

## SYRO-UIGURICA II: SYRIAC PASSAGES IN U 338 FROM TURFAN

MARK DICKENS

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

### ABSTRACT

*The Christian texts contained in the Turfan collection in Syriac, Sogdian, Uyghur Turkic and other languages are a rich treasure trove of indigenous sources for reconstructing the history of the Church of the East in Central Asia. Amongst the manuscript fragments which give evidence of linguistic and cultural interaction between the worlds of Syriac and Uyghur is a small prayer booklet, U 338, which contains prayers in both Syriac and Uyghur. After describing U 338, the original order of its folios is reconstructed, along with two Syriac passages contained in it: a longer liturgical prayer and a shorter phrase embedded in an Uyghur passage. This is followed by observations on scribal errors and other variations from the current form of the liturgical text and discussion of the possible role of the shorter embedded Syriac phrase. Finally, the text and translation of the Uyghur colophon are given.*

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The Church of the East, based initially in the Sassanid Persian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and subsequently in Baghdad, the capital of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate, had a presence in Central Asia for well over a millennium, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>2</sup> Although reconstructing the history of this presence is a

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<sup>1</sup> This is the second of three articles dealing with interactions between the Syriac and Uyghur languages and scripts in texts from the Turfan Collection, drawing on my participation in the AHRC-funded Christian Library of Turfan project, on which see the footnote below. The titles are inspired by the three “Syro-Sogdica” articles published by Nicholas Sims-Williams in the 1980’s, listed in the bibliography below. Two companion articles, entitled “Syro-Uigurica I: A Syriac Psalter in Uyghur Script from Turfan” (see bibliography for full details) and “Syro-Uigurica III: Enochic Material in a Christian text from Turfan,” will be published separately. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Peter Zieme (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften), for his input on the Uyghur portions of U 338 and to Mar Awa (Bishop of California, Assyrian Church of the East), for his identification of the Syriac material in the liturgical sources. Without their input, this article would not have been possible. I am also thankful to Dr. Erica C. D. Hunter, Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams and another anonymous reviewer for various observations and comments which helped to improve the article. Thanks also to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz and the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften for access to and permission to reproduce images of U 338. All images are copyright Depositum der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung. Low resolution images of the U signature numbers (Uyghur language, in both Uyghur and Syriac script) are available from <http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/index.html> (Digitales Turfan-Archiv website). For U 338, see [http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/u/dta\\_u0015.html](http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/u/dta_u0015.html) and [http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/u/dta\\_u0016.html](http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/u/dta_u0016.html), where the original side numbers are retained.

<sup>2</sup> For good overviews of the history of Christianity in Central Asia, see Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) and Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Christianity, iii. In Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 5 (1991), 530-534. The proceedings of the first three triennial conferences dedicated to “Research on the Church of the East in China and Central Asia” also contain a wealth of interesting

challenge given the overall paucity of extant sources, we are fortunate to have a limited number of Christian texts and inscriptions from Central Asia, as well as references scattered throughout late antique and medieval literary sources in Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Greek, Latin, Persian, Syriac and Turkic.

Undoubtedly the richest treasure trove of indigenous Christian texts from Central Asia is contained in the Turfan Collection, housed in three separate locations in Berlin: the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, and the *Museum für Asiatische Kunst* (formerly *Museum für Indische Kunst*). The collection contains approximately 40,000 manuscript fragments in 22 languages and 20 scripts, brought back by the four Prussian Turfan expeditions (1902-1914), which provide invaluable information on the religious and secular life of the residents of Turfan (located at a junction of two branches of the Silk Road in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China).

