

## STUDY OF ANOTHER TWO FOLIOS OF THE UIGHUR TEXT “ABITAKI”

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Recently we found 25 folios of the so-called Abitaki Uighur text in the Beijing National Library. The word “Abitaki” (<Chinese “Amituojing/Amitaking = Sanskrit Amitābha-sūtra) is used only as a code name written in small letter on the left side of some folios of the manuscript. But it has nothing to do with the famous scripture “Amitābha-sūtra” (one chapter, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva 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 four chapters of the Pure Land School and it was copied during the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368). Here I am studying and publishing another two folios (belonging to the 3rd chapter) of the text.<sup>1</sup>

*Key words:* Abitaki, Amitābha, Pure Land School.

Up till now only a small part of the Uighur Buddhist texts<sup>2</sup> has come to light. Therefore, each piece of a newly unearthed manuscript (even in fragmentary form) is very precious for Turkic and Uighur philology.

Our manuscript is now preserved at the Department of Books in Minority Languages of the National Library in Peking. The manuscript consists of twenty-five folios (fifty pages) in the so-called “pustaka” form. It is ca. 27 × 21.5 cm in size. There are ten or eleven 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 Amitābha and other Gods are written in red colour.

<sup>1</sup> The first two folios were published by Geng Shimin (2004).

<sup>2</sup> For a general overview on Uighur Buddhist literature, cf. my monograph (Geng Shimin 2002). The Turkish version was published in *Türkler*, cilt (volume) 3, Uighur Buddhist Edebiyatı, 2002, Ankara, pp. 786–800,

The manuscript is not complete. According to the extant folios keeping paginations, it seems to be a voluminous work consisting at least of four chapters. Among the twenty-five folios, nine folios (eighteen pages) belong to the 3rd chapter, nine folios (eighteen pages) belong to the 4th chapter, the remaining seven folios (fourteen pages) are without paginations.

On the basis of the language of our text I hold that it was written (or translated) in the 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 ɣ, s and š. Sometimes we find a confounding of the letters t and d, s and z. This phenomenon always appears in Uighur texts of the Mongol Period (Yuan Dynasty: 1279–1368).

According to the title written in small letter on the left side of some folios, our book is called “Abitaki”. The word “Abitaki” should be the transcription of Chinese “Amituojing” (< Amitaking = Sanskrit Amitābha-sūtra). After checking up with the Chinese version of this work (translated into Chinese by the famous Uighur-Kuchar Buddhist master Kumārajīva in the 4th century AD), we found that in content our manuscript has nothing to do with the Chinese Amitābha-sūtra. Furthermore, the Chinese Amitābha-sūtra is a short work consisting of only one chapter, and our text consists of as many as four chapters. Therefore, it is not a translation of the Amitābha-sūtra, but another work belonging also to the Amitābha-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 Sūtra-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 five Chinese characters “Da Bai Lian She Jing” (The Great White Lotus Society Sūtra) written in red colour.

As we know, the “White Lotus Society” of Chinese Buddhism (a school of worshipping the Amitābha 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 Amitābha 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 Amitābha Buddha, after death they can go to the Sukhāvātī, i.e. Pure Land or Western Paradise.

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

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

1. Amitābha-sūtra, also called "The Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūkha" (The Smaller Glorious Adornment of Sukhāvātī), one chapter. The book briefly describes the pleasurable aspects of Amitābha's land and praise his virtues. It then explains that one who chants Amitābha's name will be born in his paradise-land.
2. Amitāyus-sūtra (Book About the Buddha Infinite Life), also called "The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūkha", two chapters, translated into Chinese by Saṅghavarman in the 3rd century. The book explains in detail how Amitābha attained Buddhahood and how he saves sentient beings. In this book there are also forty-eight vows.
3. Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra (Book About the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life), one chapter, translated into Chinese by Khotanese Kālayaśas in the 5th century. The book presents sixteen contemplations (Uighur name is "altı ygrmi qolulamaq") centring on Amitābha 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 Sukhāvati/Pure Land/Paradise), i.e. only thinking of Amitābha Buddha (Skr. Buddhānusmṛti) and call his name (this content is also expressed in our former two folios of text). After having studied carefully the extant folios of our text, we can make the following preliminary conclusion: 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 neither connection with the Amitābha-sūtra nor with the other two works of the Pure Land. It must have been translated from a lost Chinese original consisting of four chapters.<sup>3</sup>

