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A Unique Tangut Primary Reader
Brief Collection by Taizong kept in the IOM RAS

Abstract: The previously undesiphered manuscript inv. № 5875 preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, proves to be the Tangut version of a primary reader. Its Chinese original is an inconsistently miscellaneous compilation of ancient literary allusions and contemporary folk maxims. The text is composed by different literary style of antithetical couplet and ordinary prose without a consistent subject. Although its Chinese original has not been found yet and the whole text has not been thoroughly deciphered so far, narrations and translations may be provided as many as possible in the present paper in order to lay a foundation for further studies.

Key words: Tangut; translation; primary reader; antithetical couplet; folk maxim

Introduction

The Tangut manuscript introduced here was found by Kozlov expedition in Khara-кhoto and now preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, with its inventory number 5875. It was first reported by (GORBACHEVA and KYCHANOV 1963, 24) as Taizu Jiqian Wen 太祖繼遷文 (A book of Jiqian, the First Emperor) and was characterized as a record of some government affairs about the first founder of the Xixia Dynasty, Jiqian (963–1004). The manuscript has not been put into any descriptive catalogue so far because its text seems too difficult to be deciphered. The facsimile of the Tangut original was published with the title Taizong Zeyao Wen 太宗擇要文 (A book of brief collection by Taizong, the Second Emperor).1 (NISHIDA 1999, 12) translated the first two sentences

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1 See Ecang Heishuicheng Wenxian 俄藏黑水城文獻 (Heishuicheng manuscript collected in Russia) vol. 11, p. 112–116, Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1999.
into Japanese and pointed out that the text was by no means related to historical facts about Jiqian, but the nature of the whole booklet remains unknown. Although ten couplets were translated and commented later (NIE 2012), we are still not able to solve the problem completely. Because it has been said that this manuscript is one of the most puzzling texts for Tangutologists to read over, the present paper intends to provide the translations and narrations as more as possible in order to lay a primary foundation for further studies.

The manuscript in question consists of ten folia, fragmentary from the fifth folio on. The first six folia are written in comparatively structured running hand, but the following are in illegible cursive hand. The calligraphic style shows that the original was not transcribed by one and the same person. At the beginning of the booklet there are no colophons by authors or dates, but only a Tangut title thej tsụ tshji tsji jwɨr 矣凭扼蝡 on the first line, which was translated into Chinese by Nishida as Duzu Yaoxuan Wen 大祖要選文 (A book of important collection by the First Emperor). Of course the actual meaning of the title remains unclear to us, but we can definitely say that the Tangut proper noun thej tsụ should be translated into Chinese as taizong 太宗 (the Second Emperor), not taizu. We base on the fact that the word thow thej tsụ 矢是 used for Emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (598–649) in the Tangut version of the Commentaries of Sunzi’s Art of War (LI 1997, 789).

Another character needs to be mentioned is ·jwɨr (writing, book), which is used here as a suffix of book title beyond its lexical meaning, for this reason we should better translate the title as “Brief Collection by Taizong” (hereafter BCT).

According to the parts I am able to read, it may be said with certainty that the BCT is a compilation inconsistently miscellaneous of ancient literary allusions and contemporary folk maxims. Plentiful ancient Chinese literary allusions show that the text must have been translated from Chinese, but so far nobody have found its Chinese original in any materials available, so we have to work out some tentative reconstruction of the Chinese contents. Needless to say, no matter how we try our best on making the reconstructions closer to the ancient literary style, it is impossible for us to reconstruct the Chinese original exactly, especially to reconstruct the folk maxims.

2 It seems to be a traditional custom that Non-Chinese people take a word of the same usage attached to a book title, e.g., bitig (writing, book) in Uyghurian and bithe (writing, book) in Manchu.
Narrations and translations

The BCT text begins with emphasizing the importance of sages to assist their rulers, and with two ancient monarchs mentioned. The second one, xā kew tsu 猴猴斂, was correctly recognized by Nishida as Han Gaozu 漢高祖, whereas the first one, sju·jã njij 縱臘, was reluctantly translated as a certain yanwang 燕王 with the first character sju unsolved. Now we can assume that the name actually indicates Xu Yanwang 徐偃王, a legendary moral King of the State Xu in the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC.). Here is the relevant couplet (fig. 1):

Folio 1, line 2–3:

竄臘稅緳罈，魏繃綆臔聜堡綀哗瞭繕饲沏孤；
挑猴皿篔佬通，始科絸若孺秃聶罈絅腲癝息泊。

[King Xu Yanwang possessed kindness and morality, but lost the state for lacking persons as legs and shoulders at left and right; Emperor Han Gaozu abandoned institution and politeness, but flourished the imperial power for having ministers as joints inside and outside.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

徐偃王有仁德，卻無左右股肱之人而國土喪；
漢高祖失禮義，實有內外肯綮之臣而帝道昌。

The author states that a ruler will not succeed without assistance of eminent ministers around him. The story concerning Xu Yanwang is recorded in chapter 49 of Hanfeizi:

King Xu Yanwang had his state of five hundred square li² located in Handong⁷. Because of his kind and polite behavior, 36 states had audiences with him by ceding their territory. King Jing Wenwang⁸, being afraid of

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³ Persons as legs and shoulders (Tang. khjɨ lə sju dzjwo 舢臘斂) here is a Chinese metaphor for indispensable assistants.
⁴ Ministers as joints (Tang. tsewr ɣạ thwu 若孺秃聶) here is also a Chinese metaphor for pivotal assistants.
⁵ Chinese original: 徐偃王處漢東，地方五百里，行仁義，割地而朝者三十有六國。荆文王恐其害己也，舉兵伐徐，遂滅之。故文王行仁義而王天下，偃王行仁義而喪其國。（韓非子·五蠹）
⁶ Li is a traditional Chinese unit of measure (= 400 meters at that time).
⁷ Handong, an ancient name of a certain place, perhaps was located to the east of the Hanshui River, now Hubei Province.
⁸ Jing Wenwang, i.e., Chu Wenwang 楚文王 (?–675 BC.), named Zi 貢, was the King of State Chu (now Hunan and Hubei Province), ruling the state from 690 to 675 BC.
danger to himself, sent troops to attack the State Xu and destroyed it. Therefore King Wenwang\(^9\) reigned over the world by his kind and polite behavior, while Yanwang lost his state also by his kind and polite behavior.

Han Gaozu indicates the founder of Han Dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 BC.). As for the story concerning his arrogance, see his biography in volume 8 of Shiji:\(^{10}\)

The emperor said: “Each nobleman and general dare not hide from me, all tell me the case: What is the reason why I acquire the world? What is the reason why Xiang Yu\(^{11}\) loses the world?” Gao Qi and Wang Ling answered: “Your Majesty insults others arrogantly, while Xiang Yu respects others kindly. Your Majesty ordered others to capture cities and territories, then gave them as awards, enjoying the benefits with the world. Xiang Yu did not take this way; he injured heroes, suspected sages. This is the reason why he lost the world”.

The subject of the following couplet is not related to the previous one and advises people not to be addicted to gambling games. It mentions two names: Liu Yi 刘毅 (lji wji) and Tao Kan 陶侃 (thẽ khã) in Jin Dynasty.

**Folio 1, line 3-4:**

[**Liu Yi got a capital crime for concentrating himself on chupu,\(^{12}\) Tao Kan distinguished himself for throwing the gambling devices\(^{13}\) into river.**]

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\(^9\) Wenwang here indicates Zhou Wenwang 周文王 (approximately 1152–1056 BC.), named 姬昌, the founder of Zhou Dynasty.

\(^{10}\) Chinese original: 上曰：'列侯，諸將毋敢隠朕，皆言其情：我所以有天下者何？項氏之所 以失天下者何？' 高起，王陵對曰：'陛下慢而侮人，項羽仁而敬人。陛下使人攻城掠地，因以 與之，與天下同其利；項羽不然，有功者害之，賢者疑之，此所以失天下也。' (史記·高祖本紀)

\(^{11}\) Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BC.), generally called Xichu Bawang 西楚霸王, was a leader of uprising against Qin Dynasty, being defeated by Liu Bang at last.

