiers were sent to hill stations outside the fort they were given a wedge section cut out from a woodslip, naming their destination. The woodslip with the wedge removed – like the ones shown here – was kept at the provisioning office at the fort and sent out with regular provisions. The wedge was shown as identification and checked against the tally. Sometime, as here, the watchmen wrote a note on the back acknowledging receipt of the provisions.

The British Library, IOL Tib N 1180 and 1442

**Fig. 4** Petition.

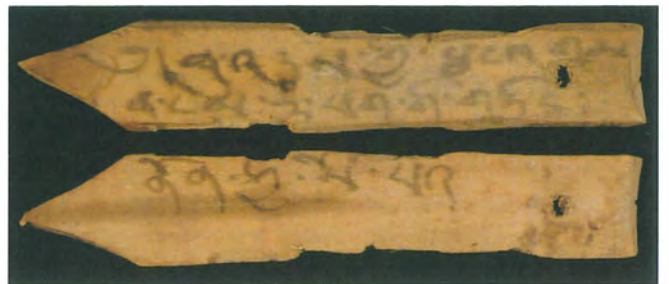
This is a letter from the Tibetan soldiers stationed at a hill named Gling-rings to the soldiers stationed at Ho-tong gyu-mo and other hills westwards to relay their request for provisions to the headquarters, Mazar-tagh.

The British Library, IOL Tib N 1577 (both sides)

**Fig. 5** Woodslip mentioning a hill station.

The Tibetan woodslips give clues as to the relative position of hill stations. There were over forty locations, many to the east of Mazar-tagh, some to the north, and probably some to the west. This slip mentions a rear-guard station to the south of Mazar-tagh, at the confluence of Kara-kash and Yurung-kash near the ancient capital of Khotan.

The British Library, IOL Tib N 1437 (both sides)



the same number of short notches are cut at both the top and bottom edges. The long notches served for later matching-up or identification, while the short ones are likely to have represented a specific number of measures (i.e., amount) of grain.

When watchmen – a group of *tshugs-po* – set out for a hill-station, they took provisions but would have needed more later, for which they brought the cut-out wedge as a tally. So the tally was made and cut apart before the watchmen's departure. After a certain period, messengers called *so-slung* (ITN1936) transported provisions to the hill-station together with the woodslip indicating their destination. When the messengers handed over the provisions to the watchmen, the latter had to show the tally (wedge part) for identification, which the messengers brought back together with the slip to the office in Mazar-tagh as a receipt. The slips were then kept in the office as records.

Periods and locations of hill-stations

In a few cases, these woodslips contain writings by the watchmen on the reverse as follows.

ITN1180 (fig. 3)

A. 'jag ma 'gur

B. ri zug brgyags z[i]gs [tshos (/pos)] nos

'Zigs-tsho (/po) received the provisions for hill-stationing.'

ITN1111 (cat. 103)

A. \$:/ stag skugs /

B. nas bre drug ma nos te pyis nod

'[We] have not received [our] six *bre* of barley; [we hope we] will receive [them] later.'

Six short notches and one long on verso.

ITN1442 (fig. 3)

A. \$:/ 'phrul gI mye long / kun snang rtse /

B. glu gang gis phye khal gcIg dang bre bzhl nos / phyin bre [phye dang]

'Glu-gang received one *khal* and 4 *bre* of flour; later [he will receive. . .] and a half *bre*.'

ITN1541 (cat. 102)

A. *dgra yI cad /*

B. [zla (/za)] *pa rI zugI brgyags / ryang rogs nos*

'Ryang-rog received the provisions of hill-stationing (for a month?).'

ITN1541 seems to mention the provisions for hill-stationing for one month. But ITN1442 suggests that the amount of barley flour to be received was about one *khal* 'bushel' and 9 *bre* – which would not be sufficient for this period. I suspect that one month was rather exceptional, and that watchmen generally received provisions every two or three weeks.

How long, then, did watchmen have to be stationed on the hill? In one woodslip (ITN1629) watchmen complain that they stayed as long as one year and two winter months. However, this is exceptional: they were normally stationed for less than a year, during which time they were supposed to receive provisions regularly.

