

# *She* Association Manuscripts from Dunhuang and the Study of Medieval *She* Association\*

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**Abstract:** This study reviews the contents, structure and classification of nearly half a thousand of Dunhuang manuscripts about grassroots associations/societies (*she* 社 or *yi* 邑) in Dunhuang. It highlights the importance and value that these obscure manuscripts have for deepening and widening our understanding of an important aspect of pre-modern society in the Dunhuang region and also in the rest of China. The second part of this study is devoted to a thorough review of some major scholarly progresses on this genre of manuscripts in the course of nearly seven decades spanning from 1938 to 2006.

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Among the over 60,000 ancient documents in the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, *she* 社 association documents only make up a small portion of it. According to our incomplete estimate, these types of documents only number over 480. However, these over 400 documents have very important value for historians.

The *she* is a type of grass root level social organization of ancient China. It has a long history that spanned from pre-Qin times to the Ming and Qing, and has a rather important function in social livelihood. The characteristics, styles, and the activities of a *she*, the class relationship that it reflected, as well as its function in social life constantly changed with the development of society.<sup>1</sup> A further study of this type of functionally important social organization in ancient China would doubtlessly help us gain a complete understanding of ancient society. However, the extant documents pertaining to these matters are relatively few, and they are also very fragmented; this makes it hard for people to conduct in-depth research in regard to this topic. This is especially the case with the functionally important private *she* which existed in medieval times; there are even less historical materials that were kept in regard to it. Fortunately, there are several hundred *she* association documents among the Dunhuang documents and the vast majority of them are documents concerning the private *she*. These content-rich primary sources made it possible for academics to dig deep and describe in detail the situation of the *she* associations, especially the private *she* during the Tang, Five Dynasties, and the early Song periods. Therefore, we have all the reasons to suppose that the discovery of the Dunhuang documents allows

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<sup>1</sup> For the general situation of the ancient Chinese *she* association, one may refer to Ning, 'Shu "Sheyi"'.

the study of ancient *she* associations in China to enter into a new stage.

Below, I will summarize the content of the documents concerning *she* associations in the Dunhuang manuscript as well as its values.

### 1. The Content of the *She* Association Documents in the Dunhuang Manuscript and Their Values

Up to now, we have collected over 480 *she* association documents, including over sixty versions which are copies or have identical content.

These over 480 *she* association documents can be divided into documents in use and documents not in use from their characteristics. The later includes literary models (*wenyang* 文樣), drafts (*gao* 稿), and hand copies (*chao* 抄). Literary models are the blueprints for the *she* association documents. Even though it was not exactly the same as the documents in use, it included the basic content of these types of documents so it also has important value in the study of *she* associations. Drafts are draft versions of documents in use and are closest to the documents in use. Its value should be the same as the documents in use. The situation of the hand copies is fairly complicated. Some were copied by school children or other people based on the documents in use. Some were written at a whim at the time by different types of people (including school children). In the former case, writings were copied for the purpose of practicing how to write documents. Therefore, it was mostly the main portion of a document that was copied, but the copy often neglected the names of the people and some contents of the document in use that the scribe considered to not be important. In the latter case, usually only one or two lines were written. In regard to the copying quality alone, 'hand copies' often contained lots of mistakes. However, 'hand copies' are written based on documents in use; even those 'hand copies' which were written on a whim and not necessarily based on any particular document in use is still a reflection of the society. In regard to our studies of contemporary societies, these documents obviously have values as references.

In the ‘*she* documents’, there is a type of ‘*she* liturgies’ (*she zhaiwen* 社齋文) which can be viewed as documents in use, but also possess the characteristics of a literary model. We will call it ‘*she* liturgy document’ (*she zhaiwen wenben* 社齋文文本). These types of *she* liturgy documents were written based on the *she* liturgy literary model. Buddhist monks could take these to a particular meeting held by a *she* association for recitation. From considering just this point, it should be said that these documents have the characteristics of a document in use. However, these types of *she* liturgy documents were often not written for any particular gathering of any particular *she* association. When the document mentioned the host of the gathering, it did not clearly record the name of the particular *she* association in question, only mentioning phrases like ‘*she* association’ (社邑), ‘a certain gentleman of the *she*’ (社子某公), or ‘*yi* members of the three long months (*zheng* 正, fifth and ninth months)’ (*sanzhang yiyi* 三長邑義). This shows that this document could be read at the liturgical meeting of a certain type of *she* association or in all of them. A monk could bring it to *She* A to be read or he could bring it to the gathering set by *She* B to be read. Through this, it can be seen that this document also possesses some characteristics of a literary model.

If we divide the contents, the *she* association documents can also be divided into five categories: ‘*she* regulations’ (*shetiao* 社條), ‘*she* association circulars’ (*shesi zhuanzhan* 社司轉帖), ‘*she* records’ (*sheli* 社曆), ‘association liturgies’ (*shewen* 社文), and ‘*she* reports’ (*she-zhuan* 社狀) and ‘*she* notes’ (*shedie* 社牒).

### 1.1. *She* Regulations

*She* regulations are also called ‘*she'an*’ 社案 (*she* record), ‘*shege*’ 社格 (*she* cases), ‘*tiao*’ 條 (regulation), ‘*tiaojian*’ 條件 (regulation document), ‘*tiaoliu*’ 條流 (specific rule), ‘*yue*’ 約 (contract), or ‘*ping*’ 憑 (receipt). It is the contract concerning regulations of the organization and activities of a *she* association.

We have collected twenty-seven *she* regulation documents among the Dunhuang manuscripts. There is one other document which is probably the ending portion of a *she* regulation. Among these twenty-eight documents, there are three copied versions, fourteen docu-

ments in use, three ‘hand copied’ (*chao* 抄) documents, one ‘draft’ (*gao* 稿) document, six ‘literary model’ (*wenyang* 文樣) documents, and one ‘meeting record’ (*jiehui ji* 結會記) written by a school boy imitating the adult’s association customs. From examining these *she* regulations, in the initial phase of the establishment of Dunhuang private *she* under the later Tang period, the Five Dynasties, and the early Song, legal articles that were used in a particular *she* were usually established based on the *she* regulation literary model. For example, the main content of the document numbered S.527 (i.e., ‘Xiande liunian zhengyue sanri nüren she shetiao’ 顯德六年正月三日女人社社條 [*She* regulation of the women’s *she* on the third day of the first month of the sixth year of the Xiande 顯德 era (959)]) and the verso of the literary model document titled S.6537 (i.e. ‘Shangzu shetiao’ 上祖社條 [*She* regulations of ancestors]) are basically identical; it is clear that the former is written based on the later literary model. Of course, the *she* regulations in use are not completely copied from the *she* regulation literary models. It usually copies a certain portion of a particular *she* regulation literary model depending on the activities of that *she* and makes some changes based on the situation. Therefore, the *she* regulation in use are often simpler than the *she* regulation literary model. The *she* regulation literary models does not have a list of the members of a *she* association; the *she* regulation in use usually gives a list of the members in the said *she* on the back of the main text of the *she* regulation (some are in the front). Some documents even have personal signatures under the names of the said persons in the *she*.

The details of the *she* regulations established by each *she* are slightly different. Usually, the first portion is a legal summary, describing the purpose of forming the association, the reasons for establishing the regulations, and then it establishes specific terms of the articles on the organization, the content of the activities, and the penalties.

Some *she* refers to the *she* regulations it made since its establishment as the ‘great regulation’ (*datiao* 大條), ‘standard regulation’ (*zhengtiao* 正條) or ‘ancestral regulation’ (*zutiao* 祖條). The great regulation or the ancestral regulation are normally kept sealed. Unless there is a major matter which the people of the *she* have difficulty deciding on, it cannot be casually opened. The document S.8160 (i.e., ‘Qinqing she shetiao’ 親情社社條 [*She* regulation concerning

Affection *She*]) is an example of a *she* regulation that was sealed up. Before opening up, this regulation document is rolled up into a scroll and glued. On the location of the seal, the name of the *she* regulation, the names of the ones who made the ‘seal’, the recorder Wang Qingzhu 王慶住 and other *she* association leaders were written.

