6 Buddhist Relics from the Western Regions

Japanese Archaeological Exploration of Central Asia

Imre Galambos

In the early part of the twentieth century, beside the archaeological exploration of Chinese Turkestan by European explorers, many of whom represented colonial powers, there was also Japanese interest in the region. Most significant in this respect was the series of expeditions organized and financed by Count Ōtani Kōzui (1876–1948). The abbot of the Nishi Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū sect, Ōtani was also a close relative of the imperial family, having married the elder sister of Empress Teimei, wife of the Emperor Taishō, who reigned from 1912. As one of the largest and wealthiest religious organizations in Japan, the Nishi Honganji of which Ōtani was abbot is the head temple for a Buddhist sect comprising ten thousand temples and twelve million followers. The temple is called Nishi (West) to distinguish it from the Higashi (East) Honganji; both temples are located close to each other in Kyoto. The original Honganji was established in the early fourteenth century, and amassed such an immense amount of wealth and power over time that when Tokugawa Ieyasu came to power in the early seventeenth century, he split the temple into an eastern and a western branch in order to reduce its influence. Both temples remained important into the modern period and are among the largest in Japan even today.

With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Buddhism fell into a state of crisis in Japan as Shinto was established as the state religion and support for Buddhist institutions was withdrawn. The ensuing anti-Buddhist movement caused great damage and led to the destruction of temple property throughout the country. Temples were faced with the need to adapt to the new situation and redefine themselves.[1] The Honganji branch implemented a series of internal reforms, including a complete educational reform.

One of its important efforts in dealing with suppression was to dispatch clerics overseas to establish contacts with other Buddhist communities and to learn about their practices.[2] The young Ōtani Kōzui, a man of exceptional talent and erudition who was at the time only the heir to the abbacy of the Nishi Honganji, traveled to a number of countries to study the role of religion in modern societies. He was trying to find alternative models for the survival of Buddhism in Japan and in the whole of Asia. It is against this background that the idea of the Central Asian expeditions was conceived, as this was the historical land through which Buddhism came from India to China and ultimately to Japan. The shared Buddhist past of East, Central, and South Asia seemed to provide a conceptual model for a pan-Asian revival under the aegis of Buddhism.[3]

With the Meiji Restoration, Japan instituted an ambitious policy of modernization, adopting European models for a new economic and legal infrastructure. By 1902, it had signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and taken its place among the colonial powers. Along with modern science and technology came a distinct worldview, in which Japan saw itself among Western industrial powers rather than the rest of Asia. Thus, in addition to the traditional Sino-Japanese names of countries and regions, European geographical or geopolitical denominations were also widely used. The term "Shina" was used for "China" instead of the traditional "Shinkoku" (i.e., Qing empire), while Central Asia, which had not existed as a separate entity before, became known as ChūōAjia. Japan's attitude toward Central Asia was determined by its concern with Russian aspirations in the region. The two powers were in direct conflict over Manchuria, and this eventually led to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, in which Japan achieved a spectacular victory. The Great Game colonial rivalry between Russia and Britain in Central Asia was therefore of interest to Japan primarily because of its ambitions in Manchuria.

Having said that, at the turn of the twentieth century, Central Asia did not feature prominently in the public mind in Japan. It was Ōtani Kōzui who, with his expeditions, resurrected the region in the popular imagination as the ancient land of the Western Regions so important in Buddhist history. While staying in Europe in 1901–2, he learned about the discoveries of ancient Buddhist ruins in Chinese Turkestan by Sven Hedin (1865–1952) and M. Aurel Stein (1862–1943) and immediately realized their significance for the Buddhist quest in modern Japan. In 1902, he led an expedition himself from London to western China in search of Buddhist ruins, manuscripts, and artifacts, all with the aim of bringing to light the region's long-lost Buddhist past.

A significant part of Chinese Central Asia consists of mountains and deserts. In the center lies the Tarim basin, with the formidable Taklamakan desert, surrounded by the mountains of Tianshan, Kunlun, and Pamir. The major cities compose a series of oases along the perimeter of the Tarim basin, where the mountains meet the plain and there is enough water from descending rivers. The roads connecting these oasis cities also run along the edge of the desert. Although at the time the region was the area where British and Russian political interests clashed, it nominally belonged to the Qing empire as the province of Xinjiang.[4] It was part of the imperial administration, with a governor in Urumchi and officials in major cities. While contemporary European narratives commonly depict Xinjiang as one of most desolate and inhospitable places in the world, a sizable population lived there and supported itself by agriculture.[5]

Although no railroads existed, there was a functional network of roads between the cities. Travelers journeyed on horse or mule and could reach Xinjiang via Gansu from the direction of Central China or could cross the border from Russian Central Asia or British India. The common route to Europe was either overland by the Russian railroad or via India and then by sea from there. Thus this "remote" region was part of an increasingly globalizing Central Asia and was connected with other parts of the world. This connection is also demonstrated by the existence of a functional postal service and the continuous efforts made for its improvement. For example, around 1910, the Danish Vilhelm Petersen was posted to Urumchi to reorganize and manage the postal system of Xinjiang. The naturalist Douglas Carruthers, who was Petersen's guest while visiting Urumchi, mentions that at last, thanks to Petersen's efforts, letters could reach Peking in forty-five days and London in thirty days.[6] Even during his expeditions, Aurel Stein maintained extensive correspondence with friends, colleagues, and publishers in India and Europe. He even corrected proofs for his articles and books and sent them by the postal service operated by the British Consulate in Kashgar. The telegraph was also increasingly used from the 1890s.[7] In this way, Chinese Central Asia was connected via an effective postal and telegraphic service to the global community and so was not nearly as remote as it was commonly depicted in the rhetoric of European and Japanese accounts.