\(^{12}\) Chupu 椁蒱 (Tang. thja wju lu 槁 賽, gamble throwing) is an ancient dice game with five small wood blocks, coloring black on one side and white on the other. According to the combination of different colors, the awards are divided into five grades: The first grade award is called lu 蘆 (all black), the second zhi 雉 (pheasant, four black and one white), those beside the two (including heida 黑犢, black calf) came to nothing.

\(^{13}\) Gambling device (Tang. khøj ihjor 槁 築, game table) here might be basin of the dice.
Chinese tentative reconstruction:
劉毅專心樗蒱而獲死罪，
陶侃投博江水而美名揚。

Liu Yi (?–412), a general of Song Dynasty in the Southern Dynasties Period, was known for his insolence. He prepared to launch an insurrection against Emperor Wudi (Liu Yu), but was defeated ahead of time. The story may be found from his biography in volume 45 of Jinshu:14

After then they gathered together at the eastern mansion for an unrestrained dice gambling with millions of money per game. When others played *heidu* and went back, only Liu Yu15 and Liu Yi left behind. Yi played a *zhi* and then lifted his clothes and walk around the stool with a great rejoicing, calling Yu to sit together and said: “It is not that I am unable to get a *lu*, merely I do not want to play that.” Yu disliked his words, so he grasped the five wood blocks for a long while and said: “As the elder brother, let me answer you.” Soon afterwards, four blocks were black but one kept turning. Yu shouted harshly and it immediately became *lu*. Yi felt extremely unpleasant, his face turned as black as iron, but he said calmly: “I already know that you will not coordinate with me!” After he went to the western defense, although he was back to share the responsibility for governing Shan Prefecture, he immediately lost the authority in royal court. Considering his limited transaction and position, he intended to await an opportunity to overturn Yu by his powerful force, but failed at last.

Tao Kan (259–334) was a famous minister and general of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The relevant story comes from his biography in volume 66 of Jinshu:16

Tao Kan was intelligent by nature, diligent in official jobs, courteous and polite, obeying human relations … Once there were assistants who delayed their affairs by chatting or gambling, he ordered someone to take back their liqueur sets and gambling devices and then throw them into river. General assistants were punished. He said: “Chupu is merely a game for swineherds!”

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14 Chinese original: 後於東府聚樗蒱大擲，一判應至數百萬，余人並黑犢以還，唯劉裕及毅在後。毅次擲得雉，大喜，褰衣繞床，叫謂同坐曰：“非不能盧，不事此耳。”裕惡之，因挼五木久之，曰：“老兄試為卿答，”既而四子俱黑，其一子轉躍未定。裕厲聲喝之，即成盧焉。毅意殊不快，然素黑，其面如鐵色焉，而乃和言曰：“亦知公不能以此見借！”
15 Liu Yu (363–422), i.e., Song Wudi 宋武帝, was the founder of the Song Dynasty in Southern Dynasties Period.
16 Chinese original: 侃性聰敏，勤於吏職，恭而近禮，愛好人倫 … 諸參佐或以談戲廢事，乃命取其酒器蒱博之具，悉投之于江，吏將則加鞭撲，曰：“樗蒲者，牧豬奴戲耳!”
Fig. 1
The first folio of Brief Collection by Taizong
Fig. 2
The second folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*
Many key words in the next three couplets are written so perfunctorily that the characters cannot be recognized one by one. What may be read is a story of a certain person in Jin Dynasty who entertained himself without stop even when his mother was dying. These three couplets are followed by the story of how Emperor Yao 堯 (jiw 鬱) examining Shun 舜 (sjwi 腋) to be his successor.

Folio 1, line 8 — Folio 2, line 1 (Fig. 2)

奶腲颊炽，䔌砃茪穎繰臡袭□□□絥，萠索界倦，勝皛笘礿睫脄碟箎聴谁，

[King Yao got false accusation when Shun collected firewood\(^\text{17}\) and drew water\(^\text{18}\) he harmed ……

Emperor Shun was reported benevolence and selected as a sage when he lifted a flag in pasturage\(^\text{19}\) and fields.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

堯王得讒，塗廩穿井時害……
舜帝告善，巡狩耕田中拔擢智人。

The above narration of Yao and Shun, who were legendary Chinese sage emperors, might have been deduced from the first volume of *Shiji*,\(^\text{20}\) but with some serious errors caused by the compiler or Tangut translator’s misunderstanding of Chinese classics:

Shun ploughed at the Mount Lishan … Gusou\(^\text{21}\) still wanted to murder him. Gusou ordered Shun to climb up for mending a granary, then he set fire below to burn the granary. Shun protected himself with two bamboo hats, getting down and leaving, so he got survived. After that Gusou ordered Shun to dredge a well, and Shun dug a hiding hole with an exit on a

\(^{17}\) Tangut *sji śjɨ tśhijj kjwi* 馃薘pixi (collecting wood and grass = collecting firewood) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *tulin* 塗廩 (mending a granary).

\(^{18}\) Tangut *zjɨ kha* 禄薡 (drawing water) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *chuanjing* 穩井 (dredging a well).

\(^{19}\) Tangut *gwi tījj sju lhew* 畋薡耕薡 (lifting a flag in pasturage) is the misunderstanding of Chinese *sunshou*巡狩 (inspection tour), a rite for an emperor just acceded to the throne.

\(^{20}\) Chinese original: 堯耕歷山…瞽叟尚復欲殺之，舜上塗廩，瞽叟從下縱火焚廩，舜乃以兩笠自扞而下，去，得不死。後瞽叟又使舜穿井，舜穿井為匿空旁出。舜既入深，瞽叟與象共下土實井，舜從匿空出去，去……堯老，使舜攝行天子政，巡狩。（史記·五帝本紀）

\(^{21}\) Gusou, meaning “old blind man”, is the name of Shun’s father. He disliked Shun and plotted murdering him repeatedly but failed at last.
side wall. When Shun went deep, Gusou and Xiang22 filled in the well with dirt, but Shun went out through the hiding hole and left … Yao, in his old age, let Shun act temporarily for the government affairs as an Emperor, engaging in an inspection tour.

The following sentences continue the subject of Yao and Shun, in which the stories concern Ji Kang嵇康 (khji khow 猷犾), Liang Hong梁鸿 (ljow xū 畳犾), Zhao Qi趙岐 (tśhjiw khji 皿犾) and Taigong 太公 (thej kow 瞽犾), who suffered hard lives before they became famous for their moral qualities.

Folio 2, line 1–2:

嵇康鍛鐵:
嵇康鍛鐵，梁鴻賃舂；
趙岐販餅，太公賣麨.

[Moral persons sought benefit:23
Ji Kang hammered iron, Liang Hong was employed for pounding grain; Zhao Qi sold pancakes, Taigong sold flour.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

德者尋利:
嵇康鍛鐵，梁鴻賃舂；
趙岐販餅，太公賣麨.

Ji Kang (224–263), as an outstanding ideologist and literati in the Wei-Jin Period, was one of the famous “Seven sages in bamboo grove” (Chin. zhulin qixian 竹林七賢) and the founder of the Metaphysic School. His anthology has been preserved till nowadays. The story of hammering iron comes from his biography in volume 49 of Jinshu:24

Ji Kang, living a poor life in his early years, hammered iron for self-supporting together with Xiang Xiu25 under a big tree. Zhong Hui26 from the Yingchuan Prefecture, a noble junior of keen-witted competence and talented eloquence, went to meet him. Kang did not receive him politely and hammered without stop.

