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Peter Zieme

**Fragments of the Old Uighur *Maitrisimit nom bitig*  
in St. Petersburg, Helsinki and Berlin**

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*Abstract:* The author examines some small Old Uighur fragments belonging to three collections of Turfan texts that provide parallels to passages of the extant full versions of the *Maitrisimit nom bitig*, an important Buddhist text on the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya known only from Tocharian and its Old Uighur translation.

*Key words:* Turfan, Maitreya, Maitrisimit, Old Uighur literature, Old Uighur texts

The *Maitrisimit nom bitig* is one of the oldest and best known Old Uighur texts.<sup>1</sup> It was translated from Tocharian and occupies a prominent place in Old Uighur literature, as it is not only well translated but appears at the very beginning of Old Uighur literature. Manuscripts that were written during the 10th and 11th centuries were found at different sites of the Turfan oasis. Today they are preserved in several collections of Central Asian texts. The majority of manuscripts from Sängim and Murtuk are housed in the Berlin Collection, others in the Xinjiang Museum of Urumqi.<sup>2</sup> One fragment belongs to the Otani Collection in the Library of the Ryūkoku University in Kyoto.<sup>3</sup> A slightly different manuscript was found in 1959 near Hami (Qomul), in the village of Tömürti. While this manuscript is preserved in the Xinjiang Museum, some 436 small fragments, probably from the same manuscript that came to light only in 2006 near the village of Närnasi, are owned by the Cultural Centre of Qomul.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, there are two groups of manuscripts, one from the Turfan oasis with the manuscripts from Sängim and Murtuk, the other consists of the fragments

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<sup>1</sup> A new comparative edition of all *Maitrisimit nom bitig* fragments is the aim of the project “Gesamtedition der alttürkischen Überlieferungen zur Maitreya-Literatur” at the “Seminar für Turkologie und Zentralasienkunde” of the University of Göttingen, cf. its website.

<sup>2</sup> ISRAPIL 2013.

<sup>3</sup> ZIEME 2000.

<sup>4</sup> ISRAPIL, LAUT, SEMET 2012/2013, 220–221.

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from Tömürti and Närnasi. While the latter ones may belong to one and the same manuscript, it is still debated how many manuscripts were written in Sängim and Murtuk or collected there.

In a recent paper, the authors reported for the first time that fragments of a manuscript from Sängim are also kept in St. Petersburg without giving any details.<sup>5</sup> Besides the pieces labelled as “Maitrisimit”, there are some small fragments in the Central Asian Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences<sup>6</sup> that can probably be regarded as parts of that text.

### St. Petersburg Fragments

Fragment SI 5129 (SI Kr IV 448) belongs to the so-called Krotkov Collection,<sup>7</sup> but there is no record about the exact site of its origin. It is a small part of a large *pustaka* leaf which might have been as large as those known from the Berlin Collection, probably about 50 cm wide. Whether it can be joined with another fragment of other collections, must be examined in future.

The fragment belongs to one of the “hell chapters” comprising large part of the Old Uighur *Maitrisimit nom bitig*. Among Old Uighur fragments<sup>8</sup> published so far, there is no direct evidence of both sections, but there is at least a probable candidate for the verso side.

#### Text of SI 5129 in transcription

(recto) [toyın]  
 (01) [-larnıŋ] köŋülläri ki[rsiz arı]g  
 (02) turug üçün köni ol k[uv]ragka  
 (03) kirür-lär : ötrü ol toyın-lar inčä  
 (04) tep ötüntilär : kim-lär sizlär nä  
 (05) ayıg kılınč kılıpan bo muntag  
 (06) [tamularta ]dip ol

<sup>5</sup> ISRAPIL, LAUT, SEMET 2012/2013, 220, fn. 2. Probably the authors thought of the items SI 4a Kr 48 and 49, SI O 40a, b, c for which the catalogue of UMEMURA, SHOGAITO, YOSHIDA, YAKUP 2002, 143, 159 gives the identification as “Maitrisimit”, but this is not the case.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to the responsible persons of the collections in St. Petersburg, Helsinki and Berlin for the opportunity to work with the Old Uighur texts housed there.

<sup>7</sup> N.N. Krotkov (1869–1921), consul in Urumqi, collected 4,070 text fragments.

<sup>8</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988b.