Travel Writing in Japan

By the end of the nineteenth century, the genre of travel literature was extremely well developed in Japan. There seems to have been an insatiable appetite for knowledge about the outside world, and hundreds of books were published about journeys to every imaginable corner of the world. The majority of the travelogues, however, except for the extremely popular genre of domestic travel, were about China and European countries, which aptly reflects Japan's orientation in this period. For historical reasons, China occupied a special place in the Japanese mind, as demonstrated by the enormous volume of travel literature about China. In his study of Japanese travelogues from the beginning of the Meiji period until the end of World War II, Joshua A. Fogel utilizes an enormous corpus of nearly five hundred books.[8] The Japanese could claim continuity with the Chinese literary and scholarly tradition and thus assert a direct connection with many of the cultural sites in China, such as the birthplace of Confucius and the old capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang. In addition, there were also travelers who were interested in modern China, in the reforms and intellectual currents of the time. At the same time, this cultural indebtedness to China was juxtaposed with the drive to modernize and catch up with the West. Unsurprisingly, this duality was also represented in the country's political and intellectual factions, some of which tried to preserve traditional models while others opted for emulating European and American examples that would lead the nation to economic prosperity.

Travel literature was also available in translation, especially about regions where few Japanese had the chance to travel. Narratives published until 1912 about sub-Saharan Africa alone numbered in the dozens of books.[9] The translation of Henry M. Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*, for example, was first published in 1893, then again in 1896.[10] This shows that by the turn of the century, there was a rich tradition in Japan of both native and foreign travel literature. Yet there were very few books on Central Asia, and the region was pushed into the foreground only with the archaeological expeditions of Hedin and Stein. Their writings, however, had not been translated yet and came out only beginning in the late 1930s. Hedin's first books translated into Japanese were unrelated to Central Asia (such as *With the German Armies in the West* and *The Flight of Big Horse*), and it was only in 1938 that *Chūō Ajia Tanken Ki* (Record of an Expedition to Central Asia) was published. Similarly, Stein's first book in Japanese is *On Central Asian Tracks*, which came out only in 1939 as *Chūō Ajia Tōsaki*.[11] Apparently, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Central Asia was not a major adventure destination and did not captivate the minds of Japanese readers. The region had few connecting points with Japan, and before the discovery of Buddhist sites there, the memory of medieval pilgrims did not excite the popular imagination. This is of course in sharp contrast to the Japanese preoccupation with the Silk Road, which developed several decades later and continues to this day.

Notable among the available travel accounts written by Japanese authors about Chinese Central Asia is *Chūajia Kiji* (A Chronicle of Central Asia). It was written by the diplomat Nishi Tokujiro (1847–1912), who, after studying in Saint Petersburg, traveled extensively in Russian and Chinese Central Asia between 1870 and 1873.[12] He published his account of the region in 1886. Another well-known travel narrative about this region is *Iri kiko* (Travels in Yili) by Major Hino Tsuyoshi (1866–1920) of the Imperial Japanese Army, who traveled in Chinese Turkestan between 1906 and 1907.[13] Starting from Beijing, he crossed the country westward on horseback, passed through Urumchi, and explored the Yili river region in the northwestern part of Xinjiang before traversing the mountain passes to India and eventually returning to Japan by sea. Both of these narratives combine personal experiences and facts gathered along the way in an effort to make Central Asia more accessible to Japanese audiences, including of course official agencies. They claim no connection with the Buddhist past of the region or the pilgrimage routes of the ancient Silk Road. Instead, they offer down-to-earth descriptions of events and facts.

The First and Second Ōtani Expeditions (1902–1904, 1908–1909)

Although Count Ōtani led the first expedition in person, once he succeeded his father as the leader of his sect, he could only direct the exploration from his headquarters in Kyoto. To be sure, his activities were not confined to western China but also involved other parts of Asia, including China proper, Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet, India, and the islands of South and Southeast Asia. Yet he is remembered today primarily for the exploration of the historical land of the Western Regions in the northwestern part of modern China. While this enterprise is customarily divided into three expeditions, in reality, there were a series of overlapping journeys carried out by his people in different countries. The whole enterprise came to an end in 1914 when Ōtani took responsibility for a financial scandal within his sect and resigned from his position, moving his base to China and the East Indies.

In 1900, Ōtani traveled to Europe with a small group of followers to study European religious institutions. During the two years he spent there, he mostly stayed in England but also found time to visit other parts of Europe and even made a trip to Constantinople. While he was interested mainly in observing European models of the role of religion in contemporary society, it was during this extended stay in Europe that he first encountered reports of the Buddhist treasures of Central Asia. The race for the manuscripts and antiquities of Chinese Turkestan was just beginning. Initially, manuscripts were purchased from local treasure hunters by Russian and British political personnel stationed in Kashgar, but Aurel Stein's exploration of the ancient ruins of the region of Khotan changed all that. He was the first person to introduce systematic excavation into the game, taking the hunt for antiquities from sporadic acquisitions of singular items to a whole new level by clearing out entire sites. At the time of Ōtani's stay in England, Stein had just finished his first expedition (1900–1901), and a preliminary report on his findings was promptly published in London.[14] Sven Hedin's book *Through Asia* (1898), about his daring explorations in Chinese Turkestan, was also extremely popular, and its second English edition was already out.[15] The success of these works in Britain was no doubt due to increasing public interest in Central Asia, which in turn was the result of the growing political rivalry with Russia over dominance in this region. The young Ōtani was equally captivated, but, unlike European audiences, what excited him was not the romanticism of oasis cities and inaccessible deserts but the discovery of Buddhist ruins and texts in a region that had historically been so important for both the introduction of Buddhism to China and medieval pilgrimages to the Western Regions. Accordingly, Ōtani decided to visit Central Asia himself and explore the ancient Buddhist sites in the desert. As he was about to return to Japan, he decided to take the overland route through Russia and China and stop over in Xinjiang.