Since the great regulation, or the ancestral regulation cannot be opened normally, and the *she* association still needs to follow regulations in activities that ‘does not concern opening the great regulation’, separate regulations or separate ordinances were established outside of the great or ancestral regulations. The document S.6005 (i.e., ‘Dunhuang moushe pian’an’ 敦煌某社偏案 [Separate law of a particular *she* in Dunhuang]) is an example of this. This regulation states:

Since the beginning when discussions were made in the *she*, clear regulations were already established, then sealed and stamped. At the present, if anyone entered the *she* later, but did not enter the registration, that person will be recorded together in the list of the three *tuo*. If each issue requires opening up previous regulations, it would not be convenient. If the record is not copied, I am afraid that there will be things left out, resulting in differences that are hard to work around. We then discuss this with the masses and create these separate ordinances. 伏以社內先初合義之時, 已立明條, 封印訖. 今緣或有後入社者, 又未入名, 兼錄三駄名目. 若件件開先條流, 實則不便. 若不抄錄者, 伏恐陋 (=漏) 失, 互相泥寔. 遂眾商量, 勒此偏案.

The remainder rules are listed together in the great regulation. If there are those who suddenly start trouble among the people of the *she* and the masses cannot make a decision, they will need to open up the sealed regulations. If the matter is small and not at the point of opening the regulations, this contract is established for that purpose. 餘有格律, 並在大條內. 若社人忽有無端是非行事者, 眾斷不得, 即須開條. 若小段事, 不在開條之限, 故立此約.

This *she* association would refer to the *she* ‘contract’ (*yue* 約) that were added outside of the great regulation as ‘separate ordinances’ (*pian’an* 偏案). ‘Separate ordinances’ can also be called ‘separate regulation’ (*piantiao* 偏條). An example is within the document

Дх.11038 ‘Shetiao chao’ 社條抄 [*She* regulation copy] where there is the passage ‘there is the grinding format, recorded in the separate ordinances’ (更有碎磨格式, 偏條所錄也). Even though we are still not certain what the meaning of this *suimo* 碎磨 (lit. ‘grinding’) is, we know that regulations concerning ‘grinding’ were recorded in the ‘separate regulations’ (*piantiao* 偏條). The ‘separate ordinances’ (*pan’an* 偏案) and ‘separate regulations’ should be named in relationship to the ‘main regulations’ (*zhengtiao* 正條).

There are also *she* where ‘separate regulations’ were established before the establishment of the ‘great (main) regulation’. An example is P.3989, which states,

The fifteenth day of the fifth month of the third year of Jingfu era, which is a *jiayin* 甲寅 year (894).<sup>2</sup> The boy descendants of the *yi* clan; even though they must choose worthy people, people get together with those who are similar when making friends, pursuing either bad or good luck. There is no standard regulation for this. Now we establish separate regulations. 景福三年甲寅歲五月十五日, 敦煌義族後代兒郎, 雖 (須) 擇良賢, 人以類聚, 結交朋友, 追凶逐吉. 未及政 (正) 條, 今且執 (制) 編 (偏) 條.

Here the ‘standard regulation’ (*zhengtiao* 政 [正] 條) is probably what we previously described as the ‘great regulation’ (*datiao* 大條) or ‘ancestral regulation’ (*zutiao* 祖條). However, we did not realize this when we sorted out this document in the past. Neither did we realize that there was a division between the standard regulation and the separate regulations within the *she* regulations. Therefore, we also could not find the fact that in the script recorded above, the character ‘*zheng*’ 政 should be a phonetic loan character for ‘*zheng*’ 正, and ‘*zhibian*’ 執編 should be a loan character for ‘*zhibian*’ 制偏. As a result, in the *Dunhuang sheyi wenshu jijiao* 敦煌社邑文書輯校 [Com-

<sup>2</sup> The Jingfu era didn’t have a third year. It shall be an error for the first year of the following era (Qianning 乾寧), which was indeed a *jiayin* year. If so, the so-called Jingfu 3.5.15 turned out to be Qianning 1.5.15, which translates into June 21, 894.

pilation of Dunhuang *She* Association Documents], we mistakenly labeled it ‘Jingfu sannian wuyue shiwuri Dunhuang moushe shetiao’ 景福三年五月十五日敦煌某社社條 [The *she* regulation from a certain *she* in Dunhuang on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the third year of Jingfu era].<sup>3</sup> Considering what we know now, this document’s correct title should be ‘Jingfu sannian wuyue shiwuri Dunhuang moushe piantiao’ 景福三年五月十五日敦煌某社偏條 [The separate regulation from a certain *she* in Dunhuang on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the third year of the Jingfu era].

There are also some *she* associations which established *she* regulations anew after some time. This is usually during times when war caused a halt in the activities of a *she* association, when there was a major upheaval (people dying, people dispersing, new people entering the *she*, or people leaving the *she*), or through the passing of time, when some of the original *she* regulations were no longer sufficient, and cannot adapt to the reality of the contemporary situation. The document P.3544 (i.e., ‘Dazhong jiunian shezhang Wang Wu deng zaili tiaojian’ 大中九年社長王武等再立條件 [Newly established regulation documents by the *she* president, Wang Wu and others in the ninth year of the Dazhong era (855)]) and S.527 (i.e., ‘Xiande liunian zhengyue sanri Nüren she zaili tiaojian’ 顯德六年正月三日女人社再立條件 [The newly established regulation documents of the women’s *she* on the third day of the first month of the sixth year of the Xiande era (960)]) are examples of the situation described above—S.2041 (‘Dazhong nianjian Rufeng fang Xixiang she she-tiao’ 大中年間儒風坊西巷社社條 [*She* regulation of the Xixiang *she* of the Rufeng living quarter during the Dazhong era (847–860)]) recorded the situation from the Tibetan administration of Dunhuang to the early period of the Guiyi jun 歸義軍 (Guiyi Army) where regulations were changed or added several times since the *she* was first established (Figure 1).

<sup>3</sup> Ning & Hao, colle. & colla., *Dunhuang sheyi wenshu jijiao*.

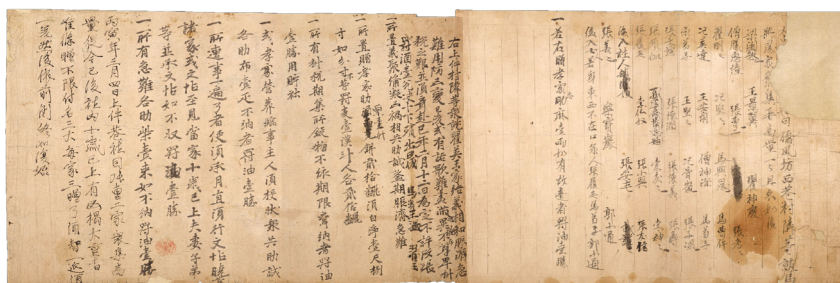


FIG. 1 S.2041 ‘Dazhong nianjian Rufeng fang Xixiang she shetiao’ 大中年間儒風坊西巷社社條; courtesy of International Dunhuang Project (idp.bl.uk).

