

A STUDY ON THE UIGHUR TEXT ABITAKI (4)

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Abstract: Recently, we found 25 folios of the so-called Abitaki Uighur text in the Beijing National Library. The word “Abitaki” (Chinese “Amituojing/Amitaking=Sanskrit Amitabha-sutra) is used only as a code name written in small letters on the left side of some folios of the manuscript; but it has no thing to do with the famous scripture “Amitabha-sutra” (one chapter, translated into Chinese by the famous Uighur scholar Kumarajiva in the 4th century AD). I hold that it belongs to a lost Buddhist Chinese book called “Da Bai Lian She Jing” (The Great Lotus Society Sutra) consisting of 4 chapters of the Pure Land School and it was copied in Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 AD). Here I study and publish another folio (belonging to 3rd chapter) of the text¹.

Keywords: Abitaki, Amitabha, School of Pure Land.

Uygur Metni Abitaki Üzerine Bir Çalışma (4)

Özet: Yakın zamanlarda, Pekin Ulusal Kütüphanesi'nde bir Abitaki Uygur metni olduğu söylenen 25 yapraklı metin bulduk. Bu metinde “Abitaki” sözcüğü (<Çince: Amituojing / Amitaking = Sanskritçe: Amitabha-sutra) bazı yaprakların sol tarafına küçük harflerle yazılmış bir şifre biçiminde göze çarpmaktadır. Ancak bu metnin “Amitabha-sutra” (bölümlerinden biri, M.S. 4. yüzyılda Çinceye tanınmış Uygur bilgini Kumarajiva tarafından çevrilmiştir) ile hiçbir ilgisi bulunmamaktadır. Benim görüşüme göre, bu metin “Da Bai Lian She Jing” (Büyük Lotus Sutra Grubu) adlı Çince yazılmış kayıp bir Budizm kitabına aittir. Bu kitapta Budizmin “Temiz Evren Okulu” (Pure Land School) görüşlerini aktaran 4 bölüm bulunmaktadır. Kitap, Yuan Hanedanlığı zamanına aittir. Bu yazıda, bulduğumuz metnin 3. Bölümünden bir yaprakla ilgili olarak yaptığım çalışma sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Abitaki, Amitabha, Temiz Evren Okulu.

Today only a small part of the Uighur Buddhist texts² has been discovered. Therefore, every newly unearthed manuscript (even in fragmentary form) is very precious for Turkic and Uighur philology.

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¹ The (1), (2) parts were published in Acta Orientalia Hungaricae, vol. 57 (2004), No. 1; vol. 59 (1) (2006). The (3) part is in print.

² For common knowledge on Uighur Buddhist literature, cf. my monograph “Uighur Buddhist Literature” published in “The Turks”, vol. 1, pp. 896-910, Yeni Türkiye, 2002, Ankara; The Turkish version was published in “Turkler”, cilt 3, pp. 786-800.

Our manuscript now is preserved at the Department of the books in Minority Languages of National Peking Library. The manuscript consists of 25 folios (50 pages) in the so-called “pustaka” form. It is ca. 27 x 21.5 cm in size. There are 10 or 11 lines of text on each side. The paper is thin and has become yellowish-brown. There are red lines at the top and bottom. Unlike the common Uighur Buddhist manuscripts in “pustaka” form, our manuscript has no circle and hole for threading (binding). In addition, all the names of Amitabha and other Gods are written in red color.

The manuscript is not complete. According to the extant folios keeping paginations, it seems to be a voluminous work consisting at least of 4 chapters. Among the 25 folios, 9 folios (18 pages) belong to the 3rd chapter, 9 folios (18 pages) belong to the 4th chapter, the remaining 7 folios (14 pages) are without paginations.

On the basis of the language of our text, I hold that it was written (or translated) in 10th-11th centuries. But the script and some orthographical peculiarities used in our manuscript show that this copy belongs to a later time—ca. 13th-14th centuries. The script used in our text is the Uighur regular script of the Mongol period. It does not distinguish between the letters q and gh, s and sh. Sometime we find a confounding of the letters t and d, s and z. This phenomenon always appears in Uighur texts of the Mongol-Yuan Dynasty (1279—1368 AD).

According to the title written in small letters on the left side of some folios, our book is called “Abitaki”. The word “Abitaki” should be the transcription of Chinese “Amituojing” (< Amitaking= Sanskrit Amitabha-sutra). After checking up with the Chinese version of this work (translated into Chinese by the famous Uighur-Kuchar Buddhist master Kumarajiva in the 4th century AD), we found that in content our manuscript has nothing to do with the Chinese Amitabha-sutra. Furthermore, the Chinese Amitabha-sutra is a short work consisting of only one chapter, whereas our text consists of as many as 4 chapters. Therefore, it is not a translation of the Amitabha-sutra, but another work belonging also to the Amitabha-cult. The word “Abitaki” here is not the title of the book, but is used only as a code name for the book.