On August 16, 1902, Ōtani set off from London with four of his followers. The party traveled by rail to Saint Petersburg and Samarqand and thence to Osh, entering Xinjiang through the Terek Pass and reaching Kashgar on September 21. Here they decided to split into two teams and proceed separately. The so-called Indian team, comprising Ōtani, Inoue Kōen, and Honda Eryū, went south to India through the Mintaka Pass. It is here that in January 1903 Ōtani received news of his father's death and promptly returned home by the sea route. In the meantime, the Central Asian team with Watanabe Tesshin and Hori Kenyū carried out excavations in the regions of Khotan and Kucha and visited a number of other sites throughout Xinjiang. But because Stein had already done a thorough survey of Khotan and the Germans had excavated the sites around Turfan, the Japanese team concentrated its archaeological activities on the ruins and cave temples in the vicinity of Kucha. In the end, the explorers left Xinjiang and, heading west, proceeded to the coast via Xi'an. During the expedition, Watanabe kept a detailed diary of the team's activities. After his return to Japan, the *Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, one of the major daily newspapers in Japan, serialized a condensed narrative version of this diary (installments of Watanabe's account ran for a week, starting June 27, 1904). Although the Japanese public seemed very interested in the expedition at the time and both local and national newspapers ran stories on the subject, none of the original members published a longer narrative or book about it.

The second expedition began in 1908 when Ōtani was already the abbot of the Nishi Honganji. He organized a new expedition with the eighteen-year-old Buddhist priest Tachibana Zuichō (1890–1968) as the leader and Nomura Eizaburo (1880–1936) as the second team member. It is worth noting that all three Ōtani expeditions were carried out by young men: with the exception of the thirty-one-year-old Inoue, the members of the first expedition had all been in their twenties (including Ōtani himself). This of course meant that they lacked sufficient archaeological training and experience in dealing with the authorities, both of which were to cause problems. The second expedition party traveled from Beijing to Mongolia and entered Xinjiang from the north. First, Tachibana and Nomura did excavations in the region of Turfan at the sites of Yarkhoto, Murtuk, Karakhoja, and Toyuk. Then, at Korla, they split up. Nomura conducted excavations near Kucha, whereas Tachibana traversed the Taklamakan and explored the Lop desert, where he located the ruins of the ancient city of Loulan visited earlier by both Hedin and Stein. Here he discovered an early fourth-century manuscript that would subsequently be declared a national treasure in Japan. The two explorers reunited in Kashgar in June 1909.

The British representative at Kashgar at this time was acting consul Captain A. R. B. Shuttleworth, who was serving in place of George Macartney (1867–1945), then on leave back in England. As a result of a series of miscommunications, aggravated by the general linguistic difficulties of conversing with the Japanese explorers, the young and inexperienced Shuttleworth gradually became convinced that the two men were spies working for the Japanese government.[16] The degree of linguistic difficulties can be gleaned from a comment in the diary of Chester G. Fuson, who was passing through Kashgar and on one occasion dined at the British consulate with the Japanese explorers: "We had great difficulty in conversing with them since our interpreter was not present, and the conversation had to be carried on through five languages—from English through Hindustani, Turki, Chinese, into Japanese, and return!"[17] Meanwhile, Shuttleworth exchanged a series of reports and instructions with his superiors, and in the end, the British authorities concluded that these two men probably were involved in espionage.

After Tachibana and Nomura left Kashgar, they traveled south through the Karakorum Pass into India. There they met with Ōtani, who had just arrived from Japan and was on his way to Europe for a second visit. Suspected of being a spy, Nomura was denied permission to return to China via the Indian frontier. Since he could not go back to Kashgar to retrieve the spoils of the second expedition, which he and Tachibana had left in the care of the British Consulate, Ōtani instructed Nomura to return to Japan by sea. Tachibana, in the meantime, traveled to London with Ōtani and a small group of followers and family members. In London, considerable efforts were made to publicize the results of the second expedition, as a result of which Tachibana was elected a member of the Geographical Society.

Both members of the second expedition kept a diary in which they recorded daily where they went and what they encountered. Once again, neither of these was published at the time, and, moreover, Tachibana's diary was later lost in a fire when his home temple in Nagoya burned down. Part of this diary was discovered only recently, but only for the section of the trip through Mongolia.[18] Thus, the only narratives that appeared in public at the time were shorter reports for the press. In comparison with the previous expedition, however, Tachibana's visit to Europe and Ōtani's publicity campaign there produced a number of responses from the English and French media. The first report about the results of the expedition came out in the *Times* and was written by Sir E. Denison Ross (1871–1940), the renowned scholar of Persian and Central Asian languages who was then principal of the Calcutta Madrasah. He had earlier met Ōtani and Tachibana in Calcutta in December 1909.[19] Acclaim in the foreign popular press and academic circles was in itself a major step forward, as it positioned the Japanese expeditions alongside those conducted by leading powers, officially acknowledging Japan as a major player in the game of colonial archaeology. This was no doubt important to Ōtani, who tried hard to establish his presence in an international field that was concerned with the history of Buddhism.

The Third Ōtani Expedition (1910–1914)

Initially, Ōtani intended to send Tachibana back to Xinjiang with new members and expand the scope of the expedition from archaeology to a number of other disciplines, such as geography and botany. In the meantime, however, Ōtani must have learned about the suspicions of espionage that had surfaced in connection with the previous expedition. His source may have been Sir E. Denison Ross in Calcutta, who was shown some Uighur manuscripts found by the second expedition. Considering Ross's close contacts with the colonial government and his keenness to be given a chance to work on the newly discovered material, it is not impossible that he had leaked some confidential information to Ōtani and advised him on how to best deal with these complications. Since Nomura was denied permission to cross the frontier, Ōtani must have immediately realized that these allegations were going to obstruct his further activities in Turkestan. He acted immediately to resolve the situation by taking three steps.