Because there is no colophon kept in our text, we do not 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)-cult,<sup>4</sup> the Amitābha-cult<sup>5</sup> also flourished in the Turfan Basin for a long period.

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

<sup>3</sup> I would like to indicate that, in my opinion, the folio which my former student Kahar Barat published (1987) 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 Temir-Kudara-Roehrborn (1984) and Sertkaya-Roehrborn (1984) respectively.

<sup>4</sup> For example, many fragments of "Maitrisimit" (meeting with the Future Buddha Maitreya) in "Tokharian", Khotanese, Uighur languages were discovered in the Tarim Basin.

<sup>5</sup> About the Amitābha-cult, beside our text, the fragments of the above-mentioned three main scriptures of Pure Land were discovered and published. Prof. R. Arat in his famous work "Eski Türk şüri" (1965) published some fragments of Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra in alliterative poem form (Nos 19, 20). Cf. also Kudara-Zieme (1985) (in Japanese).

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

## Text

### *Transcription*

#### *III, 15*

##### *recto*

45. (1) yüz yügärü bolur(..) tizh(it) kshanti (bolaly)m. suhawati  
 46. (2) tigmä artuqraq mänilig yirtinchü(tä)...  
 47. (3) bashtynqy bölüglig toghumta otghuraq (adyrtlygh) toghghaly  
 48. (4) bolup samandabadri pukin bodistwning yoryqynga  
 49. (5) qut qolonmaqynga tolu tükällig bolalym .. (üzäli)ksiz  
 50. (6) köni tüz tuymaq burxan qutyn tärk tawraq (bulalym)  
 51. (7) ulugh nomlugh tilgänig äwirälim.. biz amty kshan(ti qylu)  
 52. (8) tükädtimz(..) isig özümütin bärü ynanyp (ayagh-)  
 53. (9) yn yinchürü töpün yükünü täginürbiz ulugh köni  
 54. (10) köngüllig umughumuz ynaghymyz (abita)  
 55. (11) burxan qutynga tip m-

##### *verso*

abitaki üçhünc bish ygrmi

56. (1) -tin üç ärdinilärgä ynanyp ... ..  
 57. (2) krgäk (..) amty mn isig özümüz(tin bärü ynanurbiz tü)zün<sup>6</sup>  
 58. (3) alqu anchulayu kälmishlärgä bish bilgä bilig ... (syng)arqy<sup>7</sup>  
 59. (4) ät'özlüg burxanlarğa(..) isig özümdin bärü (ynanur-) .....  
 60. (5) biz qamaghta yig üstünki kölungügä kir- ... (yig)  
 61. (6) üstünki tuyunmaq tözi chinzhu tigmä ar(taqsyz)  
 62. (7) nomgha(..) isig özümütin bärü ynanurbiz tay(maqsiz äwil-)  
 63. (8) mäksiz türlüg ulugh yrlyqanchuchy köngüllüg bodistw-  
 64. (9) largha tip muntagh üç qada sözlöp .. inchä tip  
 65. (10) sözlägülük ol .. amty mn üç (ärdini)lärgä ynantym (..)  
 66. (11) бүгүнki күнтin ulaty ... .. bolghynchagha dägi

<sup>6</sup> It seems that this word does not belong to this line.

<sup>7</sup> The same like in the above line.

