

The Tibetan Collection in Cambridge University Library

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The Cambridge University Library holds a significant and interesting collection of Tibetan manuscripts and xylographic prints. The earliest known Tibetan books in the Cambridge University Library were acquired between 1873 and 1876 by Daniel Wright (1833-1902), a Surgeon-Major in the Indian Medical Service based in Kathmandu, who was asked by his brother William Wright (1830-1889), Professor of Arabic, to acquire manuscripts for Cambridge. While Wright's main contribution was the acquisition of an exceptionally rich collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, a total of some 113 titles (MSS Tibetan 115-145 and Add. 1050-1678) were sent to the University Library in the years 1875-78, some acquired for the University and others donated by the brothers. Of these, Dr Wright makes a special mention of Add. 1666 and Add. 1667, two large illuminated volumes, which must have belonged to a larger collection of the writings of Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa, 1357-1419), the inspirator of the *Gelugpa* (*dGe lugs pa*) school.

This was followed by the books presented by the Government of India, which Laurence Austine Waddell acquired during the Younghusband Mission to Tibet. The controversial Younghusband Mission, which turned out *de facto* to be a full-scale invasion of Tibet, took place during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899-1905) and Waddell, who was the only officer with some knowledge of Tibetan culture and religion, was the archaeologist to the mission. When the mission returned from Lhasa, the forbidden city, after signing a nominal treaty, the mission brought with it some '300 mule loads' of about 2000 volumes of religious books which were later distributed

between the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, the British Museum and the India Office. The books sent to Cambridge were received by the library and listed in the years 1905-1907. Among these are 239 titles including Tibetan 146-171 and Or. 609-635. Tibetan 149, for example, is a beautiful sample of early prints. It is the royal edition of a very important Buddhist work, the *Ma ni bka' bum* (*Mani Kabum*, see Clemente, this volume), which was printed in 1521 at Dzongkar, Gungthang (rDzong dkar, Gungthang, southwestern Tibet). Two manuscripts (Or 346-347) were obtained in 1903 as a bequest of Edward Cowell (1826-1903), Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge. In 1905, a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* (Tibetan 173) was presented by the Royal Asiatic Society and the volume *Kha* of the biography of Panchen Lozang Pelden Yeshe (Pañ chen Blo bzang dPal Idan Ye shes, Or. 774) was purchased from Luzac & Co. for £110. On 3 November 1906, a set of *Kadampa* (*bKa' gdams pa*) texts (Tibetan 175) was purchased from a Mrs G.L. Crosse.

The first canonical collection to reach Cambridge was a copy of the Derge (*sDe dge*) edition of *Kanjur* (*bKa' 'gyur*) composed of 103 volumes plus a volume of fragments (Ridding 1909). This was a gift of Rev. Charles Taylor (1840-1908), President of St John's College, who gave generous financial support to the University Library. According to Andrew Dalby,

it became known to W.H.D. Rouse in Cambridge that a set of the Derge edition of the Tibetan *Kanjur* and *Tanjur* (*bsTan 'gyur*) might be bought for £1400 from a Tibetan monk visiting the Sung

Chu Ssu in Peking. Taylor financed the purchase, though it turned out to be the *Kanjur* only that arrived in Cambridge in 1907 'in nine yak-skin packages. (Dalby 1988)

The copy is the common *sDe dge tshal par* edition in red ink on thin creamy Tibetan paper. The bundles have never been opened since they were bound with yak hair over a hundred years ago at the time of their production: they are now preserved with shelf marks Tibetan I-104 in the University Library.

In the years after the bulky gifts from the Government of India and Rev. Charles Taylor, a few books were presented to, or acquired by, the University Library. These include a set of books (Tibetan 172) from Colonel Lewin in 1914 and a scroll (Or. 1033) from Captain R.B. Haselden of New York on 3 July 1923. In 1949, J.A. Chapman presented a number of books (Tibetan 174). In 1951, the Faculty of Oriental Studies presented a set of Lhasa *Kanjur* (Tibetan 176-275) and in 1956 a copy of Narthang (*sNar thang*) *Tanjur* (Tibetan 301-526), significantly increasing the library's Tibetan holding. In addition, the University Library also acquired more books (Tibetan 276-283 and Or. 1759-1760) in 1951. Later, in 1981, it received the donation of a book on Buddhist meditation practice in the *Karma Kagyu* (*Karma bka' brgyud*) school from Ato Rinpoche of Cambridge. The books acquired after this appear to be modern publications, either printed on machine-made paper or printed in bound book format.

To summarise the provenance of the Cambridge University Tibetan collection, Tibetan I-104 make up the Derge *Kanjur*, the gift of Charles Taylor. There is no known record of provenance for Tibetan 105-114. Tibetan 115-145 were acquired by Daniel Wright in Kathmandu and Tibetan 146-171 by L.A. Waddell during the Younghusband Mission. Colonel Lewin donated Tibetan 172, the Royal Asiatic Society Tibetan 173 and J. A. Chapman Tibetan 174. Tibetan 175 was bought from Mrs. G. L. Crosse, and

Tibetan 176-275 were presented by the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Tibetan 276-283 were acquired by the University in 1951 and Tibetan 284-300 are modern publications. Tibetan 301-526 consists of the Narthang *Tanjur* donated by the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1956.

Among manuscripts, the 81 titles with the shelf mark Add. were acquired by Daniel Wright. Or. 346-347 were bequeathed by Edward Cowell, Or. 609-635 acquired by Waddell and presented by Government of India and Or. 774 purchased from Luzac & Co. Or. 830 was given to the University Library by W.H.D. Rouse, Or. 1033 was presented by Captain R.B. Haselden of New York, Or. 1759-60 was acquired by the University Library in 1951 and Or. 2254 presented by Ato Rinpoche in 1981. All these books have so far remained largely unknown and inaccessible to the general reader; their value unrecognised, an under-exploited treasure-house of Edwardian scholarship. In 2003, two great scholars of Tibetan studies, the late Gene Smith and Zenkar Rinpoche Tudeng Nima, drew attention to this collection and inspired the formulation of a dedicated project. For the first time, the books were accessed, consolidated and reproduced in both microfilm and digital surrogates through the Tibetan–Mongolian Rare Books and Manuscripts project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A digital catalogue for these books has also been created using the XML editor and templates developed for online catalogues of medieval manuscripts in Europe, with slight modifications by Burkhard Quessel of the British Library. The project has thus succeeded in enhancing the visibility and accessibility of the Tibetan books in Cambridge University Library, and in rebuilding their original integrity and purpose by consolidating them and also linking them to other related books and collections.