The majority of manuscript fragments from Turfan are Buddhist or Manichaean, reflecting the two most important religions flourishing in Turfan during the Uyghur Kingdom of Qocho (ca. 860-1284), established in the wake of the overthrow of the Uyghur Empire in 840.<sup>3</sup> However, there are also approximately 1100 Christian fragments in Syriac, Pahlavi, Sogdian (Syriac and Sogdian script), New Persian (Syriac script) and Uyghur Turkic (Syriac and Uyghur script),<sup>4</sup> most found at the site of what must

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articles on the subject: 1) Roman Malek and Peter Hofrichter, eds., *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006); 2) Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang, eds., *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Orientalia - Patristica - Oecumenica, Vol. 1) (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2009); 3) Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler, eds. *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in Central Asia and China* (Orientalia - Patristica - Oecumenica, Vol. 5) (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> The Uyghurs were one of the Turkic tribal groups which were part of the First and Second Türk Empires (552-659, 682-742). After their participation in the overthrow of the Second Türk Empire, they established their own Empire. All these states were located in Mongolia.

<sup>4</sup> Approximately 450 Syriac, 550 Sogdian in Syriac script, 50 Sogdian in Sogdian script and 50 Uyghur (in either Syriac or Uyghur script), as well as a handful of fragments in Pahlavi (Middle Persian) and New Persian.

have been a Christian monastic complex in the town of Bulayïq, near Turfan.<sup>5</sup>

Amongst the extant Uyghur Christian fragments are several that give evidence of the interaction between Syriac, the liturgical language of the Church of the East, and Uyghur, the *lingua franca* of the Turfan oasis. This article will examine a Christian Uyghur text containing Syriac passages.<sup>6</sup>

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Many of these fragments are in fact bilingual or even multilingual, so that, for example, the total number of fragments wholly or partially in Syriac rises to nearly 500. These Christian texts have been catalogued for the first time by a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK and headed up by Dr. Erica C. D. Hunter. One catalogue of Christian Sogdian and New Persian fragments in Syriac script has already been published: Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, 18,4: *Mitteliranische Handschriften*, Teil 4: *Iranian Manuscripts in Syriac Script in the Berlin Turfan Collection* (Stuttgart: VOHD, 2012). The following two catalogues will appear shortly: 1) Erica Hunter and Mark Dickens, *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* 5,2. *Syrische Handschriften*. Teil 2: *Texte der Berliner Turfansammlung. Syriac Texts from the Berlin Turfan Collection*; 2) Peter Zieme. *Altuirische Texte der Kirche des Ostens aus Zentralasien*. The few Christian fragments in Sogdian script or Uyghur script will be included in catalogues being prepared by Dr. Christiane Reck and Dr. Simone Raschmann, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> See Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Bulayïq,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 4 (1989), 545.

<sup>6</sup> This text, U 338, will be included in both of the aforementioned catalogues by Hunter-Dickens and Zieme. Other fragments that exhibit interaction between Syriac and Uyghur include the following: 1) nine folios from a Syriac Psalter written in Uyghur script (SyrHT 20-27; MIK III 58 – see Dickens and Zieme, “Syro-Uigurica I” in the bibliography below); 2) an as-yet unidentified folio of Syriac written in Uyghur script (So 20131); 3) a Syriac passage in an Uyghur “magical” text (U 328 – to be published by the current author as “Syro-Uigurica III: Enochic Material in a Christian text from Turfan”); 4) an unidentified fragmentary text containing Syriac alternating with Uyghur script on the reverse of a prayer in Uyghur script (U 323); 5) various fragments with Syriac (and sometimes Sogdian in Syriac script) on one side and Uyghur script on the other, often seemingly unrelated to each other (SyrHT 154; SyrHT 322; U 5545; U 7252); 6) Syriac liturgical texts (some with Sogdian rubrics) with graffiti or over-writing in Uyghur script, including some Syriac in Uyghur script (SyrHT 83-84; SyrHT 124; SyrHT 287); and 7) a Syriac fragment containing an Uyghur name (SyrHT 161). Several of these are mentioned

## DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

U 338 (original signature number T II B 41, No. 1), is a small prayer booklet formed of 5 sheets, resulting in 10 folios and 20 sides,<sup>7</sup> each side measuring 6.3-6.4 cm high by 7.0-7.3 cm wide, with the thread binding still intact. The binding is very rudimentary and consists of two threads running through two holes located on the centre fold of each sheet, one 0.9 cm below the upper edge and the other 0.8 cm above the lower edge. The two threads are then tied off on the upper and lower edges of the booklet. This can be observed clearly on the folios containing **sides 6-7** and **sides 16-17**, a fact which is of importance in reconstructing the original order of the texts in the booklet, as discussed below.