First, he sent Nomura back to Japan. British intelligence reports mentioned that the Russian consul identified Nomura as an officer in the Japanese army. In reality, this was true only to the extent that he had participated in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, although this was far from being unusual for a Japanese man of his age, as more than a million of his fellow countrymen had taken part in that war. Nevertheless, Ōtani must have realized, or it was explained to him by his source, that in the context of the Great Game, this military background could be construed by both British and Russian authorities as extremely problematic. He thus decided not to use Nomura in further projects in this region but sent him home to Japan. Second, he spared no effort to publicize the results of the previous expedition and elevate Tachibana's standing in academic circles. This was to show that the expeditions were purely scientific in nature and that Tachibana was an acknowledged member of the international scientific community. They submitted reports of their expeditions to the *Geographical Journal* and also tried hard to push the academic value of these expeditions to the foreground. Third, Ōtani reorganized the exploration team. Instead of his original plan to send two Buddhist priests (Hashiramoto Zuishun and Aoki Bunkyō) with Tachibana, he decided to de-emphasize the Japanese nature of the expedition and convert it into an international enterprise. Thus he hired the English seventeen-year-old Orlando Hobbs from Swindon to accompany Tachibana.[20] Once in Saint Petersburg, they also hired a sixteen-year-old Russian boy as an interpreter. This Russian "team member," however, had to be let go before reaching the Chinese border because Tachibana and Hobbs soon realized that although he could converse in Russian, his inability to speak English left him unable to act as an interpreter. It is hard not to see that these two non-Japanese members were hired not for their potential contributions to the success of the expedition but because of their nationalities. They were citizens of the two major powers that faced each other in Chinese Turkestan as part of the Great Game, and the authorities of these two powers believed that the Japanese explorers had been engaged in espionage a year earlier and thus could obstruct further work in the region.

The third Ōtani expedition ran into no difficulties whatsoever with Russian and British authorities in Xinjiang. Ironically, to a large extent this was due not to Ōtani's efforts but to the fact that George Macartney came back from England and Captain Shuttleworth was recalled. Macartney, who was older and more experienced with regard to foreign travelers in Xinjiang, saw nothing suspicious about the activities of the Japanese team. In fact, he became involved with the expedition on account of an entirely different matter, namely, the death of Orlando Hobbs. After arriving in Urumchi, Tachibana and Hobbs first visited Turfan and carried out excavations at the surrounding sites. Then Tachibana went on a desert exploration trip, crossing the Taklamakan and once again visiting the ruins of Loulan. In order to spare Hobbs from the hardship of the desert, he sent him with their luggage to Kucha, instructing him to wait for him there. But by the time Tachibana returned to Kucha, Hobbs had contracted smallpox and died. Before his death, he sent a letter to the British consulate in Kashgar, telling them about his symptoms—evidently unaware of what disease he was suffering from—and asking for help. Macartney immediately dispatched his medical officer, but by the time he arrived in Kucha, Hobbs had already died. Macartney then asked the Chinese authorities to bring the remains of the young man to Kashgar, where he was buried as the first occupant of the English Cemetery.

After learning of the death of his companion, Tachibana rushed to Kashgar and arrived just in time to take part in the funeral. In the following months, grief-stricken and suffering continuous bad luck, he made an unsuccessful attempt to enter Tibet and was lost, deserted by his men, beaten, and robbed. In the meantime, having not heard from him, Ōtani organized a search and sent Yoshikawa Koichirō to relieve and replace Tachibana in Central Asia. The two men eventually met in Dunhuang and together acquired more than 250 scrolls of Dunhuang manuscripts. After conducting excavations together in Turfan, Tachibana returned home with the most precious finds via Siberia on the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1912, while Yoshikawa stayed behind until January 1914.

Publicizing the Expeditions

The archaeological materials obtained during the three expeditions were first deposited at Nirakuso, Ōtani's extravagant villa on Mount Rokkō overlooking the Bay of Kobe. Some of the items were put on display for the general public as part of an exhibition. Both local and national newspapers ran reports about the expeditions and the collection, especially praising the young Tachibana. Shortly after his return to Japan in 1912, the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun*, two major daily newspapers, serialized his account of the last expedition. It drew hundreds of thousands of readers, and due to the overwhelmingly positive reaction, the reports were also issued as a separate volume titled *Chūa Tanken* (Exploration of Central Asia) within a few months.[21] An epigraph at the beginning of the book, in Ōtani's calligraphy, quotes the words of Emperor Taizong (r. 626–49) from his preface to the sutra translations of Xuanzang: "By emphasizing sincerity and disregarding the fatigue of labor, he sought profundity and strived for magnanimity." Evidently, the quote was intended to establish a connection with Xuanzang's pilgrimage to the Western Regions, highlighting the expedition's role in rediscovering lost texts. In other words, it established the expedition as a religious mission, albeit not to convert the local population but to recover a long-lost heritage. The preface was written by Motoyama Hikoichi, general manager of the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, and is especially interesting because it places the expedition and its results in a non-Buddhist context, pointing out its significance for the Japanese people in general. It explains that although Japan had made tremendous progress during the Meiji era, by 1912, in the Taishō reign—which had just begun in July of that year—it had to reinterpret its own position within the whole of Asia. In addition, Motoyama raised the issue of the destiny of East Asian nations and highlighted the fact that Japan had to compete with the Western powers both politically and culturally. It is in this context that the exploration of Central Asia by the young Tachibana was significant, as it symbolized Japan's rise to the level of other advanced countries.

A few months before the appearance of this volume, however, a smaller book was published with the title *Shinkyō tanken ki* (Record of the Exploration of Xinjiang).[22] This was the record of a talk on both of his expeditions that Tachibana delivered to a youth association in Tokyo. This book also begins with Emperor Taizong's words from the same preface to Xuanzang's sutra translations, again in Ōtani's calligraphy, and alludes to the hardships of traveling in the Western Regions: "In the morning the fallen snow stirred up and obscured the ground in front of him, in the evening the sandstorm eclipsed the sky above him." The preface to *Shinkyō tanken ki* was written by the newspaper mogul and historian Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957), who put Tachibana's journey alongside the expeditions of Hedin, Stein, and Pelliot, pointing out that the young Tachibana was the first Asian to distinguish himself in a world of exploration and research that was dominated by Europeans.