In spite of such a well-organized logistics system, it is not surprising to find woodslips in which watchmen make urgent requests for extra provisions due to shortage. For example, ITN1577 (Fig. 4) is a letter from the watchmen stationed at a hill named Gling-rings to the watchmen stationing at Ho-tong gyu-mo and other hills westwards to relay their request for provisions to the headquarters, Mazar-tagh.

These slips also give clues as to the relative position of hill stations. As shown below, there were over forty locations. Many of them were located to the east of Mazar-tagh, some to the north, and probably some to the west. To the south of Mazar-tagh, at the confluence of Kara-kash and Yurung-kash there was a rear-guard station (Fig. 5).

The geographical distribution of *ri-zug* suggests that the watchmen stationed there kept watch for the enemies from the east, north and west, namely, from the direction of the Northern Route of the Silk Road, in order to protect Khotan and other Tibetan territories along the Southern Route of the Silk Road. The potential enemies at the time were the Uighurs.

Organization of the unit *tshugs* and Tibetan military system – *ru* and *stong-sde*

As mentioned above (see p. 51), one *tshugs* consisted of four men. Usually they were combinations of two or three Tibetans and one or two Khotanese. The *tshugs-pon* 'commander' and 'og-pon' 'sub-commander' were always Tibetans (including Zhangzhungs and Sumpas), while the *byan-po* 'cook' and *byan-g.yog* 'assistant cook' were often Khotanese, though there is a case where all the members were Tibetans (ITN1457). The table overleaf lists the watchmen of each *tshugs*. For example, at Ho-tong gyu-mo and Gling-ring smug-po-tshal a *tshugs* consisting of two Tibetans and two Khotanese was stationed. Sometimes only three members are listed (OTM 247), possibly because one Khotanese member has deserted

(see p. 55) or for some other reason (see table on following page). The list also indicates which *stong-sde* 'thousand-district or chiliarchy' and *ru* 'horn' each member belongs to. For example, in ITN1554, the two Tibetan members, *tshugs-pon* and 'og-pon, belong to Myal-pa *stong-sde* and Skyi-stod *stong-sde*, respectively. The two *stong-sde* in turn belong to G.yo-ru 'Left horn' and Dbu-ru 'Middle horn', respectively.

The word *ru* 'horn' is the term for the largest administrative division of Tibet. There were four horns: the Dbu-ru 'Central horn', G.yas-ru 'Right horn', G.yo-ru, 'Left horn', and Ru-lag 'Supplementary horn'. Two additional horns were also formed: Sumparu in the northeast (Amdo), and Zhangzhung-ru in the west (Mnga'-ris). Each *ru* comprised in principle eight *stong-sde* or chiliarchies, which served as the basic unit for supplying soldiers to the government. Thus, soldiers stationed in Central Asia each belonged to a particular one of the *stong-sde* and *ru*.

The list clearly indicates that Tibetan soldiers composing each *tshugs* belong to different *stong-sde*, and even to different *ru*. They seem to have been selected intentionally from different units so that they hardly knew each other. But, as ITN2013 shows, if a soldier on duty became sick, he had to be replaced by someone in the same *stong-sde*. The replacement took place not in Central Tibet but in Mazar-tagh. In the case of Miran, ITN710 + 715 show that the watchmen at Miran also belong to different *stong-sde*, but, unlike Mazar-tagh, they are all from the Sumpa-*ru*, which is located in northeastern Tibet near Miran. Thus, soldiers sent to Miran belong to different *stong-sde* from those sent to Mazar-tagh.⁶

We may infer from these woodslips that the Tibetan armies were sent to Central Asia *stong-sde* as a unit, and that they were accompanied by their families and settled there. Soldiers were called up for duty by turns, but while off duty they lived with their families. This supports Richardson's statement that: 'the military occupation of a great province lasting for nearly a century could not have operated without permanent bases and an efficient commissariat. The campaigning season was generally confined to autumn and winter and the Tibetans doubtless followed the Chinese practice of establishing military colonies where soldiers' families could live, and grain could be grown.'⁷ The main military duties of soldiers during periods when they were not campaigning were serving as watchmen and scouts, while their non-military duties were farming and livestock herding, as evidenced by several woodslips mentioning *dor* 'unit of measurement for fields'. They also fished and hunted, as suggested by remains of string nets and slings.⁸

Thus, Mazar-tagh and Miran were military forts, but, like ancient Roman forts, they were also inhabited by civilians, including soldiers' families, merchants and others. This is why civilian administrative officials, such as *rtse-rje* 'town prefect' and *mngan* 'official of treasury' were placed there. As Stein pointed out, the life in these deserted forts must have been difficult,⁹ but it is likely that Tibetans preferred to settle there rather than in the more civilized oasis towns, namely, Khotan and Charklik.

