

A Preliminary Study of the Colophons of the Naxi Manuscript Collection in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

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ABSTRACT

The Naxi manuscripts are generally religious texts used by the Dongba priests in southwest of China. The interpretation of colophons has often been underappreciated in previous studies. This paper reviews previous research on colophons in Naxi manuscripts and redefines the concept of the ‘colophon’ as a term used in the study of Naxi manuscripts. In this paper, the colophons of some of the Naxi manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin are discussed, revealing when and where the manuscripts were copied, and the events associated with the copying process. When reading the colophons, one often encounters translation errors and other problems, but their correct interpretation will help shed more light on the circumstances of the production of the Naxi manuscripts, which make up a unique component of the world’s literary heritage.

KEYWORDS

Naxi manuscript, colophon, reading order, omission, phonetic complement

In 1867, Père Auguste Desgodins, a French missionary, sent eleven copied pages of a Naxi 納西 manuscript back to France, which aroused general interest in these unusual manuscripts (de Lacouperie 1885: 415–482). The Naxi manuscripts are handwritten religious texts written by the Dongba, priests of the Naxi people, who live in the Hengduan 橫斷 Mountains at the junction of Yunnan 雲南, Sichuan 四川 and Tibet in southwestern China, between the Qinghai 青海-Tibet Plateau and the Yunnan 雲南-Guizhou 貴州 Plateau. These manuscripts were written mainly in the Naxi language, which is variously labeled as belonging to the Lolo-Burmese language group

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(a generally held view refuted by D. Bradley [1975]) or the Na-Qiangic branch (Jacques and Michaud 2011).

The Dongba Priests wrote their texts in Dongba 東巴 pictographs and Geba 哥巴 phonetic characters and recited and chanted them at Naxi religious ceremonies (Friedrich 2023). In the main, Naxi manuscripts record myths and folklore about the origin of mankind, wars, and love of the Naxi people, but they also have colophons, which record the circumstances of the production of particular texts. Previous studies have focused on the main text of these manuscripts, while little attention has been paid to the colophons, which are significantly different in both language and content. In the spoken language of the Naxi people, the colophons often reveal the time, place, and identity of the scribe of the text, and some even record major events. They can be highly useful, even definitive, in determining the historical period and social circumstances in which these manuscripts were produced.

I. ABOUT COLOPHONS

A Naxi manuscript generally consists of three parts, the front cover or the title page, the main text, and the colophon. There are noticeable differences between the main text and the colophon. While the main text tells mythical stories and details of religious rites, the colophon often records secular events. The script used in the main text is only loosely based on the language actually used. The main texts are not word-for-word renditions of the ritual chant. Instead, there are many omissions. Thus, the main texts can be best interpreted alongside a Dongba priest chanting them out. The following text can serve as an example.



Fig. 1 Main text (He 2015:193)

Fig. 1 is the first page of the main text of $\text{mu}^{33}\text{yu}^{21}\text{s}\text{o}^{33}$, which means ‘killing mu^{33} and yu^{21} , two blood-thirsty ghosts. The first sentence begins with , a delimiting symbol indicating the beginning of a paragraph. The second character is , a tiger, pronounced as la^{33} , but chanted as $\text{a}^{33}\text{la}^{33}\text{m}\text{a}^{21}\text{x}\text{a}^{55}\text{be}^{55}\text{[hu}^{33}\text{d}\text{z}\text{u}^{21}]$, meaning ‘a very long time ago’ (He 2015: 193). In this case, a one-syllable character ‘tiger’ is short for a seven-syllable clause: $\text{a}^{33}\text{la}^{33}\text{m}\text{a}^{21}\text{x}\text{a}^{55}\text{be}^{55}\text{[hu}^{33}\text{d}\text{z}\text{u}^{21}]$.

Omissions of this kind are common in the main text of Naxi manuscripts, as keywords or phrases are used in shorthand in place of a longer and fuller expression.

Unlike the main texts, colophons were written largely in the order in which they were actually spoken. Most colophons are read from top to bottom and from left to right (as in Fig. 2). The style is more lively and more conversational.¹



Fig. 2 The colophon of manuscript Hs.Or.369 (Janert and Janert 1990–1994 (1990): 5.2/2086)

script	𑍏	𑍑	𑍒	𑍓	𑍔	𑍕	𑍖
IPA	mu ²¹	ɕua ⁵⁵	uə ³³	gə ²¹	to ⁵⁵	li ³³	gə ²¹

Fig. 2 is a colophon from Berlin Manuscript Collection Hs.Or.369. The first and the second of the seven characters are combinations. The remaining five were written on a separate line, each recording a unique syllable. If read from top to bottom and from left to right, the script fully recorded the sentence as it was spoken, with no omissions. The whole sentence reads ‘mu²¹ɕua⁵⁵uə³³gə²¹to⁵⁵li³³gə²¹’, meaning ‘(by) to⁵⁵li³³, of Xiashuhe 下束河’. ‘mu²¹ɕua⁵⁵uə³³’ is a place located in today’s Xiashuhe 下束河 Village, Wutai Office 五台辦事處, Dayan Town 大研鎮, Lijiang 麗江 (Deng 2013: 207).

A colophon is a page in a book that records the circumstances of its production. Naxi manuscripts are certainly not as standardized as published books. They were written with a personal style and as the particular circumstance demanded. Therefore, Deng Zhangying 鄧章應 and Zheng Changli 鄭長麗 (2013: 2) defined Dongba ‘postscrips’ (i.e. colophons) as ‘narrative or expressive writings other than the main text that often record the time and place of the scripture, names of persons and villages, information about the scribe such as his age, as well as the scribe’s good wishes.’ Based on the above definition, I define the term ‘colophon’ in this paper more broadly as all parts of the scripture outside the main text, regardless of their actual position within the manuscript, that contains any or all copying information such as time, place, and the scribe.

