

**Collecting Literary Works:  
Medieval Chinese Multiple-Text Manuscripts (MTMs)  
from Dunhuang (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

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vorgelegt von  
Nadine Bregler

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Erster Gutachter:  
Prof. Dr. Michael Friedrich

Zweiter Gutachter:  
Prof. Dr. Imre Galambos

Dritter Gutachter:  
Prof. Dr. Barend ter Haar

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## Conventions

I provide the pronunciation of Chinese characters throughout the dissertation in *pinyin*, followed by the character itself in its traditional form.<sup>1</sup> The manuscripts from the Aurel Stein Collection, now curated at the British Library (BL) in London, are identified by the prefix ‘Or.8120’, followed by a forward slash and the capital letter ‘S.’, along with a serial number. For brevity, I refer to them as ‘S.+serial number’.<sup>2</sup> Chinese manuscripts housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in Paris are designated ‘Pelliot chinois’, followed by their respective serial number. Throughout this dissertation, I adopt the abbreviation ‘P.+serial number’. Additionally, I consider several manuscripts now held in St. Petersburg, which are identified by serial numbers beginning with either ‘Φ’ or ‘Дх’. For images, I mark core content and paracontent as follows:

Start of core content	–	Green rectangle
Titles (subtitles)	–	White rectangle
Author names (ranks)	–	Red rectangle
Unclear paracontent	–	Orange rectangle

## Manuscripts Cited

To ensure smoother readability, I abbreviated the signatures of most case studies as Manuscript A to F (MS A to F). However, this does not apply to the extensive collection of fourteen case studies in Chapter 5, **Student MTMs**, where retaining the full signatures provides better clarity. Below is a comprehensive list of the manuscripts covered in each chapter, along with their original signatures and the abbreviations I use.

Chapter	Signature	Abbreviation
3	P.2567 (+P.2552)	Manuscript A (MS A)
	P.3812	Manuscript B (MS B)
4	P.2555	Manuscript C (MS C)
5	See the list in the chapter	
6	P.2712	Manuscript D (MS D)
	P.2621	Manuscript E (MS E)
	P.2488	Manuscript F (MS F)

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I follow the standard for Chinese transliterations provided by Wilkinson 2015, xvii–xviii.

<sup>2</sup> See also Galambos 2020a, VIII.

## Databases and Catalogues for the Manuscripts

Unless specified otherwise, I obtained images of manuscripts from the Stein Collection, courtesy of the BL, via the online database of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP).<sup>3</sup> Many non-digitised Stein Collection manuscripts can be found as black-and-white photocopies in a fifteen-volume edition by the British Library.<sup>4</sup>

Manuscripts bearing the signature ‘Pelliot Chinois’, courtesy of the BnF, are accessible via the searchable database ‘Gallica’ provided by the BnF.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, ‘Gallica’ conveniently provides direct links from each digitised manuscript description to its corresponding entry in the BnF’s online catalogue, known as the ‘Archives et Manuscrits’.<sup>6</sup> This catalogue, available online since 2006, is compiled from print catalogues and updated with new information.<sup>7</sup> To access an entry for a manuscript directly through this catalogue, you start by clicking ‘Département des Manuscrits’ on the homepage. Then, you select ‘Pelliot Chinois’ from the drop-down menu on the left, allowing you to choose the appropriate group based on the desired serial number. Due to its updated information, this online catalogue serves as my primary source for manuscripts bearing the ‘P.’ signature. Therefore, in the footnotes, I simply note ‘BnF 2006’ to refer to this online catalogue, without reiterating the specific signatures for each case study.

Manuscripts kept in St. Petersburg can be found through the IDP database. If the manuscripts are not digitised, one can consult the catalogue edited by Lev N. Men’shikov, which contains black-and-white photocopies of the manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the dissertation, I also refer to several significant print catalogues. The manuscripts housed in the BL were meticulously catalogued by Lionel Giles.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, for manuscripts held at the BnF, there is the five-volume ‘Catalogue des manuscrits chinois de Touen-Houang (Fonds Pelliot chinois)’, which served as the foundation for the online catalogue.<sup>10</sup> Last

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<sup>3</sup> International Dunhuang Project (IDP), <<http://idp.bbaw.de/>>, (accessed on 26 April 2024).

<sup>4</sup> British Library (BL) 1990–2009.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Gallica’, BnF, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/accueil/de/content/accueil-de?mode=desktop>>, (accessed on 26 April 2024).

<sup>6</sup> ‘Archives et Manuscrits’, BnF, <<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/>>, (accessed on 26 April 2024).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Archives et Manuscrits’, BnF, Description, <<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/contenu.html>>, (accessed on 26 April 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Men’shikov 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Giles 1957.

<sup>10</sup> BnF 1970–2001.

but not least, Mair's descriptive catalogue of a diverse range of manuscripts from various collections deserves mention.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mair 1981.



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# 1 Introduction

In his preface to the second volume of works by Aristotle and Theophrastus, the Venetian printer and humanist Aldus Pius Manutius (c.1451–1515) reflects on the challenges he faced in acquiring and using rare manuscript copies for his printing endeavours:

‘But there is one thing much to be regretted. Of the numerous works of Theophrastus – for, as one can see from his biography, he wrote as much as Aristotle – it was only possible to find these; and they are not complete and in good order but mutilated and faulty. And they are so rare that I was able to find only one copy of what you read here in the whole of Italy. So I have printed whatever texts I could obtain, in the hope that, if better copies lie hidden somewhere, they will eventually come to light, after a careful search by scholars who have read these faulty texts. I have done a great deal of work on Aristotle, both on the texts now offered to the reader and on those which we shall shortly offer, if God favors. In order that they should reach the public in as correct a state as possible, the best early manuscripts were sought, several copies of the same text were collated and corrected, and they were handed over to the printer to be taken apart, perishing like the viper that gives birth’.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the complaints voiced here are common for manuscript cultures, particularly during transitional periods from manuscript to print, where increasing importance is placed on ‘flawless’ texts. Editors, facing often damaged manuscripts and ‘erroneous’ texts had to make varied interpretative of the surviving material. There is a poignant irony the above statement of seeking out rare and precious early manuscripts, while readily accepting that the painstakingly collated but cheaper *Druckvorlagen* (‘printing copies’) made from them, even though of high scholarship, were readily sacrificed for the processes of editing and printing, during which they were ‘perishing like the viper that gives birth’. One of the *Druckvorlagen* used survives in the Harvard Library, enriched by editorial interventions yet diminished by the alterations to its original page arrangement resulting from its usage.<sup>13</sup>

Manutius’ lament regarding the scarcity of surviving manuscripts sheds light on the incomparable value that a serendipitous discovery in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century of over 50.000 manuscripts in the Library Cave 17 in Dunhuang brought forth.<sup>14</sup> This discovery granted scholars

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<sup>12</sup> I cite the English translation by Wilson 2016, 41–43. For Aldus Manutius and his printing endeavours as well as the *Druckvorlagen* used, see Maksimczuk 2023, 11–28.

<sup>13</sup> This is MS Gr 17. Editorial marks can be seen for instance on f.146 v, see Aristotle, Works of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Ammonius, Porphyrius, and Pseudo-Galen: MS Gr 17, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, <[https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:24336731\\$298i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:24336731$298i)>, (accessed on 24 April 2024). I am grateful to José Maksimczuk for drawing my attention to Aldus Manutius and this manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive account on the discovery of the manuscripts, their subsequent dispersal to different holdings, and respective scholarship, see Rong 2013.

access to previously unknown or only casually mentioned texts in approximately twenty languages and scripts.<sup>15</sup> The present study explores the production and use of Dunhuang manuscripts featuring various sets of Chinese literary texts. Its objective is to demonstrate the significance of re-evaluating from fresh perspectives manuscripts previously thought to be fully explored. I do so by addressing four primary research questions, where applicable:

1. What prompted **the production** of manuscripts?
2. In what ways were **they utilised** and interpreted by later individuals?
3. How might the manuscripts **have been valued** to warrant their placement in the Library Cave?
4. What **scholarly value** do these manuscripts hold for modern researchers?

### 1.1 Conceptual Framework and Significance of the Study

Recent research highlights how analysing manuscripts from a holistic perspective can offer insights not only into the production process of single manuscripts but also into the broader manuscript culture they represent. Various compromises are necessary in selecting materials to create a single manuscript with diverse intended qualities – be it practicality, luxury, or portability.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the textual content, which may not always be the primary focus, forms just one aspect of the investigation into manuscript cultures.<sup>17</sup>

Since the discovery of the Dunhuang manuscripts, extensive research has been devoted to cataloguing, editing, and categorising the often previously unknown Chinese literary texts, organising them by genre.<sup>18</sup> Scholars occasionally make references to specific manuscript features, such as details about scribes and monasteries found in colophons.<sup>19</sup> However, these features were frequently used only to support arguments primarily based on textual analysis. Recent scholarship has begun to increasingly acknowledge the significance of the manuscript culture behind the texts, emphasising the importance of studying manuscripts to comprehend the reasons for and methods

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<sup>15</sup> Galambos 2016a, 33.

<sup>16</sup> See especially the theoretical approaches by the Research Field K, *Selecting Materials*, of the Cluster of Excellence ‘Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures’ (UWA) at the CSMC, <<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/research/cluster-projects/field-k.html>>, (accessed on 24 April 2024).

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Amulets and Talismans. For studies on those objects from the Middle East and North Africa, see Probert & Sijpesteijn 2022.

<sup>18</sup> An overview is provided in Rong 2013, 398–411.

<sup>19</sup> Exceptional studies by Mair 1981, Zürcher 1989, and Gao 2009 focus on a more comprehensive assessment of the educational settings during the Medieval period.

of their production and use. For instance, in his 2020 monograph on Dunhuang manuscript culture, Galambos demonstrates how examining four distinct groups of manuscripts containing Chinese texts can yield valuable insights when viewed not solely as ‘Chinese’ but against the shared historical backdrop of the *Guiyijun* 歸義軍 (‘Return to Allegiance Circuit’; 851–c. mid-11<sup>th</sup> century) period in Dunhuang.<sup>20</sup> Even more recently, Nugent conducted a thorough examination of manuscript evidence for a comprehensive study of Chinese primers, revealing the ‘haphazardness’ of educational training in medieval China.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, textual combinations, as they appear in Multiple-Text Manuscripts (hereafter: MTMs), are still often considered random and dismissed as insignificant or unrelated coincidences.<sup>22</sup> Such selective analysis risks leading to circular conclusions about respective manuscript cultures. However, in a pioneering study as early as 1987, Wang Xiaodun 王小盾 demonstrated how distinct MTMs containing the same text could have been produced in various settings for very different purposes. He noted that a poem attributed to Liu Changqing 劉長卿 has different titles, such as *Jiu fu* 酒賦 (‘Rhapsody of Wine’) and *Gaoxing ge* 高興歌 (‘Song of Happiness’), and distinct ‘identities’. Depending on the overall content of a manuscript, the poem was either appreciated as a literary piece or used for entertainment, being sung or recited.<sup>23</sup>

Building on this foundation, my dissertation seeks to address this gap by moving beyond textual analysis to conduct a comprehensive study of MTMs from Dunhuang, primarily dating to the ninth and tenth centuries. These MTMs contain a variety of literary texts, including prose, poems, rhapsodies, ballads, and educational texts, such as children’s primers. The project aims to deepen our understanding of the diverse contexts in which these MTMs were produced and used, as well as to assess the overarching principles guiding their compilation.

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<sup>20</sup> Galambos 2020, 19–22.

<sup>21</sup> Throughout his book, Nugent uses the term ‘haphazard’ to refer to various aspects, ranging from available sources to punctuation and skills of the scribes, as well as to the manner in which texts are copied, see for instance Nugent 2023, 9, 37, 54, 101 and 110.

<sup>22</sup> Nugent 2010, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Wang 1987, 141–142.

## 1.2 Methodology

The primary objective of this dissertation is to conduct a comprehensive study of MTMs, which until now have been treated only arbitrarily.<sup>24</sup> I conduct a qualitative and quantitative survey of various features of Dunhuang MTMs through case studies, enriched by additional comparisons. Each case study involves the simultaneous assessment of various features related to codicology, visual organisation, core-content, paracontent, and further content. While this approach may lead to some redundancies, I strive to minimise them. Overall, the method offers more advantages than drawbacks. It enables a precise evaluation of production background and MTM usage, facilitating profitable comparisons to discern patterns and variations. Additionally, this approach illuminates the unique insights provided by each case study. In doing so, I also transcend general categorisation of texts by genre, which often pose challenges when applied to Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>25</sup>

At the outset, this project involved extensive research trips to Russia, Japan, and China to examine non-digitised manuscripts. However, swiftly changing COVID-19 regulations necessitated a shift in focus to digitised manuscripts in Paris and London. Nonetheless, research trips were still feasible to the BnF (November–December 2021) and the BL (July 2022) to address remaining codicological questions. Below, I provide a detailed introduction to the features of each case study, along with a brief overview of current research. The dissertation outline that follows will present quantitative data.

### Codicology

I commence with a thorough examination of the assemblage of manuscripts. It is crucial to distinguish between two different methods of production, as failing to do so can lead to mistaken conclusions, particularly regarding the relationship between texts they contain.

Firstly, there are pre-planned compilations of various texts, known as Multiple-Text Manuscripts (MTMs). Conversely, a manuscript may also consist of previously independent parts from different physical manuscripts, in which case it is termed a composite.<sup>26</sup> Composites are often,

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<sup>24</sup> I draw from approaches developed in the Permanent Seminar on ‘Manuscript Analysis, Description, and Documentation’, <<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/research/working-groups/permanent-seminar.html>>, at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), Hamburg.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview on the different genres including discussions of resulting problems, see Rong 2013, 398–411.

<sup>26</sup> The two different modes, which lead to a manuscript either being an MTM or a Composite, are described in Friedrich & Schwarke 2016, 15–16.

though not necessarily, assemblages by later users. The differences in production methods can be identified through codicological anomalies, particularly through caesurae – places in a manuscript where text boundaries coincide with transitions between sheets or quires.<sup>27</sup> Another important concept to consider is that manuscripts are ‘evolving entities’. Throughout their production and use, they may undergo various alterations, such as the removal or addition of sheets, bifolia, or quires, but also of text and further pieces of content.<sup>28</sup> In this study, I focus solely on MTMs, as they provide precise information about which texts were intended to be grouped together for similar purposes.

## **Hand**

I place significant emphasis on handwriting analysis in order to determine the number of scribes involved in manuscript production and to differentiate between content by scribes and later users. Traditional Chinese categories regarding handwriting are closely linked with calligraphy. However, in the Dunhuang manuscripts, it is often inappropriate to describe the casual hands in terms of their calligraphy.

Therefore, I adopt a phenomenological approach to describe the hands, drawing mainly from methodologies used in forensic hand analysis.<sup>29</sup> Building upon hypotheses from this field, I posit that individuals do not write consistently, even within a single text. Various variations can occur, such as differences in character size, stroke thickness, and even in character shape. The latter case is addressed by the concept of ‘allographs’, referring to different forms that can be used to write the same character or letter, for instance ‘A’ and ‘a’.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, several other features may vary frequently, including stroke connections and execution.

While this variability is characteristic of handwriting in general, a holistic examination of a written text reveals the individual habits and aesthetic choices of the scribe. These include recurring patterns ranging from overall impression and slant of the text to specific details like stroke connections and distinctive directional movements. For example, the letter ‘o’ may appear differently when written clockwise compared to counterclockwise. By assessing the frequency and

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<sup>27</sup> Friedrich & Schwarke 2016, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich & Schwarke 2016, 1–26.

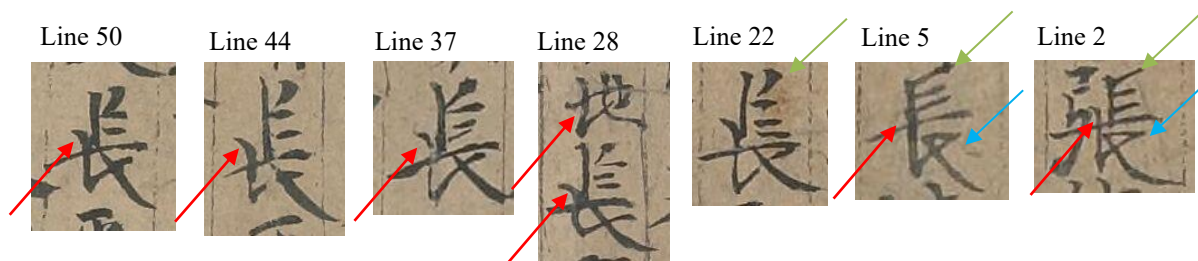
<sup>29</sup> My approach is largely shaped by Davis 2007 and by the introduction to *Forensic Handwriting Analysis* in Morris 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Davis 2007, 255.

distinctiveness of such factors, a comprehensive picture of a scribe's hand emerges. This holistic assessment can then be compared to a separately evaluated questioned hand to determine whether the texts were written by the same hand.

I will demonstrate this with examples of the character *chang* 長 in Manuscript F (MS F), which I will further discuss in Chapter 6.<sup>31</sup> This character is written slightly differently each time. For example, the first two instances, in lines 2 and 5, show two peculiarities not seen in the subsequent examples. First, the uppermost stroke is horizontal, whereas it slants diagonally in all following examples (green arrows in Fig. 1). Additionally, these first two examples have a different lower-right part, resembling 又 (blue arrows in Fig. 1). The scribe connects strokes in these instances, while the strokes are individually executed in the subsequent examples, showing the natural range of a single hand.

However, common features suggest even the first two characters are by the same hand. For *chang*, these are most evident in the lower-left part (red arrows in Fig. 1). Typically, this part comprises a vertical downward stroke followed by a diagonal upward stroke, resembling a 丩. Yet, the scribe adds a unique hook before the initial vertical stroke, resembling a ㄣ. The transition between these strokes is pronounced, sometimes marked by a perceivable dot between them. Some diagonal strokes curve rather than being straight (see the tracing of the stroke in Fig. 2). These peculiarities can also be observed in further characters requiring similar hand movements, such as the left component of *di* 地 (line 28 of Fig. 1).



**Figure 1:** Examples for character *chang* on MS F (section view). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>31</sup> P.2488, Manuscript F (MS F).



**Figure 2:** Enlarged tracing of the lower left parts of the character *chang*; courtesy by Sebastian Finzenhagen.

A brief paragraph is necessary to address the writing instruments used. As Galambos (2024) recently noted, distinguishing between a brush and a stylus is extremely challenging in most cases. The analysis is further complicated because strokes are often retraced multiple times to emulate brush writing. As Galambos demonstrates, the stylus remained the primary writing tool long after the Tibetan rule ended in Dunhuang. Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of the examined manuscripts were written with a stylus. Consequently, I will not provide a detailed analysis of writing instruments here.<sup>32</sup>

### **Visual Organisation**

In addition to material features that suggest a manuscript's intended use, patterns in the visual organisation of content similarly provide clues, especially to readers familiar with them, about the manuscript's production context and intended purpose. Examples range from smaller-sized commentaries embedded within regular lines of text to musical notations.<sup>33</sup> The concept of visual organisation encompasses factors such as the structure and arrangement into columns, font size and colour, as well as further visual signs applied to the manuscript in its three-dimensional form.<sup>34</sup>

A distinctive aspect of Chinese manuscripts to consider is their writing direction: characters are arranged in vertical lines running from top to bottom, with these lines ordered from right to left across the page. In contrast, Western manuscripts typically arrange text in horizontal lines running from left to right, placed one below the other. To describe visual organisation consistently across these formats, I use the term 'line' to mean a single sequence of characters—vertical in Chinese manuscripts and horizontal in Western ones. The term 'column' refers specifically to a grouping

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<sup>32</sup> Galambos 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Wimmer et al. 2015, 1–2 and 6–10.

<sup>34</sup> Reudenbach 2022, 3.

of several lines.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, when discussing poetry, I will use the term ‘verse lines’ to avoid ambiguity. Although this terminology may lead to some confusion, I adopt it here to underscore the importance of consistent terminology for clear comprehension of visual organisation across manuscripts from different cultures.

### **Core-Content**

My aim in analysing the content is to explore the possible reasons that led to the combination of literary texts with often very different topics onto the same manuscript.<sup>36</sup> For methodological reasons, I refrain from categorising these literary texts according to genres, which prove to be subject to much fluctuation. For instance, even some of the greatest Tang poets did not strictly adhere to genre rules. Categories such as the so-called *liushi* 律詩 poems, often used for eight-line poems, are not as clear-cut as it may seem. Instead, I adopt a strictly formal approach, stating the number of verse lines and, where relevant, the number of stanzas in each poem.

There are a few more points to note regarding the formal analysis of poetry. I do not engage with the often notoriously complex internal structure of individual poems, such as looping formations.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, despite efforts to reconstruct medieval pronunciation, analysing rhyme in poems from Dunhuang manuscripts remains problematic. Many of these poems appear to rhyme, but not according to the *Qieyun* system. This can be due to various reasons. It is possible that authors did not strictly adhere to clear rhyming patterns, and there may be certain assonances. Furthermore, poets, often producing orally, likely transmitted their work orally as well, resulting in many variants still connected with orality.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the poems probably originate from different regions, with rhymes potentially related to Northwestern Medieval Chinese, reconstructed for the Dunhuang region. Precise rhyme construction is not the focus here and is left to linguists.<sup>39</sup> For the purpose of my work, I use letters ‘a’ to ‘z’ for rhyming lines. The only exception is the letter ‘x’, which I reserved for verse lines that do not rhyme.

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<sup>35</sup> See also Galambos 2016c, 359, n. 10.

<sup>36</sup> For a study on such questions concerning early Chinese manuscript collections, see Krijgsman 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Sönnichsen 2004 demonstrates for the poet Shen Yue (441–513) how complex poems can be constructed.

<sup>38</sup> On reflections concerning research about orality, see Krijgsman 2023, 7–9.

<sup>39</sup> See for instance Anderl & Osterkamp 2017, 3: 218–229.

## **Paracontent**

In this section, I focus on when, why, and by whom various forms of paracontent were added to texts.<sup>40</sup> As I will demonstrate, few manuscripts exhibit consistent or uniform paracontent. Instead, there are often manuscripts in which several poems lack paracontent entirely. Even though in some cases, poems are highly structured with a title, an authorial preface, and subtitles, it is likely that such paracontent here already forms an integral part of the text. Furthermore, there are instances where the titles of texts vary significantly across Dunhuang manuscripts. This indicates that many manuscripts existed in a state of fluctuation, where paracontent had not yet been assigned to every texts. Additionally, it suggests that different titles for the same poem may have resulted from varying usage. In this section, I will analyse the possible reasons behind such phenomena. The diversity of paracontent added to the content within a single manuscript necessitates detailed case studies. However, considering the typically extensive content, such as over two hundred poems per scroll, I will focus mainly on presenting examples of the most noteworthy discoveries.

## **Titles**

In catalogues and inventory lists, various descriptions are employed to refer to manuscripts. At a recent workshop, the following terminology was proposed: ‘names’ refer specifically to an individual manuscript, while terms such as ‘label’ and ‘title’ pertain to its content and often appear directly on the manuscript itself. Among these, a ‘label’ can serve as a summary that considers both the manuscript’s format and its contents. For example, it might denote a manuscript as a ‘cookbook’.<sup>41</sup>

Undoubtedly, names, labels, and titles are crucial elements of a terminology to consider for examining manuscripts and their contents. Unfortunately, the manuscripts I analyse here often lack their beginning and end. Consequently, there is not enough comparable material to examine the intricacies of names and labels in detail. By contrast, many texts do contain individual titles. I therefore focus on analysing these titles to clarify their relationship to the text, their possible functions, such as guiding the reader, and whether they are original titles provided by the author or additions by later users.

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<sup>40</sup> For a definition of core and paracontent, see Ciotti et al. 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) 2018.

Numerous scholarly works offer valuable insights into the timing and rationale behind the addition of titles to texts. Much of my approach is informed by Bianca-Jeanette Schröder's monograph, which stands out as one of the most comprehensive works on the evolution of Latin titles in ancient literature. Schröder elucidates the distinct text-structuring functions of titles, illustrating how they served as book titles, quasi-tables of contents, or chapter headings and demonstrates that the practise of titling began early in antiquity and persisted into late antiquity. She anticipates a mutual influence between authentic and later titles, suggesting that some authors may have added titles themselves while others were added later. She argues that such developments align closely with the broader evolution of the book industry, where genres were increasingly organised to enhance accessibility through classification. Throughout her work, Schröder provides several examples of potential title components, such as 'proper name or addressee and topic' and 'genre and/or intention'.<sup>42</sup> To bring the evidence from Chinese manuscripts into the wider discourse on titles and enable comparative examination across cultures, I mainly concentrate on the description of elements and the structure hitherto little researched Chinese titles.<sup>43</sup>

## Authors

Closely related to the production and transmission of texts are questions concerning authorship. The definition of authorship can vary greatly depending on different time periods, cultures, and locations.<sup>44</sup> A key question concerning authorship is the exact link between a text and the author named in a manuscript. Regarding the Dunhuang manuscripts, Nugent proposed in a book-length study to view copyists as agents who could consciously participate in the transmission process by introducing intentional variations into texts.<sup>45</sup> He argued the various circumstances of introducing variants also lead to a loosened link between a given poem and its author, such as Gao Shi 高適.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Schröder 1999, 307–309.

<sup>43</sup> It is worth mentioning here a study by Huang 2021, who focuses primarily on *dianji* 典籍 ('canonical records'), while also considering Dunhuang manuscripts.

<sup>44</sup> For concepts of authorship for Tang and especially also in consideration to Dunhuang, see McMullen 2013, 92–105.

<sup>45</sup> Nugent 2010, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Nugent 2010, 65.

In a thorough review of this book, McMullen argued against the idea that introducing textual variants loosened the link between a text and its author, noting that such variants occurred even in texts closely associated with their authors.<sup>47</sup> He posited that works by renowned elite poets were closely linked to the concept of ‘individual immortality’ and thus remained recognisable as the works of those individuals. Other writings were much more subject to a more fluid concept of authorship. Among them, McMullen counted songs suitable for performance, such as those about drinking and love, as well as laments and longer public narratives.<sup>48</sup>

Despite their differing conclusions, both Nugent and McMullen assume that a large number of poems in circulation were somehow connected to famous elite poets. What is missing is the recognition that works might also have been attributed to a renowned author at a certain point in time, for instance, to ensure their circulation and transmission.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, my central question is which concept(s) of authorship are recognisable for Dunhuang manuscripts. This question can be broken down into several individual inquiries that must be addressed at the onset. Are there indications of the general importance of authors? Can it be assumed that every poem was inevitably linked to an author, even if that author was not named? Is it possible that poems were attributed to authors for the first time on some manuscripts? Are there other possibilities?

In this section, I explore these questions through case studies by also considering further information from other sources. Simultaneously, I examine the visual organisation in great detail, specifically focusing on where and how author names appear relative to other content.

## **Prefaces**

Prefaces serve various functions and can differ significantly in their content and aims. Lili Ma argues that, in the case of Chinese *fu* 賦 (‘rhapsodies’), prefaces initially originated from commentators, then evolved into a transitional form combining commentator and author perspectives, and eventually included prefaces written solely by authors, while the earlier types

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<sup>47</sup> McMullen 2013, 91.

<sup>48</sup> McMullen 2013, 98.

<sup>49</sup> This has been shown for the *ci* 詞 (‘song lyrics’) by Owen, 2019. This study offers intriguing parallels, since there is reason to assume that the Dunhuang manuscripts also present a state where *shi* 詩 (‘verses’) were not yet a highly respected genre of literary production, see Chapter 2.

also remained in use. She highlights that prefaces serve as a means for authors to connect with their audience. Thus, prefaces introduce central themes, outline text content, convey personal perspectives, and showcase the author's literary talent to attract readers.<sup>50</sup> Beate Wiesmüller's study of manuscripts from the Rifa'īya (or Refaīya), a private Damascene library, reveals that prefaces may even include tables of contents, though not always. These tables summarise divisions, section titles, and sometimes folio numbers, serving purposes such as manuscript organisation and aiding users.<sup>51</sup>

There are significantly varied prefaces found in Dunhuang manuscripts. For instance, some collections of poems feature a general preface at the beginning.<sup>52</sup> Conversely, many manuscripts include prefaces for only some individual poems, while the majority lack prefaces altogether. Some of these are explicitly labelled as prefaces in preceding titles by an additional indication, namely *bing xu* 並序 ('with preface'), while others are not. Additionally, certain prefaces, some exclusively known from Dunhuang manuscripts, are present in only one or a few manuscripts containing the same text.

Considering these variations, I examine prefaces from various angles. Apart from exploring who introduced prefaces to *shi* 詩 ('verse' or 'poem'), when, and why, along with their content and function, I am particularly interested in the characteristics that define a preface and distinguish it from a pure commentary. Furthermore, I inquire whether the absence of *bing xu* in titles holds any significance.

## Further Content

Further content scattered throughout the same manuscript is particularly intriguing because it illuminates the various contexts in which these manuscripts existed over their extensive lifespan following their creation. Such content reveals how the manuscripts were utilised and how their contents were interpreted. Both the usage and value of the manuscripts may have undergone frequent, and sometimes dramatic, changes.

For instance, Gippert identifies two aspects of the subsequent life of Old Georgian manuscripts: their movement between centres of manuscript production and preservation, and their

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<sup>50</sup> Ma 2022, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Wiesmüller 2022, 103–132.

<sup>52</sup> See the introduction to the Wang Fanzhi poems in Chapter 2.

reuse for personal purposes. This reuse includes the addition of blessings, rogations, and prayers, as well as practical items such as prescriptions, contracts, and writing exercises.<sup>53</sup> As Galambos convincingly demonstrated with Chinese scrolls containing educational texts, quotes on the verso can delineate shorter passages from the text on the recto. These likely served as markers for the parts that students had to copy as assignments.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, I inquire about the traces left in the manuscripts I study, and what they reveal about the subsequent handling and utilisation of the manuscripts and their content by later users.

### 1.3 Outline of the Dissertation

The present study examines a multitude of factors across twenty detailed case studies, comparing them with one another and with additional manuscripts from the Dunhuang literary corpus.

In Chapter 2, **Setting the Stage**, I elucidate how comparing factors across distinct types of MTMs offer initial insights into their differences and similarities. Following this introductory chapter, I analyse the factors of several case studies in the subsequent four chapters. Chapter 3 concerns two **Poetry Selections**, which are juxtaposed with the distinct type of **Student MTMs** treated in Chapter 5 (comprising 7 MTM scrolls, one set of literary texts on the verso of a scroll, and 6 MTM booklets). The ensuing chapters present case studies of seemingly analogous MTMs, spotlighting factors crucial for understanding differences in production and use. For example, Chapter 4 scrutinises a **Scribe's Notebook** akin to Poetry Selections, while Chapter 6 examines **Three MTMs With Two Core Texts**, arranged in the same sequence, purportedly created by students. Finally, Chapter 7 synthesises the findings from each chapter to delineate the differences within individual factors. Moreover, I identify recurring conventions apparent across all MTMs through shared patterns and propose potential avenues for future research by highlighting additional manuscripts as starting points.

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<sup>53</sup> Gippert 2015, 99.

<sup>54</sup> Galambos 2020a, 132–133.



## 2 Setting the Stage<sup>55</sup>

In this introductory chapter, I will demonstrate how the holistic consideration of various aspects, particularly the visual organisation of and information within paracontent, offers insights into the differences and conventions of Dunhuang manuscript culture, aiding in the identification of distinct types of MTMs. I will illustrate how through this foundational analysis, further questions can be addressed, such as whether the largely myth-enshrouded Wang Fanzhi, named in the titles to several distinct and extensive poetry collections on Dunhuang manuscripts, is indeed indicated as an author.

In the following, I will introduce the main characteristics of two distinct types: MTMs containing Poetry Selections (Chapter 3) and MTMs containing various longer literary texts, such as the Wang Fanzhi poems (Chapter 5, Student MTMs). For the latter, I examine in detail information available on the name as well as the systems for the diverse collections preserved in Dunhuang manuscripts. This will lead me to argue that Wang Fanzhi is not denoted as the author in the titles to these collections. Lastly, I will refer to additional sources to show that the Dunhuang manuscripts reflect a state prior to the convention of accumulating *shi* 詩 into collections by single authors.

### 2.1 Poetry Selections

The visual organisation already renders poetry selections immediately recognisable. Between each poem, there is ample blank space. Additionally, each poem carries an individual head title, which is likewise indented by generous blank space. Some texts include individual prefaces, which are placed between head title and poem. Beneath some of the head titles, the names of authors and their positions are added. In the following, I describe scroll P.2567 (+P.2555) as representative example (Fig. 3).

The scroll is preserved in two parts, which are assigned different signatures. Unfortunately, the scroll is torn at both the beginning and the end. Xu's analysis, based on the surviving poems,

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<sup>55</sup> The chapter is based on an earlier version, Bregler *forthcoming*, which has been accepted for publication.

suggests a dating between 753 and 805 for the content. The scroll contains 199 poems, with 108 poem featuring individual titles.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 3: Beginning of P.2567 (+P.2552). Head titles in white, names of authors and their ranks in red. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Head titles to individual poems can indicate a more abstract topic, but most often include information about an occasion. Persons named in the titles are either addressees or the topic. In the following table, I have compiled an exemplary overview of the types of individual titles on the manuscript described above (Tab. 1). This includes all titles which are followed by author names and their official titles beneath.

<sup>56</sup> Xu 2000, 42.

**Tab. 1:** Selection of Titles on P.2567(+P.2555) including author names and positions beneath some head titles.

Line	Title	Author name and official title
Col. 13	Handan shaonian xing 邯鄲少年行 ('Song of the Handan Youth')	Wang Changling <i>jiaoshulang</i> 王昌齡 校書郎
Col. 30	Ye bo Lujiang wen guren zai Donglin si yi shi ji zhi 夜泊廬江聞故人在東林寺以詩寄之 ('[Anchoring the Boat] in the Night at the Lu River, Hearing of an Old Friend Staying at the Donglin Monastery, and Sending a Poem to Him')	
Col. 54	Da Han Da 答韓大 ('Reply to Han Da')	Qiu Wei 丘為
Col. 57	Tian jia 田家 ('The Farmer')	
Col. 74	<i>Gu yi</i> 古意 ('Reminiscence of Old Times')	Tao Han <i>libuyuan wailang</i> 陶翰 禮部員外郎
Col. 79	<i>Gu yi</i> 古意 ('Reminiscence of Old Times')	
Col. 95	<i>Lu Zhongdu you xiao li feng qi lang yi dou jiu Shuang yu zeng yu yu ni lu yin kuai yu yin jiu liu shi er qu</i> 魯中都有小吏逢七朗以斗酒雙魚贈余於逆旅因鱸魚飲酒留詩而去 ('In Zhongdu Prefecture of Lu, There Is the Minor Official Pang Qilang Who Bestowed a Bottle of Wine and a Pair of Fish upon Me at the Inn, Because of Which I Leave a Poem about Minced Fish and Drinking Wine and Depart')	
Col. 117	<i>Gong zhong san zhang</i> 宮中三章 ('Three Stanzas from the Palace')	<i>Huangdi shiwen</i> Li Bai 皇帝侍文李白
Col. 132	<i>Yue xia dui ying du zhuo</i> 月下對影獨酌 ('Drinking Alone under the Moon with [One's] Shadow')	
Col. 146	<i>Xing xing you lie pian</i> 行行遊獵篇 ('Piece on Travelling Around, Hunting')	
Col. 165	<i>Yang chun ge</i> 陽春哥[歌] ('Song about Sunny Spring')	
Col. 226	<i>Xin'an wang chu sai</i> 信安王出塞 ('The Prince of Xin'an Leaves the Fortress')	Gao Shi 高適
Col. 301	<i>Tong Lü yuanwai Fan Sizhi he daifu zai po Huanghe jiu qu zhi zuo</i> 同呂員外范司直賀大夫再破黃河九曲之作 ('Composed Together with <i>yuanwai</i> 員外 Lü and Sizhi 司直 Fan for Congratulating the Daifu 大夫 [Geshu Han 哥舒翰] for Once Again Crushing [the Barbarian Tribes at] the Nine River Bends of the Yellow River')	
Col. 321	<i>Sai shang ting chui di</i> 塞上聽吹笛 ('On the Fortress [Walls], Hearing the Flute Being Played')	
Col. 323	<i>Xing lu nan</i> 行路難 ('Travelling is Difficult')	
Col. 326	<i>Song bing huan zuo</i> 送兵還作 ('Composed [upon] Returning from Sending off the Army')	
Col. 368	<i>Handan shao nian xing</i> 邯鄲少年行 ('Song of the Handan Youth')	

Line	Title	Author name and official title
Col. 372	<i>San jun yong; bing xu</i> 三君詠並序 (‘Celebration of Three Gentlemen; With Preface’) <sup>57</sup> [The three poems of the cycle have the following titles]:	
Col. 374	<i>Zheng gong Wei</i> 鄭公魏 (‘Duke of Zheng, Wei [Zheng] ’)	
Col. 376	<i>Dai gong guo</i> 代公郭 (‘Duke of Dai, Guo [Yuanzhen] ’)	
Col. 378	<i>Liang gong di</i> 梁公狄 (‘Duke of Liang, Di [Renjie] ’)	
Col. 436	<i>Xun ge pian bing xu</i> 馴鴿篇並序 (‘Piece on Tame Doves; With Preface’)	Li Ang 李昂

While some titles refer to the topics in a more general manner, such as *Tian jia* 田家 (‘The Farmer’), they most often appear to describe specific occasions and sceneries, such as *Sai shang ting chui di* 塞上聽吹笛 (‘On the Fortress [Walls], Hearing the Flute Being Played’). Additionally, the titles often allude to certain sentiments, so for instance in *Yue xia dui ying du zhao* 月下對影獨酌 (‘Drinking Alone under the Moon with [One’s] Shadow’). Titles such as *Gu yi* 古意 (‘Reminiscence of Old Times’) and *Handan shao nian xing* 邯鄲少年行 (‘Song of the Handan Youth’) appear to different poems on the scroll, which indicates that they are generic. Further titles, such as *Yang chun ge* 陽春哥[歌] (‘Song about Sunny Spring’) suggest a connection to music. In one instance, three poems with individual head titles appear subsumed under a general title, *Xun ge pian bing xu* 馴鴿篇並序 (‘Piece on Tame Doves; With Preface’), which, as already indicated in this title, includes a preface. Additionally, it is noticeable that titles often, though not necessarily, share a common terminology. Below, I list the most common characters from all titles on the scroll:

**Tab. 2:** Frequency of selected characters in titles on P.2567 (+P.2555).

Frequency	Occasion for composition
13x	<i>Song</i> 送 (‘Sending off’)
10x	<i>Bie</i> 別 (‘Parting from’)
8x	<i>Zeng</i> 贈 (‘Bestowing’)
6x	<i>Zuo</i> 作 (‘Composed [upon]’)
3x	<i>Ji</i> 寄 (‘Sending to’)
3x	<i>Feng</i> 奉 (‘Respectfully presenting to’)
3x	<i>Ti</i> 題 (‘Inscribing [a surface]’)
2x	<i>Da</i> 答 (‘Answering’)
2x	<i>Pian</i> 篇 (‘Piece’)

<sup>57</sup> For the three gentlemen, see McMullen 2013, 134.

## 2.2. The Wang Fanzhi poems

The situation is strikingly different for the visual organisation of Dunhuang manuscripts containing so-called Wang Fanzhi poems. The alleged author, a certain Wang Fanzhi, is mentioned in the titles to a vast corpus of poems in multiple distinct collections. Despite this abundance, the author's identity remains enigmatic, with only a few scattered sources filled with mythical descriptions of his origin and lifetime. Consequently, before examining the visual organisation of these Dunhuang manuscripts, I will first address two key questions that have long engaged scholars: who the mythical Wang Fanzhi was, and how the extensive poem collections ascribed to him are organised in various systems. I will then describe the visual organisation to show that Wang Fanzhi is not designated as the author.

### 2.2.1 Who was Wang Fanzhi?

Most previous studies focus on the content of the poems and the enigmatic figure of Wang Fanzhi 王梵志, whose name appears in the titles of three distinct poem collections found in Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>58</sup> This designation can be interpreted in two ways: either as a broad categorisation linking the poems to a genre associated with Wang Fanzhi's name, or as a direct attribution of authorship to him. Scholars have generally favoured the latter interpretation.

Little is known about the elusive figure Wang Fanzhi. According to transmitted sources, he is believed to have flourished at the transition from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup> Intriguingly, the preface preserved alongside one of the three poem collections found in manuscripts serves primarily as an introduction to the Wang Fanzhi poems themselves, rather than providing insight into Wang Fanzhi as an individual.<sup>60</sup> Instead, it appears that the central themes revolve around broader societal concerns, emphasising principles of general education and social virtues. Wang Fanzhi poems are described to serve as vehicles for imparting lessons of filial piety and the karmic law of retribution, presented in a vernacular language for easy comprehension. Moreover, their

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<sup>58</sup> See Xiang 2019, 230–233 for studies on Wang Fanzhi poems. Note that poems from one collection are not found in the others, Zhang 1983, 310.

<sup>59</sup> The *Guiyuan congtan* 桂苑叢談 and the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, the most frequently cited sources on Wang Fanzhi, likely draw from a lost work entitled *Shiyi* 史遺, see Chen 1994, 97–98.

<sup>60</sup> The preface is found prior to poems from *juan shang* 卷上 ('Upper Scroll') on S.778 and S.5796.

topical relevance extends to contemporary issues, offering multifaceted contributions towards personal betterment and societal transformation.<sup>61</sup>

Hu Shi 胡適, in his 1928 work on the history of Chinese literature in *baihua* 白話 (‘vernacular language’), regards the tale of Wang Fanzhi’s birth from a tree as a myth. However, he nevertheless aligns Wang Fanzhi’s lifespan with the dates provided in historical sources, placing it at the transition from the end of the Sui dynasty to the beginning of the Tang dynasty (c. 590–660).<sup>62</sup> Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高 challenges this dating, contending that transmitted sources have been uncritically treated as historical truths rather than later-generation myths.<sup>63</sup> Paul Demiéville, in his 1982 publication *L’Œuvre de Wang le Zélateur*, interprets *fanzhi* 梵志 of the name as a blend of translation and transliteration, equating it with the Sanskrit term *brahmacārin*.<sup>64</sup> He suggests that within in the Chinese context, Fanzhi may defer to ‘devotees’ or ‘lay zealots’.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, scholars frequently highlight parallels between Wang Fanzhi poems and the poems by the legendary figure Han Shan 寒山 (‘Cold Mountain’), whose identity is similarly obscure. Likewise, similar challenges confronts the poem collection attributed to the mythical Han Shan, often perceived not as the creation of a singular historical figure but as a compilation that evolved over time.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, scholars have posited that the Wang Fanzhi poems should not be attributed to a single author. For instance, Demiéville argues that Wang Fanzhi likely never existed as a historical figure; instead, poems were gathered under this name by editors or compilers, who subsequently also penned a preface.<sup>67</sup>

### 2.2.2 Systems in the Titles of Wang Fanzhi poems

Thirty manuscripts containing Wang Fanzhi poems are preserved and catalogued within the holdings of respective institutions.<sup>68</sup> Existing editions, with a focus on textual reconstruction, have long acknowledged the presence of various systems indicating three distinct collections used in

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<sup>61</sup> See Demiéville 1982, 24–31 for a French translation of the preface.

<sup>62</sup> Hu 2013 [1928], 234.

<sup>63</sup> Iriya 1955, 52–53.

<sup>64</sup> *Brahmacārin* is the first stage in a Brahmin’s life in in India, representing discipleship, see Demiéville 1982, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Demiéville 1982, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Rouzer 2017, xi–xii. Similarities are also highlighted by Hu 2013 [1928], 231.

<sup>67</sup> Demiéville 1982, 12–13, 25.

<sup>68</sup> See Rong 2013, 137–175 for details on the main collections of Dunhuang manuscripts and their catalogues.

titling the vast corpus of Wang Fanzhi poems, and incorporate this observation to different extend.<sup>69</sup> However, some editions incorporate supplementary texts, such as poems argue to share thematic and stylistic similarities but lack explicit mention in their titles.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, certain editions introduce entirely novel divisions.<sup>71</sup> This hinders a precise understanding of the poems as derived from actual manuscript evidence.

For instance, Iriya distinguishes the Wang Fanzhi poems into two major groups based on content: one comprising sophisticated poems akin to those of Han Shan, and another characterised by a didactic nature, reminiscent of an educational text found in the Dunhuang manuscripts, titled *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教 (‘Family Instructions of the Esteemed Elder’).<sup>72</sup> Likewise, Demiéville included in his study on the Wang Fanzhi poems a translation of the *Taigong jiajiao* due to perceived similarities in content.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, scholars have compared the poems within themselves according to the three different collections indicated in titles. Xiang Chu’s 項楚 introduction to the Wang Fanzhi poems exemplifies this approach.<sup>74</sup> Depending on the approach, the Wang Fanzhi poems were categorised differently. Xiang Chu, for example, understands them as singular occurrence, with no parallel cases among literary texts from Dunhuang.<sup>75</sup> Others consider them as ‘folk poems’, along with further texts such as the *Guxian ji* 古賢集 (‘Collection of Ancient Worthies’), which focuses on worthy men from ancient times, and the *Dunhuang ershi yong* 敦煌二十詠 (‘Twenty Poems on Dunhuang’), describing famous landmarks of Dunhuang.<sup>76</sup>

Already the preface in Dunhuang manuscripts unmistakably reveals an educational intent behind the Wang Fanzhi poems, aiming to both educate and inspire reflection. Consequently, any attempt to assign any differences content-wise to the poems from the three collections inevitably introduces subjectivity, contingent upon the chosen parameters. Moreover, twenty-nine of the thirty manuscripts exhibit numerous signs indicating their production within educational settings, implying that the Wang Fanzhi poems across all three collections were utilised in the same context.

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<sup>69</sup> Zhang 1983, 309–319 advocates for a distinct separation of counting systems as indicated in the titles.

<sup>70</sup> Xiang 2019, 233 lists the four current editions.

<sup>71</sup> Zhang 1983, 3–4 identifies six scrolls, while Xiang 1991, 45–51 expands to ‘scroll 7’.

<sup>72</sup> Iriya 1956, ii.

<sup>73</sup> Demiéville 1982, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Xiang 2019, 229–264.

<sup>75</sup> Xiang 2019, 4–5.

<sup>76</sup> Rong 2013, 410–411.

One single different manuscript stands out considerably, since it dates back as early as 771 and features Wang Fanzhi poems not found in the three distinct collections I discuss below.<sup>77</sup> This scroll has a very distinct visual organisation notably reminiscent of Poetry Selections, with much blank space and a single poem with an individual title.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, small numbers counting poems are found in some of the larger spaces. The colophon indicates a specific setting, noting a ‘selection’ (*chao* 抄) of one hundred and ten Wang Fanzhi poems by *śramaṇa* Faren 法忍.<sup>79</sup>

The other twenty-nine manuscripts date considerably later and can be categorised into three distinct systems of collections, based on indications in the titles. The largest group of manuscripts contains a text marked with the additional indication *yi juan* 一卷 (‘in one *juan*’), which signifies that this collection can circulate independently. Additionally, two separate counting systems are employed, which are never used in combination with each other.<sup>80</sup> First, the self-contained system of three volumes: *juan shang/zhong/xia* 卷上/中/下 (‘Upper/Middle/Lower Scroll’) and an extendable system according to numbers: *juan di yi/er/san/...* 卷第一/二/三 (‘Scroll Number One/Two/Three/...’). The twenty-nine manuscripts containing Wang Fanzhi poems can thus be sorted according to their actual titles as follows.<sup>81</sup>

### 1. *Wang Fanzhi shi yi juan* 王梵志詩一卷 (‘Wang Fanzhi poems, in one *juan*’)

This collection, or its fragments, appears in fifteen manuscripts, a significantly higher number compared to the manuscripts containing Wang Fanzhi poems of the other two systems for collections discussed below.<sup>82</sup> Notably, all manuscripts, except for one larger booklet and a single sheet, are in scroll format. Remarkably, this collection is the only one completely preserved (in four manuscripts), comprising a total of ninety-two poems, each complete text having a head and

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<sup>77</sup> The date is proposed by Mair 1981, 72. The scroll is split into two parts: Φ256 (+Дx00485 and Дx01349) kept in St. Petersburg and S.4277 in the British Library. For a list of the contained poems, see Zhang 1988, 129–134.

<sup>78</sup> The title *Huibo yue* 回波樂 has attracted significant interest since it is recognised as indication of a musical tune, which Zhang 1988, 128–129 believes to have been commonly played at courtly banquets during the Northern Wei 北魏 (385–535).

<sup>79</sup> 大曆六年五月[...]日抄王梵志詩一百一十首沙門法忍寫之記. The blank space on the scroll is here denoted by [...].

<sup>80</sup> Zhang 1983, 310.

<sup>81</sup> I base my division on Zhang 1983, 309–318.

<sup>82</sup> P.2718, P. 2842 *bis*, P.2914, P.3266, P.3558, P.3656, P.3716, P.4094, S.2710, S.3393, S.4669, S.5794, Дx 00890+Дx 00891, Hane 羽 30, and a scroll held at the *Neiraku bijutsu kan* 奈良寧樂美術館 (Neiraku Art Museum) in Nara.

end title. The title for this collection varies slightly; for instance, there is the additional character *ji* 集 ('collection') in the title of P.4094, which also appears in the title on the verso of P.2249. On P.2914, where only the opening verse lines of some poems are written, the head title is altered to *Wang Fanzhi shi juan di yi* 王梵志詩卷第一 ('Wang Fanzhi Poems, Scroll Number One'), a choice likely influenced by the title to the preceding copy of Wang Fanzhi poems in a different hand and from the numerical system, titled *Wang Fanzhi shi juan di san* 王梵志詩卷第三 ('Wang Fanzhi Poems, Scroll Number Three').

## 2. *Wang Fanzhi shi juan di san* 王梵志詩卷第三 ('Wang Fanzhi poems, Scroll Number Three')

Poems from this collection are present in three manuscripts only, two fragments of what was likely a scroll, one complete scroll, and one booklet.<sup>83</sup> Given the indication *juan di san* 卷第三 ('Scroll Number Three'), it is probable that additional collections existed, at least for a *juan di yi* 卷第一 ('Scroll Number One') and a *juan di er* 卷第二 ('Scroll Number Two'). It is conceivable that the system continued, possibly encompassing a *juan di si* 卷第四 ('Scroll Number Four') and beyond; however, no surviving manuscripts containing these have been found.

## 3. *Wang Fanzhi shi ji juan shang/zhong* 王梵志詩集卷上中 ('Wang Fanzhi poems, Collection, Upper/Middle Scroll')

There exist four manuscript fragments containing poems from the collection *juan shang* 卷上 ('Upper Scroll'): one single sheet from a pothi, two scrolls, and a small booklet.<sup>84</sup> An additional note in the head title indicates: *bing xu* 並序 ('with preface').<sup>85</sup> For the collection *juan zhong* 卷中 ('Middle Scroll'), there are three manuscripts: one booklet, one scroll, and a single sheet from a pothi.<sup>86</sup> A *juan xia* ('Lower Scroll') either completed this collection or was planned, though no manuscripts containing it have survived.

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<sup>83</sup> P.2914, P.3833 and Дх00889+Дх 02558.

<sup>84</sup> S.778, S.1399, S.5474 and S.5769.

<sup>85</sup> The preface is in S.778 and S.5796.

<sup>86</sup> P.3211, S.5441+S.6541 and Дх01197.

### 2.2.3 Visual organisation of MTMs containing Wang Fanzhi poems

The Wang Fanzhi poems appear in five manuscripts alongside other literary texts copied in the same hand. Four of these MTMs can be reliably dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, based on their colophons, and it is likely that the fifth manuscript, lacking a colophon, also originates from this period. The colophons mention students in monasteries, private schools, and one *jiedu yaya* ('Clerk to the Governor') as scribes, suggesting slightly diverse but generally educational settings for manuscript production.

The visual organisation of literary texts in these MTMs is best characterised as 'densely written'. For example, little to no space separates individual poems, and they are not assigned individual titles, as is the case for poems in Poetry Selections. Instead, the texts typically begin with a head title and end with an end title.<sup>87</sup> These titles vary in the level of detail with which they introduce the topics of a text, often including names of individuals relevant to the subject matter. Common additional indications at the end of titles include *yi juan* 一卷 ('one juan'), *yi shou* 一首 ('one text'), and *yi ben* 一本 ('a set of texts').<sup>88</sup>

#### 1.) P.3716 (28.7 x 503 cm)<sup>89</sup>

The scroll comprises eleven sheets of light beige paper, with only the first sheet incomplete (Fig. 4). The two texts on the recto indicate it as notes taken by disciples from lessons by Master Facheng 法成, who taught the *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論 (Skt. *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*) in Dunhuang from 855 to 859.<sup>90</sup>

The first half of the verso features a model letter. The colophon, dated 930, attributes this copy to Zhang Rutong 張儒通, a *lisheng* 禮生 ('student of the rites') of the *jishuyuan* 技術院 ('Academy of Skills').<sup>91</sup> After considerable blank space, a different and more skilled hand added a set of four literary texts on the second half. The final text is unfinished:

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<sup>87</sup> See Galambos 2019, 46.

<sup>88</sup> For my discussion of additional indications, refer to the discussion of paracontent in Chapter 5, Student MTMs.

<sup>89</sup> My presentation of manuscripts follows Galambos 2019, 42–54.

<sup>90</sup> For this corpus, see Moretti 2013, 177–190.

<sup>91</sup> Gao 2009, 349

- 1) *Wang Fanzhi shi yi juan* 王梵志詩一卷 (‘Wang Fanzhi Poems; One Scroll’)
- 2) *Yanzi fu yi juan* 宴子賦一首 (‘Rhapsody on Master Yan; One Item’)
- 3) *Zhao Qia chou fu fu yi shou* 趙洽丑婦賦一首 (‘Rhapsody on the Ugly Woman Zhao Qia; One Item’)
- 4) *Bai niao ming junchen yizhang* 百鳥名 君臣儀仗 (‘Names of the Hundred Birds The Ceremonial Array of Ruler and Ministers’)<sup>92</sup>

The second text recounts Master Yan’s diplomatic mission during the Warring States period, drawing parallels with a tale from the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (‘Annals of Master Yan’).<sup>93</sup> The third text humorously depicts an unattractive woman.<sup>94</sup> Some scholars read the name ‘Zhao Qia’ in the title as the name of an author.<sup>95</sup> The last, incomplete text, also found in other manuscripts, presents a hierarchical bird society, mirroring human society, with the Phoenix as the highest authority.<sup>96</sup>

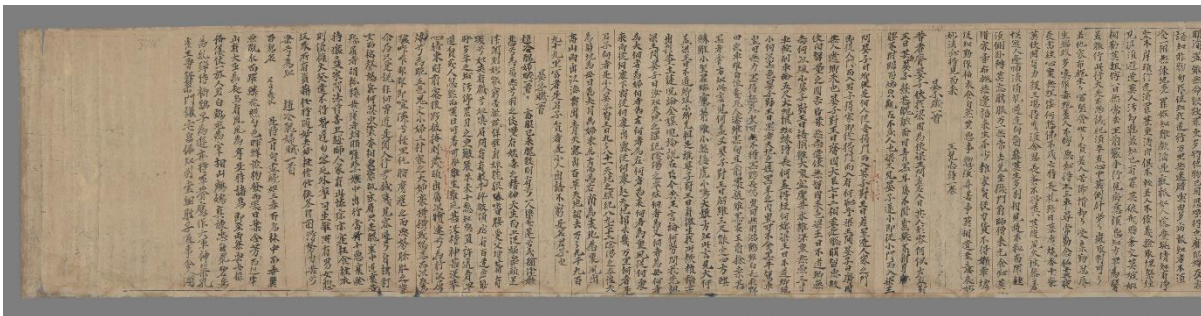


Figure 4: The second half of P.3716 verso. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

## 2.) P.2718 (28.9–30.9 × 187.6 cm)

The scroll is complete but slightly damaged on its first sheet. The ruling is irregular throughout.<sup>97</sup> In the colophon on the last sheet, which can be dated to 970, a certain Yan Haizhen 閻海真, a disciple of the *zhishuyuan* 知術院 (‘Academy of Knowledge’), claims to have copied the two contained text by hand.<sup>98</sup> There are two texts on the recto, neatly written by a slightly cursive hand,

<sup>92</sup> I adapted the translation of the title by Mayo 2000, 9.

<sup>93</sup> For the *Yanzi chunqiu*, see Milburn 2016, 348.

<sup>94</sup> Yang 2011, 236–238.

<sup>95</sup> Fu 1994, 26.

<sup>96</sup> See Mayo 2000, 9–60.

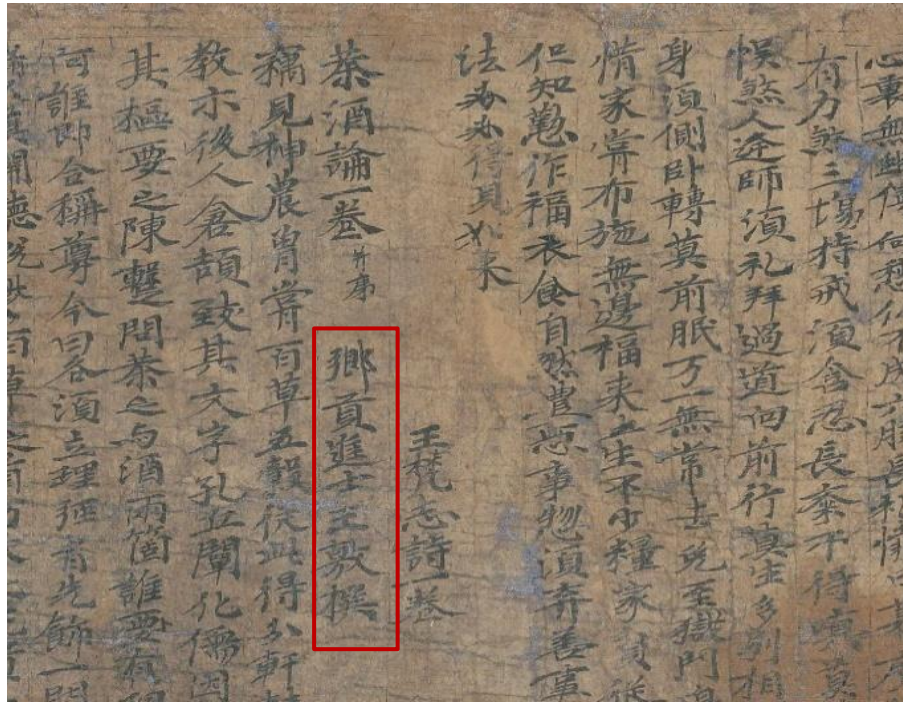
<sup>97</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Gao 2009, 349 suggests that the *zhishuyuan* is synonymous with the *jishuyuan* 伎術院, as referenced, for instance, in the colophon to the model letter on P.3716 verso.

while the verso is mostly blank, with only a few writing exercises. Though there are a few deletions and corrections in black in the two texts, they are not immediately noticeable, indicating careful planning. Both texts on the recto are complete, featuring both head and end titles:

- 1) *Wang Fanzhi shi yi juan* 王梵志詩一卷 (‘Wang Fanzhi Poems; One Scroll’)
- 2) *Cha jiu lun yi juan bing xu* 茶酒論一卷並序 (‘Debate between Tea and Wine; One Scroll, With Preface’)

The second text features a dialogue between tea and wine debating which beverage is superior and more essential, until water intervenes, emphasising its fundamental role for both.<sup>99</sup> Following the head title of the second text, two smaller characters state *bing xu* 並序 (‘with preface’). Notably, after a single-character blank space, the name of the author, Wang Fu 王敷, and details regarding his official title appear *beneath* the head title (shown in red in Fig. 5).<sup>100</sup>



**Figure 5:** Section view of the author beneath the head title to the second text on P.2718. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>99</sup> See Wang & Pan 1996 for a study of this text.

<sup>100</sup> See also Chen 2015, 86.