List of Tibetan watchmen and their regiments

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------|
| ITN1554 | | | |
| Ho-tong gyu-mo | 2 Tibetans and 2 Khotanese | | |
| <i>tshugs-pon</i> | Myal-pa [stong-sde] | < | G.yo-ru |
| 'og-pon | Skyi-stod [stong]-sde | < | Dbu-ru |
| ITN1574 | | | |
| Gling-ring smug-po-tshal | 2 Tibetans and 2 Khotanese | | |
| <i>tshugs-pon</i> | Bzang-'ord [stong]-sde | < | ? |
| 'og-pon | Lang-myi'i sde | < | G.yas-ru |
| OTM 247 | | | |
| Stag-rtse khri-skug-'jor | 3 Tibetans | | |
| Mya tshes-kong | Grom-pa'i sde | < | Ru-lag |
| Lo-nan myes-chung | Myang-ro'i sde | < | Ru-lag |
| Snya-shur stag-bzang | Rtsal-mo-pag gi sde | < | Zhangzhung-stod |
| Bye-ma 'dord | | | |
| Phur-myi rke-dung | Yang-rtsang gi sde | < | Zhangzhung-smad? |
| Sro[sti?]-kro | 'O-tso-pag gi sde | < | Zhangzhung-stod |
| ITN710 + 715 from Miran | | | |
| <i>tshugs-pon</i> | Kha-[dr]o 'l sde | < | Sumpa |
| 'og-pon | Rgod tsang[...] | < | Sumpa |
| <i>byan-po</i> | nag shod kyi sde | < | Sumpa |

Tibetan administration of Khotan

What do the documents tell us about local people, especially Khotanese, under Tibetan rule? As we have seen, Khotanese were recruited and incorporated into the units of Tibetan watchmen *tshugs* as auxiliaries (cooks and assistant-cooks). In several paper documents, Khotanese watchmen are listed together with the unit *tshar/tshard* they belong to (see *OTM* 63-65, 134, 164, 278 in the list).

Thus, Khotanese belonging to the administrative units called *tshard* were recruited to serve as watchmen. Hill-station life must have been tough for them. One contract witnesses the execution of a Khotanese assistant-cook due to causing trouble (*Contracts*: 58, *OTM* 349). In order to commute his death sentence, he had to pay compensation of 4500 copper coins to the senior Tibetan members of his station.

Not surprisingly, some woodslips report the desertion and

execution of Khotanese watchmen (ITN1638). The native regime of the kingdom, however, seems to have been mostly retained. Fig. 6 shows another type of tally stick, thicker than *ri-zug* slips, with writing on three sides.

khram-bu (ITN1924)

- A1. \$ /: / lo sar gi bag pye dang chang spa [sa de /]
 B1. chad de snga slad sdoms te chad pa chang bag pye
 B2. khram ma bur bgos te bu yang
 C1. yang spa' sa de la tsald /
 'Barley-meal and beer for the new year's [salary for *spa* Sa-de] fell short; [the amount] deficient was summed up and [written on this] tally stick which was divided into a "child" (*bur bgos te*), and the "child" (*bu*) was also given to *spa* Sa-de.'

The word *spa* (Khot. *spāta*) is the title of a local Khotanese official,

List of Khotanese watchmen and their *tshars*

| | | | | |
|---------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| OTM 247 | Li ce'u-'do | <i>tshard</i> Jam-nya | | |
| OTM 134 | Li ko-she | <i>tshar</i> Shir-no | Li bu-nyon | <i>tshar</i> Byi-ro |
| | Li rma-ga-lus | <i>tshar</i> Pan-ro-nya | Li ca-ma-po-la | <i>tshar</i> Sho-'o-nya |
| OTM 122 | Li hul-...] | <i>tshar</i> Dro-dir | Li mu-...] | <i>tshar</i> Dos-gi-nyo |
| | Li byi-de | <i>tshar</i> Bar-mo-ro-nya | Li bro-...] | <i>tshar</i> Ha-sa-par?-nya |