¹ The colophons covered in this paper, except occasional cases where due note is given, are all my interpretations, which are carried out in the following five parts. First, the glyphs are put into a table, in the sequence in which they are supposed to be read. Second, the second line in the table shows the IPA of each glyph. Third, since the actual pronunciation of a glyph may not be the same as the IPA, all colophon texts interpreted here are supplemented with their actual pronunciations in the main text of the paper. Fourth, the meanings of the colophons are explained word for word. Fifth, the meaning of the whole colophon is interpreted.



II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Rock (Rock and Janert 1965) and Li Lin-ts'an (1984) have made contributions to determining the time and region of Naxi manuscripts through their colophons, acquisition records, formats, and types of script (Dongba and Geba). According to Yu Suisheng 喻遂生 (Deng and Zheng 2013: I), though Dongba priests were the primary creators and carriers of Naxi culture, their life stories often went unrecorded and oral accounts are largely inaccurate. Colophons dating the text are first-hand historical materials, left by the scribes themselves, that deserve our due academic attention since they are important for determining the time of the text, the life experiences of the scribes, and Naxi cultural history in general. Through his interpretation and research of the colophons of Harvard Naxi manuscripts, combined with fieldwork, He Jiquan 和繼全 (2009: 127–132) revealed the basic information about Harvard manuscripts and how Rock collected Naxi manuscripts. He believes that the colophons record a large number of detailed and reliable historical facts related to the transcription of the text, and thus they are highly significant for studying Naxi cultural development, especially the social status and activities of modern Dongba priests and cultural exchanges between various regions. Their value as historical materials surpasses that of the main texts. Colophons often record the time of the text, place names, names of people, Dongba teacher-student relationships, proverbs, maxims, and local customs. They are valuable for studying the history of Naxi religion, society, and history. Deng Zhangying 鄧章應 and Zheng Changli 鄭長麗 (2013) studied the colophons in *The Complete Annotated Collection of Naxi Dongba Manuscripts* (hereinafter referred to as *The Complete Collection*) by region and found that postscripts have distinct regional features. These efforts constitute the basis for further interpretation and research of Naxi manuscript colophons. Thus, this article intends to interpret and study the colophons of the Berlin Dongba Manuscript Collection and to reveal the basic facts about the scribes and their times. In his *Na-khi Manuscripts*, Rock (Rock and Janert 1965) translated a few random colophons of manuscripts in the Berlin Collection. The rest of the colophons in the Collection remain largely unstudied, leaving much room for further academic effort.

III. RESEARCH MATERIAL

The subject of this research is the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Naxi Manuscript Collection (Berlin Collection). The connection between Germany and Naxi manuscripts began with Joseph Rock, with a complicated history of donation and acquisition across several institutions and over a long timescale. As *Na-khi Manuscripts* records, Joseph Rock donated 501 Naxi manuscripts to the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies in Rome. To help Rock with the publication of *A ¹Na-²khi-English Encyclopedic Dictionary*, director Giuseppe Tucci, himself a well-known Tibetologist, sold the 501 manuscripts to Germany (Rock and Janert 1965: XV). Since no one studied Naxi culture in Germany, the German buyers commissioned Rock to catalog and classify these manuscripts. Together with his assistant Klaus L. Janert, Rock published *Na-khi Manuscripts* (Parts I and II). Due to the lack of funds, he later sold his personal collection of about 1,000 Naxi manuscripts to the Harvard-Yenching Institute.² He photographed over 700 manuscripts and those photographic copies were at the time collected in the Staatsbibliothek in Marburg (Rock and Janert 1965: XV–

² The '1000' as used by Rock is only a rough estimate.



XVI). Now, they are stored in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Over time, and as a result of the war, the library changed its name and location. To avoid confusion, these manuscripts will be referred to as the Berlin Collection in this article.

The exact number of the manuscripts in the Berlin Collection remains disputed. Janert (Rock and Janert 1965: XV–XVI) believed there were 1,115, while Jackson's research shows there are 1,118 (including 913 photocopies) (Jackson 1979: 23).

The Berlin Collection falls into two parts: original manuscripts and photographic copies (prints of photographs taken of originals). Due to technological limitations, the photographic copies are all in black and white. Unlike the Harvard-Yenching Institute collection, the Berlin Collection was not fully digitalized and is not widely known or accessible. Therefore, the research material in this article comes mainly from the *Na-khi Manuscripts* (Parts I to V) and the *Nachitextedition* (hand-written copies).

Na-khi Manuscripts published photographic versions of the originals, in black and white, with differences in color from the originals. The manuscripts in *Nachitextedition* were hand-written by Janert's wife, Ilse Pliester or Ilse Janert, also in black and white. In his later years, Janert realized that Nazi manuscripts should be shared globally, so he and his wife published *Nachitextedition* in many volumes. First published in five volumes by Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH (Janert and Pliester 1982), followed by four more volumes by the same publisher (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989), and finally eight volumes by VGH Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH (Janert and Janert 1990–1994).

The *Nachitextedition* series were handwritten versions based on the manuscripts in the Berlin Collection. Ilse Janert was a painter, and she had hand-copied nearly one thousand Nazi manuscripts. A comparison with the photographic versions shows that her drawings were meticulously accurate both in detail and style. Fig. 3 is a part of her drawings of a Nazi manuscript now collected at Harvard-Yenching Institute (Fig. 4), which means that manuscript Hs.Or.483 in the Berlin Collection is a photographic copy of the original. Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 are very similar in layout and style, while Fig. 3 also points out the possible damages of the original. Since few can access the Berlin Collection, her copy turned out to be a great contribution to the preservation and study of Nazi manuscripts. Without Ilse Janert's accurate reproduction of the Berlin Collection, this study would not even be possible.