### 3.) P.4094 (31 × 22.7 cm)

Only two bifolios remain of this sizable booklet (Fig. 6). It is ruled, with ample space in the margins, and the large characters are neatly spaced apart. Red punctuation and section marks enhance the text, with a small red character seamlessly integrated within the text of the Wang Fanzhi poems. According to the colophon following the poems, Fan Wensheng 樊文昇, a *jiedu yaya* 節度押衙 (‘Clerk to the Governor’), copied and presented the text to his superior for approval in 949.<sup>101</sup> Due to its fragmentary condition, only the last part of the Wang Fanzhi poems and the end title remain, along with a few preserved lines of a second text on the last page:<sup>102</sup>

- 1) *Wang Fanzhi shi ji yi juan* 王梵志詩集一卷 (‘Wang Fanzhi Poems; Collection; One Scroll’)
- 2) *Fuzi quanshi ci* 夫子勸世詞 (‘Songs on the Master Admonishing the World’)

The Wang Fanzhi poems featured here are part of the same collection in *yi juan* as found on P.2718 and P.3716 described above. The second, incomplete text, unique to this booklet, is categorised by scholars alongside the Wang Fanzhi poems as ‘Buddhist poems to encourage goodness’.<sup>103</sup>

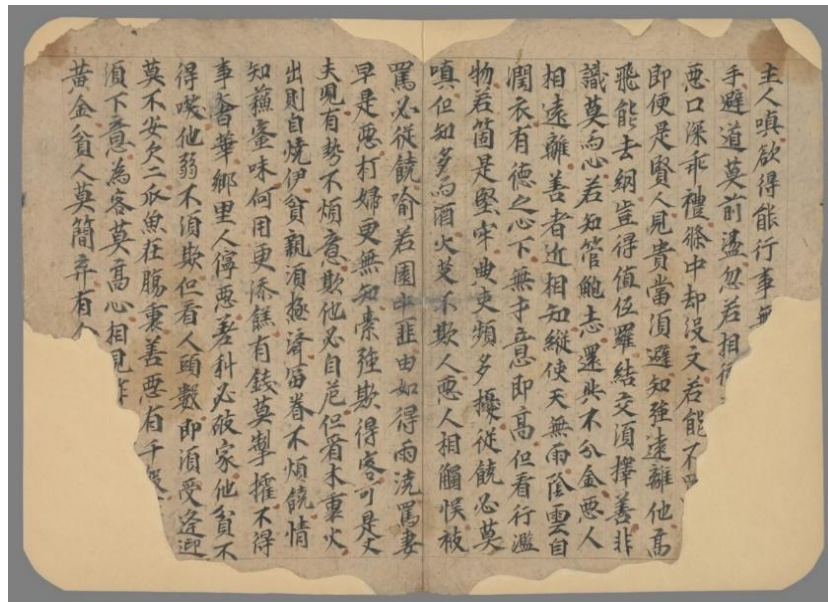


Figure 6: Pages two and three of booklet P.4094. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>101</sup> BnF 2006

<sup>102</sup> For the second text, see Zhu 2005, 76–77.

<sup>103</sup> Zhu 2005.

#### 4.) P. 3833 (15 × 14.5 cm)

This small booklet consists of seven bifolios glued together (Fig. 7).<sup>104</sup> Unlike the manuscripts described above, it lacks ruling, and the characters, written by an untrained hand, sprawl across the rough paper, with noticeable deletions and additions in black ink. The colophon for the Wang Fanzhi poems names a certain Wang Hetong 王和通, a *xuelang* 學郎 ('student') at the Liantai Monastery 蓮臺寺, possibly dating to 936.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately, missing pages from both the beginning and end leave only the end title for the Wang Fanzhi poems and a head title for the second text intact:

- 1) *Wang Fanzhi shi juan di san* 王梵志詩卷第三 ('Wang Fanzhi Poems; Scroll Number Three')
- 2) *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiang shi yi shou* 孔子相託相詩一首 ('Alternating Verses about the Questions between Master Kong and Xiang Tuo; One Text')

The second text is preserved in as much as sixteen Dunhuang manuscripts, depicting a humorous dialogue between Confucius and the boy Xiang Tuo.<sup>106</sup> In this exchange, the boy cleverly outwits Confucius with his responses, while Confucius himself struggles to counter the boy's witty questions. An additional segment in seven-syllable verse portrays Confucius attempting to retaliate against the boy.<sup>107</sup>

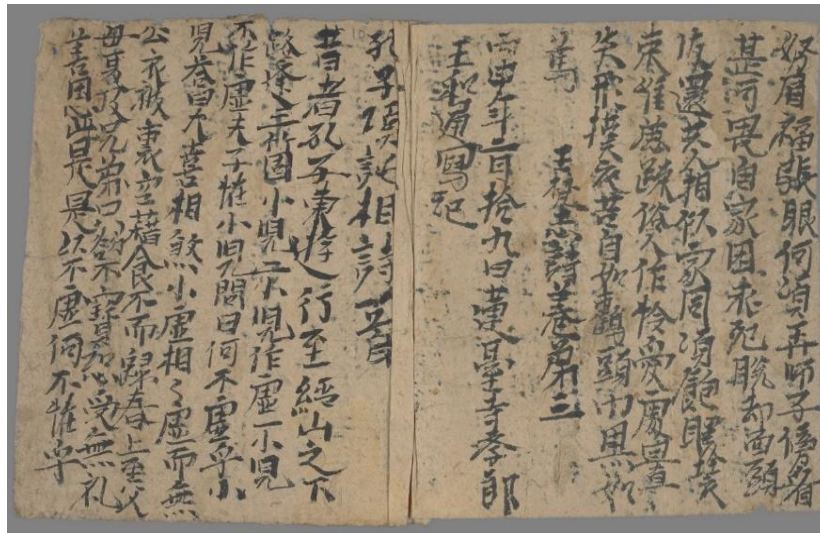


Figure 7: Pages 18 and 19 of booklet P.3833. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>104</sup> Bnf 2006

<sup>105</sup> Mair 1981, 36 tentatively proposes this date.

<sup>106</sup> See Altenburger 2009 for an early precedent of this text and its presence in Dunhuang manuscripts.

<sup>107</sup> Altenburger 2009, 262.

### 5.) S.5441 (15.5 × 21.5 cm)

Only fifteen bifolios stitched together remain of this small booklet (Fig. 8).<sup>108</sup> The manuscript is ruled, but the characters, written by an untrained hand, often reach close to the upper, lower, and some outer borders of the paper. Numerous corrections and additions are squeezed into the blank spaces between lines, resulting in a somewhat disorderly appearance. Despite this, some pages, particularly the initial ones, show an attempt for a neater layout. According to the colophon after the first text, a certain Yin Nu'er 陰奴兒, a *xuelang* 學郎 of the *kongmu* 孔目 ('Clerk in charge of files or a book collection') surnamed Fan 汎, copied the text in 978.<sup>109</sup> The booklet is intact at the beginning, with a cover page containing extra dates and names, but lacks its final part. The first text has divergent head and end titles, while the subsequent incomplete Wang Fanzhi poems feature their head title repeated three times spanning over two lines before the poems begin:

- 1) *Zhuo Ji Bu zhuan wen* 捉季布傳文 ('Story of the Capture of Ji Bu') (head title);  
*Da Han sannian Ji Bu ma Zhen ciwen yi juan* 大漢三年季布罵陣詞文一卷 ('*Ciwen* on Ji Bu Cursing on the Battlefield in the Third Year of the Great Han; One Scroll') (end title)<sup>110</sup>
- 2) *Wang Fanzhi shi ji juan zhong* 王梵志詩集卷中 ('Wang Fanzhi Poems; Collection; Middle Scroll')

The initial text combines rhyme and prose to recount how General Ji Bu insults Liu Bang 劉邦 (256/257–195 BCE), the King of Han, on the battlefield. Despite the confrontation, Ji Bu is eventually offered an official position.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See also Mair 1981, 63 for the booklet.

<sup>109</sup> I follow Hucker 1985, 297 in translating *kongmu* 孔目. For *kongmu*, see also Mair 1989, 129 and Li 1986, 44–45.

<sup>110</sup> Rong 2013, 405 explains *ciwen* 詞文 as referring to lengthy rhyming lyrics in vernacular language.

<sup>111</sup> Rong 2013, 405.

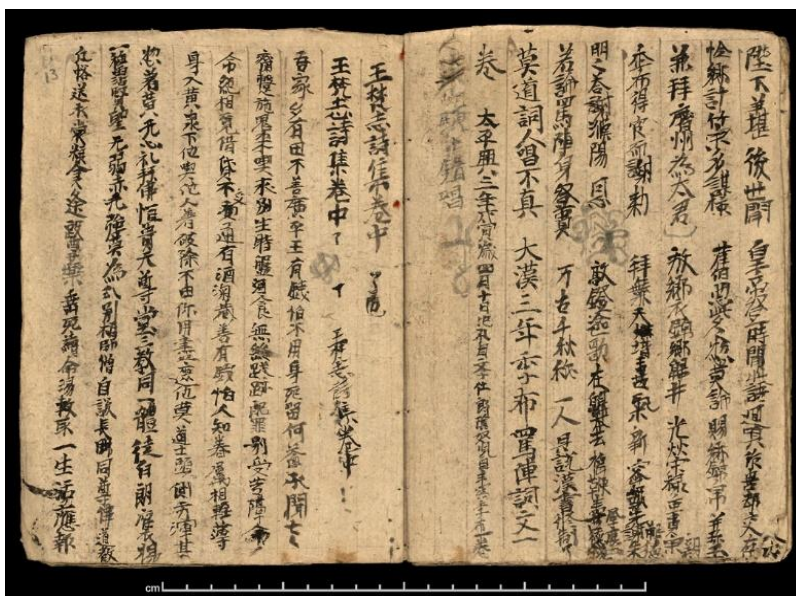


Figure 8: From the British Library collection (Or.8210/S.5441, pages 24 and 25).

In summary, the Wang Fanzhi poems from all three collections share a consistent, ‘densely written’ visual organisation, marked by titles at the beginning and end. This format extends to the other literary texts accompanying the Wang Fanzhi poems in the five MTMs described above, with their titles often indicating topics involving people’s names. Notably, *beneath* the head title, the name of the author of the *Chajiu lun yi juan* 茶酒論一卷 (‘Debate between Tea and Wine; in one *juan*’) is mentioned – an observation also valid for further Dunhuang manuscripts. For example, on P.3019, the name of Wei Zhuang is noted *beneath* the title of his *Qin fu yin* 秦婦吟 (‘Lament of the Lady of Qin’).

Comparing the results to the Poetry Selections reveals significant similarities. Many titles in both types of MTMs include the names of individuals either addressed or mentioned as topics, with names of authors invariably provided *beneath* head titles. The consistent patterns thus reveal a convention of naming authors. Thus, the inclusion of ‘Wang Fanzhi’ in the titles may be a name of a person, either as addressee or topic, but is by no means a denotation of an author. It is perceivable that the poems were composed ‘in the style of Wang Fanzhi’, and compiled under his name, as previously suggested by Demiéville. In this manner, ‘Wang Fanzhi poems’ is best understood as a generic title.

### 2.3 Bibliographic Records of the Dynastic Histories

The concept of Wang Fanzhi as a single author of a *shiji* 詩集 ('poem collection') likely stems from a later misinterpretation of the title of one of the collections, namely, 'Wang Fanzhi poems; Collection', where the characters *shi* 詩 ('verse'; 'poem') and *ji* 集 ('collection') appear sequentially. However, in addition to the evidence from Dunhuang described above against understanding Wang Fanzhi as an author at all, an examination of titles in dynastic histories furthermore suggests that reading anything on Dunhuang manuscripts as poem collections attributed to single authors is anachronistic.

This is mainly because in the dynastic histories like the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 ('Old History of the Tang'), compiled during the Later Jin 後晉 (936–946), titles combining an author's name with the two characters *shi* and *ji* are absent.<sup>112</sup> Such titles can be found only starting from the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 ('New History of the Tang'), submitted to the throne in 1060. Single-author *shi* collections likely emerged sometime before the compilation of the *Xin Tang shu*, which, for instance, records a title that combines the name of Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689 or 691–740) with the characters for *shiji*. However, in the Dunhuang manuscripts, poems by Meng Haoran still appear individually, and together with poems by various other poets, suggesting that the manuscripts from Dunhuang present an older state, before poems were collated according to their individual authors.

### 2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how a thorough examination of factors pertaining to visual organisation and paracontent contributes significantly to discerning different types of MTMs. It has become clear that two distinct types of MTMs emerge: **Poetry Selections** (Chapter 3) and **Student MTMs** (Chapter 5). Poetry Selections present a more open visual organisation, where individual poems are highlighted by distinct head titles and indented from each other by considerable blank spaces. In contrast, Student MTMs exhibit a denser visual organisation, with titles provided only at the beginning and end of entire texts. This absence of individual titles for Wang Fanzhi poems represents a fundamental divergence from poems in Poetry Selections.

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<sup>112</sup> While there are collections featuring diverse works by single authors, there are none consisting solely of *shi*.

Furthermore, a consistent convention across both types of MTMs can be noted: Author's names are invariably placed beneath head titles, rather than within them. This elucidates that the inclusion of Wang Fanzhi's name in the title does not signify authorship but rather denotes a specific genre. Lastly, a survey of book titles in the bibliographic section of the dynastic histories of the Tang reinforces the conclusion that Dunhuang manuscripts reflect a period preceding the formal aggregation of poems under single authors.

### 3 Poetry Selections

This chapter presents detailed case studies of two scrolls containing poetry selections. The two scrolls were chosen for their physical length, which allows for more precise statements concerning their various features.<sup>113</sup>

The inconsistencies and heterogeneities in content and paracontent suggest that the poems were collected from different sources. At the same time, there are certain sequences which indicate that content was partially copied from the same source, for instance, poems that have similar form and content. While the poems are neither arranged according to form nor grouped according to topic, certain topics frequently reoccur, which suggests that common interests were shared between individual scribes.

A distinctive pattern in the visual organisation of the content is that poems begin almost invariably at the upper margin of a new line.<sup>114</sup> Most importantly, it is evident from the visual organisation that poems are not arranged according to authors. Instead, an author is only cited for single poems. This raises crucial questions regarding later author attributions, not at least for the poems without author names on the scroll.

#### 3.1 Manuscript A (MS A)

This nearly six-metre-long scroll, the contents of which are written by a single hand, serves as an exemplary case to explain initial findings that apply to poetry selections. Furthermore, many statements pertain to Dunhuang literary texts in general, such as those regarding questions of authorship. To address this in more depth, relevant evidence from additional Dunhuang manuscripts will be introduced for comparison. The findings will be utilised to address various problems concerning attributions of the poems on the scroll and possibly underlying sources from new perspectives.

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<sup>113</sup> There are at least four Dunhuang scrolls with similar patterns. In addition to the two scrolls, there are P.3862 and P.5005 (+Дx1360, Дx2974). For the former, see Xu 2000, 391–412 and for the latter, see Xu 2000, 477–482. One further, possibly similar scroll, is preserved in three parts, S.6234 + P. 5007 + P.2672. For this scroll, see Fu 2021, 430–443. Where applicable, evidence from these comparable scrolls will be cited.

<sup>114</sup> There is only one exception on each scroll.

### 3.1.1 Codicology

The scroll is incomplete at both beginning and end and survives in two parts.<sup>115</sup> It measures between 26.7 and 28.1 cm in height, with a total length of 599.7 cm. There are fifteen sheets, which measure between 39 cm and 40.7 cm. The good, rather fine paper of light beige colour is irregularly pasted. All sheets are added regularly to the scroll, and the text is often written over the joints of sheets. Therefore, the scroll is most likely a single production unit.

### 3.1.2 Visual Organisation

There are 454 lines of text in total. Per sheet, there are about 30 lines. Each line contains between 25 and 35 characters. The sheets are not ruled, but there are partial traces of ruling by folding.<sup>116</sup> The visual organisation is neat. The lines are evenly distributed and straight. Space is left blank at the upper and lower margins. The texts are written by the same practiced hand in small characters with fine strokes.

Core content and paracontent is indented by blank spaces. An important pattern is that poems begin at the upper margin of a new line (in green in Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). The only exception is a poem written after some blank space beneath the end of the preceding poem.<sup>117</sup> Like poems, the three prefaces to poems on the scroll are also written in the same height at the upper margin.<sup>118</sup>

The visual organisation suggests a transitional stage of gradual and inconsistent addition of paracontent, which is not the most important structuring element. For instance, titles appear either as individual titles in front of single poems or as a general head title for several poems, each of which additionally has an individual subtitle. Subtitles are written after a blank space beneath the end of a previous poem (in orange in Fig. 10). They do not appear in every poem and are not placed at the same position in a consistent manner. Instead, they are set either in a new line, with some indention to the upper margin, or in the same line as a previous poem, with some blank space in between. Some titles possibly already existed in various original sources, where they served

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<sup>115</sup> These parts are assigned the signatures P.2567 and P.2552, respectively.

<sup>116</sup> BnF 2006. Traces of folding appear frequently on student manuscripts and are therefore discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

<sup>117</sup> For this poem beginning in line 179, see Xu 2000, 70–71.

<sup>118</sup> The paper is torn at the beginning of the preface to poem 122 (see Fig. 3.1). However, it is very likely that this preface also starts at the upper margin, since the last line of this preface is also written at the same height at the upper margins as the texts of the previous poems.

specific functions. The scribe may have adapted titles word by word from the original sources or altered them. The scribe also may have added new titles himself due to individual requirements.

Author names are again provided *beneath* titles to *individual* poems (red in Fig. 9). That they appear *beneath* titles indicates that, like the titles themselves, they are not a primary structuring element. In addition, since author names are noted beneath titles of *individual* poems, there is no reason to assume that subsequent poems are works by the same author.<sup>119</sup>

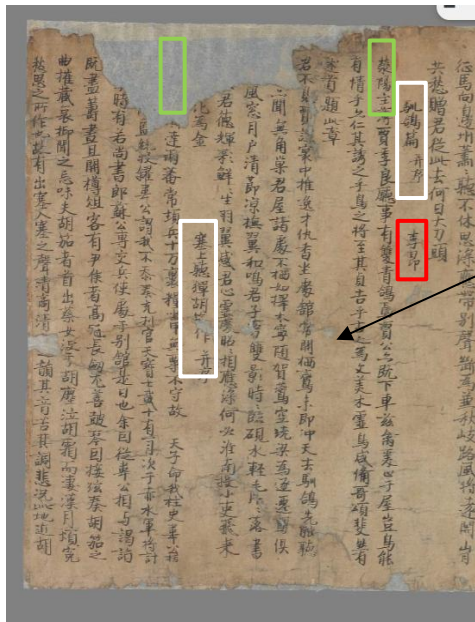


Figure 9: Section view of the end of MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

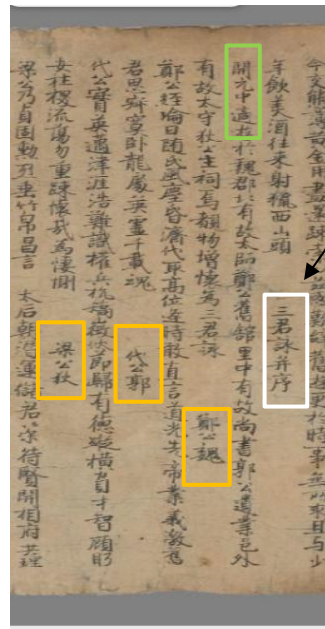


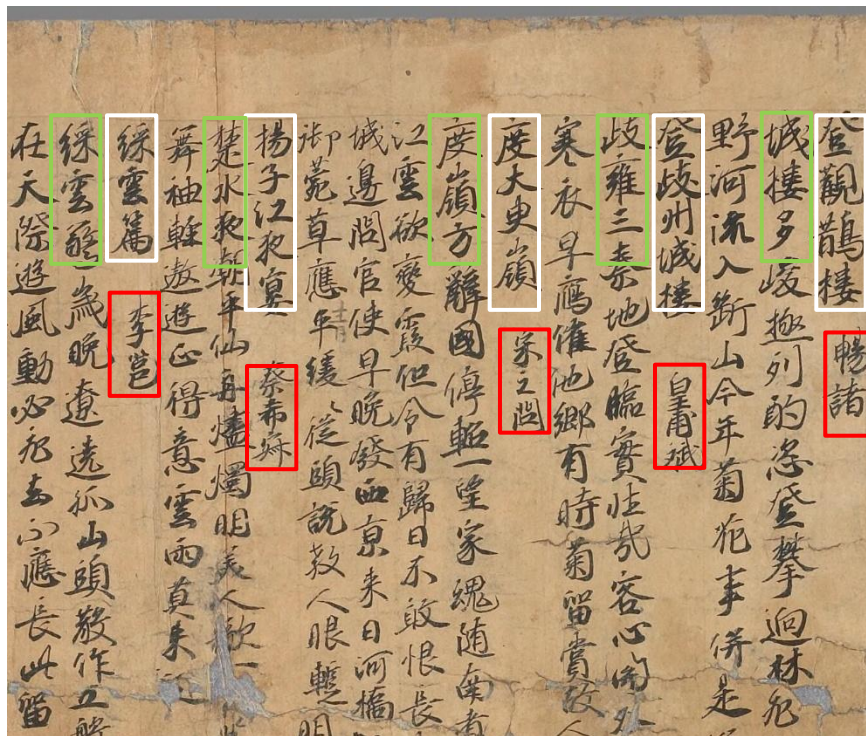
Figure 10: Section view of lines 374 to 382 on MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Given that the scribe would have collated a sequence of selected poems by the same authors, it is more likely for him to first note the respective author's names, followed by an array of poems with individual titles. However, this kind of visual organisation is conspicuously missing or at least severely underrepresented in Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>120</sup> More common are manuscripts which note author names beneath individual poem titles. This results in longer arrays of individual poems

<sup>119</sup> This has already been emphasised not at least by examples from this scroll by Pan 1988, 95–96.

<sup>120</sup> This concerns the manuscripts scrutinized for this dissertation.

with changing author names.<sup>121</sup> Several authors can also be attached to more than one individual poem on the same scroll (Fig. 11).<sup>122</sup>



**Figure 11:** Section with short poems from P.3619, lines 86 to 102. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

A single oblong booklet contains poems with individual titles that are arranged after the name of an author, Li Xiang 李翔 (Fig. 12). At the same time, however, this author's name is still written *beneath* a generic title. While this shift therefore probably indicates an early step towards the convention of collecting a sequence of poems by a single author, it is still not the main criterion for structuring the content. In addition, as already noted in the previous chapter, Dunhuang manuscripts represent a state prior to the collecting of an array of poems from only one single

<sup>121</sup> The scroll shown here is different to the two case studies, which indicate subtle changes in certain conventions for structuring content. For instance, concerning the visual organisation, titles are here now provided at the upper margin of a new line, followed beneath by author names. Concerning content, there are first an array of rhapsodies, followed by and in its second half shorter poems. Nevertheless, new poems still begin at the upper margin of a new line, and not all poems have a title and/or author name.

<sup>122</sup> For instance, the name Liu Xiyi 劉希夷 is noted beneath the titles to poems in lines 24, 41, and 67. The name Song Zhiwen 宋之問 is noted beneath the titles in lines 92 and 133. Gao Shi is mentioned beneath the title in line 126, separately in line 171 without a title and beneath the title in line 181.

author.<sup>123</sup> Thus, even in this incomplete booklet, it can be assumed that additional poems by other authors either followed or were intended to follow.<sup>124</sup>

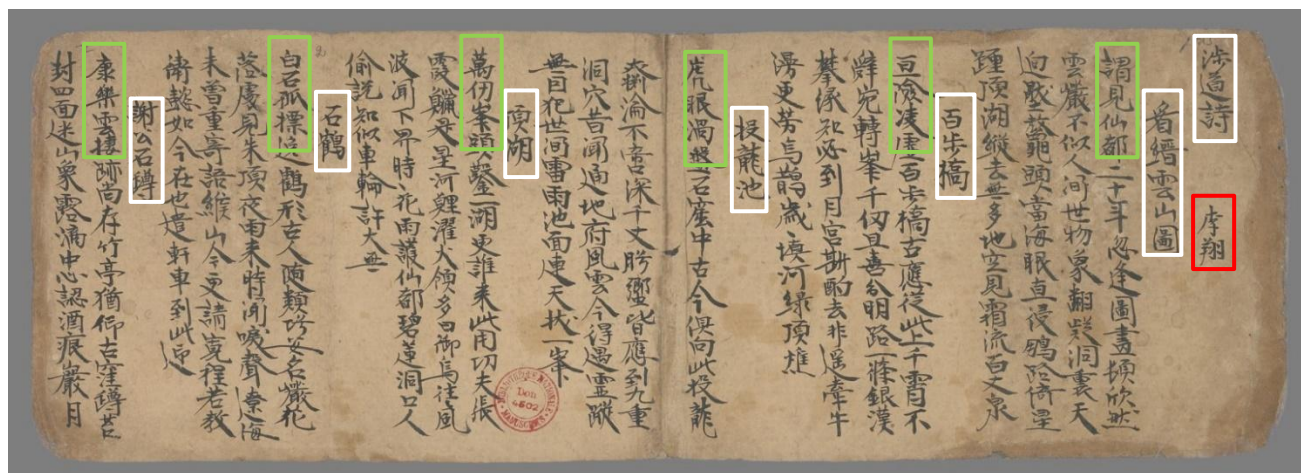


Figure 12: The beginning of booklet P.3688, with the author's name beneath a generic title in the first line. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 3.1.3 Corrections, Additions, and Marks

The texts have been carefully revised, although corrections such as additions and erasures are not immediately apparent.<sup>125</sup> Some characters have been overwritten, which renders them in rather bold ink. There are several different marks on the scroll, which are either added by the scribe himself or by later users.

One such mark takes the form of a ‘、’ and is written in black ink resembling that of the core content. It is therefore likely that the scribe himself left these marks. The mark appears either above titles or at the beginning of poems (blue in Fig. 13). Eight marks are set in the upper margin.<sup>126</sup> A ninth mark does not appear in the upper margin, but directly above the indented title of a poem.<sup>127</sup> This mark is possibly meant as a sign for deletion, since the marked poem is already noted under a slightly different title for a first time 37 lines prior.<sup>128</sup> The second poem may have

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter 1, 31.

<sup>124</sup> A telling case here is also the partially preserved booklet P.2492, which was described as collection of poems by Bai Juyi 白居易 only, before the loose leaf 卅x.3865 in the collection kept in St. Petersburg belonging to this booklet was discovered, which showed that there are further poems by different authors. See Rong 2013, 389–390.

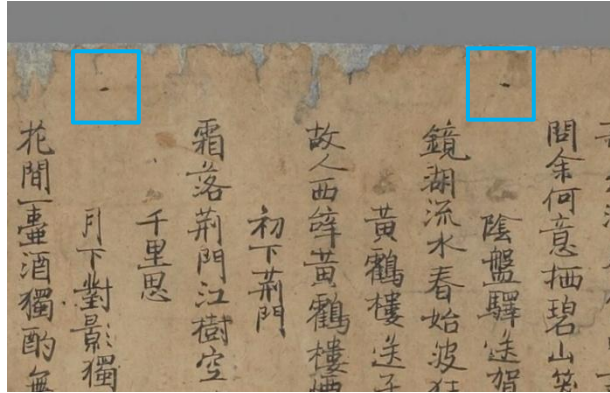
<sup>125</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>126</sup> These are the beginning of the poems in lines 52, 63, 119, 158 and 167, as well as to the titles of poems in lines 90, 126 and 133.

<sup>127</sup> The title of this poem is written in line 352.

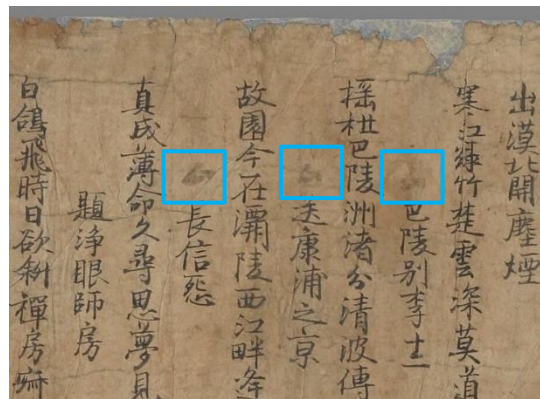
<sup>128</sup> The title to this poem is written in line 315.

been written either because the scribe encountered a slightly different version of the poem from another source or because he could not recall exactly which poems had already been copied.<sup>129</sup>



**Figure 13:** Examples for the mark ‘、’ above the titles to poems no.42 and no. 46. MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

A mark in form of ‘△’ appears at least above twelve titles at various points throughout the scroll (blue in Fig. 14). The faint ink of this mark suggests a later user of the scroll who selected poems according to his personal interests. An indication for underlying principles for selection can be that five of the marked poem titles include the character *song* 送 (‘to see [someone] off’) and three titles mention *bie* 別 (‘to part’).<sup>130</sup>

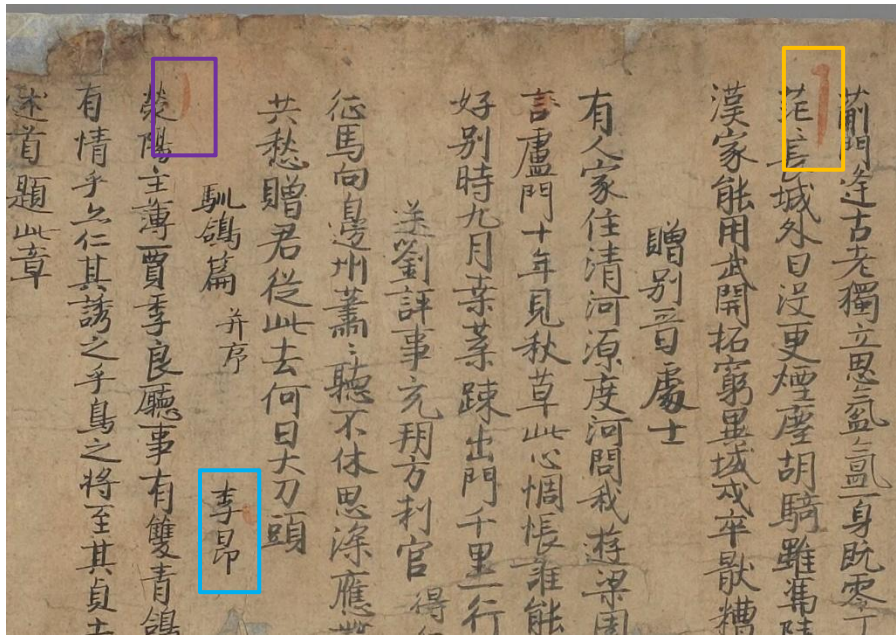


**Figure 14:** Examples for the mark ‘△’ to poems in lines 20, 22 and 24. MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>129</sup> The texts of this duplicate poem have only minor differences. For the text of the poem and the differences of the two poems, see Xu 2000, 83.

<sup>130</sup> The remaining titles are more general and the criteria for selection of poems are here less obvious. So for instance the title *Changxin yuan* 長信怨 (‘Complaints from the Changxin Palace’) in line 24.

The different marks in red ink were likely made by the same later user. Two of these marks suggest that the user took a special interest in authors and what he perceived to be their poems. For once, there are large red dots at the right side highlighting author names (blue in Fig. 15). In addition, there are red hooks set at the upper margin right between titles and the subsequent poems (violet in Fig. 15). Such hooks generally indicate the partitioning of core content into sections.<sup>131</sup> This later user likely understood all poems following a poem with author name beneath a title as a sequence of poems belonging to the same author, until a new author was introduced beneath a poem title. One of these hooks appears between the third and fourth of a consecutive sequence of five poems (orange in Fig. 15).<sup>132</sup> Possibly, the user was aware that the latter two poems were by a different author or at least from a different source and thus separated the poems here into different sections.



**Figure 15:** Examples for the various marks in red ink. Section view of poems lines 429 to 443. MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Lastly, the later user utilised red ink to leave marks in form of ‘不’ (example in green in Fig. 16). Five such marks appear above the first verse lines of new poems.<sup>133</sup> The mark is also set

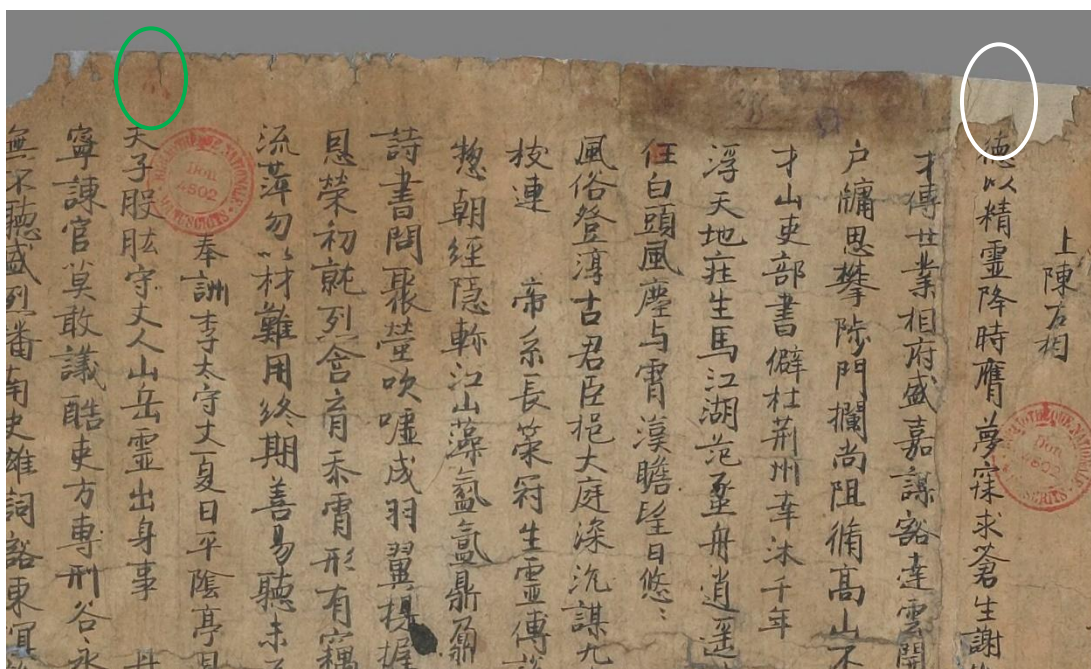
<sup>131</sup> For section marks, see Galambos 2014, 352–354.

<sup>132</sup> Between lines 429 and 430.

<sup>133</sup> The mark is set above poems beginning in lines 250, 276 and 404.

at least above one, possibly two prefaces.<sup>134</sup> In addition to any ink that may have faded, it is likely that further marks are missing due to the torn upper edges of the sheets (white in Fig. 16). Since the mark closely resembles the character *bu* 不 ('not'), it is reasonable to assume that this mark is meant in a negative sense. Perhaps, the user marked texts as 'not to be copied'.<sup>135</sup> Given that the primary concern of this later user is with authors, it is also possible that he added this mark where he found that a poem or a preface was not by an author of the sections he partitioned.

In summary, the visual organisation of the Dunhuang manuscript shows that the scribe did not arrange poems as sequences by single authors. However, the red ink marks left by a later user on the scroll indicate that the shift towards an emphasis on authorship had already begun before the manuscripts were sealed in the Library Cave around the year 1006.



**Figure 16:** Examples for the mark 不 (green) and a possibly missing mark at the torn upper margin of the manuscript. Section view of lines 249 to 265. MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>134</sup> These are the prefaces beginning in line 229, where the mark is clearly discernible and the beginning of the preface in line 441, where the mark appears with a very faint stroke at the torn upper border of the sheet.

<sup>135</sup> The titles vary in their information and are likely not the reason why poems were not selected. Possibly, the marked poems were not selected due to their length, since all marked poems are rather long pieces, ranging between 120 and 340 characters.

### 3.1.4 Core Content

A total of 122 poems are preserved on the scroll. Due to the torn beginning, only the second half of the first surviving poem remains. At the damaged end of the scroll, only the beginning of a preface to a 123rd poem is extant; the poem itself is lost.<sup>136</sup>

Most of the poems are short, with a few longer ones appearing particularly near the torn end of the scroll. This contributes to the overall loose visual organisation, characterised by generous blank spaces. Within this seemingly haphazard arrangement, there are several sequences of poems with the same form or rhyme follow upon each other. These sequences deserve special attention since parallels in form, content, and paracontent may indicate closer relations between poems. It is possible that some were composed or added as follow-ups in the same style. It is also possible that such poems were already arranged in this order on a single *Vorlage*, which was more homogeneous than MS A, even though they may not necessarily have followed directly upon each other in the *Vorlage*.<sup>137</sup>

Various topics throughout the scroll relate to the upper echelons of society. Often, a single poem includes several topics at once. A particularly prominent topic is government service, followed by themes such as the virtuous deeds of (ancient) generals, dukes, officials, and officers. Further topics are youthful strong heroes and successful warfare against the Xiongnu 匈奴 or the Quanrong 犬戎. Several poems depict palace life, featuring members of the nobility such as the emperor and princes. Notably, the Han dynasty Empress Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 (45 BCE – 1 BCE) appears in three poems.<sup>138</sup> As Zhao Feiyan is generally portrayed in a negative light in historical and fictional sources, it is therefore likely that these poems allude to discontent over her rise to imperial favour and resulting poor governance.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Xu 2000, 40 counts 119 poems. BnF 2006 indicates 108 poems. The count here takes into consideration that every new poem begins at the upper margin of a new line, or, less often, is indented with considerable space from a succeeding poem, so for example for the poem beginning in line 179.

<sup>137</sup> For instance, the subsequent poems beginning in lines 244 and 250 each consist of sixteen pentasyllabic couplets. Even though the end rhyme is different, both poems eulogise the virtuous deeds of former emperors and ministers. There are also significant parallels in their titles. The subsequent poem beginning in line 257 differs in the information provided in the title but has the same end rhyme as the previous poem beginning in line 250, with just one pentasyllabic couplet less. This poem as well concerns the emperor and meritorious ministers.

<sup>138</sup> These are poems beginning in lines 123, 166, and 212.

<sup>139</sup> For a study of Zhao Feiyan in historical and literary sources, see Milburn 2021.

A distinctive addendum is the topic of retreat from governmental and military service due to disappointment in rulers. Many poems address reclusion, including references to fishermen and, less often, farmers who plough their own fields. There are also several mentions of Daoist ideas and practices, such as the making of pills of immortality.<sup>140</sup> Penglai 蓬萊, the land of the immortals is also mentioned in two poems.<sup>141</sup> Not at least, the Daoist practices of former emperors are described. In one poem, an emperor residing in Penglai is paid respect to.<sup>142</sup> Another poem describes the Yellow Emperor, who casts a tripod at Mt. Jing, forges cinnabar, rides dragons, and becomes the master of Mt. Tai.<sup>143</sup>

Equally heterogeneous are mentions of places and palaces of contemporary and former dynasties, which reinforce the topics employed in the poems. These include, for example, the capital Chang'an 長安,<sup>144</sup> with two palaces in that city mentioned by name, the Weiyang Palace 未央殿 (built 200 BC) and the Putao Palace 蒲陶宮 of the Han dynasty.<sup>145</sup> In addition, the content of the poems suggests a significant interest in regions westwards of the Central Plains. For instance, the Anxi protectorate 安西 is mentioned, which was first established during the Tang in Xizhou 西州 (present day Xinjiang).<sup>146</sup> South of the protectorate lies the *damo* 大漠 ('Great desert'; 'the Taklamakan'), which is mentioned in two further poems.<sup>147</sup> North of the protectorate is Tianshan 天山, which is mentioned in one poem.<sup>148</sup> A further recurring term is *hu* 胡. During the Tang, this term was used mainly to denote westerners, mainly Iranians but sometimes also Indians, Arabs, or even Romans.<sup>149</sup> In addition, several of the mentioned places are Daoist locations of immortals, such as the Penglai Palace.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See the poem beginning in line 8.

<sup>141</sup> These are the poems beginning in lines 82 and 161.

<sup>142</sup> This is the poem beginning in line 82.

<sup>143</sup> This is the poem beginning in 177.

<sup>144</sup> Chang'an is mentioned with its name in the five poems beginning in lines 55, 158, 167, 327 and 333.

<sup>145</sup> The Weiyang Palace is mentioned in the poem beginning in line 76. The Xianyang Palace is mentioned in the poems beginning in lines 1, 76, 198.

<sup>146</sup> Anxi is mentioned in the first line of poem beginning in line 109, and in the two titles in lines 93 and 108. For the Anxi protectorate, see Rong 2022, 16–17.

<sup>147</sup> These are the poems beginning in lines 231 and 386.

<sup>148</sup> This is the poem beginning in line 139.

<sup>149</sup> Schafer 1963, 4–5.

<sup>150</sup> See the poem beginning in line 82.

The content of the scroll can be described as highly inclusive microcosmos of topics relevant to the upper social classes, such as government, palace life, intrigues, and warfare, especially with and against northwestern regions. Considering the mention of Empress Zhao Feiyan and the reverence towards emperors practising Daoism as well as the frequently occurring topics of retreat from governmental service and reclusion, it can be concluded that the content shows a certain disaffection with the state of the world, and most likely with the contemporary government of the person who selected the poems.

### 3.1.5 Paracontent

As has been pointed out, paracontent is not the primary structuring element on the scroll. For instance, there are only 109 titles for individual poems, with the remaining poems having no titles. At the same time, other texts are highly structured, and have titles, prefaces as well as subtitles. This indicates that the poems were most likely selected from different sources. In the following, the paracontent of these poems will be introduced in more detail.

#### Titles

Titles vary greatly in their depth of detail and information provided. Overall, titles reflect the general tendencies of the content, with frequent references to courtly life and warfare, and occasional mention of hermits or Daoist adepts. A prominent topic is the separation from someone, sometimes in combination with a banquet. There are also titles about inscribing poems somewhere, as well as visiting or mourning someone. Few titles address illness and pleasure travel.

Individuals are mentioned in an intimate manner, which makes it difficult to trace who they were. As has been shown, individuals named in titles are not indications of the poem's author. Instead, they are either recipients or the topics of the respective poems.<sup>151</sup> Most prevalent are surnames, followed by indications of (often minor) governmental positions – this occurs in twenty-six titles.<sup>152</sup> In six titles, individuals are mentioned only by their surname, followed by a reference

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<sup>151</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>152</sup> Included in twelve of these titles, *panguan* 判官 ('Administrative Assistant'), is most frequently mentioned, for instance, in the title *Suiyang chou Chang panguan* 睢陽酬暢判官 ('At Suiyang, Respectfully Offering [This Poem] as Wine Toast to Administrative Assistant Chang') in line 308.

to the order of birth within the family.<sup>153</sup> In four titles, names consist of a surname and personal name.<sup>154</sup> Among these, the poet Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740) figures prominently in one title.<sup>155</sup>

Translating these occasional titles is complicated due to the omission of personal pronouns. Most titles can therefore be read as descriptions of occasions just as much as they can be understood as summaries of topics.<sup>156</sup> At the same time, additions at the end of titles, such as the designation (*zhi*) *zuo* (之)作 (‘The Work of’) suggest a certain distance from the occasion of the person who introduced this title to the poem.<sup>157</sup> Accordingly, the occasional titles cited in this study will be translated to preserve these ambiguities as much as possible.

The following case studies are devoted to a discussion of various circumstances under which titles may have been added to the poems, and under which the poems found their way into this selection of poems from different possible sources. Where feasible, it will also be discussed how such poems were handled later.

As mentioned above, within the core content, there are sequences of poems with similarities in form and content. These close similarities deserve further attention, because they suggest a stronger relation potentially resulting from poems being taken from the same source or modelled in the same manner as a preceding poem. A further indication of this are similarly structured titles, for example the titles *Song zhong ji shi zeng Li taishou* 宋中即事贈李太守 (‘Serving in Song, Presenting This Poem to Governor Li’) and the title to the immediately subsequent poem, *Dongping yu feng zeng Bi taishou* 東平寓奉贈薛太守 (‘Residing in Dongping,

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<sup>153</sup> For example, the title *Da Han Da* 答韓大 (‘Reply to Han [The Eldest]’) in line 54 or the title *Zeng Zhao si* 贈趙四 (‘Presented to Zhao [Four]’) in line 86.

<sup>154</sup> These are the titles in lines 22, 34, 128, and 424.

<sup>155</sup> *Huanghe Lou song Meng Haroan xia Weiyang* 黃鶴樓送孟浩然下維揚 (‘At the Yellow Crane Pavilion, Seeing Off Meng Haoran Descending to Weiyang’) in line 128.

<sup>156</sup> There are some unambiguously generic titles, for instance as *Guyi* 古意 (‘Reminiscence of Old Times’) to the poems beginning in lines 76 and 82, or *Handan shaonian xing* 邯鄲少年行 (‘Ballad on the Handan Youth’) for the poems beginning in lines 14 and 372.

<sup>157</sup> Similar cases are titles ending with *ge* 歌 (‘Song on’), *pian* 篇 (‘Piece on’), and *xing* 行 (‘Ballad on’). Indications referring to the texts are also part of titles on student manuscripts, see Chapter 5.

Meeting [with] and Presenting [This Poem to] Governor Xue’).<sup>158</sup> The titles of two subsequent poems have less commonalities in their structure but show some resemblances concerning their topics.<sup>159</sup> Most importantly, both titles mention the term *daifu* 大夫 (‘Grand Master’). In both cases, a space of about two to three characters is left blank before this term. It is common to add an honorific space before terms that address important persons such as the emperor.<sup>160</sup> However, it is unlikely that such honorific space would have to be added before the term *daifu*. Instead, it can be assumed that the spaces were left blank to supplement a name. This lack of names in the titles proves highly problematic since it raises questions about the underlying intentions. Were there no names in the original titles of a *Vorlage*, or did the scribe intentionally leave names out, possibly to supplement different names for another purpose later? In any case, these blank spaces require caution about taking information provided in titles at face value as historical evidence.

The latter of these two poems is a fitting example. It is recorded in a later collection by Gao Shi, the *Gao Changshi Ji* 高常侍集. Here, a name is added as part of a slightly different title, which reads *Tong Li Yuanwai he Geshu daifu po jiu qu zhi zuo* 同李員外賀哥舒大夫破九曲之作 (‘Work on Congratulating together with Vice-Director Li the Grand Master Geshu for Crushing [the Enemies] at the Nine River Bends’).<sup>161</sup> It is known from historical sources that Gao Shi formerly served General Geshu Han 哥舒翰 (699–757), who appears to be the Geshu referred to in the title.<sup>162</sup> It is thus not too surprising to find this poem attributed to Gao Shi, since this is the last author’s name indicated beneath the title of a preceding poem on MS A.<sup>163</sup> However, contrary to this latter poem, the former poem is not found in the *Gao changshi ji*. Instead, the former poem is only attributed to Gao Shi in modern editions, based on a sequential reading of the poems on MS A according to author.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> The titles are in lines 262 and 275. Yet another example are the titles *Shang Chen zuoxiang* 上陳左相 (‘Handed up [as Present] to the Left Chief Councillor, Chen’) in line 243 and *Shang Li youxiang* 上李右相 (‘Handed up [as Present] to the Right Chief Councillor, Li’) in line 249.

<sup>159</sup> The titles are in lines 285 and 294. For the two poems, see Xu 2000, 81–82.

<sup>160</sup> Honorific spaces are for example found before the term *tianzi* 天子 (‘Emperor’), which occurs in the poems beginning in lines 54, 75, 244, and 316, as well as in the preface beginning in line 449.

<sup>161</sup> Namely in *juan* seven of the *Gao changshi ji* 高常侍集, see Xu 2000, 82, n. 1.

<sup>162</sup> See *Jiu Tang shu*, 3328–3329.

<sup>163</sup> Beneath the title in line 228.

<sup>164</sup> See for instance Sun 2019, 304, n.1.

Thus, both poems, which show indications of a certain relation and do not have any author attributions on MS A, became attached under the same author's name at different times. The possibility cannot be entirely excluded that the latter poem was recorded in an early version of the *Gao changshi ji* as a work by Gao Shi and the scribe of MS A simply did not record the name beneath the title. However, considering the blank space instead of a name in the titles on MS A itself, there may be motives and practises of adding names to titles, which are not yet well understood.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, it can also be assumed that this latter poem became attributed to Gao Shi later, not least because the name of Geshu Han added to the title in the *Gao changshi ji* nicely fits an (imagined) historical setting, which apparently was not so much the case for the former poem.

In addition to these sequences of similar poems, it is possible that several poems from different sources are subsumed under the same title on MS A. This is most likely the case for the five poems collated under the title *Jimen wu shou* 薊門五首 ('At Jimen; Five Poems'), which were separated by a later user. Each of these poems may have appeared in distinct original sources with the same title. It is also possible the scribe himself introduced this title, as a description for the topic of all five poems. Similar circumstances may be assumed for titles which indicate number counts for poems, such as *er shou* 二首 ('two poems'), or *wu shou* 五首 ('five poems').<sup>166</sup>

A single title stands out due to several reasons.<sup>167</sup> For one, compared to all other titles on the scroll, this unique title is remarkably long with a wealth of detail concerning the circumstances of poetic production. In addition, the mentioned person is referred to in a slightly different manner than is observed in other titles of the scroll. Most notably, this is the only title in which a personal pronoun is used, namely *yu* 余 ('I'). The title goes: *Lu Zhongdu you xiao li feng qi lang yi dou jiu Shuang yu zeng yu yu ni lu yin kuaiyu yin jiu liu shi er qu* 魯中都有小吏逢七朗以斗酒雙魚贈余於逆旅因鱸魚飲酒留詩而去 ('In Zhongdu Prefecture of Lu, There is the Minor Official Pang

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<sup>165</sup> Intriguingly, it is not only titles, but also in colophons in which blank spaces occur. For instance, there is blank space instead of a date in the colophon on Φ256 kept in St. Petersburg.

<sup>166</sup> See the titles in lines 169, 176, 182, and 426.

<sup>167</sup> This is the title in line 96.

Qilang Who Bestowed a Bottle of Wine and a Pair of Fish upon Me at the Inn, Because of Which I Leave a Poem about Minced Fish and Drinking Wine and Depart’).

Most likely, this title and the respective poem were ‘left as a token of gratitude’ as an inscription on the very wall of the mentioned inn, from where it possibly became copied into personal collections and began to circulate.<sup>168</sup> The scribe of MS A likewise either copied it directly from this wall or from an already circulating manuscript containing this poem.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, the unique title has striking similarities to the four prefaces on MS A, especially since it is the prefaces, not the other titles, which include first person singular pronouns, such as *wo* 我 and *yu* 余. Thus, this unique title and the prefaces on MS A can be considered as the same basic component, which function as ‘introductory texts’. Contrary to one case where such an introductory text turned into a unique title, it is therefore more often the case that these introductory texts turned into prefaces, and additional layers of titles and subtitles were introduced.

### Author Names

I will list author names that appear on MS A only for the respective single poems beneath which titles they appear. This approach clears conflicting attribution of poems without author names beneath their titles on MS A compared to different authors in other sources.<sup>170</sup> It is furthermore intended as a first step towards collecting only those poems which are evidently attributed to an author on Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>171</sup>

Six authors from the Tang dynasty are recorded, which appear to have been arranged chronologically.<sup>172</sup> First, Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698–757) is mentioned beneath the title in line 13. Next, Qiu Wei 丘為 (694–789?) is named beneath the title in line 54. The name of Tao Han 陶翰 (dated to the Tang Dynasty) is written beneath the title in line 75. Li Bai 李白 (701–762) is

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<sup>168</sup> For thoughts on circulation of poems inscribed on walls, see Dudbridge 2018.

<sup>169</sup> Further direction of research here can be comparison to the texts preceding poems inscribed in Mogao Cave walls, for instance inscriptions of different lengths and detail introduced in Bregler 2023.

<sup>170</sup> For an overview on the different attributions of poems on MS A, see Xu 2000, 41–98, especially the footnotes.

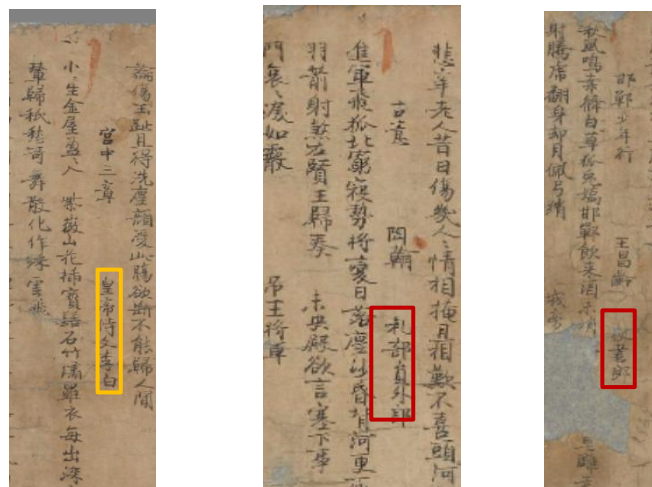
<sup>171</sup> This approach serves as a starting point for critical considerations of which poems can be reliably attributed to certain authors. It is possible that author names may also have been omitted by scribes of Dunhuang manuscripts for various reasons.

<sup>172</sup> This does not automatically imply that the subsequent poems are to be attributed to previously named authors or a planned collection for that matter. Instead, it is important to notice that all named authors are contemporaries of each other.

named shortly afterwards, beneath the title in line 118. Gao Shi's 高適 (704?–765) name appears beneath the title in line 228. Finally, the last name written beneath the title in line 440 is Li Ang 李昂, possibly referring to the Li Ang who lived from 809 to 840.

Among these six authors, Qiu Wei, Gao Shi, and Li Ang are mentioned with their names only. For two authors, standard official titles are provided after some space of about two characters beneath their names. These are Wang Changling, whose position is given as *jiaoshu lang* 校書郎 ('Editor') and Tao Han, whose position is indicated as *libu yuanwai lang* 禮部員外郎 ('Vice Director of the Ministry of Rites').<sup>173</sup> In contrast, additional information is given immediately before Li Bai's name, without any blank space, identifying him as *Huangdi shiwen* 皇帝侍文李白 ('The Emperor's Literary Attendant, Li Bai').<sup>174</sup>

It is possible that the different placement of the information before the author's name is a result of the poems being copied from different sources with distinct arrangement of paracontent. It is also perceivable that the placement indicates differences in the nature of the position held by the author.<sup>175</sup> For example, there exist various Dunhuang manuscripts containing literary texts where information about authors serving in a specific region is written before their names.<sup>176</sup>



**Figure 17:** Information before and after author names on MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>173</sup> For *jiaoshulang*, see Hucker 1985, 142. For *libu*, see Hucker 1985, 306–207 and for *yuanwai lang*, Hucker 1985, 597.

<sup>174</sup> *Huangdi shiwen* is not recorded in Hucker 1985. Scholars such as Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮 stressed the importance of this formerly unknown position, which describes the identity of Li Bai at that time most accurately, see Xu 2000, 2.

<sup>175</sup> Hu & Tao 2018, 128 argue that the position *Huangdi shi wen* appears on the same manuscript with the standard official titles noted for Wang Changling and Tao Han, and therefore also must be a standard official title.

<sup>176</sup> See for instance the student manuscripts discussed in Chapter 5.

## Prefaces

There are four prefaces.<sup>177</sup> The first preface is not marked as such, since the title does not have the additional indication *bing xu* 並序 (‘with preface’).<sup>178</sup> This indication appears only in the other titles. The dates provided in the first, second and fourth preface are roughly chronological. The first preface indicates the twentieth year of the Kaiyuan era, which is the year 732 CE. The second preface only mentions *Kaiyuan zhong* 開元中 (‘During the Kaiyuan era’), which lasted from 713 CE to 741 CE. The fourth preface indicates the seventh year of the subsequent Tianbao 天寶 era, which corresponds to the year 748 CE. Like the chronological arrangement of authors mentioned beneath individual poem titles, the timeframe also appears rather narrow, spanning only over two eras.

The prefaces show differences in structure and content, but overall concern courtly matters as well as providing information on the reasons why the respective poems are made. Thus, as stated above, the prefaces closely resemble the unique occasional title which most likely was an inscription on the wall of an inn.

For two prefaces, the authors Gao Shi and Li Ang are named beneath titles.<sup>179</sup> The preface where Gao Shi is named beneath the title is marked by the later reader with the mark 不 in red ink. Since the main interest of this later user are authors, this mark could indicate that the later user believed that this preface was not by Gao Shi 高適.<sup>180</sup>

The three poems with the title *San jun yong bing xu* 三君詠并序 (‘Celebration of the Three Gentlemen; With Preface’) are often equally attributed to Gao Shi, whose name however does not appear beneath the title.<sup>181</sup> Here, the first sentence of the preface goes: *Kaiyuan zhong Shi you yu Wei* 開元中適遊於魏 (‘During the Kaiyuan era, [Gao] Shi travelled in Wei’).<sup>182</sup> Therefore, it is most likely that Gao Shi is subject of the preface. However, he is named in third person, which

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<sup>177</sup> See the titles in lines 228, 375, 440, and 448.

<sup>178</sup> The title in line 228.

<sup>179</sup> Namely, Gao Shi beneath the title in line 228, and Li Ang beneath the title in line 440.

<sup>180</sup> Usually, names of authors to prefaces can be expected to appear behind the preface, see for example the case of Liu Shang introduced for the preface of MS B below.

<sup>181</sup> The title is written in line 375. The attribution is for instance recorded in *juan* three of the *Gao Changshi ji* 高常侍集, see Xu 2000, 90, n.1. For a discussion of the poems on the Dunhuang manuscripts, see also McMullen 2013, 134.

<sup>182</sup> For the entire preface, see Xu 2000, 89.

stands in stark contrast to all other prefaces on MS A, which either have either no personal pronouns at all or the characters *wo* 我 and *yu* 余 as self-references for ‘I’.<sup>183</sup>

This usage thus follows the convention observable in historical sources such as the dynastic histories. Once a person has been introduced with full name, they are referred to by their personal name in any further instance. This is for instance the case for Gao Shi’s biography in the *Jiu Tangshu*, who is referred to as Shi 適 after information on his full name is given at the beginning.<sup>184</sup> However, this does not automatically mean that all subsequent poems with Gao Shi’s name beneath the title are all without any doubt also poems by him. Instead, there is possibly more than one poem belonging to the same author after a poem with his name, but different poems may have been introduced in between, just like how any prose text could be used to introduce different thoughts or events. If at all, it does indicate that this one poem with a preface has stronger links to the person of Gao Shi. However, the reasons and workings behind the genesis of this preface remain obscure. The careful visual organisation and the indication *bing xu* 並序 (‘with preface’) suggest that this text already reached a state where an introductory prose text was regarded as an integral part. Beyond this, any further statement is difficult. It is unclear who made this preface to form an integral part of the text, at what point and for what reasons. It is also unclear what this introductory prose text may have been prior to becoming a prose text. Most importantly, it is unclear who wrote it and for what reasons. Thus, some doubts always remain whether such information adheres to factual history or is hearsay according to which someone ascribed a poem to a famous poet.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> The first and second preface have no personal pronouns at all, while the fourth preface has two of them, *wo* and *yu*.

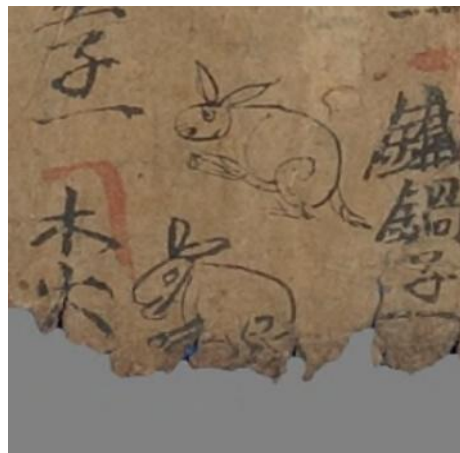
<sup>184</sup> *Jiu Tang shu* 143, 4679.

<sup>185</sup> Some insight into the manifold possibilities for genesis of a preface can for instance be gained from on P.3862, which contains a poem titled *Yan ge xing*. Beneath this title, which does not have the indication *bing xu* follows in two half-sized lines a short comment mentioning Gao Shi by his personal name. The poem is also recorded in the *Heyue yingling ji* 河岳英靈集 completed in 753. The two extant editions, now held at the National Library of China, date respectively to the late Ming–early Qing period and to the late Qing dynasty and are both based on the same text from a Song edition, see Li & Fu 1992, 105–106. Here, the poem title has the indication *bing xu* and the short comment is not written beneath the title but is a self-contained preface.

### 3.1.6 Further Content

The verso of the nearly six-meter-long scroll is almost completely blank. This can indicate the likely high status of this scroll, or that it was kept in a place where not many people had access to it.

Only three texts are preserved, written in the same direction as the texts in the recto. The first two texts are unrelated to content on the recto. First, there are thirty-five lines listing gifts received by the Liantai monastery 蓮臺寺.<sup>186</sup> Entries are marked by red hooks at the beginning, likely again functioning as section markers. On the lower part at the end of this text, there are also sketches of two rabbits.<sup>187</sup> The upper rabbit appears to be a comparatively good sketch with fine brush strokes, while the rabbit below in thicker and more unpractised strokes and rather deformed head is possibly an imitation by a person learning to draw (Fig. 18).<sup>188</sup> Second, there is an unfinished note in very faint ink, in which wheat is mentioned.<sup>189</sup> Compared to this, the third text relates to content on the recto, more specifically, the first eight characters of the poem beginning in line 257. This quote appears on the same sheet, not far from the place where the poem is written on the recto. It is possible that a later reader wrote this on the rolled-up verso of the scroll.<sup>190</sup>



**Figure 18:** Section of content on the verso of MS A. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

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<sup>186</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>187</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>188</sup> For another example of a rather clumsy rabbit sketch, see for instance Pelliot tibétain 1147.

<sup>189</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>190</sup> For the handling of scrolls to add comments on the verso, see Bregler 2024.

## **3.2 Manuscript B (MS B)**

The case study presented above serves to introduce important patterns observable in Dunhuang manuscripts with poetry selections. Building on this foundation, the following case study of Manuscript B (hereafter: MS B) explores the shared features and differences among manuscripts with poetry selections in greater depth. This aims to facilitate a more comprehensive discussion of the creation and use of poetry selections in the conclusion to this chapter.

