SOME REFERENCES TO IRANIAN TEMPLES IN THE TUN-HUANG REGION

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So little is known about Iranian cults that I have thought it worth while to collect such references to them as I happen to have come across in the Tun-huang manuscripts. These manuscripts are, however, widely scattered and still imperfectly explored. My knowledge of those in Chinese is very incomplete, and with those in other languages (for example, Uighur), I am unable to deal.

(1) Pelliot 2629, 'For offering to the spirit (*shen*) at the Baga[1] temple east of the Walls, two jugs of wine.' This occurs in an account of quantities of wine used by the Military Command (*chieh-tu*) of Tun-huang, chiefly in entertaining foreign envoys (e. g. from Kan-chou, Khotan and Hami). It is stamped with a seal (now much effaced) bearing (apparently) the words *chieh-tu*. The qualification 'east of the Walls' might imply that there was more than one such temple at Tun-huang. The date of the MS is probably 10th century.

(2) Pelliot 2748, 2983 and 2690. These have been collated by K. Kanda in *Shirin*, October 1939.

"At the time when the An wall was built
This spirit shrine was also erected.
Here the whole province prays for honours and distinctions.
Here people of every kind implore a fortunate outcome.
With marsh-weeds they arrive, never failing.
And the magic of the Spirit seems to possess the place.
Again, I look where offerings to bring rain are made.
Day and night there is wine in an endless stream."

This is one of a set of twenty anonymous poems about Tun-huang. It is entitled 'The Baga temple at the An Wall'. The surname An was given to people who came from Bokhara, and if we take An as the surname of the

(1) I have used Baga as a translation of the Chinese term *hsien* at the suggestion of Professor Henning. This term has usually been translated Mazdean, but that is clearly misleading when applied to people who seem to have been adherents not of Zoroaster, but of the Old Iranian religion.

man who built the wall and at the same time built the temple, it becomes highly probable that he was a Sogdian from Bokhara. An, however, does also exist as a purely Chinese surname. The marsh-weeds (*p'in-ts'ao*) may merely be a reference to the *Tso Chuan* chronicle (Yin, 3rd year) where they seem to typify humble offerings. I do not think they mean *barsum*, branches held before the face by Iranian worshippers.

(3) Stein 2241. (Twice summarized by Dr. L. Giles, most recently in *Six Centuries at Tun-huang*, 1943, p. 32).

This is a letter which it is not here necessary to give in full. Princess Chün-chê-chê 君閣閣 (presumably Uighur Kün-čäčäk, Sun-flower) asks her correspondent, the daughter[1] of the Minister of Works, 'in order to make blessings for me while I am on my journey,' to light a lamp in the Baga temple...if you have letters or presents that you want me to deliver during my journey, send them to me before dawn'.

She also asks her correspondent to thank 'the Lord President' for the gifts he has sent.

As the letter was found at Tun-huang it seems probable that the temple referred to was at Tun-huang, as was also the recipient of the letter. The princess, who asks for things to be sent before dawn, was presumably camping with her people and her beasts outside the town. The 'Minister of Works' is probably Ts'ao Yüan-te, the second of the Ts'ao rulers at Tun-huang. For his use of this title, see Pelliot and Haneda, *Manuscrits de Touen-houang* (1926) p. 1, line 8, where (in 933 A.D.) Ts'ao I-chin (the first Ts'ao ruler) speaking of the various members of his family, refers to 'the Minister of Works, my helper in government'. See also an inscription in Cave 68 (Shih Yai, *Chinese Inscriptions in the Caves of Tun-huang*, 1947).

The Lord President (Ling-kung), i.e. President of the Grand Secretariat, was probably Ts'ao I-chin himself. In the documents of 933 quoted above he calls himself 'Lord President, Great Prince'. The letter (which is patched at the back with a fragment bearing the date 958) would seem then probably to date from about 930.

(4) Pelliot 2005 (the well-known Sha-chou topography): 'The Baga Spirit is one *li* east of the *chou* (i.e. of Tun-huang). A building has been

(1) *Hsiao-niang-tzu* ('Little Miss') in the Tun-huang cave inscriptions seems always to mean daughter. Elsewhere it is often used by servants speaking of a young mistress, or by the household in general when referring courteously to a concubine.

erected and there is a painting of the Spirit-placing (*shen-chu*[1]). There are twenty cells. The courtyard is a hundred paces in circumferance'.

(5) Stein 367 (cf. Dr. L. Giles in B.S.O.S., 1932). This concerns the Baga temple at Hami, a week's journey N.N.W. of Tun-huang.