Each side has a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 lines, with most sides containing 4 lines. The text in black ink consists of Syriac in Estrangelo script, Uyghur in Uyghur script and Uyghur in Estrangelo script. It has been written in two different hands, one for the Uyghur text in both scripts (including two lines of Syriac embedded in this part of the booklet) and one for the longer Syriac text, which extends over 8 sides. The Syriac text is written in a smaller and neater hand than the Uyghur text, which is written in a rather untidy hand; there are numerous smudges and ink stains. The booklet has no rubrics, illustrations or other notable features.

The Uyghur text of the booklet, along with a provisional discussion of the Syriac portions, has been published by Peter Zieme, who suggests that the booklet was probably designed primarily for private use.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this article is to supplement Zieme's contribution by focussing on the overall structure of the booklet and finalizing the reading of the Syriac portions. As Zieme has noted, the booklet can be divided into the following sections (numbering of the sides reflects the original pencil numbering on the individual folios and therefore the

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in Mark Dickens, "Multilingual Christian Manuscripts from Turfan," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, Vol. 9 (2009): 22-42.

<sup>7</sup> Technically called a *quinternion*.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Zieme, "Notes on a bilingual prayer book from Bulayık," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Orientalia - Patristica - Oecumenica, Vol. 1), ed. Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2009), 170.

numbering on the *Digitales Turfan-Archiv* website, based on the current folding of the booklet):

1. **side 1**, line 1 to **side 5**, line 1: Uyghur prayer in Syriac script, including two lines in Syriac;
2. **side 5**, line 2 to **side 7**, line 6: Uyghur colophon in Uyghur script;<sup>9</sup>
3. **side 8**, line 1 to **side 15**, line 4: Syriac prayer;
4. **side 16**, line 1 to **side 19**, line 4: Uyghur prayer in Uyghur script;
5. **side 20**, lines 1-4: Uyghur prayer in Syriac script.

This apparent order of **sides 1-20** presumably reflects the way the booklet was folded when it was found. Thus, the booklet appears to consist of 2 unequal quires (**sides 1-12** and **sides 13-20**) stitched together, so that **side 1** appears to be the *recto* of the first folio of the first quire, while **side 20** appears to be the *verso* of the last folio of the second quire.<sup>10</sup>

However, analysis of the booklet's physical structure (especially the binding) and contents shows that the original order of sides has been obscured by the way the booklet was folded when it was found. The fact that the thread binding is tied off on the two folios containing **sides 6-7** and **sides 16-17**, along with examination of the crease lines on both folios, clearly indicates that they were the outer and inner folios respectively of the booklet when it was stitched together.

These physical facts are corroborated by the literary structure of the text. As Zieme has shown, portions of the Uyghur prayer in Syriac script, which actually begins on **side 20** and continues on **sides 1-5**, are paralleled in the Uyghur prayer in Uyghur script found on **sides 16-19**, although both versions of the prayer include

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<sup>9</sup> The text and translation of the colophon are included in an Appendix at the end of this article. On the colophon, see Zieme, "Notes," 170-172. One correction needs to be made: the name of the scribe's father, Yonan, is not "a shortened form of Yoḥanān, the Syriac form of John" (Zieme, "Notes," 172, repeated in Dickens, "Multilingual Christian Manuscripts," 30), but is rather the transliteration in Uyghur of **يونس**, the Syriac form of Jonah. My thanks to Nicholas Sims-Williams for alerting me to this.