22 Xiang was the younger son of Gusou and was indulgent by his father.
23 “Seeking benefit” (Tang. gjij ju 竲蘞) here means “finding some way to support one’s life”.
24 Chinese original: 初，康居貧，嘗與向秀共鍛於大樹之下，以自贍給。潁川鍾會，貴公子也，精練有才辯，故往造焉。康不為之禮，而鍛不輟。（晉書·嵇康傳）.
25 Xiang Xiu (approximately 227–272), a literati in the Wei-Jin Period, was one of the famous “Seven sages in bamboo grove” in accompany with Ji Kang.
26 Zhong Hui was a famous minister in State Wei of the Three Kingdom Period, one of the chief commanders in the war to destroy State Shu.
Liang Hong, lived in the 1st c. AD, was a poor hermit in the Eastern Han times and became famous with his wife through the idiom *juan qi mei* (raising a serving table to brow). The story of pounding grain comes from his biography in volume 83 of *Houhanshu*.27

Liang Hong then arrived to Wu Prefecture and served to a rich man Gao Botong, living at a side room and being employed for pounding grain. Whenever back at home, his wife prepared food for him by raising a serving table up to her brow and dared not look up in front of him. Botong found this with a surprise and said: “That servant should not be an ordinary person because he makes his wife to respect him like this.” Thus he let Hong live in the main house.

Zhao Qi 趙岐 (?–201), also written Zhao Qi 趙岐, a scholar at the end of the Eastern Han Period, was framed and had to leave his official position to a remote area where he wrote his famous commentaries to *Mencius*. The relevant story may be found in his biography in volume 64 of *Houhanshu*:28

At the end of Han Dynasty, Zhao Qi went to Hejian Prefecture escaping from calamity, where nobody knew his name. Then migrating to Beihai Prefecture, he often wore a cotton trouser to sell pancakes at the market. Sun Binshuo29, in his twenties at that time, entered the market in an oxcart and accompanied by two guardsmen on horse. Seeing Qi, he expected that he was not an ordinary person, and asked him: “Are the pancakes cooked by yourself?” Qi said: “I resell them.” Binshuo said: “For how much money do you buy it? For how much money do you sell it?” Qi said: “Thirty for buying, also thirty for selling.” Binshuo said: “Your intellectual feature shows me that you are not a pancake seller. There might be a reason.” Then he opened the back door of the cart and turned back to the two guardsmen, ordering them to get down from their horses and help Qi to get on the cart.

Taigong, i.e., Jiang Taigong 姜太公 (approximately 1156–1017 BC.), named Lü Shang 吕尚 or Lü Wang 吕望, also called Taigong Wang 太公望, was an outstanding politician and strategist who directed Emperor Zhou

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27 Chinese original: 梁鴻……後至吳，依大家皋伯通，居廡下，為人賃舂。每歸，妻為具食，不敢於鴻前仰視，舉案齊眉。伯通察而異之，曰：“彼傭以使其妻敬之如此，非凡人也。”乃方舍之於家。（後漢書·梁鴻傳）

28 Chinese original: 漢末，趙歧避難逃之河間，不知姓字。又轉詣北海，著絮巾袴，常於市中買胡餅。孫賓碩時年二餘，乘犢車將騎入市，觀見歧，疑其非常人也，因問之：“自有餅耶?”歧曰：“販之。”賓碩曰：“買幾錢?”歧曰：“買三十，賣亦三十。”賓碩曰：“視處士之望，非販餅者，殆有故也。”乃開車後户，顧所將兩騎，令下馬扶上之。（後漢書·趙歧傳）

29 Sun Binshuo, active in the second half of the 2nd c., was the governor of the prefecture where he made a close friendship with Zhao Qi.
Wuwang to overthrow Shang Dynasty thus became the founding father of Zhou Dynasty. As for the legend of his early years, we can only find the reference in two commentaries of Shi ji. One is attached to the text “Lü Shang was trapped in Jijin” (呂尚困於棘津) by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 in volume 124:30

Taigong Wang sold foods in Jijin in nearly seventy years of age.

“Selling foods in Jijin” was recorded by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 as “selling drinks in Mengjin” in his commentary to “Lü Shang was already poor and old at that time” (呂尚蓋嘗窮困年老矣) in volume 32 of Shi ji. It is noticeable that the canonical histories only mentioned selling foods or drinks but not “selling flour”. The story of Taigong selling flour is widely spread among the people nowadays might be deduced by later generations.32

The following couplet says that farming should be the basis for rulers in governing a country. Three names are mentioned there: Lu Xigong 鲁僖公 (lu xiji njij 呂僖公), Shun 舜 (ṣjw 聖) and Yu 禹 (giu 禹).

Folio 2, line 3–4:

[That King Lu Xigong33 engaged in farming led the state abundant,
That Emperor Shun and Yu based on agriculture led the masses peaceful.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

魯僖公務稼穡而國阜
舜禹帝本農耕而民安

Lu Xigong (?–627 BC.), named Ji Shen 姬申, was the 18th monarch of State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period, reigning for 33 years. The relevant story comes from chapter The 21st year of Xigong in Zuozhuan:34

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30 Chinese original: 太公望行年七十，賣食棘津云。(史記正義·游俠列傳)
31 Chinese original: 賣飲於孟津。(史記索隱·齊太公世家)
32 An untraceable folk legend said that Taigong was extremely unlucky in his early years. When he sold flour, wind blew his flour away; when he sold salt, rain melted his salt away.
33 Tangut njij 奉 (king) is used here to render Chinese gong 公 (Duke), because Tanguts had not the conception of Five Titles for Nobles (gong 公, hou 侯, bo 伯, zi 子, nan 男) of Pre-Qin Period. Of course it will be better if the Tangut phonetic transcription kow 呂 is used in Huangong 桓公 as shown below.
34 Chinese original: 夏。大旱。公欲焚巫尪。臧文仲曰: “非旱備也。修城郭，貶食省用，務稼勸分，此其務也。巫尪何為?天欲殺之，則如勿生;若能為旱，焚之滋甚。”公從之。足歲也，饑而不害。(左傳·僖公二十一年)
There was a bad drought in summer. The King intended to burn down a witch Wang.\textsuperscript{35} Zang Wenzhong\textsuperscript{36} said: “This is not the way for restraining drought. What should be done is to mend city walls, economize foods and expenses, engage farming and advise to alms. What use is it to burn down a witch Wang? If the Heaven intends to kill the masses, they should not be born; if a witch can bring drought, things should be even worse after burning her down.” The King followed his expostulation. That year there was poor harvest but not disastrous.

Shun, as one of the ancient “Five Emperors” in legend, was venerated as the originator of morality in China. The story of his farming can be seen in the first volume of \textit{Shiji}\textsuperscript{37}:

When Shun ploughed at the Mount Lishan, all people at Lishan vacated their field boundaries; when he fished on the Lake Leize, all people on Leize vacated their locations; when he made potteries beside river, there were not any defective items beside the river. His residence became a village in the first year, became a town in the second year and became a metropolis in the third year.

Yu was the founder of Xia Dynasty, being famous for his taming the flood and establishing the institution of the Nine Administrative Divisions (Chin. \textit{Jiuzhou 九州}). The story of his farming can be seen in Chapter 14 of \textit{Quotations of Confucius}:\textsuperscript{38}

Yi\textsuperscript{39} was good at archery, Ao\textsuperscript{40} was good at punting, but both of them did not die a natural death. Yu and Ji\textsuperscript{41} obtained the whole world by farming personally.

The following subject turns to liquor commandments, in which the two names are mentioned Zifan \textit{子反 (tsʉ xiwã 蝟اهرة)} and Bi Zhuo \textit{畢卓 (pji tśiow 翖劔)}.

