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A New Fragment of the Old Uighur *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra**

Peter Zieme

In his posthumous article “Among the Uighur Documents. II,” Reşid Rahmeti Arat discussed the fragments preserved in the library of Istanbul University. Among others he gave a general description of no. 5 the text to be edited here, as follows: “2. Manichean text. The text, which remains in only one small piece of what may be understood as belonging to a rather large page, is written in Uighur script by a calligrapher, and is punctuated by the red-black double dots of the Manicheans. On the back of the paper is Uighur writing which belongs to another period.”¹ In their edition of this fragment, Dieter Maue and Klaus Röhrborn concluded that it is, as already stated by Arat, of Manichaean content.²

The original manuscript apparently was a scroll written in a very careful and beautiful hand. Not only the use of the so-called Manichaean punctuation marks, but also the phrase *iki yiltiz* “two roots” led to the conclusion that the text is a Manichaean one. A closer look at the text itself leads me to the assumption that this is not the case. Rather I want to show that it is a fragment from an Old Uighur translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*.³

The original Sanskrit text of this sūtra was believed to have been lost forever, but recently a manuscript came to light in Lhasa. The sūtra famous in Central and especially

* Herewith I express my thanks to Dr. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst for correcting my English as well as to Prof. Y. Yoshida for reading the proofs some suggestions for a better understanding.

1 Arat 1965, p. 266.

2 Maue/Röhrborn 1980, p. 264, n. 55: “manichäische Provenienz [ist] wohl sicher”.

3 Not included in Zieme 2000.

East Asia, is known in translations into several other languages. The Old Uighur *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* itself is known to us from different manuscripts and, possibly, translations in Sogdian and Uighur scripts. A manuscript of a commentary is preserved, too.⁴

According to the catalogue by O. Sertkaya and K. Kudara the fragment I.U.[= Istanbul University] No. 5 has the size of 18.0 x 9.2 cm.⁵

A) I.U. No. 5 recto [Plate IX]

As the editors gave already a transliteration of the text lines of which only the lower parts are preserved, I give the text here only in transcription.

Transcription

- 01 [... kön]gül turgurmasar :
- 02 [... yör]üg widvag başlantı :
- 03 [... ka]mag [t]özünlär
- 04 [...]iki ä[r]m[äz] nom
- 05 [...]sar : biz kamag
- 06 [...] tep nomladı kam(a)g
- 07 [...] : birök nom tözi
- 08 [...] yilt[iz] kavšutı :
- 09 [...] i]nč[ä] tedi : mnli
- 10 [...] boltı : ol mn
- 11 [... kapıgı]ğa kirmäk .
- 12 [...] iki yiltiz tetir :
- 13 [...] : almakı bermäki
- 14 [...] bo ärür iki ärmäz

4 Zieme 2000.

5 Sertkaya/Kudara 1987.

Literal translation:

- 01 [...] if one evokes a mind [of ...]
02 [...] the explanation (or: the chapter) [of ...] has begun.
03 [...] a]ll noble men
04 [...] the teaching of non-duality
05 [...] if one [...], we all
06 [...] thus he preached. All
07 [...] If the dharma essence
08 [...] the union [of the two (?)] roots
09 [...] thus he spoke. Me and
10 [mine ...] was. That me
11 [...] entering [the door of non-duality]
12 [...] it is called two roots.
13 [...] taking and giving
14 [...] this is non-duality.

Before placing these words in a contextual translation, I cite B. Watson's English translation of the Chinese version:

(Last stanza of the 8th chapter)

“Who can hear of this Law
and not set his mind on the attainment of bodhi?
Who but the utterly worthless,
the blindly ignorant, the witless?”

(Beginning of the ninth chapter)

“ENTERING THE GATE OF NONDUALISM.

At that time Vimalakirti said to the various bodhisattvas, ‘Sirs, how does the bodhisattva go about entering the gate of nondualism? Let each one explain as he

understands it.’

One of the bodhisattvas in the assembly, whose name was Dharma Freedom, spoke these words: ‘Sirs, birth and extinction form a dualism. But since all dharmas are not born to begin with, they must now be without extinction. By grasping and learning to accept this truth of birthlessness, one may enter the gate of nondualism.’

The bodhisattva Virtue Guardian said, ‘I’ and ‘mine’ form a dualism. Because there is an ‘I,’ there is also a ‘mine.’ But if there is no ‘I,’ there will be no ‘mine.’ In this way one enters the gate of nondualism.’

The bodhisattva Unblinking said, ‘Perception and nonperception form a dualism. But if dharmas are not perceived, then there is nothing to take hold of. And because there is nothing to take hold of, there will be no grasping, no rejecting, no action, no volition. In this way one enters the gate of nondualism.’”⁶

A reconstruction of these passages with some emendations according to the Chinese text:⁷

I. 01 [... *burhan kutiṇa kōṇ*]gūl turgurmasar :

This line corresponds to 0550b26 不發菩提心 “not set his mind on the attainment of bodhi?”. Accordingly one has to suppose that the translator put this phrase at the end of the stanza.

0550b26 誰聞如是法 不發菩提心

0550b27 除彼不肖人 癡冥無智者

II. 02 [*iki ärmâz nom kapıgıṇa kirmâk atlıg yörjüg widvag başlantı*] :

The chapter “[Entering the gate of nondualism]” has begun.