<sup>10</sup> I use *recto* and *verso* here to mean first side and second side, respectively, not with the original Latin meaning of *recto*, "on the right side" (referring to the Western order of pages).

material that the other does not have.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that **side 1** should follow **side 20**. Add to this the curious fact that the colophon occurs in the middle (according to the current ordering of the sides), on **sides 5-7**, and it becomes clear that the original literary order of the text was as follows:

1. **side 8**, line 1 to **side 15**, line 4: Syriac prayer;
2. **side 16**, line 1 to **side 19**, line 4: Uyghur prayer in Uyghur script;
3. **side 20**, line 1 to **side 5**, line 1: Uyghur prayer in Syriac script, including two lines in Syriac;
4. **side 5**, line 2 to **side 7**, line 6: Uyghur colophon in Uyghur script.<sup>12</sup>

From the perspective of composition, this order has the following advantages:

1. It begins with a prayer in Syriac, the liturgical language of the Church of the East, which would impart both prestige and potency to the contents of the rest of the booklet.
2. It suggests that the scribe with the smaller, neater hand wrote first, followed by the one with the larger and less careful hand, possibly indicating a master-disciple or teacher-child relationship between the two.
3. It alternates between Syriac script and Uyghur script (either an intentional stylistic choice or perhaps just a coincidence).
4. It accounts for the fact that the Uyghur prayer which begins on **side 20** naturally continues on **side 1**.
5. It ends with a colophon, the natural place where one would expect to find this element.

However, this proposed re-arrangement involves the booklet starting on a *verso* side (**side 8**) and ending on a *recto* side (**side 7**, which is clearly the outer folio, as noted above). How can this be? The most likely explanation is that the scribe began writing on the *verso* **side 8**, intentionally leaving *recto* **side 7** blank, possibly to add a title later (since **sides 6-7** comprised the original outer “cover” of the booklet). When the scribe finished his task on the top of **side**


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<sup>11</sup> See the *Transcription and Comparison* section in Zieme, “Notes,” 177.

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Erica C.D. Hunter, who subsequently re-examined the booklet after I initially queried the order of the text and confirmed that the text originally began on **side 8**.

5, he added the colophon which, rather than merely filling up the rest of **sides 5-6**, ran over onto the “front cover” **side 7**. This may be due to the fact that the colophon is written in the larger untidy hand noted above, suggesting that it was the work of an apprentice, in contrast to the neater hand of the “master scribe” who wrote the Syriac prayer which begins the booklet; the latter, writing in a smaller hand and with more experience, perhaps would not have run over onto the front cover, leaving room for a title page. At some later point, the booklet was left folded with **sides 20 and 1** (located on separate sheets) on the outside, resulting in the current numbering of folios.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the type of thread binding used enables the booklet to be cycled through and left open at any page. This use of the booklet is possibly hinted at in an Uyghur phrase found at the end of the colophon on **side 7**: *muni tæg beş kata bitip ävdä ogul kiz okitip äsidmäki bolzun amin*, “Writing like this five times, may a boy [or] girl be heard reciting [it] in the house, Amen.”<sup>14</sup> If the text was meant to be recited and copied “five times,” perhaps it was intended to be read in a cyclical fashion, similar to the use of a rosary?<sup>15</sup>

Two other points raised by Zieme are worth noting here. First, the use of the term , *ärikäkütür* (**sides 4-5**), the plural form of the term *ärkägün* or *ärkä'un*, a term of uncertain origin used to describe Christians under the Mongols and transliterated in Chinese as *Yelikeven*, enables us to date the text to

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<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Erica C.D. Hunter for these suggestions, along with the observations below about the inner and outer folios of the booklet, which confirm the re-arranged order of the text as the original order.

