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## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE OLD UIGHUR DOCUMENT U 5933 (CONTRIBUTIONS TO MORIYASU 2019)\*

#### **Abstract**

There were private letters among the Uighur manuscripts in the Thousand Buddha Caves in Dunhuang. It is seen that these letters have different contents from daily human relations to working life, from commerce to state administration. There are more than two hundred letters belonging to the Old Uighurs from different times. This study consists of presenting a document which is only given the text and translation of it in the doctoral thesis I have prepared on the Old Uighur letters and their vocabulary, and announcing updated information and comments about the document. The document mentioned, read and interpreted in this study is a letter and it is preserved in the Turfan Collection of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften as U 5933 (T M 84 = COUL no. 172). This document was first examined by P. Zieme in 1975 and later by J. Wilkens in 2000. Finally, this document was discussed in T. Moriyasu's Corpus, which brought together Old Uighur private letters in 2019. Considering the view that Moriyasu expresses as "I cannot understand the reason why Zieme and Wilkens regard it as a writing by a Manichaean", some justifications defending this view are suggested here. In addition, some new reading and interpretation suggestions are made regarding this document.

Keywords: Letter, Turkish History, Old Uighurs, Berlin-Turfan Collection.

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# ESKI UYGURCA U 5933 BELGESI ÜZERINE BAZI DÜŞÜNCELER (MORIYASU 2019'A KATKILAR)

## Özet

Dunhuang'da yer alan Bin Buda Mağaraları'ndaki Uygurca yazmalar arasında özel mektuplar da bulunmaktaydı. Bu mektupların günlük insan ilişkilerinden çalışma hayatına, ticaretten devlet idaresine değişik içeriklere sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Eski Uygurlara ait farklı zamanlardan kalma iki yüzden fazla mektup bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Eski

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Uygurca mektuplar ve onların söz varlığı üzerine hazırlamış olduğum doktora tezinde yalnızca metni ve çevirisi verilen bir belgenin gözden geçirilerek sunulmasından ve belge hakkında güncellenmiş bilgilerin ve yorumların duyurulmasından oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmada adı geçen, okunan ve yorumlanan belge, bir mektuptur ve bu mektup, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften'e ait Turfan Koleksiyonunda U 5933 (T M 84 = COUL no. 172) katalog numarasıyla korunmaktadır. Bu belgeyi, ilk kez 1975'te P. Zieme, daha sonra 2000'de J. Wilkens incelemiştir. Son olarak bu belge, 2019'da Eski Uygurca özel mektupları bir araya getiren T. Moriyasu'nun *Corpus*'unda ele alınmıştır. Moriyasu'nun "Zieme ve Wilkens'in bunu bir Manihaist yazısı olarak görmelerinin nedenini anlayamıyorum." diye ifade ettiği görüşü düşünülerek burada bu görüşü savunan bazı gerekçeler önerilmektedir. Ayrıca bu belge ile ilgili bazı yeni okuma ve yorumlama önerilerinde bulunulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mektup, Türk Tarihi, Eski Uygurlar, Berlin-Turfan Koleksiyonu.

## 1. Introduction

Today, Old Uighur documents, including religious or non-religious ones, are held by various institutions, such as the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (formerly known as Museum für Indische Kunst) in Berlin, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, British Library in London, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences St. Petersburg Branch, Ryūkoku University Ömiya Library in Kyoto, Academia Turfanica (Turfan Museum) in Turfan, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Museum in Urumqi, Dunhuang Academy in Dunhuang, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archeology in Huhehot, China National Library in Beijing and Istanbul University in Turkey [1, p. 5]. These documents were written by the people of the Western Uighur Khaganate, which flourished from the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 13th century, in and around the Eastern Tianshan Region, including the Turfan oasis, and by the Uighurs of 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century (i.e., the former Western Uighurs) when this region came under the rule of the Mongol Empire [1, p. 5].

