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A Textual Analysis of Chinese Characters with their Variants in two Dunhuang *Jingjiao* Manuscripts

WANG LANPING

Abstract

Recently, the authenticity of *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism*—two *Jingjiao* manuscripts which are collected by Japanese scholars Takakusu Junjirô and Tomioka Kenzô respectively, have been questioned by Lin Wushu. He proposes that they were probably fabricated by a bookseller in the early twentieth century based on an ancient text of original manuscripts. In this article, the author finds out that the so-called evidence drawn from the use of both standard and vulgar forms of Chinese characters in Lin's discussion is not valid when comparing his examples with other reliable ancient manuscripts from Dunhuang. As a consequence we come to a completely opposite conclusion on the basis of a set of facts.

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INTRODUCTION: LIN'S CLAIMS

The Jesus Messiah Sutra (*Xuting mishi suojing* 序聽迷詩所經) which is collected by Takakusu Junjirô 高楠順次郎 in 1922 or 1923, and *The Discourse on Monotheism* (*Yishen lun* 一神論) collected by Tomioka Kenzô 福岡謙藏 in 1916, have for a long time been regarded as early Chinese *Jingjiao* 景教 manuscripts discovered from Dunhuang.[1] In 1951 Peter Yoshiro Saeki wrote,

> As far as we know, no scholars at home or abroad have ever expressed their opinions against the genuineness of these documents, whilst those who made a special study on the subject are all convinced of the genuineness of these Nestorian manuscripts from both external and internal evidences.[2]

This opinion remained unchanged among scholars until the recent publication of Lin Wushu's 林悟殊 study. According to Lin, the first one who questions the authenticity of the texts is Wu Qiyu 吳其昱. In the early 1990s, Wu told Lin that "these two manuscripts are forgeries, but it's very difficult to prove."[3] Since the year 2000, Lin has published three articles and believed that these two manuscripts were probably fabricated by moderns in the early twentieth century based on an an-

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[1] The first complete photograph editions of *The Discourse on Monotheism* and *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* were published in 1931. Cf. Toru Haneda 羽田亨, ed., *On the One-God*, Part 3 一神論卷第三, *Sutra of Jesus, The Messiah* 序聽迷詩所經一卷 (Kyoto: The Academy of Oriental Culture Kyoto Institute 東方文化學院京都研究所, 1931). The complete color photographs of the manuscripts were published in Japan in 2012. Cf. Kyou-shooku 杏雨書屋, ed., *The Secret Dunhuang Documents of the Kyou-shooku's Collections* 杏雨書屋藏敦煌秘笈, vol. 6 (Osaka: Takeda Science Foundation 武田科學振興財團, 2012), 84–87, 89–96. For more information on the two photocopies, transcriptions and research history, one may refer to Lin Wushu 林悟殊, *New Reflections on Nestorianism of the Tang Dynasty* 唐代景教再研究 (Beijing: Chinese Social Science 中國社會科學, 2003), 186–193, 208–216. The photocopies of these two manuscripts are also clearly released on pages 387–402, 350–386 in Lin's appendix, with line numbers assigned for easy reference. The line numbers referred in this article are same as those in Lin's book.

[2] Peter Yoshiro Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo: The Academy of Oriental Culture Tokyo Institute, 1951), 114.

[3] Lin, *New Reflections on Nestorianism of the Tang Dynasty*, 193–194.

cient text of original manuscripts.[4] One of his proofs is that two variants of a number of Chinese characters appeared in these two manuscripts, such as "肉" (rou) and "宍" (rou), "因" (yin) and "囙" (yin), "與" (yu) and "与" (yu), "作" (zuo) and "乍" (zuo). This phenomenon is explained by Lin that the copyist may have his/her unique writing habit, which gives away the clues when copying with inattention. Lin goes on suggesting that scholars specializing in variants of Chinese characters should be able to find more flaws.

For the last century, researches on *Jingjiao* have kept on referring to *The Discourse on Monotheism* and *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*. Just as Lin says, "If these two texts are copied from the original manuscripts, all remarks on them should be reconsidered."[5] In light of this it is significant to judge whether these two texts are authentic or not. Since Lin expressed his opinion that *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism* were forgeries in 2000 and 2001, there have been not many public responses from scholars over the past fourteen years.[6] Enlightened by Lin, this treatise focuses on the authenticity of these two *Jingjiao* manuscripts through studying the characters in standard and vulgar forms.