<sup>14</sup> Here and elsewhere in this article, although they may differ slightly in form, my translations from Uyghur are informed by those found in the aforementioned article on U 338 by Peter Zieme, to whom I am grateful for suggestions and corrections to improve my translations. For the full text and translation of the colophon, see the Appendix to this article.

<sup>15</sup> Zieme, “Notes,” 170 suggests that it might also be “a school exercise book,” an idea which does not preclude its use as a religious text, since spiritual training and education are not considered antithetical to each other in the East Syriac tradition. Ultimately, however, the meaning of this phrase in the colophon is enigmatic, so that no definite conclusions can be reached regarding the way in which this booklet was intended to be used.



the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>16</sup> Second, the Buddhist practice of merit transfer mentioned by the scribe in the colophon – *buyani' atam yonanka tägziin* (**side 6**), “May its merit reach my father Jonah”<sup>17</sup> – illustrates the influence of the surrounding Buddhist culture on Christian culture in Turfan.<sup>18</sup>

### LONGER SYRIAC PASSAGE

As noted above, the long Syriac passage begins on **side 8** (original **side 1**.) and runs up to **side 15** (original **side 8**):<sup>19</sup>

ܠܕܠܠܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ ܠܒܝ[ܐ] (8-1)

<sup>21</sup> ܡܠܟܐ <sup>20</sup> ܠܕܠܠܐ ܡܠܟܐ [ܐ] (8-2)

ܠܒܝ <sup>22</sup> ܡܠܟܐ ܠܕܠܠܐ (8-3)

<sup>24</sup> ܠܕܠܠܐ <sup>23</sup> ܡܠܟܐ (8-4)

<sup>16</sup> “In China at that time Christians of all confessions were called *Yelikeven*, the phonetic rendering of the Mongol term *Ärkä’ün*. This was then connected to [i.e. scholars have proposed a connection with – MD] the Greek, with the accusative form *ἀρχήγού* of the nominative *ἀρχήγός*, *archon*, which means ‘chief,’ ‘leader.’” Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 219. Note however Paul Pelliot’s skepticism about this connection in Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo, Vol. I* (Oeuvres Posthumes de Paul Pelliot) (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1959), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Zieme, “Notes,” 178.

<sup>18</sup> On the practice of merit transfer, see George J. Tanabe, Jr., “Merit and Merit-making,” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 2, 532-534. At the same time, as an anonymous reviewer pointed out, “The reference to Buddhist merit transfer is interesting, but of course Syriac Christianity has its own and not so very different ideas about accumulating merit for deceased family members. To what extent the phraseology in Uyghur very explicitly refers to the Buddhist practice or might indicate a fusion of Syriac and Buddhist concepts, is difficult for me to assess.”

<sup>19</sup> The text is compared with the edition published in J.E.Y. Kelaita, ed., *Taksa d-kabne d-’edta d-madnba* (*The Liturgy of the Church of the East*) (Mosul: Assyrian Press of the Church of the East, 1928), 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Kelaita: ܠܕܠܠܐ.

<sup>21</sup> Word split between lines.

<sup>22</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܟܐ ܠܕܠܠܐ ܠܕܠܠܐ.

ᐱᐢ <sup>39</sup> ᐱᐱᐱᐱ (11-4)

<sup>38</sup> Kelaita: **كلايتا**.

ܡܠܟܐ <sup>40</sup> ܝܗܝ[ܐ]ܕܐ (12-1)

<sup>42</sup> ܠܦܬܐ <sup>41</sup> ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠ[ܝ]ܐܕܐ (12-2)

ܡܠܟ <sup>44</sup> ܡܠܟܐ <sup>43</sup> ܡܠܐ (12-3)

<sup>45</sup> ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ (12-4)

[ܝܗܝܡܠܐ] ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ (13-1)

<sup>46</sup> ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ (13-2)

<sup>48</sup> ܡܠܐ <sup>47</sup> ܡܠܐܡܐ (13-3)

ܡܠܐ [ܡܠܐ] <sup>49</sup> ܡܠܐ (13-4)