'In the Fire Baga temple there are countless images both moulded (素, as often at Tun-huang, is for 土素) and painted. There was a leader of the Baga-worshippers called Chai P'an-t'o. Before the conquest of Kao-ch'ang (640 A.D.) he had occasion to visit the Chinese Court. At the Capital he called down the Baga Spirit. With a sharp knife he pierced his belly right through and took (his entrails) out. Then he cut off and threw away the ends and tied up the main parts with hair. Holding both ends of his knife he worked it up and down and round and round, saying as he did so that the grandiose projects of the Chinese Government were all in accordance with Heaven's will. These projects would be aided by the magic power of the deity and would all have a successful issue. When the deity departed, he fell prostrate and lay gasping for seven days. After which he completely recovered. The officials informed the Emperor, who ordered that he should receive the title of Yu-chi General[2].

The surname Chai 翟 (also pronounced Ti), ancient pronunciation d'iek, although common as a Chinese surname, occurs also as a surname of foreigners. Pan-t'o 盤陀 (transcribing something like Banda) occurs more than once as a Central Asiatic personal name; e.g. the Hu (Iranian) who tried to assassinate the pilgrim Hsüan-tsang on the way from Kua-chou to Hami.

The Chinese project to which the wizzard gave oracular support was the conquest of Turkestan, which began with the Conquest of Kao-ch'ang in 640.

The Chinese associated belly-ripping and other fakiristic performances particularly with Baga cults. But Similar feats are attributed to non-Iranians. A nun 'from distant parts' (*yüan-fang*), which does not necessarily mean

(1) A 'placing' 主, that is to say a thing to which the Spirit is attracted and into which it entered, could be either a tablet (as in Confucianism) or an image of the Spirit (as here) or a human being (a shaman). An example of the last of these three uses of the term is found in the *Kuang-chŭan Hua Po* of Tung Yu, written early in the 12th Century. The Iranian merchants (*hu shang*) at Lo-yang, says Tung Yu, each year at the time of their annual festival 'enlisted the services of a Baga-placing (i.e. a Baga shaman) who ran a sword through his belly till it stuck out behind his back. He then churned the blade about till blood flowed. After a while he spat on the wound, pronounced a spell, and was whole and sound as before.' The passage may well be a quotation from an earlier (i.e. T'ang) work.

(2) Something like 'General of Commando Forces'. Such titles were often given to distinguished foreigners.

abroad, ripped open her belly and took out her guts (also in connection with a prophecy) in 372 A. D.[1]

Five Indian magicians who arrived in China in 646 'cut off their tongues, pulled out their entrails, walked on ropes and joined up again objects that they had severed[2]. Today we associate such stories particularly with Mongolian wonder-workers.

What do we learn from these five texts? First of all, that the *hsien* cult was not a private affair of Iranian settlers in China, but was also patronized by the Chinese at large, whatever their nominal religion. In text (1) the cult has the support of a Chinese ruler; in text (2) 'the whole province' makes offerings. In text (4) an Uighur princess (probably herself a Manichean; or perhaps a Buddhist) asks a Chinese lady who was almost certainly a Buddhist to light a lamp at a Baga temple. Buddhists may have justified this by regarding the Iranian deity as a protector of Buddhism, on a par with Hindu *devas* who were also looked upon as guardians of the Faith. Later on this was certainly the case. Tung Yu, to whom I have already referred, narrating an event of 1093 A. D. tells[3] us that the god of the *hsien* temple at K'ai-feng was regarded by the Chinese as a Protector of Buddhism and was much resorted to by them.

As regards the nature of the cults at and near Tun-huang, we learn that offerings of wine were made and lamps lit.

The god was prayed to for rain, and for blessings in general. If he succeeded in producing rain at Tun-huang (where the rainfall must always have been minimal), his prestige must indeed have been great. At Hami a fire-cult is mentioned, but not (so far as I know) at Tun-huang. The native followers of the cult were presumably Sogdians, as these were the only Iranians whom we know to have had settlements in the region.[4]

Text (3) mentions a painting and text (5) speaks of both paintings and sculptures. These may have had some influence on the Buddhist art of Tun-huang. As regards the identity of the deity or deities, I will only say that if a female deity (e. g. Nanai) had been prominent, one would have expected the Chinese to note the fact. Tung Yu equates the Iranian deity at K'ai-feng with Maheśvara (Śiva), whom Buddhist texts represent as a