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[4] Lin Wushu 林悟殊, "Doubts Concerning the Authenticity of the Nestorian *Discourse on One God* from the Tomioka Collection" 富岡謙藏氏藏景教〈一神論〉真偽存疑, *Journal of Tang Studies* 唐研究 6 (2000): 67–86. Lin Wushu, "Doubts Concerning the Authenticity of the Nestorian *Sutra of Jesus, The Messiah* from the Takakusu Collection" 高楠氏藏景教〈序聽迷詩所經〉真偽存疑, *Chinese Culture and History Studies* 文史 2 (2001): 141–154. Lin Wushu, "Additional Notes on the Authenticity of Tomioka and Takakusu's Nestorian Manuscripts" 景教富岡高楠文書辨偽補說, *Journal of the Dunhuang and Turfan Studies* 敦煌吐魯番研究 8 (2005): 35–43. This article was also published in English in Roman Malek and Peter Hofrichter, eds., *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2006), 133–142.

[5] Lin, "Additional Notes on the Authenticity of Tomioka and Takakusu's Nestorian Manuscripts," 36.

[6] Rong Xinjiang remarks on this question cautiously: There are some doubts on *The Discourse on Monotheism* and *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*, and they are still being observed from different aspects. Cf. Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuangology* 敦煌學十八講 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001), 244. Matteo Nicolini-Zani also points out that Lin's hypothesis of "refined forgeries" still awaits confirmation, and future findings and examinations of the original manuscripts may make this possible. Cf. Matteo Nicolini-Zani, "Past and Current Research on Tang *Jingjiao* Documents: A Survey," in Malek and Hofrichter, *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, 29.

UNSUITABLE EVIDENCES TO DISPROVE THE AUTHENTICITY OF TWO MANUSCRIPTS

According to Lin, variants of the same character can be found in these two manuscripts. Four examples have been given as evidences of forged imitations.

The first example is "肉" and "宍". Taking as an example the Dunhuang manuscript Yuzi 宇字 56 (8470), *The Sutra on Manicheism* (*Monijiao jing* 摩尼教經) in the Peking Library, Lin points out that "肉" is written as "宍" mostly in Tang Dynasty. However, in *The Discourse on Monotheism,* "宍" appears twice (lines 68 and 84) and "肉" also appears twice (line 85). Similarly, in *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*, "宍" appears in line 112, and "肉" appears in lines 51, 131 and 147.

In fact, both "宍" and "肉" have been used in Dunhuang manuscripts as in the case of S. 388, *A Guide to the Correct Use of Characters* (*Zhengming yaolu* 正名要錄). "S. 388" indicates the serial number in The Stein Collection of Dunhuang texts as found in the British Library, London. *Zhengming yaolu* was completed between the 10th and the 23rd year of Zhenguan 貞觀 (649 AD), and was transcribed to S. 388 during the reign of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 or Wuhou 武后. S. 388 *Zhengming yaolu* explains that the forms of the characters "宍" and "肉" are different, but the sounds and meanings are similar. Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉 believes that "宍" is a variant of "肉". In Yan Yuanshun's 顏元孫 *Ganlu zi shu* 干祿字書, "宍" is considered to be the vulgar form of "肉".[7] That is true. In S. 203, *Work on Taoist Ritual* (*Duxian linglu yi* 度仙靈錄儀) which is a genuine Dunhuang manuscript, both "肉" and "宍" are used. For example, the character "肉" in this manuscript is used 3 times,[8] whereas "宍" is used 14 times[9] in

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[7] Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉, *Introduction of Characters of Vulgar Forms on Dunhuang Manuscripts* 敦煌俗字研究導論 (Taibei: Xinwenfeng 新文豐, 1996), 28, 32–34.

[8] The Institute of History of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中國社會科學院歷史研究所 et al, eds., *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (Chinese Texts Other Than Buddhist Scriptures)* 英藏敦煌文獻(漢文佛經以外部分), vol. 1 (Chengdu: Sichuan People's 四川人民, 1990), page 81, the second half, line 7 from right; page 82, the first half, lines 2 and 10 from right.

[9] Ibid., page 82, the first half, lines 18 and 24 from right; page 82, the second half, lines 17, 21, and 25 from right; page 83, the first half, lines 11 and 13 from right; page 83, the second half, line 16; and page 84, the first half, lines 10, 11, 17, 21, 22 and 23 from right.

Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (*Ying cang Dunhuang wenxian* 英藏敦煌文獻), volume 1. The occurrence of "肉" and "宍" add up to 17 times in S. 203. This shows that both standard and vulgar forms of "肉" are used in one manuscript. Furthermore, there are both "肉" and "宍" in S. 3135, *Taixuan Zhenyi Benjijing* (太玄真一本際經), which is also a genuine Dunhuang manuscript. It says "肉眼不睹三世業相"[10] and "如世宍身，皮膚血脈"[11] in *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, volume 5. Both the standard form "肉" and the vulgar form "宍" appear once.