### **3.2.1 Codicology**

The scroll measures 26 cm x 315.5 cm and consists of nine sheets.<sup>191</sup> First, there is a cover sheet, which is 15.5 cm long. This sheet is folded at the beginning and thus forms a kind of small solid loop with a width between 8 mm and 1 cm into which a stick could have been inserted. The cover was likely attached to prevent further damage to the mutilated second sheet, on which the content begins. This suggests that other than the damage to the lower half of the second sheet, the scroll is complete at the beginning. The following seven sheets measure 38 cm. The last sheet measures only 34 cm and is torn.<sup>192</sup> With the exception of the cover sheet, the remaining sheets are pasted regularly, which suggests that they were assembled as one production unit.

### **3.2.2 Visual Organisation**

On the first sheet, there is a date in faint ink by a different hand. The ruling on this cover does not align with that of the second sheet. The following descriptions therefore only concern the visual organisation of the core content from the second sheet onwards.

The content is written by a confident and fluent hand, and characters generally are of same size. The content is written with great care. For instance, there are no major and easily perceivable corrections or deletions. Including the first two lines without text at the beginning of the second sheet, there are 173 lines. Per single sheet, there are on average twenty-two lines. The texts are aligned in the middle of each line and per line there are about twenty-two characters, which makes the number of characters per line relatively consistent.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> This scroll has the signature P.3812.

<sup>192</sup> BnF 2006. The scroll is also treated in Bregler 2024.

<sup>193</sup> BnF 2006.

The sheets are ruled consistently. However, the scribe overlooked the boundaries of the horizontal ruling at the upper and lower margins, writing one or two characters above and below the ruling in the blank margins. There are indications that the sheets were ruled first, possibly for a different usage, before the scribe wrote the content.<sup>194</sup> First, the characters exceeding the horizontal ruling could have easily been included in a ruling added later, while still creating sufficiently large margins. In addition, there would have been not much necessity to draw the two blank ruling lines preceding the content (Fig. 19)<sup>195</sup> This suggests that the scribe deliberately disregarded the existing ruling, most likely for aesthetic reasons.

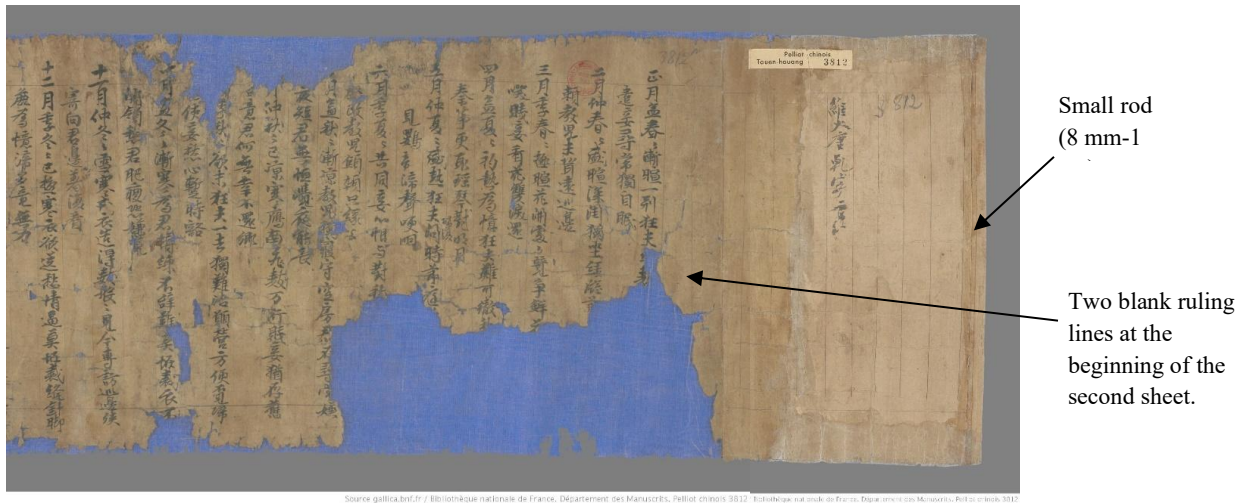


Figure 19: Beginning of MS B. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The visual organisation is the same as on MS A: content and paracontent is set apart from each other by blank spaces of approximately three to four characters. New poems begin at the upper margin of a line. Twelve poems at the beginning of the scroll do not have a title. It is unlikely that these poems had a head title, since there would have been enough space in the first two blank

<sup>194</sup> For reuse of sheets from empty Buddhist or Daoist scrolls, see Galambos 2020a, 42–44. Likewise, the scribe of MS B perhaps did not assemble and rule these sheets by himself but has been provided with or acquired these sheets somewhere else.

<sup>195</sup> An example is the sequence of four literary texts on the verso of P.3716. Here, at least part of the ruling most likely was added later since there is no horizontal ruling for the last five lines. At beginning and end of these literary texts, there is only horizontal ruling of the upper and lower margins, with no vertical ruling of the individual lines.

lines to add a title.<sup>196</sup> Beneath five titles, author names are indicated.<sup>197</sup> Like on MS A, there is only one instance where the text of a poem begins beneath a title (blue in Fig. 20).<sup>198</sup> This might be of relevance. It could, for example, indicate a kind of separation from the previous twelve poems without a title and mark the beginning of a new section.<sup>199</sup>

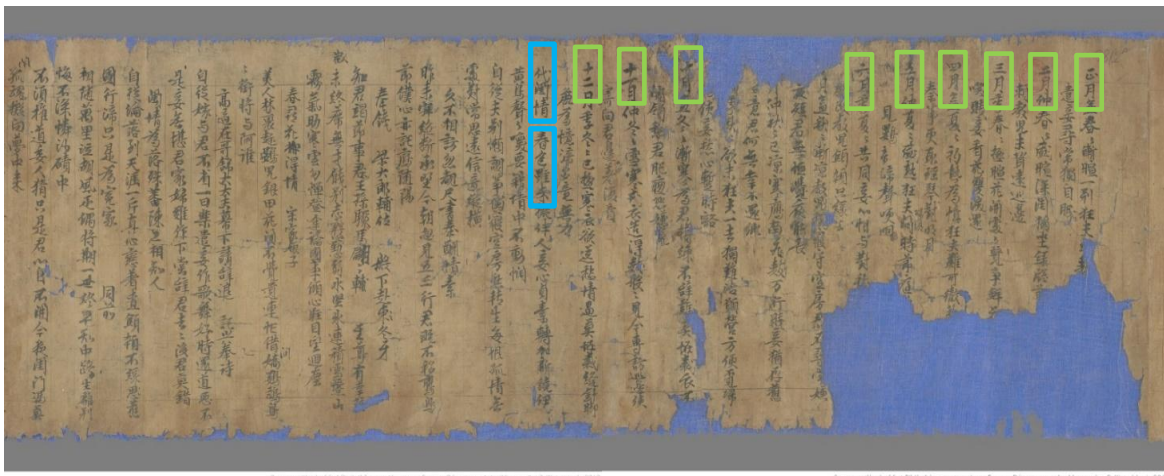


Figure 20: Section view of MS B, lines 1 to 50. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

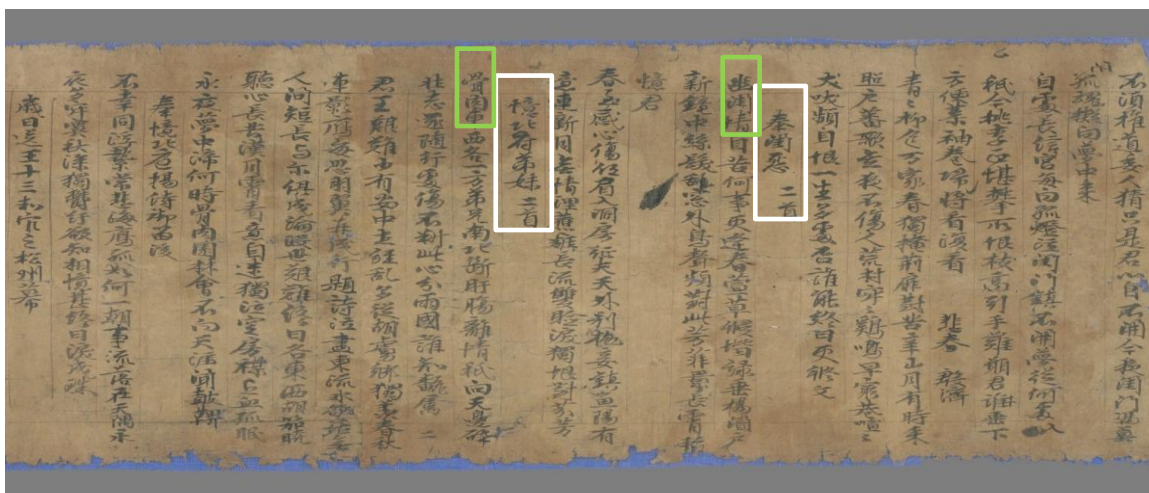
If the text of one poem ends at the bottom of a line, the title of the subsequent poem is written in the next line. The rest of this line is then left blank, and the poems begin, slightly higher than titles, in a new line (Fig. 21).

<sup>196</sup> It is possible that some information is missing since the manuscript is torn on the lower half. This would however be unusual, since it can be expected that titles to beginning texts are set higher, with approximately two to three characters blank space to the upper margin.

<sup>197</sup> These are beneath the titles in lines 38, 53, 99, 109, and 172.

<sup>198</sup> See line 27.

<sup>199</sup> This awaits confirmation based on comparison with other Dunhuang manuscripts.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Peilliot chinois 3812

Figure 21: Section view of MS B, lines 49 to 74. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Like on MS A, if there is enough blank space, the title to a following poem is written beneath the end of the previous in the same line. It is therefore not always clear whether something is a title or a subtitle — if such a distinction existed at all.

Subtitles are part of the cycle of eighteen poems at the end of the scroll. This text appears in the same manner with subtitles on two further Dunhuang manuscripts, demonstrating that they were already an integral part of the text at the time the scribe copied them onto MS B. This is also the only text on the scroll with a preface, beginning on line 114. The name Liu Shang 劉商 (received the *jinsi* 進士 degree during the Dali era, 766–780) appears after the preface, in line 117.<sup>200</sup> This visual organisation suggests that Liu Shang is the author of the preface.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Liu Shang is often regarded as author of this poem cycle, see for instance Frankel 1983, 152. This may simply be because Liu Shang’s name appears beneath the title to the poem cycle as recorded in scroll fifty-nine of the later *Yuefu Shiji* 樂府詩集 (‘Collection of Music Bureau Ballads’) by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (fl. 1084).

<sup>201</sup> On MS B, the name Liu Shang appears to be part of the first subtitle. This likely occurred because the text of the preceding preface ends at the very bottom of the previous line, thus leaving no space to record the name. Possibly, the lack of space is also the reason why no further information is provided concerning Liu Shang’s position. Compared to MS B, which only states the name, the two further Dunhuang manuscripts, P.2555 and P.2845, containing this poem cycle provide further details. Here, Liu Shang is introduced as *cheng yilang qian Luzhou Hefei xianling* 劉商承議郎前廬州合肥縣令 劉商 (‘The Gentleman for Discussion and Former District Magistrate of Luzhou, Hefei Liu Shang’).

### 3.2.3 Marks, Corrections, and Additions

The mark △ in black ink appears only once, at the upper margin of line 52. The thus marked poem without title consists of two stanzas with seven syllables per line.

Corrections and additions are done in black ink. They are done in such a way that they do not disrupt the neat visual organisation of the content. There are few deletions of characters. Moreover, there are several additions of characters at the right side of lines and sometimes in the upper margins.

### 3.2.4 Core Content

The scroll contains sixty poems in total.<sup>202</sup> Like on MS A, most poems are short, with several longer pieces interspersed in between. The poems are apparently not arranged according to any specific criteria. However, certain topics recur frequently.

The poems address service in military and government, which resembles the topics on MS A. Several poems describe journeys of following someone to and ending up at the foreign and remote regions as well as the hardships of the life at borders and foreign regions. Some poems also address a return to a person's hometown. Like on MS A, the *hu* are a prominent topic, which is employed in many poems throughout the scroll. The last poem, titled *Gaoxing ge* 高興歌 ('Song of Happiness') in line 172 is only recorded with its beginning lines at the torn end of the scroll. Its content stands in contrast to the rather sorrowful topics of the preceding texts. The last sheet is torn and only some verse lines of the poem are preserved after the title. It is therefore unclear whether further poems followed afterwards.

Compared to MS A, the perspectives of females are much more frequently depicted. For instance, the first text at the beginning of the scroll is a cycle of twelve poems without titles. Each poem begins with a verse line describing the climate of the respective month. The subsequent verse lines concern the activities of a married couple within each month. The first four poems narrate from the perspective of the wife the parting from her husband who goes to the border in military service, her subsequent solitude and longing for her husband as well as her duties in the household, such as educating her (male) children. This is interrupted by the return of the husband for a short

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<sup>202</sup> Like for MS A, this count considers the layout of the scroll, where a new poem begins at the upper margin of a new line or with considerable blank space between a previous text or is indicated as several poems in the titles. BnF 2006 records twenty-five poems. Xu 2000, 378 indicates sixty-two poems.

period in the fifth month.<sup>203</sup> The subsequent poems focus on the sentiments and duties of the lonely wife in the ever-colder seasons. For example, in the poem recounting the events in the eleventh month, she fears that her husband is freezing at the border in winter, therefore she sends clothes for him to wear.<sup>204</sup> In addition, the penultimate text recorded on the torn scroll consist of a cycle of eighteen poems.<sup>205</sup> The cycle is titled *Hujia ci shi ba pai* 胡笳詞十八拍 (‘Lyrics to the *Hu* Flute in Eighteen Stanzas’).<sup>206</sup> The poems narrate in first person the experiences of Cai Yan 蔡琰 (178–?), the daughter of Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192). Cai Yan was abducted in a period of civil war and was brought to the Southern Xiongnu, where she lived for twelve years, before she could return to her homeland.<sup>207</sup>

### 3.2.5 Shared Texts

Verse lines from several poems in MS B can be found in other poems on sources such as other Dunhuang manuscripts and even on Changsha kiln ceramics. The evidence shows that variation in the verse lines depends, at least in part, on the overall context and environment in which a poem appears. These differences are therefore a product of the distinct purposes served by manuscripts and Changsha kiln pottery. The following three examples from MS B illustrate this in greater detail.

The first example is the cycle of twelve poems without titles at the beginning of the scroll. The opening verse lines describing the climate of the respective months can be found on various further Dunhuang manuscripts, which suggests that they constitute a kind of *Urtext*. For instance, they closely resemble the beginning verse lines of a poem cycle on the verso of Dunhuang scroll S.2608.<sup>208</sup> In addition, the subsequent verse lines of each poem employ similar topics to the poems on MS B. Five subsequent verse lines have wording close to that on MS B. Often, there is only one variant in the verse line, or two characters are reversed. Three of the verse lines appear in both texts in the same place. Two further verse lines appear in different poems but their position within a poem remains the same. The second and fourth poems on S.2608 include extra verse lines made

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<sup>203</sup> This follows the reading of the line as transcribed in Xu 2000, 380.

<sup>204</sup> For the twelve poems, see Xu 2000, 379–381.

<sup>205</sup> The title to this cycle is written in line 113.

<sup>206</sup> The translation of the title is oriented on Frankel 1983, 134.

<sup>207</sup> Frankel 1983, 133–134 and 152, n.50.

<sup>208</sup> For a description of manuscript S.2608, see Giles 1957, 269. For an edition of the text, see Ren 1987, 1254–1263.

up solely of the character 也 (ye) repeated four times, giving the effect of an oral exclamation.<sup>209</sup> Interestingly, verse lines in the poem cycle of S.2608, of which most are not found on MS B, have a remarkably repetitive character.<sup>210</sup>

Considering the further content on S.2608, which suggests that this manuscript was produced in an educational setting, it can be assumed that this poem cycle served as a kind of memory aid, and likely is related to epistolary models.<sup>211</sup> The opening verse lines of the poem cycles on MS B and S.2608 appear in slightly varying versions on eight further Dunhuang manuscripts. Most of these manuscripts can likewise be situated in educational settings.<sup>212</sup> Here as well, it is highly likely that these opening verse lines were intended to be used as epistolary models.<sup>213</sup> Contrary to the highly constructed cycle on MS B, which is most likely intended for literary appreciation, the poem cycle on S.2608 and the varying opening verse lines on the eight further Dunhuang manuscripts are produced and used within educational settings as epistolary models.<sup>214</sup>

The second example concerns the poem beginning in line 35 on MS B. A similar version is noted as the fifth poem on the verso of Dunhuang manuscript P.3676 (hereafter: P.3676v). The two poems, with similar verse lines underlined and notable differences in wording highlighted in red are as follows:<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> See Ren 1987, 1257–1258.

<sup>210</sup> For example, the verse line 賤妾思君腸欲斷 (‘I am missing you, my heart is about to break’) appears as third verse line in the poems concerning the third and the seventh months. 忽憶貞君無時節 (‘The sudden remembrances about you have no season’) is given as second verse line of the poems concerning the fourth and the ninth months.

<sup>211</sup> In addition, after the cycle follows a text titled *Guxian ji* 古賢集, which is known to have been copied as a primer by students. In addition, there is a quatrain following the colophon, which is known to have been often copied by students, Xu 2000, 785. For an introduction to manuscripts containing the *Guxian ji*, see Zheng & Zhu 2002, 253–263.

<sup>212</sup> These are the manuscripts with the signatures P.2738 V, P.3705 V, P.2633 V, 羽 663R, P.4994 V, S.10275 and 羽 712. The manuscripts are collated and examined by Ren 2019, 47–57.

<sup>213</sup> Ren 1987, 1255–1256 already remarked this relation, indicating the three manuscripts P.4994, P.2633 and S.6537.

<sup>214</sup> Similar openings are found in further epistolary models, which are also preserved on Dunhuang student manuscripts. For example the *Pengyou shuyi* 朋友書儀 of the pre-Tang, the 書儀 of the time of Wu Zetian on P.3900, the 大唐新定吉凶書儀 by Zheng Yuqing 鄭餘慶, the 新集吉凶書儀 by Zhang Ao 張敖 and the 新集書儀 by an unknown author from the Five Dynasties, see Ren 2019, 50–51.

<sup>215</sup> Interestingly, it is the poem on the verso P.3676 which has the same rhyme throughout the entire poem, whereas the rhyme pattern on MS B is not immediately obvious.

## MS B

奉餞梁大郎輔佐殿下赴冬牙

1 知君竭節事王孫	swon	I know that you faithfully serve the prince's descendants
2 驟馬翩翩輔至尊	tswon	You let the horse gallop elegantly to assist His Highness
3 有幸 <sup>216</sup> 歡未終席	zjek	It is fortunate [...] happiness, the banquet has not yet ended
4 無才餞別志慇懃	gj+n	I bid you farewell with most sincere heart
5 弱水堅冰連積雪	swjet	The Weak River is frozen, upon which snow continuously piles up
6 燕山霧氣助寒雲	hjun	The fog on <b>Mt. Yan</b> adds to the darkness of the cold clouds
7 勿憚登途論國事	dzriH	Do not fear the journey, to discuss matters of the state
8 傾心駐目望迴塵	drin	I gaze with my whole heart to see the dust indicating your return

## P.3676v

奉餞赴東衙謹上

1 眾僧合邑敬如仙		All Buddhist monks and people of our county respect you like a saint
2 法海通流遍大千 x		The Dharma Sea flows through all worlds
3 奉謁清顏未終始		Unfortunately, my formal visits to you could not continue
4 無才握手淚涓涓 x		I shake your hand under running tears
5 孤雁南飛悲切切		A solitary goose flies south while sadness overflows
6 龍堆霧氣助秋煙 x		The fog in the <b>Dragon Mound</b> adds to the autumn smoke
7 前程 <sup>217</sup> 儻若騰榮日		On your road ahead, if the day of victory and honour comes
8 專心駐目望迴鞭 x		I gaze in full concentration to see the whip indicating your return

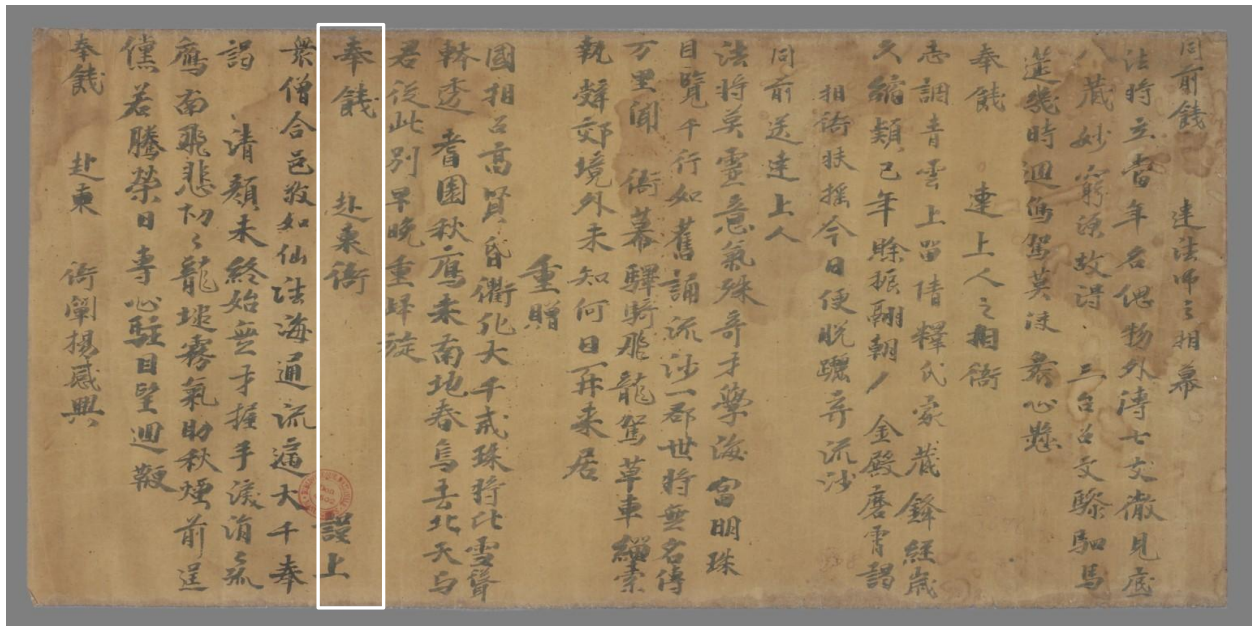
The two poems resemble each other in their overall structure and in meaning, which is essentially a wish for the early return of a person who is about to depart. Both poems include references to different persons, animals, and landscapes. The poem on MS B describes travel to remote and hostile foreign regions in service of the state, and more specifically appears to address a person of high rank, as suggested by the first and second verse lines. The third verse line introduces a landscape with firm ice and snow. The sixth verse line includes a mention of Mt. Yan. Thus, the topics employed in the poem fit remarkably well the reoccurring topics in the content on MS B. Contrary to this, the poem on P.3676v addresses the person who is about to depart as a saint praised by all Buddhist monks and the people. The Buddhist topic is continued in the second verse

<sup>216</sup> The paper of the scroll is torn here; the character is illegible.

<sup>217</sup> The manuscript here has *chen* 遲. I follow Xu 2000, 322.

line, in which the Dharma Sea penetrating all worlds is mentioned. Notably, instead of Mt. Yan, the sixth verse line mentions *Longdui* 龍堆 (‘Dragon Mound’), which refers to *Bai longdui* 白龍堆, the name of a desert located eastward of Xinjiang and southwards of Mt. Tian.<sup>218</sup> These topics thus fit neatly with the topics employed in the four other poems on P.3676v, which all address the separation from the Dharma master.<sup>219</sup>

Compared to MS B, P.3676v has several notable differences as a manuscript. The poems address the topic of separation and often wish for someone to return early in the last couplets. In addition, the content has a very distinct visual organisation. Poems as well as titles are invariably written on separate lines. There are indications that the contents are incomplete. The phrase *tong qian* 同前 (‘same as previous’) included in the first title suggests that there must have been at least one preceding poem.<sup>220</sup> At the end of the manuscript, there is a sixth title, but no poem. However, there are no remaining strokes from possibly preceding and following texts at the beginning and at the end of the sheet. Therefore, it remains unclear whether there originally were further previous and subsequent sheets with content (Fig. 22).



**Figure 22:** Verso of P.3676, with the title to the fifth poem sharing lines to the poem on MS B highlighted in white. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>218</sup> For *Longdui* and *Bai Longdui*, see Wu, Huang & Liu 1990, 2165 and 3609.

<sup>219</sup> For the poems, see Xu 2000, 320–322.

<sup>220</sup> See also Xu 2000, 321, n.1

The homogeneity of the titles likewise suggests that the poems were produced for the same purpose, namely upon a farewell feast for a certain Dharma Master Da 達.<sup>221</sup> The titles are as follows:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1. 同前餞達法師之相幕 | Same as Previous; A Feast for Dharma Master Da Who Goes to the Minister's Tent-Office   |
| 2. 奉餞達上人之相衙  | Bestowing on the Feast for the Venerable Da Going to the Minister's Office              |
| 3. 同前送達上人    | Same as Previous, Sending off the Venerable Da  |
| 4. 重贈        | Presenting Again  |
| 5. 奉餞卦東衙謹上   | Bestowed on the Feasting; Going to the East Office; Respectfully Offered                |
| 6. 奉餞赴東衙闡揚感興 | Bestowed on the Feasting; Going to the East Office; Expounding and Reacting to Stimulus |

The variants which result from changed requirements of the poem within the distinct content on the two different manuscripts also explain the slightly different titles. The title for the poem on MS B nicely portrays topics such as the assistance to the noble house upon a journey to a *dongya* 冬牙 ('Winter Headquarter'). Compared to this, the title to the poem on P.3676 speaks of a journey to *dongya* 東衙 ('East Office').

In general, it would be impossible to determine which of the poems is a variation of the other, especially since it could also be possible that both are a variation of yet another poem. However, the title on MS B is peculiar insofar as that the character *dong* 東 ('east') is written directly in front of the characters *dong* 冬 ('winter'), being marked as a deletion by three black dots at its right side (Fig. 23).<sup>222</sup> Both, the character *dong* 東 and *dong* 冬 are thus written in the line proper. This suggests that the scribe worked with the poem on P.3676v, since here, the character *dong* 東 ('east') features directly in the title. The alternation of the character into *dong* 冬 ('winter') directly afterwards is therefore likely a



**Figure 23:** Enlargement of title on MS B. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>221</sup> For example, the title given by Xu 2000, 320 to the content of the scroll is *Jian song Da fashi shi chao shi liu shou* 餞送達法師詩鈔詩六首 ('Copy of Poems about Holding a Feast for Sending off Master Da 餞; six poems'). The content is similarly described by Fu 2021, 215.

<sup>222</sup> See also Xu 2000, 382, n.1. Xu 2000, 381 renders the characters *dongya* 冬牙 in P.3812 according to the title of the poem in the verso of P.3676 as *dongya* 東衙 ('East Office').

conscious choice to fit the topic of the poem better. This makes the poem on MS B likely a literary elaboration of the poem on P.3676v.<sup>223</sup>

The third example is a quatrain beginning in line 51, which has neither a title nor an author name. This poem is known to be inscribed on a *zhihu* 執壺 (‘ewer’) from Changsha, southern China.<sup>224</sup> Here as well, no author is indicated. That the quatrain can be found on the Changsha ewer demonstrates the considerable geographical distances over which poems were known.<sup>225</sup> It is remarkable that all four verse lines are almost identical. Apart from two variants, the poem is therefore reproduced faithfully. In the following, the quatrain is noted with the two variants highlighted in bold red:

**MS B:**

1	自處長信宮	a	I <b>dwell</b> in the Changxin Palace
2	每向孤燈泣	b	I cry every time I <b>turn towards</b> the lonely lantern
3	閨門鎮不開	c	The door to the boudoirs is guarded and does not open
4	夢從何處入	b	From where do dreams enter?

**Poem on the ewer:**

1	自入長信宮	a	Ever since <b>entering</b> Changxin Palace
2	每對孤燈泣	b	I cry every time I <b>face</b> the lonely lantern
3	閨門鎮不開	c	The door to the boudoirs is guarded and does not open
4	夢從何處入	b	From where does the dream enter?

These variants raise the question why and how they occurred. It is unlikely that they are based on phonetic similarities. In addition, the meaning does not change at all, rather, the variants appear to be synonyms. The differences in the character shapes are moreover quite pronounced. It

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<sup>223</sup> This also calls for a reconsideration of the similarities between the poem beginning in line 42 on MS B and the second quatrain of a poem titled *Hannü yin* 寒女吟 (‘Lament of the Poor Lady’) recorded as a poem by Li Bai 李白 (701–762) in *juan* six of the *Caidiao ji* 才調集 (‘Collection of the Gifted and Talented’), see Xu 2000, 382–384, n.1. It is not necessarily the case that verse lines originated with famous poets, in this case, Li Bai, but also just as possible that famous poets reworded already circulating texts.

<sup>224</sup> See Xu 2000, 384, n.1. The existence of an ewer has already been indicated in Tang 1991, 224. Possibly, there still exist at least two such ewers, with remarkably similar script. One ewer is recorded as no. 199 in the appendix of Changsha yao ketizu 長沙窯課題組 1996, the other ewer is depicted in Li 2004, 42. According to the preface, the book published in 1996 describes the findings of the excavation in 1983, see Changsha yao ketizu 長沙窯課題組 1996, 1.

<sup>225</sup> Galambos 2020a, 110–111 examines the versions of a ‘student poem’ found on Dunhuang manuscript and an inscription on pottery from Changsha.

is therefore improbable that these variants resulted from copying mistakes. It is possible that the quatrain was transmitted orally, where it sufficed to transmit its meaning.<sup>226</sup>

### 3.2.6 Paracontent

Like on MS A, the heterogeneous paracontent suggests that the texts were collected from various sources. Only forty-two of the sixty-one poems have titles. There are also only four names of authors. In addition, only one poem towards the end has a preface. In the following, paratexts such as titles, authors, and prefaces will be introduced in more detail and commonalities as well as differences to MS A will be shown.

#### Titles

The forty-two titles on the scroll are of various length and detail. Like on MS A, it is possible to understand most of them either as summaries of the poem's content or as descriptions of actual circumstances that led to the creation of the poem. The boundaries between those two functions are more than often blurred. Several titles mention persons by family name and rank only, therefore, their identity is often unclear. Like on MS A, there is one historical person mentioned, namely the poet Gao Shi (c.704–765) in the title of line 41.<sup>227</sup>

The title in line 41 has four additional characters: *tuo xing feng shi* 託興奉詩 ('Entrusting to a *xing*, Presenting a Poem'). This indicates that a poem was offered, in which one entrusts the intention to one of the three poetic stylistic methods, a *xing*, which is an implicit comparison.<sup>228</sup> Even though the title mentions the famous poet Gao Shi, the poem itself is written in a woman's voice. The poem therefore most likely addresses the subject matter as stated in the title, while employing the voice of a headstrong woman speaking of leaving her husband in the poem itself.<sup>229</sup> The wording of several further titles suggests that the poems have been written in someone else's stead or were reported.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> It is of course also possible that the variants were a conscious choice by the scribe copying from a manuscript, as shown for example two above. However, the two variants of this quatrain appear too irrelevant to justify such a conclusion.

<sup>227</sup> Xu 2000, 382–383 provides an overview on scholarship concerning the authorship of the poem.

<sup>228</sup> The other two stylistic methods are the *fu* 賦 ('direct descriptions') and the *bi* 比 ('explicit comparison'), which are already ascribed to poems of the Shijing 詩經 ('Book of Songs'). For *fu* and *bi*, see also Williams 2021, xi.

<sup>229</sup> Xu 2000, 382–383.

<sup>230</sup> For instance, the title *dai gui qing* 代閨情 ('Representing the Lady's Emotions') in line 27.

## Author Names

Like on MS A, authors are only named beneath the titles to individual poems.<sup>231</sup> The first name is *Song jia niangzi* 宋家娘子 (‘Ladies of the Song Family’) beneath the title in line 38. This could refer to the ‘five women of the Song Clan’ who were summoned to the court of Emperor Dezong of the Tang 唐德宗 (r. 779–805) for musical entertainment in the fourth year of the Zhenyuan 貞元 era (788).<sup>232</sup> Secondly, a person named Yin Ji 殷濟 appears beneath the title in line 53, and is also not recorded in historical documents.<sup>233</sup> The situation is similar for the third name, Wu She 武涉 (?–?) noted beneath the title in line 99.<sup>234</sup> Fourth, the name of the Tang poet Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (c.726–c.790) is provided beneath the title in line 109. This name is written again beneath the title in line 172. Here, the position as *Jiangzhou cishi* 江州刺史 (‘Prefect of Jiangzhou’) provided before the name does not accord with the information about the Tang poet Liu Changqing known from historical records.<sup>235</sup> It is not completely unrealistic that the second mention of Liu Changqing refers to the same person, even if the position as it is given on the scroll is not recorded in historical sources. If this is the case, the additional mention of the position likely indicates that this poem was copied from a distinct source.

It is striking that, except for Liu Changqing, all the authors on this scroll are relatively unknown. This stands in contrast to MS A, where the authors are still known today. This may be pure coincidence, given the various complicated processes and criteria involved in the transmission of texts. For instance, there may once have been a bias against transmitting poems attributed to the *Songjia niangzi*, a term referring to one or more female authors. The finding may also reflect that, compared to the scribe of MS A, the scribe of MS B selected poems by poets better known locally in Dunhuang.

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<sup>231</sup> For an overview on different attributions and rewritings of poems on this scroll, see the information provided in the footnotes to each poem by Xu 2000, 379–391.

<sup>232</sup> This is argued by Xu 2000, 382, n.1.

<sup>233</sup> Hu 1993, 18.

<sup>234</sup> Xu 2000, 389, n.1 notes that another poem by this author is written in Dunhuang manuscript P.3328.

<sup>235</sup> Xu 2000, 732–733, n.1 summarizes earlier scholarship concerning the question of identity and positions.

## Prefaces

There is only one preface on the scroll, beginning in line 114, which is written to the cycle of the eighteen poems. Contrary to the prefaces on MS A, this preface is an explanation in third person perspective about Cai Yan, the daughter of Cai Yong.<sup>236</sup>

First, the preface states that Cai Yan created a tune for the *hu* flute.<sup>237</sup> The preface continues that she was abducted in the turmoil at the end of the Han dynasty and brought to foreign lands. She lived there for twelve years and gave birth to two children, before being bought back with gold and silk by the emperor to return to her homeland. To describe her emotions, she made a tune in eighteen stanzas for the *qin* 琴 (‘zither’). The preface ends by explaining that for each stanza, *ci* 詞 (‘lyrics’) were made, to describe the events of that time.

The experiences of Cai Yan in the foreign regions fits well into the general topic of foreign regions on MS B. The information that Cai Yan had made a tune on the *hu* flute and based on this, someone then made lyrics for each stanza, points toward the poem cycle on MS B itself. It is very unlikely that Cai Yan herself is the author of these stanzas recorded on Dunhuang scrolls.<sup>238</sup>

### 3.2.7 Further Content

The verso contains various scattered texts or fragments thereof, which either relate to the core content on the recto of MS B or are later use of blank space. As has been shown, comments to the content on the recto were added on the rolled-up left verso of the scroll by students.<sup>239</sup> For instance, there are three lines on the verso which comment upon the poem in line 29 on the recto, which begins with *zicong fu bie* 自從夫別 (‘Ever since parting from you, my husband’). The second and third line on verso begin with *zicong mianbie* 自從面別 (‘Ever since bidding farewell...’). The

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<sup>236</sup> This poem cycle is preserved with preface on two further Dunhuang scrolls, namely on P.2555 and on the verso of P.2845. It can be observed that the wording of the prefaces on the two further Dunhuang scrolls resemble each other more closely. The head title on MS A and P.255 is slightly different. On P.2555, the title does not include the character *ci* 詞 (‘lyrics’) as mentioned in the title of MS A. P.2845 which is torn at the beginning. As the text starts with the preface immediately at the tear, it is unclear whether there ever was a title. However, the content of all three prefaces is overall the same, which suggests that the text stems from the same source.

<sup>237</sup> *Cai Yan suo zao hujia qu* 蔡琰所造胡笳曲 (‘Cai Yan created the tune for the *hu* flute’). This is the wording of the beginning on MS A. On the other two Dunhuang scrolls, the sentence is reversed as: *hujia qu Cai Yan suo zao* 胡笳曲蔡琰所造 (‘The tune for the *hu* flute was created by Cai Yan’).

<sup>238</sup> In addition, even though she is mentioned in the preface, her name is not recorded beneath the head title. For a discussion of the authenticity of various poems attributed to Cai Yan, see Frankel 1983.

<sup>239</sup> For the discussion on the handling of MS B, see Bregler 2024.

third line on the rolled-up verso consists only of these four characters. These four characters are furthermore used in the model letter on a Dunhuang scroll in two parts.<sup>240</sup> Here, the text begins as follows: *zicong mianbie, simu you shen, jiqiu shuang leng, fuwei* [...] 自從面別，思慕尤深，季秋霜冷，伏惟 [...] ('Ever since bidding farewell, I miss you deeply, the last autumn month is frosty and cold, prostrating myself [...]').<sup>241</sup> As can be seen from the shorter line *jiqiu shuang leng*, different expressions concerning the climate were contained in epistolary models.<sup>242</sup>

This example again demonstrates a close relation of poems with epistolary model letters, mostly learned by students. It can be concluded that later recipients, especially students, used this and similar scrolls containing epistolary models to learn some first verse lines by heart, while later beginning to modify poems according to their own purposes.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The case studies in this chapter reveal that the two poetry selections are each produced by a single scribe. The scribes selected poems from a wide range of possible sources, such as using wall inscriptions as content, according to highly inclusive topics. A common topic in both case studies are foreign regions and borderlands. It is however questionable if both scrolls can thus be regarded as regional products. For MS A, this question remains inconclusive. Instead of foreign borderlands, the main topic in MS A is evidently the higher strata of elite society, such as the imperial court in general and officials in particular. The same situation holds true for the paracontent. Not at least the additional notations to the official position an author held at court indicate a strong interest in governmental affairs. Like the topics of reclusion and Daoism, foreign regions are merely a suitable addendum to these topics in content and titles. Moreover, none of the poems share verse lines known from further poems, which suggests that they were comparatively uncommon. This is quite different on MS B, where many more poems speak of foreign lands and the main topics concern separation and warfare. Moreover, MS B contains several poems, of which similar verse lines appear on other Dunhuang manuscripts. Here, it is much more likely that the scroll is a local product.

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<sup>240</sup> This is the joint Dunhuang scroll S.329 and S.361, see Xu 2005, 300. The manuscript is also described briefly by Giles 1957, 253.

<sup>241</sup> For the complete text of this letter, see Xu 2005, 300.

<sup>242</sup> For structure and terms used in model letters, see Zhang 2005, 219–247.

Various marks in the content on the recto of the scrolls indicate different usage by later persons. Here again, most marks indicate that such later users also selected poems from the scrolls according to their own criteria. In addition, verse lines of poems on the recto are repeated or responded to by similar verse lines on the verso, mostly by students. This shows that these two scrolls were also valued as learning devices in early education. Lastly, the user leaving marks in red ink on MS A concentrated on authors. Even though the visual organisation for both scrolls is evidence that the scribes did not write their selected poems as sequences according to authors, it is especially the section marks in form of hooks that indicate this is how the later user understood the content on MS A. The shift in reception and increasing value placed on authorship likely influenced which manuscripts were preserved, particularly MS A, and possibly many others from Dunhuang that include author names.

For the modern scholar, one of the greatest values of the Dunhuang manuscripts containing literary texts lies in the fact that they are one of the earliest extant sources according to which different stages of and various reasons for (mis)attributions to certain authors can be unravelled – at least when the scribes of the manuscripts attributed poems to certain authors.

Most importantly, the later user leaving his marks in red ink directly on MS A is evidence that a mental shift of reading content on Dunhuang manuscripts according to authors has happened before the cave was closed around 1006. This renders questionable the reliability of author attributions in works created already shortly prior to and after the sealing of the library cave, for instance the *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 completed in 1048. In addition, it must be considered that contemporary anthologies generally have not survived in manuscript form and that various complicated processes led to the formation of the much later and often remarkably different editions still preserved. In particular, the workings behind the addition of further poems from other sources in new volumes are not always straightforward.

Attributions in contemporary sources are likewise not always as straightforward as it appears, but subject to specific processes, circumstances, and agendas. I will illustrate this by examples concerning the poet Gao Shi (c. 704–765), who is said to be represented with by far the most poems on Dunhuang manuscripts, even before renowned authors such as Li Bai.<sup>243</sup> A famous

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<sup>243</sup> McMullen 2013, 129.

poem about frontiers said to have been authored by Gao Shi is recorded in the contemporary *Heyue yingling ji* 河岳英靈集, which was completed in 753, thus, close towards the end of Gao Shi's life. A problem is that we only have much later editions, the earliest dating to the end of Ming and beginning of Qing.<sup>244</sup> It is therefore more than likely that layout and wording of this work has undergone considerable changes. The title to the poem is *Yange xing bing xu* 燕歌行並序. This so-called preface indicated in the title is a short comment. According to the first sentence, the described events happened in the twenty-sixth year of the Kaiyuan era, which corresponds to the year 738. This short comment mentions Gao Shi in third person with his personal name only, therefore, the commentary is most likely by someone other than Gao Shi.

The poem is preserved on altogether six Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>245</sup> One manuscript is torn, therefore only the latter half of the poem is preserved.<sup>246</sup> On one manuscript, the title is simply *Yange xing* 燕歌行.<sup>247</sup> Directly beneath this title, there are two lines in half sized characters, which thus resemble a comment. This comment is essentially the same as the so-called short preface in the *Heyue yingling ji*. However, here, the initial sentence mentioning the year is missing. Moreover, none of the further Dunhuang manuscripts has any author indication beneath the various titles. On two manuscripts, the poem is titled *Yange xing yi shou* 燕歌行一首.<sup>248</sup> On two further manuscripts, the poem has a remarkably different title, namely *Hanjia pian* 漢家篇.<sup>249</sup>

The poem can be taken as an example to demonstrate how conclusions differ, depending on which sources are given more credibility. From the perspective of the *Heyue yingling ji*, the link of the poem to Gao Shi is firm and one can conclude that none of the scribes on the Dunhuang manuscripts saw it necessary to indicate Gao Shi as author. Judging from the notes to each poet and the preface of the still extant versions of the *Heyue yingling ji*, its author, Yin Fan 殷璠 (fl.727–750) can be described as one of the earliest persons who collated and presented some circulating poems according to an array of authors, albeit still likely not according to single authors.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> See footnote 185.

<sup>245</sup> For the poem and the manuscripts, see Xu 2000, 399–401.

<sup>246</sup> P.4984.

<sup>247</sup> P.3862.

<sup>248</sup> These are P.3195 and S.788.

<sup>249</sup> These are P.2544 and S.2049

<sup>250</sup> This fits well with the observation that a turn to the author can first be observed for Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740), as one of the first instances where poems only were posthumously collated as a self-contained collection, see

However, for this, he too must have informed himself about attributions as they circulated in manuscripts. Coming from the perspective of such manuscript evidence, the poem has remarkably different titles and in no case any author indication. This can serve us to reach strikingly different conclusions. Possibly, the poem existed under very different titles, and became attributed to Gao Shi at one point, likely due to the comment beneath the title, or due to otherwise unknown reasons.

Yet another point is that on two of the manuscripts, this poem attributed to Gao Shi is written before another anonymous frontier poem, which raises the question whether the anonymous poem is by Gao Shi as well.<sup>251</sup> This shows how thematically arranged content on Dunhuang manuscripts is interpreted based on a sequential understanding of poems according to authors. Not at least, it explains how author images emerge. Was Gao Shi really a ‘frontier poet’, as he is often labelled, or did this label not merely arise because a poem ascribed to him happened to be in a thematical sequence with many other poems about frontier regions on Dunhuang manuscripts? This cautions against circular statements resulting from taking information from poems, or even from prefaces, at face value to construe the ‘factual and historical life’ of an author.

In summary, we are now in the fortunate situation to compare actual manuscript evidence with transmitted sources. We can trace the manifold processes of collection and selection, the introduction of paratexts, such as titles and prefaces – and see the emergence of the author in a new light.

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Chapter 2, 31. As I showed in Chapter 2 and in this chapter, collections according to one single author are highly unlikely for Dunhuang manuscripts.

<sup>251</sup> See McMullen 2013, 142. The manuscripts are S.788 and S.2049.



## 4 A Scribe's Notebook

Manuscript C (MS C) is a scroll where the scribe actively engaged with various content such as poems and prose texts, rather than simply producing a fair copy.<sup>252</sup> It is evident that the scribe also handled the scroll differently, e.g. compared to MS A and B. He began and stopped his work somewhat arbitrarily on different sections. The poems of several sections were likely arranged to produce a poetry cycle or, at the very least, a coherent sequence. In several cases, it is plausible that the scribe himself added paracontent, particularly titles, to establish overarching and cohesive themes for the poems. Furthermore, occasional unconventional positioning and inclusion of uncommon terms suggest that the paracontent was likely added by the scribe, who may not have been proficient in Chinese, for his own purposes. I will provide a more detailed examination of this evidence in the following case study.

### 4.1 Codicology<sup>253</sup>

The scroll measures 27.4-28.3 x 629.5 cm. The scroll has no conspicuous features in its codicology, such as caesuras, which would suggest that the scroll is a composite. Instead, except for two cases where less experienced hands added further content in blank spaces, the entire content of the scroll is written by a single fluent hand. A recent study convincingly shows that this fluent hand also wrote the texts on the verso, including those where the individual characters are significantly larger.<sup>254</sup>

The scroll consists of fifteen sheets measuring between 41.42 and 42.2 cm.<sup>255</sup> The edges of the sheets are torn and there are numerous shorter horizontal tears. Aside from this, the single sheets of the scroll are intact. The first sheet shows signs of glue. The text is incomplete, indicating that the scroll was longer in the past.<sup>256</sup> The last sheet appears to be complete, despite showing signs of being cut or torn off. When examining this last sheet from the verso, it becomes evident

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<sup>252</sup> The pressmark is P.2555.

<sup>253</sup> Previous studies of MS C have examined its content, collated the texts, and assessed their scholarly significance, see Xu 2000, 686–757 and Fu 2021a, 444–487.

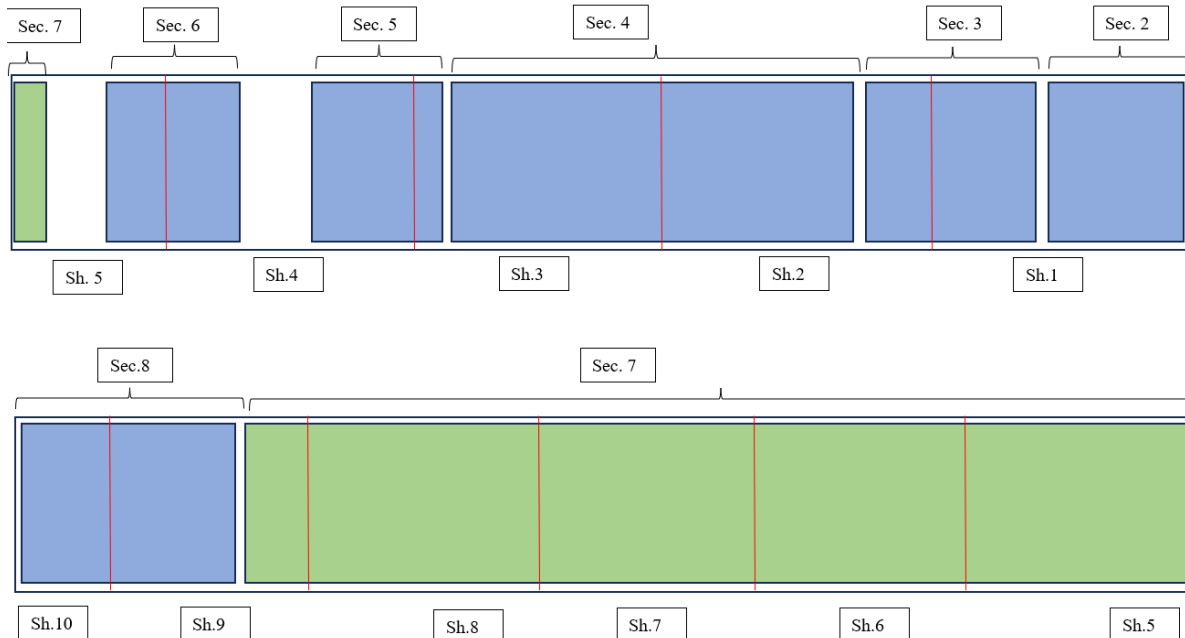
<sup>254</sup> See Zhu 2021, 129–130, who also provides examples for comparison.

<sup>255</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>256</sup> A potential preceding part is a fragment housed in St. Petersburg with the shelf-mark Дх.3871. According to Fu 2021a, 444, its dimensions are 15.6 x 38 cm. For a comprehensive overview of P.2555 and six additional fragments catalogued with it, see Fu 2001a, 444–447.

that some further sheets must have become detached here from the scroll. For instance, only the last half of a text is present at the beginning. Additionally, some strokes of characters in the first line are partially wanting where a faint glue line is still visible. This implies that the scroll, which is already quite lengthy, was likely even longer in both directions previously.<sup>257</sup>

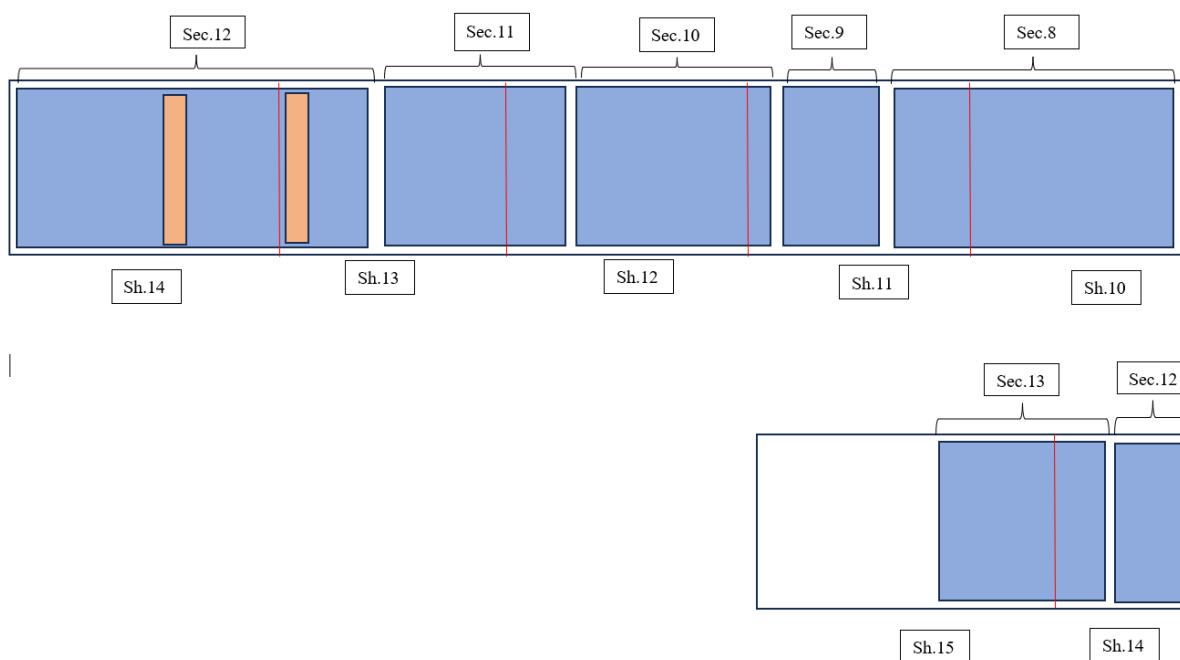
I divide the content of the recto into Sections 1 to 13 based on changes in visual organisation. The content of each section typically spans no more than two sheets. An exception is Section 7, which spans just over four sheets (green in Fig. 24). The prose text of Section 5 is discontinued. The subsequent blank space could indicate that the scribe intended to resume writing the text at a later time. Alternatively, he may never had any intention to finish this text, and instead shifted his focus to other texts, such as the subsequent Section 6. Blank space can thus either indicate that the scribe intended to complete a text later or serve as a physical boundary to separate different texts. The situation is clearer for the two smaller blank spaces between the poems of Section 12. Considering that the poems of this section are closely related to each other, it is likely that the scribe intended to supplement further poems here. However, he never followed through



**Figure 24:** Depiction of Sections 2 to 8 on the first half of the recto of MS C.

<sup>257</sup> Regrettably, the verso of the preceding fragment Дх.3871 has not been digitised in Men’shikov, 11: 78. Consequently, it is uncertain whether it is associated with MS C. Despite this, I will consider the fragment wherever applicable.

with such an intention. Now, these blank spaces contain additional content added by individuals with considerably less trained hands, likely students (orange in Fig. 25).



**Figure 25:** Depiction of Sections 8 to 13 on the second half of the recto of MS C.

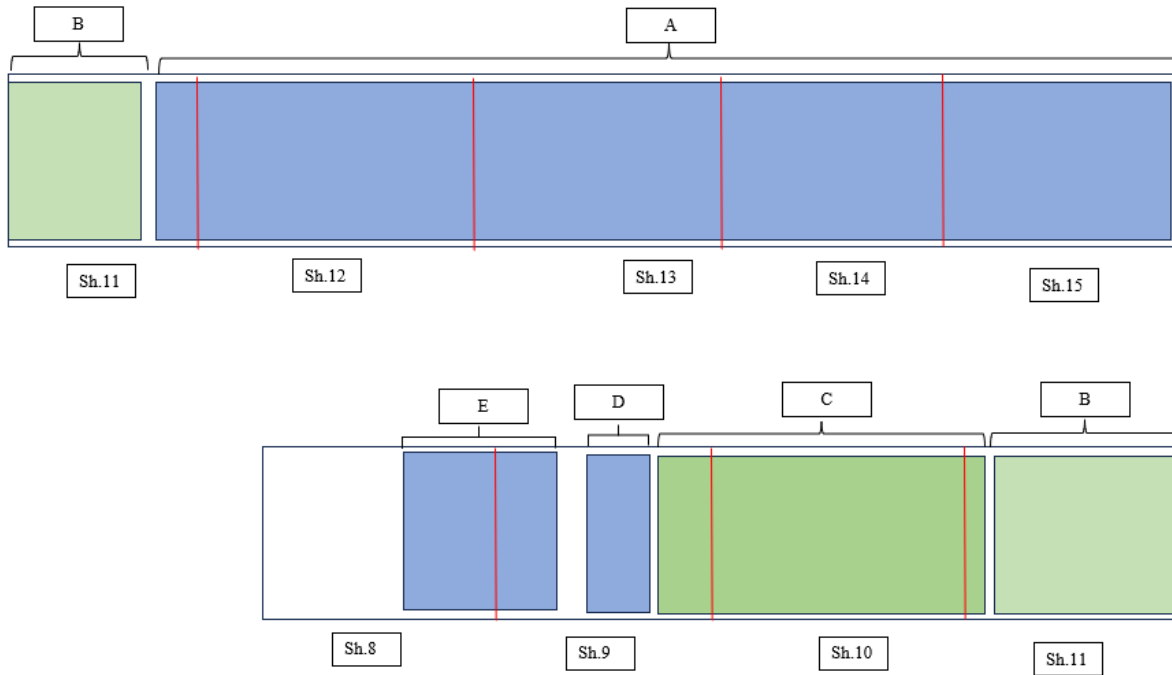
Similar to the recto, the visual organisation of content on the verso often differs significantly. The writing direction of the content on the verso is consistent with that on the recto. Additionally, most texts are written over the joint of the sheets.<sup>258</sup> The content spans from sheet 15 and ends approximately in the middle of sheet 8. The subsequent sheets are not digitised, indicating that they are likely blank and do not contain further texts (see also Fig. 26).

I divide the content of the verso into sections A to E. Section A is the longest, spanning over four sheets. This section likely extended even further, but the sheets preceding sheet 15 are now missing. Section C resembles Section 7 closely in terms of visual organisation, content and paracontent.<sup>259</sup> Among other reasons which I discuss below, this implies a close connection

<sup>258</sup> This further indicates that the scroll is not a composite.

<sup>259</sup> Additionally, I highlighted Section B in light, which also may have closer thematic ties to Section 7.

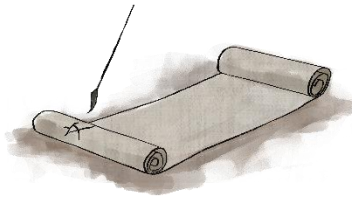
between the two sections, despite their physically separate locations on the recto and verso of the scroll. Section D comprises two incomplete text fragments, copied directly after each other. Similarly, the prose text of Section E, which follows after some blank space, is also discontinuous.



**Figure 26:** Depiction of Sections A to E on the verso of MS C.

The codicology of the scroll suggests that the scroll was already manufactured and prepared as a blank carrier before any text was written. Given the incomplete texts at the beginning of both the recto and verso, it is likely that this six-meter-long scroll was originally even longer in both directions. Given its size, this scroll is a bulky object that is likely difficult to handle, particularly for taking notes. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. First, on sheet 15, the recto contains text only in its first half, with the remainder left blank; the verso ends with the latter half of a text that likely began on missing sheets. This indicates that the scribe wrote content in the same writing direction on both sides of the scroll, flipping between recto and verso as needed. Furthermore, the scribe mostly worked in sections, as we can infer from the visual organisation. Consequently, he did not unfurl the entire scroll at once but instead rolled out a specific portion that he wanted to

use. The usage of the scroll as a three-dimensional ‘notebook’ is particularly apparent from Section 7 of the recto and Section C on the verso, which are closely related to each other. Section C was possibly appended to the left side of the rolled-up verso part of the scroll, possibly because other sections already followed upon Section 7, thus leaving no space for additions on the recto (Fig. 27).<sup>260</sup>



**Figure 27:** Depiction of how to write on the left rolled-up verso of a scroll. Depiction is taken from Bregler 2024. Sebastian Finzenhagen.

## 4.2 Visual Organisation

The differing visual organisation of the sections indicate distinct methods employed by the scribe. In some sections, it appears he faithfully copied from a *Vorlage*, while others exhibit a more casual, note-like quality. Additionally, he occasionally inserted content in blank spaces or rearranged the visual organisation. Furthermore, he appears to have often added paracontent, particularly titles, which are largely absent from the rest of the content.

The visual organisation of Section 3 and 4 is markedly different. In section 3, the short poems and their corresponding titles are separated from each other by blank space.<sup>261</sup> Apart from this, there are no discernible patterns regarding the placement of content and paracontent. A poem or a title may start at the upper margin of a new line or follow a preceding element in the same line. The same principle applies to several poems without titles (Fig. 28). In contrast, Section 4 comprises of forty-three poems, all lacking titles.<sup>262</sup> Each poem begins at the upper margin of a new line (green in Fig. 29). This visual organisation remains consistent, even when there is theoretically sufficient blank space at the end to begin a following poem in the same line.

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<sup>260</sup> For the handling of scrolls and the addition of comments to rolled-up portions, see Bregler 2024. Unfortunately, due to the condition of MS C, I have not been able to inspect it personally, which is why my conclusion is tentative.

<sup>261</sup> Lines 18 to 33.

<sup>262</sup> Lines 34 to 76.



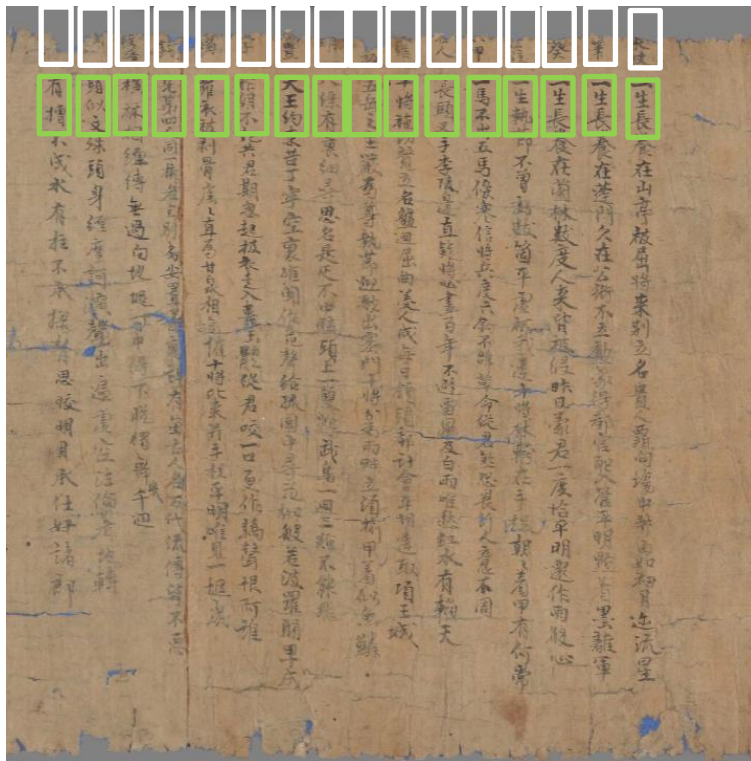
There are indications that despite their different visual organisation, Section 3 and 4 are closely related to each other. First, there is a short note preceding the poems at the end of Section 3 (orange in Fig. 28). This note identifies the form of the following poems as *qi yan* 七言 (‘seven-character verse lines’). All poems in Section 4 are also composed in seven-character verse lines. It is reasonable to assume that this short note was added by the scribe. It likely serves as a general description for poems that may have no titles. The note also shows that the criterion for selecting these poems is their form. This suggests that the scribe, after writing some initial heptasyllabic poems of Section 3, introduced the change in visual organisation of Section 4 himself. It is unclear whether this change is linked to the necessity of retrieving texts or a keen awareness of reading habits of later users. Regardless, the scribe evidently considered it an improvement to write each poem in a new line instead of leaving a blank space of two to three characters between the untitled poems.