*Pl. 1.*

Turfan Collection of St. Petersburg. SI 5129 (SI Kr IV 448) recto



*Pl. 2.*

Turfan Collection of St. Petersburg. SI 5129 (SI Kr IV 448) verso

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“As [the monks’] hearts are [spotless and] clean, they enter this true convent(?). Then these monks requested: Who are you? What bad deeds have you done [to be born] in these [hells]. Hea[ring it(?)], they [...]”

(verso)

- (01) [ kama]gın anta [ölüp]  
 (02) ulug t[am]u-larda tugdumuz ta[mu]  
 (03) -ta kurtulup amtı bo kiçig tam  
 (04) -ularda tugmış ärür-biz : körün  
 (05) -lär bäglärim(i)z tämirliig örtlüg  
 (06) çomakların [ ]

“[Theref]ore, then [we died and] were born in large h[ell]s. Having escaped from the h[hells,] we are now reborn in these small hells. Look! Our lords [beat us on our heads] with flaming maces of iron. [...]”

The text of the verso side can be compared to the following passage on leaf 7 of the 22nd chapter<sup>9</sup> of the *Maitrisimit nom bitig*.<sup>10</sup> (Pl. 73 = Mainz 975 recto 3–13) *ol tıltagın biz tıtsılarıg boş idmiş üçün anta ölüp kamağın tamuda tugdumuz : tamudın ozup bo kiçig tamular-da tugmış ärür biz : : körünlär bäglärim(i)z munta tugup örtänür yalar-biz : bahşı boltaçılar açarılar öñrä yoriyur-biz yañ udu tıtsi boltaçı-lar örtlüg yalınlıg ät’özin örtlüg çomaklar tuta bizni tokıyu inçä tep teyürlär*.<sup>11</sup> “Because of this, as we disregarded<sup>12</sup> pupils, we died there and altogether were born in hell. Released from (that) hell, we were born in these small hells. Look, our lords! We were born here, and we are all in flames and burn. As those who were masters, *ācāryas*, we go ahead, and those who are pupils following the rule<sup>13</sup> hold with their flaming and burning bodies flaming maces and beat us saying thus.”

As one finds only the highlighted words of Mainz 975 in the St. Petersburg fragment, it remains doubtful whether this is really a variant of the *Maitrisimit* text, but the probability is very high as the following table shows.

<sup>9</sup> *iki otuzunç üliş yeti ptr.*

<sup>10</sup> TEKIN 1980, Pl. 73.

<sup>11</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988b, 92.

<sup>12</sup> It is a special phrase *boş id-* “boş göndermek”, cf. Şen 2010, 62.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase *yañ udu* translated by Ş. Tekin “[uns als ihrem] Vorbild folgend” (TEKIN 1980, I, 185) was slightly changed by GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988b, 92: “und das Gefolge”. But I think that Tekin’s translation fits better, as it is improbable that *udu* can be understood as a noun.

Mainz 975	SI 5129
anta ölüp	[kama]gın anta [ölüp]
kamagın tamuda tugdumuz	ulug t[am]u-larda tugdumuz
tamudın ozup	ta[mu]-ta kurtulup
bo kiçig tamular-da tugmış ärür biz	amtı bo kiçig tam-ularda tugmış ärür-biz
körüñlär bağlärim(i)z	körüñ-lär bağlärim(i)z
munta tugup örtänür yalar-biz : bahşı boltaçılar açarilar öñrä yoriyur-biz yañ udu tisi boltaçı-lar örtlüg yalınlig ät'özin	(omitted?)
ört-lüg çomaklar tuta bizni tokiyu	tämirlig örtlüg çomakların

The word *kılıpan* contains the converb suffix *-XpAn*, which is rare, especially in Buddhist texts. Another example is *kör-üpän*<sup>14</sup> in a Sängim manuscript. Further, it occurs in the augmented form *uk-upanın*.<sup>15</sup>

The order of recto and verso sides is not clear. But considering that, before leaf 7, a large gap of about 90 lines<sup>16</sup> must be reckoned with, it is very probable that the recto side contains the question of the monks. The editors of the Göttingen project will hopefully find a proof of my assumption.

Another fragment of the Krotkov Collection, SI 4433 (SI Kr I 348) is too small to allow its exact placing in the *Maitrisimit nom bitig*. The handwriting of this fragment is similar to the manuscripts of the *Maitrisimit nom bitig*, but this fact is not conclusive *per se*, especially because the verso side contains no text. Even if it is a piece of a scroll, one cannot exclude the possibility of its belonging to this text.<sup>17</sup> While, in the *Suttanipāta*, Ajita is, like Metteya, the Buddha's disciple,<sup>18</sup> later Ajita became an epithet of Maitreya.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. TEKIN 1980, I, 231, pl. 106, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. TEKIN 1980, I, 71, pl. 23, 13.

