

NOTES ON AN UYĞUR TEXT

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The reading of Uyğur juridical documents is characterised by a number of rather tedious features – the repetitive nature of the phrases referring to the sale of various unspectacular commodities, the arrangements for the hire of land, the occasional phrase of which the words can be translated without the sense becoming any the clearer, and passages of the sort described even by Radloff as ‘wichtig Schwierigkeit’ or, on occasion, ‘recht unklar’. Add to these the fact that the writers of the documents, be they market-place scribes or the parties to the transactions themselves, seem to have had very limited ideas of calligraphy and style, and it becomes evident that the study of the medieval documents from Sinkiang can be both tedious and frustrating.

How pleasant it is, then, to come upon the text published by the late S. E. Malov in his *Pamyatniki Drevnetyurkskogo Yazyka* (ANSSSR, 1951) on pp. 201–4, with a facsimile of the original interleaved between pp. 200–1. Malov describes the text as unique in subject-matter. The writer of the document is a servant, who has apparently given his services to his master under the terms of a contract, only to find that, when the time comes for him to leave his master, his certificate of discharge has been “lost”, and that his master proposes to sell him. The document is a plea for justice, addressed to a court consisting of Chinese officials, and is interesting not only for its content but also for its language. It is unfortunate that Malov’s work was not of such a nature as to permit of a more critical edition of this text. This paper will attempt to bring out some point of linguistic and general interest.

Some points remain, however, which have defied analysis, and leave significant gaps in the understanding of the text. The document is undated; its provenance is unknown; as are its present whereabouts. It has been an inevitable inconvenience to work from Malov’s facsimile, which is considerably reduced – in fact, even the size of the original is unknown. It has not proved possible to determine whether this is an Uyğur form of a document of Chinese type, or whether it implies the existence of an independent tradition of Uy-

9. yoriğay mu mn saqınıp, Tigüi tayşı⁷ başlap
10. Qıtay tayşı-larqa keñgeşser⁸ mn, Tigüi tayşı
11. m-a taqı öz-ke kişi-ler m-a, "yulup alayın⁹
12. boş qılayın", tiser. Bu begim, "Mn yulup alayın"
13. sağa burunça boş bitik bireyin", tip.
14. "Kuvañ miñ-niñ üskinte mn bar erkinçe¹⁰
15. mağa tapınıp yorız-un. M (un)ta soñ qalsar,
16. tört yolu boş bolup, köñülinçe toyın bolup,
17. il-ke qan-qa "buyan alqış birip yorız-un," tip
18. miñ begi-niñ temğa-sın qaqip mağa boş
19. bitik birip. Anta soñ mini yulup alıp
20. boş bitik m-a qolup aldı erti. Soñ
21. yoriyu, minteki¹² boş idmiş bitik-ni begim,
22. "Mağa birgil, mn yığayın¹³, yoq qılğay sn," tiser,

7. *tayşı*: Malov translates 'prince', referring to von Gabain, *Alttürkische Grammatik* (voc) where *tayşı* is derived from the Chinese 太子 'prince'. This etymology, unfortunately will not satisfy the requirements of this text, as 太子 means 'the eldest son of the Emperor' Von Gabain (Huen Tsang, voc., under *tutsi*) gives the alternative etymology 弟子 'scholar, and again, in the note to l. 1778, 太師 'great master', which would seem to be the same as Radloff (*Dict.* III, 770) طایش 'scribe' and Pavet de Courteille تایش écrivain; maître'. The last, however, can also mean 'assistant to a provincial governor', in which sense it seems most reasonable here.

8. *keñgeşser*: Malov reads *keñgenser*, which is not attested elsewhere.

9. *yulup alayın*: For an account of this hendiadys, see Radloff (*Dict.* I, 345, under *al-*, section 6. This expression, both here and in ll. 12 and 19, seems to imply the assumption of responsibility for a person, either as a 'ward of court' or as a free employee, as distinct from simple *al-* in ll. 30 and 34, referring to the acquisition of a slave.

10. *bar erkinçe*: Malov takes this expression to mean 'with all his strength', but this seems unsuitable for two reasons; firstly, the expression *küçüm yitmişinçe* of line 26, while not precluding all possibility of an alternative, renders it unnecessary; and secondly, in order to make his point, Malov is forced to punctuate with a full stop after *üskinte mn*, and to translate I am the Kuvañ. . . , which could only be rendered by. . . *üskinte erür mn*.

11. *il-ke qan-qa*: In the original, these words, both here and in line 32, are written in the margin. L. 31 is foreshortened in order to begin the next sentence thus.