In the same year, Tachibana also began to edit an academic series titled *Niraku sōsho* (Collectanea from the Niraku Villa), with the aim of publishing the results of research related to the newly acquired material. Two years later, in 1914, he published a short book on the Mongolian language titled *Mōkogo kenkyū* (Studies in the Mongolian Language) and, in the short preface, praised Genghis Khan as his most admired hero. While these were purely scholarly ventures and did not seem to have made an impact beyond Japanese academia, such impact was equally important for Ōtani. In 1915, a beautiful two-volume catalog of the collection appeared, partially illustrated with expensive color plates. This was the *Saiiki kōko zufu* (Illustrated Catalog of Central Asian Archaeology), which provided high-quality images for the study of the Ōtani collection.[23] Due to Ōtani's resignation and departure from the country, the planned series of archaeological reports and popular narratives never materialized, and to this day, these two volumes remain an important source on the collection before its dispersal.[24]

The preface to the catalog was written by Ōtani himself and spelled out his motivation for exploring Central Asia:

> The Western Regions is the land where Buddhism once flourished and through which the Three Treasures spread. The territory of Xinjiang especially, located along the route connecting India and China, at the intersection of these two cultures, occupied a strategic position in the transmission of Buddhism to the East. But Buddhism declined in this area centuries ago, and we did not know what happened here

> in the past. For many years I have been aware that a scientific exploration of this area and the whole of Central Asia was necessary but never had the opportunity to carry out these plans. In August of 1902, I happened to be in England, in London, and as I was about to return home, it suddenly occurred to me that I should use the opportunity of my return trip to accomplish this long-standing aspiration. Having made up my mind, I personally visited the holy sites of the Western Regions and also sent others separately to explore the inner areas of Xinjiang. The results of this trip made it increasingly clear to me that the exploration of Central Asia was necessary; thus I sent expeditions over there on two additional occasions.

In this way, Ōtani justified his expeditions to Central Asia by connecting them with the history of Buddhism. He referred to the region's key location in this respect and claimed that he had been meaning to go there for a long time. He also pointed out that the idea of the first expedition came to his mind in London, although he phrased it as if the idea arose merely as a logistical issue of being able to pass through these lands on the way back to Japan. We know, however, that the expeditions had been in large part inspired by the explorations carried out by Sven Hedin and, more importantly, Aurel Stein, which Ōtani had heard about while staying in London.

In 1914, Ōtani abruptly resigned from his position in Japan and left the country for the rest of his life. This was also the end of his involvement in the exploration of Central Asia. He moved his base of operations first to Shanghai and later to Port Arthur (Lüshun), also spending part of the year in the East Indies. He continued to travel extensively and to send his followers to regions and countries that interested him, including Europe, North America, China, Siberia, India, and Turkey. He built or purchased several large villas around the world, where he intended to establish regional headquarters under his leadership. Thus, in addition to such centers in Shanghai, Port Arthur, Dairen (Dalian), and Takao (Gaoxiong, in Taiwan), he also built villas in the East Indian islands of Java and Celebes and even in Lausanne, Switzerland. During these thirty-some years, he rarely visited Japan, retiring to Beppu on the island of Kyushu only shortly before his death in 1948.

Thus, there were only two thin books published on the expeditions while they were in progress. Although a wealth of material was produced in the form of diaries, reports, and letters, these remained hidden from public view, and, with Ōtani's voluntary exile, the collection itself was gradually dispersed.[25] More than two decades after the expeditions, however, a beautiful folio-sized edition in two volumes was compiled with all of the material that was still available. The editors wrote to the original expedition members and asked for their field notes and diaries, which were included in the new compilation. It was published in 1937 with the title *Shin Saiiki Ki* (New Record of the Western Regions).[26] The title referred to Xuanzang's travel narrative *Xiyu Ji* (Record of the Western Region; in Japanese, *Saiiki*), thus directly associating the Ōtani expeditions with Xuanzang's pilgrimage. Echoing the aims of Xuanzang, who traveled to the Western Regions in search of the dharma and scriptures, the modern Japanese explorers were looking for Buddhist manuscripts and artifacts. The new volume contained a significant amount of documentation from the expeditions, although its size and price would have made it largely inaccessible to the general public. In addition, most of the diaries and notes were included in their original format, which was helpful for research but perhaps less interesting for ordinary readers. In contrast, Tachibana's two books (which were also incorporated into the second volume of *Shin Saiiki Ki*) very much targeted popular audiences who were only superficially interested in Central Asia.

The Rhetorics of Exploration

There is an interesting duality in the rhetorics of the Japanese exploration of Central Asia. As we have seen, in their justification of their motives and construction of their travel narratives, the Ōtani expeditions relied on two different traditions. On the one hand, we see an insistent association with the region's Buddhist past, referencing the works of medieval pilgrim-monks who journeyed west from China proper in search of scriptures. On the other hand, Ōtani also referenced European exploration narratives, especially those by Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin. While in Europe, he met both explorers and later sporadically corresponded with them. When Hedin visited Japan for a few days in 1908, he was also Ōtani's guest at the Nishi Honganji temple in Kyoto, which was amply publicized at the time in Japan.

It is interesting how little attention is paid to current conditions in Central Asia in the accounts of some of these archaeological expeditions. The explorers seem to be traveling in an abstract space and make fleeting comments about the people, their customs, and their living conditions only when these matters are pertinent to acquiring medieval manuscripts or visiting ancient ruins. The local population and the Chinese officials are almost a distraction, while the Japanese Buddhist travelers claim this land as their own cultural heritage. Everything is about the past, the author-traveler reads into the land a constructed view of what used to be there, and the only modern reference points are the experiences of other explorers who likewise saw the region through the lens of the past when they had visited these places a few years earlier. Thus we see a process of globalization in the records of foreign explorers, with their fixation on manuscripts and ancient ruins, continually cross-referencing one another. Although the history of any part of the world is a complex narrative involving a variety of different peoples, faiths, and periods, in the context of the archaeological exploration of Central Asia, partly because the ruins in the desert belonged predominantly to Buddhist cultures, this globalization centered around the Buddhist past of the region, disregarding other cultural and religious layers. In this respect, the Japanese experience in Chinese Central Asia was very different from that in "modern" places such as Europe. There Japanese travelers chiefly described the contemporary world around them and made very few references to a history that, albeit just as rich as that of Central Asia, rarely featured in the East Asian tradition of travel writing.