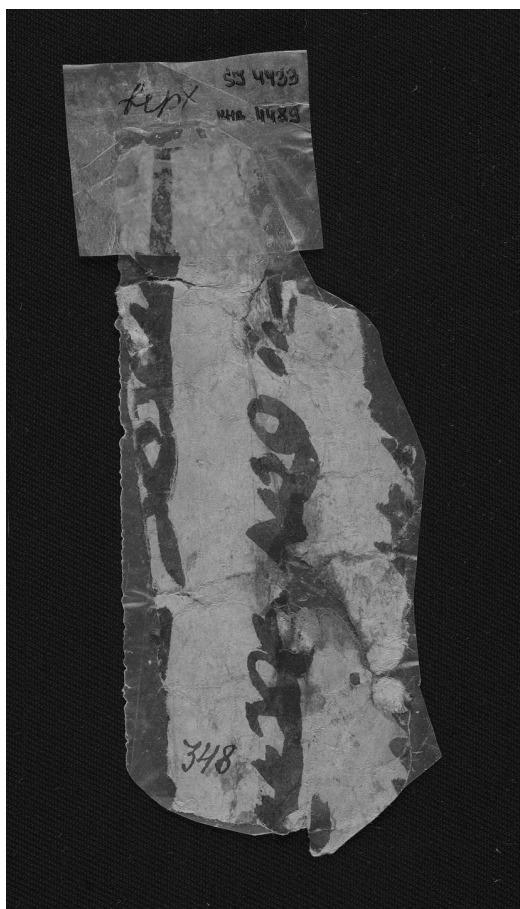
<sup>16</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988b, 91.

<sup>17</sup> See the other case of a Berlin manuscript (U 4963).

<sup>18</sup> The fragments of an Old Uighur translation of the *Pārāyānasūtra* contain the passage from the *Suttanipāta* in which Ajita and Metteya [Skt. Maitreya] put their questions to the Buddha (see ZIEME 1997).

<sup>19</sup> NATTIER 1988, 38, fn. 12.





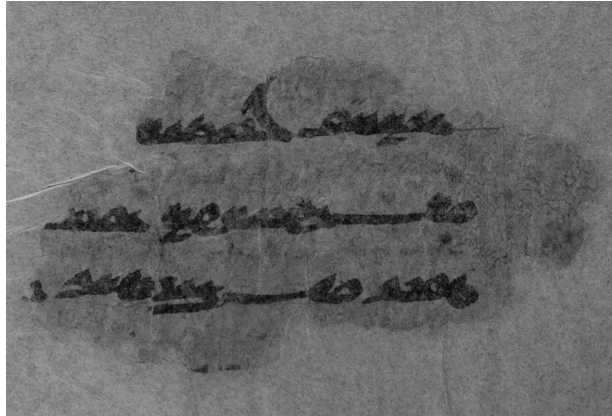
Pl. 3.

Turfan Collection of St. Petersburg. SI 4433 (SI Kr I 348) recto

This is also the case in the *Maitrisimit*. Thus both texts are candidates. Since all places where Ajita occurs in the currently known *Maitrisimit* text fragments have no match to any of the few other words, the question of identifying this small fragment remains unsettled.

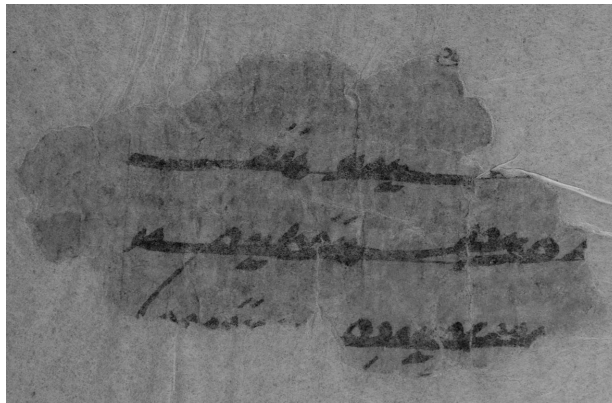
#### Text of SI 4433 (SI Kr I 348) in transcription