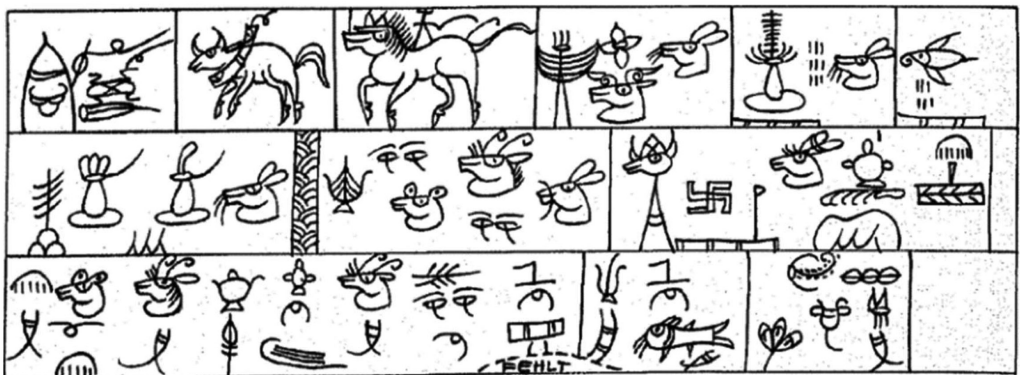


Fig. 3 Hs.Or.483 (R818) Copy in Berlin collection (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989 (1984): 2/142



Fig. 4 G4 (R818), original manuscript kept in the Harvard-Yenching Institute³

Besides the Berlin Collection, the research material of this study also includes the Harvard-Yenching Institute collection and *The Complete Annotated Collection of Naxi Dongba Manuscripts*. Part of the photographic copies in the Berlin Collection come from the Harvard-Yenching Institute manuscripts. Therefore, for some of the reproductions in the Berlin Collection, corresponding original manuscripts can be found in the Harvard-Yenching Institute collection. This article will use the Harvard-Yenching originals (such as shown in Fig. 4). The Institute now holds a total of 598 manuscripts, 510 of which were bought from Rock and 88 from Quentin Roosevelt⁴. The 598 original manuscripts, hereafter referred to as the Harvard Collection, have been digitized and published on the Institute's official website.

Part of the Berlin Collection is related to the Dongba scribes whose works are included in *The Complete Collection* (Lijiang Dongba Culture Research Institute 2000), a total of 897 volumes published by Lijiang Dongba Culture Research Institute (Lijiang Branch of Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences). To date, this is the most voluminous, translated Naxi manuscript publication project. The manuscripts in the Collection are reproduced in black-and-white photos.

IV. AN INTERPRETATION OF THE COLOPHONS IN THE BERLIN COLLECTION

Li Lin-ts'an (1984: 101) estimates that about one in fifty Naxi manuscripts has a colophon. According to my own research (Zhang 2016b), about 98 manuscripts in the Harvard Collection have colophons, taking up about 16% of the total. Unlike the main text, the colophon is not an essential element of a Naxi manuscript. This article selects and interprets some more representative colophons.

The colophon is often located at the very end of the manuscript, although it can sometimes be found at the beginning or in the middle. Colophons in the Berlin Collection appear mostly on the last page, occasionally on the cover page or the back of the cover page. Besides, colophons also differ from main texts in that their glyphs are well-arranged and orderly, in various scripts such as Dongba, Geba, Chinese characters, or a combination of several types of scripts. Contents of colophons often include time, location, the name of the scribe, as well as various greetings and

³ [https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:11444402\\$1i](https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:11444402$1i) (accessed December 18, 2022).

⁴ The Institute also holds 24 unpublished copies, prints from black-and-white photographs.



wishes. Through the interpretation of particular colophons in the Berlin Collection, the article will discuss how colophons are determined, the order of reading, the types of language and script used, and the content they record.

4.1 Colophons recording time

There are several ways in which time is recorded in colophons. Some use the traditional Chinese sexagenary cycle (of stems and branches), others use dynastic time, and still others use the age of the scribe.

(1)

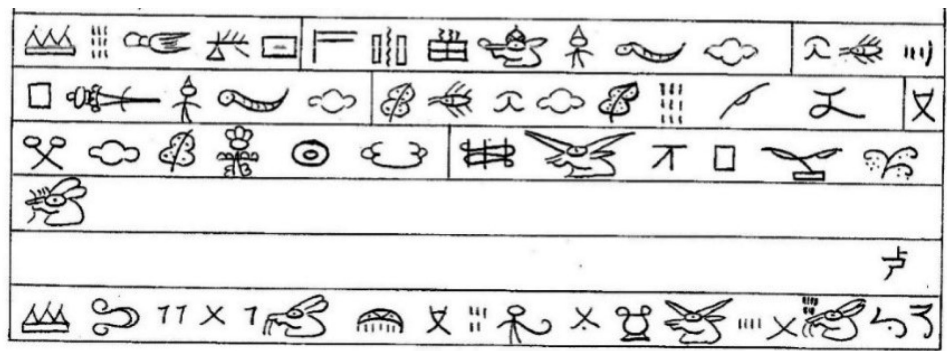


Fig. 5 Hs.Or.342 (Janert and Pliester 1982: 12/604)

1	script			11	×	7				
	IPA	mi ³³	kua ²¹	ŋi ³³	tsər ²¹	du ²¹	k ^h v ⁵⁵	pər ⁵⁵	me ⁵⁵	ua ³³

2	script		×				×						
	IPA	ŋə ⁵⁵	la ³³	zo ⁵⁵	y ²¹	lu ³³	tsər ²¹	ho ⁵⁵	k ^h v ⁵⁵	gv ³³	iə ⁵⁵	se ²¹	

Fig. 5 shows a page from the Berlin Collection, where the colophon and the main text are on the same page, with a blank line setting them apart. The colophon is written horizontally and should be read from left to right. Both Dongba and Geba scripts are used. The first sentence has nine Dongba glyphs. The second sentence is in Dongba too, except the last three Geba symbols. The first two symbols of the postscript, , record the sound of the Mandarin phrase 民國 (Republic of China). The first sentence reads ‘mi³³kua²¹ŋi³³tsər²¹du²¹kʰv⁵⁵pər⁵⁵me⁵⁵ua³³’, meaning ‘written in the 21st year of the Republic of China.’ The second sentence reads ‘ŋə⁵⁵la³³zo⁵⁵y-²¹lu³³tsər²¹ho⁵⁵kʰv⁵⁵gv³³iə⁵⁵se²¹’, meaning ‘at the age of 48, I gave (others) the script.’ The colophon uses two ways of marking time, the dynastic time and the scribe’s age. The script was written in the 21st year of the Republic of China, namely, the year 1931 when the 48-year-old Dongba gave someone the manuscript.