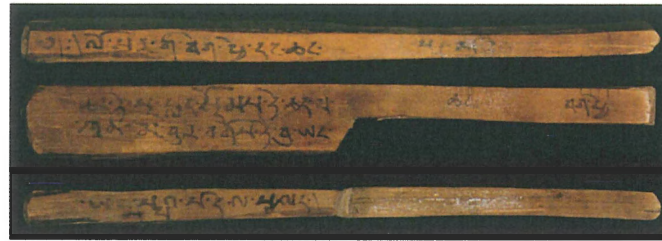


Fig. 6 Tally stick.

This shows a tally stick with the wedge cut out from three sides, all containing writing concerning a deficit in the expected new year supply of barley-meal and beer.

The British Library, IOI Tib N 1924



Fig. 7 Tally stick wedge.

This is apparently a kind of *bu* or 'child-tally' cut away from the main body of the tally stick. Interestingly, it is a food ticket for *a-ma-cha* (Khot. *āmāca*), the highest Khotanese official.

The British Library, IOI Tib N 1443

and Sa-de is his Khotanese name in Tibetan rendering. *Chang* 'beer' and *bag-pye* 'barley-meal' are written on notches representing the amounts. *Bu* 'child' (or *khram-bu*) must refer to the wedge or tally cut away from the right bottom corner, on which the same number of notches must have been cut and the name *spa* Sa-de must have been written. When he received the barley and beer later, he had to present the child-tally. Thus, it served as a food ticket for *spa* Sa-de.

Fig. 7 is apparently a similar kind of *bu* or 'child-tally' cut away from the main body of the tally stick. Interestingly, it is a food ticket for *a-ma-cha* (Khot. *āmāca*) the highest Khotanese official.

Together with other paper documents (e.g. P.1089 and *Contracts*: 10, 15, 38), these woodslips clearly indicate that the local governmental organization, beginning from the Khotanese king and *āmāca*, down to the local officials such as *spāta* and *pharṣa* (Tib. *parsha*), remained intact under Tibetan rule.

P.1089 (ll. 22–24)

dper gsol na // li rje lta bu / [23] zho sha dang sbyar nas // bla nas thugs pags mdzad de / rgyal mtsha[n] stsal nas // rgyal [cho]s gnang ba yang // lI'i blon dngul pa'i 'og na / [24] mchls pa lags // lI'i a ma ca la stogs pa / thabs gs[e]r dang [g.yu] stsal ba la stogs pa yang / rtse rje zangs pa'i 'og na mchis //
 'For example, the king of Khotan, having provided tribute [to Tibet] and having been given grace from above [i.e., from the Btsan-po], was granted a royal banner and allowed to practise the king's law. [But he] is inferior to the [Tibetan] official of silver rank [in charge of] Khotan. The Khotanese *āmāca* and so on, who are granted gold and turquoise ranks, are also inferior to the *rtse-rje* of the copper rank.'

As P.1089 also shows, the Khotanese king was subordinate to a Tibetan official in charge of Khotan (*Li'i blon*); the *āmāca* and

other high Khotanese officials were subordinate to a Tibetan *rtse-rje* 'town prefect' in Khotan (N 1769). Tibetan *rtse-rje* were both in Khotan and Mazar-tagh. But the highest Tibetan official was likely to be in Mazar-tagh, the headquarters of the Tibetan administration in Khotan, from which he supervised Khotan to the south and the frontiers to the east, north, and west. A rapid messenger service linked Mazar-tagh and Khotan five times a day (ITN2046).

In this way, Khotan – and probably also other small kingdoms, such as Nanzhao in Yunnan and Little and Great Balur in eastern Tokharistan and the Pamirs – were allowed to retain their regimes under the Tibetan colonialists, but they had to pay tribute and supply troops when ordered to do so by the Tibetan authorities.

Tibetan administration of Central Asia – Miran, Dunhuang, and Mkharr-tsan

In the other regions, military district governments or *khrom* were established in Tshal-byi, Kwa-cu, Dbyar-mo-thang and Mkharr-tsan, where more direct Tibetan administrations were established. These *khroms* comprised Bde-khams 'the province of Bde' and fell within the jurisdiction by the council of *Bde-blon* ministers.