(1) *Sou Shen Hou Chi* II fol. 1.
(2) *Taishō Tripitaka* 53. p. 859. col. 3.
(3) *Kuang-ch'uan Hua Po.* ch. 4.
(4) See Pelliot, *Journal Asiatique*, 1916; and E. Pulleyblank, *T'oung Pao*, 1952.

convert to Buddhism. Maheśvara created the Universe, so perhaps the equivalence suggests that at K'ai-feng in the 11th century the deity was Ahuramazda. Finally, these texts, I think, throw some light on Tamīm Ibn Bahr's statement that on his way to the Uighur capital in Mongolia, apparently in 821 A. D., he met fire-worshippers professing the Magian religion.' [1]Professor Minorsky regards this statement as erroneous. But he himself refers[2] to the existence of Sogdian colonies in the Uighur kingdom, and the fact that the famous Karabalgasun inscription is in Sogdian as well as in Chinese and Uighur shows that the Sogdian subjects of the Uighur Khan must have been numerous. There seems no reason to doubt that the Sogdians in Mongolia were fire-worshippers, just as were their fellow-countrymen in the Tun-huang region.

Incidentally, a Chinese parallel may possibly throw light on the object of Tamīn's mission. In the summer of 821 a Chinese called P'ei T'ung was sent to the Uighur Court with a document acknowledging the lawful succession of the tenth Uighur Khan.[3] It seems possible that the object of Tamîn's mission to the Khan's Court was to bring a similar document emanating from the wali of Khorasan. It also seems likely (though this is of course impossible to confirm), that it was P'ei T'ung who composed the Chinese version of the Karabalgasun inscription.[4]

I will end with a note on the passage in Tung Yu's book to which I have several times referred. The book itself is a collection of inscriptions on pictures. At the beginning of his inscription on Ch'ang Yen-fu's 'Picture of the *hsien* deity' Tung Yu says that in 1093 when this well-known Sung painter was (at work)[5] in the K'ai-pao Buddhist monastery at K'ai-feng he was taken ill. 'When night came he prayed at the temple of the *hsien*-deity and next day completely recovered.... He made a picture of the deity, brought it home and served it.'

Tung Yu goes on to warn us against confusing this Iranian deity with the god Zun[6] or with Te-hsi god[7] of the western Ts'ao kingdom, near Kesh.

(1) See Minorsky, *Tamīm Ibn Bahr's Journey to Uyghurs*, B. S. O. A. S. Vol. XII Part II (1948).
(2) ibidem, p. 296.
(3) See *Chiu T'ang Shu*, 195. fol. 11b. For the text of the document, see *Po Hsiang-shan Chi* (Works of Po Chü-i) ch. 33. fol. 1. P'ei T'ung was the author of a voluminous work on the *Book of Changes*; see *Hsin T'ang Shu* 57. 3a. He ended his career as President of the Board of Rites.
(4) The assistant envoy was a son of the famous statesman and geographer Chia Tan(730-805 A. D.)
(5) The bracketed words have slipped out of the text, but are present in quotations of it.
(6) See Marquart, *Das Reich Zabul und der Gott Zun*, in Festschrift E. Sachau, p. 248 seq.
(7) See Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*... . p. 139.

Te-hsi (ancient tək-siĕt) looks superficially as though it might represent a word cognate with the name of the god Tishtrya. But Professor Henning warns me that such a derivation is not possible.

Who were Tung Yu's Iranians at K'ai-fêng and Lo-yang? Were they descendants of T'ang immigrants, or newcomers from Persia, India or trade-emporiums in S. E. Asia? These are questions which someone more familiar with Sung literature than I am may be able to answer.(1) In their *Un Traité Manichéen*...Chavannes and Pelliot wrote in 1911 of the necessity for 'une nouvelle étude...de tous les témoignages chinois rélatifs au Mazdéisme', in which term they no doubt meant to include Iranian cults in general. The task, which has never been undertaken, would be a huge one, particularly as regards the Sung dynasty. Many texts would no doubt turn out to be merely variants of a single source, and to use one text in isolation would be dangerous. For this reason, and because this note is chiefly concerned with Tun-huang, I have not embarked on a full translation of the rather corrupt Tung Yu text. I have mentioned it chiefly because as it is contained not in a historical work, but in one on painting, it might easily escape notice.

It will be a great pleasure to me if this fragment of research is printed in a volume delicated to Hu Shih, an old friend, and a scholar whose work, as he knows, I have always greatly admired.

(1) So far as we know, all the Persians at the Southern Chinese ports Zaitun and Canton in Sung times were Mohammedans.