<sup>51</sup> ܡܠܐ ܡܠܐ <sup>50</sup> ܡܠܐ [ܡܠܐ] (14-1)

ܡܠܐ <sup>53</sup> ܡܠܐ <sup>52</sup> ܡܠܐ (14-2)

[ܡܠܐ] ܡܠܐ [ܡܠܐ] ܡܠܐ (14-3)

<sup>55</sup> [ܡܠܐ] ܡܠܐ <sup>54</sup> ܡܠܐ (15-1)

<sup>39</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ. Ink stain results in ܡ resembling ܐ.

<sup>40</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ ܡܠܐܡܐ ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>41</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>42</sup> Word split between lines.

<sup>43</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>44</sup> This word is partially obscured by an ink stain. Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐܡܐ.

<sup>45</sup> The lower part of the text on this line is missing. Kelaita: ܡܠܐ (om. ܡܠܐ).

<sup>46</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>47</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐܡܐ.

<sup>48</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐܡܐ.

<sup>49</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐܡܐܡܐ ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>50</sup> The text is largely lost on this side due to abrasions on the paper. Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ.

<sup>51</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐܡܐ. Again, misspelling possibly due to confusion over velars /g/ and /k/ in Uyghur.

<sup>52</sup> Splattering of dots here, where Kelaita has instructions to the priest in rubric.

<sup>53</sup> Kelaita: ܡܠܐܡܐ.



My thanks are due to Mar Awa, Bishop of California for the Assyrian Church of the East, for identifying the source of this passage, thus making it possible to reconstruct it, despite the frequent abrasions which obscure the text in places: “The prayer is from the East Syrian Euchologion. It is the prayer of the imposition of hands, an inclination prayer just before the dismissal of the catechumens (which still exists in our rite, the only apostolic Church that still retains to this day the very archaic dismissal of catechumens)... It is slightly different in a few words here and there from the text we have in the Kelaita 1928 Assyrian *takhsa*.”<sup>62</sup>

### SHORTER SYRIAC PASSAGE

In addition to this, two lines of Syriac are embedded into the Uyghur prayer in Syriac script on **side 3** (original **side 16**). The following quotation from the prayer (**side 20**, line 1 to **side 5**, line 1 = original **side 13**, line 1 to **side 18**, line 1) illustrates how the Syriac phrase in question is used to describe the Christians:<sup>63</sup>

[20] *y(ä)mä bo bizniñ ätözüümüznä tiriğ äs(ä)n* [1] *tuttačä*  
*üzütümüznä kutgartačä b(a)n(i)m(i)z mšyḥ* (ܡܫܝܚ) [2]  
*t(ä)yriniñ säviği taplağä köñli üzä* [3] ܬܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܠܝܒܐ  
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ *tep at üzä asil-* [4] *mš künü üzä külälmš alkišlīg*  
*är{i}käkütlär-kä*

“And through the love, affection (and) heart of our Lord (Khan) Messiah God, the keeper of these our bodies alive (and) healthy (and) the saviour of our souls,<sup>64</sup> (there is)

<sup>62</sup> Personal correspondence, 8 January, 2010. Throughout, “East Syrian” and “East Syriac” are used as adjectives to refer to the Church of the East. A *euchologion* is a Christian service book containing liturgies, prayers, and other rites. Although originally this prayer was only said over *catechumens* preparing for baptism, it is now said over the whole congregation, since the vast majority of church members are baptized. The *Takhsa* (ܬܚܫܐ, from Gr. τᾱξις, “order”) and the *Hudra* (ܚܝܬܪܐ, “circuit”) are the main liturgical texts of the Church of the East. The *Takhsa* text currently used by the Church is Kelaita, *Taksa d-keabne*.

<sup>63</sup> Although the whole text is in Syriac script, the Uyghur is given in transliteration (taken from Zieme, “Notes,” 177), but the Syriac is left as is, for the sake of contrast.