The Old Uighurs letters are often referred to as *esengü bitig* "letter of well-being". Four of these letters, which were thought to be few in number until Hamilton's [2] publication were published by Tezcan – Zieme (1971) [3; For other pre-Hamilton publications, see 4, p.307; 5, p.169]. Eleven of these letters, believed to be from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, are complete and three are in pieces. The Old Uighur letters have general composition [5, p. 169–170]. Although most of the letters are undated, it is also seen that the date is given at the beginning or end. First, the name of the recipient and then the name of

the sender are written. This is followed by the words *esengü bitigim, esengü bitigimiz* or briefly *esengümüz* (our letter of health and well-being). After the address, the state of health and the state of the recipient are first asked. After the sender(s) informs about their own health status, the main purpose that causes the letter to be written is passed. It is advised to find and remove the goods or gifts sent by the caravan or a coachman by looking at the tamgas on them. The letter ends with a sentence (or sentences) stating who wrote it or to whom it will be given [5, p. 170]. In his publication, T. Tekin also provided some letter samples taken from Hamilton [6] and also wrote a detailed introduction for the Hamilton publication [7, p. 300–307; 5, p. 170].

Although it is seen that a certain part of the Old Uighur letters were published in different studies, the most comprehensive study was revealed by Takao Moriyasu in 2019. It was published in Turnhout by Brepols Publishers as the XLVI (46<sup>th</sup>) volume of the Berliner Turfantexte series, under the title "Corpus of the Old Uighur Letters from the Eastern Silk Road". In Corpus, the texts of 209 letters belonging to the Old Uighurs were evaluated in five main groups by giving their paleographic information, transcriptions, English translations and the comments of the researcher. Moriyasu states in the title "I-4. The classification of epistolary formulae according to naming formulae" in the entry of COUL that he has been able to extract the following words from Uighur documents that have the letter form he has collected so far as special terms referring to these letters: yrlg (yarlıg), ötüg, söz, sav and esengü [1, p. 11].

Moriyasu gives the terms signifying "letter" as follows:

yarlıg form: yarlıgım, yarlıgımız, yarlıg bitigim, yarlıg bitigimiz, (esengü + yarlıg form)

ötüg form: ötügüm, ötügümüz, ötüg bitigim, ötüg bitigimiz, (esengü + ötüg form)

esengü form: esengüm, esengümüz, esengü bitigim, esengü bitigimiz sav/söz form: savım, savımız, sözüm, sözümüz simple bitig form: bitigim, bitigimiz [1, p. 11].

#### 2. Examination

## 2. 1. The Transcription and Transliteration of The Document U $5933^1$

Firstly P. Zieme [8, p. 66] introduced the recto side of the document U 5933 (T M 84 = COUL no. 172) in BTT V as a document found in Turfan, then J. Wilkens published the information on the document [9, 394 = AtHM, no. 460]. In 2019, Moriyasu reinterpreted and published this letter in the *Corpus* [1, p. 170–171]. For this document the paleographical information about the size and quality of the paper and the note is given as follows by Moriyasu in COUL:

"A draft or writing exercise of a Manichaean? letter (traces of folding are unclear). Type unidentified. Semi-square (larger and fat). 13 lines. Verso is probably blank.

[...] Pap.) 13x22 cm (height and width); moderately thick  $\sim$  medium? (unclear because of backing); traces of coarse ribs; beige clair  $\sim$  grisâtre; slightly uneven; medium-quality.

Although this is not a real letter but a draft or a writing exercise, rather lavish use has been made of the paper. It is written in large, thick semi-square script, but the writing style is quite idiosyncratic. I cannot understand the reason why Zieme and Wilkens regard it as a writing by a Manichaean" [1, p.170].

The transcription, transliteration and Turkish translation of the document U 5933 (T M 84 = COUL no. 172 = AtHM, no. 460) are also given in PhD thesis defended by Arslan 2021 [10, p. 110–111]. The document (see 'Image 1' below for U 5933) can be read and interpreted as follows<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The permission for use of this document, U 5933 and a user card were obtained on my own behalf from Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz Orientabteilung [Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences in the Berlin State Library - Prussian Cultural Heritage Orient Department] on February 22, 2020. I would like to thank Kristina Münchow, the representative of the institution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> As a matter of course, the publications of P. Zieme [8], J. Wilkens [9] and T. Moriyasu [1] were also taken into account in the reading and interpretation of this text.

```
04
      neteg (?)] inč ädgü mü
      n't'k] ['v]nč 'dkw mw
05
       ...]YKWMW Sävär-kä
       ...]ykwmw s'v'rk'
06
       ...] üküš köngül ayıtu
       ...] ['wy]kws kwnkwl 'yytw
      ıdur biz (?)] ymä üküš
07
       'ydwrpyz(?)] ym' 'wykws
       ...] äsän mängi tiläp
08
       ...]'s 'n m'n\lceil k \rceily tyl'p
09
       ...]••D bay bolzun
       ...]//d b'y bwlzwn
       ...]YR äsän-kä
10
      ...]vr 's 'nk'
11
      ...]••W 1dur+biz
      1//w 'ydwrpyz
      ...] üküšküze(t)ti<sup>1</sup>
12
       ...]'wykws kwz'ty
      ...]•[]••[...
13
       ...]/[ ]//[...
```