The name compulsively used in connection with the Buddhist heritage of Central Asia is that of Xuanzang, whose seventh-century narrative of his journey to India, *Xiyu Ji*, or *Record of the Western Regions*, has been one of the most popular works in the Chinese tradition. Besides being included in the Buddhist canon, the story itself continued to evolve in the popular imagination and was reincarnated in works of popular literature, the most famous of which is the sixteenth-century vernacular novel *Xiyou Ji* (Journey to the West), by Wu Cheng'en.[27] As a result of this long literary tradition, to this day, the very name of Central Asia (i.e., *Xiyu*, or "Western Regions") triggers images of Buddhist pilgrims traveling westward through the desert in search of manuscripts. This Chinese fascination with the region was brought over to Japan in medieval times and since then has also been part of Japanese culture. In a way, exploring the ruins of ancient Buddhist kingdoms was like time travel. The Japanese explorers already knew this land intimately from medieval travel narratives, which had formed part of their cultural memory. Thus when they traveled there in person, they were essentially rediscovering the place.[28] Perhaps this is part of the reason we learn so little about interactions with local populations, as the narratives dwell mostly on the adventures of the explorers or the discovery of ancient manuscripts.

The rhetorics of the Ōtani expeditions consistently utilize the image of Xuanzang and the pilgrimage to the west in general. As mentioned above, Ōtani wrote the opening epigraph in calligraphy at the beginning of both of Tachibana's books, quoting Taizong's laudatory words about Xuanzang. In addition, the preference for using the term "Western Regions" instead of modern toponyms also establishes a link with the heyday of Buddhism in this region during the medieval period and the region's significance for the transmission of Buddhist doctrines and scriptures to China. Nor should we forget that the expeditions were organized, financed, and carried out by members of one of the largest Buddhist organizations in the world. They justified their involvement in this enterprise largely by their spiritual connection with the land of Central Asia and its past. In a rare English-language account of the first expedition written in 1906, Ōtani began his "personal narrative" with the following words:

> After spending two and a half years in study in England, it was my ambition to return to Japan by way of central Asia and India, to visit the ruined cities and remains of Buddhist civilization buried in the desert sands, and to make a pilgrimage through our Buddhist Holy Land in India. I wished to follow the route of Hiuen Tsang [i.e. Xuanzang], the Chinese priest who went to India in the seventh century of the Christian era, spent several years in the Buddhist monasteries of Magadha (modern Berar, Central India) and Kashmir, and brought back many canonical books and previously unknown texts, the expounding of which caused a great revival of Buddhism in China and reinvigorated it in Japan.[29]

This short introduction includes all of the key words that would be used in all later accounts, including "England," "Central Asia," "India," "Xuanzang," "ruined cities," "desert sand," and "pilgrimage." Most importantly, Ōtani connects the manuscripts brought back from India and Central Asia with the revival of Buddhism in China and Japan, which was an important theme in his religious pan-Asianism. Having said that, European explorers were naturally also interested in manuscripts, even if for completely different reasons. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, Russian and British political officers stationed in Kashgar were instructed to acquire available manuscripts and send them back to academic institutions in their home countries. Aurel Stein's excavations in Khotan and Niya only heightened the interest in manuscripts, and Stein's acquisition of part of the Dunhuang cave library in 1907 became a veritable sensation. Ironically, when Stein approached Abbot Wang, the self-appointed caretaker of the Dunhuang cave temples who was also the discoverer of the cave library, he compared himself to Xuanzang. He was like Xuanzang, he claimed, except that he came from the West, and had come looking for Buddhist texts so that he could take the scriptures back to India, the place of their origin.[30] Nevertheless, unlike Ōtani and his men, Stein was not a Buddhist follower but a scholar, and for him the manuscripts had no religious significance.

The role of English-language models for the explorations and subsequent narratives is best demonstrated by the fact that expedition members carried with them many of these earlier books. For example, after Nomura's arrival in Kashgar in the summer of 1909, the British representative Captain Shuttleworth visited him at his residence and made the following observation:

> I noticed he had a large library of English books, including Curzon's *Pamirs*, Stein's *Ancient Khotan*, Putnam Weale's *The Truce in the East and its Aftermath* and books by Deasy, Ellsworth Huntington, Sven Hedin and Cobbold. I also saw several military works, such as *The War in the Far East* by the military correspondent of *The Times*, and one or two naval books by Mahan. Nomura distinctly told me he could neither speak nor read English.[31]

Although Shuttleworth's suspicions were most likely unfounded, as real spies would presumably not carry with them books they could not read, his comment shows the degree of dependence on the results of European exploration of Central Asia. Such a large collection of books, some of which were large and heavy (e.g., the two folio-sized volumes of Stein's *Ancient Khotan*), was not easy to carry around while traveling and its presence was no doubt justified by the books' significance for the Japanese exploration. Ōtani himself was an avid collector of books related to Central Asia and Asia in general.[32] Interestingly, these European narratives seem to have been utilized not only for their geographical, historical, and archaeological content but also as a model for such mundane things as how to travel or even what to wear. For example, since he could not personally participate in the expeditions anymore, Ōtani wrote a detailed how-to handbook for the expedition members, in which he gives instructions on how to handle practical issues, such as the daily distances one should cover on foot or horseback, information that needs to be recorded in a diary entry, or even what to wear when meeting local officials or gentlemen. He points out, for example, that "especially on British territory one should not forget to have a tailcoat at one's disposal."[33]

This indebtedness to the European exploratory tradition was of course no secret. Quite to the contrary, in most writings related to the expeditions, the European explorers are cited at the beginning as worthy predecessors. This shows that Ōtani and his people were trying to establish themselves as part of a lineage of Central Asian explorers. Tachibana, for example, mentions right at the beginning of his narrative of the second expedition that before his departure from England, he had met Stein in London and Hedin in Stockholm and that both of them wished him well, which, in the narrative, functions essentially as a kind of initiation ceremony in an almost religious type of transmission.[34] He then explains how Ōtani took him shopping for expensive scientific equipment for the journey, and his detailed list of the different kinds of chronometers and barometers feels like a device intended to emphasize the scientific (i.e., European) nature of the upcoming enterprise. The reader is reminded that this was no mere pleasure trip but a cutting-edge scientific exploration. In some sense, this also served to demonstrate that, at least with respect to the exploration of Central Asia, Japan was on a par with the European colonial powers. In addition, both of Tachibana's popular accounts were aimed at a Japanese general readership and used the names "Chūa" (Central Asia) and "Shinkyō" (Xinjiang) instead of the earlier term "Saiiki" (Western Regions). This is not to say that the element of Buddhist pilgrimage was absent from these books. As we have seen above, Ōtani chose to underline this with his calligraphy at the very beginning of the books. Yet the narratives in general read not as descriptions of visits to holy sites but as stories of adventure in a dangerous land. The emphasis on Tachibana's young age, stressed throughout the popular accounts, was part of the same narrative framework. The books also follow the European tradition of travel narratives in emphasizing the adventurous and personal aspects of the journey, at times humorous, at other times tragic.