<sup>64</sup> My thanks to the anonymous reviewer, who noted that “the literal translation... is closer to the phrase from the *lakhumara* prayer from the

blessing for the Christians, (who are) lifted up by the good name (and) praised by the reputation (of) ‘a redeemed people, a glorious race (or congregation).’”

There is some uncertainty about the proper interpretation of the Syriac phrase, already discussed in Zieme’s article.<sup>65</sup> The first word, ܥܡܡܐ, should be the plural form, “peoples, nations,” but the absence of the plural marker *seyame* and the fact that the following adjective ܡܢܝܐ is in the singular suggests that the writer (obviously not a native speaker of Syriac) intended it to be taken in the singular sense (the correct form would, of course, be ܡܢܐ). The second word, ܡܢܝܐ, is either the word “redeemed,” correctly spelled, or a spelling mistake for ܡܒܝܐ, “blessed” (resulting from the dual confusion in Uyghur between both /b/ and /p/ on the one hand and /k/ and /q/ on the other). However, in the absence of a good reason for the latter interpretation (and in light of a possible scriptural source discussed below), it should probably be taken at face value as ܡܢܝܐ.

The third word, ܥܡܡܐ, is a spelling mistake for either ܥܡܡܐ, “race, nation” (due to confusion between /s/ and /š/ in Uyghur) or ܥܡܡܐ, “congregation, assembly” (due to confusion between /k/ and /g/ in Uyghur). Either word is possible in the context; ܥܡܡܐ provides a better parallel to ܥܡܡܐ (or ܥܡܐ) in the first part of the phrase, although ܥܡܡܐ fits a possible scriptural source, as discussed below. The final word, ܡܠܟܐ, “glorious” is clear and unproblematic. As Zieme points out, the spelling mistakes probably result from the text being written down by ear, as a result of dictation.<sup>66</sup>

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liturgy, cf. in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. Anglican translation: “Thou Lord art the Quickener of our bodies, and Thou art the Saviour of our Souls [*d-a(n)tu mnaḥmānā d-paḡrā, w-a(n)tu pārqānā d-naḥṣātan*] (it is repeated several times in the liturgy, in some variations).” See Arthur John Maclean, *East Syrian Daily Offices* (London: Rivington, Percival, 1894; reprint: Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>65</sup> Zieme, “Notes,” 172-173.

<sup>66</sup> Zieme, “Notes,” 172. I am also grateful for feedback from Mar Awa on this phrase, reflected in my comments above (personal correspondence, 23 June, 2010).

## COMMENTARY

Several observations can be made on these two Syriac texts included in U 338. The longer passage written on **sides 8-15**, which originally began the prayer booklet, is a standard prayer from the liturgy of the Church of the East. Again, its position at the beginning of the booklet would be consistent with the prestige that Syriac retained in the Turfan Christian community, even at times (such as in the Mongol era) when most of its members probably could no longer read the Syriac script.<sup>67</sup> However, why was this prayer in particular chosen? Given the wording of the prayer, were those using this booklet possibly preparing for ordination to the priesthood? Were they children studying in a school based in the monastery or were they adults? We may never know the answers to these questions.

What is clear, however, is that the Uyghur prayer, in its two forms, has nothing to do thematically with the Syriac prayer. Given that the text can be dated to the Mongol era, when we assume that knowledge of Syriac was dwindling in the community, it is likely that those reciting the booklet had minimal understanding of the Syriac they were reading. Also evident, based on the various spelling and grammatical errors, is that the scribe who wrote out the long Syriac passage was not well-versed in the language (even if he was, as suggested above, the “master”). The differences from the text as it is used currently in the Church of the East can be categorized as follows:

1. Standard textual variants found in Syriac manuscripts;<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> This point is graphically brought out by the Syriac Psalter written in Uyghur script mentioned in an earlier footnote. Members of the Christian community in Turfan towards the end of the Mongol era could no longer read Syriac script; in order to be able to recite the Psalms, the text had to be transliterated into Uyghur script. See Dickens and Zieme, “Syro-Uigurica I” in the bibliography below. See also the discussion of the status of the different languages in the Turfan community in Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Sogdian and Turkish Christians in the Turfan and Tun-huang Manuscripts,” in *Turfan and Tun-huang, the Texts: Encounter of Civilizations on the Silk Route* (Orientalia Venetiana IV), ed. Alfredo Cadonna (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1992), 49-51, 54.