Other than that, during activities, some of the *she* associations added regulations outside of the *she* regulations based on practical needs in order to address the insufficiency of the original *she* regulations. An example is the one on the verso of the document S.2472 (i.e., ‘Xinsi nian shiyue nianbari Rong zhihuishi Zangxiang *she* nazeng li’ 辛巳年十月廿八日榮指揮使葬巷社納贈曆 [Report of offerings by Commander Rong at the Zangxiang *she* on the twenty-eighth day of the tenth month of the *xinsi* year]), where there was a regulation pertaining to offerings after discussion by the *she* members. There were also additional regulations concerning funerals written on the back of the abovementioned document S.8160 (i.e., ‘Qinqing *she* shetiao’). Recorded on the back of the document S.1475 (i.e., ‘Shen nian wuyue sheren Wang Nuzi deng zhuang’ 申年五月社人王奴子等狀 [Report of the *she* member Wang Nuzi and others on the fifth month of the *Shen* year]) is the ‘regulation document’ related to *nuanjiao* 餽腳 (banquet treatment) that was established by the *she* members when they attended gatherings. All these indicate that the *she* regulations were very important for the *she* association. They have important value in the study of the composition, organization, and activities of *she* associations.

## 1.2. *She* Association Circulars

The *she* association circular is the notification paper for the people of the *she* to attend activities. We have collected a total of 265 of these kinds of documents, of which thirty documents are either copies or have the same content, so there are really 235 documents. Most of these 235 documents are hand copied documents, a good amount of which have not finished copying so the documents in use only number over ninety.

The *she* association circular usually mentions the reasons for gathering, things people should bring to the gathering, and the time and the location of the gathering. It mentions the punishments for those who were late, those who did not arrive, as well as those who were late in passing on information. It also mentions the time the notes were given out and the position and names of the people who made the notes. Most of *she* association circulars in use list the names of those who were informed on the back of the notes (some are listed in front of the notes). After receiving the notes, those who were informed wrote the character ‘understood’ (*zhi* 知) (the minority of the cases), or add a dot in ink on the right side of their names (the majority of the cases) as a symbol showing that they now know about it and then passed it on to the next person. Like this, it was passed down in turn until the last person, who will make another ‘pass’ and return it to the hands of the one who first passed out the note. Some of the *she* association circulars even have the verification symbol of the *she* association listed alongside the names of the *she* members. An example is S.5632 (i.e., ‘Dingmao nian eryue bari Zhang Han’er muwang zhuan tie’ 丁卯年二月八日張慙兒母亡轉帖 [Circular for the death of the mother of Zhang Han’er on the eighth day of the second month of the *dingmao* year]) where there is a hook (*gou* 勾) stroke at the upper right corner of the names of some of the people of the *she*, and a circle and a black dot on the right side of that. We suspect that the black dot was marked by the person of the *she* personally to symbolize himself. The circle and the hook stroke were added by the *she* office to show whether the person arrived and presented his offerings (see Figure 2).

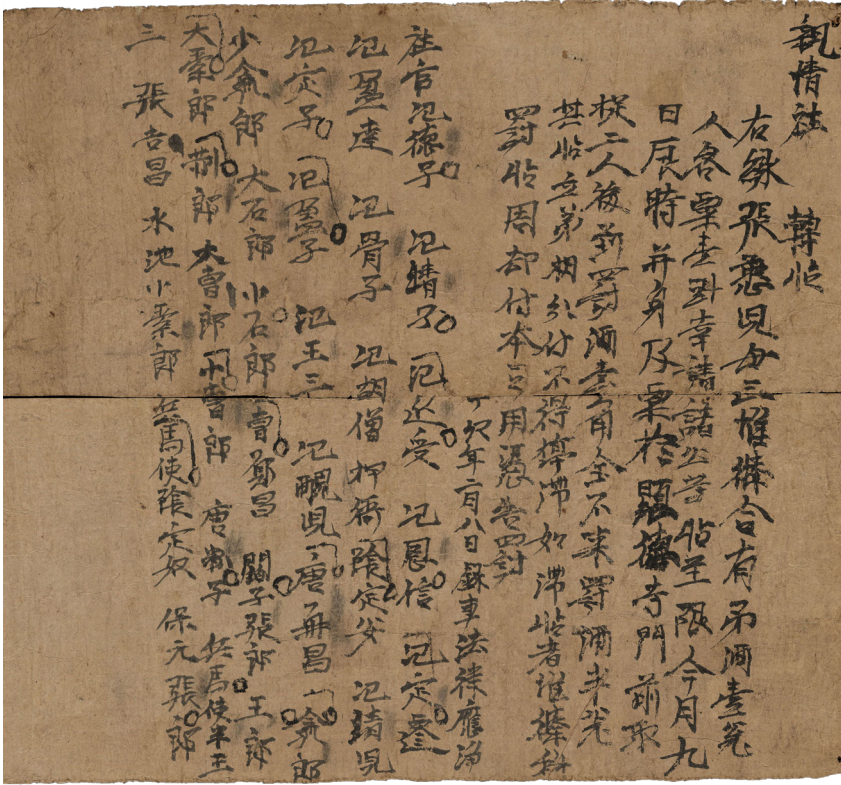


FIG. 2 S.5632 'Dingmao nian eryue bari Zhang Han'er muwang zhuan tie'  
丁卯年二月八日張慈兒母亡轉帖; courtesy of International Dunhuang Project  
(idp.bl.uk).

The *she* association circulars can be divided based on different tasks into the 'circulars for the deceased' (*shenwang zhuan tie* 身亡轉帖); the 'circulars for banquets' (*juxi zhuan tie* 局席轉帖) pertaining to 'spring banquets' (*chunzuo* 春座), 'autumn banquets' (*qiuzuo* 秋座), and 'general banquets of the *she*' (*zuoshe* 座社); 'circulars for making good fortune' (*jianfu* 建福), 'establishing vegetarian banquets' (*shezhai* 設齋), and 'establishing offering' (*shegong* 設供); 'circulars for discussing trivial matters' (*shaoshi shangliang zhuan tie* 少事商量轉帖); 'circulars concerning the canal *she*' (*qushe* 渠社) and canal people' (*quren zhuanzhan* 渠人轉帖), as well as documents pertaining to the canal people.

Circulars for the deceased are circulars that inform the people of the *she* to attend funeral activities. In terms of just numbers, these kinds of circulars are not the most numerous among Dunhuang documents, but most of them were circulars in use, so they reflect the fact that mutual aid in regard to funerals was the most important activity during the latter part of the Tang, the Five Dynasties, and the early Song periods.

The circulars for banquets pertaining to spring banquet, autumn banquet, and general banquets of the *she* inform people to participate in gatherings and banquet activities in the spring and autumn banquets. The spring and autumn banquets are traditional activities with a long history. These types of circulars number the most among those that were preserved, showing that this activity had a fairly deep imprint on the people's minds. However, these types of circulars are mostly incomplete copied documents, with few of them being in use, showing that the activities of the spring and autumn banquets were probably not as important as mutual aid for funerals among the practical activities of the *she* association.

Circulars for making good fortune, establishing liturgies, and establishing offering inform *she* members to attend liturgies, make offerings, and participate in other activities related to Buddhist matters and monasteries. Circulars for discussing trivial matters inform people of the *she* to participate in gatherings for discussion.

The last type of *she* association circulars are circulars pertaining to the canal *she* and canal people, as well as documents concerning the canal people. The 'canal people' in Dunhuang documents are the commoners who were responsible for 'working on canal entrance' in the Dunhuang region from the later period of the Tang, the Five Dynasties, to the early Song. Their duties were preventing flood, fixing canal dams and bridges. Circulars concerning canal people inform the canal people to participate in the activities described above. The circulars for canal *she* notify its members to participate in funeral mutual aid and spring and autumn banquet activities. However, because the canal *she* associations are the organizations of the canal people, the two different types of activities described above are both related to the canal *she*. Based on this fact, we categorize the circulars

for canal people and the circulars for the canal *she* that are unrelated to the *she* association together as one. For research convenience in regard to this category, we also collected two documents concerning the canal people.

The *she* association circulars are the most numerous among the *she* association documents, and their importance are also the greatest. On the surface, these documents have the same layout with similar contents, and do not seem to have great value. However, the number of the *she* association circulars pertaining to different matters to a degree reflects the frequency and importance of the various activities in the *she* association; the different times and location, as well as the different people's names also contain different kinds of scholarly information. These are necessary for our deeper study and detailed exploration of the *she* association.