⁶ Watson 1997, pp. 103, 104.

⁷ Cited from the CBETA version of T. 475 in vol. XIV.

This passage must represent the headline. While the editors already explained the word *widvag* correctly as Sogdian *wyδβ'γ* “chapter”, the letters before this word were read .../WN, but there is a slight difference between final K and final N, and it seems preferable to read K. This makes it possible to read the word as *[yör]üg*. On the other hand, *yörüg* “explanation” corresponds to the first meaning of Sogdian *wyδβ'γ* “explanation”, but it has never been found as “chapter”. To see here a misunderstanding of the translator is somewhat odd, but at the moment I do not see any other possibility.

III. 03 [*vimalakirt atlıg amanč inčä tep tedi: ka*]mag [*t*]özünlär 04 [*birök ... atlıg bodistv*] *iki ä[r]m[äz] nom* 05 [*kapıgıña kir*]sär : *biz kamag* 06 [...]

“[Vimalakīrti thus said: ‘A]ll noble [men! Let] all [of us explain], how [the Bodhisattva is about to enter the gate] of nondualism.”

0550b29 爾時維摩詰。謂眾菩薩言。諸仁者。云何菩薩入不二法門。各隨所樂說之。

IV. [...] *tep nomladı kam(a)g* 07 [...] : *birök nom tözi* 08 [*atlıg bodistv ... iki*] *yiltiz kavšuti* :

“[The Bodhisattva Dharma Freedom] preached: ‘All [noble men!] If the *dharma*s [in] essence’ [...] union of the [two] roots [...]”

會中有 0550c02 菩薩名法自在。說言。諸仁者。生滅爲二。法 0550c03 本不生今則無滅。得此無生法忍。是爲入 0550c04 不二法門。

There is not a full correspondence between these words and the underlying Chinese text, especially the group [*iki*] *yiltiz kavšuti* “union of the [two] roots” reflects a somewhat different original text, but to determine this exactly is impossible.

V. 09 [... *atlıg bodistv i*]nč[ä] *tedi* : *m(ä)nli* 10 [*mäniḡli* ...] *bolı* : *ol m(ä)n* 11 [-*li*
mäniḡli iki ärmäz kapıḡı]ḡa *kirmäk*.

“[The Bodhisattva called Virtue Guardian] spoke thus: ‘I [and Mine ...] became. Entering the [gate of nondualism of] I [and Mine] are the two roots.’”

0550c05 德守菩薩曰。我我所爲二。因有我故便有 0550c06 我所。若無有我則無我所。是爲入不二法 0550c07 門。

VI. 12 [...] *iki yiltiz tetir* :13 [...] *almakı bermäki* 14 [...] *bo ärür iki ärmäz* [*kapıḡıḡa kirmäk*].

“[The Bodhisattva called Unblinking spoke thus: ‘Perception and nonperception] from two roots (= dualism)[...] ‘Taking and Giving [...] : this is [entering the gate] of nondualism.’”

0550c08 不眴菩薩曰。受不受爲二。若法不受則不可 0550c09 得。以不可得故無取無捨無作無行。是 0550c10 爲入不二法門。0550c11 德頂菩薩曰。垢淨爲二。見垢實性則無淨 0550c12 相順於滅相。是爲入不二法門。

B) I.U. No. 5 verso [Plate X]

The verso side bears the following text written in cursive script.⁸ The text is in no way connected to the recto side and seems to belong to a medicine book, but I have not been able to identify it. As a help towards the identification of further fragments of this precious manuscript of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* I give a full edition of these lines, too.

8 I want to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Osman Fikri Sertkaya for sending me the photographs of the fragment and for allowing me to re-edit them.

Transcription:

01 []
02 orun-ıṇa aṣun-ıṇa aṣıg-lıg : ' [nom]
03 -nuṇ [v]/astuṣı bolmıṣ kızılgı a []
04 [] sig-lig kač []
05 [] t[ın]lıg-lar-nıṇ [] u []
06 [mı]ṣ-ta ok antıran : ' []
07 [] talaṣapadri čurnı [] sd [] i []
08 -ta čan-ta tutup alkiṣ al[k]u []
09 bolmakı bolzun alkatmıṣ ıduk b []
10 [] kedin äntkāk [el]i [] glüg []
11 in-nıṇ ädi tavarı-nıṇ ta/ : []
12 [iki ygr]mi türgäk-lär . sadri []

Translation:

“[...] profitable for the place (?) and the existence⁹ of [...] the girl (?) - [...] having become the [v]astu of [...] dharma some [...] of the living beings [...] after [...] from there [...] the *talīṣapattrā*¹⁰ powder holding on [...], on a cup the blessing all (?) may be [successful!]

The blessed, holy [...] [in the rea]lm of Western India [...] of the property of ? [...] [twel]ve packages¹¹ (?). [...]”.

9 Cf. *aṣunlarta orunlarta* in Suv 124/23.

10 Skt. *tālīṣapattrā*, cf. MW 445b: *tālīpattrā* “leaf of Tālī plant”, *tālīṣa* Flacourtia cataphracta; BSJT Nr. 292: Tālapattrā, Tālakī, Tālakṣīraka, Tālajangha, Tālaśabda. The term *talaṣapadri čurnı* appears also in U 5449.

11 *türgäk* “a package, parcel” (cf. ED 544b): does the term refer to chapters?

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