The sixteen poems in Section 6 are highly organised.<sup>263</sup> A line typically begins with a title, often incompletely preserved at the brittle upper margins of the sheets. Only the two poems at the end lack a title. Based on the content of the surviving characters of the titles, we can infer that titles had a similar structure and possibly even the same number of characters. Following a small blank space of about one or two characters, the respective poems follow in the same line. Remaining space at the lower edge of the paper is left blank. The titles and the respective poems are neatly aligned at similar heights. However, the scribe did not go as far as to attempt a horizontal alignment of each individual characters of the texts (Fig. 30).

The visual organisation of this section closely resembles that of Section 4, except that most poems now have titles. One might initially assume that the scribe composed the poems himself to fit previously devised titles. However, the visual organisation is too regular to support this scenario. There are no indications that these poems are drafts, written for the first time, such as crossings-out or other marks. Instead, there are added characters and hook-shaped correction marks, which indicate that two characters were copied in reverse order and must be read the other way round. Therefore, it is more likely that the scribe was copying pre-existing poems. The titles in this section appear to be squeezed into the upper margin. This suggests that they are later additions, most likely made by the scribe himself, in an effort to situate the poems within a desired context.

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<sup>263</sup> Lines 91 to 106.

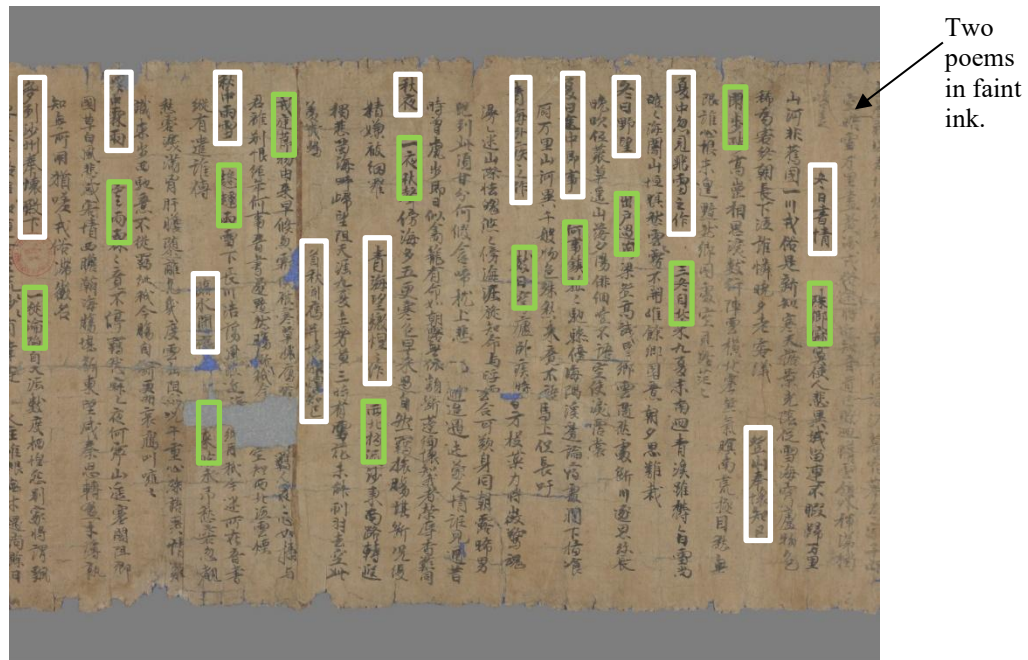


**Figure 30:** Visual organisation of Section 6 on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The visual organisation of Section 7 is inconsistent. Several titles begin at the upper margins of new lines, positioned one character higher than the texts. Poems rarely start in new lines at the upper margin but are often written with some space preceding titles or other poems in the same line. Towards the end, there is less blank space between individual poems. Here, many poems do not have titles. The first two poems and their titles are written in noticeably faint ink, whereas the subsequent content is written in black ink (Black arrow in Fig. 31).<sup>264</sup> Throughout the section, the ink occasionally weakens slightly but is soon replenished by the scribe. Only the last one or two poems at the end of the section are written in rather faint ink. The hand becomes increasingly careless from around line 203 onwards, with several overwritten characters observable in the text.

<sup>264</sup> Lines 107 to 230.

No clear patterns are discernible for this section, except for the custom of adding blank spaces between paracontent and content. Blank spaces left between individual poem could hypothetically be utilised to add titles and further paracontent later on. Proving the existence of such a method to work with collated content is challenging for various reasons, not the least because the scribe likely used the same kind of ink for the entire process. However, there are still some indications, for instance, where the characters of titles are written in different size.<sup>265</sup> Moreover, the absence of titles for several poems, such as towards the end Section 7, may be attributed to insufficient blank space left between individual poems. Additionally, variation in ink colour provides compelling evidence that core content was not consistently written. In Section 7, the scribe began with the third poem in dark ink. Subsequently, in the blank space which he initially left to indicate a new section with different content, he added two more poems. The faint ink of these first two poems indicates that the brush was running dry, likely because the scribe already had written a significant portion of the content in Section 7.



**Figure 31:** Visual organisation of Section 7 on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>265</sup> This is evident especially in the penultimate poem. Its title in line 228, though likely by the same hand, appears in smaller characters with darker ink. Another example is the title *Yi guren* 憶故人 in line 153.

Section 8 comprises of a cycle of eighteen poems, the *Hujia shiba pai*. The text is structured with a head title, a preface, eighteen poems with individual subtitles.<sup>266</sup> The titles and subtitles are consistently aligned at the same height as the texts at the upper margins. The preface begins at the same height as titles (blue in Fig. 32). The poems start after some blank space beneath the individual subtitles. Only MS C contains an additional nineteenth poem preceded by an explanatory note. The explanatory note is set one to two characters lower at the upper margins than the other texts (yellow in Fig.34).

The *Hujia shiba pai* is also found on two further Dunhuang manuscripts. The structure of the content and paracontent remain generally the same across all three manuscripts. Therefore, the *Hujia shiba pai*, with all its various elements, can be considered as a fixed text. At the same time, some variation can be observed on all three manuscripts.<sup>267</sup> For instance, concerning the visual organisation, on one manuscript, the subtitles for each poem are written in the blank space at the bottom of a line, while the next poem begins at the upper margin of a new line.<sup>268</sup> On the verso of P.2845, the subtitles are part of the running text and are distinguished only by small blank spaces before and after them. After the end of a poem, the subtitle and the beginning of the next poem follow closely in the same line, without much blank space in between the individual elements.

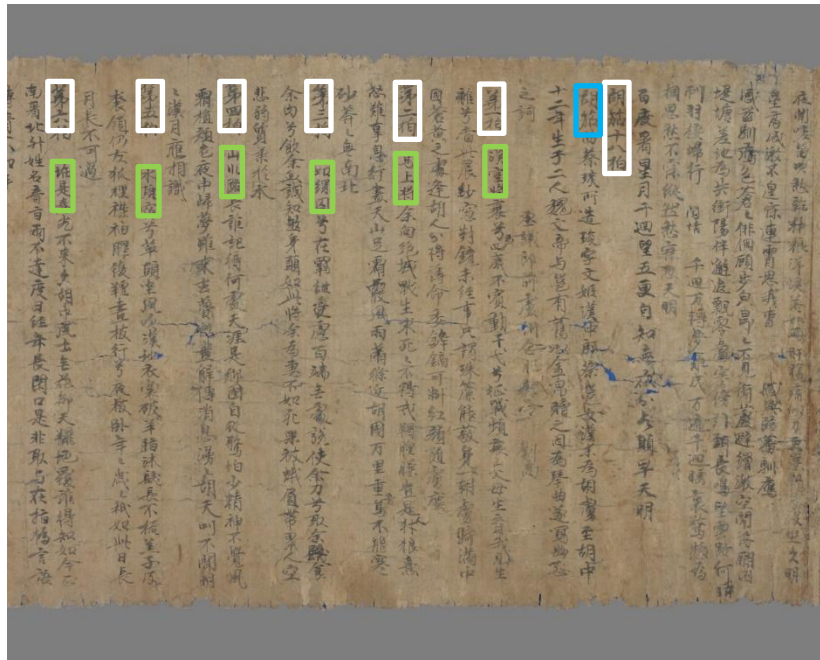
Therefore, the content of the *Hujia shiba pai* is already highly structured, with various paracontent such as a main title, a preface, and subtitles to each stanza. However, evidence from the three Dunhuang manuscript indicates that both content and paracontent were not entirely fixed but subject to changes. Similarly, the different visual organisation of the *Hujia shiba pai* on the two other Dunhuang manuscripts demonstrate that while the content had a general structure, the visual organisation was not fixed. It remains unclear whether the specific visual organisation on MS C was derived from a *Vorlage* or was done by the scribe himself, and if so, for what reasons.

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<sup>266</sup> These are MS B, lines 231 to 284, and P.2845 verso.

<sup>267</sup> In addition to some variation in the preface, certain stanzas follow each other in a different order, see Xu 2000, 719–739.

<sup>268</sup> MS B.

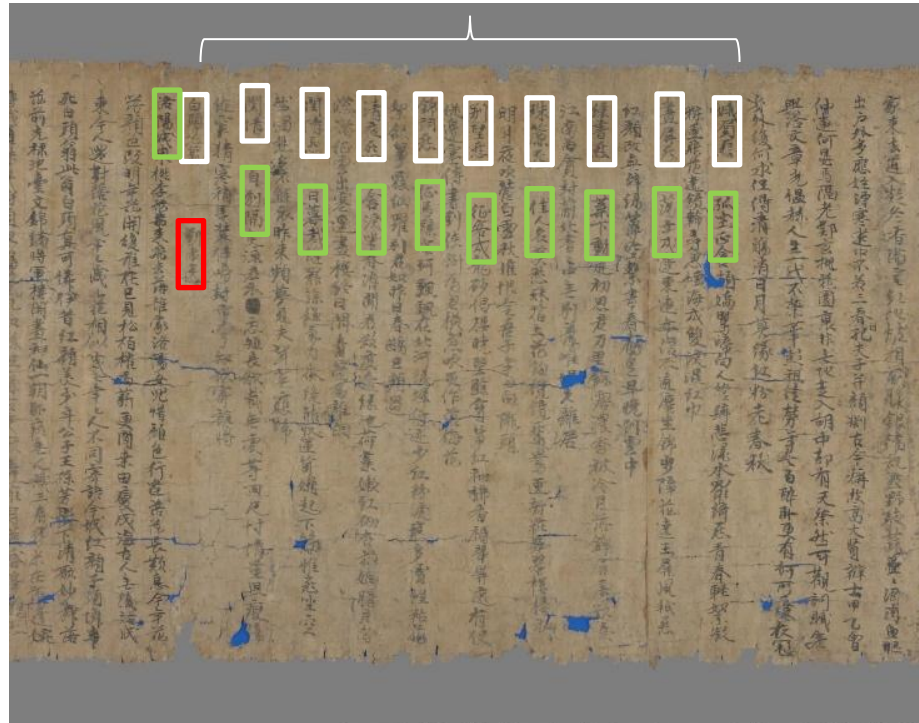


**Figure 32:** Visual organisation of Section 8 on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The visual organisation of Section 10 is similar to that of Section 6. The head titles for the short poems are aligned at the upper margin, followed by a brief blank space of approximately two characters before the respective poem begins.<sup>269</sup> The poems start and end at roughly the same height, with the continuation of their texts in new lines aligned at the same height as end titles. From this visual organisation alone, it is evident that the poems are of the same length. The space remaining after a poem is left blank. Unlike in Section 6, where titles are squeezed into the upper margin, in Section 10, titles are aligned at the same level as the content of the preceding and following sections (Fig. 33). This suggests a higher likelihood that the titles were already integral elements of the content in Section 10 and not added to the text later by the scribe.

<sup>269</sup> Lines 306 to 323.

Section 10



**Figure 33:** Visual organisation of Section 10 on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

In Section 12, titles are positioned at the upper margins of new lines.<sup>270</sup> Beneath a title follows after a small blank space of about one or two characters a first poem. New poems without titles follow at the upper margins of new lines. In the two blank spaces between poems, different and untrained hands added content also known from educational settings. These hands likely belong to students (orange in Fig. 34).

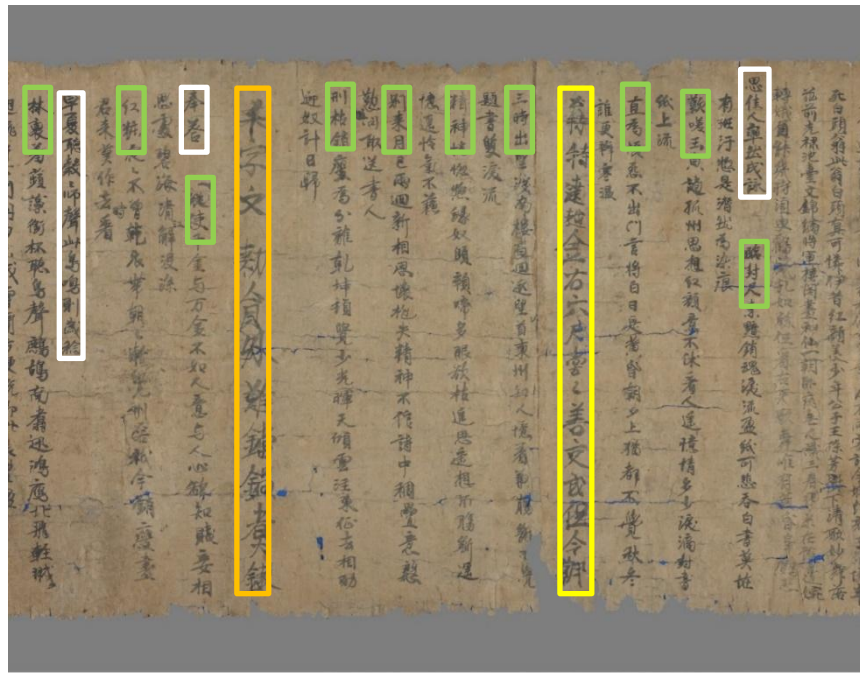
The visual organisation in this section suggests that titles are already integral parts of the poems. They possibly serve as markers for new sections and potentially also apply in a general manner to all following poems without titles.<sup>271</sup> However, further titles can be easily added later into the blank spaces at the end of a line, which results in the same visual organisation as observed MS A and B.<sup>272</sup> This clearly demonstrates how paracontent may be added retrospectively without necessarily resulting in an obvious disruption of the visual organisation. This makes it challenging

<sup>270</sup> Lines 331 to 357.

<sup>271</sup> Xu 2000, 743, n. 1.

<sup>272</sup> One poem is also written beneath the title on MS A and B, respectively.

to distinguish between fair copies and working manuscripts, except in such obvious cases as MS C.



**Figure 34:** Visual organisation of Section 12 on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

On the verso, I divided the content into Sections A to E. In contrast to the recto, it is noticeable that certain content is written in larger characters. Furthermore, the scribe used the entire sheet space for writing, resulting in often absent or only narrow margins. Consequently, the characters at the top and bottom margins are frequently not preserved due to the torn edges of the sheets.

A notable characteristic in Section A is that titles are consistently placed in the middle of otherwise empty lines.<sup>273</sup> Although this visual organisation appears systematic, it still allows for some variation on MS C. For example, not all titles are positioned exactly at the same height. In one instance, a title, followed by several poems, is squeezed halfway between lines, suggesting a later addition (orange in Fig. 36).<sup>274</sup> Another title is written in beneath the end of a preceding poem (Fig. 37).<sup>275</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the mark in the blank space between the end of the

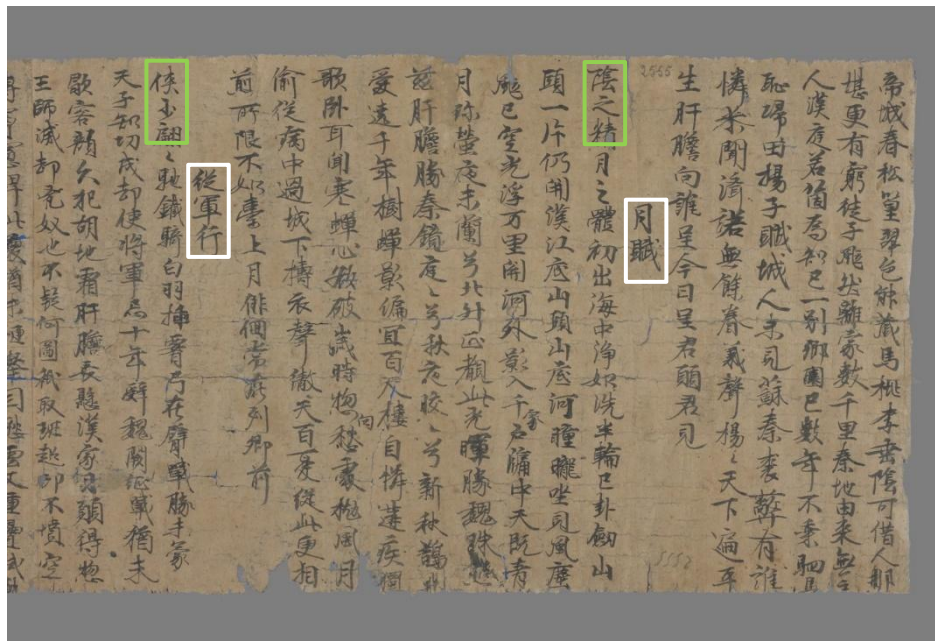
<sup>273</sup> This section spans from lines 1 to 82 on the verso, characterised by large, fluidly written characters. The ink consistently appears black, with strokes exhibiting slight variations in thickness. Each verse line typically contains between 16 and 21, most often 18 or 19 characters.

<sup>274</sup> Line 36.

<sup>275</sup> Line 54.

previous poem and the title for the next poem is intended to indicate that this title should be on a separate line (blue in Fig. 37).

The distinctive visual organisation in Section A, with titles placed in the middle of separate lines, facilitates quick retrieval of individual content for later readers. Many other Dunhuang manuscripts, in both scroll and book forms, utilise this organisational style throughout their content.<sup>276</sup> However, the deviations found on MS C suggest that the scribe loosely adhered to these conventions. This implies that while the scribe may have copied the visual organisation from a *Vorlage*, he did not strictly follow it, likely because his primary focus was on noting down content for himself rather than ensuring readability for later users.



**Figure 35:** Visual organisation at the beginning of Section A on the verso of MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>276</sup> There are scrolls such as S.373, S.6234+P.5007+P.2672, and P.3676, and booklets such as P.3866 and P.2492.

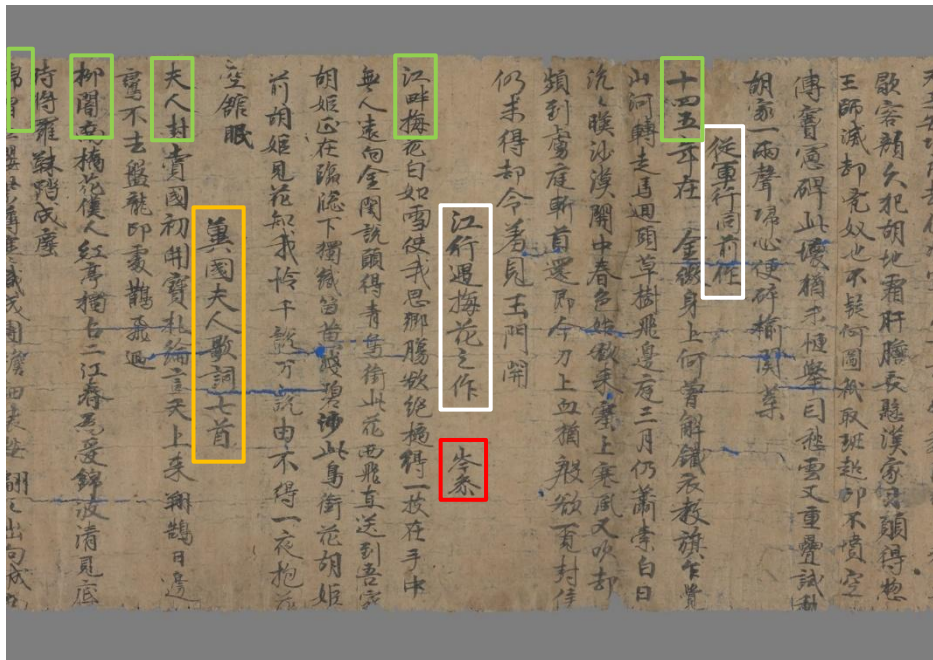


Figure 36: Visual organisation at the middle of Section A on the verso of MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

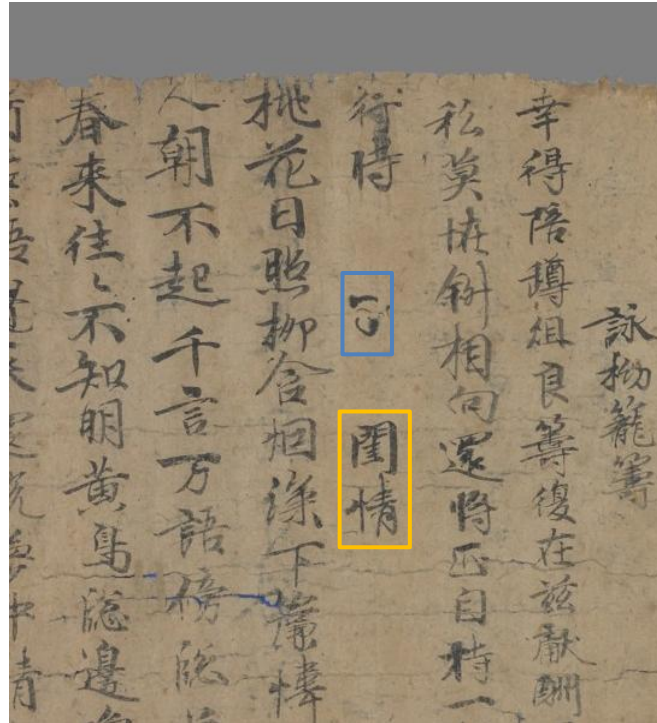


Figure 37: Section view of the mark and the title beneath the end of the previous poem in Section A on the verso of MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

In Section C, the texts start at the upper margins.<sup>277</sup> The positioning of titles is variable, beginning either in the same line as the preceding poem or in a separate line. This flexibility allows for the potential addition of paracontent, particularly titles, at a later time. Some uncertainties regarding the initial title and the subsequent paracontent complicate a precise understanding of the correct order and reading of these individual elements.<sup>278</sup> Following the eight characters of the title in dark black ink, there appears to be a sort of commentary (dark orange in Fig. 38). This commentary, written in lighter ink, features characters of roughly the same size as the title but offset slightly to the right. Immediately below this, there are several more characters, unfortunately mostly illegible and rendered in light-coloured ink. The characters are noticeably smaller and positioned towards the left side of the line. In the following line, only two additional characters appear, starting at the same height and in similar size as the title in the previous line. The specific alignment of these two characters prompts questions about their association with the various paracontent.

One possibility is to interpret them as a continuation of the eight-character commentary following the title.<sup>279</sup> However, this interpretation does not clarify why only two characters are placed in a new line, nor does it address the connection to the subsequent illegible sentence in smaller characters. Moreover, other alternative interpretations cannot be completely ruled out. For instance, it is plausible that the first line should be read in its entirety, with the two characters in the next line constituting a part of the now-illegible comment at the bottom. In addition to this unclear case, there is a brief comment after the end of the second poem in this section (violet in Fig. 38).<sup>280</sup> This comment is written in smaller-sized characters and aligned to the right side of the line. Its distinct visual organisation makes it readily identifiable as a comment to the core-content.

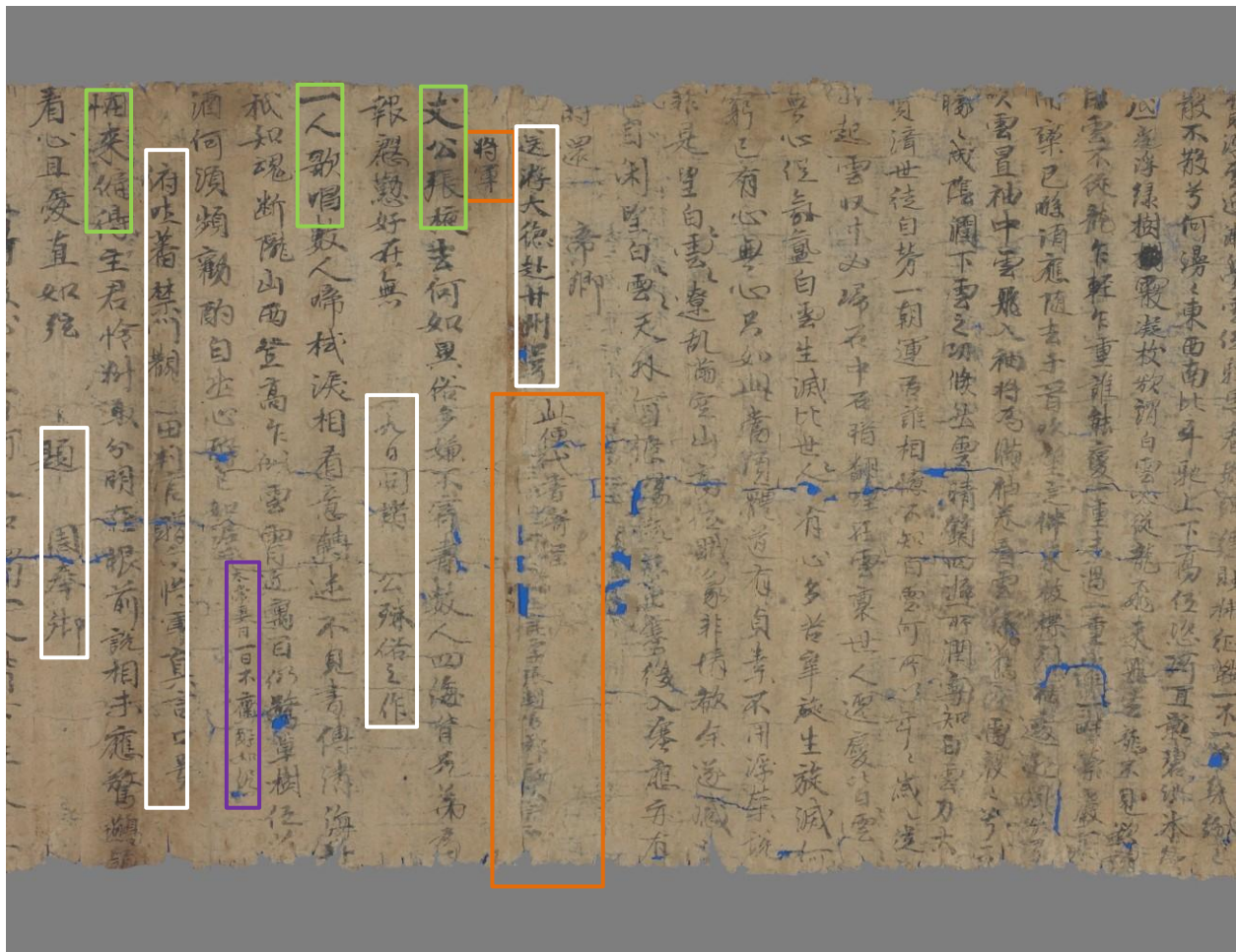
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<sup>277</sup> Lines 103 to 133.

<sup>278</sup> Line 103 and 104.

<sup>279</sup> See Xu 2000, 754.

<sup>280</sup> Line 109.



Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Ballet chinois 2555

Figure 38: Visual organisation of Section C on the verso of MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Some texts on the verso are calligraphic exercises. Section D consists of four lines without a title.<sup>281</sup> In contrast to other sections, the hand is here less fluent, almost angular.<sup>282</sup> The characters are written in black ink with fine strokes of unchanging thickness. The first twenty-nine characters belong to a short prose text. This text, which has neither title nor author name on MS C, is known as *Xuanshi biao* 宣示表 (‘Memorial About Public Announcement’), attributed to the famous calligrapher Zhong Yao 鍾繇 (151–230).<sup>283</sup> The text is a memorial to the first emperor of the Wei dynasty, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), aiming to persuade him to accept the loyalty expressed in a letter

<sup>281</sup> Lines 134 to 137.

<sup>282</sup> The first two lines contain 14 characters each, the third line has 15 characters, and the fourth line, which is discontinued, only has four characters.

<sup>283</sup> Xu 2000, 757, n.1.

by Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252), the founder of the Eastern Wu kingdom.<sup>284</sup> Immediately following are eighteen characters that are categorised as a lost letter by the calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), whose name is mentioned at the end.<sup>285</sup>

Since on the manuscript, there are only a few characters of the two texts, written directly after each other, it is unlikely that the scribe intended to copy the texts in their entirety. Instead, the two text fragments represent calligraphic exercises by the scribe.<sup>286</sup> For once, the calligraphy of the *Xuanshi biao* is described as a strict and regular script with a balanced combination of angular and rounded strokes.<sup>287</sup> Efforts to achieve such a style can be clearly recognised in the four lines of the copy on MS C.<sup>288</sup> The changes in the hand of MS C are therefore due to the scribe's effort to achieve said calligraphic characteristics, the scribe himself remains the same. Zhong Yao is often celebrated directly together with Wang Xizhi as 'Zhong-Wang'. It is also assumed that the surviving version of the *Xuanshi biao* is an authentic copy of Wang Xizhi.<sup>289</sup> Not at least, Wang Xizhi's name is mentioned in the second text fragment. Likewise, the large and often cursive characters in Section E are not indicative of a different scribe; rather, they provide further evidence for calligraphic efforts by the very same scribe.

In summary, the visual organisation varies widely, ranging from sections with no apparent patterns to such with some degree of structure, and finally, to highly organised sections. The sections also reflect different stages of textual structuring. While most poems lack titles or any other paracontent, other texts exhibit a high level of structure. Such differences are indicative of various processes of collating and working with content.

Section 7 and Section C lack discernible patterns for structuring, except for the presence of blank spaces between content and paracontent. In Section 7, there is often minimal blank space between individual poems lacking titles. This suggests that there was not enough space to add titles.

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<sup>284</sup> See Wang 2023, 130.

<sup>285</sup> Xu 2000, 757, n.1

<sup>286</sup> Xu 2000, 757, n.1. Wang Xizhi's texts are often celebrated primarily for their calligraphy. For a scholarly examination of the texts as letters, see Richter 2010.

<sup>287</sup> Li 2022, 337.

<sup>288</sup> See Fig. 1 in Wang 2023, 130.

<sup>289</sup> Li 2022, 337.

Section 4 is a continuation of Section 3 content-wise, but the scribe adopted a different approach to the visual organisation, as now, each heptasyllabic poem is written in a separate line. This results in an overall more orderly visual organisation compared to Section 3. The adjustment suggests that the scribe wished to retrieve single poems more quickly.

Section 6 and Section 10 exhibit a high level of organisation, with each poem's title positioned at the beginning of a line followed by the poem itself. Each poem is written in a separate line. In Section 6, it appears that the scribe later squeezed the titles into the upper margins, while in Section 10, the titles are an integral part of the content and likely copied together with the poems from a *Vorlage*.

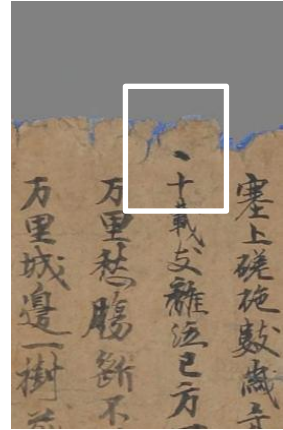
In Section 12, another distinct pattern emerges, as titles are here followed immediately by a poem, while subsequent poems lacking titles start at the upper margins of new lines. This suggests that the titles serve as general titles and even mark specific thematic sections. The visual organisation furthermore allows for addition of later titles into the blank spaces. In doing so, the result is the visual organisation of MS A and MS B. This finding raises a previously overlooked problem: Not every manuscript automatically qualifies as a fair copy simply because it exhibits consistent visual organisation and is written by the same hand.

The poem cycle of Section 8 is highly structured in terms of paracontent. There are notable variations compared to how this text appears on two other Dunhuang manuscripts. This suggests that the scribe adopted the textual structure from other examples but took a certain freedom in arranging the visual organisation. MS C also stands out as the only case where a nineteenth stanza is included.

On the verso, the visual organisation of Section A is particularly intriguing because the titles, placed in the middle of otherwise blank lines, facilitate quick content retrieval without the need for extensive reading. However, this organisation is not entirely consistent, which suggests that the scribe copied the visual organisation from a *Vorlage* but did not prioritise a neat visual organisation for the sake of later readers. The inclusion of calligraphic exercises in Section D and E further supports the hypothesis that the scribe's primary focus was on personal notations and practices rather than the production of a manuscript for dissemination to later readers.

### 4.3 Corrections, Marks, and Additions

There are few corrections, deletions, and additions of characters throughout the texts. In section 4, there are two marks in form of a ‘、’ at the upper margins (Fig. 39).<sup>290</sup> These marks closely resemble those discussed for MS A. Compared to this scroll, they are not set above head titles, but above the beginnings of individual poems. This likely has to do with the fact that none of the poems in section 4 has a head title. Similar to MS A, these marks may indicate a selection or deletion of poems. The scribe may have copied these marks together with the poems from the Vorlage. Based on the evidence from MS A, it is however more likely that he added them himself for personal purposes.



**Figure 39:** Example for the mark in line 49 of the recto on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 4.4 Core Content

The content of MS C covers a diverse array of topics similar to those found on MS A and B.<sup>291</sup> This includes themes such as travel to foreign regions, the desire to prove oneself worthy, diplomatic interactions with foreign countries, experiences of captivity, longing for one’s homeland, and missing loved ones. These topics are often explored from various, sometimes contradictory perspectives. Akin to the poem cycle depicting the twelve months at the beginning of MS B, MS C features a poem that begins with the verse line *Zhong chun er yue feng shi xuan* 仲春二月風始喧 (‘In the second month of spring, the wind begins to clamour’).<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, similar to poems found in the cycle depicting the twelve months on MS B, MS C contains two poems that describe females sewing clothes for their husbands at the border. These poems express concerns of females about whom they should trust to deliver the garments and convey worries that their lovers may have become too thin, causing the clothes possibly being too loose on them.<sup>293</sup>

<sup>290</sup> See lines 39 and 49.

<sup>291</sup> I will not provide a detailed description and list of the content on the scroll. For a recent comprehensive collation, refer to Xu 2000, 686–757.

<sup>292</sup> This first heptasyllabic poem with twenty-four verse lines appears at the beginning of Section 2. It starts from line 21 on the fragment Ⅱx.3871.

<sup>293</sup> The poems on MS B pertain to the tenth and twelfth months, while those on MS C commence in line 28 and line 29.

Several poems on MS C depict beautifully clothed women, palaces luxurious goods such as embroidered earmuffs, and blooming flowers. Additionally, there is a seventy-six pentasyllabic verse line about the tragic story of Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, who served as a consort lady at the court of Emperor Yuan of Han 漢元帝 (r. 49–33 BCE).<sup>294</sup> Historical sources offer limited details about her life, but later stories developed about her depict her in various ways. In one tradition, she is portrayed as refusing to bribe the court painter Mao Yanshou 毛延壽 for a favourable picture. Consequently, she was not selected by the emperor and instead chosen to be sent off in marriage to the Xiongnu.<sup>295</sup> The poem on MS C takes the form of a dialogue between Zhaojun and the emperor. While the emperor expresses regrets after seeing Zhaojun and realising her beauty, her response can be interpreted as a firm desire to break free from the confines of the imperial palace and seek a life on the frontier borders.<sup>296</sup> This perspective provides a nuanced portrayal of travelling to and living in foreign regions, which are predominantly depicted as negative experiences in Chinese poems.

Occasionally, the heavy sentiments conveyed in the contents are lightened by poems about rejoicing, holding festivities, and drinking wine to one's hearts content. Thus, wine emerges as a prominent means to alleviate heavy sorrow.<sup>297</sup> Similar to MS B, the long poem titled *Gaoxing ge* ('Song of Happiness') about drinking wine with sages of ancient times follows after the *Hujia shiba pai*, which recounts Cai Yan's abduction from her home country and her life at the border regions. These two texts are therefore arranged in the same order on two manuscripts. This suggests that the stark contrast between sorrowful and carefree themes is perceived as a particularly appealing combination.

A first notable difference in MS C compared to MS A and B is the consistent presence of a single character, *chou* 愁 ('sorrow'), which appears frequently throughout nearly all sections.<sup>298</sup> This character can be interpreted as a keyword, reflecting the central theme around which the various texts are collated, setting a certain mood. Second, MS C contains texts which explicitly concern matters at the imperial court, particularly regarding policies concerning foreign states.

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<sup>294</sup> This poem begins in line 3.

<sup>295</sup> For the earliest sources on Wang Zhaojun and subsequently accumulating legends, see Kinney 2014, 210–211.

<sup>296</sup> Chai 2000 (1983) a, 25.

<sup>297</sup> The thought of wine erasing worries is mentioned in Chai 2000 (1983) a, 28 on the example of a poem in line 73 on MS C. For the poem itself, see also Xu 2000, 701.

<sup>298</sup> This character appears 57 times on the recto.

The first example is a long poem about the *mingtang* 明堂 ('The Bright Hall'), a significant architectural structure within imperial palaces used for audiences, rituals, and banquets.<sup>299</sup> This building symbolises the emperor's authority as the regulator of the universe.<sup>300</sup> The second case is a prose text about Li Yong 李邕 (674–747), presented as a memorial to Emperor Xuanzong in 747 by Kong Zhang 孔璋.<sup>301</sup> This text discusses Li's offenses that led to his death sentence, with the plea of the unnamed vassal Kong Zhang, to take the death penalty in his stead. The vassal argues for Li's usefulness to the state due to his numerous merits. Thirdly, the second prose text is a letter mentioning the *Suzhou cishi* ('Prefect of Suzhou') 肅州刺史, Liu Chenbi 劉臣璧, who concludes the letter by 'knocking his head on the ground' (*dun shou* 頓首).<sup>302</sup> This sentence indicates the completeness of the letter, which appeals to Shangzanmo Shepo'e 上贊摩射婆萼 to use his influence on the Tibetan king to end the Sino-Tibetan wars and halt Tibet's plans concerning Suzhou Prefecture.<sup>303</sup>

The scribe organised content differently in the Sections. In Sections 3 and 4, poems were grouped based on their form, as already indicated by the note *qi yan* 七言 ('heptasyllabic').<sup>304</sup> These sections feature recurring themes like aging men affected by war, punitive expeditions, and journeys to the west and desert regions. The sixteen poems in Section 6 form a cohesive group with recurring phrases and motifs, suggesting they were likely created as a unified set. Common phrases like *yi sheng zhangyang zai* 一生長養在 [...] ('Growing up my entire life at [...]), *pingming* 平明 ('At daybreak'), and *shi jiang* 十將 ('ten generals') appear throughout, indicating thematic unity.<sup>305</sup> Descriptions of luxurious goods like silk and mention of banquets suggest a connection to diplomatic journey, where such items were exchanged as gifts and feasts with games

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<sup>299</sup> This poem begins on line 77 of Section 5. For a study of a *mingtang* constructed during the reign of Empress Wu, see Forte (1988).

<sup>300</sup> See Corradini 1995.

<sup>301</sup> Demiéville 1987, 306, n.3. The text begins in line 81 of Section 5.

<sup>302</sup> For phrases used in letters, see Richter 2013, 75–116.

<sup>303</sup> Demiéville 1987, 293. Demiéville 1987, 292–306 also offers a French translation along with a critical examination, noting historical inconsistencies.

<sup>304</sup> Line 29.

<sup>305</sup> The former expression appears in the initial verse lines of the first three quatrains and partly in the fourth, while the second term is found in the fourth verse lines of the second, third, and twelfth quatrains. The latter term is incorporated into the fourth, seventh, eighth, and twelfth quatrains.

were held for the envoys.<sup>306</sup> Additionally, underlying military themes align with the broader context of the scroll's content. Mention of general Li Ling 李陵 (d.74 BCE) adds historical depth.<sup>307</sup> Other poems, such as the one entitled [...] *bi* 筆 ('[...] Brush'), allude to the struggles of an unsuccessful literatus seeking to travel to the *Moli jun* 墨離軍 ('Moli Commandery') to advance his career.<sup>308</sup>

Poems in other sections often form cycles or show strong tendencies towards cyclic arrangement. A prime example is the *Hujia shiba pai* cycle. The inclusion of a nineteenth stanza in MS C raises questions about its origin, whether copied from another source or added by the scribe, along with an explanatory note. Even though these questions prove difficult to answer, this expansion illustrates how even texts with fixed titles can be augmented. Similarly, in Section 12, nine heptasyllabic quatrains, of which the first seven depict someone demoted to Guazhou 孤州, near Dunhuang, hint at a chronological narrative.<sup>309</sup>

Sections 7 and C consists of poems variously depicting journeys away from the homeland, filled with hardships, imprisonment by Tibetans, and longing for friends or letters from home.<sup>310</sup> The two sections appear to represent an early stage of the process of collating and ordering poems for a cycle, marked by inconsistencies in the content which challenge a chronological reading. For instance, despite mentions of reunification with an old friend in two poems at the end of Section 7, subsequent poems revert to the themes of separation, sorrow, and captivity.<sup>311</sup> Only the first two poems in faint ink, likely added later, offer concrete location details, such as Maquan[kou] 馬圈[口], located twenty-five *li* southwest of the city of Dunhuang, which often served travellers as a natural stopover on their journeys, and the Yangguan 陽關 Yang Pass, situated southwest of the

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<sup>306</sup> See Wen 2023, 135–136.

<sup>307</sup> See the first verse line of the sixth quatrain. The poem begins in line 96 on MS C.

<sup>308</sup> See also Chai 2000 (1983) a, 30, who cites this specific poem, which commences at line 92. For the Moli Commandery, see the introduction to the poems in Sections 7 and Section C below.

<sup>309</sup> Guazhou is located in present-day Anxi 安西 county, Gansu 甘肅 province, see Rong 2022, 114. Section 12 comprises nine heptasyllabic quatrains, succeeded by four pentasyllabic poems with eight verse lines each. Although I won't discuss the content of the eight-liners here, they touch on varied themes that may still tie into the overarching narrative of the quatrains. These include landscape depictions, invitations to merriment, and expressions of longing to forget one's sorrows and wish to return home.

<sup>310</sup> Wang 1984, 51 states about the poems: 'The author's thoughts are not that lofty, he only cries from sorrow, cries from illness, and misses his home, in almost every sentence there is "heartbreak"'.

<sup>311</sup> See the two poems in lines 219 and 221.

city of Dunhuang.<sup>312</sup> While Dunhuang and its surrounding regions are mentioned frequently as the dwelling places of friends and family, the poems lack detailed accounts of customs and conflicts with foreigners, especially referred to as *rong* 戎 (a general belittling term for people of non-Han origin).<sup>313</sup> Descriptions of travel routes and places of captivity remain likewise vague and consist of general descriptions of unspecified landscapes, with especially frequent mention of an unlocalised sea. These topical descriptions suggest that such regions are intended merely as a complementary part to better capture the theme of a journey away from the homeland. Section C parallels Section 7, but with slightly more specific references. For instance, the first poem mentions Master Zhi 支公 and his journey to Zhangye 張掖, located far from Dunhuang in Ganzhou 甘州 (northwest of modern Gansu 甘肅 province).

In summary, the content of MS C mirrors the varied themes found in MS A and B, and some poems even share similar phrases. While most poems carry a tone of sorrow, some celebrate the enjoyment of wine and merriment. A notable difference in MS C is the frequent use of the keyword *chou* 愁 ('sorrow'), suggesting an underlying motif for compilation. A further difference is texts concerned with political life, especially the Sino-Tibetan relations.

The content of the various section reflects different working processes. The note *qi yan* ('heptasyllabic') in Section 3 indicates that the scribe collated poems based on their form. The uniform phrases in Section 6 suggest that these poems were created as a cohesive group. The visual organisation furthermore suggests that they are not drafts, and that the scribe copied them, and likely added the titles himself, by squeezing those into the upper margin. Additionally, there are several poem cycles, such as the *Hujia shiba pai*, as well as texts in the early stages of sequencing. The latter case is particularly visible from the content of Section 7 and C. The inconsistencies in content and paracontent suggest that these poems are not yet in their final order. Most likely, Section C on the verso is an addition meant to be placed after or integrated into Section 7.

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<sup>312</sup> Wen 2023, 129. The first poem begins in line 108.

<sup>313</sup> Wen 2023, 257.

## 4.5 Paracontent

The recto contains minimal paracontent. Most sections lack titles for individual poems, and even in sections where titles are present, many poems remain untitled. Author names are scarce, with only a few instances mentioned throughout. There are no prefaces, except for a preface to the *Hujia shiba pai*. However, this preface appears in a similar form in two other Dunhuang manuscripts. It therefore should be regarded as an already established integral part of the text and not be considered as genuine paracontent in MS C. Rather than distinct prefaces, the manuscript contains three shorter sentences that serve various functions. Below, I will introduce these sentences and discuss their possible functions in more detail.<sup>314</sup>

### Titles

I will address three key aspects relating to titles. First, it becomes apparent that titles, regardless of whether they are added to prose texts or poems, follow the same structural patterns. I will show that the interpretation of this patterns significantly impacts our understanding of occasional titles. Second, titles not only provide context for individual poems but also create thematic coherence in a group of collated poems, unifying them under overarching themes. Nevertheless, due to the originally heterogeneous nature, some contradictions between titles and content remain. Lastly, various information in titles offer further insights. Terms unique to titles on MS C provide clues about the person who added them, likely the scribe. Specific terms also found in titles on other Dunhuang manuscripts reveal general processes concerning paracontent, particularly how commentaries are integrated into titles.

Similar to MSS A and B, MS C features a mix of titles summarising themes and describing occasional circumstances. As noted for these two manuscripts, on MS C as well, it is not always clear whether a single title is to be interpreted as indication of the theme or a description of the occasion. In the following, I will re-address the problems of such a categorisation by analysing the overall structure of titles.

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<sup>314</sup> This will not be a comprehensive analysis of all preserved paracontent. For the paracontent, refer to the notes of the individual poems in Xu 2000, 692–757.

Regardless of whether the subsequent content is a prose text or a poem, titles typically start with an introductory part and frequently, though not always, conclude with nouns that directly refer to the texts themselves in various ways.<sup>315</sup> For instance, the two prose texts end with the characters *biao* 表 and *shu* 書, respectively. Among titles summarising topics is *Luo hua pian* 落花篇 (‘Piece on the Falling Blossoms’), where *pian* 篇 refers to the text itself.<sup>316</sup> Additionally, numerous titles refer to the poems as songs, melodies, or lyrics. Terms like *xing* 行 (‘ballad’) and *ge* 歌 (‘song’) appear frequently, along with *geci* 歌詞 (‘lyrics to a song’) and *kouhao* 口號 (‘verses composed on the spot’), the latter which may have originated from verse eulogies recited by court musicians.<sup>317</sup> Several of these nouns are added to otherwise occasional information in titles. An illustrative example is the title *Song you dade fu Ganzhou kouhao* 送游大德赴甘州口號 (‘Verses Composed on the Spot about the Sending the Venerable off to a Journey Going on Travel to Ganzhou’).<sup>318</sup> This clearly demonstrates that even in the case of occasional titles, the ending terms are nouns. Thus, this also applies to ending terms such as *zuo* 作 (‘work’). Instead of the more common interpretation in its verbal sense, describing the action of someone creating a poem, *zuo* is to be understood as a noun, namely as ‘Work about’ something.<sup>319</sup> The same applies to a title in Section 7, which concludes with *zhi zuo* 製作 (‘composition’).<sup>320</sup>

The analysis of titles for both prose texts and poems reveals a significant structural pattern: an introduction presenting the background or topic, followed by a concluding term that directly references the text. It is questionable whether further rigid distinctions between ‘occasional’ and ‘topical’ poem titles are meaningful, as both elements tend to be intermixed to varying degrees. This is closely related to questions of authenticity, since occasional titles are often assumed to offer genuine insight into the authors’ motivations for composing a text.<sup>321</sup> Such assumptions

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<sup>315</sup> It is worth emphasising once more that several titles lack such terms, as observed in the title Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 in line 3, where the name itself serves as the topic. Consequently, ending terms are often but not necessarily included. However, the titles’ structure and function likely remain the same.

<sup>316</sup> For *pian*, see also Huang 2021, 32–33.

<sup>317</sup> Demiéville 1987, 329, n. 2 notes that *kouhao* generally denotes pieces written spontaneously under the inspiration of the moment.

<sup>318</sup> This is the title in line 103.

<sup>319</sup> The titles including *zuo* on MS C are written in lines 30, 106, 119, 121, and 126.

<sup>320</sup> *Zhi zuo* 製作 appears in the title in line 128.

<sup>321</sup> Two titles in particular, *Xia ri tu zhong ji shi* 夏日途中即事 (‘In Summer Travelling, At the Time the Matter Occurred’) in line 121 and *Wen cheng ku sheng you zuo* 聞城哭聲有作 (‘Composed Upon Hearing Crying Sounds at

about titles have to be carefully considered, not at least because the above analysis suggests that even occasional titles sometimes merely serve the function of introducing the background and thus may be later additions. This particular function of occasional titles is most evident in Sections 7 and C. As I will demonstrate below, these titles are not crafted by the authors of the individual poems. Instead, they are additions by the scribe as a means to contextualise the collated poems under overarching themes.

Titles serve to guide readers in understanding a poem within a coherent context. For instance, it is challenging to discern the exact topic of a poem in Section 6 without reading the titles first, which state the topics explicitly, such as *qiuzhang* 毬杖 (‘ball cane’) and *konghou* 箜篌 (‘lute’). This is also the reason why the poems have been described as being of riddle-like nature.<sup>322</sup> The titles of Sections 7 and C exemplify not only how individual poems are contextualised, but also how the titles contribute to a cohesive experience across a larger number of heterogeneous poems.<sup>323</sup> In Section 7, the titles provide information about departure from the hometown Dunhuang, travel in foreign countries, and subsequent imprisonment by Tibetans. Additionally, the titles mention the absence of friend(s) or a lover, addressed as *zhi ji* 知己 (‘intimate friend’) and *guren* 故人 (‘old acquaintance’), as well as a superior, referred to as *dian xia* 殿下 (‘Your Excellency’).<sup>324</sup> However, like with the content itself, there is an almost suspicious absence of any tangible information in the titles concerning details of events, such as the doubtlessly traumatic imprisonment.

The titles of the first two poems, faintly inked, offer certain geographical clues. These two poems and especially the title to the first poem alone already roughly sketch the greatest stop on a

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the City [Walls]’) in line 186, convey a sense of immediacy and authenticity. However, the term *ji shi* (‘An Occasional Scene’) in the former title, though conveying a certain urgency, appears to be a commonly used term in poem titles. For similar titles in works attributed to Du Fu, see Owen, Warner, and Kroll 2016, 166; for those attributed to Meng Haoran, see Kroll and Owen 2021, 104, 320, 384, and 460. Thus, rather than being unique cases, these expressions can be conventions used in occasional titles.

<sup>322</sup> The poems begin in lines 91 and 94.

<sup>323</sup> Chai 1982, 71–72 understands the poems in a chronological sense. Demiéville 1987, 319, n. 3 likewise presents the poems as a sequence attributed to a single author. However, despite proposing potential travel routes linking Lake Qinghai with the *Chiling* mountain range via *Baishui* and *Linfan*, he also suggests that attempting to find a continuous travel route within these poems may be futile.

<sup>324</sup> *Zhi ji* is used in the titles in lines 110, 114, 130, 156, and 181. *Guren* is included in the titles in lines 153, 181, 219, and 220. *Dian xia* appears in the title of line 140.

constructed travel route. The title of the first poem reads: *Dong chu Dunhuang jun ru Tuihun guo zhao fa Maquan zhi zuo* 冬出燉煌郡入退渾國朝發馬圈之作 (‘Work About Departing in Winter from Dunhuang Commandery to Enter the State of the Tuihun [Nomads]’), At Morning Departing Towards Maquan[kou]’).<sup>325</sup> The poem also mentions Maquankou (no. 1 on Fig. 40) and the Yang pass (blue circle in Fig. 40).<sup>326</sup> The Tuihun tribe, of Mongolic origin, settled in the in the region of Qinghai 青海, far to the southeast of Dunhuang (No. 2.b. in Fig. 40).<sup>327</sup> The title to the second poem states: *Zhi Moli hai fenghuai Dunhuang zhi ji* 至墨離海奉懷敦煌知己 (‘Reaching the Sea at Moli, Respectfully Offering [This Poem] With Deepest Affections to an Intimate Friend at Dunhuang’).<sup>328</sup> The Sea at Moli could refer to a sea north of the *Moli jun* 墨離軍 (‘Moli Commandery’) in Guazhou, (No. 2.a. on Fig. 40), or, more likely, to the Tuihun settlement mentioned in the first title.<sup>329</sup> Hence, already the first title effectively outlines a traveller’s journey from Dunhuang through Maquankou, with the destination of Qinghai, which is first mentioned only in the title to the eighth poem in Section 7.<sup>330</sup>

Notably, there is a sudden change in travel direction between the first two poems and the subsequent ones.<sup>331</sup> The change could be attributed to the period of captivity. For example, Chai suggests that the initial poems merely depict a routine envoy journeying southwest via the Yan pass towards Tuihun. It is not until the ninth poem that subtle hints emerge suggesting the envoy’s loss of freedom and a subsequent journey eastwards.<sup>332</sup> Given that the two poems in faint ink were included later in the section, it is also plausible that the scribe found their content fitting descriptions of the early stages of a journey but had to contextualise mentioned locations such as the Yang pass. Seen from this perspective, the titles serve to navigate contradictory information within the content and paracontent to convey a coherent message.

Apart from the locations mentioned in these first two titles, the subsequent titles conspicuously lack any tangible information. Only three further places are explicitly mentioned.

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<sup>325</sup> In line 107.

<sup>326</sup> Wen 2023, 129.

<sup>327</sup> Demiéville 1987, 308, n. 3.

<sup>328</sup> In line 110.

<sup>329</sup> Demiéville 1987, 309, n. 1. For the first *Molijun* 墨離軍, see for instance the JTS, 1386.

<sup>330</sup> In line 123. Only one further title in line 128, mentions Qinghai.

<sup>331</sup> For different opinions about the travel route, see also Zhu 2021, 133–135.

<sup>332</sup> See Chai 1982, 71–73 and Chai 1983, 63.

The next mention of a more specific location is *Chiling* 赤嶺, a mountain range east of Qinghai (light purple in Fig. 40).<sup>333</sup> This is followed by a mention of *Baishui* 白水.<sup>334</sup> *Baishui* likely refers to *Baishui jun* 白水軍, an old Chinese stronghold, northeast of the *Chiling*, a mountain range (no.3 in Fig. 40).<sup>335</sup> Lastly, one title mentions Linfan 臨蕃, which is located south of *Baishui jun* (no. 4 in Fig. 40).<sup>336</sup>

Unlike Section 7, every poem in Section C is titled. The title of the first poem mentions a journey to Ganzhou, a place not referenced elsewhere in either Section 7 or Section C.<sup>337</sup> However, the poem itself mentions Zhangye 張掖, which is located within Ganzhou. Zhangye is situated north of Qinghai 青海 (No. 4 in Fig. 40). The initial title in Section 7 informs the reader that the journey concludes at Qinghai as final destination. This suggests that Zhangye is to be understood as yet another stop along the journey. Thus, the entirety of Section C appears to have been drafted as an insertion within the content of Section 7.

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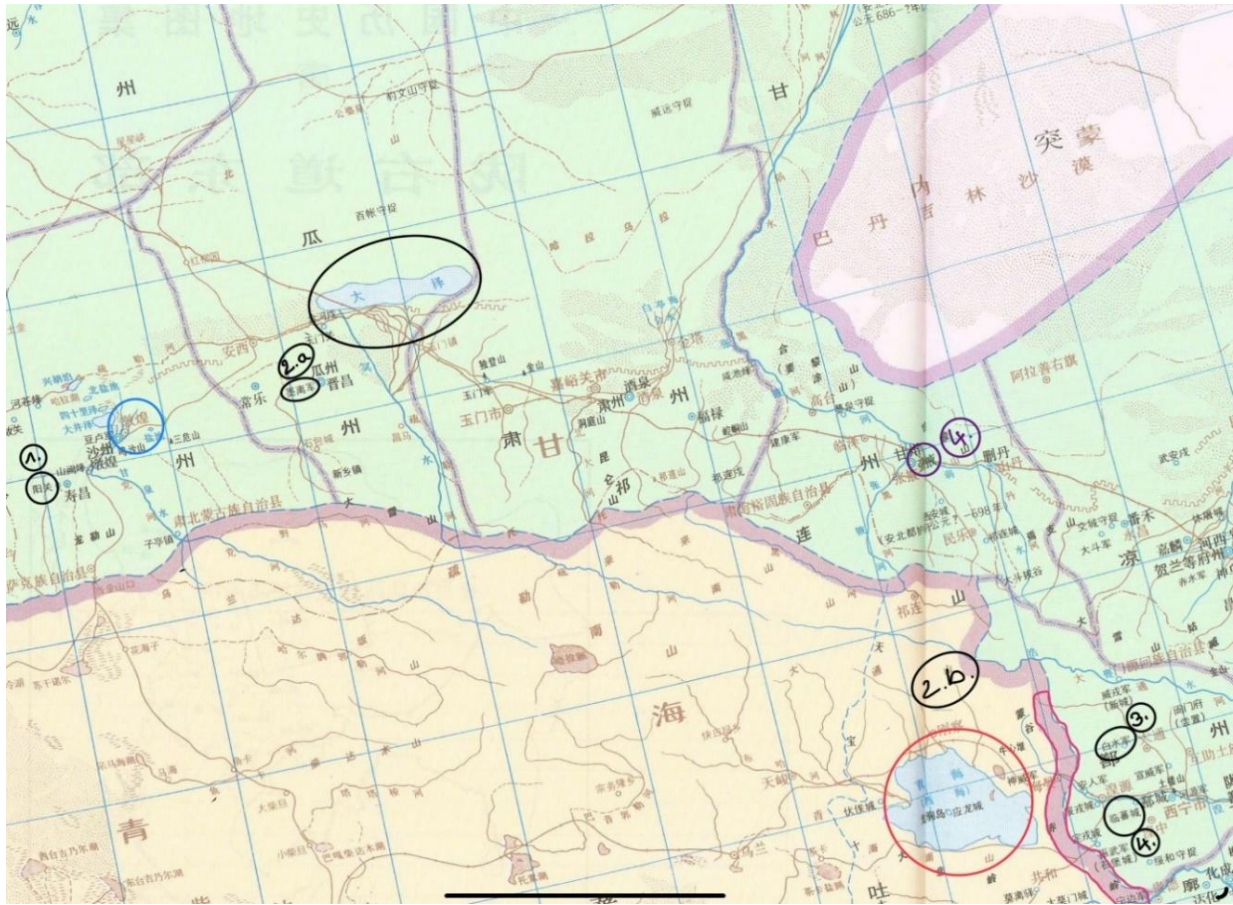
<sup>333</sup> This title reads *Ye du Chiling huai zhu zhi ji* 夜度赤嶺懷諸知己 (‘Crossing the Red Mountain Pass at Night, With Deepest Affections for All Intimate Friends’) in line 156. See Demiéville 1987, 319, n. 2.

<sup>334</sup> This is in the title *Baishui gurong jian ku gu zhi zuo* 晚次白水古戍見枯骨之作 (‘Work on Staying over the Night at the Old Frontier Baishui and Seeing Dry Bones’) in line 159.

<sup>335</sup> See also Demiéville 1987, 319, n. 3.

<sup>336</sup> This title is in line 161, which goes: *Wan qiu zhi Linfan bei jin zhi zuo* 晚秋至臨蕃被禁之作 (‘Work on An Autumn Night Arriving Close to Linfan and Being Taken into Custody’). Demiéville 1987, 319, n. 3 states that the stronghold of Linfan is situated 60 *li* west of the *Heyuan jun* 河源軍 (Heyuan Commandery).

<sup>337</sup> This is the title in line 103 on the verso. Another title in line 121 potentially mentions a location: *Zhi dan he tong qian zhi zou* 至淡河同前之作 (‘Work Same as Previous, About Reaching Danhe’). Demiéville 1987, 332, n.1 discusses uncertainty regarding the interpretation of the character *dan* 淡 (‘bland’), whether it means *dan* 澹 (‘bubbling’) or is a proper noun.