### 1.3. *She* Records

*She* records are the records of the revenue of the *she* association, with a total of sixty documents, the vast majority of which are documents in use (there are only two copied documents). The most important of the *she* records are the 'record concerning offering for the deceased' (*shengü nazeng li* 身故納贈曆). 'Records concerning offering for the deceased' are records of the people of the *she* making offerings to the *she* association based on the rules of the *she* regulations or the temporary decisions of the *she* association when the members of a *she* association or their relatives passed away. In it, the number of offerings given by the people of the *she* and their names were recorded (if pie, millet, oil, and firewood are offered based on regulations, numbers will not be written down). There are verification symbols of the *she* association on the upper right corner of most of the offered objects from the *she* members. There are records of some cases where the offerings given by some of the *she* members were eventually given to the families of the deceased.

Besides the 'record concerning offering for the deceased', the 'record concerning *she* association for convenient goods' (*shesi bianwu li* 社司便物曆) were fairly important. Most of them are

known to be goods such as noodles, oil, millet, wheat, and jute where the people of the *she* borrowed from the *she* association. These provided important material for the study of the public accumulation of goods of the private *she*.

Other than these, there is also information on the goods that *she* members owed, the offered goods, the goods fined by the *she* associations, and their expenditure books.

#### 1.4. Association Liturgies

There are a total of 107 association liturgies, twenty-nine of which are copies, so there are in reality seventy-eight documents.

These types of documents can be divided into eight in total: (1) ‘*she* festival greeting documents’ (*sheri xiangyin shu* 社日相迎書); (2) ‘memorial inviting the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja’ (*Qing Bintoulu boluoduo shangzuo shu* 請賓頭盧波羅墮上座疏); (3) ‘*she* liturgies’ (*she zhaiwen* 社齋文); (4) ‘*she* association Buddhist documents printed on sand’ (*sheyi yin shafo wen* 社邑印沙佛文); (5) ‘*she* association burning lamp documents’ (*sheyi randeng wen* 社邑燃燈文); (6) ‘*she* association record of merit’ (*shesi gongde ji* 社司功德記); (7) ‘*she* documents concerning sacrifices’ (*sheji wen* 社祭文); and (8) ‘documents concerning sacrifices to the *she*’ (*jishe wen* 祭社文).

The ‘*she* festival greeting documents’ are literary models of the notification documents inviting *she* members to participate in a gathering during the spring and autumn banquet activities. The two types of *she* festival greeting documents (there is a copied version of each) are all preserved in the ‘written protocols’ (*shuyi* 書儀).

‘Memorial inviting the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja’ is a text written before the *she* association conducts offering activities in order to call up an *arhat*.

The relatively complicated documents include the ‘*she* liturgies’, the ‘*she* association Buddhist documents printed on sand’, and the ‘*she* association burning lamp documents’. These are the scripts which were chanted during activities which the *she* association held in regard to vegetarian banquet gatherings, printing Buddhas on sand and burning the lamp respectively. These types of *she* liturgies

can be divided into literary models (文樣) and formal documents (文本). The literary models are all preserved in the 'liturgical protocols' (齋儀). The liturgical protocols are the same as the written protocols; these are the literary models that people who came up with the draft of the *she* liturgies consults. Most of them appeared in the form of documents, and usually can be divided into three parts: the preface, table of contents and the main text. The literary models of the *she* liturgies, the *she* association Buddhist documents printed on sand, and the *she* association burning lamp documents, are all parts of a certain liturgical protocol. They cannot be directly taken to the activities of liturgical meetings that the *she* association established to be recited. Because the standard document of the *she* festival greeting documents, the *she* association Buddhist documents printed on sand, and the *she* association burning lamp documents that were based on the literary models have practical uses; they can independently form a piece of text. They can also form a compilation of liturgies from several pieces, over ten pieces, or several tens of pieces of document. The three types of association liturgy documents we collected were mostly preserved within the compilation of liturgies, while some were also preserved as a single piece or as two pieces of documents. In Dunhuang, there are more than one type of liturgical protocol. In just the literary models of the *she* associations preserved in the different liturgical protocols, we have found eight types of texts. Because many literary models of association liturgy texts were not found, these eight types of liturgical protocols were not all that existed. On the other hand, the literary model of one kind of liturgical protocol could develop into several different versions of texts. Examples include P.3545, P.3765, S.5573, S.6923 where the main portion of the liturgy texts are mostly the same; only the quoted texts in the beginning and the end might be different. These several types of texts very likely came from a *she* literary model of a liturgical protocols. Liturgical protocols and the liturgy texts can also be divided into the Central Plains texts and regional Dunhuang texts. Regardless of whether its liturgical protocols or liturgy texts, the earliest of these all likely spread from the Central Plains. After these texts circulated in Dunhuang for a time, liturgical protocols and liturgy texts with

Dunhuang characteristics appeared. Due to the situation described above, the *she* liturgies, the *she* Buddhist texts printed on sand, and the *she* burning lamp texts preserved within the Dunhuang documents are fairly abundant. Each type of texts contains either several, over ten, or even over twenty different systems of written texts. Some of the literary models of the association liturgies, the *she* liturgies, the *she* Buddhist documents printed on sand, and the *she* burning lamp documents that we collected contain copied versions, the most numerous of which contain three copies. However, the presence of the copied versions of the literary models of the *she* liturgical texts does not imply that the liturgical protocols that they appeared in were also copies. Similarly, the presence of several versions of the copies of the association liturgy documents also does not imply that the liturgy text collection they were in were also copies. According to materials at hand, there are extremely few liturgical protocols or liturgy text collections that were identical.

The sixth type of association liturgy is the '*she* record of merit'. It recorded the merits of Buddhism-related activities such as drawing Buddhist paintings, renovating pagodas, renovating and making caves, building monasteries, and making Buddhist statues. These types of merit records are all manuscripts or copied documents since in practice, the records of merit concerning renovation of the caves are written on the cave walls while the records of merits for the building of monasteries and pagodas are carved on the inscriptions of monasteries and pagodas.

The '*she* documents concerning sacrifices' are writings used for recitation when the *she* association uses the traditional method for performing rites for a *she* person or his relatives when they passed away. There is only one document concerning sacrifices to the *she*, which is preserved in the back of S.1725 (the back of P.3896 also preserved part of the document). This manuscript is divided into two portions. The first portion is the text on rites for the gods, including texts like 'document concerning rites for sages and masters' (*shidian wen* 釋奠文), 'document concerning rites for the *she*' (*jishe wen* 祭社文), 'documents concerning rites for Lord of the Rain' (*ji Yushi wen* 祭雨師文), 'documents concerning rites for the Count

of the Wind' (*ji Fengbo wen* 祭風伯文); the second portion contains notes reporting to officials regarding the people and material needed for the few rites mentioned above. The documents concerning sacrifices to the *she* is similar to the 'Kaiyuan li zuanlei' 開元禮纂類 [Reclassification of the Kuaiyuan Rites], part 16 ('Rites for the Land' ['Duzhou ji sheji' 堵州祭社稷] from *juan* 121 of the *Tongdian* 通典 [Comprehensive Institutions]; it is highly possible that it is the text used during the performance of the rites for the spring and autumn banquets in Shazhou 沙州.

The eight types of association liturgies described above have important values for the understanding of the contents, thoughts, and ideas of the activities of the Dunhuang *she* association.

### 1.5. The Association Reports and Notes

There are a total of twenty-four association reports, with one copied document; so there are really twenty-three documents. These are documents used when the *she* association took care of applications to the *she* (*toushe zhuang* 投社狀), leaving the *she* (*tuishe* 退社), and other matters.

'Applications to the *she*' are applications submitted to the *she* office to join the *she* from those who wanted to be part of the *she* association after it is established.