12. *minteki*: Malov's translation 'nahodyashchijsya u menya' might mean either 'on my person' or 'in my possession'. In view, however, of the use of the plural *bitiklerni* in l. 24, this word may merely denote that the document in question was Bintuñ's copy of the agreement between his master and himself.

13. *yığayın*: Malov transcribes this word as *yuqayın* and gives *yıg-/yığ-* in his printed-out text. In his vocabulary, under *yuq-* but without reference to this passage, he gives the meaning 'to adhere'; in his translation, he gives 'to preserve'. The word is surely *yığ-* 'to collect, heap up, put together'.

23. ol bitik-ni m-a begim-ke birtim. Amtı
 24. ol bitik-ler-ni begim yaman qayu-ta qodup
 25. untdı. Kişike mu alsıqdı? Mini "alyuq
 26. sn", tip inç qılmadın turur. Mn küçük yitmiş-
 27. inçe iş küç qılıp tapınıp yazmışım yoq.
 28. Begim m-a maña yavuz yaman qılınmışı yoq.
 29. Negü¹⁵ iş-ke uğralsar¹⁴ mn, anındınbaru negü¹⁵
 30. m-a timişi yoq erti. Yana bir qul alğalı
 31. mini bilen keñgeleşip¹⁶ turur.
 32. İl qan adıña toyın bolup buyan birz-ün tip
 33. ujik boş bitik birip mini aldı erti.
 34. Yanturu satğalı almadı erti. Amtı, "Satarmn",
 35. tir ermiş. Beglerim buyan-layu tsuyurqayu
 36. yarlı qasar, köñülkerü¹⁷ uqa yarlıqaz-unlar.

TRANSLATION

L1. 1-4. The plea of me, Bintuñ, a distressed and humble supplicant, comes to the grace of my meritorious lords.

L1. 4-12. I, Bintuñ, since I have not left the house of Aday as I wished, being unable to finish his work, and since in my youth I studied writing and the Scriptures, think that in any case I may become a monk and live as befits a monk, and that if I appeal to the Chinese tayşıs headed by Tigüi tayşı he, and the others too, will say "I will take you (into my protection), and set you free".

14. *uğralsar*: Malov reads 'oğrılar', translating 'to turn to'. *Oğrıla-*, however, can only be a derivative of *oğrı* 'thief', which seems unlikely to be correct. It may be seen clearly enough from the facsimile that the ending of the word is *-s(a)r*.

15. *Negü...negü*: While the first *negü* 'what kind of' may be taken with the following conditional to mean 'whatever kind of', the second is not so easily explicable. It may perhaps be a hitherto unknown usage, or possible a scribal error, by which *neñ* has been mis-spelt. The probability of the latter is heightened by the following negative.

16. *keñgileşip*: Malov takes this to mean 'to extend, enrich oneself' deriving the verb form *keñi* 'broad, wide'. As, however, this interpretation requires *mini bilen* to be translated 'by means of me' it cannot be correct, as *bilen* is always comitative; 'by means of me' would have to be *mini öze*. The word is probably a form of *keñge-* /*keñgeş-*, (occurring in 1. 10 but with a different construction), but is elsewhere unattested.

17. *köñülkerü*: Malov reads *köñül kerü* 'opening (their) hearts', but the gerund of *ker-* 'to open' is *kere*. The word occurs in TT VB 65 (note), 69 and 70, and in Suv. 596.23. For the suffix *-ker* see von Gabain, *Altürkische Grammatik* para. 87.

Ll. 12-19. This master of mine said "I will take you (into my employment) and give you a certificate of discharge in advance". He gave me a certificate of discharge saying 'Let him serve me as long as I am Kuvay of the Miγ. If he remains (alive? healthy?) after that, let him be completely free, become monk as he wishes, and bring merit and praise to the Empire', and impressed upon it the seal of the Miγ begi.

Ll. 19-26. Then he took me (into his service), asked for my certificate of discharge and took it. Eventually, when my master said, of my copy of the document that was to set me free, "Give it to me, I will keep them together, you are likely to lose it", I gave that document to my master. Now my master has put those documents in a bad place and has forgotten. Have they been stolen by someone? He persists in saying of me "You have taken (them)".

Ll. 26-31. I have served and worked as hard as I could, and have done no wrong. My master has suffered no harm through me. To whatever work I have been put, he has said nothing. When about to buy a new slave he has consulted me.

Ll. 32-35. He gave me a certificate of discharge saying 'Let him become a monk and bring merit to the name of the Empire', and took me. He did not take me so as to sell me again. Now he has said: "I will sell (you)".

Ll. 35-36. When my lords exercise their merciful and gracious kindness, may they do so with compassion and understanding.