**Figure 40:** Section view of the map in Tan 1982, 5: 61–62, on which regions around Dunhuang (blue circle) possibly referenced in the poems are marked.

Unusual terms appear in some titles throughout MS C, which are not found in other Dunhuang manuscripts or titles to transmitted poems. The inclusion of such terms indicates that the person responsible for adding the titles, which in case of MS C was likely the scribe, was probably not a Chinese speaker. For instance, three titles in MS C include the word *zhi* 至 to indicate arrival at a certain destination, a usage known from Mongolian travel itineraries.<sup>338</sup> Fifteen titles end with *zhi zuo* 之作, an expression not found in other Dunhuang manuscripts, where the titles typically end with *zuo* 作 only.<sup>339</sup> This unusual expression serves as further evidence that *zuo* 作 is to be read in its nominal sense. Another example is the term *fei suo* 非所 ('A Place Not To

<sup>338</sup> These are the titles in line 110 and 161 in Section 7, and the title in line 121 in Section C, see Wen 2023, 322, n. 2.

<sup>339</sup> These titles appear in lines 18, 107, 117, 123, 128, 159, 161, 164, 192, and 219 on the recto as well as the titles in lines 30, 106, 119, 121, and 124 on the verso.

Be’), which typically refers to prisons and border areas but is otherwise rarely included in Chinese poems and respective titles.<sup>340</sup> Although further research is needed for more conclusive results, these observations suggest that the unusual titles are added by the scribe of MS C himself and that he may not have been a native Chinese speaker.

Other components in the titles of MS C can also be found in titles on other Dunhuang manuscripts, suggesting common structural elements. Based on such structural characteristics, assumptions can be made concerning the evolution and changes in paracontent. For instance, some titles follow a pattern where the first part describes an occasion, while the second part serves as an explanation to information of the first part. This second part typically begins with *ci* 此 (**‘this’**). It can be assumed that the second part originally started out as a comment but gradually became integrated into the title itself. The structure can be found in a title on MS C, which goes: *Zao xia ting gugu shi sheng, ci niao ming ze sui ren* 早夏聽穀穀師聲此鳥鳴則歲稔 (‘In Early Summer, Hearing *Gu Gu* Sounds; When **This** Birds Cries, the Year Has a Good Harvest’).<sup>341</sup> A similar pattern is observed in MS A, where a title goes: *Suiyang song Wei canjun huan Fen shang ci gong yuankun ren Suiyang canjun* 睢陽送韋參軍還汾上此公元昆任睢陽參軍 (‘In Suiyang, Sending Adjutant Wei Back Onto the Fen River; **This** Lord’s Elder Brother Serves as Adjutant of Suiyang’).<sup>342</sup> Direct evidence that the second part started as commentary is found for a case on the verso of MS C, where a partially legible sentence beneath the title begins with six characters the same size as the title, namely *ci bian dai shu ji cheng* 此便代書寄呈 [...] (**‘This** is thus sent in lieu of a letter to present [...]), and continues in smaller, illegible characters.<sup>343</sup> Despite some uncertainties regarding the visual organisation, it is plausible that the scribe initially copied an existing commentary in the same size as the title before realising it was a commentary and continuing with smaller characters.

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<sup>340</sup> This term is mentioned in four titles of Section 7. The titles are written in lines 148, 179, 194, and 223. The term is already documented from the *Hou Han shu*, see Luo 1993, 781.

<sup>341</sup> This title is in line 349, Section 12, recto of MS C.

<sup>342</sup> See line 10 of MS A.

<sup>343</sup> Beneath the title in line 103. Xu 2000, 754, n.1 includes the two characters *jiangjun* 將軍 (‘General’) of the next line to the sentence. Xu interprets the mainly illegible characters in smaller size as 尚書張判官. However, this reading may not be entirely accurate. From what can still be discerned, it appears to include the characters 託字張湖 [ ]郎 [...].

Above, I explored the multifaceted functions of title elements in this section. It is evident that titles for both prose and poetry adhere to a consistent structure, first offering details on the background, topic, or occasion of a text, and frequently concluding with terms directly referring to the text. This holds true even for occasional titles, where terms like *zuo* are meant nominally rather than verbally. Consequently, determining the origin of a title, whether it was authored by the original writer or added later, has to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The diverse purposes of titles added later, especially occasional ones, is directly evident in Sections 7 (recto) and C (verso). Here, the scribe's intention extends beyond introducing individual poems; rather, titles interconnect and frame the entire content within overarching themes – such as a journey from Dunhuang to Qinghai and eventual captivity. While such titles smooth over discrepancies in content, some ambiguities persist, such as conflicting travel directions. The higher frequency of titles in Section C suggest a more deliberate planning. The mention of Ganzhou, north of Qinghai, suggests that the scribe intended to integrate the content of Section C as an intermediate stop between content of Section 7. Consequently, it is crucial to scrutinise the actual nature of each title separately, but also in conjunction to preceding and subsequent titles.

Uncommon terms in the occasional titles offer valuable clues concerning MS C and manuscript culture in general. Terms absent from titles of other Dunhuang manuscripts or transmitted poems in general suggest that the scribe himself was not a Chinese speaker – further research is needed to ascertain the potential Mongolic influence. Conversely, structural parallels with titles in other Dunhuang manuscripts illustrate how different paracontent merges either with titles or can gradually become visually organised as a preface, depending on the provided information.

### **Author names**

Author names beneath titles to individual poems and prose texts are scarce.<sup>344</sup> Some indications, such as An Ya 安雅 beneath the title Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 can be either interpreted as author name or as other paracontent, e.g. as a title.<sup>345</sup> There are two other Dunhuang manuscripts with

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<sup>344</sup> The attribution of certain poems to specific authors in other sources, as documented in Xu 2000, 692–746, warrants further examination into whether they are later additions or possible omissions by the scribe of MS C.

<sup>345</sup> Line 3 of the fragment Dx.3871.

this text, one of which has the character *ci* 詞 ('lyrics') after the two characters.<sup>346</sup> For Chai Jianhong, this indicates that it is not an author's name, but the name of a music tune onto which this text was sung. Chai suggests this, not least due to the prevalence of dances in Zhaojun's story, and assumes an 'elegant (*ya* 雅) melody from Anguo 安國.<sup>347</sup>

In Section 9, beneath the title *Gaoxing ge* ('Song of Happiness') follows the author name, *Jiangzhou cishi Liu Changqing* 江州刺史劉長卿 ('Prefect of Jiangzhou, Liu Changqing'). However, it is unclear whether this refers to the well-known poet Liu Changqing, who never served as Prefect of Jiangzhou, or to another, lesser-known individual with the same name.<sup>348</sup>

In Section 13, beneath the title of the prose text, is the name Dou Hao 竇昊. Demiéville interprets this name as Dou Wu 竇吳, noting that Wu as a personal name is unusual.<sup>349</sup> The more commonly accepted reading is Dou Hao, which aligns better with the character in MS C. There is a mention of a person with this name in the *Zaixiang shixi biao* 宰相世系表 of the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書, where he is referred to as *Ningyuan jiangjun* 寧遠將軍 ('General of Ningyuan') and introduced as the son of Dou Xian 竇銑, who lived during the reigns of the Emperors Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762) and Suzong 肅宗 (711–762).<sup>350</sup>

In Section A on the verso, two author names are listed. The first author's name appears beneath the title *Jiang xing yu meihua zhi zuo* 江行遇梅花之作 ('Work About Walking at the River and Encountering Plum Blossom'). The inclusion of the term *zhi zuo* in the title, as discussed above, indicates that the title was likely added by the scribe rather than the author of the poem. The name given is that of the renowned poet Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770). This attribution is unique to MS C and not found in other sources. Thus, its authenticity is a subject of scholarly debates.<sup>351</sup> The attribution is likely difficult to trace in retrospect, however, the fact that his name appears directly on MS C suggests that the poem was associated with his name for certain reasons at least from the production of MS C onwards.

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<sup>346</sup> These are P.2673 with the character *ci* and P.4994.

<sup>347</sup> Chai 2000 (1983) a, 25–26. The identification of *Zhao langzhong* 趙郎中 ('Gentleman of the Inner Court, Zhao') in line four on ㄉx.3871 poses a similar ambiguity, as noted by Xu 2000, 693, n.1.

<sup>348</sup> See the information on author names in Chapter 3.

<sup>349</sup> Demiéville 1987, 292, n.3.

<sup>350</sup> Chai 2000 (1983) a, 19–20.

<sup>351</sup> See for instance Xu 2000, 78, n. 1 and Xu 2000, 748, n.1.

The second author's name, Ma Yunqi 馬雲奇, appears beneath the title *Huaisu shi caoshu ge* 懷素師草書歌 ('Song about the Cursive Script of Master Huaisu'). My preliminary investigation found no records of Ma Yunqi in historical sources such as the dynastic histories or relevant Tang poetry collections.<sup>352</sup>

In sum, the scarce author attributions on this scroll indicate their limited role in content compilation. For most authors mentioned, little information exists. The poem attributed to Cen Shen showcases how Dunhuang manuscripts may preserve lost information. However, verifying such attributions is nearly impossible without explicit statements in reliable sources, which are rare. Instead, attributions in Dunhuang manuscripts shed light on prevailing beliefs about authors at certain times and, with enough evidence, can be traced back to specific scribes.

#### 4. 6 Prefaces and Further Paracontent

In this section, I typically focus on prefaces. In MS C, there is only one preface to the poem cycle titled *Hujia shiba pai* in Section 8. The preface explains that the text was inspired by the tune of Cai Yan 蔡琰, in which she expressed her experience of abduction and life in border regions.<sup>353</sup> As indicated above, I count this not as paracontent but as an integral part of the text, since it appears in similar form on two other Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>354</sup> In MS C, there are also several further short sentences on both recto and verso, which differ in position and character size from typical prefaces. Many questions arise concerning these sentences, including who added them, why, and when.

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<sup>352</sup> Modern scholars attribute additional poems on the scroll to this author based on criteria such as the sequential arrangement of poems. For an overview, refer to Xu 2000, 686 and 689.

<sup>353</sup> See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of the content of the preface on MS B.

<sup>354</sup> Similar versions of the preface exist in two further Dunhuang manuscripts, P.284v and on MS B. MS B includes only Liu Shang's name following this preface. MS C and P.2845v also state his rank before the name. Despite slight variations in wording, the content of all three prefaces is close enough to suggest a common source text. Scholarship on the *Hujia shiba pai* and on questions such as the authorship of the preface in the Dunhuang manuscripts is collected in *Wenxue yichan* 1959.

In MS C, the *Hujia shiba pai* uniquely features an additional short sentence and the nineteenth stanza. The sentence's unusual placement in a separate line between the eighteenth and nineteenth stanza as well as the information it provides defy a straightforward categorisation; it could be seen as a title, a commentary, or even as a preface, yet it does not align neatly with the conventions on Dunhuang manuscripts for any such paracontent (Orange in Fig. 41).<sup>355</sup>

For instance, modern scholarship often considers *Mao yaya* 毛押牙 ('Clerk Mao') mentioned in the sentence as the name of an author.<sup>356</sup> This contradicts the convention in Dunhuang manuscripts of naming authors beneath titles. Alternatively, the sentence may be viewed as a kind of colophon, yet it lacks the typical elements of such colophons in Dunhuang manuscripts, which name a scribe and state details about the production of the text, often even recording dates.

Several critical questions are difficult to answer. These include whether the mentioned Clerk Mao is truly an author's name, whether the scribe copied this addition from a *Vorlage* or added it himself and whether Clerk Mao and the scribe are the same person. Nevertheless, the atypical position of the sentence sheds light on scribal practices. The sentence could be understood as an indication for a transitional phase, where the conventions of placing paracontent begin to change.

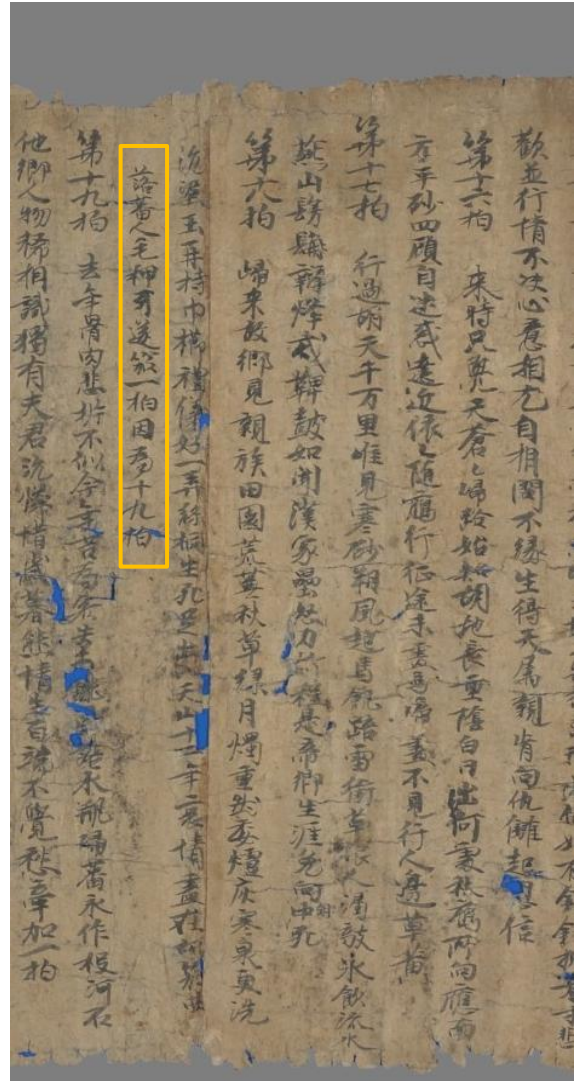


Figure 41: Section view on the additional short sentence in the *Hujia shiba pai* on MS C. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>355</sup> For instance, the nineteenth poem already has its own subtitle.

<sup>356</sup> The complete sentence reads: *Luo fan ren Mao yaya sui jia yi pai yin wei shijiu pai* 落蕃人毛押牙遂笳一拍因為十九拍 ('Having Fallen [into Captivity] at Tibet, the Clerk Mao Carries the [Hu]jia on [with] a Poem, thus, [this] Makes Nineteen Poems'). Xu 2000, 730 suggests *jia* 加, meaning that 'Clerk Mao thereupon adds a Poem'. Considering that the scribe is most likely not a Chinese speaker, I opt for the more difficult reading here.

However, when viewed alongside the unconventional wording in titles on MS C, it is reasonable to assume that the placement of the sentence reflects the scribe's unique scribal habits, likely reflecting a limited familiarity with written Chinese conventions.

Yet another short sentence on the recto is included after the title *Kong Zhang dai Li Yong si biao* 孔璋代李邕死表 ('Manifesto about Kong Zhang Dying instead of Li Yong').<sup>357</sup> It begins at the upper margin of a new line and reads: *Buyi shen Kong Zhang mei si xian shu* 布衣神孔璋昧死獻書 ('The Commoner Kong Zhang, Disregarding the Risk of Death, Presents a Letter [to the Throne]'). While the exact nature of this sentence also awaits further comparison, it is clear that this sentence adds depth to the information provided in the title by elaborating on Kong Zhang's courageous act and underscores the risk involved in his actions.<sup>358</sup>

On the verso, instead of prefaces, there are three distinct cases of shorter sentences. The first case consists of six only partially legible characters *ci bian dai shu ji cheng* 此便代書寄呈 [...] ('This is thus sent in lieu of a letter to present [...]'). followed by smaller illegible characters reaching the bottom of the line. As discussed earlier, sentences beginning with *ci* 此 ('this') often integrate explanations to titles into the titles.

Secondly, beneath the title *Bai yun ge* 白雲歌 ('Song About the White Clouds'), a shorter sentence reads: *Yu shi luo shusu sui fan jun wang zhi gan ci er zuo* 予時落殊俗隨蕃軍望之感此而作 ('I at that time happened to fall [into captivity to those with] different customs, and following the Tibetan Army I gaze at [it] and feel, thus [I] made [this poem]').<sup>359</sup> The smaller-sized characters already indicate that this sentence is a commentary. A similar case can be found on Dunhuang manuscript P.3862, where a smaller-sized commentary is written beneath the title *Yan ge xing* 燕歌行.<sup>360</sup> This commentary reads: *Ke you cong yuanrong chusai er huan zhe zuo Yang ge xing yi shi Shi, gan zhengshu zhi shi, zuo ci Yan ge xing* 客有從元戎出塞而還者,作燕歌行以示適,感征戍之事,作此燕歌行 ('There was a Traveller, Having Returned from Following the

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<sup>357</sup> See the description of Section 5 on MS C in this chapter.

<sup>358</sup> A comprehensive evaluation necessitates additional comparisons with other Dunhuang manuscripts. Hence, the assessment of this sentence remains preliminary.

<sup>359</sup> Line 83.

<sup>360</sup> Line 71 on P.3862.

Supreme Commander as He Departed the Fortress, Composed a *Yan ge xing* and Presented It to [Gao?] Shi. Feeling the Matters of the Garrison, [He] Made this *Yan ge xing*'). The sentences share similar structures, including phrases such as *gan ci er zuo* to introduce background information on the production of a poem. Since these sentences are comments on the texts rather than the titles, they could potentially be considered as prefaces added by certain copyists. Over time, the visual organisation might reflect this shift, with commentaries transitioning from smaller-sized characters beneath titles to normal-sized characters forming a preface, which starts at the upper margin of a new line.

Thirdly, there is a brief comment in small characters at the end of the poem titled *Jiu ri tong zhu gong shu su zhi zuo* 九日同諸公殊俗之作 ('Work About On the Ninth Day Together with All the Esteemed Lords [Being at] the Place With the Different Customs').<sup>361</sup> This comment directly relates to the poem's last verse line: *ziran xinzui yi ru ni* 自然心醉已如泥 ('In a natural way the mind is drunk, already like mud'). The comment reads: *Taichang qi yue: yi ri bu zhai zui ru ni* 太常妻曰一日不齋醉如泥 ('In *The Wife of the Grand Master of Ceremonies*, it says: 'In a single day of not being abstentious, he is drunken like mud').<sup>362</sup> The comment thus functions as a means to provide reference for a certain expression.

In summary, MS C features various forms of paracontent. Notably, there is only one preface, namely to the *Hujia shiba pai* in Section 8. Since this preface appears on two further Dunhuang manuscripts, it is already an integral part of the text and does not count as paracontent of MS C only. An unusual short sentence and a nineteenth stanza follow this text, suggesting unique scribal habits rather than evolutions in paracontent. On the verso, three brief comments exemplify diverse processes by which paracontent can change. Some comments clarify details mentioned in titles, potentially can become parts of the titles. Conversely, comments offering background information on subsequent texts resemble prefaces and may be visually restructured accordingly in the process of copying. Lastly, there is a comment providing reference for an

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<sup>361</sup> Line 106.

<sup>362</sup> This commentary pertains to an anecdote from the *Hou Han shu* concerning the Grand Master of Ceremonies, Zhou Ze (ca. 80 CE). For an analysis of this anecdote, refer to Brashier 2011, 307–308. The phrase *zui ru ni* 醉如泥 ('drunken like mud') appears to be a popular expression and is also present in verse line three of the *Gaoxing ge*.

expression used in the content itself. Such comments may undergo similar assimilation processes and can potentially become parts of the content itself.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

The codicology of MS C indicates that the sheets were assembled into a scroll before use. Contrary to conventional practises of writing from left to right, or recto to verso, the scribe, a professional with fluent hand, appears to have added sections at different times, alternating between recto and verso. This usage resembles that of a blank notebook, suggesting scrolls were more versatile objects than commonly perceived. The varied visual organisation of sections likely stems from the scribe copying content from distinct sources, rather than a deliberate effort to aid later readers. This reinforces the notebook-like nature of the scroll, where neat organisation was secondary to the act of recording information.

MS C also stands out for its numerous poems and prose texts referencing Dunhuang and nearby regions, hinting at a local origin for its production. This context is reinforced by the unconventional wording in titles as well as the peculiar placement of the sentence to the additional nineteenth poem of the *Hujia shiba pai*. These factors suggest that the scribe was not a native speaker of Chinese. Consequently, the texts on MS C likely portray China not as a central focus but as just one of many powers and regions in the scribe's worldview, alongside Tibet.

The content of MS C mirrors that of MS A and B, focusing primarily on themes of warfare, journeys, and longing for loved ones. However, there are additional themes, such as political matters. Many sections reveal different working processes by the scribe. This is especially evident from Sections 7 and C, where the poems were collated, likely from heterogeneous sources and without titles. From these two sections, it becomes apparent that occasional titles, where ending terms such as *zuo* 作 are to be understood in their nominal sense, can also be later additions, serving to create textual coherence for a greater number of poems.

The analysis reveals how titles establish connections between preceding and following texts. However, these connections can be obscured when poems are separated and categorised according to different criteria, such as individual authors. This can be best exemplified using the poem attributed to Cen Shen. The use of the term *zhi zuo* in the title *Jiang xin yu meihua zhi zuo* 江行遇梅花之作 (‘Work About Walking at the River and Encountering Plum Blossom’) in

Section C is indicative of unique scribal habits and serves a specific function within the overall content on MS C. However, when poems are extracted and grouped solely by later attributions to an author, e.g. Cen Shen, there is a risk that the title's wording may be misread as a literal account of his personal experiences, rather than as parts of scribal convention.



## 5 Student Manuscripts

Numerous studies analyse manuscripts produced and used by students, who are often affiliated with monasteries (hereafter: student manuscripts).<sup>363</sup> These studies thoroughly examine various aspects of the manuscripts, including their colophons, main texts, additional poems, palaeographic features, and notes on the verso.<sup>364</sup> They reveal the diverse stages of the students learning process, from acquiring basic literacy skills to advanced calligraphy practice and textual annotations.<sup>365</sup> Additionally, studies tracing titles and texts on the verso provide insight into the overall content to be learned by students.<sup>366</sup>

In this chapter, my primary aim is to explore the reasons for and methods of producing student manuscripts. The analysis focuses on texts from MTM scrolls and booklets with colophons mentioning students. Expanding the corpus, all further MTMs containing these known texts were included, and their additional contents traced. Other manuscripts mentioning students in colophons are excluded, as they cannot be directly traced as textual combinations on MTMs. While my focus will be the introduction of the material evidence of the traceable MTMs, I will elaborate on this situation in the conclusion. However, where relevant, comparisons to such other manuscripts are included. Expansion stopped when inconsistencies in handwriting, visual organisation, or content suggested the manuscript was not produced by a student. An exception is booklet P.3821, which highlights the challenges of making such distinctions.

In modern scholarship, texts are often extracted from their original context in an MTM and categorised into new groups based on perceived differences in content, such as ‘literary’ or ‘didactic’ texts. However, these divisions overlook the practices and reasons behind the creation of the MTMs. Therefore, I approach the texts as part of the MTMs which were produced in educational settings. Additionally, I provide an overview of Single-Text Scrolls, which feature the traced texts but exhibit distinct features. Understanding these scrolls can shed light on the differing motivations behind producing MTMs as opposed to Single-Text Scrolls.

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<sup>363</sup> The previous scholarship is summarised in Galambos 2020a, 85–90.

<sup>364</sup> Galambos 2020a, 91–137.

<sup>365</sup> Zürcher 1989, 295–337. For a categorisation of student manuscripts based on such aspects, see Zheng and Zhu 2002, 27–28

<sup>366</sup> Galambos 2016b.

## 5.1 MTM Scrolls

There are seven MTM scrolls that share at least one text with another MTM.<sup>367</sup> Additionally, the verso of scroll Pelliot chinois 3716 (hereafter: P.3716v) contains four texts, three of which are known from MTM scrolls. Although P.3716v was produced with different core texts on the recto that are unrelated to students and thus was not initially produced in the student context, the relevant texts on the verso warrant its inclusion in this study.

### 5.1.1 Codicology

The seven scrolls range in height from 28 cm to 30.9 cm. While the sheet lengths of six scrolls are known, they vary considerably.<sup>368</sup> The shortest sheets measure 41 cm.<sup>369</sup> The longest sheets measure 44 cm.<sup>370</sup> Within each scroll, sheet lengths only vary slightly, with deviation ranging from 0.5 cm to 0.9 cm.<sup>371</sup>

None of the MTMs are complete, suggesting they were originally longer with additional content. Five scrolls are incomplete both at beginning and end, while two are incomplete only at the beginning but complete at the end.<sup>372</sup> Damage likely occurred for various reasons. For instance, on P.2718, there is an irregular tear at the first sheet with a significant indentation. The damage appears to result from a deliberate attempt to divide the sheet precisely between two distinct texts, so as to preserve the titles of both with their respective texts (titles in white in Fig. 42). This is confirmed by projecting the traced tear line of the first sheet onto the two surviving texts (red in Fig. 43).<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> The scrolls are P.3416, P.2747+P.2648 + P.3386 (+3582), P.2564, P.3797, S.3835, P.2718 and P.2633.

<sup>368</sup> The sheet measurements of S.3835 are not listed in the catalogue by Giles 1957, 243.

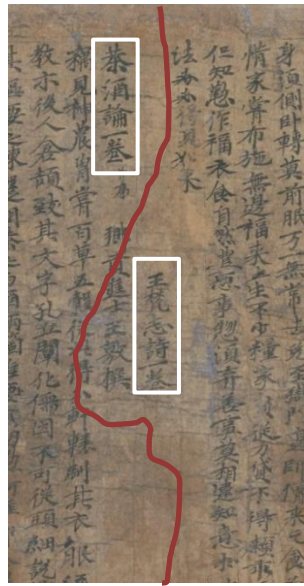
<sup>369</sup> P.3797.

<sup>370</sup> P.3416.

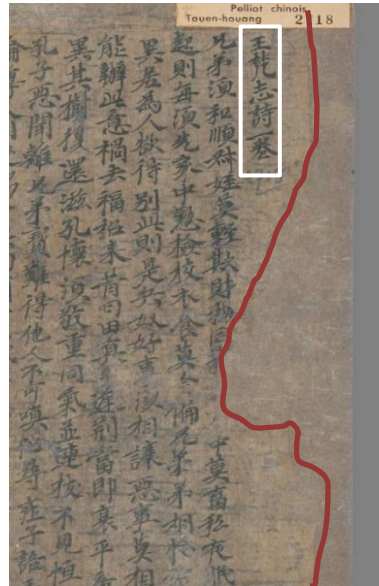
<sup>371</sup> Scroll P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+3582) presents challenges in evaluation due to its fragmentary condition, which is why I excluded it from the assessment. Nonetheless, the relatively preserved sheets of the second fragment suggest minimal variation in sheet lengths.

<sup>372</sup> The former scenario applies for P.3416, P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+3582), P.2564, P.3797, and S.3835. The latter scenario is evident for P.2718 and P.2633.

<sup>373</sup> Traces of the author's name might theoretically still be visible beneath the head titles. However, as the initial text consist of Wang Fanzhi poems, which typically lack author indications on Dunhuang manuscripts, it is unlikely that this scroll originally included an author's name. For Wang Fanzhi poems, see Chapter 2.



**Figure 42:** Line projected between the two contents on P.2718. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



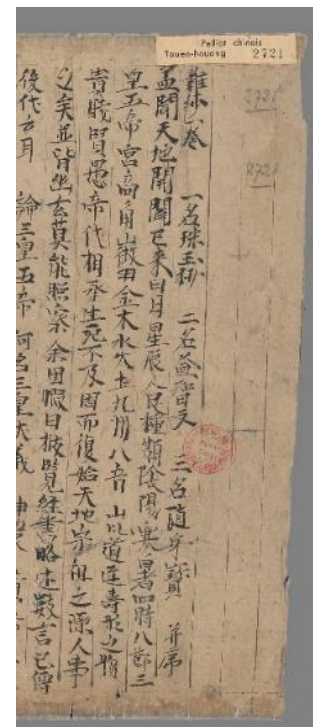
**Figure 43:** Tear traced in red at the beginning of P.2718. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

In contrast, neat cuts indicate at the repurposing of blank sheet portions at the end of scrolls to create new manuscripts. This practice is evidenced by a poem found on several student manuscripts:<sup>374</sup>

書後有殘紙  
不可列(裂)將歸  
雖然無手筆  
且作五言詩

After writing, some scrap of paper remains  
Not to be torn off and taken home  
Though I lack refined brushwork  
I nevertheless compose a pentasyllabic poem

Direct evidence for this scenario is absent in the seven MTMs examined here. However, similar examples can be observed in other student-produced manuscripts, such as scroll P.2721.<sup>375</sup> Here, the first sheet, measuring 29.3 cm, exhibits a neatly cut, slightly diagonal line. The space preceding the first text is ruled, with some remaining ruling strokes visible at the sheets border (Fig. 44).<sup>376</sup>



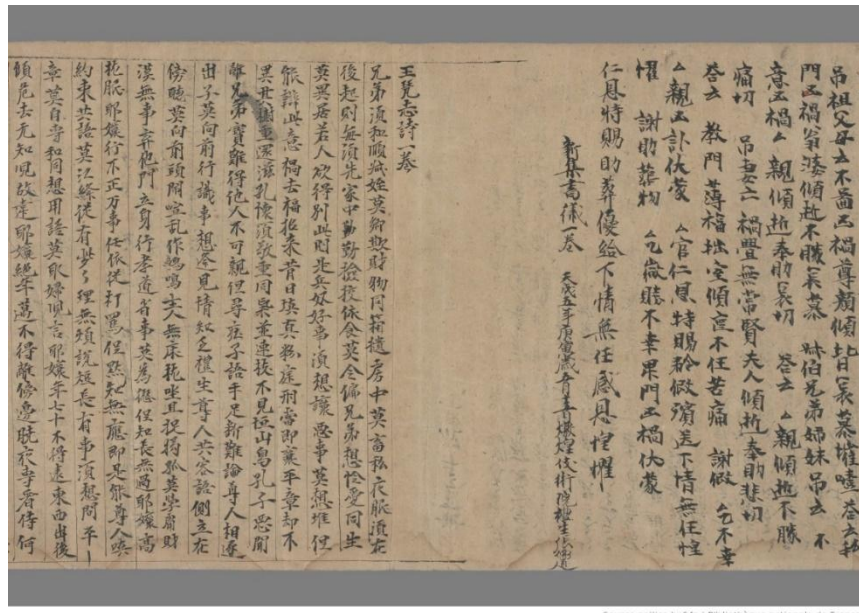
**Figure 44:** Section view of the beginning of P.2721. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>374</sup> For a slightly different translation, see Galambos 2020a, 109. For further analysis of this and related student manuscripts, see Galambos 2020a, 108–110.

<sup>375</sup> This scroll contains texts known to be copied by students; see Galambos 2020a, 100–104.

<sup>376</sup> This scroll is incomplete at the end.

In addition to the seven MTMs, there is scroll P.3716, measuring 28.7 x 503 cm, which is incomplete at both the beginning and end. Its complete sheets range between 44.5 and 45.5 cm long, showing minimal deviation.<sup>377</sup> The scroll originally consisted of two separate sections containing notes on lessons from the *Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra* (*Yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論), compiled by a disciple of Master Facheng 法成, as part of a larger corpus of manuscripts produced between 855 and 959.<sup>378</sup> On the verso, the latter half of a model letter is written in an angular hand and black ink.<sup>379</sup> After a substantial gap of blank space, the four literary texts, which are relevant for my analysis, appear in a different, more cursive hand (Fig. 45).



**Figure 45:** The verso of P.3716 exhibits the end of the model letter in a distinct hand on the right and the beginning of four literary texts on the left. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 5.1.2 Visual Organisation

Efforts for a neat visual organisation are visible in all seven MTMs and P.3716v, despite varying handwriting skills.<sup>380</sup> There are few deletions and additions, noticeable because they usually plot a character out entirely in black ink. There are downward strokes on P.3716 at the bottom of the

<sup>377</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>378</sup> For detailed analysis of the scroll, see Bregler 2018, 57–62. Moretti 2013 offers broader examination of this manuscript group.

<sup>379</sup> According to the colophon, this letter was copied in 930 by Zhang Rutong 張儒通, *lisheng* 禮生 (‘student of rites’) at the *jishuyuan* 技術院, see BnF 2006. For further exploration of Chinese epistolary literature, see Richter 2015.

<sup>380</sup> More fluent hands, like those on P.2718 and P.3716v, contrast with the less practiced hand on P.3793.

lines, which serve as hyphens to connect split words.<sup>381</sup> None of the scrolls have corrections in red ink, and except for a few lines on one scroll, none are punctuated.<sup>382</sup>

The sheets are ruled, with varying margins.<sup>383</sup> While there is little variation in lines per sheet, some scrolls feature a consistent number of characters per line, while others differ.<sup>384</sup> There is no clear correlation between the number of lines per sheet and sheet width, or the number of characters per line and scroll height.

Head and end titles typically mark the boundaries between texts, often accompanied by indentations between content and paracontent.<sup>385</sup> The textual divisions are clearly discernible on six scrolls, two require closer inspection.<sup>386</sup> Four MTMs and P.3716v have minimal blank space between content and paracontent, while three MTMs show more noticeable structural organisation, like blank space between verse lines.<sup>387</sup>

The ends of the scrolls likewise vary: On three, the texts end abruptly without titles, suggesting unfinished copying.<sup>388</sup> On three other MTMs, the texts have colophons, indicating completion.<sup>389</sup> Among these, one has significant blank space after the colophon, another has extra notes and a poem, and the last has a partially preserved colophon due to sheet damage.<sup>390</sup> Lastly, two MTMs are torn or cut off directly after the end title.<sup>391</sup>

### 5.1.3 Core Content

The seven MTMs and P.3716v together feature fifteen texts. In modern editions, texts are often categorised based on perceived content similarities, such as ‘literary’ or ‘didactic’.<sup>392</sup> However,

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<sup>381</sup> These have been introduced in a talk at the University of Cambridge by Galambos 2018.

<sup>382</sup> See the few punctuated lines in black ink at the end of the first text in scroll P.3797.

<sup>383</sup> The scroll P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+3582) has partially ruled margins, with the ruling stopping around the middle of the second part (P.2747). There is no ruling on the last part (P.2648), and the second content begins directly at the upper margin.

<sup>384</sup> On average, each complete sheet contains between 27 and 30 lines. Line lengths vary: on P.3416, they typically consist of 19 to 21 characters, while on P.2633, they range from 24 to 31 characters.

<sup>385</sup> See the explanations for head and end titles in Galambos 2020a, 50.

<sup>386</sup> The six scrolls are P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+3582), P.2718, P.2564, P.3797, S.3835, and P.3716v. The two scrolls are P.3416 and P.2633.

<sup>387</sup> The four MTMs with minimal space are P.3416, P.2718, P.2564, S.3835. The three MTMs with more notable spaces are P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+3582), P.2633, and P.3797.

<sup>388</sup> This is observed for P.2633, P.3797, and the literary texts on P.3716v.

<sup>389</sup> These are P.2718, scroll P.2747+P.2648+P.3386 (+P.3582), and S.3835.

<sup>390</sup> The first scroll is P.2718, the second is P.2747+P.2648+P.3386(+P.3582) and the third is S.3835.

<sup>391</sup> P.3416 and P.2564.

<sup>392</sup> The *Cha jiu lun* is considered vernacular literature in Zhang 2002, while the *Qianziwen* is viewed as an educational primer in Zheng and Zhu 2002.

these categories overlook reasons behind grouping of texts within the same MTMs. Moreover, most texts simultaneously combine humorous narratives with practical knowledge, often represented in literary form, such as dialogues and debates. Additionally, all texts, except one, are rhymed, suggesting that they serve dual purposes: to educate and entertain. Therefore, as a more neutral approach, I list all fifteen texts by lengths and summarise their topics.<sup>393</sup> On one manuscript, P.2633, three texts consist of multiple distinct parts. I indicate these texts with an asterisk as ‘\*P.2633’. Next, I discuss and chart the textual combinations on the MTMs.

***Da Han san nian Ji Bu ma zhen ciwen* 大漢三年季布罵陣詞文 (‘*Ciwen* on Ji Bu Cursing on the Battlefield in the Third Year of the Great Han’) (JB)**

This lengthy narrative spans 4474 characters, each verse line crafted with seven syllables and employing consistent end rhyme. It recounts Ji Bu’s insult to Liu Bang 劉邦 Bang (256/257–195 BCE), the King of Han, on the battlefield, despite which Ji Bu is later granted an official position.<sup>394</sup>

***Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教 (‘Family Instructions of the Grand Duke’) (TGJJ)**

This text comprises a total of 2661 characters. It begins with a preface spanning 139 characters, followed by the main text consisting of 2463 characters. It concludes with what can be considered a postface of an additional 60 characters.<sup>395</sup> Serving as an introductory guide for students, this primer facilitates the acquisition of basic knowledge of common characters. Additionally, it serves an instructional purpose by addressing the theme of proper conduct.<sup>396</sup>

***Wang Fanzhi shi* 王梵志詩 (‘Wang Fanzhi poems’) (WFZ)**

This text is part of a larger corpus of Wang Fanzhi poems, which is divided into various collections indicated by distinct counting systems in their titles. Firstly, there is a self-contained system marked by *juan shang* 卷上 (‘Upper Scroll’), *juan zhong* 卷中 (‘Middle Scroll’) and *juan xia* 卷

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<sup>393</sup> For insights into the time students might have spent copying assigned texts, see Galambos 2020a, 133–134.

<sup>394</sup> Rong 2013, 405.

<sup>395</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002, 349–350.

<sup>396</sup> Galambos 2020a, 137.

下 (‘Lower Scroll’).<sup>397</sup> Among these, only portions of the poems in *juan shang* and *juan zhong* are preserved, with no collection titled *juan xia*.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, there is a numerical counting system, with only *juan di san* 卷第三 (‘Scroll Number Three’) partially preserved. Finally, a self-contained text is indicated by *yi juan* 一卷 (‘One Scroll’) in its title. This is the only text preserved in its entirety in some Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>399</sup>

The Wang Fanzhi poems explore diverse themes, emphasising Buddhist retribution and social etiquette, hinting at educational aims. The *yi juan* collection consists of ninety-two heptasyllabic quatrains, totalling 1840 characters.<sup>400</sup> The initial seventy-two poems can be characterised as secular, while the final twenty poems exhibit more pronounced Buddhist themes.

### ***Xiaojing* 孝經 (‘Classic of Filial Piety’) (XJ)**

This 1800 character-text, found in the Dunhuang manuscripts in many copies, was part of the imperial examination system.<sup>401</sup> Despite of not being a primer originally, it is often used in educational settings due to its focus on filial piety.<sup>402</sup>

### ***Cha Jiu lun* 茶酒論 (‘Debate Between Tea and Wine’) (CJL)**

This text, consisting of 1010 characters, includes an 87-character preface followed by 923 characters of main text.<sup>403</sup> It humorously depicts a debate between tea and wine, abruptly ended by water, the common basis for both beverages.<sup>404</sup>

### ***Qianziwen* 千字文 (‘Thousand Character Text’) (QZW)**

This 1000-character text serves as a primer for character learning and introductory knowledge on various topics, including the universe, meteorology, natural science, society, history, and ethics.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> For the counting systems, see Zhang 1983, 310.

<sup>398</sup> Early scholars already noted the incomplete state of these collections, see for instance Demiéville 1982, 14.

<sup>399</sup> For instance, as first of the four texts on P.3716v.

<sup>400</sup> I adopted the character count from Xiang 1991, 17.

<sup>401</sup> Rong 2013, 371. I adapted the character count from Galambos 2020a, 102.

<sup>402</sup> Galambos 2020a, 101 and 106.

<sup>403</sup> This is my own count for P.2718.

<sup>404</sup> Wang, Pan 1996.

<sup>405</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002, 11. For the Dunhuang *Qianziwen* and the respective manuscripts, see *ibid*, 11–31.

***Yang Manshan yong Xiaojing* 楊滿山詠孝經 (‘Yang Manshan Chants the Classic of Filial Piety’) (YMSYXJ)<sup>406</sup>**

The 720-character text is organised with subtitles followed by two pentasyllabic quatrains, each summarising and elaborating on main points from the eighteen chapters of the *Xiaojing*.<sup>407</sup> Thus, this text can be viewed as an independently circulating commentary or summary.

***Jiu fu* 酒賦 (‘Rhapsody on Wine’) (JF)**

Based on editions, the poem consists of 21 verse lines, totalling 608 characters.<sup>408</sup> The poem is structured into three, three, seven, seven or seven syllable verse lines.<sup>409</sup> The theme focuses on carefree drinking of wine with wise men of old, such as the sages from the bamboo grove.<sup>410</sup>

***Yanzi fu* 晏子賦 (‘Rhapsody on Master Yan’) (YZF)**

The text, with 600 characters, recounts a tale from the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) about Master Yan.<sup>411</sup> Initially resembling a story from the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (‘Annals on Master Yan), it diverges as Master Yan is sent to Liang instead of Chu, and then is forced to enter through a dog lap due to his stature.<sup>412</sup> Despite attempts by the King of Liang to embarrass him with questions, Master Yan cleverly responds, answering even general knowledge inquiries with ease.<sup>413</sup>

***Bai niao ming* 百鳥名 (‘Names of The Hundred Birds’) (BNM)**

This 560-character text depicts a bird society mirroring human hierarchies.<sup>414</sup> Birds in official roles and those without, akin to common folk, assemble before their ruler, the phoenix.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> The character *shan* 山 is written as *chuan* 川 on P.2747, see my discussion concerning titles below.

<sup>407</sup> Xiang 2019, 152. I discount here titles and subtitles.

<sup>408</sup> I mainly used the edition by Wang 1987, 138–139.

<sup>409</sup> For a discussion of the Dunhuang manuscripts, see Wang 1987.

<sup>410</sup> Fu 2000, 16–21.

<sup>411</sup> This is an approximate character count for P.3716v.

<sup>412</sup> For the *Yanzi Chunqiu*, see Milburn 2016, 348.

<sup>413</sup> Zhang 1996, 340–355.

<sup>414</sup> This is an approximate character count for S.3835. For a study of the *Bai niao ming*, see Mayo 2000.

<sup>415</sup> Zhang 2002, 151–154.

**\*P.2633: *Yake xinfu wen* 齟齬新婦文 (‘Text on the Malicious New Wife’) (YCXFW)**

This content includes multiple distinct texts, totalling 481 characters.<sup>416</sup> The first, spanning 360 characters, describes a woman’s bad behaviours, such as cursing her husband and neglecting etiquette.<sup>417</sup> Following this are four more texts: twelve verses lamenting war, twelve stanzas discussing the double hours of day and night, an exhortation to study, and a section addressing challenges faced by newly married women.<sup>418</sup>

***Zhao Qia chou fu fu* 趙洽醜婦賦 (‘Rhapsody on the Ugly Wife [of] Zhao Qia’) (ZQCFF)<sup>419</sup>**

This text, comprising 351 characters, humorously portrays an unattractive woman, detailing her flaws and negative behaviour.<sup>420</sup> It ends with a lament about the worthlessness of life with such a wife, urging a swift separation.<sup>421</sup>

**\*P.2633: *Zheng yue meng chun you han* 正月孟春猶寒 (‘The First Month, First Month of Spring, It Is Still Cold’) (ZYCMYH)**

This section comprises 346 characters across four distinct texts.<sup>422</sup> It begins with epistolary formulas for each month, totalling 79 characters. This is the text to which the title belongs.<sup>423</sup> Following this is the start of a short model letter, encompassing 10 characters.<sup>424</sup> Then, there are 180 characters featuring text fragments from the *Kongzi beiwen shu* 孔子備問書 (‘Writing about the Detailed Questions by Confucius’).<sup>425</sup> This work utilises dialogues to impart knowledge on

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<sup>416</sup> This text on P.2633 is incomplete due to scroll damage. The text is also contained on P.2564 and S.4129. I consulted Demiéville 1959, 61–65 to estimate the character count, assuming that the text was originally complete.

<sup>417</sup> Demiéville 1959.

<sup>418</sup> The sequence of these texts in the three manuscripts is the same as documented by Demiéville 1959. This indicates they were integral by then.

<sup>419</sup> Zhao Qia is often interpreted as the author’s name, see for example Zhang 1996, 295. However, the characters are included in the title rather than added beneath it, indicating they are part of the topic, see Chapter 2.

<sup>420</sup> The character count for P.3716v is approximate due to numerous torn areas in the manuscript. I exclude deletions from the count, while including additions.

<sup>421</sup> Fu 2000, 50–51.

<sup>422</sup> Contained on P.2633.

<sup>423</sup> This text is found in eight manuscripts, believed to originate from educational contexts, as discussed by Ren 2019, 47–57. Hane 羽 663r follows this text with a segment of the *Zachao* 雜抄, as noted in Ren 2019, 56. However, due to differences in visual organisation, I assume that Hane 羽 663 was created under remarkably distinct circumstances, and do not trace any further combinations of the *Zachao*.

<sup>424</sup> For a study of Dunhuang model letters, see Zhang 2007.

<sup>425</sup> The text is contained on P.2570, P.2581, P.2594, and P.3756+P.2579. One further manuscript, P.3155 contains under this title a different text. Zheng and Zhu 2002, 194–277.

various subjects, including geography, society, and Buddhist teachings.<sup>426</sup> Finally, 77 characters from the *Xuanzong Huangdi yuzhi quan bai liao* 宣宗皇帝御製勸百寮 (‘Admonitions of the Officialdom Composed by His Majesty, the Emperor Xuanzong’) are included, marked by an individual preceding head title.<sup>427</sup>

***Xin ji yan fu jiao* 新集嚴父教 (‘Newly Collated Instructions of the Stern Father’) (XJYFJ)**

This 270-character text comprises nine sections, each with six verse lines of heptasyllabic verse. It offers guidance for younger brothers in daily life, with a repeated admonition to follow its advice.<sup>428</sup>

**\*P.2633: *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* 崔氏夫人訓女文 (‘Text about the Lady of the Cui Clan Instructing Females’) CSFRXNW)<sup>429</sup>**

This 224-character text begins with sixteen heptasyllabic verse lines. It advises young females on proper conduct, including interactions with their new family after marriage and behaviour in public settings.<sup>430</sup> This is followed by a four-line praise about the text and two additional poems, each composed of heptasyllabic quatrains, extend the text by 76 characters.<sup>431</sup>

Likely due to the incomplete nature of the manuscripts, a single text appears with varying frequency. One text is found on three MTMs, while six others are on two MTMs each. The majority of eight texts appear only once in an MTM. The coloured graph below also indicates that the combination of the texts varies each time, suggesting no fixed sequences (Fig. 46).<sup>432</sup> This implies individual or changing copying agendas. Scribes likely drew from multiple sources to produce their own MTMs.

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<sup>426</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002, 221–222.

<sup>427</sup> See BnF 2006. Fragments of the same text are also found on the verso of two additional manuscripts: P.2914 and P.3738.

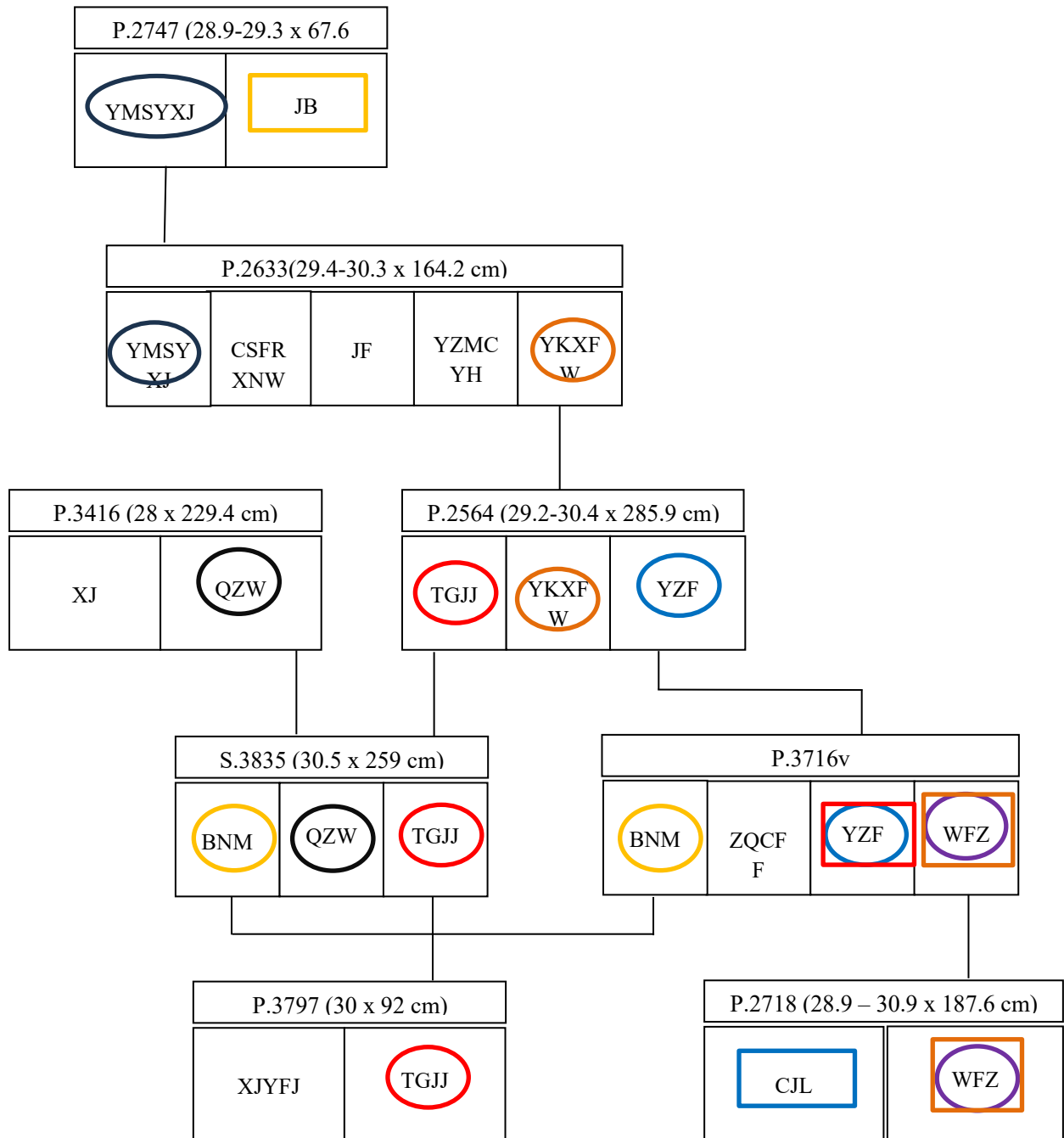
<sup>428</sup> For the manuscripts and a detailed introduction to the text, see Zheng and Zhu 2002, 402–408.

<sup>429</sup> The character *xun* 訓 is written as *yao* 要 in the title on P.2633. The rendering of the title here follows Zheng and Zhu 2002, 409.

<sup>430</sup> For a detailed introduction to the Dunhuang manuscripts and the text, see Zheng and Zhu 2002, 409–422.

<sup>431</sup> I discount here titles and subtitles.

<sup>432</sup> Please note that Fig. 46 and Fig. 50 are not meant to suggest any textual interdependences between the contents.



**Figure 46:** Graph illustrating shared content on each Student MTM scroll.

#### 5.1.4 Paracontent

In general, head and end titles to texts mark the textual boundaries on a manuscript.<sup>433</sup> However, author names appear only beneath a few head titles. Some texts feature prefaces, some of which are denoted by the additional indication *bing xu* 並序 (‘with preface’) in the head titles. Moreover, MTMs and Single-Text Scrolls alike often contain numerous colophons and similar lines, particularly when complete at their end. The following section examines the paracontent in greater detail, considering its stability, probable functions, and the circumstances of its use.

#### Titles

The titles are concise, summarising topics without excess detail.<sup>434</sup> While some names, like Ji Bu and Master Yan, are recognisable historical figures, most remain unknown. Action verbs appear in some titles, such as *xun* 訓 (‘instruct’) in *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* 崔氏夫人訓女文 (‘Text about the Lady of the Cui Clan Instructing Females’). This supports the argument previously made that phrases indicating an occasional nature are a part of the topic. Others, like *Qianziwen* 千字文 (‘Thousand Character Text’) denote the text form, while the title *Wang Fanzhi shi* 王梵志詩 (‘Wang Fanzhi poems’) serves as generic designation, likely including the name of Wang Fanzhi within the topic.<sup>435</sup> Many titles end with specific references to the texts content, using characters like *wen* 文 (‘text’), *fu* 賦 (‘rhapsody’) and *shi* 詩 (‘poems’). The diverse terms used indicate that the description of texts was at the discretion of the scribes, rather than following fixed genre categories.<sup>436</sup> As discussed previously, it is probable that some titles were added later.<sup>437</sup>

The texts often share identical head and end titles, even for such texts on more than one MTM, indicating that they are relatively stable integral parts of the texts, albeit with some potential

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<sup>433</sup> For a description of head and end titles, see Galambos 2020a, 50.

<sup>434</sup> *Da Han san nian Ji Bu ma Zhen ciwen* is an exceptionally long title.

<sup>435</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>436</sup> For an overview of literary texts by genre, see Rong 2013, 398–411.

<sup>437</sup> The introductions of such designations parallels the modern practice of assigning titles to untitled poems. For example, the poem cycle about the twelve months discussed in Chapter 3 is tentatively titled *Shi er yue shi* 十二月詩 (‘Poems on the Twelve Months’) in modern editions, see Xu 2000, 379.

for variation.<sup>438</sup> In only a few cases are end titles shorter than head titles.<sup>439</sup> There are two notable exceptions. One text has different titles on two MTM scrolls. On the first scroll, it is titled *Yang Manshan yong Xiaojing shi ba zhang* 楊滿山詠孝經十八章 (‘Yang Manshan chants the Classic of Filial Piety, Eighteen *zhang*’).<sup>440</sup> On the second scroll, it is titled *Yang Manchuan yong Xiaojing shi ba zhang* 楊滿川詠孝經壹拾捌章, 五言, 一名滿山 (‘Yang Manshan chants the Classic of Filial Piety, Eighteen *zhang*, Five Syllables, otherwise called: Manshan’).<sup>441</sup> This indicates that the scribe of the second scroll knew at least two title versions. However, both texts already include subtitles, structured similarly as the head title, suggesting stability in the content organisation.

Another exception is a text with only an end title, namely *Zheng yue meng chun you han* 正月孟春猶寒一本 (‘The First Month, First Month of Spring, It Is Still Cold, One Set’), which lacks titles on other Dunhuang manuscripts. This suggests that the end title here is a recent addition.<sup>442</sup> The end title appears as a concluding summary of the copied content, even though it only refers to the first of the set of texts. This evidence offers a new perspective on the titling processes. It is perceivable that some end titles to texts existed before head titles. Consequently, longer head titles may have evolved as elaborations of short end titles.<sup>443</sup>

The texts on P.2633 demonstrate diverse methods of working with texts, reflected both in the presence of titles and the frequency with which textual sequences can be found across manuscripts. The end title *Zheng yue meng chun you han* exclusively pertains to the first short text within a series of four untitled and likewise short fragments, forming a unique combination of texts on P.2633.<sup>444</sup> Conversely, the considerably longer texts *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* and the *Yake xinfu wen* are each followed by the same sequence of shorter texts across other Dunhuang

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<sup>438</sup> Exceptions include variations in writing numbers, such as using either 一 or 壹, as well as varying additional indications discussed below.

<sup>439</sup> An example is the *Yake xinfu wen* 齋齋新婦文 (‘Text on the New Wife’). The abbreviated end title simply states *Yake yi shou* 齋齋壹首 (‘Yake; one *shou*’). For more examples, see also Galambos 2020a, 50.

<sup>440</sup> See P.2633.

<sup>441</sup> See P.3386 (+P.3582).

<sup>442</sup> Scroll P.2633.

<sup>443</sup> Abbreviated end titles are also probable, particularly when head and end titles have been integral parts of a text for an extended period.

<sup>444</sup> For further manuscripts containing the *Zheng yue meng chun you han*, see Ren 2019, 47–57.

manuscripts, indicating stable textual groupings.<sup>445</sup> Notably, these texts are accompanied by head titles on certain manuscripts and all shorter texts have individual titles.<sup>446</sup>

This suggests that the scribe copied different text fragments after the *Zheng yue meng chun you han*, possibly for personal reasons, relying on the end title as a reminder. It is unlikely that later readers would be able to anticipate this specific textual combination. In contrast, the scribe likely copied two pre-existing sets of texts, the *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* and the *Yake xinfu wen*. It is likely that by reading the head titles referring to the first main text only, later readers already knew what textual combinations to expect.

At the end of titles, various additional indications like *yi juan* 一卷 (‘one scroll’) and *yi ben* 一本 (‘one booklet’; ‘a set’) are present. As I demonstrate in the following, these indications are better understood as carrying textual implication rather than having codicological significance, e.g. referring to the format of either a *Vorlage* or a copy.

The term *juan* 卷 can signify a physical scroll, but also a division of texts, a fascicle, or a chapter. Among the titles analysed here, six include the indication *yi juan* 一卷 (‘one scroll’), implying independent circulation of the subsequent texts.<sup>447</sup> Among these texts, the *Qianziwen* appears in two MTMs, with the indication *yi juan* present in the head title on one, but not the other.<sup>448</sup> Interestingly, a seventh title, the *Bai niao ming*, lacks this indication in the head title, featuring it only in the end title.<sup>449</sup> This text is notably shorter, at just 560 characters. Thus, the two shortest texts include *yi juan* only in the end titles. However, as the fifth text is only slightly longer, further analysis is needed to determine whether this usage of the indication in head and end titles is coincidence or relates to the length of texts.<sup>450</sup> The seven texts, listed according to descending lengths, are:<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> The *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* is also contained on S.4129. The *Yake xinfu wen* is also contained on P.2564 and S.4129.

<sup>446</sup> The *Cui shi furen xun nü wen* has a head title on S.4129, while the *Yake xinfu wen* is titled on P.2564.

<sup>447</sup> Zhang 1983, 318.

<sup>448</sup> On S.3835, the titles are entirely without indications.

<sup>449</sup> See for example on S.3835.

<sup>450</sup> Interestingly, in MTMs primarily containing mostly shorter Buddhist texts, *yi juan* is consistently added only to end titles, see Galambos 2020a, 50.

<sup>451</sup> I exclude the *Xin ji yanfu jiao*, a 270-character text not found in any other manuscript. Further evidence is needed to discuss its correlation with the contents examined here.

1. Ji Bu	4474
2. Taigong jiajiao	2261
3. Wang Fanzhi	1840
4. Xiaojing	1800
5. Cha jiu lun	1010
6. Qianziwen	1000
7. Bainiao ming	560

In its textual sense, *ben* 本 signifies a copy or edition of a text. In Dunhuang manuscripts, *yi ben* likely denotes ‘a set’ of texts.<sup>452</sup> This is particularly seen in the three texts comprised of shorter, formerly unrelated texts grouped under the title of the first text.<sup>453</sup> The texts are also notably shorter than the texts labelled *yi juan*. The only longer text is the poem titled *Jiu fu* or *Gaoxing ge* on the manuscripts. It is however likely that this poem as well consists of several formerly independent pieces concerning the topic of wine.<sup>454</sup> The four texts are:

1. Jiu fu	608
2. Yake xinfu wen	481
3. Zheng yue mengchun you han	346
4. Cui shi furen xun nü wen	224

*Shou* 首 can be a measure word for verse compositions. The two texts are similar in length to those with *yi ben* in the titles, hinting at potential interchangeability between these indications. This is shown by the text *Yake xinfu wen*, which uses *yi ben* in the head title and *yi shou* in the end title on one scroll.<sup>455</sup> The two texts are:

1. Yanzi fu	600
2. Zhao Qiao chou fu fu	351

Lastly, *zhang* 章 denotes a complete section of music, song, verse or prose, akin to a stanza or a paragraph. The term *zhangju* 章句 generally refers to chapters, verses, paragraphs, or lines, and

<sup>452</sup> See Galambos 2020b, 178 and 179.

<sup>453</sup> For several distinct texts subsumed under the title of a first text, see Fu 2021b, 132–138.

<sup>454</sup> This is indicated by frequent and irregular changes in form, rhyme, and topics.

<sup>455</sup> This is P.2564.

particularly, to commentaries on earlier or canonical texts. This aligns with the titles to the text *Yang Manshan yong Xiaojing*, where each subtitle summarises and explains chapters of the *Xiaojing*.<sup>456</sup>

### Author Names

The MTM scrolls provide the names of three authors, but little additional information is available about two of them from other sources. The indication beneath the head title of the the *Chajiu lun* goes: *xiangong jinshi Wang Fu zhuan* 鄉貢進士王敷撰 (‘Compiled by the Prefectural Nominee [for the] Presented Scholar [Examination], Wang Fu’).<sup>457</sup> Unfortunately, historical records offer no details about Wang Fu.<sup>458</sup> Similarly, the indication beneath the head title of the *Jiu fu* (also titled: *Gaoxing ge*) reads: *Jiangzhou cishi Liu Changqing zhuan* 江州刺史劉長卿撰 (‘Compiled by the Prefect of Jiangzhou, Liu Changqing’).<sup>459</sup> It is debated if this refers to the historical Tang poet Liu Changqing (c.726 – c.790), since he is not known for having served as *cishi* 刺史 (‘Prefect’) of Jiangzhou.<sup>460</sup>

In contrast, the third author, Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (d. 521), is documented in sources beyond the Dunhuang manuscripts, in which his name is beneath the head title to the *Qianzi wen*.<sup>461</sup> The information provided in this indication is notably different from the previous two, stating *chi yuanwai shilang Zhou Xingsi ci yun* 勅員外侍郎周興嗣次韻 (‘Imperial Order for the Supernumerary Gentleman in Attendance Zhou Xingsi To Set [the *Qianziwen*] into Rhyme’).<sup>462</sup> A widely accepted explanation for the creation of this text by Zhou Xingsi is that he was ordered to render a thousand-character calligraphy by the renowned Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 303–ca. 361) to rhyme.<sup>463</sup>

The absence of mention in other historical sources regarding the first two authors calls for careful consideration regarding whether content of attributed texts or poems reflects their actual

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<sup>456</sup> See the introduction of the core content above.