(2)

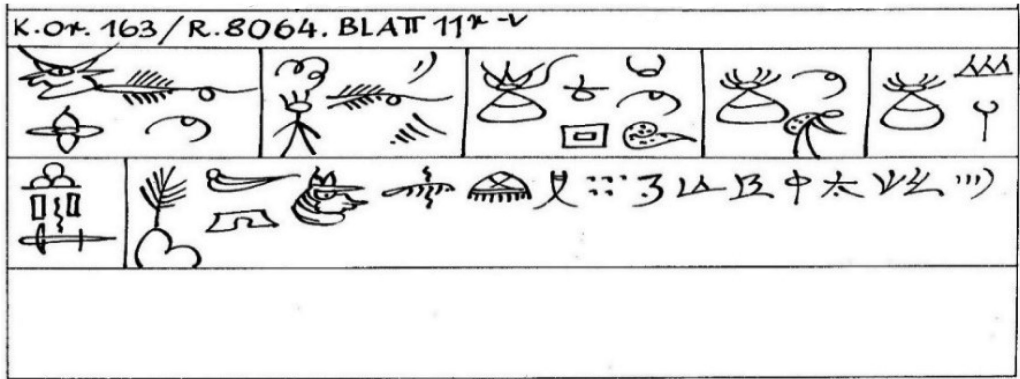


Fig. 6 K.Or.163 (Janert and Janert 1990–1994 (1993): 6.4/3618)

1	script									
	IPA	bu ³³	t ^h o ²¹	d̪ɛi ³³	gə ³³	zua ³³	k ^h v ⁵⁵	pər ⁵⁵	me ⁵⁵	ua ³³

2	script									
	IPA	lu ³³	ɣua ²¹	uə ³³	ly ³³	k ^h u ³³	gə ³³	ua ²¹	me ⁵⁵	

Fig. 6 shows a page from the Berlin Collection, with no markers such as a blank line or space, but the content shows that it is a colophon. The first part is in Dongba script and the second part is in Geba. The sexagenary cycle is used to mark time. The symbol , which looks like a pine tree on a slope, indicates ‘stems and branches’. Most Naxi manuscripts follow the order of top-to-bottom and left-to-right, but some Dongba scribes may break the rule, to make the writing look more beautiful. For the symbol , the bottom part  (bu³³, hill slope) should be read first, and then the upper part  (t^ho²¹, pine tree). Researchers can consider the symbol as a marker of a date in a colophon. The colophon reads ‘bu³³t^ho²¹dzi³³gə³³zua³³k^hv⁵⁵pər⁵⁵me⁵⁵ua³³, lu³³ɣua²¹uə³³ly³³k^hu³³gə³³ua²¹me⁵⁵’, meaning ‘written in the ‘stems and branches’ year of water and horse, the manuscript of uə³³ly³³k^hu³³, who lives on highland.’ This colophon records the time when the Dongba wrote the manuscript, as well as the Dongba’s residence. Though the ‘stems and branches’ marker may be used to indicate the time of writing, the year is not definite. Sixty years form a cycle and there are many years of ‘water and horse’. All the Naxi manuscripts that have been discovered were written after 1616 during the Qing 清 dynasty,⁵ and all the manuscripts in the Berlin Collection were dated before 1949. So, the year when this manuscript was written

⁵ Rock claimed to have manuscripts written during the reign of Emperor Wanli 萬曆 of the Ming Dynasty (1573–1620), but it has not been verified by colophons or provenance records.



could be 1642, 1702, 1762, 1882, and 1942, all years of ‘water and horse’. Therefore, without other information, the exact year of a manuscript cannot be determined only by its ‘stems and branches’ time marker.

4.2 Colophons recording place

In most cases, colophons record the place of writing in the Naxi language. Though Mandarin place names are now officially used, place names in the Naxi language are still used locally. For instance, the manuscript in Fig. 2 belongs to someone from ‘mu²¹ sua⁵⁵ uo³³’, and the scribe of Fig. 6 is from ‘uo³³ ly³³ k^hu³³’. Both are names of places not far from today’s Old Town of Lijiang. The following colophon also records a place.

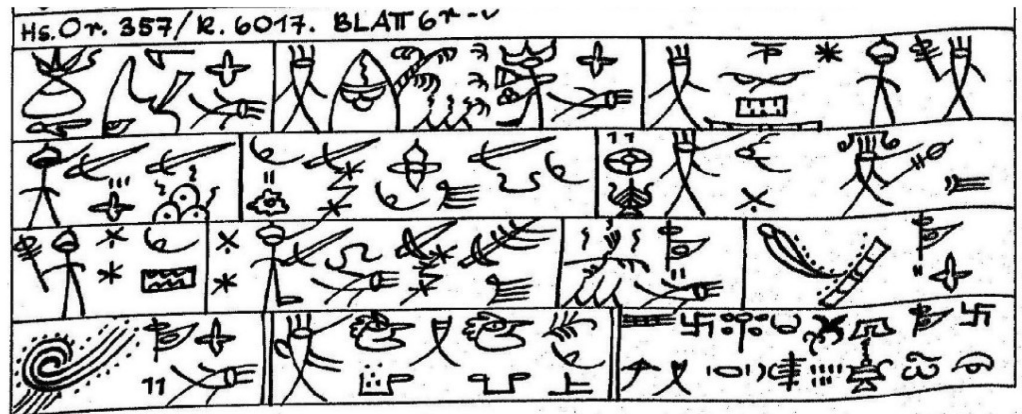


Fig. 7 Hs.Or357 (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989 (1984): 2/451)

1	script										
	IPA	dər ³³	u ³³	tsʰv ³³	kʰua ³³	dv ²⁴	gə ³³	tʰe ³³	u ³³	mu ³³	me ⁵⁵