\textsuperscript{35} Burning somebody to death is a method to prevent disasters in ancient China.
\textsuperscript{36} Zang Wenzhong (？–617 BC.) was an enlightened minister assisting four monarchs of State Lu.
\textsuperscript{37} Chinese original: 舜耕歷山, 历山之人皆讓畔; 漁雷澤, 雷澤上人皆讓居; 陶河濱, 河濱器皆不苦窳. 一年而所居成聚, 二年而成邑, 三年而成都. (史記•五帝本紀).
\textsuperscript{38} Chinese original: 羿善射, 船蕩舟, 俱不得其死然. 禹稷躬稼而有天下. (論語•憲問).
\textsuperscript{39} Yi, usually called Hou Yi 后羿 (King Yi), was a legendary hero in archaic times. As a skillful archer, he shot down nine of the ten suns in severe heat weather but was killed by his apprentice at last.
\textsuperscript{40} Ao was a legendary figure in Xia Dynasty. He was able to punt a boat on the ground with his unusual strength, but at last was killed by the seventh generation from Yu.
\textsuperscript{41} Ji 稷, usually called Hou Ji 后稷 (King Ji), was venerated as the ancestor of farming and the deity of grains in Chinese legend.
Folio 2, line 4–5:

報席麾麾醡飮，踉踉蹌蹌醉極授；
煩煩睫睫妖妖，踉踉蹌蹌醉極授。

[General Zifan of the King of State Chu killed himself for being drunken by accident and being defeated;
Minister Bi Zhuo of Jin Dynasty was captured for stealing liquor when he was drinking excessively.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

楚將子反，誤醉戰敗而自盡;
晉臣畢卓，盜酒造飲以遭擒.

Zifan (?–575 BC.), named Ce 側, was the commander in chief of the troops of State Chu in the Spring and Autumn Period. His story of drinking comes from chapter The 16th year of Chenggong in Zuozhuan:42

Guyang Shu43 offered liquor to Zifan, Zifan was drunk and could not meet the King. The King said: “The Heaven will destroy the State Chu. I cannot stay here.” Then he fled at night … When the troops went back to Xia, the King ordered someone to tell Zifan: “Earlier you, my senior minister, lost the troops because the King was absent. Please do not think it as your fault, it is my guilt.” Zifan saluted twice and said: “If the king grants death to a minister, he will be immortal. My soldiers really fled, it is my guilt.” Zizhong44 told Zifan: “It is already known that you lost your troops before. Why do not you find some way?” Zifan answered: “Although there were few ministers doing so before, as a minister assisting the King, how dare I do anything injustice? A minister lost the King’s troops, how dare I escape the death?” The King ordered somebody to stop him, but he died before the messenger’s arrival.


43 Guyang Shu, named Guyang, was a close servant of Zifan. The word shu 豎 (mean guy) is a derogatory term attached by traditional historians for his entrapping the host by liquor.

44 Zizhong (?–570 BC.), named Yingqi 婪齊, Zifan’s brother, was also a minister in State Chu.
Bi Zhuo, lived in the first part of the 4th century, was an officer in Ministry of Personnel in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, being famous for delaying his jobs by drinking. The story of his stealing liquor may be found in volume 49 of Jinshu.45

Bi Zhuo, as an official in the Ministry of Personnel, often postponed official jobs by drinking wine. A neighbor official brewed wine, drunken Zhuo went among the jars at night to steal and drink it, but was caught by wine guards. Next morning, when the guards had found that it was Bi from the Ministry of Personal, the guards unbundled him hastily. Then Zhuo led the host to drink beside the jars, and after that he became drunken and left home.

The next two stories, essentially showing the uninhibited life of intellectuals in Wei-Jin Period, seem to be lend for liquor commandments here, in which the second person name mentioned is undoubtedly Liu Ling (ljiw lhew 豬 伶), the first name should be Ziquan 子泉 (tsʉ tshjwã 蔷 蒴) but the second character was written as to 竝 by a slip of pen.46

Folio 2, line 5–7:

Ziquan was fond of wine, intending to be buried beside a pottery workshop on deathbed.
Liu Ling liked deer, finding wine in a rich family and one hu47 per drinking was insufficient.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

Ziquan, generally called by his surname Zheng Quan 鄭泉 (tśhijj tshjwã 藍 蒴) in the Tangut version Forrest of Categories (SHI ET. AL. 1993, 183), was a minister Taizhong Dafu 太中大夫 of State Wu in the Three Kingdoms

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45 Chinese original: 卓…為吏部郎，常飲酒廢職。比舍郎釀熟，卓因醉夜至其甕間盜釀，為掌酒者所縛，明旦視之，乃吏部吏也。遂釋其縛。卓遂引主人宴於甕側，致醉而去。（晉書・畢卓傳）
46 Tangut to 竝 is never used for phonetic transcription.
47 Hu 卤 is an ancient Chinese unit of measure (≈ 20 liters).
Period. He was often sent to State Shu as an envoy for negotiation but merely being famous as a liquor mania. His story comes from *Wushu* 吳書 quoted by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 in his commentary attached to “Zheng Quan interviewed Liu Bei in Baidi City” (Zheng Quan pin Liu Bei yu Baidi) in volume 47 of *Sanguo Zhi*.\(^{48}\)

Zheng Quan, a given name Wenyuan, from Chenjun Prefecture, was erudite and unusually ambitious but fond of liquor in nature … On his deathbed, Quan told his relatives: “Do bury me beside a pottery workshop. Maybe I shall turn into soil after one hundred years and fortunately be taken for making wine jars. So it will really satisfy my heart.”

Liu Ling lived in the 3rd c. and was one of the “Seven sages in bamboo grove”, being famous for his uninhibited attitude to reclusion. The well known story of him comes from volume 49 of *Jinshu*: \(^{49}\)

Liu Ling … often travelled on a deer cart with a pot of wine and ordered someone to follow him with a spade, telling: “Bury me if I die.” He disregarded his body like this. Once he was very thirsty and asked his wife for wine. His wife poured out wine and destroyed the drinking set, admonishing with tears: “Drinking too much is not the way for keeping health. You must quit it down.” Ling said: “Well, but I cannot quit it by myself except giving an oath to ghosts and gods. So you may prepare wine and meat.” Then he took wine and meat, and was drunken highly again.

The following subject emphasizes that natural disaster cannot be withstood merely by a king’s ability and morality. Two names are mentioned there: Tang 湯 (thow) and Yao 堯 (jiw).  

\(^{48}\) Chinese original: 鄭泉字文淵，陳郡人。博學有奇志，而性嗜酒……泉臨卒，謂同類曰：“必葬我陶家之側，庶百歲之後化而成土，幸見取為酒壺，實獲我心矣。” （三國志•吳主傳注）

\(^{49}\) Chinese original: 劉伶……常乘鹿車，携一壺酒，使人荷鍬而隨之，謂曰：“死便埋我。”其遺形骸如此。嘗渴甚，求酒於其妻。妻捐酒毁器，涕泣諫曰：“君酒太過，非養生之道。必宜斷之。”伶曰：“善！吾不能自禁，惟當祝鬼神以誓耳。便可長酒肉。”妻從之。伶跪祝曰：“天生劉伶，以酒為名。一飲一斛，五斗解酲。婦兒之言，慎不可聽。”仍引酒御肉，隗然復醉。 （晉書•劉伶傳）

\(^{50}\) *Dou* 斗 is an ancient Chinese unit of measure (≈ 2 liters).
Folio 2, line 7–8:

湯有睿智，卻為七年大旱；
堯非仁德，何泛九年洪災？

[Emperor Tang had sagacity, but there was seven years drought.
Was not Emperor Yao virtuous? Why there was nine years flooding?]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

湯有睿智，卻為七年大旱；
堯非仁德，何泛九年洪災？

Evidently the above couplet is derived from a famous statement by a Han
minister Chao Cuo 晁錯 (200–154 BC.) in volume 24 of Hanshu.51

The reason why there were not starvations during nine years flooding in
Emperor Yao or Yu’s times and seven years drought in Emperor Tang’s
times is that there were lots of accumulations and prearranged preparations.

