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Peter Zieme

**An Old Uighur Fictional Letter Supposedly
Written by Prince Gautama from a Fragment
in the Serindia Collection at the IOM, RAS**

Abstract: In this paper the Old Uighur fragment SI 4bKr 11 (SI 4028) of the Serindia Collection at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, the Russian Academy of Sciences is edited together with notes. Its content are rather peculiar and shed some light on the attitude of Uighur monks towards their Buddhism.

Key words: Old Uighur, Buddhist culture, fiction, rare words

The recto side of fragment SI 4bKr 11 (SI 4028) of the Serindia Collection at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) of the Russian Academy of Sciences is part of a copy of the 菩薩瓔珞本業經 *Pusa yingluo benye jing* (“Gem-Necklace Scripture of Bodhisattvas”) attributed to Zhu Fonian.¹

The verso side is a remarkable testimony to the activities of Old Uighur Buddhist monks. From left to right the leaf can be divided into four sections. **A** is the concluding passage of an Old Uighur Buddhist text, **B** is a colophon, **C** is a part of a loan contract, and **D** is the transcription of a Chinese phrase in Uighur script. Before coming to **A**, which is the main subject of this paper, I shall discuss the other sections briefly.

Section B (colophon)

Section **B** was introduced by D. Matsui.² The text of this colophon can be read as follows.

- (10) kwyskw yyl 'ltync 'y pyr ynkyq' pw t'vq'c kwyn t' mn
- (10) küskü yıl altınč ay bir yaŋıka bo tavgaç kön-tä m(ä)n
- (11) <t> t'qycwq twtwnk qy 'yrykyp 'wlwrwp 'yky k'zyk ky'
- (11) <t> takıçok tutuŋ k(ı)y-a irikip olurup iki kâzig-k(i)y-ä

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¹ T. 1485, vol. 24, pp. 1014b12–29.

² Further notes in MATSUI 2004, 58, 61, 66.

(12) py[]dym cyn 'wl 'zkw ym' 'rm'z 'wl typ pytydym cyn t'kynwr mn
 (12) bitidim čın ol äzüg ymä ärmäz ol tep bitidim čın täginür m(ä)n

“In the year of mouse, in the sixth month, on the first day. On this Chinese scroll I, Takıçok(?)³ Tutuñ K(1)ya, sitting about lazily,⁴ only wrote a couple of lines. It is true; it is not wrong. It is true, I affirm.”

Section C (loan contract)

(13) qwyn yyl 'wycwnc ''y vyty ykrmy k' m'nk'
 (13) koyn yıl üçünč ay yeti ygrmikä maña
 (14) smpwdw twtwnk q' ''syq q' kwymws krk'k
 (14) s(a)mbodu tutuñ-ka asıg-ka kümüş kargäk

“Sheep year, third month, on the seventeenth. I, S(a)mbodu Tutuñ, was in need of silver on interest.”

Section D

D is a separate section (lines 15 to 19). This passage edited by M. Shōgaito⁵ contains the Chinese phrase 四種族性清淨諸勝利利王帝 followed by a transcription in Uigur script and an Old Uighur translation.

The first attempt at translating the Chinese phrase — *tegmä tört türlüg tözüg uguştıg kitärtäči t⁶* (ll. 15–16) — was determined to be wrong, without a mark of deletion. In his new attempt the writer started with a transcription of the Chinese sounds into Uighur script, after which he translated the phrase. Here I present the text in the following table.⁷

³ t'qycwq or t'mycwq. I follow Matsui's reading although it is not definitive.

⁴ Translated as *kokoro-o itame* 心を痛め “in sorrow” (MATSUI 2004, 53, 66). The verb *irik-* (*erik-*?, ED, 226a) has the meaning “to be disgusted, bored”. M. Erdal (OTWF, 366) reminds of Maḥmūd al-Kāšğarī's *ir-* “to be lonely”, but Clauson combines *ir-* and *irik-*. In Kirgiz (JUDACHIN 1965, 461b) the verb *irik-* has two meanings “to be bored” and “to be lazy”. I think that the latter meaning fits the phrase above, expressing the self-deprecating attitude of scribes: “sitting about lazily I only wrote a couple of lines”, or in a more natural rendering as Nicholas Sims-Williams suggested to me: “owing to my laziness I only wrote a couple of lines”. The expression “two lines” is probably not meant literally: it should rather be interpreted as “a couple of lines”.

⁵ SHŌGAITO 1997, 28–29. Mentioned in MATSUI 2010, 700.

⁶ Emended to *ta[rkartači]*.