Within each *khrom*, local administrative systems were mostly retained, and local officials held high civil administrative posts: for example, there was a Chinese *to-dog* (Chinese, *dudu* 都督) in Dunhuang. But the heads of the administration of each town, namely, *rtse-rje* 'town prefect', were occupied by Tibetans.

On the military side, local inhabitants, such as Chinese, 'A-zha and Mthong-khyab were organized into *stong-sde*. But the highest posts for each military unit (e.g., *stong-pon*) were mostly held by Tibetans, while local officials were appointed to be their assistants (e.g., *stong-zla*).

The head of a *khrom* was called a *dmag-pon* 'the highest-ranking military officer', but his title for the position was *ru-dpon*, the same title as *ru-dpon*, given to the highest official in the four horns

(Dbu-ru, G.yas-ru, etc.). In the examples below, *ru-dpon* clearly refers to the head of Tshal-byi *khrom* (ITN1016) and Mkhars-tsan *khrom* (P.1089), respectively. They are also called *dmag-pon* in the same contexts (ITN789 and P.1089).

ru-dpon of Tshal-byi (ITN1016) *dmag-pon* [of] Tshal-byi (ITN789)
Various officials of Mkhars-tsan *khrom* beginning with the *ru-dpon*
(P.1089:35)
dmag-pon from the Mkhars-tsan *khrom* (P.1089:30)

ru-dpon = head of 4 *stong-sde* in each *ru* = *dmag-pon*
(administrative post) head of a *khrom* (military rank)

The term *ru-dpon* originally referred to the head of a *ru* (i.e., Dbu-ru, G.yas-ru, etc.), more precisely the head of a half of a *ru*. Thus, there are two *ru-dpons* for each *ru*. A *ru* was divided into two parts, each comprised of four *stong-sde* and headed by a *ru-dpon*. A *khrom* seems to have contained around four *stong-sde* as well. For example, Mkhars-tsan *khrom* has four *stong-sde*, i.e., Tibetan, Sumpa, 'Azha, and Mthong-khyab *stong-sde* (P.1089), while Kwa-cu *khrom* had at least three Chinese *stong-sde* in Dunhuang and possibly one or two more in Kwa-cu (Guazhou) or Sug-cu (Suzhou). Thus, the head of a *khrom* may be considered to have been equal in rank to the *ru-dpon* in Tibet proper, and both had the military rank of *dmag-pon* and the administrative rank of *ru-dpon*, as shown in the above schema. The employment of the title *ru-dpon* for the head of a *khrom* in the frontier provinces suggests that the Tibetan govern-

ment may have intended eventually to extend their *ru*-system to Central Asia. But the central government of the Tibetan Empire collapsed in 842, and Tibetan domination of Central Asia also ended soon after.¹⁰ However, the Tibetan language and culture, including Buddhism, survived among the local inhabitants of Central Asia as late as the tenth century – no doubt the heritage of the long-lasting Tibetan domination of Central Asia.

I hope this preliminary examination of woodslips has shed some light on how Tibetan military administration in Central Asia, particularly in Khotan and Lop-nor, was organized and functioned.

The following abbreviations are used in this essay:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Contract Text | Text number in Takeuchi, <i>Contracts</i> . |
| ITN | IOL Tib N numbers, requisition numbers for Tibetan woodslips in the British Library. |
| OTM | Text number in Takeuchi, <i>Old Tibetan Manuscripts</i> . |
| P. | Pelliot number as in Bibliothèque nationale de France. |