It is inexplicable that in a few parts of BCT there are not any stories of the
ancestors and their literary style are not consistent with the context. Obviously
these statements are not historical quotations, but folk maxims which are
irrelevant with the subject and their sources cannot be found in any traditional
Chinese records. It is reasonable to suspect that these couplets might not have
come from traditional classics, but blends inserted by later authors or transcribers.
The following couplet is a metaphor to emphasize that hard environment helps one to be strong and comfortable condition makes one to be weak.

Folio 2, line 8 — Folio 3, line 2: (Fig. 3)

荊緬刺臝，跋瞺螹篟窏，聸薸絓絅怖；
縗疟科絓，艡繗菺絪甚，夫襲絓□簧．

[The branches of a pine at bottom of the valley are not withered in cold,
because the growing place makes it forceful;
The leaves of a willow in the garden fall of meeting dew, 52 because the
planting place results it in failure.]

51 Chinese original: 堯有九年之水，湯有七年之旱，而國無捐瘠者，以畜積多而備先具也．（漢書•食貨志下）
52 According to the common sense, here the word “dew” (Tang. war 聞) might be a miswritten “frost” (Tang. nja 霜)．
This topic is objected in the next couplet, where the support from the bigwigs is regarded as the essential condition for succeeding.

**Folio 3, line 2–3:**

妓能髇髇髇髇, 朷朷朷朷朷;  
靐靐靐靐靐, 邨魴魴魴魴.

[Growing in dung, the flowers of hibiscus\(^{53}\) bloom in the morning and fall in the evening;  
Growing in front of a palace, the *mingjian* grass\(^{54}\) blooms in one day and wither after a month.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

木蓮花糞中生，故朝開夕落，  
明見草殿前長，故日放月枯。

The next subject turns unaccountably to calling for humility:

**Folio 3, line 3:**

絹毾毾毾毾毾,  
毾毾毾毾毾.

[A virtuous man will be excellent when praised by others,  
A beautiful woman will be ugly if boasting herself. ]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

男行人譽則妙，  
女美自誇則醜。

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\(^{53}\) The flowers of hibiscus (Chin. *mulian* 木蓮 or *mufurong* 木芙蓉) bloom only for a very short time, but I do not know whether ancient people believed that they grow in dung.

\(^{54}\) The real meaning of the Tangut word *miyi kja* 盍葇 is unknown. Here I transcribe it as *mingjian* phonetically because in China it was a sort of grass used for flowering lawn. Perhaps people think that it may be planted on the ground in front of a mansion.
Fig. 3
The third folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*
Fig. 4
The fourth folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*
The following couplet turns back to the previous style, which tells the stories of civilians how to catch an eye of noblemen and get promoted. Two persons are mentioned: Feng Xuan (馮諼) and Ning Qi (寗戚).

Folio 3, line 3-4:

馮諼彈鋏以望所需，
寗戚擊角而求得見。

[Feng Xuan claimed necessities by rapping on the sword, Ning Qi hoped to be interviewed by knocking an ox horn.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

馮諼彈鋏以望所需，
寗戚擊角而求得見。

Feng Xuan, also written Feng Huan, was a sponger (Chin. shike 食客) of Mengchang Jun during the Warring States Period. He excessively asked for many privileges, but helped his host a lot with prestige and political safety. The relevant story comes from volume 11 of Zhanguo Ce:

There was a man in State Qi, Feng Xu an, poor and not able to support himself. He asked someone to entrust Mengchang Jun for allowing him to be a house guest. Mengchang Jun asked: “What is the guest good at?” He said: “The guest is good at nothing.” Mengchang asked: “What he can do?” He said: “He can do nothing”. Mengchang Jun received him with a smile and said: “Well.” People around thought that Mengchang Jun looked at him as worthless and then gave him poor food. After some time, Feng Xuan leaned to a column and rapped his sword, singing: “Long scabbard, let us return home! [Food without fish].”

55 Tian Wen 田文 (?–279 BC.), titled Mengchang Jun (Viscount Mengchang), was a nobleman in State Qi. As one of the “Four lords of the Warring States period”, he was famous for adopting talents, and then became the Prime Minister of the State Qi and Wei in succession but was out of political jam at last.

56 Chinese original: 齊人有馮諼者，貧乏不能自存，使人屬孟嘗君，願寄食門下。孟嘗君曰：“客何好？”曰：“客無好也。”孟嘗君笑而受之曰：“請。”左右以君賤之也，食以草具。居有頃，倚柱彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！食無魚。”左右告之。孟嘗君曰：“食之，比門下之客。”居有頃，復彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！出無車。”左右皆笑之，以告。孟嘗君曰：“為之薦，比門下之車客。”於是乘其車，揭其劍，過其友曰：“孟嘗君客我。”後有頃，復彈其劍，歌曰：“長鋏歸來乎！無以為家。”左右皆惡之，以為貴而不知足。孟嘗君問：“馮公有親乎？”對曰：“有老母。”孟嘗君使人給其食用，無使乏。於是馮諼不復歌。(戰國策·齊策四).
leave! There is no fish for eating." People around reported that. Mengchang Jun said: “Give him fish, as to guests in my place.” After some time, Feng Xuan rapped his scabbard again and sang: “Long scabbard, let us leave! There is no cart for going out.” All people around laughed at him and reported that. Mengchang Jun said: “Give him a cart, as to guests in my place.” Thereafter Feng Xuan raised his sword in the cart and met his friend, saying: “Mengchang Jun treated me as a guest.” After some time, he rapped his scabbard again and sang: “Long scabbard, let us leave! There is nothing to support my family.” All people around hated him for his greed and insatiate demands. Mengchang Jun asked: “Has Mister Feng relatives?” They answered: “He has an old mother.” Mengchang Jun ordered someone to support her accommodation. Thereupon Feng Xuan did not sing again.

Ning Qi in the Spring and Autumn Period, lived in the second half of the 7th c. BC., was frustrated in his early years but became one of the major ministers and finally assisting King Qi Huangong. The story comes from volume 5 of Xinxu.

Ning Qi fed an ox under the hackery, feeling grief when catching sight of Huangong. Then he knocked the ox horn and immediately sang a song of Shang. Huangong heard him and grasped his servant’s hand, saying: “I am so amazed that the singer must not be an ordinary person!” Huangong ordered the cart behind to carry him back. The servant asked for instruction, Huangong said: “Give him clothes and hat, I shall interview him.” Ning Qi was then interviewed and talked to Huangong how to govern within the border. When being interviewed the next day, Ning Qi talked to Huangong how to possess the world. Huangong was particularly pleased and willing to promote him.

There are not any stories in the following sentences, which merely tell the restraint and leadership of monarchs on the masses.

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57 Huangong (?–643 BC.), named Xiaobai, as the King of State Qi, was one of the “Five Hegemons” in the Spring and Autumn Period.

58 Chinese original: 窮戚飯牛於車下，望桓公而悲。擊牛角，疾商歌，桓公聞之，扶其僕之手曰：‘異哉！此歌者非常人也。’命後車載之，桓公反至，從者以請。桓公曰：‘賜之衣冠，將見之；’窮戚見，說桓公以合境內。明日復見，說桓公以為天下。桓公大說，將任之。(新序•雜事五)।

59 Shang (approximately 1060–1046 BC.) is the second Dynasty in archaic Chinese History.
Folio 3, line 4–5:

Monarchs are like containers, masses are like water. If the container is round, water will be round; if the container is quadrate, water will be quadrate.

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

君者器也，民者水也。器圆则水圆，器方则水方。

Here the word “container” is used as a general term for both plate and pot. This maxim first appears in the chapter 12 of Xunzi, reading: “Monarchs are like plates, if the plate is round, water will be round; Monarchs are like pots, if the pot is quadrate, water will be quadrate.” By contrast, a quotation in volume 73 of the Yiwen Leiju is much closer to that in BCT, which reads: “Monarchs are like plates, masses are like water. If the plate is round, water will be round; if the plate is quadrate, water will be quadrate.”

The aim of the next couplet is to specify the above metaphor, in which the two figures concerned are Huangong 桓公 (xwâ kow) and Zoujun 鄒君 (tshew njij) respectively.