A 'report for leaving the *she*' (*tuishe zhuang* 退社狀) is the application for leaving the *she* submitted by a member of the *she* association to the *she* office. In order to preserve the stability of the *she*, each *she* devised strict punishments for people who wanted to leave the *she*. Therefore, it is rare to see a situation where people leave the *she*. We have only seen one document of a report concerning leaving the *she*.

The association report document types can also be found on the back of P.3899 (i.e., 'Kaiyuan shisi nian er zhi si yue Shazhou gouzheng Kaiyuan jiunian Xuanquan fu Mashe qian'an juan' 開元十四年二至四月沙州勾征開元九年懸泉府馬社錢案卷 [Document from the second to the fourth month of the fourteenth year of Kaiyuan on the case of Shazhou collecting money from the horse communal system at Xuanquan Prefecture in the ninth year of Kaiyuan]). This

document is actually an official document. But because it is involved in the horse communal system, and since the horse communal system is a type of official communal system, and since there were tallies (*fu* 符), reports (*die* 牒), and verdicts (*pan* 判) within it, we attached it to the end of the association report. The document P.2942 (i.e., ‘Shazhou jishe guang poyong pan’ 沙州祭社廣破用判 [Discerning the Large Expenditure of the Shazhou Offerings for the Land]) is a document from the collection of the verdict of the Pacification Commissioner (*xunfushi* 巡撫使) of Hexi 河西. Because its content involved the Shazhou government performing rites for the *she*, and because the original verdict pertains to the related report, it is also attached to the Association Reports and Notes. On the document P.3379 (i.e., ‘Xiande wunian eryue shelushi dutou Yin Baoshan deng tuan baodie’ 顯德五年二月社錄事都頭陰保山等團保牒 [Official document pertaining to the district agent Yin Baoshan and his group on matters in the *she* on the fifth year of Xiande]) is stamped the characters ‘Gua Sha deng zhou Guanchashi xinyin’ 瓜沙等州觀察使新印 [The new seal of the Inspector of Gua[zhou], Sha[zhou] and other prefectures]. It is a document of the official association and is different from the normal association report.

The association report type of document has important value in the understanding of the activities of the *she* association as well as the understanding of the specific operations during the activities organized by the *she* association.

It is not hard to see from the simple introduction above that the *she* association documents of the Dunhuang manuscript are mostly private *she* documents. There are only a few documents involving the official *she*. This reflects the prevalence of private *she* during the Tang, the Five Dynasties, and the early Song period in the Dunhuang region.

There are only twenty-one documents with recorded years among these *she* association documents. Among them, the earliest dates to the fourteenth year of Kaiyuan era (726), while the latest dates to the seventh year of Taiping Xingguo 太平興國 era (982). Up until now, there are a total of 230 documents when counting documents that originally had a recorded year and adding those where the date

had been derived from analysis. Among these over 230 documents, ten of them date to before the period of Tibetan administration of Dunhuang (786); eighteen date to the period of Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang (786–848); over 150 date to the period of the Cao 曹 family Guiyi jun (914–1002); eleven from the Guiyi jun period, and one from the late Tang, Five Dynasties, and early Song period. Most of the documents were from the Guiyi jun period, and under the Guiyi jun period, most documents date to the Cao family period. Based on these estimated numbers, it seems that those *she* association documents where the dates have not been determined can be roughly framed in the late Tang, the Five Dynasties and the early Song period, and most of them should be in the Guiyi jun period.

There are lots of aspects regarding the academic value of the *she* association documents in the Dunhuang manuscript. First, they provided vivid and detailed materials for the study of ancient Chinese *she* associations. Not only can people make in-depth explorations and detailed descriptions of the specific conditions of the *she* in the Tang, Five Dynasties and the early Song period (mainly the private *she*), but they can also use the knowledge gained from these documents to further examine the *she* associations from the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty and the development of the *she* association after the Tang.

At the same time, the content of the *she* association documents also involves many fields such as politics, military, economy, culture and so on in the Middle Ages. For example, the back of the above-mentioned P.3899 ('Kaiyuan shisi nian er zhi si yue Shazhou gouzheng Kaiyuan jiunian Xuanquan fu Mashe qian'an juan') involved various issues concerning the relationship between horse communal system, *gouzheng* 勾徵 (tax levying), Zhechongfu 折衝府 (Assault-resisting Garrison), prefectures 州府 (Zhechongfu), and counties (縣) in the Tang Dynasty. There are also many names of people in *she* association documents that are found in other official and private documents. It can be said that these documents have important value as references for studying the politics, economy and the entire society of the Dunhuang region in the late Tang Dynasty, the Five Dynasties and the beginning of the Song period.

## 2. A Review of the Research on Dunhuang *she*-related Documents in the Past Nearly Seven Decades (1938–2006)

We can divide the study of Dunhuang *she* association documents by Chinese and foreign scholars over the past half a century or more into two stages. Before 1980, foreign scholars were the ones mainly engaged in the research of this subject.

### 2.1. Research before 1986

The Japanese scholar Naba Toshisada 那波利貞 (1890–1970) is the pioneer on the study of this issue. As early as 1938, he already published the article on the *she* association during the Tang.<sup>4</sup> This was the earliest article to use Dunhuang documents both in China and abroad to study ancient Chinese *she*. In this article, Naba first studied the ritual activities of the spring and autumn banquet in China from the pre-Qin to the Ming and Qing dynasties and from the government to the common people. Then, based on Dunhuang documents combined with related records in documents that were passed down, he pointed out that in the middle and late Tang and the Five Dynasties period, there existed three different types of *she* associations in China.

The first type is the Buddhist community, which is centered on Buddhist beliefs and consists of Buddhist believers at home. He used the *she* association circulars for spring and autumn banquet activities and circulars for making good fortune among the Dunhuang documents to explain that Buddhist organizations centered on sculpture activities that were popular during the Southern and Northern Dynasties also existed in large numbers in the middle and late Tang as well as the Five Dynasties period. However, its name has been changed from *yiyi* 邑義 (village righteousness), *yihui* 邑會 (village society), and the like to names like *sheyi* 社邑 (*she* village) and *yishe* 邑社 (village *she*); the content of its activities has changed from making statues to mainly lecturing to commoners. This posed

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<sup>4</sup> Naba, 'Tōdai no shayū ni tsukite'.

a strong challenge to Japanese scholars such as Yamazaki Hiroshi 山崎宏 (1903–1992), who advocated that Buddhist communities in the Northern and Southern Dynasties gradually declined after entering the Tang Dynasty and completely disappeared from the late Tang to the early Song Dynasty.<sup>5</sup>

The second type is a *she* association that was derived from the first type, but there are fundamental differences between the two types of *she* associations. Buddhist communities take Buddhist beliefs as its bond and mainly engage in Buddhist activities. The second type of *she* association evolved from joint payment for the worship of Buddha and making Buddhist statues to the mutual assistance between members in normal times, and from simply organizing sacrificial activities twice a year to mundane activities where members educate each other. This made it a kind of non-governmental mutual aid group voluntarily formed by the people, which is completely unrelated to Buddhism. The description of this kind of *she* association is the central focus of Naba's article. He used a large amount of document sources such as the *she* regulations (社條), *she* reports (社狀), *she* records (社曆), association liturgies (社文), and *she* association circulars (社司轉帖) preserved in the Dunhuang documents to explain that the main activities of this type of community were funeral mutual assistance, consoling association members who traveled far and returned, as well as improving the members' moral cultivation, strengthening the friendship between members, and animal-killing and feasting during the sacrifices. In short, although this type of private *she* is derived from a Buddhist community, it has nothing to do with Buddhism in regard to the purpose of the establishment to the content of its activities. Even the monks who joined this private community did not join as Buddhist believers, but as a member of the mutual aid group. This kind of private *she* with modern characteristics was popular throughout China during the middle and late Tang and the Five Dynasties period, and it was further developed in the Song Dynasty.