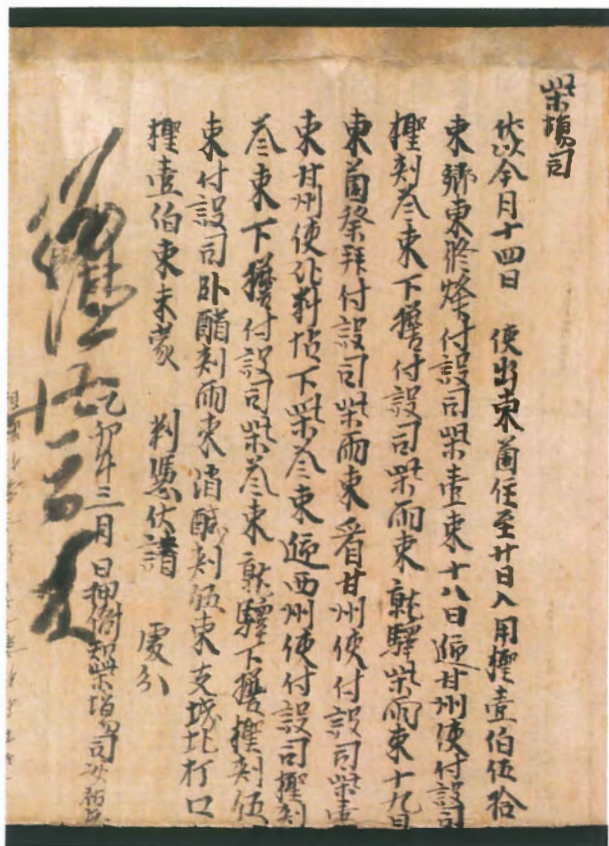
Tsuguhito Takeuchi is a professor at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. His catalogue of the Tibetan fragments in the British Library (Old Tibetan Manuscripts) was published in 1998 and he is currently cataloguing the Tibetan woodslips at the British Library.

NOTES

1 Uray, "KHRUM", 310–18.
2 Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks*, 114.
3 Stein, *Serindia*, pls. 50, 51 and 49.
4 Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 181.
5 H.A. Jäschke, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary* (London: Routledge, 1881).

6 Uray and Uebach, "Clan versus Thousand-district", 913–16; Iwao, "Toban no ru to senkō", 573–605.
7 Richardson, *High Peaks*, 172.
8 Stein, *Serindia*, pl. 50.
9 Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, 441.
10 Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire*, 169–72.

Preparing for Battle (cats. 100–105)

**100 Official reports**

955? (*yimao* year)
Stein, 2nd expedition: Dunhuang, Cave 17
Ink on paper
H: 30.9 cm W: 127.3 cm
The British Library,
Or.8210/S.3728
Giles, *Catalogue*, 7511; Mair, "Lay Students", 57; *Yingzang*, 5: 152–53; Rong Xinjiang, *Guiyijunshi*, 368–69

101 Tibetan hill-station woodslip

8th to 9th century
Stein, 2nd expedition: Mazar-tagh
Ink on wood
H: 1.8 cm W: 11.2 cm D: 0.3 cm
The British Library,
IOL Tib N 1107 (M.Tagh.006)
Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 255; Wang and Chen, *Tufan*

102 Tibetan hill-station woodslip

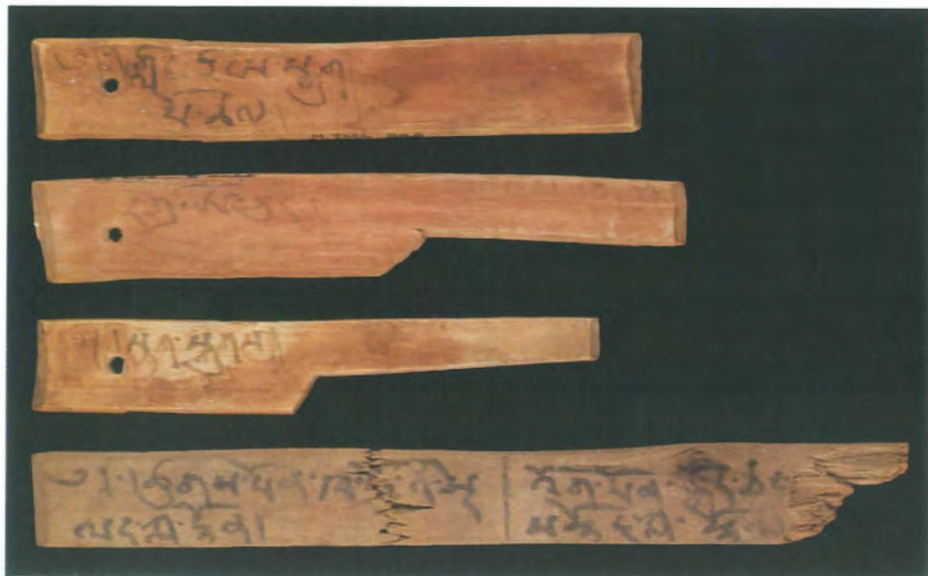
8th to 9th century
Stein, 2nd expedition: Mazar-tagh
Ink on wood
H: 1.8 cm W: 12 cm D: 0.4 cm
The British Library,
IOL Tib N 1541 (M.Tagh.a.II.0065)
Wang and Chen, *Tufan*