Folio 3, line 5–7:

Huangong was fond of wearing purple clothes, therefore all the masses wore so. Zoujun was fond of wearing feather hat, therefore all the officials wore so.

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

桓公好服紫而民庶人人尽服，邹君好冠纓而臣宰所在皆冠。

60 Chinese original: 君者，盤也，盤圓而水圓；君者，盂也，盂方而水方。（荀子•君道）.
61 Chinese original: 荀卿子曰：君者盤也，民者水也，盤圓則水圓，盤方則水方。（藝文類聚，卷七十三）.
62 There might be a slight error of Tangut transcription, for the Chinese zou 鄒 should be pronounced tiew, not tshew in Tangut.
63 Tangut _STOCK (feather) is a misunderstanding of Chinese ying 纓 (hatband).
Both stories come from chapter 32 of *Hanfeizi*.  

King Qi Huangong was fond of wearing purple clothes, therefore people of the whole state were in purple. At that time, five plain color clothes were not equal to one purple in price. Huangong worried about that and said to Guan Zhong: “That I am fond of wearing purple makes purple extremely expensive and the people of the whole state are fond of purple endlessly. How can I face stop this?” Guan Zhong said: “If intending to stop this, why does not Your Majesty try to give up wearing purple? Telling servants around: I dislike the smell of purple. Just when people around coming in purple, you have to say: Draw back a little, for I dislike the smell of purple.” Huangong said: “Well.” In one day there were not any officials wearing purple, in the next day nobody wore purple in the capital, after three days nobody wore purple within the borders.

That Monarch Zoujun was fond of long hatband and all people around wore it and it made a long hatband very expensive. Zoujun worried about that and asked people around. People around said: “The reason of expensiveness is that Your Majesty is fond of wearing it, so the masses wear it as well.” After that, Zoujun shortened his hatband and went out, thus nobody wore long hatbands within the state.

The following two lines on folio 3 are beyond my ability to decipher word by word. What follows in folio 4 (Fig. 4), not in connection in context with the previous folio, is a folk maxim without rhythm, telling not to be hypercritical too much.

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64 Chinese original: 齊桓公好服紫，一國盡服紫。當是時也，五素不得一紫。桓公患之，謂管仲曰：“寡人好服紫，紫貴甚，一國百姓好服紫不已，寡人奈何？”管仲曰：“君欲止之，何不試勿衣紫也？謂左右曰：吾甚惡紫之臭。於是，左右適有衣紫而進者，公必曰：少卻，吾惡紫臭。”公曰：“諾。”於是一日，郎中莫衣紫；其明日，國中莫衣紫；三日，境內莫衣紫也。…… 鄒君好服長纓，左右皆服，長纓甚貴。鄒君患之，問左右。左右曰：“君好服，百姓亦多服，足以貴。”君因先自斷其纓而出，國中皆不服長纓。（韓非子•外儲說左上）。

65 Guan Zhong (approximately 723–645 BC.), named Yiwu 夷吾, as the Premier of State Qi, was the most outstanding politician in the Spring and Autumn Period. He assisted King Qi Huangong in reform to make his State rich and its military force efficient. Under his instruction, Qi became the most powerful State at that time.

66 It is said that the purple dyestuff was extracted from the root of comfrey and there was a frowzy smell brought about in the process of extraction.

67 State Zou is generally called Zhu 鄒, was a small dependent state to State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period. The monarch of State Zou mentioned here remains unknown except his surname Cao 曹.
Folio 4, line 1–2:

[A single tree dried up (in the forest), does it hurt the forest? 
A single grass drifting in the sea, is it fault of the sea? 
Just as a bristle on fur, one seeks a flaw by blowing the fur.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:
(叢林間) 枯一株樹, 而何害於林? 
大內漂一株草, 豈歸罪於海? 
譬如皮生硬毛, 吹毛求疵一般。

In the following, the literary style returns to the antithetical couplet. First, the regularity of natural world is emphasized.

Folio 4, line 2–3:

[Four seasons are changing, Spring and Autumn take the regularities of life; 
Five Elements are succeeding, water and fire manifest their gentle natures.] 

Chinese tentative reconstruction:
四季更迭, 春秋有生滅之理; 
五行相襲, 水火顯柔和之性.

According to natural regularities, monarchs should govern all things on earth by their virtue and morality.

Folio 4, line 3–4:

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68 It seems that this metaphor is derived from the Chinese idiom *chui mao qiu ci* 吹毛求疵 (seeks a flaw by blowing the fur), which means one constantly focused on the smallest defects of others.

69 “Five Elements” in traditional Chinese philosophy, including metal, wood, water, fire and earth, are said to be the basic factors to form all the matters in the universe.
[It is a devotion to breed Five Cereals,\(^{70}\)
It is a merit to manage all things.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:
養五穀為信，
治萬物成功。

**Folio 4, line 4–5:**

因為養育，為治萬物成功。

[Wind and rain depend on benevolence, \(yin\) and \(yang\){\(^{71}\)} accord with virtue.
Governing affairs depends on \(yin\) and \(yang\), enlightening multitude relies on benevolence.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:
風雨依乎仁，陰陽合於德。
依陰陽治諸事，以仁義化庶民。

The following topic turns back to telling historical stories, emphasizing the importance of governing the country by law at first. The figures mentioned are Zhengshu 鄭叔 (tśhjīw tśjīw) and Guanghan 廣漢 (ko xā ko xā).

**Folio 4, line 5–7:**

因為鄭叔能使民安，陽陰合於德，
依陰陽治諸事，以仁義化庶民。

[Because Minister Zhengshu made the laws lenient, many bandits gathered in bush;
For Eastern\(^{72}\) Guanghan had a severe majesty, all bullies within Jingzhao City\(^{73}\) were wiped out.]

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\(^{70}\)“Five Cereals” is a Chinese joint name for grain crops, including rice, millet, barley, wheat and bean.

\(^{71}\)\(Yin\) and \(yang\), as the fundamental of ancient Chinese philosophy, indicate the negative and positive which constitute the universe and determine the cosmic order by their combination.

\(^{72}\)Tangut word \(njīj džjī\) 蘆苃 (east-cover) is inscrutable to decipher. Here I tentatively translated it as “eastern” by considering that Guanghan was a native of Zhao Prefecture 涓郡 (now in Hebei Province) which located to the east of the Capital Jingzhao.

\(^{73}\)“Jingzhao”, now Xi’an City, was written mistakenly as \(tśhjīw kjīj\) 樞京 (Chin. zhaojīng 兆京) by a careless Tangut transcriber.
Chinese tentative reconstruction:
大臣鄭叔律令寬鬆，而草莽之中盜者多集；
東方廣漢威儀剛猛，故京兆城內豪強盡絕。

Zhengshu, also called Taishu, a minister of State Zheng, was the son of Zichan. Zichan, named Gongsun Qiao, as Prime Minister of State Zheng, was one of the most outstanding politicians in the Spring and Autumn Period. The story about his son comes from chapter The 20th year of Zhaogong in Zuozhuan.74

Zichan of State Zheng was ill, he told his son Taishu: “After I die, you for sure will administrate the politics. Only a virtuous leader can govern the masses by lenience, and do not exceed severity. Fire is severe; the masses look out and fear it, so few of them die there. Water is weak, the masses go close and disregard it, so lots of them die there. For this reason, lenience is more difficult.” After several months Zichan died of illness. When Taishu became the administrator, he did not care severity, but took lenience, then bandits increased in State Zheng.

Guanghan, having his surname Zhao, lived in the first century BC., was the governor of the capital and one of the most famous upright officials in Western Han Dynasty. The relevant story comes from his biography in volume 76 of Hanshu.75

Guanghan was a man of force, being proficient in official affairs. In meeting officials or masses, sometimes he did not sleep until daybreak … As the governor of Jingzhao Prefecture, he ruled clever and honestly, severely restraining bullies and giving official position to ordinary people. The masses have thought back of him and have praised him so far.

