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Chapter XX of the “Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka” and its hellish sufferings: the fragment THT 1308.a¹

Ilya B. Itkin & Anna V. Kuritsyna

The article deals with the Tocharian A fragment THT 1308.a. On the basis of parallels with the Uyghur text “Maitrisimit nom bitig” it is established that this fragment belongs to act XX of the “Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka”, one of the so-called “Höllenskapitel”, and contains a narration by the denizens of hell about the sins they committed in a previous birth and the torments they suffer.

Among the Tocharian A fragments from the Berlin Turfan Collection not included in the edition (Sieg & Siegling 1921), quite a number belong to the Buddhist drama “Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka” (further MSN). This fact was already known to Sieg and Siegling themselves, cf. for example the inscription “Maitr. Sam. III” on the frame of fragment THT 1377 or the laconic entry “Bādhari” on the recto of fragment THT 1409.p.

However, for a significant part of texts the affiliation to the MSN remains unmarked. Actually, this is just the category to which the fragments that nowadays have the press mark THT 1308 belong. This press mark contains two small fragments, THT 1308.a and THT 1308.b. Both fragments have been published by Schaefer (2013: 345), but without translation or commentary. Schaefer just points out that this document “gehört jedenfalls zur Maitreyaliteratur” (ibid.), which is based doubtlessly

1 The authors sincerely thank Sergey V. Malyshev for various help with the article, the anonymous reviewers for their important remarks and bibliographical advice and Svetlana I. Pereverzeva and Alexandra S. Borisova for editing the English text.

on the fact that in fragment THT 1308.b Maitreya is mentioned. Nevertheless, the exact identification of fragment THT 1308.b must be a matter of future research, while the present paper scrutinizes only fragment THT 1308.a.

Preliminary transliteration of the fragment THT 1308.a

- a1 /// ·[kq] (·)śn· – – [k]· – ///
- a2 – lyalypantu arantram – ///
- a3 tsi yoktsi sã[nṭa]k tã[p]a – ///
- b1 [ta]tmu[ś n]a[sam̐as] || [p]· – ///
- b2 [s]([\\]) [k]a[śtyo] [śurā]m[yo po] – ///
- b3 /// – (–) y[ś]al[mas] .. ///

Our preliminary transliteration significantly differs from the ones proposed by Tamai (2007) and Schaefer; in particular, it includes the reading of some akṣaras and signs which have remained unread.

The provenance of fragment THT 1308.a (as well as that of fragment THT 1308.b) is unknown. The handwriting of both fragments resembles that of the manuscript №№ 306–310 (M-δ); however, we do not insist on them being identical.

Old Uyghur parallel

Despite its bad state of preservation, the text of fragment THT 1308.a seems to have quite a reliable parallel in chapter XX of the Old Uyghur MSN translation, “Maitrisimit nom bitig”. It should be noticed that no Tocharian MSN fragments with certainty belonging to act XX were known so far. Fragment A 259, considered in (Pinault 1999: 203) to belong to the end of act XX and the beginning of act XXI, was later identified together with fragment A 287 from the same leaf as belonging to acts XXV–XXVI (Geng, Laut & Pinault 2004: 36–41).

It is well known that the text of the “Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka” (or, respectively, the “Maitrisimit nom bitig”) abounds in repetitions, sometimes word for word precise. However, in this case there is quite a long passage with some unique features. For instance, Laut points out that “in den bisher aus zwei Hss. (Sāṇim und Murtuk) bekannten Höllenskapiteln der Maitrisimit sind keine Passagen zum Thema Abtreibung bzw. Kindestötung überliefert. Ein Blatt aus dem 20. Kapitel der Hami-Handschrift des Textes schildert jedoch recht ausführlich diese Vergehen und ihre Bestrafungen in der Hölle.” (1995: 113). Besides, as far as we could find out, the word *ačmak* ‘hunger’ co-occurs with the words *busuṣ kadguluḡ otin* ‘sorrow fire’ in the Uyghur version of the Höllenskapitel only once; cf. THT 1308.a b2.

Below we give the German translation of the respective part of “Maitrisimit nom bitig” of Geng, Klimkeit & Laut (1998: 82). Correspondences with the Tocharian text are given in boldface and pointed out by line numbers.