103 Tibetan hill-station woodslip

8th to 9th century
Stein, 2nd expedition: Mazar-tagh
Ink on wood
H: 1.6 cm W: 10.4 cm D: 0.3 cm
The British Library,
IOL Tib N 1111 (M.Tagh.0010)
Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 231; Wang and Chen, *Tufan*

104 Tibetan hill-station woodslip

8th to 9th century
Stein, 2nd expedition: Mazar-tagh
Ink on wood
H: 1.8 cm W: 10 cm D: 0.4 cm
The British Library,
IOL Tib N 710 (M.I.xiv.124) & 715 (M.I.xiv.129)
Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 129–30; Wang and Chen, *Tufan*



Scale armour was in common use among the armies of the Silk Road throughout the first millennium, both for men and for their mounts (see cat. 99). The Stein collection of paintings from Dunhuang includes twenty-four showing Lokapāla or Guardian kings wearing scale armour representative of the style of the period and place — just as the architecture and clothing shown in Buddhist paintings from Dunhuang usually follow Chinese rather than Indian models. The

Lokapāla shown in cat. 106, although not standing on a demon, carrying no weapons (hence the inability to identify him) and entirely non-grotesque, is still wearing scale armour similar to that worn by the contemporary cavalryman (cat. 99) and the three infantry guards (cats. 107a–c).

Cat. 108 shows a soldier, shield and armour all found in separate locations in the Ming-oi shrine near Gaochang in a Buddhist shrine. The soldier originally formed part of a frieze of stucco sculptures of soldiers, presumably defending the Dharma. They had been fastened to the wall on a wooden framework and were painted, the armour — which may depict metal scales — in red and green. Whitfield suggests that there are many Sasanian elements in this figure, particularly the coat with wide lapels.

Some few examples of discarded scales of armour survived for over a thousand years in the rubbish heap of Miran fort for Stein to uncover — most suits of armour would have been taken with the soldiers when they left. Contemporary records also mention metal armour and excavated scales have been found on the Eastern Silk Road. The examples found in Miran fort by Stein, a sample is shown in cat. 109, are, however, leather covered with lacquer which added strength, colour and design. Leather scales are known in China from at least the first millennium BC but these are important for being the earliest examples of carved lacquer, as Whitfield points out.

109 Leather scale armour

8th to 9th century
Stein, 2nd expedition: Miran fort
Leather with lacquer
7 cm × 15.6 cm 11 cm × 19.5 cm
15.5 cm × 21.2 cm
The British Museum,
MAS 611/621
(M.I.ix.003/M.I.xxiv.0040)
Stein, *Serindia*, 464, 481, 483, 946, pl. 50
Whitfield, *Art*, 3: 49



Fig. 26 Depiction of a battle from the Dunhuang Caves.

Dunhuang, Cave 12. Courtesy of the Dunhuang Academy

Life in the Fort (cats. 110–115)

110 Tibetan recycled woodslip

8th to 9th century
 Stein, 3rd expedition: Mazar-tagh
 Ink on wood
 H: 2.2 cm W: 11.8 cm D: 0.2 cm
 The British Library,
 IOL Tib N 1407 (M.I.agh.0595)

111 Tibetan recycled woodslip

8th to 9th century
 Stein, 2nd expedition: Miran fort
 Ink on wood
 H: 2.3 cm W: 6.2 cm D: 0.4 cm
 The British Library,
 IOL Tib N 693 (M.I.xiv.97)

112 Tibetan recycled woodslip

8th to 9th century
 Stein, 2nd expedition: Miran fort
 Ink on wood
 H: 5.9 cm W: 5.9 cm D: 0.3 cm
 The British Library,
 IOL Tib N 1096 (M.I.lviii.008)



113 Stripy wool bag

8th to 9th century
 Stein, 2nd expedition: Miran fort
 Wool
 L: 27 cm
 The British Museum,
 MAS 1128 (M.I.xxvii.009)
 Stein, *Serindia*, 466, 484

