

Preface

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Preface

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This report contains part of the results of the Monbukagakusho/JSPS overseas research grants, "Bon Cultrue in Tibet" (1996-1998 fiscal years; No. 08041040), "Reconstruction of the Zhangzhung Language and Formation of Written Tibetan" (1999-2001 fiscal years; No. 11691050), and "Linguistic Substratum in Tibet" (2004-2008 fiscal years; S-No.16102001).

Zhangzhung is a Tibeto-Burman undeciphered language, spoken by the Bon followers in West Tibet. It was originally that of the dMu tribe that was based north of Mt. Kailash in the Zhangzhung sMad district of Western Tibet. The dMu and other tribes in Zhangzhung strengthened the bond with the Yarlung Dynasty, which had arisen in Central Tibet, through cross-cousin marriages. They then began moving eastward around the 4th to 5th century until they settled in the northwestern area of current Sichuan Province. Later, when the Yarlung dynasty came to power, it abandoned the Bon religion, which was the religion of the dMu, and accepted Buddhism as the new ideology of state unification. As a result, the political powers of Central Tibet removed those bureaucrats of Zhangzhung origin who had been cooperating with them. Moreover, as the central administration strongly promoted Tibetanization, the Zhangzhung language seems to have become obsolete around the 10th century, when Tibetan control over Dunhuang ended. Decipherment of Zhangzhung manuscripts itself is a challenge for linguists, but, at the same time, Zhangzhung is important in that it seems to represent a kind of linguistic substratum in that area and it must have influenced the formation of Written Tibetan.

Research into the literature excavated from Dunhuang has made progress since the beginning of the 20th century. The research shows that the Dunhuang literature belonging to the British Library includes some texts written in Tibetan characters, but not in the Tibetan language. F. W. Thomas assumed that they were in the Zhangzhung or the Nam language. Considering the lexical items that can be picked up in fragments, he hypothesized that: (1) the two pieces (plus one piece added later) of the literature known at that time to be Zhangzhung are those related to medical herbs; and (2) the forms other than loanwords from either Written Tibetan or Sanskrit have a genetic relationship with the pronominalized languages of Western Tibet. The Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, has another three pieces of literature which are considered similar to the above, making a total of five pieces at present. We position this Zhangzhung language as "Old Zhangzhung (OZ)" to distinguish it from the Zhangzhung language reconstructed in and after the 14th century.

F. W. Thomas, the pioneer of the OZ studies, left several papers on OZ, and claims, "The language is clearly Tibeto-Burman, and there are many indications of close relation

to the Lepcha, even if it is not an old form of that language" (1926 Two languages from Central Asia . *JRAS* 3:506), but did not show any real evidence for this inference. The whole picture of Thomas' hypothesis remains obscure because he passed away before completing his study. However, Professor Tsuguhito Takeuchi who has been involved in our project discovered the research notes by Thomas containing research results on the Zhangzhung language in the British Library. In cooperation with the British Library, we started to edit and publish these materials in hopes that they will add to our understanding of Thomas' study. After several rounds of editing, we reached this shape.

I hope that this publication widens scopes of Tibeto-Burman linguistics and will be an impetus for the Zhangzhung studies. My deep appreciation goes to the British Library for its understanding of the significance of Thomas' works. Lastly, I would like to express my warm thanks to Mrs. Satoko Suzuki for her practical help.