

XIAO DILU

The epigraphic document here identified as the Epitaph of Deputy Commissioner Xiao Dilu (*Xiao Dilu Fushi Muzhi*) comprises two separate pieces, a cover stone and a base stone, both of which contain a Khitan text. Both pieces were obtained by Wu Yingzhe and his colleague Buyandelger of Inner Mongolia University at the beginning of May, 2007, from a local dealer in antiquities based in Tuquan County 突泉縣 *Tuquan Xian* of Khingan League 興安盟 *Xing'an Meng*, Inner Mongolia. According to the dealer (who asked not to be named), the epitaph had been discovered already in the autumn of 2002 at Naiman Banner 奈曼旗 *Naiman Qi* of Tongliao Municipality 通遼市 *Tongliao Shi*, the former Jerim League 哲里木盟 *Zhelimu Meng*, Inner Mongolia. The exact place of discovery and circumstances of excavation are not known, but it may have been a question of an accidental find. The available information suggests that the epitaph had first been stored at a peasant's stable for over three years before the dealer had acquired it. Fortunately, the text faces had apparently been kept protected during that time, so that hardly a single character had suffered any secondary damage. The epitaph is, consequently, in a relatively good state of preservation.

After acquiring the two stones of the epitaph, the dealer kept one of them (the base stone) in his local storeroom, while the other one (the cover stone) was transferred to Changchun 長春, Jilin Province 吉林省 *Jilin Sheng*, several hundred kilometres away. It

was only with considerable difficulties and complicated practical arrangements that the two heavy stones were finally reunited and transported to Huhhot, where they were incorporated into the ethnographical and archaeological collections of the School of Mongolian Studies of Inner Mongolia University. In their new location, the stones have been subjected to a more careful study, which has confirmed their authenticity. At the same time, rubbings have been prepared of the text surfaces.

Both pieces of the epitaph are square tablets of approximately the same size and made of what seems to be grey sandstone (petrological analysis pending):

(1) The cover stone measures 84.5 cm in width, 84.5 cm in height, and 8 cm in thickness. The sides are slanting downwards, so that the top surface forms a smaller square of about 67 x 67 cm. The estimated weight of the stone is about 100 kg. The text is on the smaller (top) surface and comprises 25 lines of Khitan Small Script characters neatly inscribed. The number of blocks per line varies from 17 to 29. Altogether, there are 1,462 characters in 580 blocks, including two damaged characters.

(2) The base stone measures 83-84.5 cm in width, 83 cm in height, and 9-15 cm in thickness. The estimated weight is close to 200 kg. This stone has 26 lines of text in the Khitan Small Script, including 8 lines of poetry. The number of blocks per line varies from 2 to 29. On this stone, there are altogether 1,444 characters in 529 blocks, including one damaged character.

The whole epitaph contains, consequently, 2,903 preserved and 3 damaged Khitan Small Script characters, corresponding to 1,109 blocks and divided into 51 lines. The average block size is relatively large, ranging from 2 x 2 cm for single-character blocks to 3 x 5 cm for multiple-character blocks. Some of the blocks are previously unattested.

2.1. THE COVER STONE

The Khitan text of the cover stone of *Xiao Dilu* is in the following presented in a linearized version, with the characters ordered from