⁷ For details see SHŌGAITO 1997, 28–29. In lines 3 and 10 the characters were not transcribed. Line 12: The phrase beginning with *töpüdä abižek* “*abhišek* on the head” definitely refers to the emperor or ruler (*wangdi*), cf. RÖHRBORN 2015, 5–6.

	Chinese character	Pinyin	Transcription in Uighur script	OU translation
(1)	四	<i>si</i>	<i>sy</i>	<i>tört</i>
(2)	種	<i>zhong</i>	<i>cwnk</i>	<i>türlüg</i>
(3)	族	<i>zu</i>	—	<i>tözlüg</i>
(4)	性	<i>xing</i>	<i>sy</i>	<i>uguşluglarnuñ arasınta</i>
(5)	清	<i>qing</i>	<i>sy</i>	<i>arığı</i>
(6)	淨	<i>jing</i>	<i>sy</i>	<i>süzüki üzä</i>
(7)	諸	<i>zhu</i>	<i>cw</i>	<i>alkuta</i>
(8)	勝	<i>sheng</i>	<i>şynk</i>	<i>utmiş yegädmiş</i>
(9)	刹利	<i>chali</i>	<i>c' r ly</i>	<i>kşatrik</i>
(10)	王	<i>wang</i>	—	
(11)	帝	<i>di</i>	<i>ty</i>	
(12)				<i>töpüdä abižek</i>

The *kşatriya* is the name of the second in the system of the four castes in India, but in the phrase above it is placed first. This deviates from the traditional sequence of the four castes, i.e. *brāhmana* (priests), *kşatriya* (military), *vaiśya* (farmers, traders), *śūdra* (serfs), but agrees with a passage in the Old Uighur *Insadi-sūtra*: *kiştirik braman uz tarıgçı bo tört uguşluglar* “those who belong to the four castes, i.e. *kşatriya*, *brāhmana*, artisans, farmers”.⁸ While the artisans are chosen as representatives of the third caste, the farmers were regarded as the lowest caste. In at least four Chinese texts, too, the sequence begins with *kşatriya*: T. 374, T. 375, T. 397, T. 1763.⁹

Section A

Finally, the first section (A) on the verso side of the fragment is the most interesting and most difficult.

Transliteration and transcription

- (01) [] mn pww¹⁰ pys 'şwn nwk ywl 'ycyn t' k[]
 (01) [] m(ä)n bo beş ažun-nuñ yol için-tä-k[i]

⁸ BT III 119.

⁹ T. 374, vol. 12, p. 372a2, T. 375, vol. 12, p. 611b24, T. 397, vol. 13, p. 359b8, T. 1763, vol. 37, p. 390b4.

¹⁰ Peculiar spelling pww for *bo* “this”.

(02) q' t'k +y+ y'nm'q'y mn q'c'n pwq'n qwdyn pwlm'qyn c' q'pylp'q
k' []

(02) -ka-tägi yanmagay-m(ä)n kačan burhan kutin bulmagın-ča kapılıbak
k' []

(03) t'qy tydymym q'nkym šwdwt'n' 'ylyk pl'k 'wytwnwr mn ''r'swd
'wyk lp¹¹

(03) -takı tidimim kañım šudotana elig b(ä)läk ötünür-m(ä)n arašud
öñ-l(ü)g

(04) kwyk s'cyqmy¹² 'wykw m'q' m'y q'dwn q' pl'k 'wydwnwr mn
pwqwnwm t'qy mwrwm

(04) kök saçımın ögüm maha-may hatun-ka b(ä)läk ötünür-m(ä)n bogu-
num-takı murmu

(05) -twmwmy kwykwyym ''k'm q''dwn q' pwyr'l'kym t'ky pwyr'l'k swk
kwk myn ''mr'q

(05) -tum{um}nı kügüyim äkäm hatun-ka *bürläkim-täki *bürläk
sünjök-(ü)min amrak

(06) q''dwnwm y'š t'ryq q' p'l'k 'ydwr mn. ''lty ywz twym'n 'yck'k
qyrqyn

(06) hatunum¹³ yaš-tarih-ka bäläk idur-m(ä)n . altı yüz tımän inčgä kırkın

(07) q'nym q' cwt'm'nym ''s'n kwyl'yw ''ytw 'ydwr mn 'lty yyl twynyn

(07) hanım¹⁴-ka čutamanım äsän-güläyü aytu idur-m(ä)n altı yıl tönin

(08) twysq'c'r lyq ''cyq 'mkk 'mk'nwr mn pwq'n qwdyn 'wycwn

(08) dwyšq'č'r-lıg açıg ämgäk ämgänür-m(ä)n bu(r)han kutin üčün

(09) pw s'kymwny ny mn 'ydswyn twtwk qy 'pytydym cyn 'wl

(09) bo šakimuni-nı m(ä)n 'ydswyn tutuñ k(ı)y-a bitidim čın ol

Translation

I will not return into [...] of the ways of these five existences as long as I do not attain Buddhahood.