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<sup>5</sup> Yamazaki, 'Zaike Bukkyō dantai no ichikeishiki toshite no giyū'; 'Zui Tō jidai ni okeru giyū oyobi hōsha ni tuite'.

The third type of *she* association has the characteristics of both the first and second types. It was engaged in sacrificial rituals to the *she*, in mutual assistance activities, and also in Buddhist activities, but it was still an organization composed of Buddhist believers.

In 1939, Naba Toshisada published another article, this time on the organization of the *she* associations during the middle Tang and the Five Dynasties period based on the Buddhist faith.<sup>6</sup> The focus of this article was to study the first of the three types of *she* association mentioned in the previous article. He used the *she* regulations preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts and the *she* liturgies chanted during the *she* liturgical meetings, as well as using the *she* association's record of merit texts pertaining to tasks like cave repairing, cave building, and painting to further demonstrate that the Buddhist communities of the Southern and Northern Dynasties still existed in large numbers in the middle and late Tang dynasty. However, their names have been changed from *yiyi* 義邑 and *yihui* 邑會 to *sheyi* 社邑 and *yishe* 邑社. The title of its leader was changed from *yishi* 邑師 (*yi* master), *yizhu* 邑主 (*yi* chief), *yizhang* 邑長 (*yi* head), *yiweinuo* 邑維那 (*yi* manager), to *sheseng* 社僧 (*she* monk), *shezhang* 社長 (*she* head), *sheguan* 社官 (*she* official), *shelao* 社老 (*she* elder), and *yuhou* 虞候 (inspector). The title of its members changed from *yiyi* 邑義, *fayi* 法義 (dharma pacts), *yiren* 邑人 (*yi* person) and *yizi* 邑子 (*yi* member) to *sheren* 社人 (*she* person), *shezi* 社子 (*she* member), and *shehu* 社戶 (*she* household). Although the names of the Buddhist communities had changed, the nature of this group did not change.

Naba further explored the relationship between this type of Buddhist community and the monastery and pointed out that this kind of *she* association is usually subordinate to a certain monastery, and received the guidance and economic assistance of the monastery. At the same time, they were the social foundation of the monastery and one of the sources of its economy and labor. Based on relevant materials in Dunhuang documents, he estimated that there were as

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<sup>6</sup> Naba, 'Bukkyō shinkō no motozukite soshiki seraretaru chūban Tō-Godai jidai no shayū ni tsukite (jō)'; 'Bukkyō shinkō no motozukite soshiki seraretaru chūban Tō-Godai jidai no shayū ni tsukite (ge)'.

many as two to three hundred *she* members under the control of a monastery. Naba pointed out that the activities of this kind of *she* association bonded by Buddhist beliefs included: helping the temple to hold three liturgical meetings in the first, fifth and ninth months; supporting the monastery's lecture to commoners; helping the monastery to burn lamps to make offerings to Buddhas in the first, second and tenth months. At the same time, they were also engaged in Buddhist activities such as cave repairing, cave building, and printing Buddhas in the sand.

The two famous essays by Naba Toshisada had a profound influence on the study of ancient Chinese *she* associations and even of the history of the social life of the entire Tang Dynasty.

First, in these two long articles, Naba published a large number of Dunhuang documents, with sixty-four kinds of documents related to the *she* association alone. Among these documents are *she* regulations, *she* reports, *she* records, association liturgies, and *she* association circulars. Its contents involved the various documents related to the *she* association that we know so far. This enabled scholars in China and abroad to begin to understand such 'miscellaneous documents' and their value.

Secondly, Naba did not limit himself to the case study of any particular document, but tried to use an entire genre of documents to investigate the evolving trend and the changing pattern of this historical phenomenon. He used this method and achieved profound results in research. Until the early 1980s, his study was still the starting point for any further work on the *she* association. Some of his basic views, such as the division of the three different types of *she* association, are still irreplaceable theories. His discussion of the relationship between Buddhist communities and monasteries is also useful as a reference for our further research.

All these said, by our standards today, Naba's research also has obvious flaws. The first is that there was not enough collation of Dunhuang documents from the perspective of philology. In the *she* association documents cited by him, there are some problems in regard to explanation, characterization, and dating. Although the author had collected a lot of documents related to the *she* association, there are still a number of important *she* documents (especially those

preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts in the British collection) that have not been touched, and even among the documents that have been touched, there was no collation based on systematic classification, which limited his research. For example, Naba believed that the *she* association notified the *she* members to support the monastery's lectures to commoners, but in reality, it informed the *she* members to participate in an activity that was unrelated to Buddhism. The author made mistaken conclusions due to the lack of careful collation and research on these types of documents.

Secondly, although Naba had done a great deal of work on the verification of facts between documents, he has not yet explored the document materials. This led to lots of speculations in his articles, which are inevitably skewed or even wrong. For example, he believes that the *she* association as a mutual aid group originated from the Buddhist community. In reality, private *she* appeared as early as the Han Dynasty and developed during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. When it reached its prosperous stage in the Tang Dynasty, it appeared much earlier than the Buddhist community. Another example is the change in the names of Buddhist associations from the Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Tang and Five Dynasties. Although Naba pointed out this phenomenon, he failed to use source materials to further examine the reasons for this phenomenon and the problems it reflects.

Lastly, although the author had discussed the relationship between Buddhist communities and monasteries, he failed to analyze the nature of this relationship.

Following Naba Toshisada, the famous French Sinologist Jacques Gernet (1921–2018) published the book *Les Aspects Economiques du Bouddhisme Dans la Societe Chinoise du Ve au Xe Siecle* [Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries] in 1956.<sup>7</sup> In this book, he used one section to investigate Buddhist associations from the Southern and Northern Dynasties to

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<sup>7</sup> Gernet, *Les Aspects Economiques du Bouddhisme Dans la Societe Chinoise du Ve au Xe Siecle*; For its English version, see Gernet (trans. Verellen), *Buddhism in Chinese Society*.

the Tang and Five Dynasties period. Gernet pointed out that from the end of the fifth century to the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, the Buddhist associations popular in northern China were called ‘*yiyi*’ 義邑 and ‘*yihui*’ 邑會. Since the middle of the seventh century, Buddhist organizations called *she* have appeared. By the Sui Dynasty, *yi* and *she* had become synonyms. The Chinese-style commoner’s organization—the *she* that participated in the sacrificial activities of the spring and autumn banquets can be transformed into a Buddhist *she* under certain conditions. Even though there are differences in the organization and the content of the activities between Buddhist associations such as *yiyi* and *yihui* on one hand and the *she* and *sheyi* recorded in Dunhuang documents on the other, they were all engaged in Buddhist activities. He believes that Naba Toshisada’s division of the communities in Dunhuang into non-governmental mutual aid groups unrelated to Buddhism and religious groups that only engage in Buddhist activities is meaningless because all *she* associations in Dunhuang have been influenced by Buddhism to varying degrees, and they were all engaged in mutual aid and Buddha worshiping activities.

Jacques Gernet also compared the Buddhist associations of the Southern and Northern Dynasties period with the *she* associations of Dunhuang and pointed out that these religious associations used the method of sworn oath to maintain the number of its members. These were often established under the suggestions of monks, and they all had their own Buddhist masters; these were what we call the masters in the Buddhist associations of the Southern and Northern Dynasties and the monks and nuns in the Dunhuang community. The monks within these *she* not only lectured on dharmas for the members of the *she*, but also brought a sense of sacredness to the *she* and strengthened the Buddhist activities of the *she*. However, there were also differences between the *she* associations of the two periods; the amount of money contributed by members of the Buddhist *she* during the Southern and Northern Dynasties when engaged in Buddhist activities depended on the depth of one’s belief and the amount of property one had. These organizations were also loosely organized. The amount of capital contributed by the members of the Dunhuang community is decided by the *she* regulations, and the

offenders were punished. By this time, alms giving was no longer a personal choice. Moreover, in many aspects, the Dunhuang *she* association had the characteristics of the traditional Chinese *she* in which the main activities were to engage in the rituals of the spring and autumn banquets. When they were engaged in Buddhist activities such as liturgical meetings, parading Buddha statues, turning prayer wheels, and burning lamps, they were also engaged in activities such as funeral mutual aid, traveling afar and showing appreciation for those returning. These Buddhist associations promoted the spread of Buddhism. The economic aid they provided maintained the living conditions for the monks in some areas.