## 2.2. The Translation of the Document U 5933

01-13) ...] (to Äsän-kä or Sävär-kä? and) to Yuka, we send [news/letter], how are you (pl.), well? [ ] to Sävär asking many times about (her/his) heart [] and many [ ] wishing health (and) joy (to you all) [ ] May (he) be rich! [ ] To Äsän [ ] we send [ ] (he) protected many times [...]

## 3. Remarks

(1) The first line of the letter is clearly unreadable. However, we can make some assumptions from the readable letters. From right to left, the first letter we can read should be  $/a\sim a/$  or /n/, furthermore there is a suffix +ka at the end of the line, it means that according to the general composition of the Old Uighur letters, the name of recipient or adressee should be before the suffix +ka or  $+k\ddot{a}$ . In this line, we can read the last word as "Yuka-ka" because it resembles the first letter /y/. "Yuka" is a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> I prefer to follow Wilkens on the interpretation of this word, cf. [9, AtHM 394, no. 460; 1, p. 171].

personal name<sup>1</sup> that also appears in a Buddhist Old Uighur text [11, p. 153]. We can make two assumptions for the first word: a) If the last letter is /a~ä/, another recipient's name is mentioned here. These recipients may be people named "Äsän or Sävär", who appear later in the document. Then the letter we see becomes /ä/ and we can read it as "Äsän-kä or Sävär-kä". In this case, we can say that the name of the person who sent the letter appears in a damaged part of the letter, at the end of the letter. b) If the last letter is /n/ then the name of the person who sent the letter may be mentioned here. E.g; Toyın, Tegin etc.

- (2) The verb id- (or id-) "to send, to dispatch; to allow to go; used as auxiliary verb following a gerund in -u/-i/-i with perfective or intensive nuance." see~[1, p.~214; 13, p.~217; 14, p.~37]. Biz means "we (1<sup>st</sup> personal plural pronoun)." see~[1, p.~212], however it is used functionally as a suffix here.
- (3) The word *inč* means "at peace, at rest, fine, well..." *see* [1, p. 216; *see also* 13, p. 210a; 14, p. 171-172; 15, p. 164].
- (4) The word *ädgü* means "good, well, superb; fine, healthy, in good condition; health…" and this word also may be used as a personal name, *see* [1, p. 209; 13, p. 163; 14, p. 51].
- (5) This line of the letter is unreadable. However, we can make some assumptions from the readable letters. Especially, therefore there is the dative suffix  $+k\ddot{a}$  at the end of the second word, we can think that it is a personal name. The transliteration of the letters is: s'v'rk'. In this case, we can think that the personal name Sävär, which we saw in another Buddhist Old Uighur text [16, p. 251-252], is appropriate here.
- (6) The expression *üküš köngül ayıtu* is a part or the one of the greeting phrases used in Old Uighur letters. After the greeting phrase, the main purpose that causes the letter to be written is passed.
- (6, 12) For the detailed explanation on the word *köngül* in Old Uighur texts, please *see* [1, p. 218; 13, p. 315-316; 14, p. 731; 17, p. 247-272].
- (7) For the detailed information about *ymä* "and, also, too; now, well, moreover; as for ~, about ~" *see* [1, p. 238; 13, p. 255; 14, p.934].