MaitrHami, ch. XX, leaf 14 (recto, 11 – verso, 18)

11–12 “(Die Höllenschergen) ble[nden] unsere Augen und **schneiden unsere Zungen ab** (= a1). 12–15 Fliegende V[ögel] kommen, und mit ihren eisernen, scharfen Krallen zerreißen sie Stück für Stück unser Fleisch und tragen es weg. 15–16 Sie zerstückeln unsere Innereien und fressen sie. 16–18 Wir können jedoch nicht ermatten und sterben, und **unsere Schuld erfüllt sich nicht** (= a2).” 18–22 Einige (der Höllenwesen) sag[en] folgendes: “Wir waren früher in der Menschen-Existenz w[eibliche] Wesen und haben, um den Embryo in unserem Leibe abzutreiben, unseren Leib gequetscht. Wir haben zwischen den Leib geschlagen, 23–25 wir sind von hohen Plätzen heruntergesprungen und wir haben wissentlich abtreibende **Speisen und Getränke verzehrt. Wir nahmen Kräuter** (= a3) ein, indem wir (zu uns) sagten: ‘[Der Embryo] soll abgehen!’. 25–28 Um den Embryo anderer (Frauen) abzutreiben, haben wir deren Leiber gequetscht und den (noch) nicht ausgereiften Embryo, der im Leib war, getötet. 28 – verso 1 Einige von uns haben auch das neugeborene Baby

getötet. Kraft dieser schlechten Tat sind wir dann [gestorben] und in der (Groß)-Hölle wiedergeboren worden.

1–3 Aus dieser (Groß)-Hölle [befreit], sind wir in diesen Kleinhöllen [**wiedergeboren**] **worden** (= **b1**). 3–5 (Die Höllenschergen) zerspalten und zerquetschen uns mit großen Felsen und zerstoßen uns in Mörsern. 5–8 Sie nehmen(?) einen Holzpfehl und stechen uns beide Augen aus. Sie höhlen unsere Augäpfel aus und lassen uns eine Frühgeburt gebären. 9–10 Während wir (dann) unser neugeborenes Baby [halten(?)], fressen wir es auf. 10–12 Wir [brennen(?)] **im Feuer des Hungerns, Dürstens, der Sorge** (= **b2**) und des Leids”. 12–16 Einige sagen folgendes: “Als wir ehemals in der Menschen-[Ex]istenz waren, haben wir uns mit weiblichen Wesen im Kloster und in der Klosterzelle **sexuell** (= **b3**) versündigt. 16–18 Kraft dieser [schlechten Tat sind wir] in den Großhöllen [wiedergeboren worden].”

Comments on the Tocharian text

GENERAL REMARKS: The Uyghur text proves that the order of recto and verso assumed by Tamai and Schaefer is correct. Fragment 1308.a visually appears to be a left lower leaf corner. This impression may be supported by the rather small distance between the Uyghur sentences which correspond with the lowest preserved line on the recto and line b1. Provided fragment 1308.a indeed belongs to the manuscript №№ 306–310 (or some other six-line manuscript), the lines here numbered as a1–a3 must in fact be lines a4–a6; but since this is uncertain, we keep the initial numbering.

- a1 Sergey V. Malyshev (p.c.) has called our attention to the fact that a form of the verb *kāršt-* ‘cut off, cleave’ may have to be read in line a1. This assumption conforms well to the content of the Uyghur text. A conjecture *[kă](r)šn[e](ñc=ä)[m]* ‘they cut off ... us’ appears to be the most probable. Although the extant diacritic parts above the ligature *(r)šn* resemble rather *ā* than *e*, the reading *[e]* seems to be possible as well.