On the basis of a fragmentary piece of the same work kept in Dunhuang Grottoes, Gansu province of China, which I personally investigated in 1983, I hold that the title of our text should be called “The Sutra-book of the Great White Lotus Society”. Because on one side of this small fragmentary piece, beside the code name “Abitaki” written in small Uighur script, there are also 5 Chinese characters “Da Bai Lian She Jing” (The Great White Lotus Society Sutra) written in red colour.

As we know, the “White Lotus Society” of Chinese Buddhism (a school of worshipping the Amitabha Buddha) formed early in the 4th century AD. by Hui-yuan, who with 123 notable literati swore to a life of purity before the image of Amitabha Buddha and planted white lotus as symbol in the pond of their temple.

This society later played a very important role in the development of the “Pure Land School” in the history of Chinese Buddhism. This school advocates that if their members always chant the name of Amitabha Buddha, after death they can go to the Sukhavati, i.e. Pure Land or Western Paradise.

Some scholars hold that the Pure Land School of Mahayana Buddhism and its main scriptures are formed under the Iranian influences. The word “Amitabha” in Sanskrit means “infinite light”. The Buddha Amitabha presides over a paradise of light inhabited by pure, stainless beings that are reborn there after chanting the name Amitabha.

According to Buddhist tradition, the main scriptures of the Pure Land School consists of the following 3 books:

1) Amitabha-sutra, also called “The Smaller Sukhavativyukha” (The Smaller Glorious Adornment of Sukhavati), 1 chapter. The book briefly describes the pleasurable aspects of Amitabha’s land and praise his virtues. It then explains that one who chants Amitabha’s name will be born in his paradise-land.

2) Amitayus-sutra (Book About the Buddha Infinite Life), also called “The Larger Sukhavativyukha”, 2 chapters, translated into Chinese by Sanghavarman in 3rd century. The book explains in detail how Amitabha attained Buddhahood and how he saves sentient beings. In this book there are also 48 vows.

3) Amitayurdhyana-sutra (Book About the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life), 1 chapter, translated into Chinese by Khotanese Kalayashas in 5th century. The book presents 16 contemplations (Uighur name is “alty ygrmi qolulamaq”) centring on Amitabha and his land.

As mentioned above, there is no doubt that our text belongs to the work of the Pure Land School of Buddhism. For its adherents, this school advocates a simplest method to attain Buddhahood (being born in Sukhavati/Pure Land/Paradise), i.e. only thinking of Amitabha Buddha (Skr. *Buddhanusmṛti*) and call his name (this content is also expressed in our former 2 folios of text). After having studied carefully the extant folios of our text, we can make a preliminary conclusion like this: this is a Buddhist work which has close relationship with the Pure Land School, especially with the White Lotus Society founded by the famous Chinese monk Hui-yuan. But it has connection neither with the Amitabha-sutra nor with the other two works of the Pure Land. It should have been translated from a lost Chinese original consisting of 4 chapters³.

³ By the way, I want to indicate that in my opinion, the folio which my former student Kahar Barat as referred to “Fragmentary Biography of Hui-yuan in Uighur” (*Wenwu [Cultural Relics]*, 1987, no. 5) also belongs to our text (but belongs to another earlier copy). Besides, there are some folios of the same texts kept in Ankara and Istanbul which were published by A. Temir, K. Kudara, K. Roehrborn (*Turcica*, t. xvi, 1984) and

Because there is no colophon kept in our text, we don't know the author or the translator's name as well the time and place of the composition or translation of the work.

From the viewpoint of religious history we could say that after the worship of Maitreya (Future Buddha)-cult⁴, in Turfan Basin flourished also the Amitabha-cult⁵ for a long period.

Below are the transcription, English translation and commentaries of another 1 folio of our text. In transcription, I use a little changed Latin alphabet (keeping the original orthography). The following marks are used:

- (): words or letters added by the author according to context;
- ... : uncertain number of letters or words are missing;
- ///: 3 graphs are missing;
- .. : 2 short strokes used as punctuation in the original text.
- hend.: hendiadys.

Text

Trancription

III,47

recto

- 133 (1) ...-gh ärsär ulugh yrly(qancucy köng)ülgä tükällig
- 134 (2) bolghu ücün tolp nom oghushyntaqy tynlghlargha
- 135 (3) buyan äwirmäk ärür(..) yna ymä alty ygrmi qolulamaq
- 136 (4) sudurnyng qan lu su tigmä king yoryr susynta
- 137 (5) sözlämish ol .. birök kim qayu tynlyghlar suxawati
- 138 (6) tigmä ärtuqraq mängilig yirtincüdä toghghaly kösäsär(..)
- 139 (7) suxawati ulushta toghurdacy ädgü yoryqlargha
- 140 (8) qatyghlanu byshrunu yorymysh krgäk .. bu qat(yghlanu)
- 141 (9) (bysh)runu yoryghuluq yoryq qawyrasynga sözl(äsär iki)
- 142 (10) türlüg bolur .. qayular ol iki türl(üg tisär) (..)
- 143 (11) (angil)ki yoryghuluq yoryq oghuryu u- ...