In Moriyasu's *Corpus* [1], this letter (U 5933 = COUL no. 172) is indicated as "type unidentified" [1, p. 170-171]. However, when we review the letter, we can make some guesses on the composition and the epistolary

<sup>1</sup>The master's thesis done by Seren in Turkey is on proper names in Old Uighur texts, and these personal names mentioned here also could be seen at her work, for this useful resource, *see* [12].

formula of this letter according to Moriyasu's classification [1, p. 11-13], which limits the possibilities:



Figure 1.The assumptions on the epistolary formula of the document U 5933

## 4. Conclusion

First of all, this document has been damaged to such an extent that it is difficult to read. Therefore, referencing the information in other Old Uighur letters may give us only some clues. We can say that it is not seen the information about the date at the beginning or end of this letter, when we look at the overall composition of this letter. It is well-known that the Old Uighur letters have general composition. In this letter, this general composition may help us. There are the names of the recipients (*Yuka, Äsän, Sävär*), but then we can't detect the name of the sender in this letter. This is generally followed by the words *esengü bitigim, esengü bitigimiz* or briefly *esengümüz* (our letter of health and well-being) or the other terms signifying "letter" such as *bitig, yarlıg, sav or söz*. But in this document there isn't any word used clearly instead of those terms which express "letter" [for the epistolary formulae of Old Uighur letters, *see* 18; 19; 20; 21, p. 213; 1, p. 11-13].

The expression  $\ddot{u}k\ddot{u}\ddot{s}$   $k\ddot{o}ng\ddot{u}l$  ayıtu is the one of the greeting phrases used by Old Uighurs in the letters. After the greeting phrase, the main purpose that causes the letter to be written is passed. In Moriyasu's Corpus, the information was given that  $\ddot{A}s\ddot{a}n$  was a personal name among Uighurs, and also we can detect at least six different letters which include the name  $\ddot{A}s\ddot{a}n$ , so we can say that there are a lot of persons bearing this name [1, p. 243].

COUL no. 09 = K 7713 recto, COUL no. 102 = U 6149 recto, COUL no. 106 = Dx 3654 verso, COUL no. 202 = U 6122, these documents are defined as the Buddhist letter; and COUL no. 109 = K 7715 = UBr, Text C (Although it is a non-religious text, it has a Buddhist proper name.), this document can be counted as one of them. Furthermore "Yuka" is a personal name that also appears in a Buddhist Old Uighur document, Mi07 1-6-11 [11, p. 153] such as "Sävär" in BTT XXVI, 134 19-28 [16, p. 251-252]. When we consider the view that Moriyasu expresses as "I cannot understand the reason why Zieme and Wilkens regard it as a writing by a Manichaean", all these onomastic signs strengthen *the possibility* that this document is a Buddhist letter.

#### **Abbreviations**

AtHM	J. Wilkens.	Alttürkische Handschrifte	en. Teil 8. Manichaisch-türkische
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Texte der Berliner Turfansammlung. (VOHD, XIII-16). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner

Verlag, 2000.

BTT V P. Zieme, *Manichaisch-türkische Texte*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975.

BTT XXVI Y. Kasai, Die uigurischen buddhistischen Kolophone. Berliner

Turfantexte XXVI, Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

COUL T. Moriyasu, Corpus of the Old Uighur Letters from the Eastern Silk

Road. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019.

DTS V. M. Nadelyayev et alii. *Drevnetyurkskiy slovar*'. Leningrad: Akademiya

Nauk SSSR, 1969.

EDPT G. Clauson. An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century

Turkish. Oxford, 1972.

OTWF M. Erdal. Old Turkic Word Formation. Wiesbaden, 1991.

SUK N. Yamada. Sammlung uigurischer Kontrakte (Uiguru-bun keiyaku monjo

shūsei). 3 vols., J. Oda - P. Zieme - H. Umemura - T. Moriyasu (eds.). Suita

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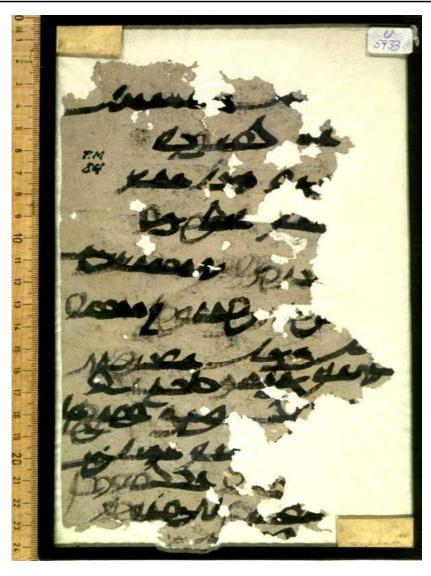