2	script							
	IPA	py ²¹	bv ³³	zɿ ⁵⁵	ɣər ³³	ha ⁵⁵ i ³³	ha ⁵⁵	i ³³

The colophon in Fig. 7 has no marker and could be easily mistaken as part of the main text. It should be read line by line, the top line first, from left to right, then the bottom line, also from left to right, but with one exception. The first sentence reads ‘dər³³ u³³ tsʰv³³ kʰua³³ dv²⁴ gə³³ tʰe³³ u³³ mu³³ me⁵⁵’, with one symbol recording one syllable, meaning ‘the manuscript of the good place tsʰv³³ kʰua³³ dv²⁴’. The second sentence is more complicated. and should be read in reverse



order, as ‘py²¹bv³³’, meaning ‘Dongba priest’. The whole sentence reads: ‘py²¹bv³³zɿ⁵⁵ʂər³³ ha⁵⁵ i³³’, meaning ‘(wish) Dongba longevity’. What’s noteworthy here is that 𑄎 is a phonetic complement to the syllable of ‘ha⁵⁵’ in ‘ha⁵⁵ i³³’. Similarly, 𑄎 serves as a phonetic complement to the syllable of ‘i³³’ in ‘ha⁵⁵ i³³’. As such, both are silent. ‘ts^hv³³ k^hua³³ dv²⁴’ refers to today’s Wutai 五台 Dongyuan 東園 Village, Dayan 大研 Town, Old Town 古城 District, Lijiang 麗江 (Deng 2013: 200).

4.3 Colophons recording the name of the scribe

Some colophons have the names of the scribe. They are usually their religious names, in the common format of (to³³+X). Occasionally, Chinese names 漢名 are also used.

(1)

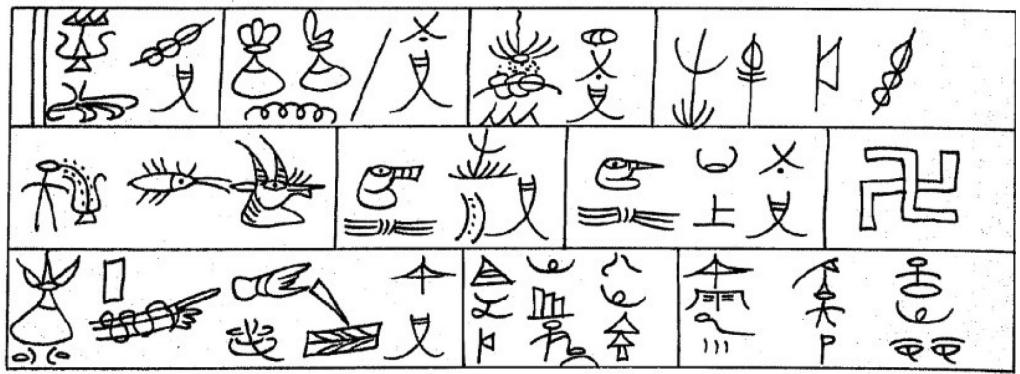


Fig. 8 Hs.Or.1447 (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989 (1984): 2/514)

script								
IPA	py ³³ bu ²¹	to ³³	k ^h æ ³³	la ²¹	nu ³³	pər ⁵⁵	mu ³³	me ⁵⁵

In Fig. 8 from the German Collection, the main text and the colophon are divided by a reverse Yungdrung *swastika* 卐, which indicates that the following text is not a continuation of what came before. The symbols in this colophon are all in Dongba script. The first part has nine symbols, to be read from top to bottom and from left to right. It should be noted that 𑄎, normally read as ‘mu³³’, meaning ‘sky’, is subject to a phonetic change in this sentence and should be read as ‘mu³³’. It serves as a modal particle. The whole sentence reads: ‘py³³ bu²¹to³³k^hæ³³nu³³pər⁵⁵mu³³me⁵⁵’, meaning ‘written by Dongba to³³ k^hæ³³’. ‘to³³ k^hæ³³’ is the scribe’s name.



(2)

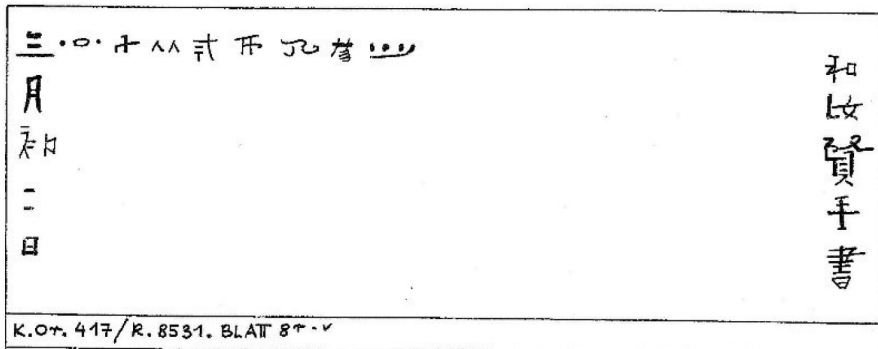


Fig. 9 K.Or 417 (Janert and Pliester 1982: 12/664)

script								
IPA	py ²¹	bv ³³	zɿ ⁵⁵	ʂər ³³	ha ⁵⁵	i ³³	ho ⁵⁵	me ³³

Fig. 9 shows the last page of K.Or.417, in two scripts, Chinese characters and Geba. The Chinese characters 三月初二日, 和汝賢手書 mean 'hand-written by He Ruxian 和汝賢, on the second day of March'. He Ruxian is the Dongba's Chinese name. The sentence in Dongba script at the top, 'py²¹ bv³³ zɿ⁵⁵ ʂə³³ ha⁵⁵ i³³ ho⁵⁵ me³³', means 'wish the Dongba longevity'. Besides, on the back of the page, there are three columns of Chinese characters, 民國廿四年造, 利見X, 主人手書. The third character in the second column cannot be recognized, and it might have been written wrongly. Fig. 9 and Fig. 10 show that the manuscript was written by Dongba He Ruxian 和汝賢, on the second day of March, in the 24th year of the Republic of China, namely, April 4th, 1935.