- (01) [        ] ačiti [                    ] [        ] Ajita [            ]  
 (02) [        ] : beš türl[üg        ] [        ] five kin[ds        ]  
 (03) [        ] : mn // 'w'[        ] [        ]



*Pl. 4.*

Mannerheim Collection of Helsinki. M14E recto



*Pl. 5.*

Mannerheim Collection of Helsinki. M14E verso

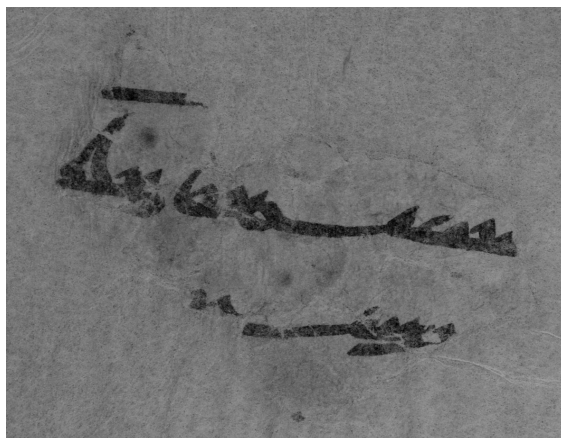
### **Fragments of the Mannerheim Collection in Helsinki<sup>20</sup>**

The following two fragments of the Mannerheim Collection in Helsinki resemble the Sāngim manuscript of the *Maitrisimit*. But, due to its meagre text, there is little chance to locate them in the *Maitrisimit nom bitig*. From the few legible words one can guess that “all monks” will keep “true belief” and venerate the “Noble Maitreya”.

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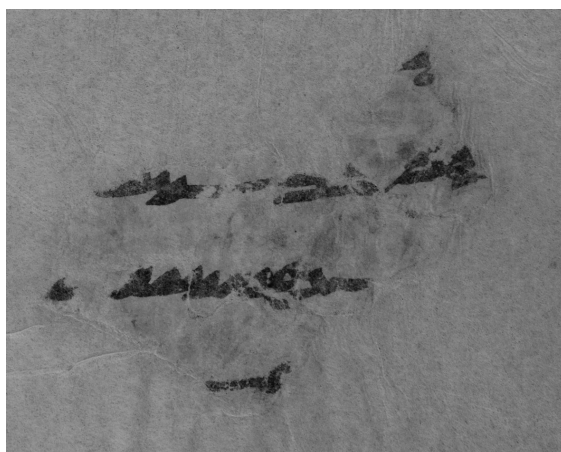
<sup>20</sup> The Mannerheim Collection is deposited in The National Library of Finland, and its owner is The Finno-Ugrian Society. I express my thanks to Oguchi Masashi for sharing with me his photographs.

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*Pl. 6.*

Mannerheim Collection of Helsinki. M14F recto



*Pl. 7.*

Mannerheim Collection of Helsinki. M14F verso

### **M14E in transcription**

(recto)

(01) alku dentar [                      süz]

(02) -ük köğül ör[it                      ]

(03) tözün maitri [                      ]

(04) [    ]

(verso, *marginē*) pw<sup>21</sup>  
 (01) [ ]-lar-ka  
 (02) [ ] ö]zümin kutlug  
 (03) [ ] ančulayu sakınıp  
 (04) [ ]

#### M14F in transcription

(recto)  
 (01) [ ]  
 (02) [ ] inčä tep tedi [ ]  
 (03) [ ]ym'n yw[ ]

(verso)  
 (01) [ ]l[ ]  
 (02) [ ]wy ymä s[ ]  
 (03) [ ] körsär '[ ]  
 (04) [ ]č [ ]