The second example is "因" and "囙". In *The Discourse on Monotheism*, both "因"[12] and "囙"[13] appear. In *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*, only "因"[14] appears. "囙" is not used.

Ganlu zi shu explains that "囙" is considered to be the vulgar form of "因". Taking as an example the genuine Dunhuang manuscript S. 3427, *Prayer Transferring Merit Acquired by the Erecting of an Altar and the Distribution of Food* (*Jietan sanshi huixiang fayuanwen* 結壇散食回向發願文), we can read "又請上方釋提桓因,"[15] "記錄福因,"[16] "因(淫)祠妖精,"[17] and also "誦呪散食勝囙"[18] in *The Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, volume 5. The word "因" has been mentioned for 4 times in S. 3427, including the written form "因" for 3 times, and the other form "囙" only once. Once again we find both standard and vulgar forms in the same manuscript. In another manuscript S. 1147, which has the same content as S. 3427, there are both "因" and "囙" as well. It is written as "因" in "因(淫)祠妖精"[19] and as

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[10] *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (Chinese Texts Other Than Buddhist Scriptures)* 英藏敦煌文獻(漢文佛經以外部分), vol. 5 (Chengdu: Sichuan People's, 1992), page 17, the second half, line 4 from left.

[11] Ibid., 5:15, the second half, line 13 from left.

[12] *The Discourse on Monotheism,* lines 42, 72, 75, 92, 112, 175, 186, 230, 299, 304 and 368.

[13] Ibid., lines 6, 13 and 25.

[14] *The Jesus Messiah Sutra,* lines 28, 30 (twice), 79, 155.

[15] *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, 5:87, line 9 from left.

[16] Ibid., 5:89, line 3 from left.

[17] Ibid., 5:89, line 14 from right.

[18] Ibid., 5:88, lines 14 to 15 from right.

[19] *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (Chinese Texts Other Than Buddhist Scriptures)* 英藏敦煌文獻(漢文佛經以外部分), vol. 2 (Chengdu: Sichuan People's, 1990), page 239, the second half, lines 4 to 5 from left.

"曰" in "釋提桓**曰**"[20] in *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, volume 2.

The third example is "與" and "与". In *The Discourse on Monotheism*, both "与"[21] and "與"[22] appear. In *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*, only "与" appears,[23] and "與" is not used.

Ganlu Zi Shu says that "与" is the vulgar form and "與" is the standard form.[24] These two different forms can be seen in the same Dunhuang manuscript, such as in S. 747, *Sayings of Confucius with Commentary by Kong An-guo and Others* (*Lunyu ji jie* 論語集解), which is a genuine Dunhuang manuscript. It is written as "與" in:

包曰：「[所譽者]，輒試以事，不虛**與**(譽)而已也。」
子張問曰：「**與**師言之道**與**。」
民到於今而稱之，其斯之謂**與**。

but is also written as "与" in:

包曰：「卷而懷之，謂不**与**時政柔順，[故]不忤於人。」
子曰：「可**与**言而不**与**言，失人；不可**与**言而**与**之言，失言。」
孔曰：「鄭聲、倭(佞)人，亦俱能感(惑)人，**与**雅樂、賢人同，而使人[淫亂]危殆，故當放、遠之。」
冉有**与**季路[為季氏]家臣，來告孔子之也。
孔[子]曰：「求！無乃爾是誰之過**与**。」
既來之，則安之。今由**与**求也。
大人，即聖人，**与**天地合其德也。
孔曰：「黨，助也。君子雖眾，不相私助，義之**与**比也。」

Furthermore, it is written as "与" as in "龜玉毀於櫝中，是誰之過与".[25] It is worth noticing that in:

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[20] Ibid., 2:238, the second half, line 13 from right.

[21] *The Discourse on Monotheism*, lines 85 and 234 (twice).

[22] Ibid., lines 86, 111, 134, 160, 173, 194, 223, 224 (twice), 239, 241 (four times), 242, 259, 274, 279, 323 (twice), 325, 332, 362 and 394.

[23] *The Jesus Messiah Sutra,* lines 20, 45, 48, 94 (twice), 95 (twice), 98 (twice), 162, 164.

[24] Zhang, *Introduction of Characters of Vulgar Forms on Dunhuang Manuscripts*, 203–204.