<sup>457</sup> The text is written on scroll P.2718. For *xiangong*, see Hucker 1985, 232. For *jinshi*, see Hucker 1985, 167.

<sup>458</sup> Fu 2021 a, 61. The author’s name is variously written in four manuscripts, see Chen 2015, 86.

<sup>459</sup> This is scroll P.2633.

<sup>460</sup> For *cishi*, see Hucker 1985, 558–559.

<sup>461</sup> On scrolls P.3416 and S.3835.

<sup>462</sup> The name is incomplete due to tear in the paper on scroll S.3835. For *yuanwai*, see Hucker 1985, 597, for *shilang* see Hucker 1985, 426–427.

<sup>463</sup> Nugent 2023, 83.

life experiences. Instead, the information provided before their names is more reliable. The first author's background aligns well with educational settings, having been recommended by a prefecture and passing his *jinshi* examination. The second author's position as Prefect of Jiangzhou is less straightforward in this regard, suggesting that the text may have originated from a different context. Likewise, the information on the third author suggests different circumstances of textual production. Nevertheless, as evident from the MTMs, all three texts found their way into the educational setting.<sup>464</sup> Additionally, a distinctive term in these indications on student MTMs is the character *zhuan* 撰, which explicitly signifies that the named individuals compiled the texts. However, the term is absent for the third author. This omission is likely because Zhou Xingsi is not regarded as the actual author of the *Qianziwen*; instead, he adapted a pre-existing text to rhyme.

## Prefaces

In two titles, prefaces are marked with *bing xu* 並序 ('with preface'). Firstly, the *Xiaojing* contains a detailed preface of about 270 characters, outlining Confucius's background, his disciples, and emphasising the significance of the text.<sup>465</sup> It describes Confucius's struggles before finding employment during a tumultuous period. For instance, his contributions, such as the improvement of the *Chunqiu* 春秋 ('Spring and Autumn Annals') and the revision of the *Shi(jing)* 詩(經) ('Book of Songs'), are noted. In addition, Confucius is mentioned to have had over three thousand disciples, with Zeng Shen singled out for his exposition of true piety. This virtues were expounded by Confucius and his disciples titled it *Xiaojing* ('Classic of Filial Piety'). The preface concludes with a praise of the text, highlighting its crucial role in maintaining social order.<sup>466</sup> Secondly, the preface to the *Cha jiu lun*, at only 87 characters, is notably shorter. It does not focus on individual backgrounds, but rather praises the inventions by wise sages, like Confucius for elucidating human relations. This sets the stage for the texts main aim, the inquiry into the superiority between tea and wine, promoting each beverage to present its arguments.

While not explicitly indicated as prefaces in their titles, it is possible that other texts include prefaces as well. Some texts, like the *Cha jiu lun*, begin with introductory sentences using formulas

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<sup>464</sup> Nugent 2023, 84 suggests that although there is no explicit indication of the *Qianziwen*'s original purpose as a primer, its content hints at its potential utility in educational settings.

<sup>465</sup> For insights into the different *Xiaojing* versions and the respective Dunhuang manuscripts, see Zhuang 2014.

<sup>466</sup> For the preface, see Zhu 2010, 169–170. My character count is based on Zhu 2010, 169–170.

such as *xi zhe* 昔者 (‘In former times’) and *shi shi* 是時 (‘At that time’).<sup>467</sup> This indicates that even without *bing xu* in the title, an introductory section for texts was rather common. Not at least, the *Taigong jiajiao* is often seen as consisting of a preface, a main text, and a postscript, even though this as well lacks the term *bing xu* in the title.<sup>468</sup> In what is considered to be a preface, a potentially lyrical speaker introduces themselves as born into troubled times. In the so-called postscript, there is an expressed eagerness to instruct the youth. Although both sections have a personal tone, the lyrical speaker remains unnamed.

## Colophons

Three colophons provide dates ranging from 930 to 972, spanning the Later Tang 後唐 (923-936) to the early Northern Song 北宋 (960–1127). From the perspective of the Dunhuang region, this period coincides with the *Guiyijun* 歸義軍 (‘Return to Allegiance Circuit’; 851–1036).<sup>469</sup>

The earliest colophon indicates that Suo Buzi 索不子 wrote the text in his own hand around 930 or 931.<sup>470</sup> There is no further information provided, such as the status of the copyist, institutional affiliation, or reasons for copying.<sup>471</sup> The second colophon, datable to the year 942, mentions Zhang Fuying 張富盈 of the Sanjie monastery 三界寺 as copyist.<sup>472</sup> The third colophon, by a certain *dizi* Yan Haizhen 閻海真 of a *zhishuyuan* 知術院, dates the copy to the third year of the Kaibao 開寶 reign, indicating the year 970.<sup>473</sup> There is a slight discrepancy in dating, since the year *renshen* also mentioned in the colophon corresponds to 972.<sup>474</sup>

## 5.2 MTM Booklets

Six MTM booklets contain texts also found on MTM scrolls, with five being of similar small size.<sup>475</sup> P.3821 stands out to significant differences in content and structure. I will address it as an

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<sup>467</sup> The former formula marks the beginning of the *Yanzi fu*, while the latter marks the start of the *Bainiao ming*.

<sup>468</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002, 350

<sup>469</sup> For *Guiyijun*, see Rong 2013, 40–46.

<sup>470</sup> Giles 1957, 242–243. The manuscript is S.3835.

<sup>471</sup> For details regarding the information in student colophons, see Galambos 2020a, 91–100.

<sup>472</sup> BnF 2006. The manuscript is P.2747 + P.2648 + P.3386 (+P.3582).

<sup>473</sup> The manuscript is P.2718. The *zhishuyuan* 知術院 (‘Academy of Knowledge’) is possibly the same institution as the *jishuyuan* 伎術院 (‘Academy of Skills’) mentioned on other Dunhuang manuscripts, see Gao 2009, 349.

<sup>474</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>475</sup> The signatures of the booklets are S.5529, P.3833, S.5441+S.6541, P.3910, P.3821, and P.4094.

exception to highlight the challenges in distinguishing between various production circumstances. The sixth booklet, P.4094, is larger, suggesting disparities both in production and usage, and particularly in terms of transportability.<sup>476</sup> I will first describe the five smaller-sized booklets, occasionally referring to P.3821, and then discuss the larger booklet separately as the ‘sixth booklet’.

### 5.2.1 Codicology

The five small booklets range from 14 to 15.9 cm in height, with width varying considerably from 9.4 to 21.5 cm. Each booklet is incomplete, with two pages lacking both at beginning and end, while the other three are complete at the beginning but lack endings.<sup>477</sup> Additionally, one booklet consists of four loose bifolios.<sup>478</sup>

The booklets vary in assembly: one is glued, three are stitched, and one is both sewn and glued.<sup>479</sup> While three booklets have bifolios aligning with text boundaries, suggesting caesuras and the possibility of composites, no further material evidence supports this hypothesis.<sup>480</sup> It is more likely that the booklets were produced as part of a single process, although the quires might have been initially separate and later combined. The sixth booklet is notably larger, measuring 31 x 22.7 cm, and incomplete at both the beginning and the end.<sup>481</sup> While lacking immediate caesuras, there are signs that the content was written before the sheets were ruled, after which the folios were glued and stitched together.<sup>482</sup>

### 5.2.6 Visual Organisation

Unlike the MTM scrolls, the five small booklets show less precision, with texts written by relatively untrained hands. Each booklet has numerous visible corrections, additions, and deletions in black ink, but without any additional marks or punctuation in red ink.

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<sup>476</sup> For a discussion on the implications of the size of manuscripts, see Galambos 2020a, 34–37.

<sup>477</sup> The two booklets are P.3833 and P.3821. The three booklets are S.5529, S.5441+S.5641, and P.3910.

<sup>478</sup> S.5529.

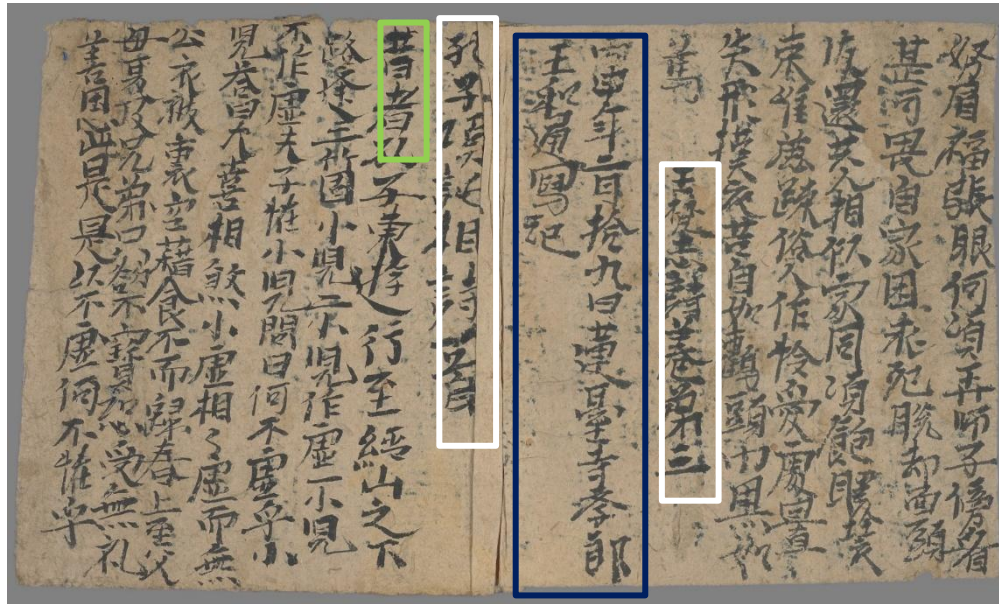
<sup>479</sup> P.3833 is glued. S.5529, S.5441+S.5641, P.3910 are stitched. P.3821 is sewn and glued.

<sup>480</sup> The three booklets are P.3833, S.5441+S.5641, and P.3910.

<sup>481</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>482</sup> See Bregler 2018, 62.

Three ruled booklets have narrow margins and contain between 6 to 11 lines per folio, with nine lines being most common.<sup>483</sup> Character count per line varies across the five booklets, showing no clear pattern related to booklet height.<sup>484</sup> Most exhibit some level of text structuring, such as small blank spaces between verse lines.<sup>485</sup> One booklet has core content written consecutively, while paracontent placement shows no clear pattern.<sup>486</sup> Typically, the contents have both head and end titles, except in P.3821 where some texts have head titles only.<sup>487</sup> Two booklets feature colophons positioned after end titles, appearing *between* texts, unlike MTM scrolls where colophons usually *conclude* a set of texts (Fig. 47). This discrepancy suggests differences in the booklet production process, indicating that the texts may have been copied at different times and later compiled into booklets.<sup>488</sup>



**Figure 47:** Folios 18 and 19 of P.3833. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). Folio 18 contains the title to the Wang Fanzhi poems, followed by a colophon, while folio 19 features the head title to the subsequent text.

<sup>483</sup> S.5441+S.5641, P.3910, and P.3821.

<sup>484</sup> On S.5441+S.5641, the first content consists mainly of heptasyllabic verse lines, with each line containing between two to four verses, totalling 14 to 18 characters. Typically, lines have three verses, resulting in 21 characters. In the second content, each line comprises 19 to 24 characters, with 22 or 23 characters being most common. As for the height, S.5529 measures 14 x 9.4 cm and contains 14 to 16 characters per line, while P.3821 (15.9 x 11.1 cm), despite being 1.9 cm taller, also has between 11 to 16 characters per line.

<sup>485</sup> The four booklets are S.5529, S.5441+S.5641, P.3910, P.3821.

<sup>486</sup> P.3833.

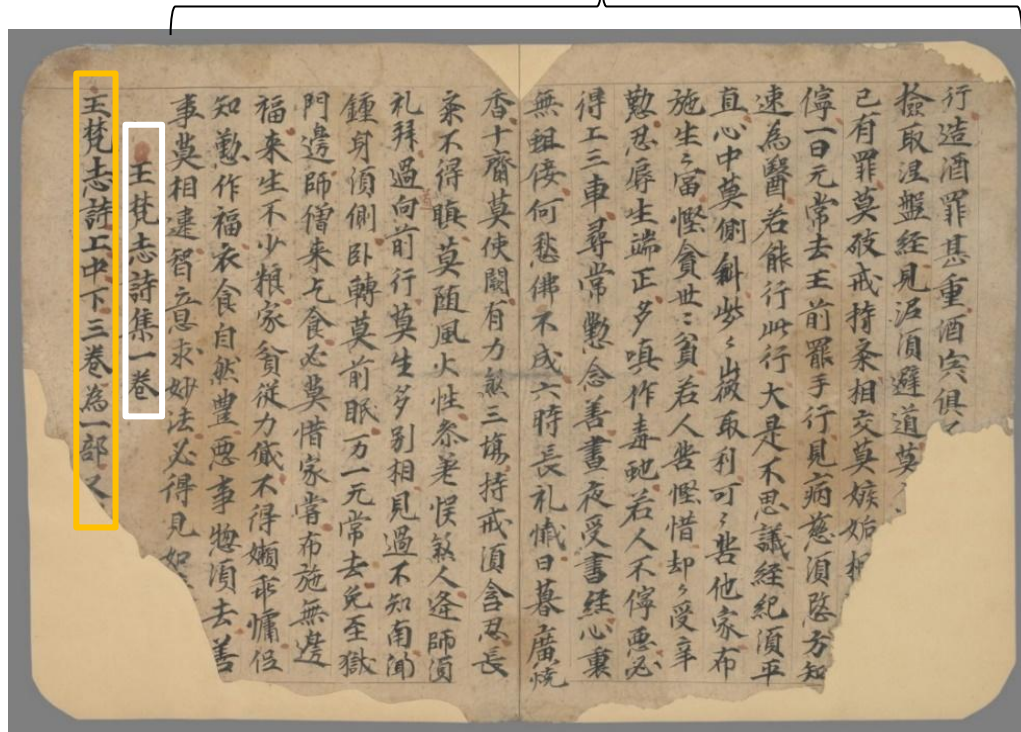
<sup>487</sup> The last text may present a different scenario as it is incomplete at the end, making it difficult to assess fully.

<sup>488</sup> S.5441+S.5641 and P.3833.

The sixth booklet is distinct in several regards. The visual organisation is meticulous, with well-executed ruling and ample margins (Fig. 48 and Fig. 49). Each folio contains only ten or eleven lines, with neat handwriting, large characters, and generous space between characters, resulting in 15 to 16 characters per line. The texts are consecutively written, without any blank space between verse lines. The texts include corrections and additional punctuation in red ink, indicating a thorough revision. Red downward strokes at the line's end serve as hyphens.<sup>489</sup>

The booklet lacks both a beginning and end, preserving only the end title for the first text and the head title for the second. The first text is provided with an end title, which is consistent with the pattern seen in MTM scrolls and booklets. Thus, it can be inferred that each text originally had both a head and an end title. Following the end title is a summary discussing the various collections of Wang Fanzhi poems. Additionally, a colophon spanning three lines appears after the first content, thus again *between* texts (dark blue in Fig. 49).

Text 1

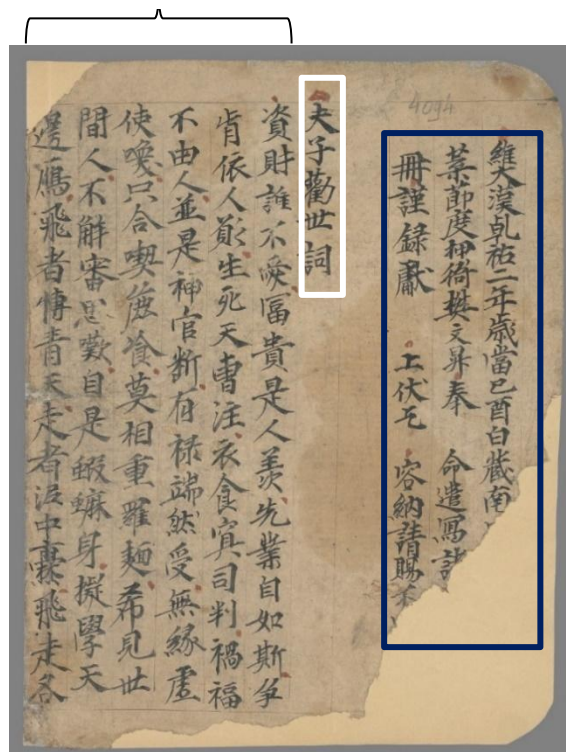


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Pelliot chinois 4094

**Figure 48:** Folios 6 and 7 of P.4094. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). On Folio 7, there is the end title to the Wang Fanzhi poems, followed by a general explanation.

<sup>489</sup> See Bregler 2018, 50.

## Text 2



**Figure 49:** Folio 8 of P.4094. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). After the colophon to the Wang Fanzhi poems follows the head title to the second text, *Kongzi quan shi ci*.

The position of colophons suggests two distinct types of MTMs: scrolls typically features multiple texts copied before completion is marked by a colophon, while booklets indicate completion directly after individual texts with a colophon. This does not necessarily imply a more predetermined planning for scrolls, or that the content on booklets is more spontaneous. However, this evidence highlights different mindsets in how texts are copied and MTMs are produced.

### 5.2.3 Core Content

The six MTM booklets contain a total of thirteen texts, including four from MTM scrolls: Wang Fanzhi poems (WFZ), *Ji Bu* (JB), *Cha jiu lun* (CJL), and *Yanzi fu* (YZF). I summarise the remaining texts based on descending lengths, with one case involving several texts subsumed under a single title (\*P.3910). Additionally, I present the content on the exceptional booklet P.3821 separately. Finally, I discuss the texts as they are preserved on the MTMs based on a chart.

***Qin fu yin* 秦婦吟 (‘Lament of the Lady of Qin’) (QFY)**

The text, totalling 1666 characters across 238 heptasyllabic verse lines, primarily comprise quatrains with rhymes in the second and fourth verse lines.<sup>490</sup> It recounts events of the Huang Chao rebellion, initiated in 874 by Wang Xianzhi 王仙芝 (?–878) and Huang Chao 黃巢 (835–884) in southern China. The rebellion resulted in the sacking of Chang’an on 10<sup>th</sup> January 881.<sup>491</sup> Narrated largely from the viewpoint of the Lady of Qin, the text vividly captures the tumultuous events of the period.<sup>492</sup>

***Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* 孔子項托相問書 (‘Writing on the Alternating Questions between Master Kong and Xiang Tuo’) (KZXT)**

This text, spanning 1233 characters, alternates between prose and verse.<sup>493</sup> It humorously recounts how Master Kong, unable to outsmart a young boy named Xiang Tuo in a dialogue with questions on general knowledge, plots revenge, leading to a detailed narrative in heptasyllabic verse at the end of the text.<sup>494</sup>

**\*P.3910: *Xin he Xiaojing Huangdi gan ci* 新合孝經皇帝感辭 (‘Lyrics on the Newly Assembled Classic of Filial Piety [Set to the Tune] ‘Stimuli by the Emperor’’) (XHXJHDGC)**

This 660-character text comprises three originally distinct sections, with only the first corresponding to the head title’s topics.<sup>495</sup> Although the title indicates eleven poems, only nine are present, suggesting some were omitted during copying.<sup>496</sup> The subsequent section, comprising nine heptasyllabic quatrains, narrates Zhang Qian’s 張騫 (d. 114 BCE) visit to Xiwangmu 西王母 (‘Queen Mother of the West’). Lastly, twenty-one poems cover various topics including the challenges of frontier life, the struggle of talent without fortune, praises for rulers, young women’s

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<sup>490</sup> Nugent 2010, 31–32. For an analysis of the structure and rhymes of this text, see Giles 1926.

<sup>491</sup> For the historical events during this rebellion, see Giles 1926, 309–316.

<sup>492</sup> Giles 1926, 324–235 divides the narrative into fourteen stages.

<sup>493</sup> Altenburger 2009, 262. Due to errors and potential omissions, this count is an approximation based on the edition by Xiang 2006, 473–487.

<sup>494</sup> Altenburger 2009, 262.

<sup>495</sup> My approximate count is based on Fu 2021a, 275–276.

<sup>496</sup> See BnF 2006.

emotions, and Buddhist themes.<sup>497</sup> The first six are heptasyllabic quatrains, while the last fifteen are pentasyllabic.<sup>498</sup>

***Xin he Qianwen Huangdi ganci* 新合千文皇帝感辭 (“Lyrics on the Newly Assembled Thousand Character [Set to the Tune] ‘Stimuli by the Emperor’”) (XHQWHDGC)**

This 252-character text contains nine heptasyllabic quatrains, although the head title suggests eighteen poems.<sup>499</sup> Thus, the scribe likely omitted sections during copying.<sup>500</sup> The content interprets the *Qianziwens*’s opening lines and praises the emperor’s virtues.<sup>501</sup>

***Fuzi quan shi ci* 夫子勸世詞 (“Songs on the Master Admonishing the World’) (FZQSC)**

This text, discovered in a single incomplete Dunhuang booklet, comprises only some first 93 characters.<sup>502</sup> It is structured in heptasyllabic verse with rhymes every second verse line. The content emphasises the importance of righteousness over wealth and includes warnings about the consequences of one’s actions in afterlife.<sup>503</sup>

***[Wu geng diao* 五更調] (IWGD))<sup>504</sup>**

Only 89 characters of this untitled text, found on one MTM booklet, are preserved.<sup>505</sup> It corresponds to the beginning of a eulogy from the Southern school of Chan found on six other Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>506</sup> A similar text titled *Nanzong zan* 南宗讚 (‘Praise about the Southern Lineage’) exists on several manuscripts.<sup>507</sup> Whether these texts are excerpts or reworkings of each other remains unclear.

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<sup>497</sup> Fu 2021a, 133–135.

<sup>498</sup> Fu 2021a, 276.

<sup>499</sup> This is P.3910.

<sup>500</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002, 40–41.

<sup>501</sup> For this text, see Fu 2021a, 274–275.

<sup>502</sup> Character count from P.4094.

<sup>503</sup> For a study of these text and the relation to Buddhist exhortations, see Zhu 2005.

<sup>504</sup> I adapted the title in brackets from modern editions, opting for *Nanzong zan* used in *Dunhuang yanjiu yuan* 2002, 170, to maintain a distinction until the relationship between the two texts is clarified. For this reason, they are not discussed further in this study.

<sup>505</sup> Booklet S.5529.

<sup>506</sup> The manuscripts are S.4173, P.2690v, P.2963v, P.4608, 北 8371 (乃 074) and 北 4456v (人 075), see *Dunhuang Yanjiu yuan* 2002, 104. On S.4173, see also Giles 1957, 194.

<sup>507</sup> See for example P.4608 and S.4173.

In addition, booklet P.3821 contains four distinct texts following the *Yanzi fu* (YZF). These texts consist of Buddhist songs and praises of the government. In the following, I list them according to their sequence on P.3821:

**[*Bai sui pian* 百歲篇 (‘Series of Songs [on the Theme of] a Hundred Years’) (BSP)]**<sup>508</sup>

The content comprises 1120 characters and features four texts of the same length and form.<sup>509</sup> The first text is complete but lacks a head title on this incomplete booklet.<sup>510</sup> On two other manuscripts, it is titled *Zimen bai sui pian* 緇門百歲篇 (‘Piece on a Hundred Years in Buddhist Faith’).<sup>511</sup> This text presents an overview of the process of becoming a monk or nun and dedication to Buddha. The second text, titled *Zhangfu bai sui pian* 丈夫百歲篇 (‘Piece on a Hundred Years of a Male Person’), explores the stages in a man’s life, while the third, *Nü ren bai sui pian* 女人百歲篇 (‘Piece on a Hundred Years of the Female Person’), focuses on a woman’s journey.<sup>512</sup> Lastly, *Bai sui shi shi shou* 百歲詩拾首 (‘Ten poems on the Hundred Years’) features the renown Buddhist Monk Wuzhen (c.811–895) reflecting on his life.<sup>513</sup>

***Shi er shi xing xiao wen* 十二時行孝文 (‘Text on the Twelve Double-Hours of Conducting Filial Piety’)**

This content consist of five texts totalling 1230 characters.<sup>514</sup> The first text, spanning 288 characters, comprises twelve quatrains with a three-syllable first verse line followed by heptasyllabic verse lines, exhorting readers to love their elder brother and practise filial piety.<sup>515</sup> The second text, titled *Bai shilang zuo shi er shi xingxiao wen* 白侍郎作十二時行孝文 (‘Text on Attendant Gentleman Bai Undertaking Twelve Double-Hours of Conducting Filial Piety’), follows the same structure as the first. The third text shares the same title as the first and consists of 216

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<sup>508</sup> This is not an actual title but the description of the content in BnF 2006.

<sup>509</sup> Each text comprises ten heptasyllabic quatrains (280 characters). The same textual combinations are found on two additional manuscripts, S.2947 and S.5549, as documented in Fu 2021a, 225, indicating a stable textual unit. Given the absence of new relevant textual combinations, I do not discuss the manuscripts in detail.

<sup>510</sup> P.3821.

<sup>511</sup> The title used here appears on manuscripts S.2947 and P.4525, see Fu 2021a, 225.

<sup>512</sup> Fu 2021a, 225.

<sup>513</sup> Fu 2021a, 226.

<sup>514</sup> Four texts are listed in BnF 2006. My count is based on Fu 2021a, 227–231.

<sup>515</sup> Fu 2021a, 227. For this text, see for example Ren 1987, 1276–1277.

characters organised into 12 quatrains. Unlike the first two texts, each quatrain begins with a three-character verse line followed by pentasyllabic verse lines.<sup>516</sup> Additionally, there is a table of correspondences between the 60 cyclic combinations, comprising 30 heptasyllabic verse lines.<sup>517</sup> The fourth text shares the same title as the first and third texts and follows the same structure as the first two text.<sup>518</sup>

### [Lyrics to tunes]<sup>519</sup>

The content, spanning 758 characters, consists of fifteen poems set to tunes addressing diverse topics.<sup>520</sup> Each piece is introduced by a head title indicating either the tune's name or stating *tong qian* 同前 ('same as previous'). The first two pieces praise the government and the emperor, while the next two explore personal ambitions. The next four pieces illustrate serene natural scenes and the contentment of a recluse. The ninth piece expresses a Daoist's aspiration for an official post, while the tenth piece depicts the sorrow of memory loss. The eleventh piece contrasts the celestial realm with the human world, questioning the pursuit of wealth and fame. The twelfth piece emphasises talent, virtue, and the desire to become an Imperial loyalist. The thirteenth piece expresses aspirations for greatness, while the fourteenth and fifteenth poems present mocking dialogues between a warrior and a Confucian.<sup>521</sup>

Below, I outline the texts as preserved in the MTMs (Fig. 50). While each booklet includes at least one text from MTM scrolls, two booklets have rather unique content. Three texts belong to different Wang Fanzhi collections, and the *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* (KZXT) is contained in two booklets. Other texts are exclusive to individual booklets. Notably, one booklet contains two texts from two distinct MTM scrolls.<sup>522</sup> This diversity of possible textual combinations reflects that of MTM scrolls.

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<sup>516</sup> Fu 2021a, 229.

<sup>517</sup> See BnF 2006.

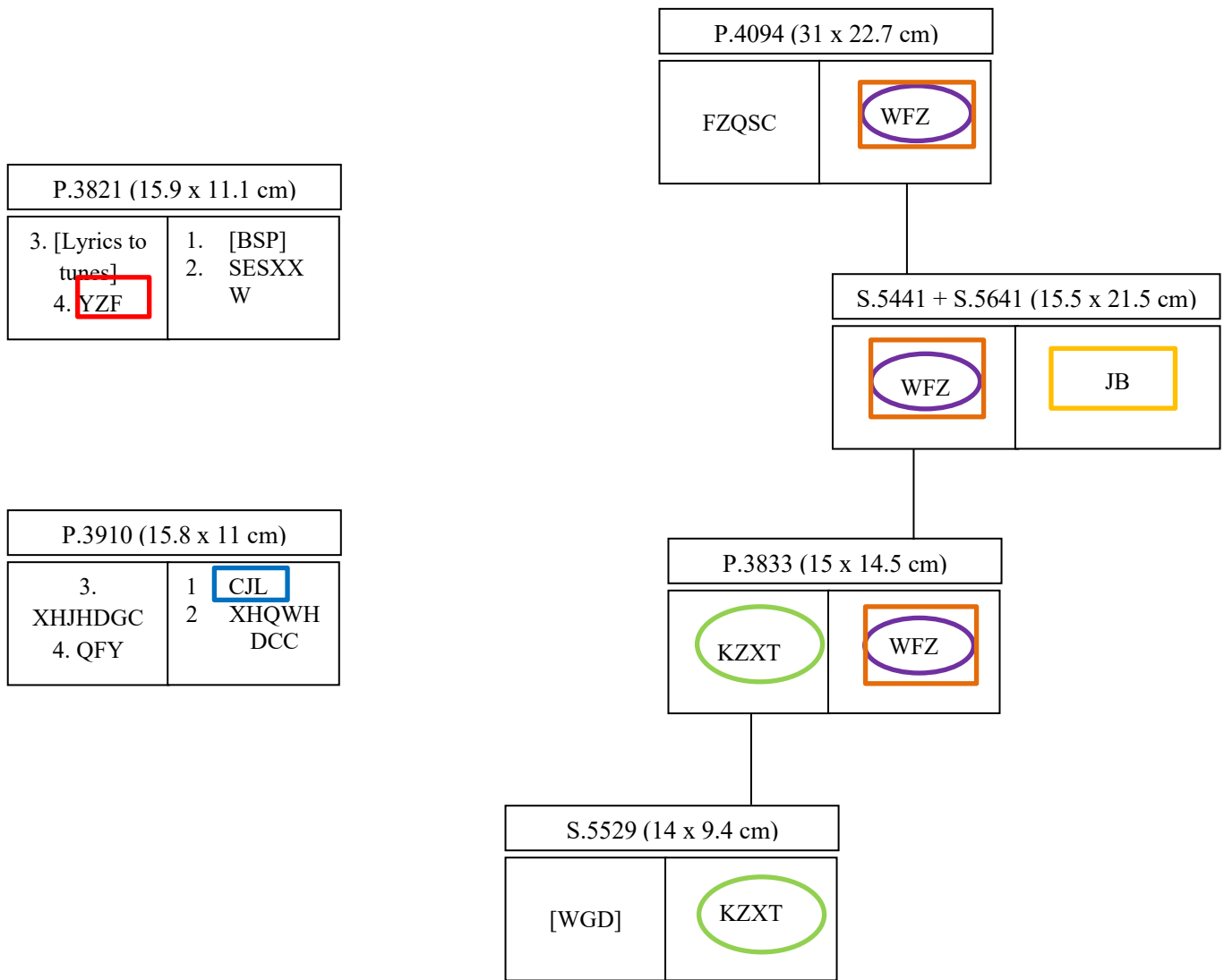
<sup>518</sup> For this text, see also Fu 2021a, 229.

<sup>519</sup> This content is on P.3812.

<sup>520</sup> This is my own approximate count of the text in P.3821.

<sup>521</sup> The poems are divided and described by Fu 2021a, 231–234.

<sup>522</sup> S.5441+S.5641.



**Figure 50:** Graph illustrating shared content on each Student MTM booklet.

#### 5.2.4 Paracontent

The paracontent structure on MTM booklets closely mirrors that of MTM scrolls. Initially, I will outline the paracontent found in the five booklets that share the most commonalities.<sup>523</sup> Following this, I will discuss the unique characteristics of P.3821 and the sixth booklet.

#### Titles

Like titles on MTM scrolls, those on booklets often reference the texts themselves with terms like *wen* 文 ('Text [about ...]'), with persons mentioned in the title as integral part of the subject matter. Additionally, the titles *Xin he Xiaojing Huangdi gan ci* and the *Xin he Qianwen Huangdi ganci* both include the term *Huangdi gan* 皇帝感 ('Stimuli by the Emperor'), which refers to a tune for court music recorded in the *Jiaofang ji* 教坊記 ('Record about the Instruction Quarters') by Cui Lingqin 崔令欽.<sup>524</sup> The end titles of both texts omit this term.

The titles on booklets exhibit variations in information. For instance, in the text recounting the story of Ji Bu insulting the King of Han, the head title is notably shorter than the end title. The former reads *Zhuo Ji Bu chuanwen* 捉季布傳文 ('The Story of the Capture of Ji Bu; One Scroll'), while the latter states *Da Han san nian Ji Bu ma Zhen ciwen* 大漢三年季布罵陣詞文一卷 ('*Ciwen* on Ji Bu Cursing on the Battlefield in the Third Year of the Great Han'). The titles for the text about Confucius and the boy Xiang Tuo vary on two booklets. In one, the title *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* 孔子項托相問書 ('Writing on the Alternating Questions between Master Kong and Xiang Tuo') clearly outlines the content.<sup>525</sup> The title in the second booklet differs slightly: *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shi* 孔子項托相詩 ('Poem on the Alternating [Questions between] Master Kong and Xiang Tuo').<sup>526</sup> Previous scholars noted that *shi* 詩 only refers to the verse part added after the first part.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> S.5529, P.3910, S.5441+S.5641, P.3833.

<sup>524</sup> Fu 2021a, 274.

<sup>525</sup> S.5529.

<sup>526</sup> P.3833.

<sup>527</sup> Altenburger 2009, 262, n.18.

Titles on booklets, akin to MTM scrolls, include various indications like *yi juan*, *yi ben*, and *yi shou*.<sup>528</sup> Interestingly, in one booklet, where the head title refers to the text about Confucius and the boy as *shu* 書 (‘Writing’), the additional indication is *yi juan*.<sup>529</sup> In the other, where the title ends with *shi* 詩 (‘Poem’), it is followed by the more fitting indication *yi shou* (‘one piece’).<sup>530</sup>

The paracontent in booklet P.3821 indicates unique circumstances for its production. The first content consists of four texts, each with clear titles referring to their subjects. Notably, the use of *pian* 篇, in the titles is distinct from the other MTM booklets.

### Author Names

Only one of the six booklets lists two authors beneath the head titles.<sup>531</sup> The otherwise unknown Wang Fu is credited under the title *Cha jiu lun*, also found on an MTM scroll.<sup>532</sup> The *Qinfu yin* is attributed to *Buque Wei Zhuang zhuan* 補闕韋莊撰 (‘Compiled by the Rectifier of Omissions, Wei Zhuang’). Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (836–910), who is not mentioned in official historical records such as the dynastic histories, is mentioned in several other contemporary and later sources, such as the *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言, a collection of anecdotes by Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (900–968).<sup>533</sup> This source reveals Wei Zhuang’s ministerial role in the Kingdom of Shu, mentioning that he took the palace examination during the Huang Chao invasion. His authorship of the *Qinfu yin* led contemporaries to refer to him as the *Qinfu yin xiucai* 秦婦吟秀才 (‘*Qinfu yin* Graduate’). This text is believed to be one of his early works, likely composed in his twenties before he attained his *jinshi* degree in 894.<sup>534</sup> Wei Zhuang later censored the text, reportedly due to disapproval from higher officials.<sup>535</sup>

The case of the *Qinfu yin* sheds light on the variety of texts found in student MTMs. These texts, some of which were likely controversial and beyond official approval to their times, coexist

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<sup>528</sup> The text *Fuzi quan shi ci* lacks any indication in the head title. Since it isn’t found on other manuscripts, it is unclear what indication, if any, would have been present in a potential end title.

<sup>529</sup> On S.5529.

<sup>530</sup> This is P.3833.

<sup>531</sup> P.3910.

<sup>532</sup> P.2718.

<sup>533</sup> For more information about Wei Zhuang and the text attributed to him, see Giles 1926, 316–323. For the *Qinfu yin* in Dunhuang manuscripts, see Nugent 2010, 31–65.

<sup>534</sup> Giles 1926, 318 and 320.

<sup>535</sup> Giles 1926, 316–317.

with approved didactic pieces like the *Qianziwen*. It is likely that students favoured contemporary, blunt works such as the *Qinfu yin* over older, stylised texts.

### Colophons

Similar to the MTM scrolls, the dates indicated in the three colophons in booklets are relatively late. Two colophons denote students in monasteries. First, there is a certain Wang Hetong 王和通, *xuelang* 學郎 (‘student’) at the Liantai monastery 蓮臺寺. The colophon mentions a *bingshen* 丙申 year, likely corresponding to 936.<sup>536</sup> The second colophon mentions Yin Nu’er 陰奴兒, a *xuelang* 學郎 (‘student’) of the *kongmu* 孔目 (‘Clerk in charge of files or a book collection’) surnamed Fan 汎 to have copied the text in his own hand. The date mentioned here corresponds to the year 978.<sup>537</sup>

The third colophon, found on the sixth booklet, bears a date corresponding to the year 949, aligning with the timeframe of the other colophons. However, it diverges significantly from typical one-line colophons seen on MTM booklets and scrolls. This lengthier colophon spans three lines and includes additional details, mentioning a certain *jiedu yaya* 節度押衙 (‘Lacey to the Military Commissioner’) by the name Fan Wensheng 樊文昇 tasked with copying and offering the booklet to his superior.<sup>538</sup> This shows that the text was not copied by a student. However, the content and the information of the booklet still hint at its likely its intended usage within an educational context.

### 5.3 Single-Text Scrolls

This section outlines the general features of Single-Text Scrolls. To define the corpus, I excluded scrolls likely intended as, or torn fragments of, MTMs, primarily based on visual organisation.<sup>539</sup> This analysis thus focuses on 54 scrolls:<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> P.3833. For the colophon, see Mair 1981, 36.

<sup>537</sup> S.5441+S.5461. Giles 1957, 234–235 understands Fan Kongmu as the name of a second copyist.

<sup>538</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>539</sup> For instance, P.3198 displays ruled lines and a second sheet that has been cut off. I have excluded fourteen scrolls from this analysis, which could have easily accommodated additional texts in blank space after end titles (S.5674, S.5655, S.3393, P.5545, S.1392, P.3743, P.3883, P.3623, P.3656, P.3053, P.3369, P.3108, P.3780, and P.3614). This preliminary approach serves as an initial screening, but it does not guarantee that several other scrolls discussed here were not also intended as MTMs.

<sup>540</sup> I arranged the signatures by descending height of the scrolls.

Core-Content	Number of MS	Signatures
<i>Taigong Jiajiao</i>	20	P.3104, S.4329, P.2738, S.479, P.4085, P.4588, P.2937, P.3569, P.3894, P.3764, P.3430, S.6173, S.4920, P.3623, P.3599, P.2825, S.1163, S.1291
<i>Wang Fanzhi shi</i>	11	P.3211, S.3393, S.4669, Hane 羽 30, P.3266, S.778, P.2914, S.1399, S.2710, P.3558, <i>Neiraku</i> scroll <sup>541</sup>
<i>Xiaojing</i>	10	P.3378, P.3382, P.2715, P.3428 (+2674), S.707, S.1386, P.2545, P.3698, S.728, P.3369
<i>Qin fu yin</i>	5	P.3381, S.692, P.3953, P.2700, P.3780
<i>Kongzi Xiang Tuo</i>	5	S.5674, S.395, S.1392, P.3882, P.3883
<i>Qianziwen</i>	3	P.2888, P.3170, P.3614
<i>Yanzi fu</i>	1	P.3460
<i>Ji Bu</i>	1	P.3197

Among these scrolls, no clearly identifiable groups with the same distinct features exist. However, several features sets them apart from MTM scrolls, hinting at varied production settings and usage methods. In the following section, I highlight key differences between Single-Text Scrolls and MTM scrolls.

### 5.3.1 Codicology

Nineteen scrolls are incomplete both at the beginning and the end.<sup>542</sup> Sixteen scrolls are incomplete at the beginning but complete at the end. Twelve have intact sheets, and six are complete at the beginning but torn at the end.<sup>543</sup> Among the 51 scrolls with known measurements, only two are under 25 cm high: one is 5 cm high and 165 cm long, the other is 12.7 to 13 cm high and 44.2 cm long.<sup>544</sup> The following scrolls measure 25 cm high, and the rest gradually increase in height, with the tallest reaching 31.5 cm.<sup>545</sup> However, many scrolls may have been higher due to milled edges. The measurements of three scrolls are incomplete.<sup>546</sup>

The scrolls are composed of sheets with both similar and notable different lengths. For instance, one completely preserved scroll, measuring 30 cm in height, consists of three sheets, each

<sup>541</sup> This is not a signature but a reference to a scroll housed at the *Neiraku bijutsu kan* 寧楽美術館 in Nara, Japan.

<sup>542</sup> My statements regarding the codicology are tentative and primarily derived from observations of the digitised images.

<sup>543</sup> See Tab. I in the appendix.

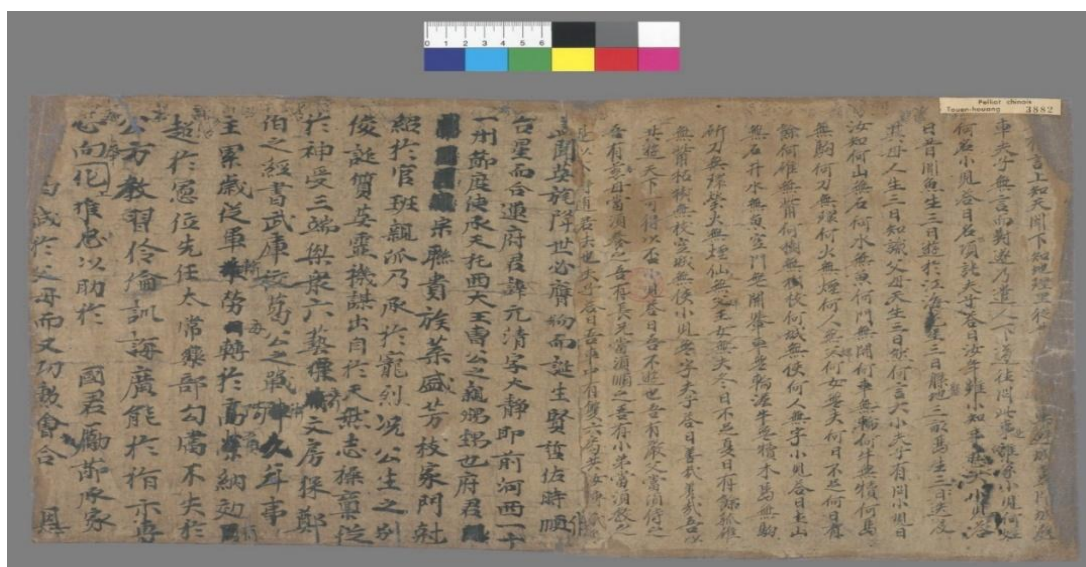
<sup>544</sup> The first is S.5674. The second scroll, P.3104, is notable because its five sheets measure only between 7 to 10.9 cm, see BnF 2006. For an illustration of the height of the scrolls, see Graph I in the appendix.

<sup>545</sup> The former is S.4329 and the latter is P.3614.

<sup>546</sup> These are S.1291, S.1163 and the scroll in the *Neiraku bijutsu kan* in Nara.

between 41 cm to 42 cm long, differing only by one cm.<sup>547</sup> In another example, discounting the torn first and last sheets of an eight-sheet scroll, the second sheet measures 26.6 cm, the third is 9.1 cm, the fourth is 9.8 cm, and the fifth to seventh sheets range between 44.7 and 46.2 cm in length.<sup>548</sup>

Most scrolls follow the common practice of gluing sheets together from left to right and are often written by a single hand.<sup>549</sup> However, some scrolls present a more complex composition, raising questions about collaborative production and composite nature. For instance, there is a scroll with only two sheets, each written by a different hand (Fig. 51).<sup>550</sup> Possible scenarios include collaboration between two scribes who later combined their sheets, or the addition of one sheet to another at a later time.



**Figure 51:** P.3882, which consists of two incomplete sheets containing texts by different hands. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Many scrolls show damage, likely from frequent use.<sup>551</sup> Missing sections are usually rectangular, correlating with folding lines (Fig. 52). It is likely that students, not always careful with their manuscripts, may have grasped and bent shorter scrolls too tightly when handling them (Fig. 53).

<sup>547</sup> P.3698, slightly mutilated at the end, is missing a rectangular piece of paper from the last sheet's lower part.

<sup>548</sup> This is P.2738.

<sup>549</sup> See Galambos 2016c, 357–358.

<sup>550</sup> P.3882.

<sup>551</sup> The ensuing discussions were sparked by a talk on Medieval Chinese paper scrolls, see Galambos 2021.

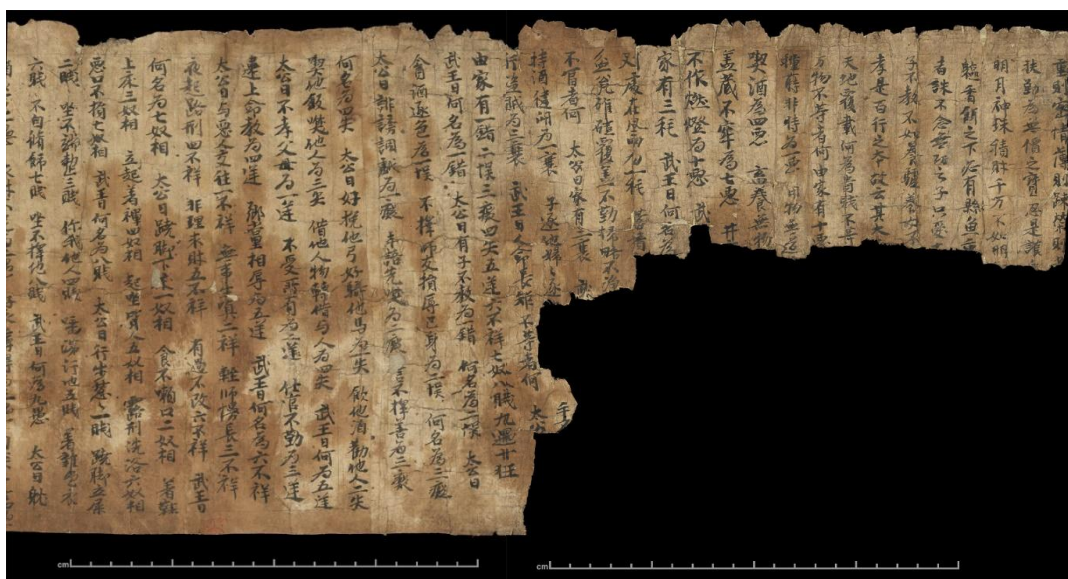


Figure 52: From the British Library collection (Or.8210/S.479, first half of the scroll).

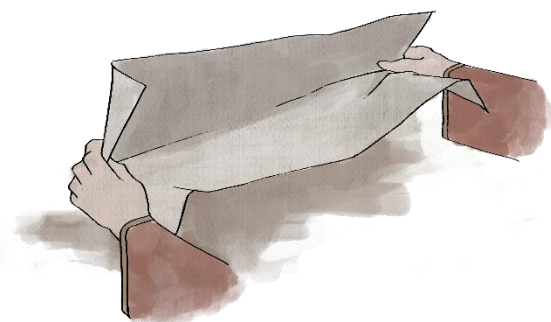


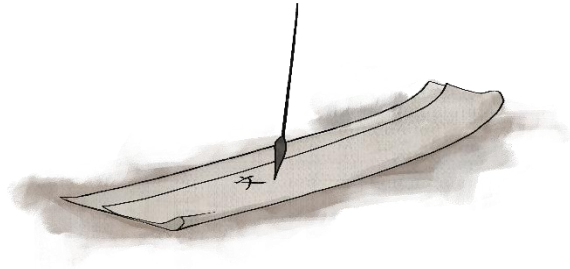
Figure 53: A possible method to hold a mid-length scroll which can cause folding lines around the middle. Depiction by Sebastian Finzenhagen.

Horizontal folding lines may have been created when bending the paper to write on the verso, such as comments to the main texts on the recto (Fig. 54).<sup>552</sup> However, this usage appears rare. Longer scrolls with horizontal folding lines often lack content on the verso.<sup>553</sup> On scrolls with content on the verso, the text or fragments typically span the entire height of the scroll, beyond the

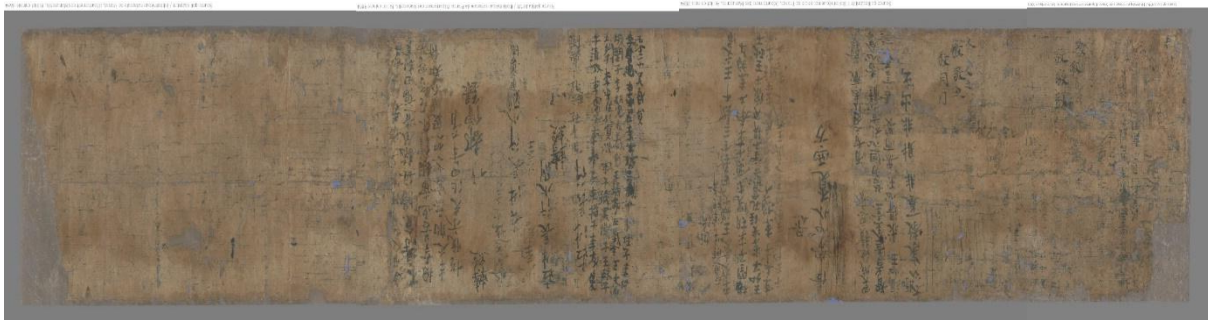
<sup>552</sup> Since this procedure involves transaxially folding, the remarks later appear ‘upside-down’ relative to the writing direction on the recto, as discussed in Bregler 2024.

<sup>553</sup> A possible case may be P.3656, for which the verso is not available in digitised form.

middle folding line (Fig. 55). Thus, it is more plausible that these texts were added by turning the entire scroll over.<sup>554</sup>



**Figure 54:** A hypothetical method on the verso of a folded scroll. Depiction by Sebastian Finzenhagen.



**Figure 55:** The verso of P.3894 with a horizontal folding line running through the entire scroll. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Horizontal folding lines can result from excessive force applied when rolling up scrolls. Typically, when rolling a scroll, the index finger hold the middle part, exerting considerably pressure, particularly during the initial inward curling. This action often causes short lines and tears around the middle of the scroll. Short horizontal lines across the scroll can indicate the level of pressure applied and the frequency of unrolling and rolling up the scroll.

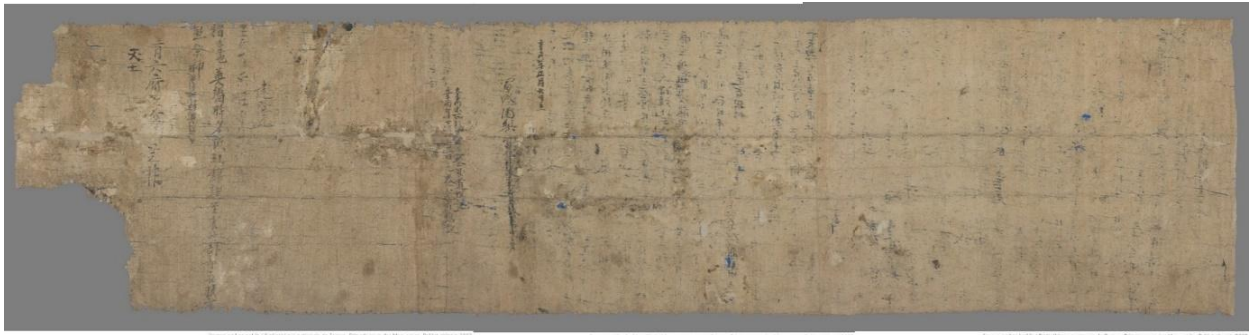
Only two of the 54 scrolls display continuous parallel horizontal lines throughout (Fig. 56), making this type of damage relatively rare.<sup>555</sup> The distance between these is consistently either

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<sup>554</sup> Another approach is to write on the rolled-up verso at the left end, as discussed in Bregler 2024.

<sup>555</sup> The signature of the two scrolls are P.3883 and P.2487.

three or five centimetres.<sup>556</sup> This damage may have occurred during rolling up, where pressure with the index fingers on two different spots instead of just one in the middle could cause two lines.<sup>557</sup> Alternatively, rolling the scroll up and then bending it without applying enough pressure at the middle could also create such parallel horizontal lines.<sup>558</sup>



**Figure 56:** P.3883 verso with two horizontal folding lines above and below the horizontal middle of the sheets. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Scrolls were likely folded in or around the middle to reduce their height for easier transportation or storage, typically around 15 cm. This could be done by folding along the horizontal line before rolling or by rolling first and then bending in the middle. The former method shows a prominent horizontal line upon unrolling, while the latter results in faint vertical folding lines along with a horizontal one in the middle.

Lastly, some scrolls feature vertical folding lines spanning their entire height, suggesting they were intentionally added as substitutes for ruling lines (Fig. 57 and Fig. 58).<sup>559</sup> These lines could have been created by rolling individual sheets of the scroll and then pressing the edges down.

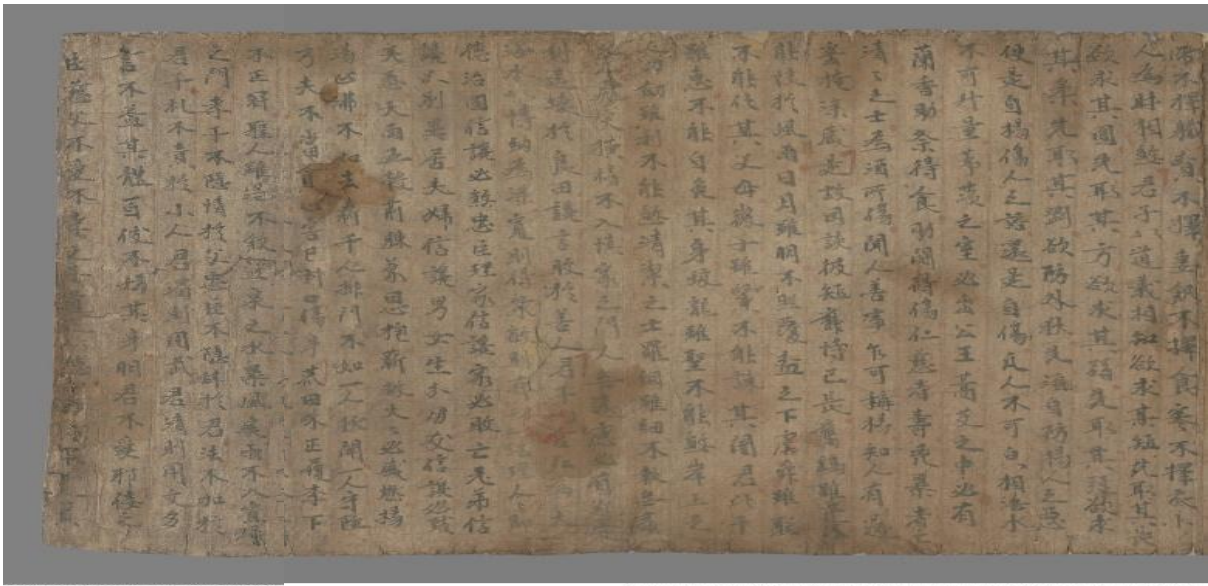
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<sup>556</sup> P.3698 has at least three lines, particularly noticeable towards the end of the scroll.

<sup>557</sup> P.3883 is 29.5 cm, P.2487 is 29.4-30.2 cm and P.3698 is 30 cm high.

<sup>558</sup> Users may have inadvertently bent the scrolls while engaged in other activities.

<sup>559</sup> This folding method, noted as ‘Regule par pliage’ (ruled by folding) in BnF 2006, may have been used for: P.3197, P.3430, P.2715, P.3428 (+2674), S.1392, P.3369, and P.2825.



**Figure 57:** P.3430 recto. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). The text is written within the boundaries of the vertical ruling.



**Figure 58:** P.3430 verso, where the vertical folding lines are visible. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 5.3.2 Visual Organisation

Around 80% of the scrolls lack ruling, but visual organisation is evident. For example, about 67 % of the scrolls have margins along the upper and lower edges of the sheets. Ruling, especially vertical lines, was likely added at the same time or after the content was written, as seen in scrolls

with only horizontal ruling of the margins.<sup>560</sup> In the exemplary scroll below, ruling changes throughout, with the first part lacking ruling, transitioning to horizontal ruled margins.<sup>561</sup> Vertical ruling for a few lines is then often discontinued, while horizontal ruling for the margin continues. Punctuation and symbols in red ink appear in the first half of the scroll but are discontinued after the first half of the second sheet (Fig. 59 and Fig. 60).

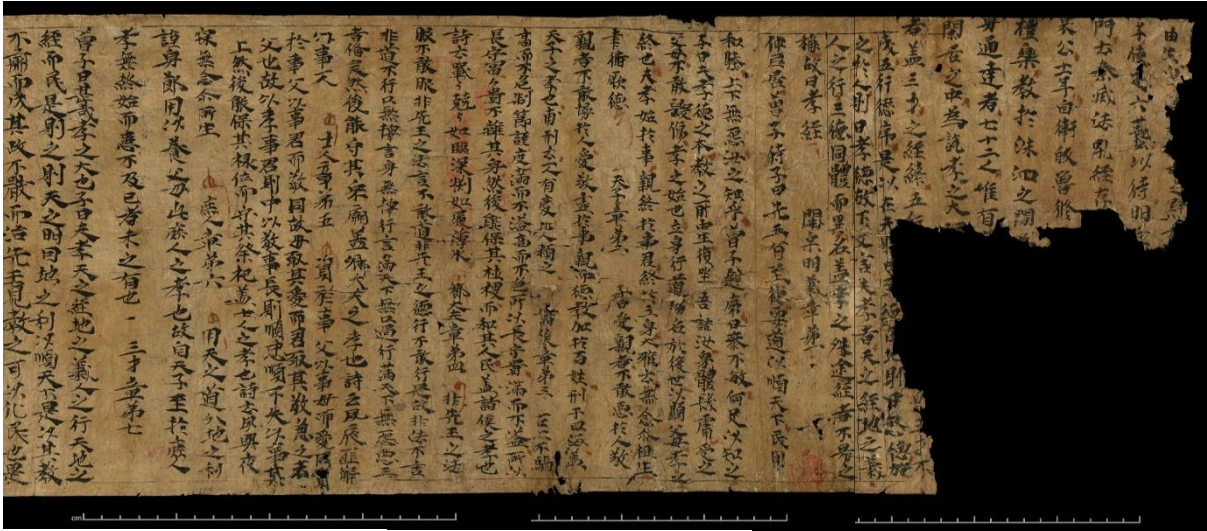


Figure 59: From the British Library collection (Or.8210/S.1386, first half of the scroll).

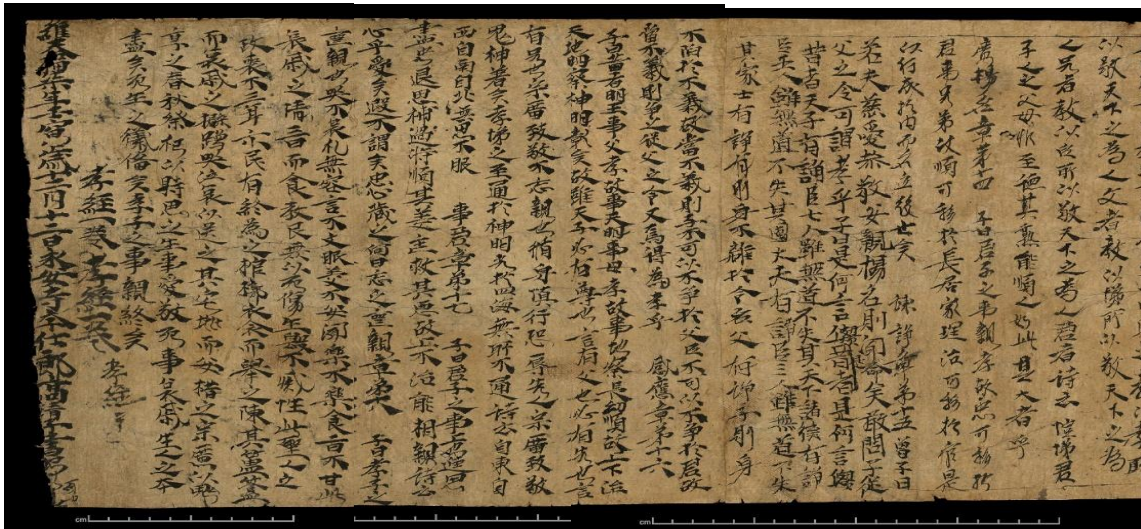


Figure 60: From the British Library collection (Or.8210/S.1386, second half of the scroll).

<sup>560</sup> See MTM scroll P.3716v and MTM booklet P.4094.

<sup>561</sup> S.1386.