#### A Fragment of the Turfan Collection in Berlin

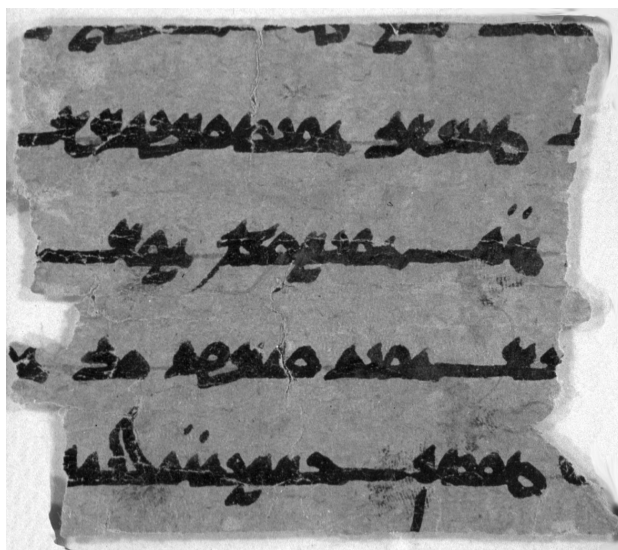
In the following, I turn to a passage of the first leaf of the 10th chapter of the Tömürti manuscript: *anta ken šamnu t(ä)ñri ötügingä t(ä)ñri t(ä)ñrisi šakimun burxan čap(a)li atl(ı)g yemišliktä ölümlüg šamnug utup isig özin idıp ikilä üç ay köni adištıt üzä tuta y(a)rlukadukta tözün maitri bodis(a)v(a)t t(ä)ñri t(ä)ñrisi burxanta öñräräk yalıjuk ät'özin idalap tužit t(ä)ñri yerintä tugdi.*<sup>22</sup> “When the god of gods Śākyamuni Buddha on request of God Māra in the garden called Cāpāla had conquered the Death-Māra and was giving up his life and graciously retained it again for three months through adhiṣṭhita, the Noble Maitreya Bodhisattva gave up his human body earlier than the god of gods Buddha and was reborn in the Tuṣita heaven’s land”.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> In Uighur cursive script.

<sup>22</sup> Tömürti ms. X, 1b1–9.

<sup>23</sup> It is comparable to the life of Buddha, cf. WALDSCHMIDT 1982, 224: “Darauf antwortete der Erhabene Mara, dem Bösen: ‘Gib dir keine Mühe weiter, o Böser, bald werde ich ins Nirwana eingehen! Nach Verlauf von drei Monaten wird der Pfadvollender von hinnen scheiden.’ So gab der Erhabene im Tschapala-Heiligtum klar und bei vollem Bewußtsein das Dasein auf, und als er so tat, entstand ein gewaltiges, schreckliches, haarsträubendes Erdbeben, und der Donner krachte.”

Parts of this phrase occur in fragment U4963 of the Turfan Collection of the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.<sup>24</sup> According to the old signature (T), it originates from Toyuq, so far not known as a place where *Maitrisimit* fragments were found. It is a fragment of a book-scroll. If the identification of this fragment as part of the *Maitrisimit nom bitig* can be ascertained, it would be the first specimen of a *Maitrisimit* manuscript that definitely is not from a *pustaka*.



Pl. 8.  
Turfan Collection of Berlin. U 4963 recto

#### Text of U4963<sup>25</sup> in transcription

- (01) [...] [o]l k[...]k[ ]l<sup>26</sup> [urunčaq tuta tąginti : anta ken]  
 (02) [šmn]u t(ä)ŋri ötüginä [šakimun burhan čapali atlg yemišlik-tä]  
 (03) [...] -ka ölüm-lüg [šmnug utup]  
 (04) [is]ig özünüzni id[ıp ikilä üç ay köni adištīt]  
 (05) [üz]ä tuta y(a)rlikadın[ız...]

<sup>24</sup> The verso side bears the old entry T II T., while the label on the glass has T II T 503.

<sup>25</sup> The verso side remained empty, as is normal with scrolls, later it was used to write down some phrase of a document that contains in its second line the well-known term *kuanpo* “official linen”.

<sup>26</sup> Unclear.

The following table may show how the two texts are related to one another. The identical words are highlighted in bold letters.

Tömürti ms. X 1b	U 4863
anta ken šamnu <b>t(ä)ŋri ötügingä</b> t(ä)ŋri t(ä)ŋrisi šakimun burxan	[... šmn]u <b>t(ä)ŋri ötügiŋä</b> [...]
čap(a)li atl(1)g yemišliktä <b>ölümlüg</b> šamnug utup	-ka <b>ölüm-lüg</b> [...]
<b>isig özin ıdıp</b> ikilä üç ay köni adištıt üzä <b>tuta y(a)rlikadukta</b>	<b>[is]ig özüŋüzni ıd[ıp ... üz]ä</b> <b>tuta y(a)rlikadı[ız ...]</b>
tözün maitri bodisvt	

With some hesitation I suggest that U4963 is part of another manuscript of the *Maitrsimit nom bitig*. The corresponding passages are striking, but still some deviations are unsurpassable. In line 3 of U4963, there is an unexpected suffix *-ka*. Another problem is the shift from the narrative style (3rd person) in the Tömürti text to the addressing style (you) in U4963.