A folk maxim about not taking ill-gotten gains is inserted between the contexts.

Folio 4, line 7:
 Área, 裏, 隱匿, 滿, 隱, 隱, 隱, 隱, 隱?
[It is not obtaining to get a sword on the roadside, Is it stashing to hide properties into the tomb?]
Chinese tentative reconstruction:
道旁得劍不為取，
墓裏有財豈為藏?

The following couplet emphasizes that extravagance will definitely lead the country to decline and fall, in which the two figures mentioned are Lu Zhuanggong 魯莊公 (lu tsiow kow 戰公) and Xia Kangdi 夏康帝 (xia khow dzjw 戰帝):

Folio 4, line 8 — Folio 5, line 1:
[It is because Lu Zhuanggong’s palace was gorgeous that the state became weak and disordered at last. Emperor Xiakang’s palace was beautiful that the masses became indigent and perished.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:
魯莊公殿堂華美，故國家衰弱至於亂；
夏康帝宮室莊嚴，故民庶匱乏致滅亡。

Lu Zhuanggong (706–662 BC.), named Ji Tong 姬同, was the 16th monarch of State Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period. The Tangut word pjụ rjɨr 檀仔 (palace) seems to originate from Chinese tai 塔 (tower, high platform), see chapter The 32rd year of Zhuanggong in Zuozhuan.76

King Zhuanggong built a tower close to the Zhangs,77 where he saw Mengren78 and intended to fornicate with her but was refused. Then he got her promise to be his concubine and took an oath by cutting arms.

According to Zuozhuan, the later political turmoil in State Lu was caused by the feuding among Zhuanggong’s three younger brothers, which was irrelevant to building the gorgeous palace.

Xiakang, generally called Taikang 太康, was the second emperor of Xia Dynasty in legend. It was said in Lisao 烏騷 by Qu Yuan that he lost the country for his indulgent amusement: Xiakang yu yi zizong 夏康娱以自縱 (Xiakang amused himself with indulgence).

76 Chinese original: 公築臺臨黨氏，見孟任，從之鬭。而以夫人言，許之，割臂盟。 (左傳·莊公三十二年).
77 “Zhangs” here indicate the family of minister surnamed Zhang.
78 Mengren was the firstborn daughter of minister Zhang.
Fig. 5
The fifth folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*
Fig. 6
The sixth folio of *Brief Collection by Taizong*
The next couplet follows the former subject of advocating a simple life and objecting to luxury, in which the first figure mentioned is Yao 堯 (jiōng 嬤) but the second one, tsow wē tśhjow 彰 談, is quite incomprehensible. Here, I believe that the second character of the name is a mistake caused by the similarity of two Chinese characters. Considering the Tangut wē 縴 is always used to transcribe Chinese wen 文 which is similar to tai 太 in appearance, especially shown in cursive handwriting, we may decide that the original must have been Zuo Taichong 左太沖 under the help of Chinese classics.

Folio 5, line 1–2:

奶聻紗洪番砃屬, 烁坯驳氢两筟; 彰繡新庶聲聻效, 媼拂嚴添效 جانب.

[The masses heaped praise on Emperor Yao for he made soil steps and thatched huts. Family members heaped irony to Zuo Taichong for he complimented luxury buildings.]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

堯天子造土階茅茨, 民庶齊聲讚歎; 左太沖愛屋舍莊嚴, 鄉人交口譏訾.

The legend about Yao making soil steps and thatched huts for himself to live in can be found in volume 74 of Jiutangshu.

In the past Tang Yao lived in a thatched hut with soil steps, Xia Yu wore poor clothes and ate simple food. I know that things like these cannot reappear nowadays.

Zuo Taichong, i.e., Zuo Si 左思 (approximately 250–305), was one of the most famous writers in Western Jin period. His literary work Sandu Fu 三都賦 was spread widely at that time, but it seems that there were people who sneered at him, as recorded in the second volume of Shishuo Xinyu.

When Zuo Taichong just finished his work Sandu Fu, somebody at that time heaped irony to him.

79 Chinese original: 昔唐堯茅茨土階, 夏禹惡衣菲食; 如此之事, 臣知不可復行於今. (舊唐書·馬周傳).
80 Sandu Fu 三都賦 is a joint title of his antithetical prose for the capitals of Wei, Shu, Wu in the Three Kingdoms Period. In these works the prosperity of the cities are excessively complimented by flowery rhetoric.
81 Chinese original: 左太沖作三都賦初成, 時人互有譏訾. (世說新語•文學四). 
The next two sentences, not in antithetic genre, are metaphors comparing to the advice that it should not treat noblemen as common people.

**Folio 5, line 2–4:**

肢械雜化>Edit

[To feed a swift horse as precious jade, is it the way to go together with the horses before or after it? To treat a sword equal to gold of ten thousand liang in price, is it used as a tailor’s needle?]

**Chinese tentative reconstruction:**

餵養千里寶玉馬，豈與首尾之馬並馳？

萬兩金價劍，豈同裁縫之針？

In the following there come two famous stories of Emperor finding sages at unobserved places, but some characters on the original are lost:

**Folio 5, line 4-6:**

[ Taigong, as a fisher beside the (Weishui) River, was invited to be Prime Minister by Zhou Wenwang; (Fu Yue), as a walling worker in…, was promoted directly to be a minister by Yin Gaozong.]

**Chinese tentative reconstruction:**

太公，渭水河濱捕魚者也，周文王請而為丞相；

傅說，□□□中版築之人，殷高宗巡撫為大夫。

The legend of Jiang Taigong Lü Shang’s fishing recorded in volume 32 of *Shiji*.

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82. *Liang* 離 is a Chinese unit of measure (≈ 14 grams at that time).

83. Chinese original: 肖或售助窮困，年老矣，以魚釣於周西伯。西伯將出獵，卜之，曰: “所獲非龍非鱉，非虎非熊，所獲雞王之輔。”於是西伯獵，果遇太公於渭之陽，與語，大悦，曰: “自吾先君太公：當有聖人過周，周以興，子真是邪? 頌太公望子久矣。”故號之曰太公望，載與俱歸，立為師。
Lü Shang, being destitute in his early age, came into contact with Zhou Xibo by fishing when he was old. Xibo would go hunting and divined for it, the answer was: “The proceeds will be neither dragons, nor a tiger, nor a bear, but an assistant for ruling the state.” Then Zhou Xibo went hunting and really met Taigong on the north bank of the Weishui River, talking with him and being greatly delighted, he said: “My ancestor monarch Taigong said that there should be a sage coming to Zhou and Zhou Dynasty would be prosperous with him. It is really you? My Taigong has expected you for a long time.” For that, Xibo named him Taigong Wang, went back with him in a cart and appointed him as preceptor.

The legend of Fu Yue’s walling recorded in volume 3 of *Shiji*:

Emperor Wuding saw a dream with a sage named Yue. He looked at all the ministers and officials for a person he saw in the dream, but all of them were not him. Thus he ordered officials to search for the sage among the civilians and then found Yue in Fuyan when Yue was serving sentences as a walling worker there. Wuding interviewed him and said: “It is just him.” By receiving and talking with him, Wuding found that he was really a sage, and then appointed him to be Prime Minister, bringing a great order throughout the state. Thus Wuding gave him a surname according to Fuyan and named him Fu Yue.

The upper left part on folio 5 and the upper right part of folio 6 (Fig. 6) are fragmentary, and I am not able to decipher the relevant lines word by word. What we can see with certainty is there mentioned a story of Emperor Shun and a short phrase “fearing the four knowings” (Tang. *ljɨr nwə kjạ* 汪緂絶, Chin. *wei sizhi* 畏四知), the latter evidently comes from the story of Yang Zhen (–124) in volume 84 of *Houhanshu*.

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84 Zhou Xibo is the title of Ji Chang 姬昌 before he overthrew Yin Dynasty and became King Zhou Wenwang. “Xibo” means “Earl in the West”.

