

Introduction

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Introduction

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The present monograph is the publication of F. W. Thomas' unpublished study of the Zhangzhung language. Thomas published two articles concerning the Zhangzhung language: In the article in 1926ⁱ he introduced for the first time a Dunhuang manuscript written in Tibetan script but in an unknown language, which he assumed to be a Tibeto-Burman language, possibly Lepcha or quasi-Lepcha. In his next article in 1933,ⁱⁱ Thomas successfully presented an advanced research result in deciphering the text. He concluded that it is a medical text, the language may be identified with Zhangzhung, and it belongs to the Western pronominalized sub-group in the Himalayan region. He also identified a considerable number of grammatical forms and lexical items in comparison mainly with Tibetan and Kinnauri.

Thomas continued his research on the Zhangzhung language, planning to publish an extensive study of it. Unfortunately, he passed away without completing it. This circumstance is described by A. F. Thompson, who edited Thomas' posthumous work in 1967,ⁱⁱⁱ as follows:

"An unpublished study of the *Žaŋ-Žuŋ* language, with transcriptions of the available texts, was one of four works^{iv} based on Tun-huang manuscripts in which during his retirement Professor Thomas continuously revised and supplemented the results of researches extending over many years. After his death in 1956 detailed examination of his drafts for this study revealed that although it contained a mass of information – geographical, historical and principally linguistic – it was little possibility of editing it for publication as a whole. The transcription of India Office Library text, however, seemed to be in its final form, and is published here [i.e., Thomas 1967] with a few minor amendments made after checking with the original manuscript. The complete draft work may be consulted in the India Office Library, where it was deposited by Professor Thomas's executors, together with his other unpublished papers." (Thomas 1967: p. 211)

When we started the project of studying the Zhangzhung language in 1997, I visited the British Library and searched for the above mentioned "complete draft work" with Burkhard Quessel and found it in the basement storeroom of the European Manuscripts Section of the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library.^v

The work consisted of five chapters. The first four chapters were typewritten with numerous interlinear handwritten additions by Thomas. Many footnotes and references were left blank. Chapters 1 to 3 deal with the geographical, ethnographical and historical backgrounds of Cis- and Trans-Himalayan peoples with which the Zhangzhung language may be most closely related. Chapter 4 is a linguistic description of the languages spoken in

the Himalayan region, of which the last section (pp. 209-219) deals specifically with the Zhangzhung language. Chapter 5, entitled 'The language of the medical Mss,' is solely devoted to the Dunhuang manuscripts which Thomas claimed to be the Zhangzhung language. In this respect, Chapter 5 is by far the most important, for which the previous four chapters constitute preparations, but it remained only as a handwritten manuscript and is by no means in the state for publication.

Apparently, there were discussions in the India Office Library regarding the possibility of publishing the drafts and the drafts were inspected by specialists (H. Richardson and probably G. Tucci). There remains an interesting handwritten remark by Hugh Richardson to answer this question. It states:

"I have examined the mss and see little possibility of making it a complete and self contained book. [. . .] There is no trace of any attempt at a full translation and I doubt whether Prof Thomas intended to attempt one. Although the material is, as stated, in an unsatisfactory condition from the aspect of publication, it contains such a mass of information, – geographical, historical and principally linguistic – analysed and presented by so great a scholar that it must surely be of value and importance, even if published in an incomplete state. But even to do that is a considerable task and seems to me to call for a scholar of linguistics who has at his disposal a first class library of Asian geography, literature, and languages."^{vi}

This remark by Richardson apparently constituted a base for the above quoted editorial remark by Thompson and the drafts have been left unpublished. As clearly pointed out by Richardson, the drafts were not at all in a state for publication. Nevertheless, the work no doubt contains many valuable data which deserve to be shared by researchers. Thus, upon consultation with Graham Shaw, it was decided that Nagano and Takeuchi would try to find a way to publish it.

We decided our editorial policy as follows: We would publish the drafts as is without making any substantial changes. For example, the descriptions of the Tibeto-Burman languages are in several parts already outdated, but they are left unchanged. Nevertheless, several editorial emendations are indispensable. Regarding many additional marginal notes by Thomas, we have to decide which should be incorporated in the text and which should not. As regards many footnotes and references left unfinished, we have supplied the data which can definitely be detected from contexts. Some more amendments are made to make the book legible to readers. We asked Rolf Kramer to typewrite the manuscript version of Chapter 5. Thanks to Kramer's meticulous work, Chapter 5 has become clearly legible, but a few places remain illegible due to paper damage. They are marked as [. . .] in the text.

Although it remained unfinished, this Thomas' research notes on the Zhangzhung language provides an extensive survey of the languages in the Himalayan region with which Zhangzhung may be closely related (Chapters 1-4) and is an insightful attempt at

deciphering the Zhangzhung language (Chapter 5). Thomas planned to publish the transliterated texts of the three Zhangzhung texts from the Dunhuang cave (two in the Stein Collection and one in the Pelliot Collection), of which only the one in the Stein Collection was published in 1967.

Since the work of Thomas, there has been no extensive study of the Old Zhangzhung manuscripts till our project in 1997. I found two more manuscripts in the Pelliot Collection and entered all five texts into database.^{vii} In the course of our research,^{viii} we were greatly aided by Thomas' research: we accept Thomas' identification of the language as Zhangzhung. We agree that it belongs to the West Himalayan group of Tibeto-Burman languages, but do not find any trace of 'pronominalization.' We also accept most of Thomas' lexical identification, but promote a different grammatical analysis of the Zhangzhung language.^{ix} Study of the Zhangzhung language is still in its early phases, and we hope other researchers will be interested in it. It is our hope that the present publication will make Thomas' valuable work available for use by future researchers.

ⁱ "Two languages from Central Asia." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and* 3: 505-507.

ⁱⁱ "The Zhang zhung Language." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2: 405-410.

ⁱⁱⁱ "The Zhang zhung Language." *Asia Major*, New Series 13: 211-217.

^{iv} The other three works are: 1. *Tibetan literary text and documents concerning Chinese Turkestan*, 1935-63, with an unpublished introduction; 2. *Nam: an ancient language of the Sino-Tibetan borderland*, 1948; and 3. *Ancient folk literature from north-eastern Tibet*, 1957.

^v Entitled 'Thomas Mss EUR F 155.' There are eighteen boxes of materials concerning Thomas. Thomas' Zhangzhung materials are in Box 1 together with Richardson's note. The other boxes contain other interesting materials: e.g., drafts of the *Ancient Folk-Literature* (in Box 5), personal letters from Tucci, Petech, Henning, Bailey, Konow *etc.* (Box 6), an early hand written version of Thomas' catalogue slips to Tibetan wooden slips (Box 10).

^{vi} Richardson also gave extensive comments on the state of the material section by section.

^{vii} The database will be available on the OTDO Website (<http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp/>).

^{viii} Takeuchi, T., Y. Nagano, and S. Ueda, "Preliminary Analysis of the Old Zhangzhung Language and Manuscripts." In Y. Nagano and R. J. LaPolla (eds.) *New Research on Zhangzhung and Related Himalayan Languages*. *Bon Studies* 3: Senri Ethnological Reports 19 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001) 45-96 + 18 pls.

^{ix} Takeuchi T. and Nishida A. "The Present Stage of Deciphering Old Zhangzhung." In Y. Nagano (ed.) *Issues in Tibeto-Burman Historical Linguistics: Senri Ethnological Studies* 75 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2009) 151-165.