#### Further Notes on Maitreya

In their editions of the 10th and 11th chapters of the Tömürti manuscript, the authors pointed out how essential the descent of Maitreya from the Tu-šita and his birth on earth are; these events present the culminating phases of the whole story.<sup>27</sup> In the following, I discuss some passages of chapter XI.

a) In the passage which describes Maitreya's stay in his mother's womb we read: *ög karnınta olurup kaltı mončuk ärdni kaš atlag agıda urmiš osuglug kalı[n] k[an] kir yamka arıtı yukulmaz*<sup>28</sup> "Maitreya sits in the mother's womb as a pearl jewel wrapped into brocade called *kāśi*, totally not flawed by thick blood, dirt and dust".

The authors comment on the fourth word of 4b27, which they read *ärši*: according to the context, this word should denote a kind of fabric.<sup>29</sup> Now, instead of *ärši* one can read *agı*. As noted by Maḥmūd al-Kāšyarī, this *agı* has the special meaning "brocade".<sup>30</sup> What could fit Maitreya better?

<sup>27</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1987 and 1988a.

<sup>28</sup> Tömürti ms. XI.4a25–29.

<sup>29</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988a, 343, fn. 40.

<sup>30</sup> CLAUSON 1972, 78A.

b) At another place, the text has the following passage: *k(ä)ntü ät'özin hua yavişgu töltäklig ag(a)r yıdın tıkmış äv barkça sakınıp*.<sup>31</sup>

Two words have to be read, in my view, differently from the authors' reading: 'kr = *ag(a)r* instead of *ädgü* and *tıkmış* instead of *tugmış*. Considering these different spellings, one can translate the phrase as follows: "(She) envisages her own body as a house endowed with flower garlands and filled with *agaru*<sup>32</sup> fragrance".

c) A further sentence will be discussed here: *t(ä)ñrilär eligi hormuzta t(ä)ñri on ay kö[ni] t(ä)ñridäm tatag bodis(a)v(a)t morvantun(i)ñ [tü] tüpintin ät'öziñä kigürür*<sup>33</sup> "God Indra, the king of the gods, lets heavenly sweetness enter into his body for ten months from the ends of the chain of the bodhisattva".

In their note,<sup>34</sup> the authors point to the legend that Brahmā offers a drop of honey<sup>35</sup> to the Bodhisattva from a crystal bowl (*vaiḍūrya-bhājana*).<sup>36</sup> In this connection, one should consider Dieter Maue's explanation of *morvant*. He writes that this word can be understood as "chain", not "pearl", as sometimes assumed.<sup>37</sup>

d) In 2009, Jens Peter Laut edited the joint fragments U3798 + Mainz 1098.<sup>38</sup> He writes that their text is similar to the first leaf of chapter X of the Tömürti version. I read the text of U3798 + Mainz 1098 somewhat differently:

(recto)

- (01) ///y yüz [ ]  
 (02) ugrınta m[ ]  
 (03) [yer]tinčüdä [ärkän]<sup>39</sup> beş<sup>40</sup> kırk  
 (04) [ya]şınta burhan kutın bultı :  
 (05) beş älig yıl burhanlar  
 (06) işin işlädi kırk kırk<sup>41</sup>  
 (07) yıl yaşagu-[luk]<sup>42</sup> yaşın

<sup>31</sup> Tömürti ms. XI.6b22.

<sup>32</sup> RÖHRBORN 1977–1998, 62 (see *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 73 (1978), col. 329 ('kr in U3148)).

<sup>33</sup> Tömürti ms. XI.4b2–5.

<sup>34</sup> GENG, KLIMKEIT, LAUT 1988a, 343, fn. 44.

<sup>35</sup> This term is apparently the origin of Old Uighur *t(ä)ñridäm tatag*.

<sup>36</sup> WINDISCH 1908, 152.

<sup>37</sup> MAUE 2009, 297–298.

<sup>38</sup> LAUT 2009, 334.

<sup>39</sup> The emendation to [ärkän] follows similar patterns.

<sup>40</sup> LAUT 2009, 334, reads *tört* with question mark. But I believe the letters can be clearly read as *beş*, and one also expects the age of 35 for the moment of enlightenment.