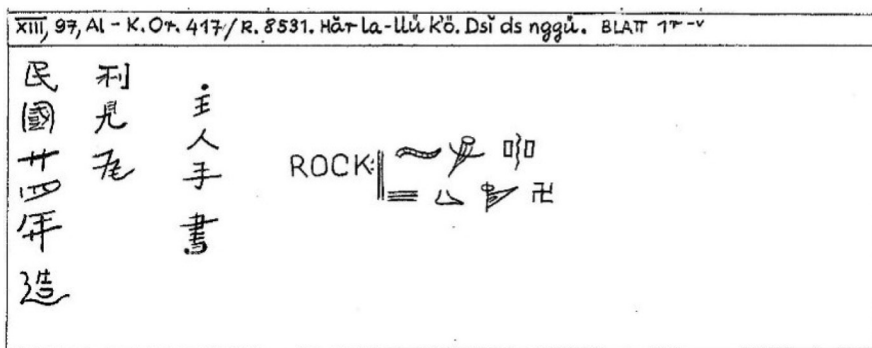


Fig. 10 K.Or 417 (Janert and Pliester 1982: 12/661)

Rock recorded and translated this manuscript. He noted, ‘On the pages before last is a colophon which states that the manuscript was written by the Dongba of the village of $kv^{55}na^{21}ua^{33}$. The village of $^2kv^{55}na^{21}ua^{33}$ is west of Lichiang Snow range by the eastern riverside of Yangtze’ (Rock and Janert 1965: 91). Rock lived in Longpan 龍蟠 for a while, where he met and studied with Dongba He Huating 和華亭 (Zhang 2016a: 91–103).

However, there is further information about the place on the last page of the manuscript.

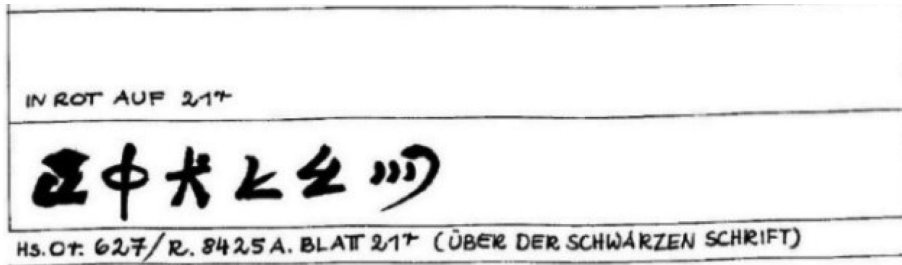


Fig. 12 Hs.Or.627 (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989 (1984): 4/1439)

script	𑄀	𑄁	𑄂	𑄃	𑄄	𑄅
IPA	ua^{33}	ly^{33}	$k^h u^{33}$	$gə^{33}$	ua^{21}	me^{55}

‘IN ROT AUF’ in Fig. 12 is a note made by Mrs. Janert, to indicate the original manuscript is in red. The colophon on this page is different from the one on the previous page. It has six Geba glyphs, in bold, thick, forceful strokes in red, obviously different from previous writings. Each symbol corresponds to one syllable, to be read from left to right. The sentence reads: ‘ $ua^{33} ly^{33} k^h u^{33} gə^{33} ua^{21} me^{55}$ ’, meaning ‘(the manuscript) of $ua^{33} ly^{33} k^h u^{33}$ ’. ‘ $ua^{33} ly^{33} k^h u^{33}$ ’ is a place name in Naxi language, namely, today’s Qingyun 慶雲 Village, Old Town District 古城區, Lijiang 麗江 Municipality. That there are two colophons in one manuscript shows a possible change of the owner. The first colophon is similar to the main text in the style of writing, while the second colophon shows a notable difference. Therefore, the manuscript might have been given away as a gift or sold.

(2) Different translated versions

Some colophons have been translated and interpreted more than once, by different academics who either hadn’t noticed each other’s work or had different interpretations of the same text. The following colophon (Fig. 13) has been interpreted by three different scholars.

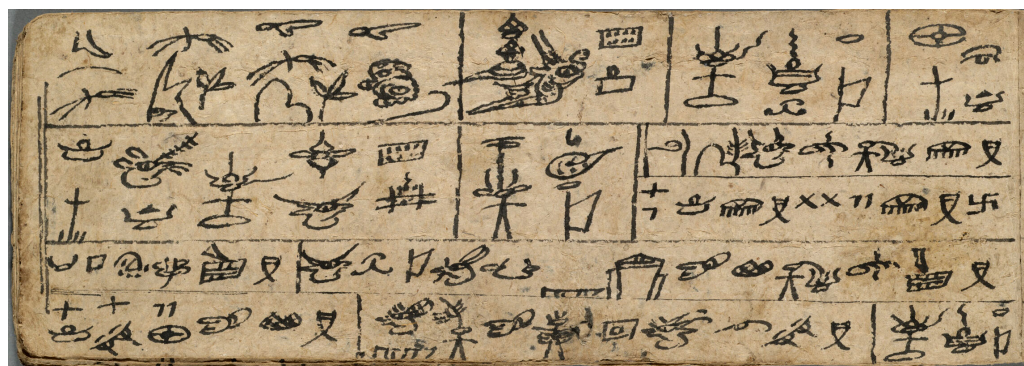


Fig. 13 B24 colophon in Harvard-Yenching Institute⁶

He Jiquan's 和繼全 (2009) translation is as follows: 'written on the 22nd of November, in the year of Wood and Ox, by Dong Zhi 東知, of Changshui 長水. Written in the year when Yang Yuke 楊玉科 seized Heqing 鶴慶'. According to *Naxi Manuscripts Collected by Harvard-Yenching Institute* (2012: 467), the colophon is translated thus: 'Heavenly Stem, wood, written on 22nd of November, lunar year of Ox, by Dongzhi 東知, of Enke 恩科. Written in the year when Yuyikong 餘依空 Bai 白 ethnic area was taken. It was taken on the second day of November of the lunar year. Countless people died in the world. Wish the Dongba longevity.' A third translation was given by Li Xiaoliang 李曉亮 (2014: 265): 'Written on 22nd of November, the year of Ox, the sexagenary cycle. By Dongzhi 東知, of Changshui 長水. Written in the year when Yang Yuke 楊玉科 seized Heqing 鶴慶, on the 2nd of November. Countless people died in the world. May the priest have a long life.'