Most scrolls contain densely written text without any blank spaces. However, some scrolls features indentations, typically around one to three characters in length, particularly before and after subtitles. In rare cases, blank spaces are deliberately used to separate individual characters of the running text, indicating a meticulous approach to visual organisation regardless of the quality of hands.<sup>562</sup>

### 5.3.3 Marks, Corrections, and Additions

Unlike MTMs, Single-Text Scrolls often contain numerous corrections, deletions, additions, and punctuation in both black and red ink. Less common are specific marks like hooks, which appear infrequently. The upcoming section explores a particular mark found on only six scrolls.<sup>563</sup> This mark, consisting of two vertically aligned dots connected by a stroke, is positioned to the right of the characters (Fig. 61 and Fig. 62). Sometimes hastily executed or omitted entirely, these marks appear in different colours – red and black – and are placed at different points within the same texts, suggesting their individual usage.<sup>564</sup>

The mark is found in black ink on five scrolls, with variations in its placement observed in two manuscripts featuring the *Xiaojing*.<sup>565</sup> These marks likely serve for emphasis, possibly indicating key points in the text (Tab. 3).

Two scrolls feature red ink marks.<sup>566</sup> While neither of these scrolls are ruled, the texts are (partially) punctuated in red ink. The marked characters can sometimes be read together as independent sentences. For example, in the Wang Fanzhi poems, characters like *ren* 人, *xi* 惜, *zhen* 真, and *jing* 經 collectively convey a message to value the true classics (Tab. 4).<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> This is P.4085. For a similar student manuscript not examined here, see scroll P.2578.

<sup>563</sup> I previously discussed the marks found on the scroll at the *Neiraku bijutsukan*, as well as P.2710 and P.3211v in my M.A. thesis, Bregler 2018, 49. Building on this analysis, I extend the examination to include the newly discovered evidence from the manuscripts presented here. The marks also appear frequently on manuscripts not discussed here, such as P.3408 and P.3243, both containing the text *Kaimeng yaoxun* 開蒙要訓 ('Important Instructions for Teaching Beginners') and P.3783, containing the *Lunyu* without commentary.

<sup>564</sup> For instance, on the *Neiraku bijutsukan* scroll, the mark is in red ink, while on Hane 羽 30, it is in black ink.

<sup>565</sup> The manuscripts are P.2715 and S.1386.

<sup>566</sup> As noted in Bregler 2018, 49, marks consisting of two dots appear on P.2710 alongside specific characters, such as *lai* 來, *jie* 借, *xin* 心, *bai* 拜 and *en* 恩. The dots are either in red or black ink.

<sup>567</sup> This is the scroll in the *Neiraku bijutsukan*, Nara.



**Figure 61:** Section view of a marked character on P.2738. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



**Figure 62:** Section view of a marked character on P.3381. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

**Tab. 3:** List of the different characters marked in black ink in texts on Student manuscripts.

Black mark				
Signature	Core-content	Marked words	Ruled?	Punctuated?
<b>P.2738</b> (24.7-25.9 x 228.2 cm)	<i>Taigong jiajiao</i> 太公家教	者如 先 之寶	not ruled	punctuated in red and black
<b>P.2715</b> (27.4-28.6 x 134.9 cm)	<i>Xiaojing</i> 孝經	嚴而 [possibly: 自?]	possibly ruled by folding	punctuated in red
<b>Hane 羽 30</b> (28.8 x 168 cm)	Wang Fanzhi poems 王梵志詩	人心下無	ruled	No
<b>S.1386</b> (29.3 x 106.69 cm)	<i>Xiaojing</i> 孝經	昔者	only two lines ruled	partially punctuated red, symbols in red

**Tab. 4:** List of the different characters marked in red ink in texts on Student manuscripts.

Red mark				
Signature	Core-content	Marked words	Ruled?	Punctuated?
Scroll kept in the <i>Neiraku bijjutsukan</i> , Nara (unkown)	Wang Fanzhi poems 王梵志詩	人 惜 真 經	not ruled	punctuated in red
<b>P.3381</b> (26.7 x 185.3 cm)	<i>Lament of the Lady</i> 秦婦吟	是	not ruled	partially punctuated in red

### 5.3.4 Colophons

Out of twenty-eight scrolls with extant end titles, twenty-one include colophons at the end of the text.<sup>568</sup> Seven lack colophons, with five having blank space at the end.<sup>569</sup> One scroll contains later-added content, including poems.<sup>570</sup> Lastly, two scrolls are cut off after the end titles, with remaining strokes suggesting possible following texts or colophons.<sup>571</sup> This may explain the presence of torn paper slips containing lines with dates and names among the Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>572</sup>

Like MTMs, the colophons typically consist of formulaic one-liners, offering details on dates, individuals, and institutions.<sup>573</sup> Seven monasteries are mentioned, with sixteen colophons spanning from 850 to 957.<sup>574</sup> The frequent appearance of colophons prompts questions about their significance. Two main scenarios emerge: either they indicate completion by the scribe or are additions by later users.<sup>575</sup> Such one-liners added by later users cannot reliably date the

<sup>568</sup> This constitutes 75% of the scrolls.

<sup>569</sup> S.5674, S.3393, S.1392, P.3883, and P.3743. This suggests that highlighting learning process may have been prioritised over indicating production responsibility.

<sup>570</sup> S.3393.

<sup>571</sup> These include S.4920, where faint strokes of a next line are discernible, and P.3623.

<sup>572</sup> Single paper slips are patched onto the verso of scrolls, such as S.778, which requires individual assessment to ascertain whether they were written by original scribes or added later by following owners or users.

<sup>573</sup> For an overview of student colophons, see Galambos 2020a, 91–100. I chose ‘one-liners’ because most of these formulas are just one line.

<sup>574</sup> The majority of five colophons mention the Jinguangming monastery, while the names of the Yong’an, Lingtu and Sanjie monasteries appear twice each. Three other monasteries - Liantai, Jingtu and Xiande – are each mentioned once. For more on monasteries, see Galambos 2020a, 96. The former date in the colophon on P.2825 is discussed in Galambos 2020a, 91. The latter date is in one of many ‘one-liner’ on P.3780.

<sup>575</sup> Galambos 2020a, 98.

manuscripts production.<sup>576</sup> Later users, identified by different hands, interacted with the manuscripts in diverse ways. Verbs like *shu* 書 ('to write') or *xie* 寫 ('to copy') likely indicate that the user transcribed the texts on other manuscripts. A different engagement with the texts is suggested by verbs such as *du* 讀 ('to read aloud') and *song* 誦 ('to recite').<sup>577</sup>

Colophons and one-liners often end with *ji* 記, commonly understood as signifying the act of recording information.<sup>578</sup> This character is often part of the formula *ji zhi er* 記之耳 ('recorded and that's it').<sup>579</sup> Similar expressions are found in inscriptions on Mogao cave walls, such as *you ji zhi er* 遊記之耳 ('...travelled and recorded, that's it'). Considered together, these suggest that *ji* 記 in one-liners is likely an abbreviation of such formulas, which serve to document the presence of users, whether physically at a location, or, in a more abstract sense, having encountered a manuscript.<sup>580</sup>

Both colophons and one-liners by later users showcase one's learning achievements, yet there is a notable absence of verbs relating to memorisation. While *yi* 憶 likely denotes committing something to memory, along with other similar terms, it is conspicuously missing.<sup>581</sup> The absence of further specific verbs like *bei* 背 ('to recite aloud from memory') likewise suggests that long-term memorisation of texts was either rare or not a primary focus in the educational setting in Dunhuang.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> On S.479, a colophon dated to 879 suggests that a student named Lü Kangsan 呂康三 recited the content possibly indicating a one-liner rather than a scribal colophon. Giles 1957, 243, no. 7278 records the name as Lü Kang and interprets the character *san* as connected to the following action, translating it as 'Threefold recitation recorded by the student Lü K'ang [...]'. My reading of the name follows Rong and Yu 2008, 263–264. The hand of this one-liner is arguably different.

<sup>577</sup> Galambos 2020a, 98.

<sup>578</sup> Galambos 2020a, 98.

<sup>579</sup> This translation is based on Galambos 2020a, 98. This formula is included in the colophons on P.3780, P.3764, and Hane 羽 30.

<sup>580</sup> For relevant discussions, see Bregler 2023, 223–224.

<sup>581</sup> This character is prominently featured in a passage describing Cai Yan's recollection of her father's lost books, as discussed in see Nugent 2010, 77.

<sup>582</sup> In a preliminary examination, I found no instances of *beisong* prior to the Qin dynasty, while *dusong* is documented in the Weishu by Wei shou 魏收 (534–550).

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter reveals that MTM scrolls, booklets, and Single-Text Scrolls were crafted by students at different stages of learning, each with unique objectives. MTM scrolls likely served as personal notes for advanced students, who nevertheless sought to identify themselves upon completion of their work. The flexible combination of texts suggests a freedom in selection, without clear evidence of a prescribed curriculum or teacher involvement. Additionally, the absence of reading aids such as punctuation in MTM scrolls implies that later users were expected to be familiar with the texts or skilled enough to navigate without assistance, given that usage by later persons was anticipated at all.

The five smaller and thus easily transportable MTM booklets serve as personal notes for specific texts, with less polished hands compared to MTM scrolls. This suggests format choice reflects students learning stages, with scrolls likely preserved for advanced learners. The lack of red punctuation suggests that use by later students was not originally anticipated. The sixth booklet, beautifully crafted, was produced by a *jiedu yaya* ('Lakey to the Military Commissioner') comparatively late, in 949. While not student-made, it likely served educational purposes, evident from meticulous red punctuation. This large booklet was likely intended as *Vorlage*.

In Student MTMs in format of booklets, it is common for either the middle section or a portion of the beginning to remain intact. To accurately assess the significance of this observation for practices in Dunhuang manuscript culture, more comprehensive comparisons with manuscripts from additional holdings are necessary. Implementing a straightforward classification during cataloguing – whether it is the beginning, end, or middle section – could assist scholars in identifying potentially related parts of a single booklet more swiftly. Furthermore, comparisons should extend to MTMs produced in different settings and containing distinct texts, such as those containing short scriptures, which, unlike the Student MTMs, are often complete at the end and include back covers.<sup>583</sup>

Single-Text Scrolls serve diverse purposes, from initial writing exercises and learning to read and write entire texts to showcasing advanced calligraphic skills. Unique marks, absent in MTMs, reflect the students' active engagement with the texts, including reading and recitation. Evidence suggests extensive usage of such scrolls, with common signs of wear like horizontal

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<sup>583</sup> Galambos 2020a, 37–79.

folding lines and missing sections. Additionally, the presence of several one-liners and further content in different hands indicates many later users.

In student manuscripts that are adequately preserved at the end, there is a notable prevalence of colophons after end titles, particularly when compared to other Dunhuang manuscripts like sutras. This indicates that colophons, as well as one-liners, played a significant role within the educational context. Further, the analysis revealed two distinct types of MTMs: scrolls with consecutively written texts concluded by a colophon, and booklets with colophons between individual texts, usually coinciding with quire boundaries. However, the sixth booklet breaks this pattern, with a colophon placed on the verso of a folio, followed immediately by the head title to the next text. Thus, the placement of colophons on booklets mirrors Single-Text scrolls, warranting further investigation into its implications.

Notably, MTMs lack expected combinations with texts like *Yanzi fu* 燕子賦 ('Rhapsody on the Swallow'), the *Han Peng fu* 韓朋賦 ('Rhapsody on Han Peng'), or the *Kaimeng yaoxun* 開蒙要訓 ('Important Instructions for Beginning Learners'), and the *Baixing zhang* 百行章 ('Stanzas on the Hundred Conducts'). These texts are often found together on other student MTMs. While acknowledging the incompleteness of the surviving MTMs, it is thus evident that distinct groups with different sets of texts existed. This likely reflects variations in the texts available at different monastic or educational centres, possibly with only some very popular texts such as the *Qianziwen*, *Taigong jiajiao*, and *Kongzi Xiangtuo* widely copied. Notes on the verso of scrolls associated with this other group not discussed here may indicate later efforts to gather manuscripts at a single site.



## 6 Three MTMs with Two Shared Core Texts

Three Dunhuang scrolls share the same two literary texts (hereafter: core texts), copied consistently in the same order. Despite minor variants, the core texts remain identical across all three scrolls, indicating a standardised text.<sup>584</sup>

All three scrolls are damaged, limiting the analysis to the surviving evidence. Codicological features, core content and paracontent suggest their production in educational settings. However, differences between the scrolls suggest distinct modes of production and use. The first scroll presents the two core texts on the recto in a fluent hand. The second scroll includes the core texts among three texts on the verso, with the second core text being nearly absent. The third scroll is assembled from several shorter sheets and contains altogether four texts, with the last incomplete. I discuss these scrolls' significance for understanding MTMs in the conclusion.

### 6.1 Manuscript D

Manuscript D (hereafter: MS D) contains solely the two core texts on its recto.<sup>585</sup> In the following, I describe this scroll and the topics of the core texts in more detail.

#### 6.1.1 Codicology

MS D measures approximately 28.7 to 29.1 x 75.7 cm and is damaged at both ends. The first sheet, measuring 42.1 cm, is close to the average width.<sup>586</sup> Interestingly, a blank line precedes the head title on the second line, hinting at the possibility of additional sheets originally being present before the current first sheet.<sup>587</sup> The second sheet, at 33.6 cm long, is notably shorter than average, indicating it may have been longer originally.<sup>588</sup> Despite significant tear in the middle along a horizontal line, the lack of noticeable features at the joint of two sheets suggests that the scroll was created in one go.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> For an edition of the two core texts, see Zhang 1996, 287–294 and 269–277.

<sup>585</sup> The manuscript has the signature P.2712.

<sup>586</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>587</sup> See also the discussion on the codicology of student manuscripts, Chapter 5.

<sup>588</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>589</sup> This is suggested, for example, by some strokes of characters that extend across the joints of sheets.

### 6.1.2 Visual Organisation

The sheets lack ruling, and due to damage, it is unclear if margins existed. Characters are generally aligned but the lines become more diagonal towards the end. In total, there are 36 lines of text, with 20 on the first sheet and 26 on the second, each containing 20 to 25 characters per line.<sup>590</sup>

The scroll's beginning is mutilated, with a blank line followed by the head title to the first text at the upper margin of the second line. The text starts in the next line at the upper margin and there is no end title. Instead, seven smaller characters occupy the right half of a line directly below the last four characters of the text (orange in Fig. 63).<sup>591</sup> Beneath this, the head title of the second text follows in characters of regular size (yellow in Fig. 63), with the author's name positioned after a small blank space in the same line. The second text begins in the following line at the upper margin, and an end title appears below the end of the text in line 35 (orange in Fig. 63), with a blank space of about two to three characters. Finally, the colophon occupies the entire line 36 (dark blue in Fig. 63).

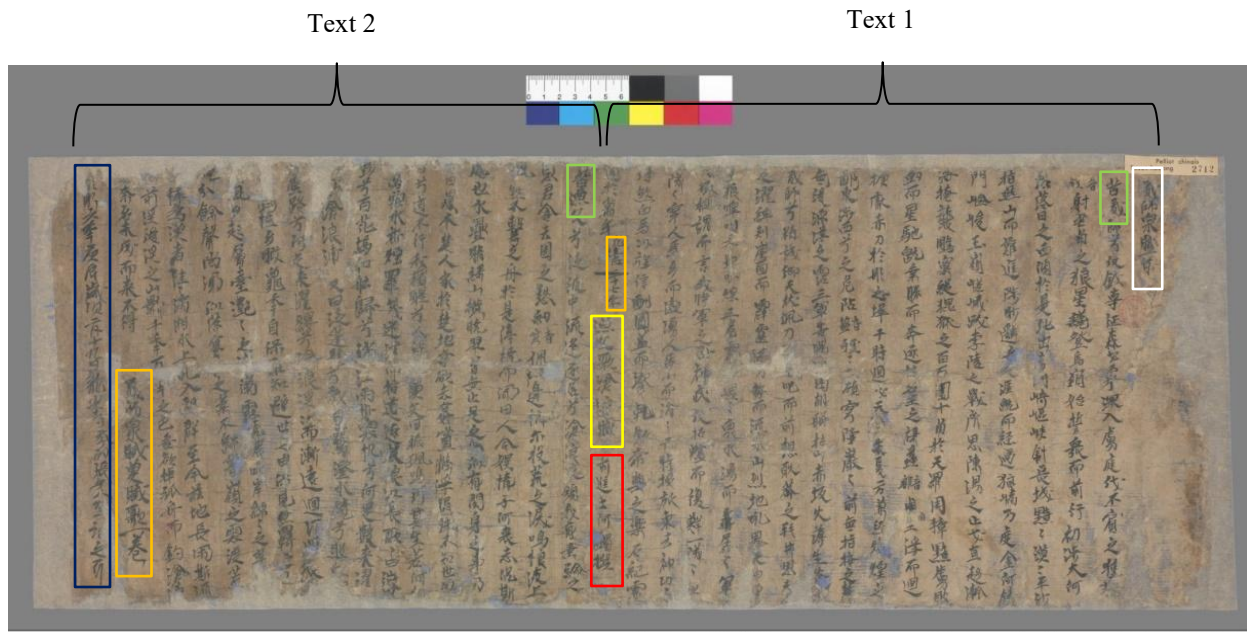
In both texts, phonetic glosses are integrated directly below the relevant characters, occupying half the space of a line. The first text contains three such glosses, appearing in lines four, nine, and eleven. However, the information provided in these glosses does not always align accurately with the reconstructed pronunciation of the Middle Chinese characters. For example, in line four, the character *yu* 鬻 ('sell'; 'vend') (MC: *yuwk*) is glossed with 欲 ('want'; 'hope for'; 'shall') (MC: *yowk*).<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> I count the blank line at the beginning as line number one.

<sup>591</sup> The small size of the seven characters resembles that of comments in a text.

<sup>592</sup> Kroll 2017, 574 and 572.



Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France - Département des Manuscrits, Peilinet chinois 2712

**Figure 63:** The recto of the incomplete MS D containing two texts. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The seven characters following the first text serve as a character count, with a thick horizontal black line running through the fourth character (Fig. 64). This line may indicate a visual separation of the core texts or a deletion of the of the second character *san* 三 (‘three’) from the seven characters. The character count is accomplished using the phrase *fan shu san bai san shi qi zi* 凡書三百三十七字 (‘In total, three hundred thirty-seven characters’).<sup>593</sup> If the second *san* is indeed meant to be deleted, the count would indicate three hundred and seventeen characters. Additionally, a vertical line crosses out the first *san*, suggesting even more possibilities for the character count (Fig. 64).

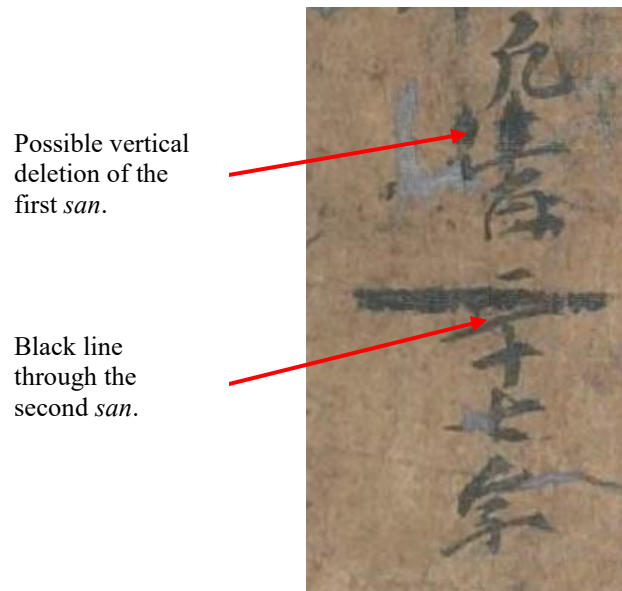
The actual character count is three hundred fifty-two, considerably higher than any number possibly indicated by the seven characters.<sup>594</sup> If the scribe was paid based on the number of words, he would have received less than he deserved. It is more plausible that he copied from a Vorlage which contained the correct number of characters.<sup>595</sup>

<sup>593</sup> The seven characters are labelled as a ‘final note’ in BnF 2006.

<sup>594</sup> My count excludes head title, end title, as well as any additions, deletions, and phonetic glosses. Given the manuscript’s severe damage in various places, the presence of certain characters can only be speculated. Thus, this tally is an approximation. Sanft 2022, 296 also provides a count of one hundred and fifty-four characters, likewise excluding titles, deletions, additions, and phonetic glosses.

<sup>595</sup> Sanft 2022, 297, n. 21 suggests this possibility.

Among all manuscripts discussed in this dissertation, this is the only one where characters of a text are enumerated. Although character counts appear in some other Dunhuang manuscripts, it is unusual for such notation to be limited to the end of the first text rather than applied to all texts in the manuscript.<sup>596</sup> This implies that the second text was likely added later from a different source.



**Figure 64:** The number count after the first text on MS D (section view). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

## Hand

Both texts are written in a single skilled hand.<sup>597</sup> The size and balance of the characters are uniform, with mostly medium to thick strokes and small but evenly spaced characters. Each character bears a slight slant, and the scribe's distinctive style is evident in the execution of certain strokes, such as in the characters *cang* 滄, 人 and *jin* 今. Notably, the scribe employed more hand movement than necessary, as seen in the unique wave-like form in the second stroke of these characters.

### 6.1.3 Marks, Corrections, and Additions

Marks, corrections, and additions are only evident in the first text, suggesting that the scribe paid more attention to it. This discrepancy further implies that the texts were not written at the same time.

<sup>596</sup> I am grateful to Costantino Moretti for bringing this to my attention during a discussion of this manuscript at the Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg on 07/21/2022.

<sup>597</sup> My approach to hand analysis is grounded in the work of Davis 2007 and Morris 2021.

All changes are made in black ink, likely by the same hand that wrote the core texts. Notably, red punctuation is entirely absent. This suggests that the scribe corrected himself, either immediately or during a later review. In line 9, a character is rewritten at the right side, indicating dissatisfaction with its form (Fig. 65).<sup>598</sup> Additionally, at the start of lines eleven and twelve, two hooks indicate that the characters are to be read in reverse order (Fig. 66).



**Figure 65:** The additional character at the right of line 9 (section view). MS D. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



**Figure 66:** Hook-like inversion marks in lines eleven and twelve (section view). MS D. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Deletions are marked using various methods. In lines ten and sixteen, two characters are deleted by placing the mark 卜 to their right (Fig. 67). Another method is seen in line fifteen, where the first character, *zhuān* 孺 (‘cautious, weak, coward, orphan’), is eliminated by several vertical strokes in black ink. This alters the second character slightly, adding *shì* 尸 on top, changing it to *chān* 孺 (‘weak, feeble, ineffective, powerless’), with a repetition mark indicating that the character is to be read twice (Fig. 68). In modern editions, the term is rendered with an additional water radical as *chān chān* 潺潺 (‘sound of water: murmur, babble’) since the sentence in which the character occurs concerns the bubbling forth of the water from the spring.<sup>599</sup>

<sup>598</sup> Sanft 2022, 296 suggests that the character was rewritten, as it appears rather blurry in the line.

<sup>599</sup> See Fu 2000, 23.



**Figure 67:** Deletion by adding the mark 卜 to the right of the character *zhi* 之 in line 9 (section view). MS D. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



**Figure 68:** Deletion of the first *chan* 潺 in line 15 by crossing it out using vertical lines (section view). MS D. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

#### 6.1.4 Core Content

The scroll features only the two core texts, which share significant structural similarities. Notably, both texts commence with identical pattern, including the syllable *xi* 兮 typical of the *sao* 騷 style. However, the second text deviates by incorporating two additional verse lines, warranting further exploration of the potential reasons for this variation.

The first text concerns Li Guangli 李廣利 (d. 89 BCE), a Han dynasty general known for his campaigns against the Xiongnu. Referred to as *Ershi jiangjun* 貳師將軍 (‘General of Ershi), Li was dispatched by Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 140–87) in 104 BCE to seize the city of Ershi for its fine horses. Despite initial success, the campaign failed after two years, leading to Li’s retreat to Dunhuang. Angered by his report, the Emperor ordered the Yumen Pass 玉門關 blocked to obstruct the return of the army. Reinstated for another campaign, Li conquered some western states but eventually fell victim to political intrigue and fled to the Xiongnu, where he met a tragic end as human sacrifice orchestrated by Wei Lü 衛律. Before his death, he prophesied to bring disaster upon the Xiongnu, leading to the establishment of a shrine in his honour.<sup>600</sup>

<sup>600</sup> Loewe 2000, 221–223.

The second text features Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340 BC–278 BC) and a fisherman, according to a story documented in Sima Qian’s *Shiji* 史記.<sup>601</sup> Qu was known for his loyalty to King Huai of Chu during the Warring States period. The *Shiji* recounts how King Huai’s misguided decisions led to loss of territory and soldiers and eventually resulted in Qu’s exile. After King Huai’s territory was seized and he died in the enemy state of Qin, Qu found himself in utter despair by the Yangtze river. In a conversation with a fisherman about the state of the world, the fisherman advised Qu to adapt to the circumstances. Qu, however, refused to compromise his virtues and chose to drown himself in the Miluo river after composing a poem.<sup>602</sup> This dialogue is also part of a separate work in the *Chu ci* (‘Songs of Chu’), titled *Yufu* 漁父 (‘Fisherman’).<sup>603</sup>

To date, no study has explored the relationship between the two core texts as contained in the Dunhuang manuscripts. While the first text touches on themes associated with Dunhuang, the significance of this connection remains uncertain due to the lack of information about the author.<sup>604</sup> In addition, the second text does not relate to Dunhuang, thus, there must be other reasons for the pairing. Analysing the most frequent characters in both texts did not offer any remarkable insights, suggesting a more abstract commonality between them. Both texts revolve around loyal heroes from historical accounts who aroused the envy of their ruler’s ministers, leading to intrigue and their eventual downfall. Simultaneously, the foolish decisions made by their rulers brought harm to the state. In essence, both texts pose the question: ‘What constitutes ideal conduct for a ruler, general, or minister?’

Contrary to historical sources, Li Guangli is portrayed in the first text positively with subtle Confucian undertones as a worldly hero.<sup>605</sup> Alluding to an early legend, the text narrates how the general summoned a spring when his troops lacked water, later identified near Dunhuang as *Xuanquan* 懸泉.<sup>606</sup> The first segment of the text follows the general’s punitive expedition against

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<sup>601</sup> For a translation of the Biography of Qu Yuan in the *Shiji*, see Watson 1961, 499–508.

<sup>602</sup> Watson 1961, 504–505.

<sup>603</sup> Watson 1961, 504, n. 7.

<sup>604</sup> Sanft 2022 304–305.

<sup>605</sup> Fu 2000, 30–31 suggests that the people in Dunhuang under Tibetan rule sympathised with Li’s surrender, perceiving him as a hero worthy of chanting about.

<sup>606</sup> Neither the *Shiji* nor the *Han shu* mention Li’s connection to the spring. The earliest reference is in *juan* nine of the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, citing Liu Zhen’s 劉珍 *Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記, where Geng Gong 耿恭 is described

the Xunyu 獯鬻, an ethnic group in ancient northern China, alluding to locations reminiscent of Han victories over the Xiongnu.<sup>607</sup> After a brief battle, during which a king is seized, the triumphant army returns. The narrative then describes their return journey through Dunhuang's eastern borderlands, where the general miraculously summons a spring by stabbing a cliff to quench the soldiers' thirst. The text concludes by noting the engraving of a musical stone in Changle 常樂, east of Dunhuang, to commemorate Li's deeds.<sup>608</sup>

The title, content, and wording of the second core text resembles passages from the *Yufu* 漁父 ('Fisherman') in the *Chu ci* 楚辭 ('Songs of Chu') (hereafter: *Yufu*). The fisherman theme is employed in various sources to convey moral lessons, focusing on the engagement of sovereigns and advisors in matters of government. For example, Mengzi praises the sage Shun for his lifelong commitment to learning from diverse experiences, including his time as a fisherman, before ascending to kingship.<sup>609</sup> In Zhuangzi's chapter 'Yufu' 漁父 ('Fisherman'), Confucius is humorously urged to prioritise self-cultivation over meddling in other's affairs.<sup>610</sup>

In the *Yufu*, Daoist principles are evident, particularly in the Fisherman's advice to adapt to circumstances without seeking to change them. This is exemplified in his concluding song, where the fisherman remarks that 'if the waters of the Canglang river are clean, one can wash his cap strings, and if they are muddy, one can wash his feet' (滄浪之水清兮，可以濯吾纓。滄浪之水濁兮可以濯吾足), a verse line frequently cited.<sup>611</sup> In the *Mengzi*, for instance, Confucius interprets a child's singing of this verse line differently. He asserts that the varying functions of the water depend on its state, illustrating with examples how an individual, a family, or a state first faces internal destruction due to a certain attitude even before external threats emerge. A passage from the chapter on king Tai Jia 太甲 in the *Shangshu* 尚書 is referenced, where the king declares that while heavenly calamities can be avoided, one cannot escape self-inflicted disasters.<sup>612</sup> The

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as begging for water in a well, see Fu 2000, 27. For an in-depth exploration of the earliest accounts and their dissemination, see Sanft 300–301.

<sup>607</sup> Fu 2000, 28.

<sup>608</sup> For Changle, see Fu 2000, 26–27, n. 48.

<sup>609</sup> Legge 1991a, 205–208.

<sup>610</sup> Legge 1962, 192–201.

<sup>611</sup> For the text of the *Yufu*, see Fu 2000, 34–35.

<sup>612</sup> Legge 1991a, 299–300.

king expresses regret for not heeding the advice of his advisor Yi Yin 尹伊, leading to self-inflicted harm, and seeks ongoing guidance.<sup>613</sup>

Compared to the *Yufu*, which mentions Qu Yuan by name, the Dunhuang version only refers to him as a *chen* 臣 ('vassal'), or, if addressed by the fisherman, as *jun* 君 ('Milord'). In the discussion that follows, I use the term 'vassal'. The Dunhuang version is longer and appears to consist of several different passages. Initially, the fisherman asks why the vassal is in such a state of grief. The vassal replies that he wanted to eradicate all corruption but soon realised that in a deluded age, the correct path could not be followed. This is followed by two poems sung by the fisherman, instead of the one poem in the *Yufu*, which are separated from each other by the word *you* 又 ('again'). In both poems, the fisherman invites the vassal 'to come to the bank of the Canglang river and wash his cap strings' (來濯纓兮滄浪浦) – however, the second verse line of the poem of the *Yufu* about the use of muddy water to wash his feet is missing altogether.

The omission of the second verse line concerning muddy water, seemingly insignificant, actually highlights a crucial difference in the underlying meaning of the Dunhuang version. This sheds light on the otherwise cryptic statement in the closing verse lines of the text: The fisherman invites the vassal twice to wash his cap strings, as the water of the Canglang river is clear enough to do so. There is no mention of letting things go their own way, as would be emphasised by the missing second verse line. These two songs are then followed by a lengthy and detailed description of the free and unrestrained landscape through which the fisherman is rowing upon his return to a remote shore. The passage closes with an image of endless permanence of nature, reminiscent of the ending of the first core text, followed by the closing verse lines, which lack structural parallels to the first core text.<sup>614</sup> These closing verse lines are either spoken by the vassal or a new third party, possibly a third lyrical persona. In the first verse line, the wish to row on a lonely boat and fish on the river is expressed. However, in the second verse line, it is lamented that this cannot be done, as no name has yet been established, and thus, the invitation of the fisherman to come to the river cannot be followed.<sup>615</sup> Considering that the fisherman in his song only speaks of clear water, one can infer that the state is still ordered enough to make a name for oneself. Furthermore, the

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<sup>613</sup> Legge 1991b, 206–207.

<sup>614</sup> Possibly, citing the first part alone already evokes the second verse line about muddy water in the reader's mind. However, this does not account for the inclusion of the two concluding verse lines.

<sup>615</sup> 吾欲棹孤舟而釣滄浪，其奈名未成而來不得。

speaker of the closing verse lines regrets that he cannot yet follow the fisherman, as he has not yet made a name for himself. Possibly, this speaker had not yet obtained his cap. Thus, in contrast to the *Yufu*, which subtly critiques Qu Yuan's ridged adherence to Confucian moralism, the Dunhuang version actively promotes such behaviour.

Therefore, an additional connection between the two core texts can be seen as an underlying encouragement to engage in active service for the state. In the first text, Li Guangli's return through Dunhuang is not obstructed, and his meritorious deeds are mentioned as being engraved into stone. In the second text, the vassal (or a lyrical persona) sees the advantages of seclusion but acknowledges that this is not yet achievable since he has yet to establish a name for himself.

### 6.1.5 Paracontent

The paracontent added to the core-content lacks consistency in the type of information it provides. In the following, I discuss titles, their position, author names, prefaces, and colophons.

#### Titles

The head title to the first text is *Ershi quan fu yi shou* 貳師泉賦一首 ('Rhapsody on the Ershi Spring; one *shou*') and the head title to the second text states *Yufu ge Canglang fu* 漁夫歌滄浪賦 ('Song about the Fisherman Rhapsody on the Canglang River').<sup>616</sup> Read in this sense, the title is exceptional for Dunhuang rhapsodies because it includes a longer description of the topic and a verb, *ge* 歌 ('singing'). It is also possible to interpret this title as originally two distinct titles listed one after the other: *Yufu ge* 漁父歌 ('Song about the Fisherman') and *Canglang fu* 滄浪賦 ('Rhapsody on the Canglang River').<sup>617</sup> This interpretation aligns better with the appearance and information provided in head titles to Dunhuang rhapsodies, such as the text titled either *Gaoxingge* 高興歌 ('Song on Happiness') or *Jiu fu* 酒賦 ('Rhapsody on Wine').<sup>618</sup> Typically, such

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<sup>616</sup> This is for example proposed by Fu 2021, 21.

<sup>617</sup> See the discussion of this manuscript below.

<sup>618</sup> See MS F below.

titles are short statements of the topics, averaging between two to four characters and do not include verbs.<sup>619</sup>

There is only one end title, positioned after the second text. This title exemplifies the fusion of titles of the two texts. It reads: *Ershi quan fu yufu fuge yi juan* 貳師泉賦漁父賦歌一卷 (‘Rhapsody on the Ershi Spring, Rhapsody on [and] Song about the Fisherman; One *Juan*’).<sup>620</sup> It is uncommon for an end title to refer to more than one literary text, resembling a summary or colophon that indicate manuscript production circumstances.<sup>621</sup> Referring to both core texts may acknowledge their equal importance and highlight their belonging together. The end title has further peculiarities: the two characters *yufu* 漁父 (‘Fisherman’) of the second text are written so tightly together that they appear to have become a single character, while *Canglang* 滄浪 (‘Canglang River’) is omitted.<sup>622</sup> A remainder of this second part of the title is only that both characters, *fu* 賦 and *ge* 歌, are included in the title.<sup>623</sup> Compared to the head title to this text, the order is switched. Given that this was not a mistake due to inattentiveness, this suggests that the characters are used interchangeably. This further underscores the previous observation that such terms in titles do not delineate fixed literary genres.<sup>624</sup>

Throughout the scroll, additional indications to the titles vary greatly: *Yi shou* 一首 (‘one *shou*’) in the first head title may specifically refer to this text as exactly ‘one piece’.<sup>625</sup> Alternatively, *yi shou* in the first head title and *yi juan* in the end title could frame both contents.<sup>626</sup> The first text is closely linked to the second, both in visual organisation and paracontent. There is no end title for the first text, only a character count. The next head title and second text follow

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<sup>619</sup> Some titles ending with *fu* are more occasional in content, in which case they begin with verbs and lack a subject, setting them apart from the title mentioning the fisherman directly. See for instance the titles listed in Zhang 1996, 1–2.

<sup>620</sup> This relates to manuscripts analysed in this dissertation. As observed in student manuscripts in Chapter 5, titles can group multiple works together, but only the first text is indicated in the titles.

<sup>621</sup> This mirrors the colophons that credit the collaborative effort of Song Wenxian 宋文顯 and An Wende 安文德 in creating S.707, see Galambos 2020a, 91–95.

<sup>622</sup> Fu 2021a, 21

<sup>623</sup> Zhang 1996, 273 suggests *ge* 歌 (‘song’) in the end title may be a mistake for *ge* 各 (‘each’). This raises the question whether *ge* 歌 (‘song’) (MC: ka) and *ge* 各 (‘each’) (MC: kak) were similar enough to be interchanged mistakenly.

<sup>624</sup> This reinforces the argument that the head title combines two originally distinct titles for the same text. Additionally, within the second text, the part potentially corresponding to *Canglang fu* in the title is introduced with *ge yue* 歌曰 (‘[He] sang as follows’; ‘The song goes’).

<sup>625</sup> This mirrors the usage of *yi shou* in the head titles of poetry selections, see Chapter 3.

<sup>626</sup> This is observed in student manuscripts, see Chapter 5. However, it is noteworthy that even here, texts rarely feature *yi shou* in a head title together with *yi juan* in an end title.

immediately in the same line, blurring the boundaries between texts. Furthermore, the absence of additional indications in the head title to the second text further loosens the already weak textual boundaries. Lastly, the end title of the second text closes with the additional indication *yi juan*, of which it is difficult to determine whether it refers to the contents as a textual unit or to the present scroll.

### Author Names

Beneath the head title of the first text, no author information is provided. However, the author is indicated in MS E and F, as discussed below. Only MS F provides a name, generally read as Zhang Xia 張俠.<sup>627</sup> On these two manuscripts, his position is given as *xianggong jinshi* 鄉貢進士 (‘Prefectural Nominee [for the] Presented Scholar [examination]’). No further information is available about the author’s period or place of service.<sup>628</sup> Beneath the head title of the second text is the information: *qian jinshi He Juan zhuan* 前進士何蠲撰 (‘Compiled by the Former Presented Scholar He Juan’).<sup>629</sup> The title *jinshi* (‘Presented Scholar’) indicates that He Juan also passed the Tang civil-service examination.<sup>630</sup> Apart from this, no further details are available about He Juan.<sup>631</sup>

### Colophon

The colophon states that Zhang Anba 張安八, *xuelang* 學郎 (‘student’) at the Longxing 龍興 monastery copied the texts on the nineteenth day of the second month in a *gengchen* 庚辰 year, during the sixth year of the Zhenming 貞明 reign, which corresponds to the year 920.<sup>632</sup> Thus, this scroll was produced during the Guiyijun period, when Cao Yijin 曹議金 (d.935) ruled the region.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> BnF 2006. For a summary of scholarly interpretations of this name, see Sanft 2022, 297–299.

<sup>628</sup> Zhang 1996, 288.

<sup>629</sup> BnF 2006. Zhang, 1996, 273, n.1 points out that the character *juan* 蠲 is incomplete due to paper tear on the left side.

<sup>630</sup> Kroll 2017, 216.

<sup>631</sup> Zhang 1996, 271.

<sup>632</sup> BnF 2006. Sanft 2022 follows Mair in interpreting the last character *ba* 八 as *ren* 人. However, the manuscript shows a gap between the two strokes and a curved left stroke, consistent with *ba* 八. Comparison with *ren* 人 in other texts reveal a straighter left stroke. Hence, I follow the reading as *ba* 八 as given in BnF 2006.

<sup>633</sup> On Cao Yijin, see Rong 2013, 44–46.

### 6.1.6 Further Content

Apart from a few pen strokes from the text on the recto bleeding through in several places, the verso is blank. Only in the middle of the scroll, there are several zigzagging lines (Fig. 69).<sup>634</sup> These are most likely remnants of someone testing their pen before beginning to write the content, either on this scroll or elsewhere.



Figure 69: Verso of MS D with only some few zigzag lines. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 6.2 Manuscript E (MS E)

The recto of this scroll contains short histories with partly faulty references to their sources.<sup>635</sup> The manuscript is therefore not an MTM *per se*, since the relevant set of literary texts is on its verso. Before turning to the verso, I briefly introduce the visual organisation and paracontent of the recto.

The sheets lack vertical ruling, featuring only top and bottom margins. There are a total of 198 lines, with 24 to 26 lines per sheet, each containing 17 to 23 characters.<sup>636</sup> While the handwriting appears advanced and fluent, it lacks a consistent slant. Variation in the thickness occurs unexpectedly in certain strokes, including elongated downward strokes in characters like *xiao* 孝 and *shi* 是. Throughout the texts, there are subtitles and smaller-sized comments interspersed with the core content, although they may not be immediately noticeable due to the indentation being relatively mild. At the end, a colophon in small characters credits a *xuelang* 學

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<sup>634</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>635</sup> This scroll has the signature P.2621.

<sup>636</sup> BnF 2006.

郎 (‘student’) named Yuanyi 員義 with copying the text, dating the copying to the tenth day of the fourth month of a *wuzi* 戊子 year, possibly 868 or 928.<sup>637</sup> This is followed by a humorous quatrain in pentasyllabic verses, which can also be found on the verso of P.2937, featuring the *Taigong jiajiao* as its core-content.<sup>638</sup>

### 6.2.1 Codicology

The scroll measures around 28.7-29.8 x 330.4 cm but is incomplete at both ends.<sup>639</sup> It consists of nine sheets, seven of them measuring 40 to 43 cm. The first sheet is damaged and is only 35.8 cm long, with the upper right corner missing. The final sheet is just 3.6 cm long. The paper, though fine, shows signs of ink, grease, and moisture stains, as well as cracks and holes, with traces of original repair still visible.<sup>640</sup>

### 6.2.2 Visual Organisation of the Verso

The verso lacks ruling and contains various writings by different hands, including model letters, personal names, and writing exercises, often incomplete.<sup>641</sup> Among them are the here relevant three literary texts in the same hand, likely intended as a set but left incomplete.<sup>642</sup> The first text is complete, while the second, which is the first of the two core texts, has only a head title, the author’s rank, and the first line of the text, with ample blank space left for continuation which was, however, never realized. Instead, the latter part of the blank space was used by a different hand (red arrow in Fig. 70). A third text follows afterwards, which is the second of the two core texts. This text is complete.

For all three texts, the head titles are positioned in the upper margin of a new line. Other than this, the visual organisation varies. In the first text, the main text begins immediately after the head title, followed by the end title on the same line, without any space in between (yellow in Fig.

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<sup>637</sup> Galambos 2021a, 106. Given the small size of the colophon and the poem following it, it is possible that this is a one-liner by a later user, rather than an original colophon.

<sup>638</sup> BnF 2006. See Galambos 2020a, 106–108 for the poem.

<sup>639</sup> This manuscript has the signature P.2621.

<sup>640</sup> See BnF 2006.

<sup>641</sup> For a list of all contents on the verso, see BnF 2006.

<sup>642</sup> These and the following numbers accord to the list of content provided in BnF 2006.

70). Below the head title, there are four characters indicating the author's rank but not his name. It is likely that the scribe intended to add the name later. Similarly, the second text, left incomplete, may have awaited addition of an end title upon completion.

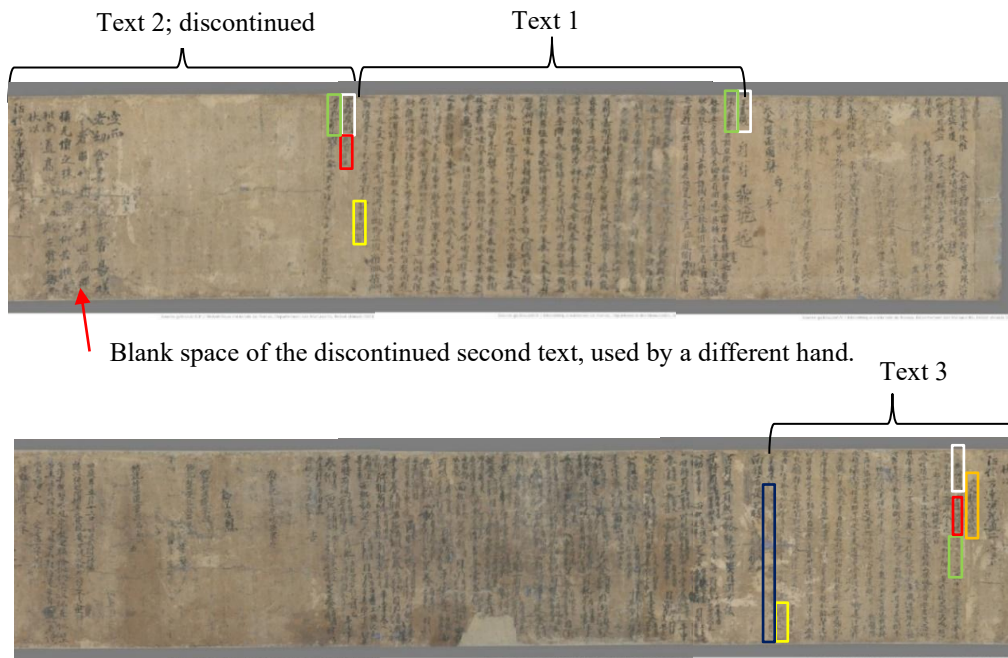
The third text has two head titles. The first is indented by about two characters of blank space in the upper margin and is written in slightly larger characters. This scroll stands out as the only one among student manuscripts studied so far to display two head titles in this manner. The first head title might be a later addition or a repetition of the one in the next line. Notably, this first title is placed just before the joint of two sheets, with some strokes extending onto the following sheet. The second head title begins directly in the upper margin of the sheet (Fig. 70). It is plausible that the first head title indicated which text should follow if the subsequent sheet with the second head title became detached from the scroll. Interestingly, this text shares the same phonetic glosses as MS D, suggesting a consistent convention in glossing this text.<sup>643</sup>

A colophon is placed in the middle of a new line after the end title of the third text (dark blue in Fig. 70).<sup>644</sup> It is probable that the colophon was added after copying the third text. This timing may or may not align with the completion of the first content. The presence of the second discontinued text suggests that the addition of colophons can precede the completion of all planned core content.

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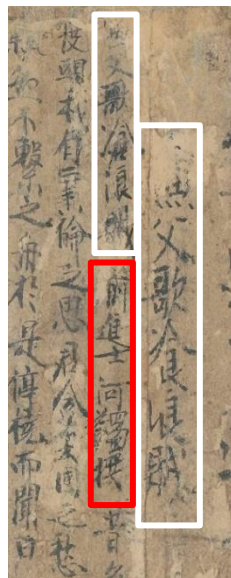
<sup>643</sup> The first text lacks interlinear glosses, and it is unclear if the second text, which is unfinished, would have included similar glosses as the text on MS D.

<sup>644</sup> Above the colophon, five characters are partially crossed out, resembling the beginning of a colophon. Notably, the character *ba* 𐑂 appears prematurely, potentially prompting the scribe to restart the colophon.



**Figure 70:** Overview of the beginning and middle section of MS E. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Beneath the second head title, the author's rank and name are indicated. Unlike the previous two texts, the text itself starts in the same line. The end title is positioned in the same line as the conclusion of the text, with a small space of one character left blank (Fig. 71).



**Figure 71:** The two head titles of the third text (section view). MS E. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

## Hand

The hand in the literary texts displays proficiency but also some irregularities. While characters generally maintain uniform size, individual strokes and components within characters often lack balance. There is no consistent slant in the characters, and strokes are typically executed one after the other. Stroke thickness varies from thin to medium, with occasional thick strokes. Notably, thick strokes tend to apply uniformly across entire characters.

A distinctive aspect of this hand is the presence of elongated horizontal strokes, evident throughout the texts. Examples include characters like *ke* 可, *he* 河, *wu* 無, *yuan* 遠, and *zhui* 追. In characters such as *ming* 鳴 and *ma* 馬, the four dots are often replaced by elongated strokes, resulting in cursive forms such as 鳴 and 馬.

### 6.2.3 Marks, Corrections, and Additions

Numerous corrections and additions, noted in smaller black in characters, are scattered throughout the texts, particularly the first one. Omitted characters are seamlessly added into their respective lines, such as *dai* 待, added beside *chuan men* 傳門, suggesting a meticulous round of revision.<sup>645</sup> Additionally, a single hook-shaped mark on line eighteen of the first texts indicates that two characters should be read in reverse order. Notably, there are no red marks or punctuation, which usually indicate text parsing by later users.

### 6.2.4 Core Content

There are three literary texts in total, all written in the same hand. The second and third texts are the two core texts discussed above: the *Ershi quan fu*, discontinued after some first lines and a complete *Yufu ge canglang fu*. I will now concentrate on the first text and explore its potential connection to the two core texts.

The first text, titled *Ziling fu* 子靈賦 (‘Rhapsody on *Ziling*’), features two parts with regularly rhymed verses.<sup>646</sup> The initial part comprises pentasyllabic verses, while the latter part

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<sup>645</sup> See the edition by Zhang 1996, 317 and 321, n. 5.

<sup>646</sup> For the head title and its information, see below.

consists of heptasyllabic verses.<sup>647</sup> These sections appear to be amalgamated from potentially separate poems, some possibly missing verse lines. The initial part comprises three pentasyllabic quatrains, followed by two poems with six verses each, and lastly, three separate verse lines, possibly incomplete. The rhyme scheme varies across the text, with the first quatrain having an a-a-x-a pattern, the second quatrain lacking rhyme or using dialectical rhymes, and the third quatrain possibly following an a-b-c-b or dialectical rhyme scheme. The two following poems share consistent rhyme in every second verse line. The rhyme scheme for the three separate verse lines remains unclear. The second part initiates with three pieces, each comprising eight verse lines with different rhymes for every second verse line. Following these, there are four verse lines lacking a consistent rhyme scheme. Three more pieces follow, each featuring eight verse lines with various rhymes in every second line. Finally, this part concludes with a quatrain in heptasyllabic verses, utilising an a-a-x-a rhyme scheme.

The initial section, composed in pentasyllabic verses, portrays the emotions of a woman confined to her chambers, lamenting her separation from a loved one and reflecting on their current circumstances. It evokes a sense of longing intertwined with reflections on the passage of time, with things enduring and people changing.<sup>648</sup> While seemingly disconnected from the theme of making a name for oneself in the world as employed in the two core texts, the connection becomes more explicit in the following piece written in heptasyllabic verses. Here, the topic from the pentasyllabic verses is continued, but gradually shifts the centre of attention towards the situation of the man who departed for service. Especially the last of the heptasyllabic pieces exhorts the man to study diligently and encourages him to travel far for making a name for himself.<sup>649</sup> Various exemplary great officials and generals are named in detail with their respective stories, and towards the end, the necessity to study the Five Classics to pass the Imperial Examination is mentioned. This suggests that even though the text is likely a collection of different poems, the topics are developed consistently towards the overarching themes of self-advancement as found in the two core texts.

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<sup>647</sup> See for instance Zhang 1996, 320 and Fu 2000, 71–72.

<sup>648</sup> See Fu 2000, 76.

<sup>649</sup> Zhang 1996, 320.

### 6.2.5 Paracontent

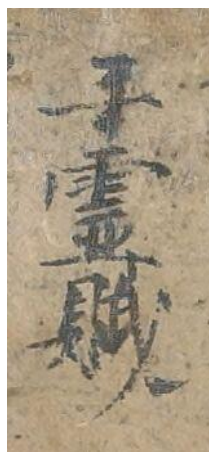
Paracontent is inconsistently applied, offering varying information for each of the three texts. In the following, I introduce the paracontent in more detail.

#### Titles

The head title to the first text is usually read as *Ziling fu* 子靈賦 (‘Rhapsody on *Ziling*’) (Fig. 72). It is unclear what *Ziling* precisely refers to, as these characters are not mentioned within the text itself, making it challenging to discern their connection.<sup>650</sup> The end title reads *Ziling fu yi shou* 子靈賦一首 (‘Rhapsody on *Ziling*; one *shou*’), with *yi shou* appearing under the end title instead of the head title, possibly reporting in the sense of a colophon that ‘the copying of the *Ziling fu* is finished’.

Similar to the previous manuscript, the head title to the second text describes the topic as the Ershi general and the spring, but without the addition of *yi shou*. Since only the first few lines of this texts are present, it is unclear if there would have been an end title.

The two head titles for the third text are identical to those on MS D: *Yufu ge Canglang fu* 漁父歌滄浪賦 (‘Song about the Fisherman; Rhapsody on the Canglang River’). This title succinctly introduces the central themes of the text. However, the end title is abbreviated, mentioning only the topic of the first part of the head title without the word *ge* 歌 (‘song’), as *Yufu yi juan* 漁父一卷 (‘Fisherman; one *juan*’). Unlike the merged title on MS D, this title only refers to the third text, indicating it as a standalone unit.



**Figure 72:** The head title to the first text (section view). MS E. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>650</sup> See Fu 2000, 72. I follow the established reading of this title, even though the characters are not easily identifiable. For example, the reading of the first character as *zi* 子 remains uncertain. If the second character is interpreted as *xu* 虛, the title could be read as *Zixu fu* (‘Rhapsody on Master Vacuous’), as noted in the *Dunhuang yishu zongmu suoyin* 敦煌遺書總目索引, see Zhang 1996, 319. However, this interpretation differs slightly from the second character, which is a variant for the character *ling* 靈, written as 靈, see the online database by Guojia jiaoyu yanjiu yuan, <<https://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=49614>>, (accessed on 16 May 2024).

## Author Names

For the first text, no author information is provided, leaving the identity of the author unknown as the text is unique to this Dunhuang scroll.<sup>651</sup> The second text lacks the author's name, likely due to the incomplete copying process. Only the designation *xiangong jinshi* 鄉貢進士 ('Prefectural Nominee [for the] Presented Scholar [Examination]') is given, with a minor character mistake.<sup>652</sup> The third text includes author information beneath the second head title as *qian jinshi He Juan zhuan* 前進士何蠲撰 ('Compiled by the Former Presented Scholar, He Juan'), matching the attribution found in MS D.

## Colophon

In the partially legible colophon on the verso, the Jingtu 淨土 monastery in Dunhuang is referenced, along with the fifth year of the Changxing 長興 reign, corresponding to 934.<sup>653</sup> The subsequent name is mostly illegible due to paper wear, but it likely indicates a *xuelang* 學郎 ('lay student'), with the first character possibly reading Zhang 張.

Scholars suggested the name could be Yuanyi 員義, matching the colophon on the recto, which dates to either 868 or 928.<sup>654</sup> However, the character on the verso colophon consists of a left and a right part, clearly different to the character *yuan* 員, suggesting that the name on the verso denotes someone else. Furthermore, hand comparisons of the texts on the recto and verso suggests the involvement of two distinct scribes. The hand on the verso is fluent and skilled, while on the recto, it is less refined and often executed stroke by stroke. Even if we consider the possibility of a single scribe for both sides, questions remain about the rationale behind this and the process of writing on both the recto and verso. Whether the colophon on the recto indicates 868 or 928, the texts precede those on the verso by either sixty-six or six years. While a scribe's skill may diminish over time, the likelihood of a single scribe is overall still less probable than there being two different scribes, with the scribe on the verso being less skilled. This is supported

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<sup>651</sup> Zhang 1996, 319.

<sup>652</sup> The character shi 士 (MC: dzriX) is written as *shi* 使 (MC: sriX). Kroll 2017, 414 and 415. The pronunciation is similar. The mistaken character *shi* 使 may have been partially informed by the shape of the character *xia* 俠, which would be part of the author's name but is missing from here.

<sup>653</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>654</sup> Zhang 1996, 272. The source of Zhang's information and the correspondence with the microfilm image is unclear.

by additional content on the verso penned by multiple different hands, indicating several later users engaged with the blank space on the scroll.

### 6.2.6 Further Content

In addition to the three literary texts by the same hand, there is several further texts by different hands. At the beginning of the scroll, there are fifteen lines of a model letter in lighter ink, likely written first.<sup>655</sup> Below the head title to the *Ziling fu*, the character *shen* 身 ('body') appears twice, followed by *fei* 飛 ('to fly') three times, possibly prompted by encountering it in the text of the *Ziling fu*.<sup>656</sup> The blank space from the discontinued second text was used by a less skilled hand to write an incomplete speech of a monk.<sup>657</sup> Following the third literary text, in a different hand and darker ink, is a treatise on divination.<sup>658</sup> There are several additional and fragmented texts, with notable gaps between them.<sup>659</sup> One fragment repeats the title *Foshuo miaofa lianhua jing* 佛說妙法蓮花經 ('Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma') three times, with the second and third instance specifying *pin di wu* 品第五 ('Chapter Number Five').

## 6.3. Manuscript F (MS F)

The codicology of this scroll presents a complex picture, suggesting the reuse of sheets and potentially extensive reworking of the entire manuscript.<sup>660</sup> The recto features the two core texts along with two additional texts, which will be discussed below under **3.3.6. Further Content**.

### 6.3.1 Codicology

MS F is unusual in that several sheets were likely added later on the right side, rather than exclusively to the left.<sup>661</sup> This was done by leaving the first line of a sheet blank and starting the

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<sup>655</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>656</sup> The character *fei* is commonly found on the verso of student manuscripts, like on the verso of P.3666 and S.1386. This suggests it served as common writing exercise, likely due to its complex structure.

<sup>657</sup> This is on sheet six, lines 45–51. BnF 2006.

<sup>658</sup> Sheets five to three, lines 68–95. BnF 2006.

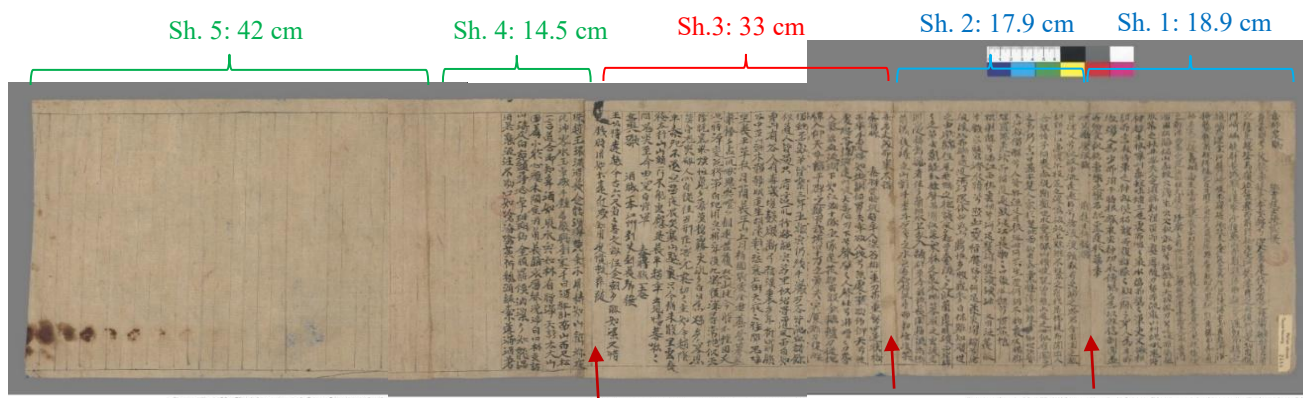
<sup>659</sup> Sheets three to two, lines 96–121. BnF 2006.

<sup>660</sup> This scroll has the signature P.2488.

<sup>661</sup> For a general description of scroll assembly, see Galambos 2016b, 358. First lines of sheets are often left blank to prevent content loss from damage. Some scrolls, like P.3812, P.2544, and P.3666, even include additional cover sheets. This suggests that adding sheets to the right was not uncommon.

text from the second line onwards.<sup>662</sup> This allows additional sheets to be attached at the beginning without covering previously written content. Shorter amounts of characters could then be added to the first blank lines of subsequent sheets from end of texts on preceding sheets.

The scroll, measuring 30.1 to 30.5 x 126.4 cm, is well preserved, with few holes but no major tears at the edges (Fig. 73). It consists of five sheets of thick beige paper. Several sheets are cut shorter than the usual width of about 40 to 42 cm.<sup>663</sup> Sheets 1 and 2 are similar in width (18.9 cm and 17.9 cm), suggesting a close relationship, although the exact nature of this remains uncertain. Sheet 2 may have been cut from the second half of a different scroll, repurposed to match the dimensions of the first sheet closely. Alternatively, sheets 1 and 2 could have originated from the same sheet initially, with only a line or two of text being cut off from its centre. Sheet 3, at 33 cm, likely existed independently first. Sheets 4 and 5 were probably worked on as a unit before being attached, with sheet 4 being the shortest at 14.5 cm.