O. Sertkaya and Roehrborn (UJb. Bd. 4, 1984) respectively.

⁴ E.g. many fragments of "Maitrisimit"(meeting with the Future Buddha Maitreya) in "Tokharian", Khotanese, Uighur languages were discovered in Tarim Basin.

⁵ About the Amitabha-cult, besides our text, the fragments of the above-mentioned 3 main scriptures of Pure Land were discovered and published. Prof. R. Arat in his famous work "Eski Turk Shiiri" (1965) published some fragments of Amitayurdhyana-sutra in alliterative poem form (No. 19, 20). Cf. also K. Kudara, P. Zieme: Uiguru no go Kammuriojukio(Guanwuliangshoujing in Uigur), 1985 (in Japanese).

verso

- 144 (1) ...-luq byshrunmaq
145 (2) ...-layu yoryghuluq yoryq oghuryn ...
146 (3) üç türlüg bolty .. qayular üç tip ti(sär ang-)
147 (4) (ilki) burxanygh ömäklig yoryq .. iki(nti yirtincü-)
148 (5) tä ädgü qylynclygh yoryq üçün yig ...
149 (6) qolulamaqlygh yoryq ärür .. angilki burxanygh (ömäklig)
150 (7) yoryq yana bölünüp üç türlüg bolur .. qayular
151 (8) ol üç türlüg tip tisär .. angilki burxanlar
152 (9) adyn adap ömäk saqynmaq .. bu burxanlar adyn
153 (10) adamaq ömäk saqynmaq yügärü til üzä köngül üz-
154 (11) ä bö(lünmäk)lig ärür .. til (üzä) ärsär tk til üz(ä)

Translation

III,47

recto

- 1 to transfer fortune to all the living creatures
2 in the whole realm of law with great mercifulness
3 in heart. Furthermore , it is said in the
4 widely expounded preface of the “Sutra of Sixteen Contemplations”
5 that: if someone wants to be born in
6 Sukhawati—the most happy land, he should
7 try hard to do good deeds which can make him
8 bear in Sukhavati land. The good deeds
9 one should try hard to do, generally speaking,
10 are of two kinds. What two kinds ?
11 The first good deed one should try hard to do is ...

verso

- 1 ... The (good deed)
2 one should try hard to do is
3 of three kinds. What three kinds ?
4 First is to think of the Buddha. Second is to do
5 good deeds in this world. Third is to do
6 contemplation (in Buddha). The first kind of (thinking of) the Buddha
7 can also be divided into three kinds.
8 What three kinds ? The first is to
9 call his name and think of him.
10 To call Buddha’s name and think (hend.)of him now can be divided into
11 (two kinds:) by tongue and by heart. By tongue means that only by tongue

... ..

Commentaries

On the common Uighur words and Buddhist terms no commentaries will be given.

The Arabic numbers before every entry indicate line numbers in the text
The following abbreviations are used:

Chin.: Chinese

SH: Soothill –Hodous: A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms. London , 1934 .

Skr.: Sanskrit

- 134 : nom oghushy < Chin. (fa jie)= Skr. dharmadhatu “dharma-realm”, 1) a name for ‘things’ in general, noumenal or phenomenal; for the physical universe, or any portion or phase of it . 2) the unifying underlying spiritual reality regarded as the ground or cause of all things, the absolute from which all proceeds(SH, p.271).
- 135 : buyan äwir- : = Skr. parinamana “ to tranfer merit from one person to another”(SH,p. 205).
- 135 : alty ygrmi qolulamaq sudur: It is the Uighur name of the Amitayurdhyana-sutra(Book About the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life, its Chin. name is “Guanwuliangshoujing”).
- 136 : qam lu su : It could be a transcription of three Chin. characters “gan lu shui”. From the viepoint of Chin. historical phonology, “qam lu” seems to be transcription of Chin. words “ganlu”(nectar), but in meaning it does not conform to the Uig.translation “king yoryr”(widely explained) after the word “tigmä” (so-called) . “su/sü” seems to be a trancription of Chin. word “ xu”(preface) or “shu”(book). Furthermore, there is no such “preface” in the extant editions of “Guanwuliangshoujing”, i.e. Uig. “alty ygrmi qolulamaq sudur” (sutra of 16 Contemplations).
- 137 : suhawati:<Skr. Sukhavati. According to the Pure Land School it is a paradise-like place in the West where there is no suffering and everybody lives a happy life.
- 141 : qawyrasyncha: According to the context , it means “in short”. It derives from the verb stem “qawyr-” (to collect, to gather) .
- 151 : burxan atyn atamaq ömäk saqynmaq: =Chin. “nian fo”=Skr. buddha-anusmrti.

A STUDY ON THE UIGHUR TEXT ABITAKI (4)

