

Seiki no Chizu: Map of China and Westward (8th century)

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The map reproduced on the following page, dating from the end of the eighth century to the mid-ninth century CE, depicts the 22 countries established on the Eurasian continent at the time. Although described as a “map”, this document displays the territories of the 22 countries in a simplified, rectangular form, enclosed by perpendicular lines. And the names of these countries were noted down in both Chinese and Tibetan characters. Chief among the 22 countries, which have not yet been identified completely, are, from the east to the west, the Tang China (No. 21), Uighur (No. 19), Tibet (No. 17), India (No. 11), the Islamic Caliphate (No.3) and the Byzantine Empire (No.5). This map focused on the countries of Asia with the exception of the Byzantine Empire, of which the Chinese name * (in Tibetan characters *Pu-lim*) was derived from Iranian language *From/Hrom* meaning Rome.

It is still unknown who drew the map, but there is a strong possibility that it was drawn by a Buddhist monk. The map was imported from Tang China into Japan in the Heian Period (794-1185). Unfortunately, the original of this map has been lost and it has been copied many times: it is uncertain to what extent the repeated copies reflect the lost original.

And what is worse, it is unclear where the last copy is kept now. We can only provide a blurred photo of the last copy. The plates below reproduce a photo of the last copy and a sketch of it, drawn by Japanese scholar Teramoto Enya and printed in his thesis. Nevertheless, the piece retains great value as a map of the world as conceived during the Tang dynasty.

Please note: The Japanese personal names are written in the Japanese way in which the surname precedes the given name.

Reference:

Teramoto Enya, “On the relationship of Japanese history and Tibet during the Tu-fan times”, *Journal of the Otani*, 1931, 12-14, pp.44-83.

- “弘林”

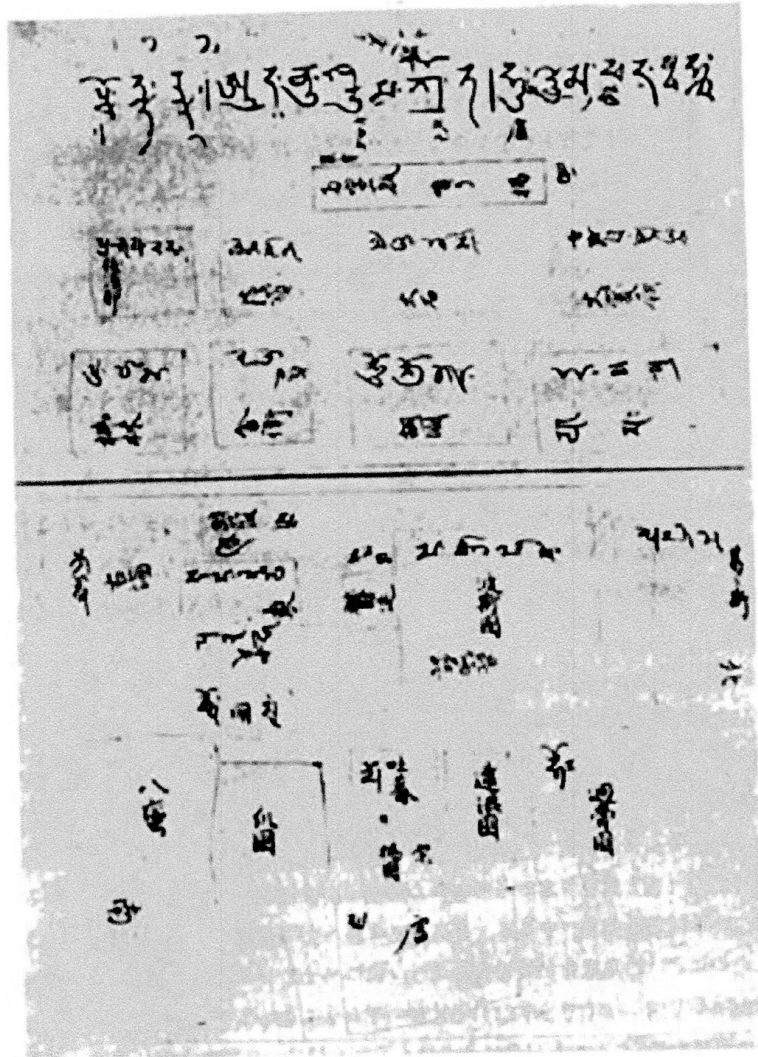


図1 今本1931年論文の口絵より転載