- a2 The preserved remnants of the left akṣara allow the reading [mā], which would completely match the Uyghur text. Cf. a close parallel: 295 b₁ (MSN, perhaps act V) /// *ntaṃ lyalypäntu āreñc=ām* . Probably, a negation should be restored also in A 295: (*mā o*)*ntaṃ lyalypäntu āreñc=ām* ‘his karmas are not ending’.
- a3 The conjecture (*śwā*)*tsi* is evident. Besides the reading *sā*[*ntä*]k, a reading *sā*[*nta*]k is also possible, cf. *s(ā)ntak* (A 355 b₃). As follows from the Uyghur text and from line b₁, the narration in the discussed part of the act XX proceeds from the first-person plural perspective. Accordingly, the verb form of *śwā*-/*tāp*- ‘eat’ should be restored as *tā*[*p*]a[*mā*](*s*). This earlier unattested form can represent morphologically both 1pl. prt. act. and 1pl. subj. act., but the Uyghur text unambiguously speaks in favor of a preterite.
- b1 The expression *tatmuṣ nasamäs* ‘we are (re)born’ repeatedly occurs in MSN, cf. in particular A 300 b₂ and THT 1409.a a₁. In the sufficiently well-preserved text A 300 it is followed by a tune name (*maitraṃ*); most probably, this also applies to the fragments THT 1409.a and THT 1308.a. Besides the reading [*p*]· the reading [*ṣ*]· is also a possibility.
- b2 With respect to this line, the Tocharian original is more concise and seems to differ structurally from its Uyghur translation. The Tocharian words *kaṣt* ‘hunger’ and *śurām* ‘sorrow’ are both rendered with hendiadyses: *ačmak suvsamak* and *busuṣ kadgu*, literally ‘Hunger – Durst’ and ‘Sorge – Leid’. The suffix *-lug* in *ačmak suvsamak busuṣ kadgulug otin* adjectivizes both hendiadyses, forming an attribute to ‘fire’, whereas in the Tocharian version the instrumental forms [*ka*]ṣtyo and [*śurā*]m[yo] cannot depend on the word *por* ‘fire’. At the same time, it is not clear whether the extant remnants of a badly damaged akṣara following [*po*] allow the reading [*pory*](*o*), which would imply a construction with three homogenous instrumental complements: ‘by hunger, sorrow (and) fire (‘tortured’ vel sim.)’. A similar construction is likely to occur in A 300 b₄ /// *poryo sälpmäś onminyō* :, lit. ‘we are burning with fire (and) remorse’, i.e. perhaps ‘we are burning with fire of remorse’. The text A 300 probably belongs

to the “Höllenkapitel” of the Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka as well (Pinault 1999: 205).

- b3 The reading $y[ś]al[mas]$ based on the proposal made by one of the anonymous reviewers is sure and corresponds precisely to the Uyghur text. For the following word a conjecture $(w)[ā](rpāmāt)$ ‘we partook’² can be proposed on the basis of “general considerations”: the expression $yśalmas wārp-$ ‘to enjoy sexual pleasures’ occurs several times in the Toch. A texts, cf. particularly A 119 a4 /// $(kā)n[i]kāñcānaśśāl y(ś)almas wārpñātār ||$ ‘...he enjoys sexual pleasures with a virgin.’ However, this remains absolutely uncertain.

Final reading (with conjectures) and translation

- a1 /// · $[kā](r)šn[e](ñc=ā)[m : k] · - ///$
 a2 $[mā] lyalypāntu arantr=ām - ///$ ($śwā$)
 a3 $tsi yoktsi sā[ntā]k tā[p]a[mā](s) ///$
 b1 $[ta]tmu[ś n]a[samās] || [p] · - ///$
 b2 $[s : ka]śtyo [śurā]m[yo po] - ///$
 b3 /// - (-) $y[ś]al[mas] .. ///$

- a1 ‘... they cut off our (tongues ?) ...’
 a2 ‘... our karmas don’t end ...’
 a3 ‘... food, drink and remedy we ate ...’
 b1 ‘... we are reborn: || In [the tune] P. ...’
 b2 ‘... by hunger, sorrow (and ?) fire ...’
 b3 ‘... sexual pleasures (we partook?) ...’

If the identification proposed in this paper is correct, it would be yet another modest contribution to the fund of knowledge about the Tocharian A “Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka”.

[RECEIVED: MAY 2017]

- 2 The reading $k[l]eś-$ proposed by the anonymous reviewer does not appear possible either from the paleographic or from the semantic point of view.

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