I offer as a present my diadem on the headgear k' [] to my father, King Šuddhodana.

I offer as a present my *rājavarta* coloured blue hair to my mother, Queen Mahāmāya.

¹¹ The word 'wyk lp seems to be written in error for *öñ-lüg*.

¹² In s'cyqmy the dots cannot be explained.

¹³ Written q'dtwn.

¹⁴ As *hanım* is difficult in this position, it is perhaps better to assume that an *l*-hook was forgotten so that we should read *kırkın-larım*.

I send as a present my *mumurt* on my knuckle to my aunt and my elder sister, the ladies, and my **bürläk* bones in my **bürläk* to (my) beloved wife Yaśodharā.

Asking about their health, I send my *cūdāmaṇi* to my 600 times 10,000 tender servant girls.

I suffer the bitter pains of *duṣkaracaryā* suffering through six years for Buddhahood.

I, Idsön Tutuṅ k(1)ya, wrote this Śākyamuni (text). This is true.

General notes

The “I” of this fictional letter can be none other than Prince Gautama himself. The actual writer was an Old Uighur monk by name ’ydswyn Tutuṅ. That name consists of two elements: ’ydswyn + *tutuṅ*. The latter is the title *dutong* 都統 widely used in Buddhist Uighur clerical circles. The first part is certainly also derived from Chinese, but only its second syllable can be identified — coming from *quan* 泉 “fountain”, while the source of the first syllable ’y, which can be read as *i*, *ay*, *ni* and other variants, remains unclear.

What was the purpose of this fictional letter? There is no easy answer. I would like to think of it as a special act of devotion, but possibly it was nothing more than a writing exercise.

Notes on some words

(02) q’pyp’q may be read **kapılbak*. This word can be regarded as the original form of *kalpak* denoting in Turkic languages “head-cover, hat”, etc.¹⁵ The modern Turkish form reflects a reduction and metathesis from **kapılbak* > **kalpbak* > *kalpak*. A similar formation is *kögüsbäg* in the Old Uighur Family archive.¹⁶

(03) *tidim* “crown”¹⁷ is ultimately derived from Greek διάδημα “crown” and means here in all probability the *ūrṇa* on Buddha’s forehead.

(03–04) ’’r’swd. If read *arašud*, this seems to be a previously unnoted spelling of *ražvart*¹⁸ < Skt. *rājavarta* “lapislazuli”, the colour of Buddha’s *uṣṇīṣa*, here *sač* “hair”. Cf. *ražawrt öṅlüg kök sači*¹⁹.

¹⁵ Cf. TMEN No. 1506; ED, 584b–585a; ESTJa 1997, 234–236.

¹⁶ UMEMURA 1987, l. 29; ED, 714b (*köküzme* “breastplate”).

¹⁷ ED 456b: “the crown which a bride wears on her wedding night”, thus recorded in the Family archive, cp. UMEMURA 1987, l. 87.

¹⁸ KARA 2001, 106.

¹⁹ GENG and KLIMKEIT 1988, ll. 2000–2001 (“his *rājavarta*-blue hair”, mark of Buddha).

(04) Mahāmāya,²⁰ Prince Gautama's mother.

(04–05) mwrmtwm. If one regards the last two letters wm as dittography one gets mwrmt. The most similar word is mwrmt in Mainz 724 verso 51 = BT.XXIII.D093: *ärtini-lig murmut* meaning *ratnamālā* 寶鬘 “jewel necklace”.

(05) *kügüy* “aunt”, this seems to be the first occurrence in an Old Uighur text.²¹ The following word is *ākā* which can also mean “aunt”.²² Buddha's maternal aunt and adoptive mother was Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (Pāli) / Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī (Sanskrit). In a famous story she made a special dress for the Buddha, but the Lord accepted it only after long discussions. This story is told at length in the Old Uighur *Maitrisimit nom bitig*.²³

(05) pwyrl'kym t'ky pwyrl'k swk kwk myn. The first word **bürläk* (pwyrlwk) denotes something like a head-cover, to be explained from **bürülüg/bürülük* “something twisted” <*bürül-* “to be twisted, folded”²⁴; swk kwk myn = *sünük(ü)min* “my bones”. But the expression as a whole is enigmatic: **bürläkim-täki *bürläk sünük(ü)min* “my **bürläk* bones in my **bürläk*”.