The key to the interpretation of the colophon lies in the two place names and one personal name. 𐄌𐄌 (ur³³k^ho³³) is a place name in the Naxi language, namely, today's Changshui 長水 Village, Huangshan Town 黃山, Old Town District 古城區, Lijiang 麗江 Municipality (Zhang 2016b: 256). 𐄌𐄌 is read as 'y²¹ i³³k^hu³³'. He Jiquan 和繼全 quoted *Annals of Naxi Autonomous County of Lijiang* (Li 2001: 672), which states: 'In August of the fourth year of Emperor Tongzhi's 同治 reign (1865), Yang Yuke 楊玉科 and Zhang Run 張潤 led their troops into Zhongdian 中甸 County (...) Later, they led around 500 men and marched through Shigu 石鼓 to Heqing 鶴慶 Town. They took Heqing 鶴慶, but later lost it'. y²¹ i³³k^hu³³ is the phonetic rendition of Yang Yuke 楊玉科, as pronounced in Mandarin. It is the name of a person. He conquered the city of Heqing 鶴慶 in 1865, when the manuscript was written. Also, 1865 was a year of Wood and Ox, consistent with the record in the manuscript. 𐄌𐄌 (le⁵⁵bv³³dy²¹) is a place name literally meaning 'the place of the Bai 白 ethnicity'. It is today's Heqing 鶴慶 County, Bai 白 Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan 雲南 Province, where Yang Yuke 楊玉科 used to wage war. In comparison, He Jiquan's 和繼全 translation is more convincing as he resolved the three key names more satisfactorily and his determination of the time and place of the manuscript is more reliable. The translation in *Naxi Manuscripts collected by Harvard-Yenching Institute* adopts literal translation or transliteration, without accurate information about the three proper names. That's why its conclusion is vastly different from that of He.

⁶ <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:2176119> (accessed Dec.18,2022)



(3) Errors in the manuscript

Occasional errors may have occurred when the Dongba was writing the manuscript, as in the following colophon (Fig. 14), where the date is incorrect.

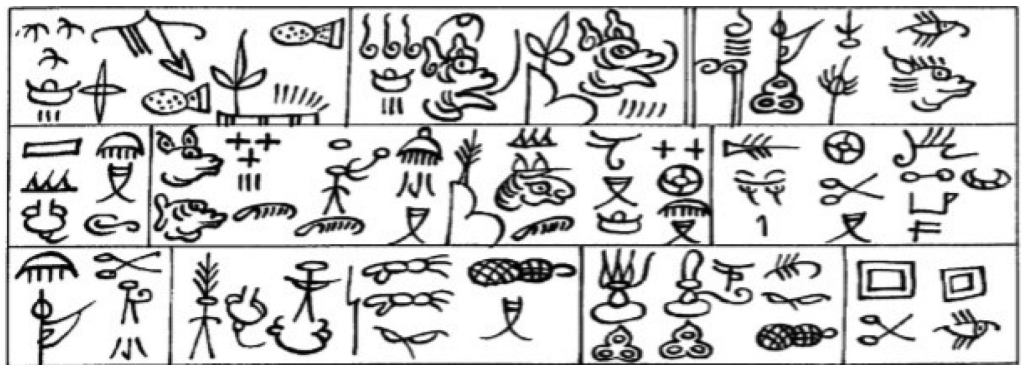


Fig. 14 K.Or.240 (Janert and Pliester 1982–1989 (1984): 1/413)

1	script												
	IPA	tʰe³³	u³³	tɕʰɿ³³	dze²¹	lu⁵⁵	bu³³	to²¹	mi⁵⁵	nu⁵⁵	pər⁵⁵	me⁵⁵	ua³³
2	script												
	IPA	dʒi³	y²¹	sɿ²¹tsər²¹	sɿ²¹	kʰv⁵⁵	gv³³	tʰu³³	kʰv⁵⁵	pər⁵⁵	nu³³	me⁵⁵	
3	script												
	IPA	bu³³	tʰo²¹	mi⁵⁵	zua³³	kʰv⁵⁵	ɕæ³³	he⁵⁵	me⁵⁵	ɲi³³tsər²¹	ɲi³³	pər⁵⁵	me⁵⁵
4	script												
	IPA	mæ⁵⁵	ɲə³³	du⁵⁵	ɲi³³								
5	script												
	IPA	tɕi²¹	me³³	py²¹	bv³³	so⁵⁵	dʒɿ²¹	dʒy²¹					



6	script					
	IPA	ŋə ⁵⁵	nu ²¹	pər ⁵⁵	t ^h e ³³	tei ⁵⁵

7	script									
	IPA	sɿ ²¹	nu ²¹	lv ³³	bv ³³	tʂ ^h ər ⁵⁵	ku ³³	ku ²¹	iə ⁵⁵	ho ⁵⁵

8	script										
	IPA	py ²¹	u ³³	p ^h ər ²¹	u ³³	pu ⁵⁵	iə ⁵⁵	ho ⁵⁵	ta ⁵⁵	ɕi ²¹	ta ⁵⁵