Ōtani also worked hard to publicize the results of his expeditions in Europe. He corresponded with leading European scholars, sent reports and maps to the Royal Geographical Society, and succeeded in having Tachibana acknowledged by the academic community in Europe. He saw the progress of European scholars in the study of the history of Buddhism in Central Asia, India, and Tibet and tried to establish Japan, and more specifically his own sect, among the major players. His grand vision of the pan-Asian revival of Buddhism necessitated that Buddhist scholars were not left out of this field.

As we have seen, the travel narratives of twentieth-century Japanese Buddhist exploration of Central Asia were affiliated with two distinct traditions. On the one hand, they tried to position themselves as part of the tradition of European exploration of Central Asia, which to some extent reflects Japan's contemporary aspirations to align itself with leading colonial powers. This European colonial element shines through in all narratives associated with the expeditions. On the other hand, they also claimed a connection with the medieval Buddhist pilgrimages through the Western Regions. The Chinese monks had brought back scriptures, statues, and relics that all symbolized the dharma, and even their travel accounts functioned as dharma in that they were mementos from the land of the Buddha. The Japanese explorers expressly associated themselves with these medieval movements, effectively sanctifying their archaeological work as a religious pilgrimage in search of relics. When Ōtani learned during his stay in London about the Buddhist ruins and manuscripts found in Central Asia, he immediately realized the significance of these discoveries for his pan-Asian vision of Buddhism. With his expeditions to the region, he meant to reenact the seventh-century journey of Xuanzang, who brought back manuscripts and relics that were to play an important role in the subsequent revival of Buddhism. The ancient land of the Western Regions was the missing link between the East and the West, which provided ideological support for redefining the role of Buddhism both in contemporary Japanese society and throughout Asia.

This might have also been one of the reasons that news of the discovery of ancient Buddhist sites and artifacts in Chinese Turkestan did not trigger much wider interest in China itself. Indeed, Chinese scholars had not paid attention to these finds until the French scholar Paul Pelliot brought some of the manuscripts he purchased in Dunhuang to Beijing in 1909. These were mostly copies of traditional Chinese texts, such as the Confucian canon, classical literature, and geographical and historical treatises. It was mainly these non-Buddhist manuscripts that prompted the interest of the Chinese scholarly community, which eventually was successful in petitioning the Ministry of Culture to rescue the remaining manuscripts. Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, in contrast, excited less attention and were appreciated primarily for their calligraphy and antiquarian value. Even less valued in the first decades of the twentieth century were manuscripts written in foreign languages. Tibetan and Sanskrit texts thus went virtually unnoticed by Chinese scholars, even after scholars had been alerted to the existence of the Dunhuang cave library.[35] In Japan, however, Buddhism was very much a living tradition. The country had a long tradition of collecting and studying manuscripts—many Japanese temples have extraordinary collections of old manuscripts going back to medieval times.[36] Accordingly, Buddhist sutras and artifacts from Central Asia, the Western Regions, were a powerful cultural symbol in Japan that summoned images of religious revival and prosperity.

Notes

This chapter was written while I was a Petra Kappert Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Hamburg University. I am grateful for Prof. Michael Friedrich and his colleagues at the center for their support.

1. On Buddhism in the Meiji period, see Winston Davis, "Buddhism and the Modernization of Japan," *History of Religions* 28, 4 (1989), pp. 304–39. On the ways in which the Nishi Honganji tries to define its relationship to the state, see Minor L. Rogers and Ann T. Rogers, "The Honganji: Guardian of the State (1868–1945)," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 17, 1 (1990), pp. 3–28.

2. Richard M. Jaffe, "Buddhist Material Culture, 'Indianism,' and the Construction of Pan-Asian Buddhism in Prewar Japan," *Material Religion* 21, 3 (2006), pp. 266–93.

3. Pan-Asianism was one of the consistent themes in Ōtani's life, and he was one of its main proponents in Japan even though he spent the second half of his life away from Japan. On many levels, this nationalistic ideology coincided with Japan's military expansion, and Ōtani has been sharply

criticized for this in the West. See, for example, Ronald S. Anderson, "Nishi Honganji and Japanese Buddhist Nationalism, 1862–1945" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1956).

4. At the time, "Xinjiang" was usually spelled "Sinkiang" in European literature. Today it is no longer a province but an autonomous region.

5. In 1907–8, the population of Xinjiang was in the range of 1.65 million to 2 million. See James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 152–53.

6. Douglas Carruthers, *Unknown Mongolia: A Record of Travel and Exploration in North-West Mongolia and Dzungaria* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1914), vol. 2, pp. 445–46.

7. Chen Huisheng, *Minguo Xinjiang shi* (History of Xinjiang in the Republican Era) (Urumchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, n.d.), p. 171, n. 2.

8. Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. xii.

9. For a list of works, both Western and Japanese, on exploration in sub-Saharan Africa that appeared during the Meiji period, see Aoki Sumio, "Meijiki Nihon ni okeru Sabu-Sahara Afurika he no kanshin (Shoseki mokuroku)" [Japanese Interest in sub-Saharan Africa during the Meiji Period [Bibliography]], *Journal of African Studies* 72 (2008), pp. 61–66.

10. Henry Stanley, *Ankoku Afurika* [Dark Africa], trans. Yabe Shinsaku (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1893). The second edition came out as Stanley, *Sutanrētanken jikki* [True Record of Stanley's Expedition], trans. Yabe Shinsaku (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1986).