[25] The photograph of S. 747 is published in *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, 2:142–144. The texts are cited from Hao Chunwen 郝春文 and Jin Yingkun 金瀅坤, eds., *The Transcript of Social and Historical Manuscripts from Dunhuang in*

子曰：「威(臧)文仲，其竊位者**與**！知柳下惠之賢而不**与**立。」

there are both “與” and “与” in the same line. The author’s statistics of the frequency of “与”, “與” and “𠂒” in manuscript S. 747 shows that “與” appears 5 times, “与” appears 12 times , and “𠂒” appears once. We believe “𠂒” should be another form of “与”. “与” and “𠂒” are vulgar forms, and “與” is standard form. It is comfortable for a scribe to use in these texts more than one form or style of a character in the same Dunhuang manuscripts.

Both “與” and “与” also appear in the manuscript S. 203, *Work on Taoist Ritual*. We find “與” in:

單紙度錄章剌一通，在此靜中玉案上，請**與**功曹使者對共干省。[26]

but “与” appears in:

咒曰：神水當起，追逐吏兵，受入肉人身中。上天下地，入火不燃，入水不濡，白刃之下不傷，**与**道合同。次以水三汾，受錄人師仍左手執錄，授**与**弟子。[27]

We can even see “與” and “与” in one line of manuscript S. 203 in the following text:

謹牒縣鄉里姓名年紀，所請將軍種數並者保舉人名姓如右，輒遣功曹使者，**與**考召君吏，知肉人情實。應選用**与**不應用者，願及時下將軍吏兵。[28]

In the manuscript S. 203, “與” has been used 3 times and “与” is found twice. This is another example of using both vulgar and standard forms in one manuscript.

The fourth example is “作”and “仵”. They appear many times in *The Discourse on Monotheism* and *The Jesus Messiah Sutra*. These two forms are very much similar to each other, and should be considered as

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British Collections 英藏敦煌社會歷史文獻釋錄, vol. 4 (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic 社會科學文獻, 2006), 1–9.

[26] *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections*, 1:81, the second half, lines 9 to 10 from right.

[27] Ibid., 1:82, the first half, lines 17 to 20 from right.

[28] Ibid., 1:83, the first half, lines 9 to 12 from right.

standard and vulgar forms of one character. We may find different forms of this character in the *Dictionary of Vulgar Characters from Dunhuang Manuscripts* (*Dunhuang suzidian* 敦煌俗字典),[29] and so the details of various forms are not repeated here.

Some researchers have shown that *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism* are Chinese *Jingjiao* manuscripts which date from early Tang Dynasty. Scholars calculate that the former should have been translated in 641, whereas the latter between 635 and 638.[30] For better understanding, genuine Dunhuang manuscripts which were completed around that period are cited above. For example, in the manuscript S. 3135, *Taixuan Zhenyi Benjijing*, the following note is found in the colophon:

> On the 22nd of the 3rd moon of the 3rd year of Yi-feng, the female official of the Three Profundities (the three main divisions of the Taoist Canon corresponding to the Buddhist), Guo Jinji, reverently copied a section of *Ben Ji Jing* on behalf of her deceased Preceptor, in order that he might be helped and benefited by the resultant stock of surpassing happiness, praying that his path might coincide with that of the Nine Immortals, and that his spirit might travel to the Eight Blessed Regions.[31]

The 3rd year of Yi-feng is the year 678, and so it is close to the time when *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism* were translated. Manuscript S. 747, *The Sayings of Confucius with Commentary by Kong An-guo and Others*, is transcribed roughly between 649 and 816. To strengthen the argument of this paper, the example of manuscript S. 203, which is completed one hundred years after *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism*, is also cited.

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[29] Huangzhen 黃征, *Dictionary of Vulgar Characters from Dunhuang Manuscripts* 敦煌俗字典 (Shanghai: Shanghai Education 上海教育, 2005), 579–580.

[30] Toru Haneda 羽田亨, *Recueil des Oeuvres Posthumes de Tôru Haneda: Etudes Religieuses et Linguistiques* 羽田博士史學論文集：言語・宗教篇 (Kyôto: De L'Histoire de L'Extrême-Orient 東洋史研究會, 1958), 248–250. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 114–124.

[31]「儀鳳三年三月廿二日，三洞女官郭金基奉為亡師敬寫《本際經》一部，以此勝福，資益亡師，惟願道契九仙，神遊八境。」The English text of this note is cited from Lionel Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1957), 220–221.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, it has been demonstrated that both standard and vulgar forms of a Chinese character are normally used in the same manuscript. In most situations, coetaneous Dunhuang manuscripts should reveal similar writing habits and styles, and a scribe chooses one form for one character in writing the same manuscript. Nevertheless, it is found that both variant and non-variant forms of one character are used in the same Dunhuang manuscript. In light of this, it is invalid to state that *The Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *The Discourse on Monotheism* are forgeries by referring to the occurrences of "肉" and "宍", "因" and "囙", "與" and "与","作" and "乍".