In Fig. 14, the colophon follows the main text immediately, with only the symbol as a ‘beginning’ marker, indicating the beginning of a new paragraph. The colophon is read from top to bottom and from left to right, with only three exceptions. The first sentence, all in Dongba script, with each symbol recording one syllable, is read as t^he³³u³³tʂ^hɿ³³dze²¹lu⁵⁵bu³³to²¹mi⁵⁵nu⁵⁵pər⁵⁵me⁵⁵ua³³, meaning the manuscript was written by priest ‘to²¹mi⁵⁵’. The second sentence is in Dongba script too, except for one Geba symbol, (small). Normally it is read ‘nv’, but here there is a phonetic variation, and should be read as ‘nu³³’. The sentence reads: ‘dʒi³³zu³³sɿ²¹t^hər²¹sɿ²¹k^hv⁵⁵gv³³t^hu³³k^hv⁵⁵pər⁵⁵nu³³me⁵⁵’, meaning ‘written in the year when I was 33’. In the third sentence, and should be switched and read as ‘he⁵⁵me³³’, indicating the month. The sentence reads: ‘bu³³t^ho²¹mi⁵⁵zua³³k^hv⁵⁵sæ³³he⁵⁵me³³ɿ³³tər²¹ɿ³³pər⁵⁵me⁵⁵’, meaning ‘written on the 22nd of July, in the year of the fire horse, in the sexagenary cycle’. The fourth sentence is in Dongba script, reads ‘mæ⁵⁵ŋə³³du⁵⁵ɿ³³’, and means ‘another day later’. In the fifth sentence, and should be switched when read. The whole sentence reads: ‘tei⁵⁵me³³py²¹bv³³so⁵⁵dʒɿ²¹dʒy²¹’, meaning ‘if young priests come to study’. The sixth sentence reads: ‘ŋə⁵⁵nu³³pər⁵⁵t^he³³tei³³se²¹’, meaning ‘I wrote (the manuscript) and put it (here)’. The interpretation of the sentence is complicated because and must be switched in the actual recitation of the text, and because se²¹ at the end of the sentence, which indicates the perfect tense, is omitted. The seventh sentence reads: ‘sɿ²¹nu²¹lu⁵⁵bv³³tʂ^hər⁵⁵ku³³ku²¹iə⁵⁵ho⁵⁵me⁵⁵’, meaning ‘may (the manuscript) be passed on by our offspring to future generations’. The last sentence reads: ‘py²¹u³³p^hər²¹u³³pu⁵⁵iə⁵⁵ho⁵⁵, ta⁵⁵tei²¹ta⁵⁵li⁵⁵’, meaning ‘May there be capable priests and shrewd diviners, the best auspices.’ ‘ta⁵⁵tei²¹ta⁵⁵li⁵⁵’ is a phonetic rendition of the Chinese phrase ‘大吉大利 (dà jí dà lì)’.

According to the colophon, the manuscript was written by Dongba (to²¹mi⁵⁵). A similar colophon can be found in *The Complete Collection*, as shown in Fig. 15.



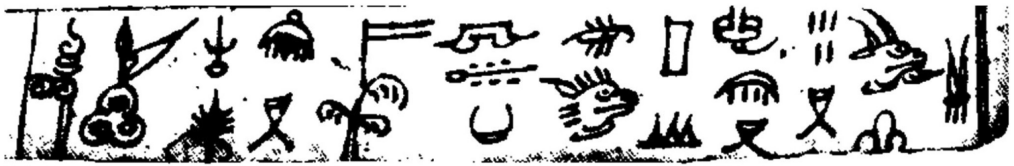


Fig. 15 Colophon in *The Complete Collection* (Lijiang Dongba Culture Research Institute 2000: 46–47)

The colophon means ‘the manuscript was written by Dongba to²¹mi⁵⁵, in the place of tɕ^hv³³k^ho³³, on the plateau, when he was tending sheep.’

In *The Complete Collection*, the manuscript ‘Honoring Ghosts Cloud, Wind, Dv²¹and Tse²¹, Setting the holy altar, and Spreading the holy grains’ (Vol. 79.) has a colophon. Its sentence structure is similar to those in the Berlin Collection, and the religious name of the Dongba is also ‘to²¹mi⁵⁵’. The Chinese name of priest is He Changming 和長命. He was the Grand Dongba of Mingyin 鳴音 Town. He was born in 1910 (Deng and Zheng 2013:32). K.Or.240 was written when he was 33 years old. Therefore, it was written in the year 1942,⁷ which is a *renwu* year 壬午年, in other words, a year of the water horse 水馬年. He Changming’s 和長命 ‘year of the fire horse 火馬年’ was a mistake.

VI. CONCLUSION

Unlike the main text, the colophons of Naxi manuscripts often record the language as it was spoken; they are read from top to bottom and from left to right, and follow a set format both in form and in content. Through the interpretation of particular manuscripts in the Berlin Collections, this article finds that colophons often have more freedom in the choice of script, which may be Dongba, Geba, Chinese characters, or any random combination of them. They record either the scribe’s religious name or Chinese name. There is also more freedom in the method of noting the date. They may use the sexagenary cycle, the scribe’s age, the Chinese dynastic date, or some of these combined. While colophons often accurately record the actual use of language, there are phonetic omissions and complements. But in comparison to the main text, colophons follow a more rigid format in syntax and record the use of language more fully.

Though the interpretation of colophons can be easier than that of the main text (Poupard 2021: 111–112), there are still considerable difficulties to be overcome by academics. First, Naxi manuscripts only have dividing symbols that act as large section markers, thus it can be difficult to determine the internal sentence structure within a clause. Second, there are often omissions and complements in sentences. Researchers need to locate them, re-insert what has been omitted, or take out what is complementary, before properly understanding the sentence. Third, in some colophons, the Dongba might violate the normal reading order, which requires interpreters to switch the order of certain glyphs. Fourth, even if the date of production and the name of the scribe can be interpreted, it could still be difficult to determine the actual time of writing, without other reliable information. Fifth, some colophons have conflicting information and errors or are subject to multiple interpretations. Therefore, proper interpretation of colophons necessitates

⁷ The Naxi people use the traditional Chinese age reckoning, which generally adds one year to their real age.

familiarity with the Naxi language, knowledge of the fixed diction and syntax of colophons, and accessibility to other related documents and materials.

The colophons in the Berlin Collection are similar in style to those in other collections. The interpretation of more colophons can help us gain a better understanding of the Naxi manuscripts in the Berlin Collection. Judging from the colophons interpreted above, the Naxi manuscripts were mainly produced in the Lijiangba 麗江壩 Area, not far from Lijiang Old Town 麗江古城區, including Mingyin Town 鳴音鄉. They were mostly written quite recently, at the beginning of the 20th century. The interpretation of these colophons not only helps us determine the time and place of the manuscript's production but also allows us a glimpse into the mental state of the scribe. In addition to an academic endeavor, interpreting the colophons can also become a dialogue, across time and space, with the wise Dongbas of the past.

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