Jacques Gernet's study of the *she* association were more advanced in some ways compared to Naba Toshisada's studies. For example, his view that the *she* can be transformed into a Buddhist association under certain conditions is very enlightening and provided clues to the historical phenomena where the *yi* and *she* were originally different and evolved to where *yi* and *she* became indistinguishable. However, because he disagreed with Naba Toshisada's accurate notion of the existence of three types of *she* associations, his overall descriptions on the *she* associations in the Tang and Five Dynasties were overly generalizing and not accurate enough. His view that the monks and nuns in the Dunhuang *she* were the Buddhist masters of the *she* associations also did not conform to facts.

In 1964, the Japanese scholar Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章 (1930–2015) published the article 'Tonkō shutsudo "sha" monjo no kenkyū' 敦煌出土「社」文書の研究 [Research on 'Association' Documents Unearthed from Dunhuang].<sup>8</sup> This is another important paper on *she* association documents written by Japanese scholars after Naba Toshisada. Based on the photos, Chikusa Masaaki carried out a thorough organization of the *she* documents in the Dunhuang manuscripts in the British Collection which was rarely used by Naba Toshisada. He used the *she* documents stored in Paris and published by Naba Toshisada to meticulously sort out the *she* association circulars and the *she* regulations within the *she* documents. He has

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<sup>8</sup> Chikusa, 'Tonkō shutsudo "sha" bunsho no kenkyū'.

made a huge stride since Naba Toshisada in the investigation of the form, nature, and function of the documents, as well as in explaining the texts and analyzing the dates. He also discussed the nature and purpose of *she* documents such as literary models, documents of calligraphic practicing (*xizi* 習字), original copies, and drafts that Naba Toshisada paid little attention to, and compared them with the documents in use. On this basis, he re-investigated the activities and organizations of the *she* association. He pointed out that mutual assistance during funerals were the most important of the mutual assistance activities in the *she* association, and investigated the detailed process of mutual assistance during funerals. In regard to the list of the leaders of the *she* association, he corrected some of Naba Toshisada's mistakes and added some names. He also inspected the identities of the *she* members and pointed out that although the *she* association is a mutual aid organization, due to its many activities, it also became a heavy burden on the members, causing some poor *she* members to withdraw from the community.

In sum, Chikusa Masaaki had taken a big step forward in document collation and description of some specific issues such as mutual assistance in funerals and the burden of *she* members. However, because he did not put the *she* documents under the large context of the history of the overall development of ancient *she* associations, and held the same view on the classification of *she* associations as Jacques Gernet, his research pertaining to the overall understanding of the *she* association did not surpass those of Naba Toshisada.

## 2.2. Research after 1980s

After the 1980s, the collation and research of Dunhuang manuscripts and *she* association documents entered a new stage. With the publication of a large number of Dunhuang documents, it is possible for people to conduct a comprehensive collection and systematic collation of the *she* association documents. Therefore, at this stage, the philological collation of the *she* association documents had become an important task.

Tang Geng'ou 唐耕耦 (1927–2017) and Lu Hongji 陸宏基 were the first to carry out this work. In 1986, the first edition of *Dun-*

*huang shehui jingji wenxian zhenji shilu* 敦煌社會經濟文獻真蹟釋錄 [Collection of Dunhuang Manuscripts on Social and Economic Documents] compiled by Tang Geng'ou and Lu Hongji came out. The fifth part of the book is on the *she* association documents. It contains sixteen documents on the establishment of *she* regulations, eight documents on admission and withdrawal requests for the *she*, eight documents on association reports and punishments, eighty-seven documents on various types of circulars, thirteen documents on records concerning offering, seven documents on revenue and certificates, as well as ten other documents; totaling 149. At that time, this was the largest and most meticulous collation undertaking of *she* association documents in China and abroad, and its explanation was closer to the meaning of the original documents than the explanations of Naba Toshisada and Chikusa Masaaki. Their work has provided great convenience for the academic community to use and study such documents.

Regrettably, the collection of *she* documents in this book is far from exhaustive; it is less than half of the *she* documents we know at the present. In regard to the part that was already collected, there was also no introduction to the situation of these documents, and most of their dates were not decided. There are also still some problems in regard to the explanation of the documents. Therefore, the compilation of the *she* documents is far from complete.

Dohi Yoshikazu 土肥義和 (1933–2020) and Ishida Yusaku 石田勇作 from Japan were also collecting and sorting out Dunhuang *she* documents at the same time as Tang Geng'ou and others. I have also cooperated with Professor Ning Ke in the early 1980s to organize and research the Dunhuang *she* documents.

The work which I organized in cooperation with Professor Ning Ke, the *Dunhuang sheyi wenshu jixiao* 敦煌社邑文書輯校 [Compilation of Dunhuang *She* Association Documents] was already published by Jiangsu guji chubanshe 江蘇古籍出版社 in 1997. The following three characteristics of this book are noteworthy. First, it is complete, with a total of 398 pieces collected, which is more than twice the amount collected by Tang Geng'ou and Lu Hongji. Although this figure is a bit less than what we currently know about *she* association documents, most of the missing ones were only

announced after this publication; virtually all of the *she* documents from the Dunhuang documents published by that time were collected. In order to collect the *she* association documents, we more than once studied the Dunhuang documents that were available at that time (generally, scholars mainly depend on the catalogues). Second, the explanation is accurate. The explanation of all the documents had been repeatedly verified. In addition, most of the documents in the Beijing library (now the National Library of China), the British Library, and the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France) had been checked for the originals. Many pictures or microfilms with unclear print had been dealt with as much as possible. Third, it is a combination of collation and research. In the process of sorting out the Dunhuang *she* association documents, we have successively published a series of papers on the *she* association, especially a detailed work on dating the *she* association documents (mainly undertaken by myself). On the basis of the original work, more than one hundred new documents have been dated. As everyone knows, determining the dates of historical sources is the basic work of the study of history and the prerequisite for conducting research. Therefore, my work on dating laid the foundation for the further in-depth study of Dunhuang *she* association documents.

Although the collation work of Dohi Yoshikazu and Ishida Yusaku<sup>9</sup> has its publication dates written on the book as 1988 and 1989 respectively, the book was actually published after 2000.<sup>10</sup> The main advantage of this collection of sources is that it printed both the illustration (B) and the explanation (A) of the documents. The illustrations are relatively clear and convenient for users to make references. The second advantage is that it has the preface, guide, recounts and table of contents in English so it was easy to use by scholars in the English-speaking world. However, the *she* association documents collected in this source collection are incomplete, especially the ‘association liturgies’, many of which were omitted. At the same time, it included a batch of documents

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<sup>9</sup> Dohi & Ishida, *She Associations and Related Documents*.