*III, 16**recto*

67. (1) ikiläyü yana ynanmaz ... .. -lärgä t(ä)rs  
 68. (2) azagh nomlughlarqa (..) kösüshüm ol t(olp on)tyn syngarqy  
 69. (3) alqu burxanlar bodistwlar .. ädgü ögli (yrly)qanchuchy  
 70. (4) köngülläri üzä syghuru ichgärü yrlyqazuñlar mini  
 71. (5) tip muny munchylayu üch qata sözläp üch 'ärdinilärgä  
 72. (6) ynanu tükädtüktä inchä tip sözläyü bodi köngül(lüg ärgü-)  
 73. (7) lük ol .. ayayu aghyrlayu yükünü täginürmn .. tolp ...  
 74. (8) syngarqy tolp kök qalyq oghushyndaqy tolp ...  
 75. (9) -yndaqy parmanular sanyncha il ulushlarta yrlyqa(mysh)  
 76. (10) qamaq burxanlar bodistwlar ...  
 77. (11) // 'y/ligläringä asygh tusu ... ..

*verso*

abitaki üçhüñch alty ygrmi

78. (1) -ingä udusghu yirchilägü üçhün s(amandabadri)  
 79. (2) bodistwning yoryqynga tayaq(lyghyn üzäliksiz köni)  
 80. (3) tüz tuymaq burxan qutynga köngül öritürmn t- ...  
 81. (4) inchä tip sözlägülük<sup>8</sup> ol .. tünlghlar oghushy ü(chün)  
 82. (5) ol qut qolunu täginürmn alquny barcha osghur(ghaly)  
 83. (6) (qut)gharghaly buyanly bilgä biligli ülgülänchsüz ol (qut)  
 84. (7) qolunu täginürmn alquny barcha tolghurghaly tosh(qur)ghaly nom  
 85. (8) qapyghy ülgülänchsüz ol qut qolunu täginürmn alquny  
 86. (9) barcha ögrätgäli bilgäli anchulayu kälmish ülgülänch-  
 87. (10) siz ol qut qolunu täginürmn alqu barcha tapynghaly  
 88. (11) udunghaly üzäliksiz burxan quty bolghuluq ol qut

**Translation***III, 15**recto*

... It will appear (before us). Please pardon us. Let us surely (hend.) be born in Sukhavati – the most happy land ... at our first birth and have a good fortune to take part in the act of Samantabhadra Bodisattva. Let us quickly attain the unexcelled perfect intelligence (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*) and turn the wheel of the great law. Now we have finished our confession. Since our birth we venture to believe in our refuge – the great, upright Amitābha Buddha and worship him with respect.

<sup>8</sup> Written as "sözlägürük".





*verso*

Believing in the ... three treasures (*ratnas*) people should (pray for the following:) since our birth we believe in Tathāgatas and Buddhas possessing five wisdoms as well ... bodies. Since our birth we believe in the indestructible law which (can guide people) to the best vehicle and to the *bhūtatahatā*. Since our birth we believe in the Bodhisattvas who are very merciful and no-slipping, no-retreating. You also should say these words three times: Now I believe in the three treasures. From today up to ... time,

*III, 16*

*recto*

I will never again believe in the... and in the heretics. I wish all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in ten directions would embrace me with their kind, merciful hearts. After praying three times like thus and expressing faith in the three treasures, you should again pray with enlightened heart like thus: I venture to worship respectfully all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are in as many heavens and countries as particles of earth ... .. benefits (hend.) to ... ..

*verso*

...In order to follow and guide ... to ... and through doing the act of Samantabhadra I make up my mind to (attain) the unexcelled perfect intelligence. You should also say like thus: I pray for the human beings. I pray for (getting) the measureless good fortune and wisdom to rescue (hend.) all (the human beings). I pray for the measureless doors of law to fulfill (hend.) all (the desires of mankind). I venture to pray for that there are measureless Tathāgatas to teach and understand all (the human beings). I venture to pray for the unexcelled perfect intelligence to worship (hend.) all (Buddhas).

### 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

DL: Atalay, B. (1939–1941): *Divanü Lūghat-it-Türk Tercümesi*. Ankara.