11. Sven Hedin, *Chūō Ajia tanken ki*, trans. Iwamura Shinobu (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1938); M. Aurel Stein, *Chūō Ajia tōsaki*, trans. Kazama Tarō (Tokyo: Seikatsusha, 1939).

12. Nishi Tokujirō, *Chūajia kiji* (Tokyo: Rikugun bunko, 1886).

13. Hino Tsuyoshi, *Iri kikō* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1909).

14. M. Aurel Stein, *Preliminary Report of a Journey of Archaeological and Topographical Exploration in Chinese Turkestan* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1901).

15. Sven Hedin, *Through Asia* (London: Methuen, 1898). The second edition was published by Harper, New York and London, in 1899.

16. On the British suspicions against Tachibana and Nomura during their stay in Kashgar, see Imre Galambos, "Japanese 'Spies' along the Silk Road: British Suspicions Regarding the Second Ōtani Expedition (1908–09)," *Japanese Religions* 35, 1–2 (2010), pp. 33–61.

17. Ibid., p. 49

18. This portion of the diary was published recently under the title *Shimei Ki* (Record of a Mission) by Tachibana's son and grandson with the help of Silk Road scholar Kaneko Tamio. See Tachibana Zuichō, *Shimei ki* (Nagoya: privately published, 2001).

19. "Exploration in Chinese Turkestan," *The Times*, February 3, 1910, p. 5. Although this report appeared anonymously, Ross mentioned having authored the text in his correspondence with Stein. See Imre Galambos and Kōichi Kitsudō, "Japanese Exploration of Central Asia: The Ōtani Expeditions and Their British Connections," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, 1 (2012), pp. 113–34, esp. pp. 116–17.

20. On the tragic fate of Orlando Hobbs and his role in the expedition, see Imre Galambos, "An English Participant in the Japanese Exploration of Central Asia: The Role of A. O. Hobbs in the Third Ōtani Expedition," in Irina Popova, ed., *Russian Expeditions to Central Asia at the Turn of the 20th Century* (Saint Petersburg: Slavia, 2008), pp. 188–202.

21. Tachibana Zuichō, *Chūa tanken* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1912). The volume was actually put together from an oral interview with Tachibana by the journalist Seki Roko, who was closely associated with Ōtani and actively promoted the cause of the exploration.

22. Tachibana Zuichō, *Shinky tanken ki* (Tokyo: Minyusha, 1912).

23. Kagawa Mokushiki, ed., *Saiiki kōko zufu* (Tokyo: Kokkasha, 1915).

24. Since some of the items included in the catalog were subsequently lost, it remains the only record of them. As newer collections become accessible to researchers (e.g., Lüshun Museum), some of these lost items may resurface, and the catalog will provide a much needed reference point.

25. Important parts of the original Ōtani collection are kept today at Ryukoku University Library, the National Museum of Tokyo, the National Museum of Kyoto, the Lüshun Museum, the National Library of China, and the National Museum of Korea, among others. There are also items that have only recently been discovered in private collections in Japan or are still considered lost.

26. Uehara Yoshitaro, ed., *Shin Saiiki ki* (Tokyo: Yukosha, 1937). A reprint, *Shin Saiiki Ki* (Tokyo: Igusa, 1984), includes a small supplement.

27. For an English translation, see Anthony Yu, trans., *The Journey to the West*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977–83).

28. Joshua Fogel writes about this aspect of Japanese travel narratives on China, how travelers were confronted with the contrast between the China they knew from their shared cultural tradition and the one they saw upon arriving there in person. See Fogel (1996), pp. 302–3.

29. Count Kosui Otani, "The Japanese Pilgrimage to the Buddhist Holy Land: A Personal Narrative of the Hongwanji Expedition of 1902–03," *Century Magazine* 10 (1906), p. 866.

30. Partly as a result of these rhetorics, today the Stein collection of Dunhuang manuscripts consists mostly of Buddhist texts. Another reason for this was Stein's inability to read Chinese and his lack of sinological training. In contrast, Paul Pelliot, the talented French sinologist who visited the caves a few months after Stein, purchased manuscripts that were more valuable from the point of view of the classical Chinese textual tradition. Ōtani, however, expressly preferred Buddhist texts and in his article on the first expedition writes: "More fortunate than Captain Bower, whose famous manuscripts proved to be chiefly the formula and prescriptions of a medicine-shop, our explorers brought back many pieces of sacred writing—fragments of sutras written in Uigur, Sanscrit, and Chinese characters." See ibid., p. 877.

31. Galambos (2010), p. 54.

32. Part of his collection of books was donated to the Dairen Library (today's Dalian Library), and since the shelf mark of these books begins with an "O," they are still identifiable as a collection. The catalog of the books in European languages shows more than a hundred titles—some quite rare and valuable—that used to belong to Ōtani, mostly on Central and East Asia. See *Classified Catalogue of Books in European Languages in the Dairen Library of the South Manchuria Railway Company* (Dairen: The Dairen Library, 1937). I am grateful to Kitsudō Kōichi of Ryukoku University for pointing out this catalog to me.

33. Ueyama Daishun, "*Tanken shizusho* to *Ryokō Kyōhan*," *Bunka Issan* 11 (2001), pp. 34–35.

34. Tachibana (1912), p. 2.

35. On the topic of how non-Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang were initially neglected, see Justin Jacobs, "Central Asian Manuscripts 'Are Not Worth Much To Us': The Thousand-Buddha Caves in Early Twentieth-Century China," *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 4 (2009), pp. 161–68.

36. One of the most sensational finds of recent decades is the medieval library with thousands of manuscript scrolls discovered in 1990 at the Nanatsudera temple. See Ochiai Toshinori et al., *The Manuscripts of Nanatsu-Dera: A Recently Discovered Treasure-House in Downtown Nagoya* (Kyoto: Istituto italiano di cultura, Scuola di studi sull'Asia orientale, 1991).

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Edited by Nile Green

Indiana University Press

Bloomington and Indianapolis