Image 1.U 5933 (Turfanforschung Digitales Turfan-Archiv, BBAW)

#### Аннотация

Существуют частные письма среди уйгурских рукописей в пещерах Тысячи Будд в Дуньхуане. Данные письма имеют разное содержание от повседневных человеческих отношений до трудовой жизни, от торговли до государственного управления. Существует более двухсот писем, принадлежащих староуйгурам разных времен. Это исследование состоит из представления документа, который содержит только текст и его перевод в подготовленной мной докторской диссертации о староуйгурских письмах и их лексике, а также объявления обновленной информации комментариев к документу. Документ, упомянутый, прочитанный и интерпретированный в этом исследовании, представляет собой письмо и хранится в Турфанской коллекции Берлинско-Бранденбургской академии наук под номером U 5933 (TM 84 = COUL № 172). Этот документ был впервые рассмотрен П. Зиеме в 1975 г., а затем Дж. Уилкенсом в 2000 г. Затем в 2019 году этот документ обсуждался в Корпусе Т. Мориясу, в котором собраны старые уйгурские частные письма. Принимая во внимание точку зрения Мориясу «Я не могу понять, почему Зиеме и Уилкенс считают это сочинением манихея», в данном исследовании предлагаются некоторые обоснования в защиту этой точки зрения. Кроме того, в данной статье сделаны некоторые новые предложения по чтению и толкованию в отношении этого документа.

**Ключевые слова:** Письмо, История тюрков, Древние уйгуры, Берлинско-Турфанское собрание.

(Х. ЧАГДАШ АРСЛАН. НЕКОТОРЫЕ РАЗМЫШЛЕНИЯ О ДРЕВНЕУЙГУРСКОМ ДОКУМЕНТЕ U 5933 (ДОПОЛНЕНИЕ К МОРИЯСУ 2019))

#### Андатпа

Дунхуандағы Мың Будда үңгірлерінен табылған ұйғыр қолжазбаларының ішінде жеке хаттар да бар. Бұл хаттар күнделікті адами қарым-қатынастан бастап жұмыс өміріне, саудадан мемлекеттік басқаруға дейін әртүрлі мазмұнда жазылғаны байқалады. Әр дәуірде өмір сүрген ескі ұйғырларға тиесілі хаттардың саны екі жүзден асады. Бұл зерттеуде Ескі Ұйғыр жазуы, олардың сөздік қорына қатысты жазылған докторлық диссертациямдағы мәтіні мен оның аудармасы ғана қамтылған құжатты және құжат бойынша жаңартылған мәліметтерді, пікірлерді ұсындым. Мақалада аталған, оқылған және түсіндірілген құжат (хат) U 5933 каталог нөмірімен Берлин-Бранденбургише Академиясының Турфандық жинағында сақталған (Т М 84 = COUL № 172). Бұл құжатты алғаш рет 1975 жылы П. Зиеме, кейін 2000 жылы Дж. Уилкенс зерттеген. Одан кейін бұл құжат 2019 жылы Ескі Ұйғыр жазуымен жазылған жеке хаттарын жинақтаған Т. Мориясу Корпусында талқыланды. Мориясудың «Неліктен Зиеме мен Вилкенс мұны манихейлік жазба деп санайтынын түсінбеймін» деген пікірін ескере отырып, бұл пікірді қорғайтын кейбір негіздемелер осы мақалада ұсынылды. Сонымен қатар осы құжатқа қатысты оқу және түсіндіру бойынша жаңа ұсыныстар жасалды.

Кілт сөздер: Хат, Түркі тарихы, Ескі ұйғырлар, Берлин-Турфан коллекциясы. (Х. ЧАГДАШ АРСЛАН. ЕЖЕЛГІ U 5933 ҰЙҒЫР ҚҰЖАТЫ ТУРАЛЫ КЕЙБІР ОЙЛАР (МАРИОСУ 2019-ҒА ҚОСЫМШАЛАР))