<sup>41</sup> The editor has not read the word before *kırk*.

<sup>42</sup> The editor reads *yaşar*, but the parallel text clearly has *yaşagu*-[luk].

(08) kodup isig<sup>43</sup> [özin ]  
 (09) bardı<sup>44</sup> : s/// a/[ ]

(verso)

(01) [ ] aya[gka]  
 (02) tägim[lig täñri täñrisi bur]han isig  
 (03) özin [yavlak] ölümlüg  
 (04) šmnug alañurtı<sup>45</sup> üç ay kö[ni]  
 (05) tirigin yaşayu y(a)rılıkar : ötrü  
 (06) yag(ı)z yer ämgäkintä täpräyür  
 (07) kamša[yur] buluñ yınak oytan<sup>46</sup>  
 (08) [ ]dın ot  
 (09) [ünüp ] tägzinip karañgu<sup>47</sup>

The editor gave no translation, here is a trial version:

(recto)

“[...] hundred [...] at the time [of...] [...]when he was] in the world, he reached the Buddhahood when he was 35 years old. For 45 years, he accomplished the Buddhas’ deed. After 40 (plus) 40 years, he left (the world), [gave up] his life and went [...]”.

(verso)

“In his life, the Honou[rable, the god of gods, the Bud]dha weakened the [evil] death-Māra. For three months he graciously lived his life<sup>48</sup>. Then the brown earth in its suffering trembles and shakes all corners and ends. From caves [...] fire arises, [...] turns, dark [...]”.

There are two fragments in the Turfan Collection of Berlin with Sanskrit text on one side and Old Uighur on the other: U7248 and U7249.

The Old Uighur side of U7248 has the same text as the joint fragment edited by J.P. Laut. A comparative table may help to clarify this.

<sup>43</sup> The author has not read this word, he gave the transliteration ’’SYP.

<sup>44</sup> This word was transliterated as [ ]’DY.

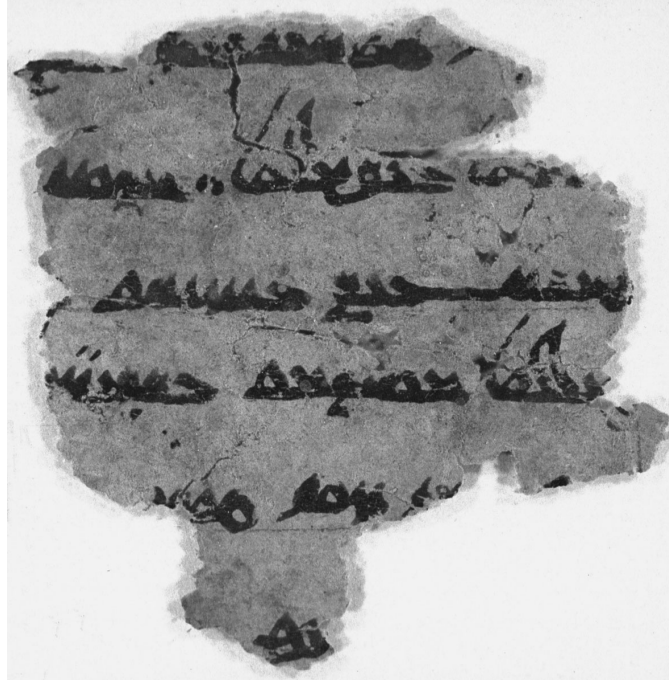
<sup>45</sup> The author transliterated ’’L[ ].

<sup>46</sup> The author transliterated ’WYT’.

<sup>47</sup> Not sure, perhaps *kork*[....?].

<sup>48</sup> A difficult passage.





Pl. 9.

Turfan Collection of Berlin. U 7248 recto

U7248	Mainz 1098 + U3798
(01) [ ] korkinčig akl[ančig šmnug]	
(02) [u]tup yegädip : anta [kırk]	<b>kırk</b>
(03) kırk yıl yaşagu-[luk yašin]	<b>kırk 07 yıl yaşagu-[luk] yašin</b>
(04) [t]idip italayu y(a)rlika[dı]	<b>08 kodup isig [özin berip] 09 bardı</b>
(05) [ ]öz-süz tu[ ]	
(06) [ ]bo [ ]	

The other fragment is U7249 (T II M 866) with some traces of words only.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Between the Sanskrit lines of the other side of U7249, there is an entry in Uighur script and language.



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