<sup>10</sup> Meng, ‘*She zuzhi jiqi xiangguan wenxian*’, 414.

that were unrelated to the *she* association, such as ‘Dangsi zhuantie’ 當寺轉帖 and ‘Guanzhai li’ 官齋歷。

In the research of *she* association documents, there are tens of papers published after the 1980s. In 1980, the *Kōza Tonkō 2: Tonkō no rekishi* 講座敦煌 2: 敦煌の歴史 [Dunhuang Lecture Series 2: Dunhuang History] compiled by Japanese scholars was published. In the fifth section of Chapter Five written by Dohi Yoshikazu, he investigated the Dunhuang manuscripts and cave inscriptions, as well as the vows related to *she* associations repairing caves, constructing caves, building shrines, and repairing Buddhist temples and statues during the Guiyi jun period.<sup>11</sup> In the *Kōza Tonkō 3: Tonkō no rekishi* 講座敦煌 3: 敦煌の社會 [Dunhuang Lecture Series 3: Dunhuang Society] published later in the same year, the third section written by Nagasawa Kazutoshi 長澤和俊 (1928–2019) also talked about the relationship between Dunhuang civilian life and the *she*, but he only gave a simple introduction to the organization and activities of the *she* association relying on the researches of Naba Toshisada and Chikusa Masaaki (mainly the latter).<sup>12</sup>

Guo Feng’s 郭鋒 ‘Dunhuang de she jiqi huodong’ 敦煌的‘社’及其活動 [The *She* of Dunhuang and its activities] published in 1983 was the first article by a scholar in Chinese mainland who specifically studied Dunhuang manuscripts on the *she* association.<sup>13</sup> This paper introduced the situation of the Dunhuang *she* associations among the populace to the academic circles of our country for the first time. Among them, the descriptions on the origin of Dunhuang *she* associations and the characteristics of the *she* association during the Tang and Five Dynasties had advanced compared to the studies of foreign scholars. However, due to the re-starting stage of Dunhuang studies in Chinese mainland at that time, the author did not appear to be meticulous in the compilation of documents, and also did not pay enough attention to the research results of foreign scholars.

Hu Tongqing’s 胡同慶 article attempted to explicate the long-

<sup>11</sup> Dohi, ‘Kigigun (Tō kōki, Godai, Sōsho) jidai’.

<sup>12</sup> Nagasawa, ‘Tonkō no shomin seikatsu’.

<sup>13</sup> Guo, ‘Dunhuang de she jiqi huodong’.

term existence of Dunhuang *she* associations from the new perspective of the habitat of Dunhuang, whereas Liu Yonghua's 劉永華 tried to explain the reasons for the prevalence of private *she* associations in Dunhuang from the perspective of family movements in Dunhuang.<sup>14</sup> However, the two papers above overlooked the historical background of the private *she* associations whose main activities were economic and livelihood mutual assistance that were also prevalent in other regions of the country during the Tang and Five Dynasties period.

In the process of compiling Dunhuang *she* association documents, Professor Ning Ke and I also jointly or independently published more than twenty relevant papers, mainly involving the following aspects. The first is dating the documents;<sup>15</sup> the second is to explore some of the important activities of the Dunhuang *she* associations, such as funeral mutual aid activities and the spring and autumn banquets;<sup>16</sup> the third is to explore the relationship between *she* associations and monasteries in the medieval period;<sup>17</sup> the fourth is to try to explain the process and cause of the development and evolution of ancient *she* associations.<sup>18</sup> In recent years, I have tried to re-examine the relationship between *she* associations and Buddhism in the Middle Ages from the perspective of cultural conflict and integration.<sup>19</sup>

Some materials about women's associations were preserved in Dunhuang documents, and some related records were also preserved in stone carvings from the Northern Dynasties to Sui and Tang times. Based on this, I wrote an article, which was published jointly

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<sup>14</sup> Hu, 'Cong Dunhuang jieshe tantao ren de qunti xing yiji geti yu jiti de guanxi'; Liu, 'Tang zhonghou qi Dunhuang de jiating bianqian he sheyi'.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Hao, 'Dunhuang wenben sheyi wenshu niandai huikao'.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Ning & Hao, 'Dunhuang sheyi de sangzang huzhu'; Hao, 'Dunhuang yishu zhong de 'chunqiu zuo juxi' kao'.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Hao, 'Dongjin Nanbei chao shiqi de Fojiao jieshe'; 'Sui Tang Wudai Songchu chuantong sishe yu siyuan de guanxi'.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Ning, 'Shu "sheyi"'.

<sup>19</sup> Hao, 'Cong chongyu dao jianrong'.

with Professor Ning Ke in 1990.<sup>20</sup> This article mainly discussed the popular period of women's association, its characteristics, the contents of its activities and its evolution. The materials used in it have attracted the attention of women's history researchers and have been cited in related works. Huang Xia's 黃霞 article gave an introduction to a document in the collection of the National Library regarding *she* regulations in a women's *she* associations.<sup>21</sup> Yang Sen's 楊森 research note did not have many new ideas.<sup>22</sup> In Lin Yanzhi's 林豔枝 article on the Dunhuang women's associations during the Tang and Five Dynasties, the materials cited were all within the scope of previously published papers, and there was no new contribution to the explanation of the materials.<sup>23</sup> Yu Xin's 余欣 article is primarily a unique discussion on the 'walking the bridge' customs mentioned in the *she* regulations.<sup>24</sup> Meng Xianshi's article explored the social function of women's *she* from the perspective of social history.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the articles on women's associations mentioned above, Meng Xianshi published several more papers in recent years by using methods of social history to re-examine the *she* documents of Dunhuang manuscripts. These papers were able to explain materials from a new perspective on the basis of the materials collected by predecessors.<sup>26</sup>

Since the 1980s, foreign scholars have published more research papers on the *she* association. These include Dohi Yoshikazu's paper that re-evaluated the general situation of the organization of the *she*

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<sup>20</sup> Ning & Hao, 'Beichao zhi Sui Tang Wudai jian de nüren jieshe'.

<sup>21</sup> Huang, 'Beitu cang Dunhuang 'nüren she' guiyue yi jian'.

<sup>22</sup> Yang, 'Wantang Wudai liangjian 'nüren she' wenshu zhaji'.

<sup>23</sup> Lin, 'Tang Wudai shiqi Dunhuang diqu de nüren jieshe'.

<sup>24</sup> Yu, 'Tang Song Dunhuang funü jieshe yanjiu'.

<sup>25</sup> Meng, 'Shilun Dunhuang de funü jieshe'.

<sup>26</sup> Meng, 'Dunhuang sheyi de fenbu'; 'Shilun Tang Song shiqi Dunhuang minjian jieshe de zuzhi xingtai'; 'Tang Song shiqi Dunhuang de guanren jieshe'; 'Tang Song zhi ji Dunhuang de minjian jieshe yu shehui zhixu'; and 'Lun Tang Song shiqi Dunhuang minjian jieshe de shetiao'.

association between the Tang and Song periods.<sup>27</sup> Ishida Yusaku's 石田勇作 introductory study of the Dunhuang *she*-related documents is the Japanese version of his English article 'Tun-Huang and Turfan Documents IV The Japanese version of the English commentary of *she* Associations and Related Documents', and it was mainly an introduction of the *she* association circulars.<sup>28</sup> There is also Tokio Takata's 高田時雄 study on two to three types of *she* association documents in Tibetan. The most notable of this study by Takata is that through the *she* documents in Tibetan, it raised the important issue of the Tibetanization of the Dunhuang Han ethnicity.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Concluding Remarks

After nearly seventy years of hard work, the academic community has made remarkable achievements in the study of both the Dunhuang *she* association documents and the medieval *she* association. In terms of data compilation, the basic tasks have been completed. Although we can still find new *she* association documents from newly published Dunhuang documents, or find some problems in the existing compilations, on the whole, these are only tasks regarding to adding or supplementing to what already existed. But in terms of research, we still have a lot of work to do. For example, it is a very important task to integrate Dunhuang *she* association documents with handed down documents and stone inscription sources to write a history of the development of ancient Chinese *she* associations from the past to the present. In addition, we can also use new methods or new perspectives to interpret these documents at a deeper level.

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<sup>27</sup> Dohi, 'Tō Hoku Sō kan no 'sha' no soshiki keitai ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu'.

<sup>28</sup> Ishida, 'Tonkō 'sha monjo' kenkyū josetsu'.

<sup>29</sup> Tokio, 'Zangwen sheyi wenshu er san zhong'.

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- P Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Pelliot Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.  
 S Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, British Library, London.

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