DTS: *Drevnetjurkskij Slovar'*. Leningrad, 1969.

ED: Clauson, G. (1972): *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*. Oxford.

EH: Eitel, E. J. (1904): *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism*. Tokyo.

hend.: hendiadys

- SH: Soothill, W. E. – Hodous, L. (1934): *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. London.
- Skr.: Sanskrit
45. tizhit: < Skr. deśita “confession”.
45. kshanti: < Skr. kṣānti “confession”.
45. Suhavati: < Skr. Sukhāvātī. 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.
48. Samandabadri: Name of a Bodhisattva < Skr. Samantabhadra. He represents the intrinsic principle, meditation and practice of all Buddhas, as contrasted to Mañjuśrī who represents wisdom and realisation. According to the Buddhist tradition, he is the right-hand attendant of Shakyamuni Buddha and is often portrayed mounting on a white elephant.
48. Pukin: This is the medieval Chin. name of Samantabhadra.
48. bodisatw: < Skr. Bodhisattva. According to the Mahayana Buddhism, the bodhisattva’s aim is the salvation of all the people in our world.
- 49–50: üzälikisiz köni tüz tuymaq (burxan quty) = Chin. “wu shang zheng deng jue” = Skr. anuttarasamyaksambhodhi “unexcelled perfect intelligence” – the ideal state which every Buddhist is in pursuit of.
51. nomlugh tilgänig äwir-: lit. “to turn the wheel of dharma”, i.e. “to preach, or to teach, or to explain the doctrine of Buddhism”.
52. isig öz: means “life” (lit. “warm self”) (ED, p. 246). Here “isig özümüzün bärü” means “since our birth”.
53. tägin-: Its original meaning is “to reach, attain”. Here it is used as a self-deprecatory auxiliary verb following a gerund verb in -u/-ü with the meaning “to venture to do something” in direct antithesis to the honorific auxiliary verb yarlyqa- “to deign to do something”.
54. umugh ynagh: means “something, or someone, desired and trusted” (ED, p. 157). Here used as a Buddhist term meaning “refuge”.
54. Abita: < Medieval Chin. Abita/Amita (modern Chin. “Amituo) < Skr. Amitābha “boundless light”, name of the Buddha in Sukhāvātī (Western Pure Land/Western Paradise). His another name is Amitāyus “boundless life”. Amitābha is one of the most popular Buddhas in Mahāyana Buddhism. His land is in the West and is called Sukhāvātī “Utmost Bliss Land”. According to the doctrines of this school, those who have sincere faith in Amitābha and recite his name are able to be born in his land after their death. The school of Buddhism worshipping Amitābha Buddha is known as Pure Land (or Lotus) Buddhism.
56. ärdini: Skr. Ratna “treasure”. üç ärdini means “three treasures or three precious things, i.e. Buddha, doctrine and priesthood”.
58. anchulayu kälmiş: A calque translation of Chin. ru lai = Skr. Tathāgata (one who is like the coming), the highest epithet of the Buddha.
61. chinzhu: < medieval Chin. zheng ru = Skr. Bhūtatahā (as the real, such is its nature). This word is fundamental to the philosophy of Mahāyana Buddhism,

implying the absolute, ultimate source and character of all phenomena, in a word, it is the All.

- 62. äwil-: According to DTS, it means “hurry”.
- 70. syghur-: a verb meaning “accept”.
- 72. bodhi < Skr. Bodhi “perfect wisdom, the enlightened mind” (SH, p. 388b).
- 75. parmanu: < Skr. Paramāṇu “an atom of dust” (EH, p. 114).
- 84. tolghur- toshqur-: two verbs with the causative suffixes -qur/-ghur deriving from the verb stems “tol-”, “tosh-” (to be full).
- 85. nom qapyghy: It is a calque translation of Chin. “fa men” = Skr. Dharmaparyāya. It is a Buddhist term meaning “the doctrines or wisdom of Buddha regarded as the door to enlightenment or a method” (SH, p. 273b).

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