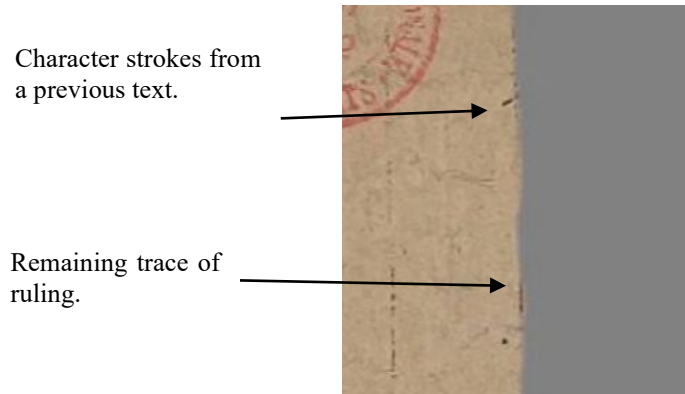
**Figure 73:** Overview of sheet length and caesuras (red arrows) of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Sheet 1, 18.9 cm long, appears to have been cut out from a longer original sheet, with traces of following and preceding texts visible at both ends. Character strokes from the preceding text and traces of vertical ruling are evident at the beginning (Fig. 74), while some strokes of a following text are preserved beneath the narrow joint to the second sheet (Fig 75). The latter case

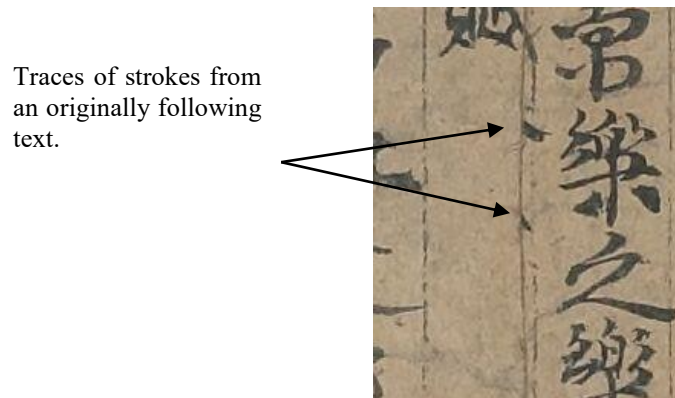
<sup>662</sup> This phenomenon can be frequently observed for student manuscripts.

<sup>663</sup> BnF 2006.

suggests that sheets were cut not only when there was a blank line between texts but also when another text followed directly in the next line.



**Figure 74:** Enlarged section of the beginning of the sh.1 of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



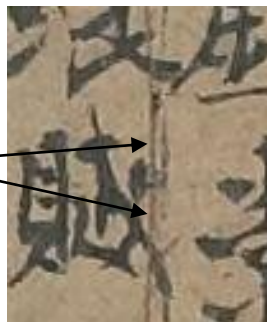
**Figure 75:** Enlarged section of the end of the sh.1 of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The preserved part of sheet 2 likely represents its second half, indicated by the narrow first vertical ruling line, partially overlapped by sheet 1.<sup>664</sup> Sheet 2 appears to have served as a connecting piece between sheet 1 and sheet 3. Initially, only the content from the second line onwards may have been present on sheet 2, with the title added in the narrow first line upon joining the sheets. Some strokes of the title extend slightly over the joint onto the paper of sheet 1 (Fig. 76).

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<sup>664</sup> Additionally, the ruling was conducted before joining the sheets, evident from the horizontal rulings at the upper and lower margins, which do not directly connect.

Two examples for strokes of the title in first line reaching over to sheet 1.

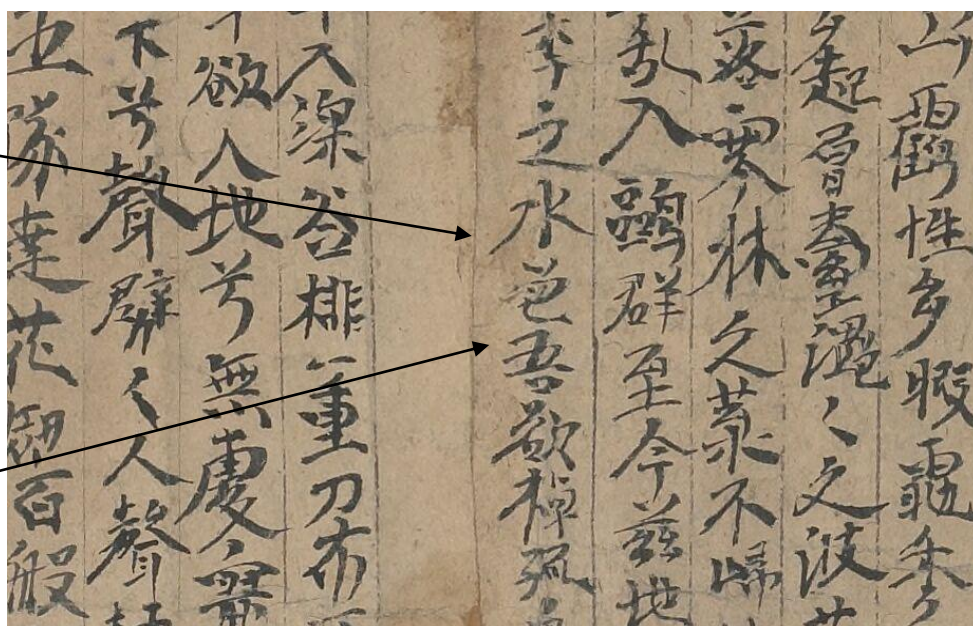


**Figure 76:** Enlarged section of the joints of sheet 1 and sheet 2 of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The end of Sheet 2 is blank, without traces of a cut-off following text. The edge of sheet 2 forms a perceptible line on the following sheet, potentially replacing manual ruling. Sheet 3 begins intact, with ruling starting from the second line (Fig. 77).<sup>665</sup> The codicological evidence is inconspicuous, suggesting it had existed as an independent unit. Here again, the last eight characters of the content on sheet 2 can be a later supplement, added after joining the two sheets (Fig. 78).<sup>666</sup>

No prior ruling detectable for sheet 3 beneath the joint.

No vertical ruling for a possibly following line on sheet 2.



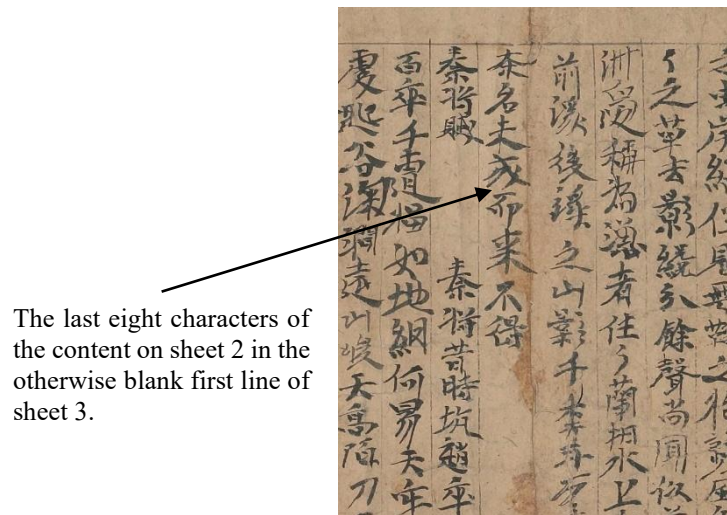
**Figure 77:** Enlarged section of the joint of second and third sheet of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>665</sup> The disconnected horizontal ruling at the margins of sheets 2 and 3 suggest a left-to-right approach, with the lower margin indicating supplement ruling in multiple strokes.

<sup>666</sup> Some strokes of the eight characters extend onto sheet 2.

The content of the first text on sheet 3 ends before reaching the edge of the paper (red arrow in Fig. 79), followed by the title to the fourth text in the next line. However, this fourth text is discontinued after two lines, leaving the rest of the line blank (blue arrow in Fig. 79). Moreover, a partially visible last line remains blank (yellow arrow in Fig. 79).

Sheets 4 and 5 are a cohesively worked unit, as evident from the consistent ruling.<sup>667</sup> Sheet 4, the shortest, is pasted onto sheet 3, contrary to the more usual other way of pasting following sheets underneath preceding ones.<sup>668</sup> Likely a cut-off end from a longer sheet, its first half is missing.<sup>669</sup> The discontinued fourth text on sheet 3 resumes at the beginning of sheet 4, with some strokes extending onto sheet 3. Despite being mostly blank, the ruling of sheet 4 extends onto sheet 5, suggesting an anticipation of future content that was never realised.<sup>670</sup>



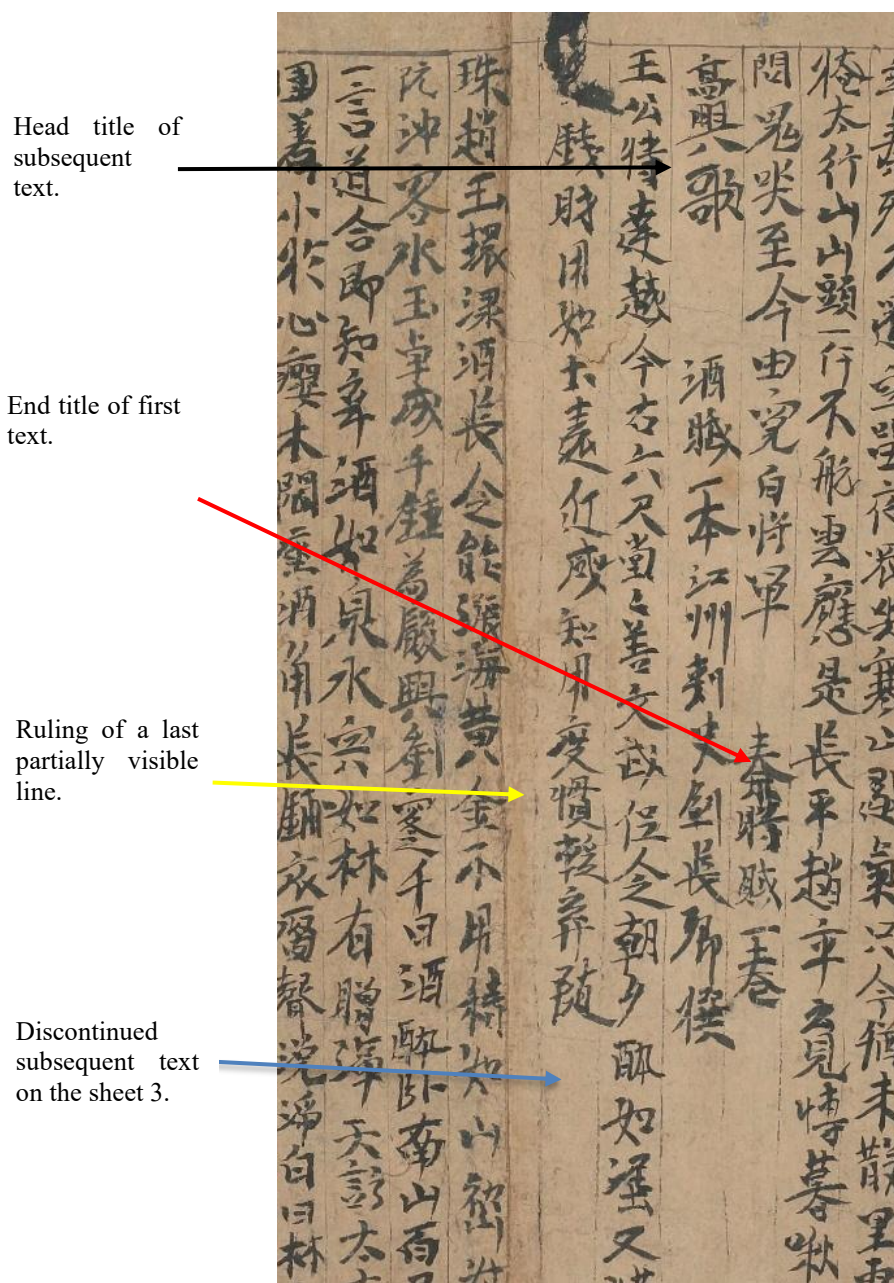
**Figure 78:** Enlarged section of the joint between sheet 2 and sheet 3 of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>667</sup> The ruling at the joint maintains consistent height. While the ruling of the upper margin remains continuous, the ruling of the lower margin is disconnected. However, the sheets were ruled after being joint together, as indicated by vertical ruling on either side of the joint, forming a line of text that spans across both sheets. These ruling lines slope leftwards and end at the bottom of sheet 5.

<sup>668</sup> This is evident as the paper of sheet 4 is slightly detached at the upper part, observed during a visit to the BnF on 12/06/2022.

<sup>669</sup> This is evident from the ruling at the joint, where the height differs. Particularly, the ruling line at the lower margin is noticeably narrower than on sheet 4.

<sup>670</sup> Galambos 2020, 84 emphasizes the importance of considering blank space after texts.

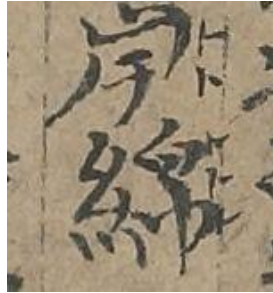


**Figure 79:** Enlarged section of the joint between the third and fourth sheet of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 6.3.2 Marks, Corrections, and Additions

No black ink marks or corrections are present, and there are no red ink marks or punctuation. Only the third and fourth characters in line 26 are deleted applying the mark 丨 twice next to the first character twice and three times next to the second character (Fig. 80). These deletions appear to

have been made during the process of writing. The deleted characters *an* 岸 and *mian* 綿 appear twenty-one characters later in the text. This suggests that the scribe initially copied from a *Vorlage* where he skipped approximately one line, then realised the error and deleted them before continuing.



**Figure 80:** Enlarged section with the correction mark at the left side of characters in line twenty-six of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

### 6.3.3 Visual Organisation

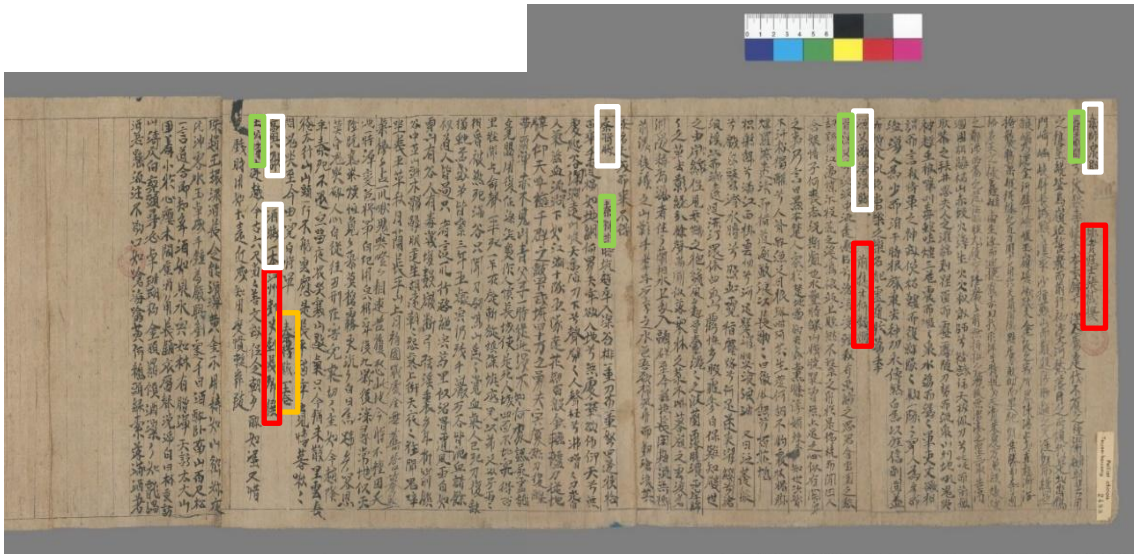
The scroll comprises 100 ruled lines, of which only fifty-nine contain text. Each line contains between 21 to 32 characters.<sup>671</sup> Sheets 1 and 2 have a similar number of lines, fifteen and fourteen, respectively. Sheet 3 contains twenty-five lines, and sheet 4 has text in eleven complete lines and in the first half of a twelfth line, continuing on sheet 5.<sup>672</sup>

Head titles appear at the upper margins of new lines. On sheets 1 and 2, the texts follow a consistent pattern, with head titles in lines 2 and 16, followed by the author's name and position before the text begins on the next line. Sheet 3 deviates slightly from this pattern, starting with a head title in the upper margin in line 31, lacking an author's rank and name, instead followed directly by the text. An end title is added at the end of the text in the same. The fourth discontinued text, which begins on sheet 3 and continues on sheet 4, has two different head titles in line 52, separated by blank space. The second head title is followed immediately by the author's name and position. MS F is unique in containing both these different head titles in one scroll, suggesting the scribe was aware of both (Fig. 81).

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<sup>671</sup> BnF 2006.

<sup>672</sup> BnF 2006 excludes the first blank line on sheet 1 and lists fourteen lines for the first two sheets.



**Figure 81:** Overview of the visual organisation of MS F, with the last text having two different head titles. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

## Hand

The initial lines on sheets 1 and 2 feature noticeably narrower characters with delicate strokes in faint ink. In contrast, the latter portions showcase broader characters with bolder strokes in dark black ink (lines 22, 25, and 34).<sup>673</sup> Despite these differences, hand analysis reveals that all lines are written in the same albeit somewhat unsteady hand. Notably, this hand displays tendencies towards accentuated downward strokes over horizontal ones and consistently adds beginning hooks to the vertical strokes of characters.<sup>674</sup>

### 6.3.4 Core Content

There are four texts on this scroll. The first two are the core texts. In the following, I introduce the third and fourth texts and examine their connection to the core texts.

The third text recounts the life of General Bai Qi 白起 (d. 257 BCE), renowned for his service to the state of Qin 秦. Bai Qi is particularly remembered for his brutal actions during the Battle of Changping 長平 in 260 BCE, where his forces massacred more than 400,000 surrendering soldiers from the state of Zhao 趙.<sup>675</sup> Following this, Bai Qi proposed annihilating

<sup>673</sup> According to BnF 2006, some lines are written in another hand with clumsy writing.

<sup>674</sup> I discuss the hand from this scroll as an example for hand analysis in Chapter 1.

<sup>675</sup> For historical sources and discussion on the number of killed soldiers, see Bodde 1987, 99–100.

Zhao entirely. However, political intrigue led by Fan Ju 范雎 prevented this, causing resentment on the part of Bai Qi. Subsequently, during a siege of Zhao's capital Handan 邯鄲, Bai Qi feigned illness and refused to march, resulting in Qin's defeat due to the lack of support. Eventually, Bai Qi was demoted and ordered to commit suicide, and he reflected on his actions before doing so. The entry in the *Shiji* concludes that Bai Qi's death was unjust, with the people of Qin sympathising with him.<sup>676</sup> Soon after, Qin failed to capture Handan and suffered defeat in 257 BCE.

Given that the historical context was known, the comparison between Bai Qi and the two protagonists of the core texts reveals important both parallels and contrasts. Bai Qi achieved significant, albeit brutal victories for his state, facing opposition from rivals like Fan Ju. Similar to Li Guangli and Qu Yuan, his advice was ignored, and political intrigues arose due to the envy of unworthy ministers, leading to the state's defeat in the siege of Handan. Bai Qi was revered by the people of Qin as a hero who had been wronged by his lord and envious vassals. However, unlike Li Guangli or Qu Yuan, Bai Qi refused further service in a more self-determined manner.

The Dunhuang version of the story of Bai Qi is a rhapsody of verses of different length, consisting of 490 characters, describing the events of the war at Changping in a detailed and realistic manner.<sup>677</sup> In contrast to historical records, Bai Qi and his army are consistently portrayed negatively.<sup>678</sup> The rhapsody begins with the encirclement of the soldiers of Zhao by the Qin army, followed by a meticulous description of the massacre and its aftermath. The landscape is depicted as gruesomely changed, with the deadly silent valley filled with the screams and groans of the half-alive and the gushing sound of flowing blood streams. Broken bow strings and swords litter the area for several years, and the text repeatedly depicts the crying souls of the dead soldiers resenting General Bai.<sup>679</sup>

The fourth text, titled *Jiu fu* or *Gaoxing ge*, comprises 173 characters in verses of three or seven syllables. It explores the theme of drinking wine with sages of old times and finding solace from sorrows. Various states of mind are depicted, including contemplation of life's emptiness and the joy of drunkenness, expressed through imagery such as lying under a pine tree. The text also

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<sup>676</sup> See the *Bai Qi Wang Jian liezhuan* 白起王翦列傳 in the *Shiji*.

<sup>677</sup> For the three manuscripts of this text, as well as an edition of the text, see Zhang 1996, 308–316.

<sup>678</sup> Fu 2000, 66 connects this contradiction to the shifting relationship between extreme benevolence and cruelty in Buddhist culture.

<sup>679</sup> Fu 2000, 63–66.

mentions the rules of drinking games and emphasises the insignificance of wealth and fame.<sup>680</sup> For instance, the third and fourth verse lines of the second last quatrain read: *ren sheng yi dai bu ronghua, Peng Zu tulao nian qi bai* 人生一代不榮華, 彭祖徒勞年七百 (‘A whole lifetime of not [having] prosperity or high positions, Ancestor Peng [nevertheless] strived for seven hundred years’), implying that enduring a lifetime devoid of prosperity or high positions is challenging, but even living as long as Ancestor Peng can be deemed arduous.<sup>681</sup> The second verse line of the final quatrain underscores this notion with a rhetorical and slightly Daoist inquiry: *yi guan shen wai fu he qiu* 衣冠身外復何求 (‘The official attires are things outside the body, why pursue them?’), questioning why one should pursue such inconsequential matters as fame and fortune.<sup>682</sup>

The thematic progression of the four texts can be summarised as follows: First, the valorous deeds of General Li Guangli are celebrated, highlighting his heroic act of saving his troops by striking a cliff with his sword so that water comes out of it. Second, the narrative shifts to the tragic tale of the exiled Qu Yuan, contrasting his unwavering principles with the pragmatic approach of the fisherman. The Dunhuang version reinterprets this theme, advocating ambition and self-promotion, based on the evidence of the lyrical persona at the end of the text. These personal ambitions reach a climax in the third text, which focuses on Bai Qi. He undoubtedly earned a name for himself in the service of his state, but in doing so, he perpetrated an indescribable massacre, depicted in highly negative terms in the Dunhuang version. It is unsurprising, then, that the fourth text takes a radical turn, advocating detachment from worldly pursuits through depictions of drinking with ancient sages. In the concluding quatrains of the fourth text, which can also represent a final conclusion of the tumultuous journey through all four texts, the pursuit of fame in the world is explicitly rejected.

In terms of structure, there is an alternating pattern between historical narratives and literary compositions across the four texts, all mentioning historical figures: Li Guangli’s historical story is followed by a literary dialogue involving Qu Yuan and/or a lyrical persona and a fisherman. The third text returns to a more historical narrative, focusing on General Bai Qi, whereas the fourth

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<sup>680</sup> See Zhang 1996, 207–208.

<sup>681</sup> Ancestor Peng, a legendary figure during the Shang 商 dynasty, is said to have lived over eight hundred year, see Fu 2000, 16, n.74.

<sup>682</sup> Fu 2000, 16, n.75.

shifts to a lyrical composition on wine and detachment. This compilation of the four texts and their varying formats may reflect individual preferences or, if consistently observed in other Dunhuang manuscripts, suggests a conventional approach. A more generalised description then would be that the two core texts, found together in other manuscripts, support secular engagement. In contrast, the following two texts, likewise structured as historical narrative followed by a literary piece, reject such pursuits.

### 6.3.5 Paracontent

While all texts contain paracontent, the inclusion and nature of the information varies across each core content. All four texts are equipped with head titles, which provide a general idea of the content without revealing specific details. Information about authors is given beneath the head titles for most texts, except for the third one, where the author remains unknown.<sup>683</sup> The format is consistent, with the position followed by the author's name. Notably, all three texts include the additional character *zhuan* 撰 ('compose, write; compile, edit') commonly found on student manuscripts.<sup>684</sup> None of the four texts includes a preface. Furthermore, there are no prefaces to these texts found on other manuscripts, although their condition often makes it difficult to ascertain this definitely. After elaborating on this paracontent, I analyse the colophon and further content, as they offer valuable insights into the production circumstances of this manuscript.

### Titles

The titles of the first two texts are the same as those of the core texts on the two previous manuscripts. The title of the first text refers to the Spring of the Ershi General, while the title of the second text comprises two parts: the first part mentions a person, the fisherman, and the second indicates the Canglang 滄浪 river as the subject matter. The head title to the third text indicates the General of Qin as the topic.

Notably, this third text is the only one with an end title, which repeats the information of the head title and includes the additional indication *yi juan*. If the additional indication refers to a

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<sup>683</sup> The latter half of this text is also incomplete on P.5037, lacking a title. Additionally, on the verso of S.173, there is only one line of the text. For the manuscripts, see Zhang 1996, 308–316.

<sup>684</sup> Kroll 2017, 621.

codicological unit, it further supports the idea that the third sheet once existed independently.<sup>685</sup> Alternatively, it could signify a textual unit.

The fourth text is unique in that it features both distinct head titles, which indicates the scribe’s awareness of more than one title to the same text. The first head title, *Gaoxing ge* 高興歌 (‘Song of Happiness’), is remarkable for its introduction of a literary mood, reminiscent of titles found in poetry selections.<sup>686</sup> In contrast, the second head title focuses on a concrete object, wine.<sup>687</sup> Notably, this head title includes the additional indication *yi ben*, commonly found in titles on student manuscripts, where it can denote the sense of ‘a set of’. This further underscores the possibility that the poem consist of formerly independent verses. This final text is discontinued, leaving uncertainty regarding a possible inclusion of an end title and any potential additional indications it might have featured. The paracontent of the four texts can be summarised as follows (Tab.5):

**Tab. 5:** Summary of the head and end titles to the four texts on MS F.

L.	Text	Head title	End title	Translation
2	1	貳師泉賦		‘Rhapsody on the Ershi Spring’
16	2	漁父歌滄浪賦		‘Song about the Fisherman Rhapsody on the Canglang River’
31	3	秦將賦	秦將賦一卷	‘Rhapsody on the General from Qin; in one <i>juan</i> ’
52	4	高興歌 酒賦一本		‘Song about Happiness Rhapsody on Wine; in one <i>ben</i> ’

### Author Names

Not much is known about the authors of the first two texts beyond their names and ranks.<sup>688</sup> For the fourth texts, found in six other manuscripts, the author’s rank as *Jiangzhou cishi* 江州刺史 and his name, Liu Changqing, are provided. As discussed earlier, the author is sometimes identified as

<sup>685</sup> The first text might have lost its end title after the sheet was cut off. Additionally, neither the first nor the second text on sheets 1 and 2 have an end title. This omission could underscore the intentional connection between the two texts.

<sup>686</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>687</sup> Fu 2021, 23–24 proposes reading the two head titles together as *Gaoxing ge jiu fu* 高興歌酒賦 (‘Rhapsody on happily singing about Wine’), akin to *Yufu ge Canglang fu* 漁夫歌蒼浪賦. However, this overlooks the blank space between the two titles on MS F, and it is worth noting that only one of the titles is present on the other manuscript.

<sup>688</sup> See Chapter 5.

the Tang poet Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (c.726–c.790). However, since it is uncertain whether the Tang poet served as *Jiangzhou cishi* 江州刺史, this attribution remains unconfirmed.<sup>689</sup> The information on authors can be summarised as follows (Tab.6):

**Tab. 6:** Summary of positions and author names on MS F.

L.	Text	Position and author name	Translation
2	1	鄉貢進士張俠撰	‘Compiled by the Prefectural Nominee [for the] Presented Scholar [Examination], Wang Fu Zhang Xia’
16	2	前進士何蠲撰	‘Compiled by the Former Presented Scholar He Juan’
31	3	-	-
52	4	江州刺史劉長卿撰	‘Compiled by the <i>Jiangzhou cishi</i> Liu Changqing’

## Prefaces

None of the texts analysed here, nor any additional manuscript featuring one or more of the texts, includes a preface. This suggests that it was not customary to include them with these texts, potentially providing a pattern for distinguishing between different types of MTMs or texts. The core texts, preserved only in the three discussed manuscripts, lack prefaces. The third text, partially preserved on P.5037 and S.173, also lacks a preface.<sup>690</sup> Similarly, the last text, found in six additional manuscripts, including three with complete texts, lacks prefaces as well.<sup>691</sup>

## Colophons

No colophon is present on the recto of the scroll, likely due to the incompleteness of the final text and the fact that the MTM was not finalised. However, the verso contains several lines with a name, providing additional insights into the scroll’s production circumstances. I discuss them in the following, along with additional content found on the verso.

<sup>689</sup> See the discussion in Chapter 3.

<sup>690</sup> Zhang 1996, 310–311.

<sup>691</sup> The fully preserved text can also be found on P.2555, P.2633 and S.2049. For a comprehensive introduction to all manuscripts, see Wang 1987.

### 6.3.6 Further Content

On the verso of the first sheet, the characters *Wu Gounu an* 吳狗奴安 are prominently displayed, followed by one or two additional characters that have been crossed out in black ink. These characters, written in the opposite direction than the core content on the recto, are likely indicative of a scroll's owner, Wu Gounu.

A bit further on the first sheet, there is a repetition of the head title of the first text on the recto, *Ershi quan fu*. This repeated title is written in the same direction as the content on the recto. Directly beneath the repetition is the character *xiang* 鄉, which marks the beginning of the indication for position and name of the author. Unlike the recto, the character here is separated from the head title by approximately three characters of blank space. The circumstances that led to this repetition on the verso remain open to discussion. Placed approximately at the middle of the sheet, it is unlikely that it is intended as title for identifying the scroll in a rolled-up state. The hand is difficult to judge, and it is possible that the repeated title was added by a later user (Fig. 82).



**Figure 82:** An enlarged picture showcasing the repeated head title of the first text on the recto. Photograph captured on December 6, 2021, at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

On sheet 3, there are two closely written lines featuring dates. The lines denote a *xinmao* year yet lack further details on the reign era. Given that this scroll was likely produced in the late 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, it could correspond to three potential years: 871, 931, or 991.<sup>692</sup>

Both lines are again written upside-down in comparison to the content on the recto (Fig. 83). Since the third sheet possibly existed as a separate unit before being assembled into this scroll, these two lines may have originally pertained only to the third sheet. The name mentioned here corresponds to that written on the verso of sheet one. The two lines read as follows:

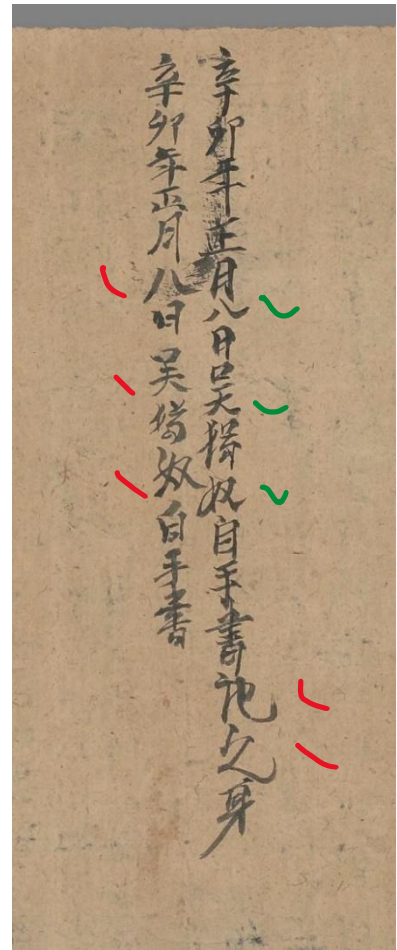
辛卯年正月八日吳狗奴自手書 记之身[耳]

Written in his own hand by Wu Gounu on the eighth day of the first month of the year *xinmao*, **recorded and that is it**

辛卯年正月八日吳狗奴自手書

Written in his own hand by Wu Gounu on the eighth day of the first month of the year *xinmao*.<sup>693</sup>

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that these two lines are written by two distinct hands. The first line exhibits a slightly more fluent hand. The slim characters are slightly slanted, with strokes that often end in upward strokes when executed from the upper left to lower right, such as in *ba* 八, *wu* 吳 and *nu* 奴 (green in Fig. 83). Beneath the first line, the scribe from the recto added the last three larger characters highlighted in bold above: *ji zhi shen* [er] 记之身[耳]. Additionally, he wrote the



**Figure 83:** The two one-liners with dates on the verso of MS F. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

<sup>692</sup> Several scholars suggests the year 931, see Sanft 2022, 295–296.

<sup>693</sup> BnF 2006.

complete second line, evidently attempting to imitate the hand of the first line (red in Fig. 83).<sup>694</sup>

The hand of the second line matches closely that of the texts on the recto. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Wu Gounu was not just an owner of this manuscript, but actually the scribe responsible for the texts on the recto. The fact that his name appears on the verso of sheets further suggest that it was necessary to distinguish manuscripts, likely because they were produced in an educational settings with several students. Moreover, these two lines on the verso provide detailed insights into the exact circumstances for the production of this scroll.

The first hand, likely that of a teacher or advanced student, provides information about Wu Gounu, which he then repeats in his own hand in the second line, imitating the style of the first line. This scenario suggests that Wu Gounu may have lacked the ability to write basic characters such as the date and his own name, possibly needing to imitate the shape of characters rather than knowing the correct stroke order from memory.<sup>695</sup> At the very least, he was apparently not familiar with the structure of basic one-liners or colophons. This also explains why the texts on the recto appear to have been written by two different hands. Wu Gounu likely copied the texts from a now-lost *Vorlage* written in a more narrow and fluent hand by this teacher or advanced student of the first line on the verso. When beginning a new sheet, Wu Gounu initially strove to imitate this hand but abandoned his effort halfway through, reverting to his own broader hand.<sup>696</sup>

From the well-crafted core content, it appears that this scroll was produced as a final assignment. Except for the third text, the remaining three texts are known from other Dunhuang manuscripts, suggesting their broad circulation. Given evidence of Wu Gounu's modest literacy, he likely did not arrange the texts in their current order. The presence of a more fluent, narrower hand and the probable use of a *Vorlage* from which Wu Gounu copied imply that he was instructed to transcribe this prearranged set of literary texts as practice, one sheet at a time.

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<sup>694</sup> The hand in the second line resembles that on the recto, with slightly more pronounced ending hooks. This tendency is evident, especially in characters like *ba* 八, *wu* 吴 and *nu* 奴 when compared to their equivalent of the narrower hand in the first line. Further differences can be seen in *nian* 年, *zheng* 正, and *zi* 自, latter appearing almost as *bai* 白. Additionally, the absence of the little upward hook on the right side for *yue* 月 is indicative, a feature frequently observed in the hand on the recto, for instance in *xing* 行, *he* 何, and *yong* 用.

<sup>695</sup> This context helps to understand scholars observation, such as the presence of 'confused text in columns 1,4, and 8', as noted by Sanft 2022, 293–310.

<sup>696</sup> This observation holds true for the first and second text, but the situation may vary for the third and fourth text, as they do not show many tendencies to imitate the narrow hand.

#### 6.4 The production of the three MTMs

Compared to Student MTMs, the three MTMs introduced above show significant differences in their features. Most notably, despite the greater number of Student MTMs, none of them exhibits fixed combinations of texts, unlike the two core texts in the three MTMs, which consistently follow each other in the same sequence. This alone would not be remarkable if it were not for the fact that these two core texts, both individually and in conjunction with further content on two of the three MTMs, are deeply intertwined in terms of topics. In case of MS E, this is preceded by a text likely containing formerly independent stanzas brought together into a single poem, with a strong emphasis on self-establishment and the pursuit of knowledge, echoing closely the themes found in the two core texts. In MS F, the two core texts are followed by two additional texts that closely mirror their distinct forms, with the first text leaning towards historical narrative and the second more towards literary elaboration, but both reject the values expressed in the two core texts and instead embrace Daoist principles and a *laissez-faire* attitude. Further differences arise in the paracontent: while student MTMs typically maintain consistent head and end titles, the paracontent across the three MTMs lacks uniformity, with the same texts containing varying information, indicating a much less standardised production environment compared to Student MTMs.

This suggests that the three MTMs are of a separate type, and that their content likely is at least partially informed by a different setting. Two additional scroll-format MTMs (P.4994+S.2049 and P.2544) closely match several features of the three MTMs discussed here and are prime candidates for future comparison.<sup>697</sup> Both scrolls bear the marks of a fluid yet somewhat unpolished hand. Their content consists of poems of similar moderate length, with some appearing to be composed similar to the first text in MS E, possibly originating from independently composed stanzas.<sup>698</sup> Notably, both scrolls share an exact sequence of as much as fourteen texts, suggesting either mutual copying or derivation from a common *Vorlage*. The content does not necessarily have to have close thematic relationship between the texts to be copied as the same sequences. It is also highly likely that these scrolls served as repositories. Unlike the three MTMs, the poems on these two scrolls only feature head titles, if at all. This difference can signify slightly different

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<sup>697</sup> For the manuscripts as well as the edition of the content, see Xu 2000,

<sup>698</sup> For instance, both scrolls also contain the *Jiu fu*, which likely consists of several formerly independent poems. In addition, Luo 2011, 28 indicates this for the *Beimang pian* 北邙篇, which has rather sudden transitions between meandering topics in the stanzas. On the two scrolls, there are also different prose texts, which must be considered when assessing the production background of the manuscripts.

settings of production and usage, for instance, indicating that texts on the three MTMs written by students gradually became equipped with end titles usual for an educational setting. Nonetheless, these succinct titles bear remarkable resemblances, especially short titles such as *Jiu fu* 酒賦, *Longmen fu* 龍門賦 ('Rhapsody About the Dragon Gate') and *Beimang pian* 北邙篇 ('Piece on Mt. Beimang').

## 6.5 Conclusion

The three scrolls analysed in this chapter exhibit significant differences in terms of codicology, reflecting distinct production backgrounds. Concerning codicology, the first scroll contains the two core texts on its recto, attributed in the colophon as a copy by a student at the Longxing monastery with a colophon dated to 920 CE. This predates MS E, which features one text and the two core texts on its verso. The colophon on MS E references the Jingtū monastery and an illegible student's name, dated to 934 CE. These two scrolls were produced relatively late, roughly 80 years before the library cave was sealed in 1006. The students mentioned belonged to different monasteries, suggesting widespread circulation of the core texts. Unfortunately, the dates on the verso of the composite MS 3 only use the cyclical format, making it unclear if this manuscript dates to roughly the same period as the former two scrolls or was possibly produced earlier. The lines also do not specify whether Wu Gouwu belonged to a monastery, another institution, or was taught privately.

The two core texts exhibit significant parallels in form and content, which are expanded thematically by further texts on MS E and F. The texts feature Confucian and Daoist values, emphasising the importance of achieving recognition and pursuing scholarly endeavours, alongside themes of worldly engagement and, in the case of MS F, eventual withdrawal into seclusion. Strikingly absent are references to Buddhist values or narratives, which might be expected given Dunhuang's context as a site famous for Buddhism. This contributes to the observation by previous scholars that the monasteries served as centre of secular education, catering to the educational needs of the local elite's offspring.<sup>699</sup> Taken together, the alternating sequence on MS F, first a text offering historical narrative and then a text presenting a more literary treatment of situations, suggests a conscious progression culminating in the vehement rejection of

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<sup>699</sup> For more information on the social status of Dunhuang students, see also Galambos 2023, 100.

ambitious pursuits. This sequence invites comparison with other manuscripts to determine whether it represents a deliberate and conventional compilation linked to particular teaching strategies.

The paracontent exhibits notable heterogeneity across all three scrolls, in contrast to the stable units of the core content, which circulated with consistent glosses. The varied titles offer valuable evidence gaining a better understanding of the use and function of paracontent in different contexts, such as educational settings. Notably, the educational context is evident from the ranks of authors, many of whom were nominated for the *jinsshi* examination. This suggests that referencing the work of individuals who took the imperial examination was deemed important, a circumstance that aligns closely with the topic of self-advancement depicted in the core content.



## 7 Conclusion

This study demonstrates how new insights can be gained by analysing manuscripts from fresh perspectives. I conduct a comprehensive study of Multiple-Text Manuscripts (MTMs) containing literary texts, since these have previously been examined only as singular case studies and whose content were often dismissed as insignificant and arbitrary combinations. The findings of this study offer insights into Dunhuang manuscript culture, while also extending to broader discussions within manuscript culture and codicology. Furthermore, they inspire a re-evaluation of transmitted texts against the backdrop of the production of the manuscripts, enriching the field of Chinese literature. Due to travel restrictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented me from conducting the initially planned research trips to Russia and China, I performed even more detailed case studies of manuscripts housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in Paris and in the British Library (BL) in London. Since these collections comprise the larger half of the Dunhuang collection, they can be considered more or less representative for the entire corpus. Therefore, while potential future studies may refine some of the results, they are unlikely to alter the main findings.

In this study, I show how simultaneously considering various features – ranging from codicology and visual organisation to core content, paracontent, and further content – enables finely tuned arguments about the similarities and differences among MTMs. This approach allows for a better understanding of processes underlying their production and usage. The primary distinguishing factor between MTMs is their level of ‘consistency’ across various features. The question of ‘consistency’ reveals where initially similar MTMs differ from each other.

A first example is the comparison between the two Poetry Scrolls and the Scribe’s Notebook. Both are relatively long scrolls, meticulously penned by a single, fluent hand. However, the Poetry Selections confine content to the recto, while the Scribe’s Notebook includes content on both recto and verso. The Poetry Selections demonstrate remarkable consistency in visual organisation, content, and paracontent, which each poem starting on a new line. In contrast, the Scribe’s Notebook exhibits variety, with shifts in visual organisation and inconsistencies within the sections. Content-wise, the Poetry Selections typically comprise shorter poems, while the Scribe’s Notebook includes both poems and prose. The Poetry Selections display a ‘consistently

heterogeneous' blend of themes like separation, warfare, and longing. The Scribe's Notebook has a similar mix but emphasises political issues and the Dunhuang region, with a uniform theme centred on the keyword *chou* 愁 ('sorrow'). The 'consistency' of the Poetry Selections is also reflected in their paracontent, characterised by a remarkable 'heterogeneity'. Many poems lack titles, and only a few have structured texts with titles and prefaces, which can be considered standalone units with integrated paracontent. The titles cover a broad spectrum of information. Exceptions with parallel structure suggest a common origin or purpose. Conversely, the Scribe's Notebook shows much more consistency in the structure and information of titles across its various sections.

Likewise, we can clearly distinguish between Student MTMs and the three MTMs containing the two core texts. One notable difference is the significant number of Student MTMs (7 scrolls, a set of texts on the verso of one scroll, and 7 booklets) identified by tracing text combinations, compared to only three MTMs in scroll format containing the two core texts. Additionally, Student MTMs predominantly feature longer texts interspersed with a few shorter ones, while the three MTMs consist exclusively of medium-length content (around 300 characters per text). Furthermore, texts in Student MTMs function independently, whereas those in the three MTMs exhibit complex thematic interweaving extending beyond individual textual boundaries. The analysis for MS F suggests that this compilation likely originates from a teacher whose hand is evident on the verso and was partially imitated by the student on the recto. These differences suggest that the production setting of the three MTMs is different, and that the content is also at least partially drawn from sources other than that informing the content in Student MTMs.

Additionally, this study offers fresh insights into Dunhuang manuscript codicology. It reveals that fully intact manuscripts are rare, shedding lights on factors such as rather unconventional methods for assembling and separating manuscripts as well as careless handling. Many scrolls examined here are lengthy and yet incomplete, challenging assumptions about difficulties to utilise long scrolls in daily activities. Even non-literary scrolls display a similar pattern, like P.3716, which contains separate notes on distinct lectures joined together into a five-meter scroll. Similarly, P.3718, comprising separate eulogies, suggests a common practise of consolidating related content. This suggests that long scrolls were likely more common than

previously assumed based on the preserved manuscript evidence, which in turn impacts how practices of writing, reading, and handling lengthy scrolls are interpreted.

The study also reveals diverse reasons behind the visual organisation of content in Dunhuang manuscripts. In the case studies presented here, the core content typically takes precedence and is prominently featured, while paracontent such as titles, author names, and prefaces is rarely employed as a structural device. This is especially evident in Student MTMs, where elements like head and end titles delineate textual boundaries but lack a fixed position within the lines which would render them important elements of the visual organisation.

However, as comparisons to further manuscripts in this dissertation show, this observation does not universally apply to all Dunhuang manuscripts containing literary texts. For instance, the Scribe's Notebook exhibits a distinct visual organisation in Section A, prominently featuring titles as central organising elements placed in the middle of otherwise blank lines. While the scribe may have noted down this content for personal use in this particular scroll, the consistent visual organisation suggests that a *Vorlage* he likely copied from already possessed this deliberate structure, indicating a thoughtful consideration for subsequent readers. This illustrates the coexistence of Dunhuang manuscripts for personal usage and those intentionally organised to facilitate textual navigation, particularly for readers who may be unfamiliar with the content.<sup>700</sup>

In terms of content, a close examination, particularly through tracking combinations in Student MTMs, reveals that these are not haphazard groupings of texts lacking significance, as previously assumed. Instead, it is clear that these texts are purposefully curated, each containing to different degrees various elements that often previously resulted in their categorisation as either 'didactic' and 'literary'. Contrary to such classifications, it is clear that all texts aim to entertain and educate at the same time. Moreover, evidence shows that texts previously classified content-wise into the same categories are not matched with each other on MTMs, for instance, primers such as the *Tiagong jiajiao* and the *Xiaojing* are not copied together with the *Kaimeng yaoxun* or

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<sup>700</sup> This visual organisation also prompts inquiries into potential variations in their application, influenced by the production background of the manuscripts and the nature of their textual content. Future research may address the transition of such visual organisation to woodblock print and print. For a recent workshop addressing woodblock printing from a cross-cultural perspective, see CSMC 2024, <[https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf\\_en/100437/CSMC\\_Workshop\\_Woodblock\\_Printing.pdf](https://www.vk.uni-hamburg.de/uploads/event/pdf_en/100437/CSMC_Workshop_Woodblock_Printing.pdf)>, (accessed on 7 May 2024).

the *Baixing zhang*. The abundance of copies of such texts suggests that this discrepancy is not solely due to the fragmentary nature of the MTMs but rather reflects different contexts of their production and use.

Furthermore, the production processes of literary texts are directly evident in the Dunhuang manuscripts. For instance, it is evident that the poems in Sections 7 and C of the Scribe's Notebook are amalgamated from various sources to create a cohesive whole. Similar processes are observable in several other texts, such as the *Ziling fu* in MS D, which is a compilation of numerous individual poems concerning the same topic, a scenario likely mirrored in the *Jiu fu* as well.

This study furthermore unveils consistently applied features across diverse types of MTMs, thus revealing patterns crucial for understanding Dunhuang manuscript culture in particular and Chinese manuscript culture in general. For instance, author names consistently appear beneath titles, as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, even in MTMs containing extensive collections of poems such as the Wang Fanzhi poems. Despite ambiguities surrounding Wang Fanzhi's identity, it is clear that this is not an author name for the extensive collections, given its placement in the title rather than beneath it. This underscores that Dunhuang manuscripts predate the emergence of single-author poem collections. Further analysis of bibliographic entries in the *Jiu Tang shu* showed that single-author collections of *shi* were not prevalent in China during this period. Likewise, Dunhuang MTMs such as Poetry Selections sparingly mention author names and only position them beneath head titles to individual poems. Consequently, authors did not serve as primary organisational tool for the core content, nor were poems attributed to sequences of authors. A rare indication for the transition to read Dunhuang manuscripts as sequences of poems by the same author is the presence of red ink marks in MS B by a later user who interpreted certain texts as sequences of poems by the same author. It illustrates how later emerging practises of reading manuscript evidence led to issues prevailing nowadays, such as the varied attribution of single poems to multiple authors in different transmitted sources, depending on the interpretation of nowadays often lost manuscripts. Ultimately, it shows that a transition towards a more author-oriented approach in reading content on manuscripts likely happened sometime prior to the sealing of the library cave around 1006.

Details in titles resist simple categorisation into topical or occasional information, often blending both and allowing multiple interpretations. On the other hand, a consistent pattern in title structures emerges: they typically begin with variously mixed information and end with a term referring to the text itself. Furthermore, evidence from the case studies indicates that paracontent is often absent or added later. This warrants careful consideration to determine the authenticity or alternative purposes of titles and emphasises the importance of understanding the functions of titles against the backdrop of production of the manuscripts and their content.

For instance, Sections 7 and C in the Scribe's Notebook reveal that the titles serve to contextualise a heterogeneous collection of poems for a literary intent, using topical and occasional information to evoke specific sentiments in a reader. Although Poetry Selections make it challenging to determine original contexts for the addition and function of titles since they contain core content and paracontent from diverse sources, individually considered, titles to individual poems likewise highlight the varying function. In MS B discussed in Chapter 3, a title mentions the renowned poet Gao Shi terminating his service to Geshe Han precedes a poem voicing a woman's lamentation over her husband. This contraposition indicates a literary interpretation rather than a historically factual title. Thus, instead of a categorisation into topical and occasional titles, investigations into the original setting and functions of titles are more conducive to understanding their evolution and function within their respective manuscript culture.



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**Tab. I: Overview on Content and Codicology of Single-Text Scrolls**

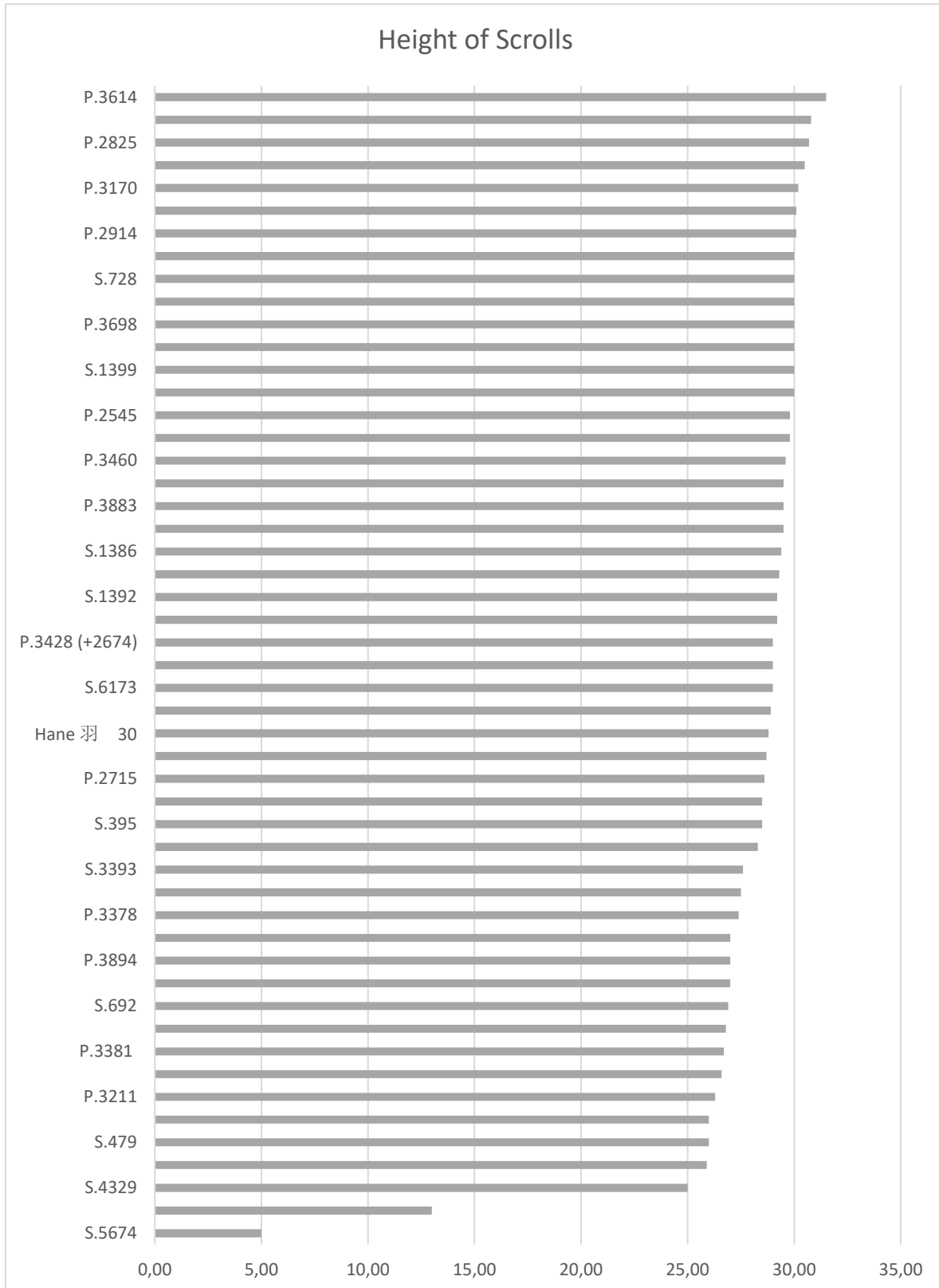
Text	Signature	Completeness (Object)	Completeness (Content)	End title	Colophon	Comment
						<b>O = Complete // X = Incomplete</b>
<i>Taigong Jiajiao</i>						
	P.3104	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.4329	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.2738	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.479	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	
	P.4085	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.4588	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	unclear	Two lines with date and student name in black ink
	P.2937	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.3569	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes		
	P.3894	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.3764	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Yes	
	P.3430	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.6173	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.4920	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Torn directly after end title; some strokes can still be seen of what may have been a colophon
	P.3623	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	No	Sheet torn directly after end title
	P.3599	[O]_[X]	[O]_[X]			
	P.2825	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	
	S.1163	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon in one line, torn directly after
	S.1291	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			

<i>Wang Fanzhi shi</i>						
	P.3211	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.3393	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	No	Poems, writing excersises in blank space
	S.4669	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	Hane 羽 30	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Scroll heavily mutilated; colophon is one line, smaller characters
	P.3266	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.778	[O]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.2914	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]			End title, Colophon and some first verse lines of Wang Fanzhi poems from another collection are added by a different hand and in blacker ink
	S.1399	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	S.2710	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon in seven lines, likely incomplete
	P.3558	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Scroll heavily mutilated, parts of head title and colophon (one-liner?) missing
	<i>Neiraku</i> scroll	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	No		Blank space after last poem in which a seal was added, no end title, no colophon
<i>Xiaojing</i>						
	P.3378	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.3382	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.2715	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon longer than one line

	P.3428 (+2674)	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]	Yes		Scroll heavily mutilated, especially at end, it cannot be judged if a colophon followed
	S.707	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	
	S.1386	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon in larger and blacker characters
	P.2545	[O]_[X]	[O]_[X]			
	P.3698	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Scroll heavily mutilated, parts of head title and colophon (one-liner?) missing
	S.728	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon longer than one line
	P.3369	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes		Two colophons in different hands
<b><i>Qin fu yin</i></b>						
	P.3381	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Yes	
	S.692	[X]_[X]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon longer than one line; incomplete
	P.3953	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.2700	[O]_[X]	[O]_[X]			
	P.3780	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes		Scroll heavily mutilated; Several one-liners with dates and poems in blank space after core text as well as on verso
<b><i>Kongzi Xiang Tuo</i></b>						
	S.5674	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	No	Blank space after end title
	S.395	[X]_[X]	[O]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon longer than one line; incomplete
	S.1392	[X]_[X]	[O]_[O]	Yes	No	noch etwas nach dem Endtitel?

	P.3882	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.3883	[O]_[O]	[O]_[O]	Yes	No	Blank space after end title
<b><i>Qianziwen</i></b>						
	P.2888	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			
	P.3170	[X]_[O]	[X]_[O]	Yes	Yes	Colophon is one line in blank space, likely by the same hand
	P.3614	[O]_[X]	[O]_[X]			
<b><i>Yanzi fu</i></b>						
	P.3460	[O]_[X]	[O]_[X]			
<b><i>Ji Bu</i></b>						
	P.3197	[X]_[X]	[X]_[X]			

**Graph I: Depiction of the height of Single-Text Scrolls**





## Kurzzusammenfassung

Die aktuelle Forschung betont die Bedeutung gründlicher Manuskriptanalysen, um unser Verständnis von Manuskriptkulturen zu vertiefen und interkulturelle Vergleiche zu ermöglichen. Trotz umfangreicher Studien zu chinesischen Manuskripten aus Dunhuang, die auf das 9. und 10. Jahrhundert datierbar sind, bleiben die sogenannten *Multiple-Text Manuscripts* (MTMs), welche verschiedene literarische Texte wie Gedichte, Balladen und Elementarbücher enthalten in Bezug auf ihre Produktion und Nutzung weitgehend unerforscht.

Diese Studie bietet eine umfassende Analyse solcher MTMs und beleuchtet ihre Produktion und Verwendung innerhalb der Manuskriptkultur in Dunhuang. Dabei werden qualitative und quantitative Bewertungen durchgeführt, einschließlich Vergleichen mit weiteren Dunhuang Manuskripten. In Kapitel 2, **Setting the Stage**, zeige ich, wie der Vergleich von Merkmalen verschiedener MTMs zu unserem Verständnis ihrer Unterschiede und Ähnlichkeiten beiträgt. Kapitel 3 bis 6 präsentieren detaillierte Fallstudien: Kapitel 3 untersucht **Poetry Selections** und kontrastiert diese mit den **Student MTMs** in Kapitel 5. Kapitel 4 analysiert ein **Scribe's Notebook** ähnlich den **Poetry Selections**, während Kapitel 6 erforscht **Three MTMs with Two Core Texts**, die wahrscheinlich ebenfalls wie die **Student MTMs** von Schülern geschrieben wurden. Kapitel 7 fasst die wichtigsten Ergebnisse zusammen und interpretiert sie.

Die Studie verdeutlicht, wie die gleichzeitige Berücksichtigung verschiedener Merkmale der Kodikologie, visuellen Organisation, Hauptinhalten und Paracontent, sowie weiterer Inhalte nuancierte Argumente über die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschieden von MTMs ermöglicht und unser Verständnis ihrer Produktion und Verwendung vertieft. So zeigt sich insbesondere im Grad der „Konsistenz“ über verschiedener dieser Merkmale hinweg, wo sich zunächst ähnliche MTMs unterscheiden. Zum Beispiel ergeben sich beim Vergleich von **Poetry Selections** mit dem **Scribe's Notebook**, sowie zwischen den **Student MTMs** und den **Three MTMs with Two Core Texts** signifikante Unterschiede in der visuellen Organisation, den Hauptinhalten und im Paracontent. Darüberhinausgehend bietet diese Studie neue Erkenntnisse in die Kodikologie von Dunhuang Manuskripten, indem sie unkonventionelle Methoden zur Zusammenstellung und Handhabung von Manuskripten aufzeigt. Sie stellt Annahmen über die Verwendung von langen Rollen in Frage und legt nahe, dass deren Existenz häufiger und in der Handhabung unproblematischer war als bisher angenommen. Zudem bieten konsistente Merkmale in verschiedenen MTMs entscheidende Einblicke. Beispielsweise zeigt die konsequente Platzierung von Autornamen unterhalb der Titel zu individuellen Gedichten, dass Dunhuang Manuskripte vor der Entstehung von Sammlungen der Gedichte einzelner Autoren einzuordnen sind. Die Studie betont auch die Bedeutung des Verständnisses der Funktion von Titeln, die oft Informationen über Thema und Gelegenheit vermischen, im Kontext ihrer jeweiligen Hauptinhalte. Beispielsweise können Titel dazu dienen, heterogene Gedichte für literarische Absichten zu kontextualisieren.



## Short summary

Recent research underscores the significance of thorough manuscript analyses to deepen our understanding of manuscript cultures and facilitate cross-cultural comparisons. Despite extensive research on Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Multiple-Text Manuscripts (MTMs), containing various literary texts like poems, ballads, and primers, remain largely underexplored in terms of their production and usage.

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of such MTMs, shedding light on their production and usage within Dunhuang manuscript culture. Employing both qualitative and quantitative evaluations, the methodology includes comparisons with other Dunhuang manuscripts. In Chapter 2, **Setting the Stage**, I demonstrate how comparing features across different MTMs contributes to our understanding of their disparities and similarities. Chapters 3 through 6 present detailed case studies: Chapter 3 examines two **Poetry Selections**, contrasting them with the **Student MTMs** in Chapter 5. Chapter 4 analyses a **Scribe's Notebook** similar to the **Poetry Selections**, while Chapter 6 explores **Three MTMs with Two Core Texts**, likely also produced by students. Chapter 7 synthesises and interprets the most important findings.

The study illustrates how simultaneous consideration of various features such as codicology, visual organisation, core content, paracontent, and further content enables nuanced arguments about the similarities and differences of MTMs, enhancing our comprehension of their production and usage. Notably, the level of 'consistency' across various features reveals where initially similar MTMs diverge. For instance, comparisons between **Poetry Selections** and the **Scribe's Notebook** highlight significant differences in visual organisation and paracontent. Similarly, comparisons between **Student MTMs** and the **Three MTMs with Two Core Texts**, which likely also were produced by students, unveil notable distinctions in core content and paracontent.

Most significantly, the study unveils that literary texts in MTMs reflect specific production and usage settings rather than arbitrary copies. This study also provides fresh insights into Dunhuang manuscript codicology, revealing that intact manuscripts are rare and shedding light on unconventional methods for assembling and handling manuscripts. It challenges assumptions about the use of long scrolls and suggests that their existence was more common than previously thought. Additionally, consistent features across diverse MTMs offer crucial insights into Dunhuang and Chinese manuscript culture, such as the consistent placement of author names beneath titles, which shows that Dunhuang manuscripts predate the emergence of single-author collections of poems. The study also emphasises the importance of understanding the function of titles within the context of their respective core content, illustrating how titles, which often blend topical and occasional information, can serve to contextualise heterogeneous poems for literary intentions.



## **Eidesstattliche Erklärung**

Ich versichere, dass ich die Dissertation selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe. Ich habe keine anderen als die im Literatur- bzw. Quellenverzeichnis angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt und mich keiner darüberhinausgehender Internetquellen bedient. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Veröffentlichungen entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Ich habe die Arbeit zuvor nicht in einem anderen Prüfungsverfahren eingereicht.

Nadine Bregler

Hamburg, 22.05.2024