85 Weishui 渭水 is a river near Chang’an (now Xi’an City).

86 Here the word “Taigong”, including the next one, does not indicate Lü Shang, but a certain ancestor of Xibo. “Taigong” means “grandfather”.

87 Chinese original: 武丁夜夢得聖人，名曰説。以夢所見視羣臣百吏，皆非也。於是遣百工營求之野，得於傅巖中。是時説為胥靡，築於傅巖，見於武丁。武丁曰："是也。" 得而與之語，果聖人。舉以為相，殷國大治。故遂以傅巖姓之，號曰傅説。（史記•殷本紀）

88 Wuding, the 23rd Emperor of Yin (Shang) Dynasty in legend, is priced to be the Lord of Resurgence at that time.

89 Fuyan is an ancient name of place to the east of Pinglu County, Shanxi Province.

90 Chinese original: 楊震…當之郡，道經呂邑，故所舉荆州茂才王密為呂邑令，謁見。至夜，懷金十斤以遺震。震曰：“故人知君，君不知故人，何也？”密曰：“暮夜無知者。”震曰：“天知，神知，我知，子知。何謂無知？”密愧而出。（後漢書•楊震傳）。
When Yang Zhen went to the Prefecture via Changyi County, County magistrate Wang Mi asked for an interview for Zhen recommended him from a scholar in Jingzhou Prefecture. At night he went with ten jin\(^91\) of gold to present Zhen. Zhen said: “Why the old friend knows you but you do not know the old friend?” Mi said: “Nobody knows at night.” Zhen said: “The Heaven knows, the deity knows, I know and you know. What do you mean by nobody knows?” Mi was ashamed and got out.

The story of Yang Zhen’s “fearing the four knowings” must be one of the widely spread literary allusions at that time in the Silk Road, for we see it was mentioned in both Tangut versions of Forrest of Categories (Sti et al. 1993) and Collection of Upright Behaviors (SUN 2011). Besides, it is also mentioned in the Tibetan version of an untitled Confucian Maxims from Dunhuang (STEIN 1992).

The sixth folio (Fig. 6) is severely damaged, in which the only complete couplet can be read over is telling how to be a wise and hard-working administrator. The two figures mentioned are Zhao Guanghan 趙廣漢 (tśhjiw ko xà) and Wuma Qi 巫馬期 (u big khji):

**Folio 6, line 7–8:**

鍚鍚鍚鍚鍚, 鍚鍚鍚鍚鍚;  
鍚鍚鍚鍚鍚, 鍚鍚鍚鍚鍚.

[Zhao Guanghan possesses wisdom, knowing the price of horse by asking about goat; Wuma Qi possesses discourse, sitting in the government hall at dawn and leaving at night.\(^92\)]

Chinese tentative reconstruction:

趙廣漢有智, 故問羊知馬;  
巫馬期有語, 故星入星出.

Zhao Guanghan already appeared in previous text, but here the Chinese character guang 廣 is transcribed by a homophone ko \(\text{ko}\) than ko \(\text{ko}\). There is a story of his finding reality in a roundabout way in volume 76 of Hanshu.\(^93\)

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\(^91\) Jin 斤 is a Chinese unit of measure (≈ 220 grams in Han Dynasty).

\(^92\) Here is misunderstanding of the Chinese phrase xing ru xing chu 星入星出 (to be back home with stars and go out with stars), i.e., he is so busy that he goes out for official affairs from early-morning to late-night without leisure.

\(^93\) Chinese original: 廣漢 ... 尤善為鉤距, 以得事情, 鉤距者, 設欲知馬賈, 則先問狗, 已問羊, 又問牛, 然後及馬, 參伍其賈, 以類相准, 則知馬之貴賤不失實矣. (漢書•趙廣漢傳).
Guanghan was especially good at getting realities by *gouju*. Gouju means that if anyone want to know the price of a horse, he should ask about that of a dog first, then that of a goat, then that of an ox, then that of a horse at last, weighing their prices analogically, thus he knows a real price of a horse.

Wuma Qi (521–? BC.), named Shi 施 with a given name Ziqi 子期, was one of the disciples of Confucius and famous for his diligence. His story can be found in the second volume of *Hanshi Waizhuan*:

In administrating Shanfu County, that Zijian 97 played zither without leaving the hall brought Shanfu in order. That Wuma Qi went out and back accompanied by stars, doing everything personally without staying also brought Shanfu in order.

The last four folia of BCT are too fragmentary in illegible cursive handwriting to be recognized, in which I can only read out a character *dżwa* (finish) indicating the end of the text. After that there is a fragmentary prose which might be estimated as a postscript of the booklet, but its content remains unknown to us.

### Nature of the manuscript

Although a complete satisfying translation is not given in the present paper, the above narrations and translations do not show any relations between BCT and Emperor Tang Taizong. The parallel facts may be found in folk literature of Northwestern China at that time, since we see that in materials excavated from Dunhuang there are manuscripts entitled *Taigong Jiajiao* 太公家教 (Family instructions by Taigong) and *Wuwang Jiajiao* 武王家教 (Family instructions by Emperor Wuwang) which both have nothing to do with Jiang Taigong and Wuwang in early Zhou Dynasty. Actually we all know it is a tradition in ancient China that folk authors used to insert the names of famous historical figures in the title of their own productions.

There are various primary readers excavated from the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang, in which we cannot find a creation in the same literary style

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94 *Gouju* 鉤距 is a sort of ancient weapon with a hook at the top of a long pole. Here it was used as a metaphor for saying something in a roundabout way.

95 Chinese original: 子賤治單父，彈鳴琴，身不下堂，而單父治。巫馬期以星出，以星入，日夜不處，以身親之，而單父亦治。（韓詩外傳卷二）

96 Ancient Shanfu County locates in today’s Heze City of Shandong Province.

97 Fu Zijian 宓子賤 (?–445 BC.) was another disciple of Confucius.

98 Some of the works were selected and studied by Zheng and Zhu (2002). According their classification, perhaps our BCT might be put into the “Primary readers of the morality”.

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of BCT, i.e., there are not any works compiled by the style of mixing ancient allusions and current maxims. What is more, although there are not any consistent subjects throughout the text, BCT shows a distinctive feature from others else in Dunhuang that it might have been made more specifically for noble children, not common people, with the purpose of expecting them to increase their historical knowledge and understand some principles in the meantime for assisting monarchs in future. This explains the fact that in BCT there mentions lots of monarchs, administrators and other outstanding persons but no moral preaches given by a senior to juniors as those in Taigong Jiajiao and Wuwang Jiajiao.

In the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, RAS, there is a plentiful collection of original Tangut maxims compiled by a Xixia official scholar (Kychanov 1974), in which we cannot find any couplets identical with those collected in BCT. If we believe that almost all of the folk maxims spread in Xixia are included there, we may estimate with some certainty that those in BCT are intrinsic in its Chinese original, but I have no idea how to explain why the folk maxims were inserted into ancient literary allusions to form a book discordant in literary style. Maybe the Chinese original was finished by two persons, the first one was the start-up author and the second one was a careless transcriber who mixed two different manuscripts together to form a miscellaneous basis for the Tangut translator to rely on.

Comparing with most authors of the primary readings in Dunhuang, the educational level of the BCT author is evidently higher. Even we may estimate him as a learned official in government of Tang or Song Dynasty than a private teacher in backcountry, whose social role determined his vision limited within elites than ordinary masses. Accordingly, the readers presupposed by the author in his compilation might have been descendants of noble families, not of common villagers, because what the latter need most is to cultivate the awareness of respecting the old and having the ability of running the household industriously and frugally, while a high post with matched salary is an elusive dream for most of the common people in their whole life. So far it has been not difficult to understand that the narrow readers of BCT determined it being given cold shoulder by civilians, and it is just this imperfection made it being not preserved until nowadays as the numerous manuscripts of primary readers in Dunhuang.
References