(05–06) *amrak hatun yaš-tarh* “beloved lady Yaśodharā”, the wife of Prince Gautama. The name is written in a strange way: y'š t'ryq. In the *Maitrisimit nom bitig* the spelling is y'swd'r'.²⁵

(06) *altı yüz tümän* “600×10,000”. In the *Maitrisimit nom bitig* we find *altı tümän kunčuy hatunlar*²⁶ “60,000 princess ladies”.

(06) *ičgak kırkın*, taken as it is, would mean “demon girls”, but probably the scribe miswrote the first word, intending to put *inčgä* “tender”. The compound *inčgä kırkın* meaning “servant girls (of the harem)” is known from several texts.

(07) As the paper is torn here, I cannot propose a definite reading, but it seems to be something like cw(n)t' rksy. Although I am assuming *cūḍāmaṇi* here, I should point out that the letters can also be interpreted as **cūḍārakṣa* or **cūḍālakṣa*, if the *l*-hook was forgotten or not written. The latter would mean “the mark of *cūḍā*”, Skt. has *cūḍā-lakṣaṇa* as the name of the “tonsure”,²⁷ but that is not something that can be sent as a gift. Skt. *cūḍāmaṇi* is

²⁰ Cf. GENG and KLIMKEIT 1988, ll. 1299, 2226 (*maxamaya qatun*).

²¹ LI 1996.

²² ED, 100b “junior (paternal) aunt” and “elder sister”, later only “elder sister”.

²³ GENG and KLIMKEIT 1988, ch. IV.

²⁴ ED, 365b.

²⁵ GENG and KLIMKEIT 1988, ll. 1330, 2456, 2484, 2488; *yažotara* l. 2474.

²⁶ GENG and KLIMKEIT 1988, l. 2496.

²⁷ MW, 401a.

the precious stone in the *uṣnīṣa*. In Old Uighur it is known as the name of a jewel only from the story of *Sadāprarudita and Dharmodgata*.²⁸

anıy kántiniñ taşında yana tågirmiläyü

alp tap(i)şguluk čintamani čudamani biliñn(a)mani brahmamanita ulatı ärdinilär üzä

aralaşturu etmiş yetirär kat tamlıg

*adinčig körklä yetirär kat kalıkları ısırgalıkları ol ::*²⁹

“Outside of his city around there were extremely beautiful castles and palaces with seven layers each with seven walls each alternatively³⁰ decorated with jewels like *cintāmaṇi*, *cūḍāmaṇi*, (*śakrā*)*bhilaḡnamaṇi*, *brahmāmaṇi* that are difficult to find.”

(07) *töñin* may be a variant of the postposition *töni*.³¹

(08) *twysq'c'r* < kt. *duṣkaracaryā* “arduous practices”, the term for “asceticism”, especially that of Buddha when he left home and spent six years leading an ascetic life.³² In this spelling in Uighur script we see another rare example of the letter q for a Sanskrit front k.³³

Abbreviations

BT III: Berliner Turfantexte III

BT XXIII: Berliner Turfantexte XXIII

DDB: Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

ED: Etymological Dictionary

ESTJa: Etimologičeskii slovar' tiurkskikh iazykov

GOT: Grammar of Old Turkic

MW: M. Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary

OTWF: Old Turkic Word Formation

T.: Taishō Buddhist Canon

TMEN: Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen

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²⁸ TEKIN 1980, 190.

²⁹ ll. 070–072.

³⁰ OTWF, 816.

³¹ ZIEME 1992.

³² Cf. DDB; KUDARA and ZIEME 1997, 77.

³³ RÖHRBORN 1988.

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Photographs of SI 4bKr 11 (SI 4028)

//Photograph 1//

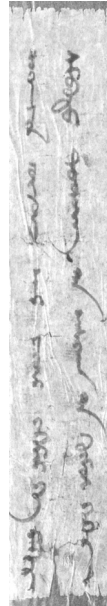


Section A

//Photograph 2// //Photograph 3//

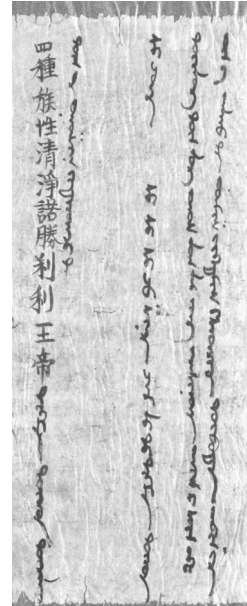


Section B



Section C

//Photograph 4//



Section D