<sup>68</sup> Examples include **1**) the omission of initial **ܐ**, “and” (9-1, 10-4, 14-2) or the relative pronoun marker **ܐ**, “that” (8-3); **2**) the formation of

2. The result of scribal sloppiness;<sup>69</sup>
3. The result of expansion or contraction of the text in subsequent years, as various words and phrases have been alternately added or removed;<sup>70</sup>
4. The result of adding or changing pronominal endings;<sup>71</sup>
5. Probable evidence of writing down the text by ear, resulting in phonologically-based orthographic errors. These include the omission of silent **𐰌** /h/,<sup>72</sup> the addition of **𐰚** to carry the first vowel in the plural ending *-āṭā*<sup>73</sup> and the aforementioned confusion between the dentals **𐰃** /t/ and **𐰄** /d/<sup>74</sup> and the velars **𐰆** /g/ and **𐰇** /k/.<sup>75</sup>

Also noteworthy is the fact that there are no instructions to the priest in rubrics, as are found in the modern text, not surprising given that the booklet was apparently not used in a liturgical setting (where such rubrics are frequently employed).<sup>76</sup>

The shorter passage, consisting of just four words, “a redeemed people, a glorious race (or congregation),” sounds like a

genitive relationships without the pronominal ending **𐰌** (11-4) and **3**) the use of a synonym which is similar in form (**𐰚𐰆𐰚** vs. **𐰚𐰆𐰚**, both meaning “spiritual,” in 12-2).

<sup>69</sup> Examples include **1**) the omission of the plural marker *seyame* (11-3, 12-2–12-3, 13-2, 13-3, 15-2, 15-4) and **2**) replacing **𐰚** /ā/ with **𐰃** /t/ due to their similarity in form (15-1).

<sup>70</sup> Examples of what the text looked like before its subsequent expansion include **1**) the omission of “catholic” from the phrase “(holy) church” (8-3, 12-1); **2**) the omission of “weak” from the phrase “of deficient nature” (11-2) and **3**) the use of “your compassion” instead of “the compassion of your divinity” (13-4). The reverse process (contraction of the text) can be observed in the change from “our Lord and our God” in the Turfan text to “my Lord” in the text used today (12-4).

<sup>71</sup> Examples can be found on lines 8-4, 12-1, 13-3, 14-1. Some of these changes are grammatically incorrect, such as those on 8-2: “Yours is your [instead of “the”] holy church”; and 11-1: “you have made worthy you [instead of “those”] of deficient nature.”

<sup>72</sup> Line 10-2.

<sup>73</sup> Lines 12-2–12-3.

<sup>74</sup> Line 10-3.

<sup>75</sup> Line 14-1.

<sup>76</sup> Line 14-2.



However, if the second word is indeed **فدِم**, “redeemed,”

then a more likely scriptural source is I Peter 2:9: **ἡμεῖς ἅγιος λαός, ἡμεῖς ἁγιασθέντες ἁγίᾳ ῥήματι, ἵνα ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς ἡγοῦμεν ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς ἁγίον λαόν, ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς ἁγίον λαόν.** “But you are a chosen generation of the priesthood for the kingdom, a holy nation, a redeemed congregation, that you may declare the praises of him who called you from darkness to his excellent light.” This second text has the advantage of containing three of the words from the catch phrase: **ἅγιος**, **λαός** and **ἁγιασθέντες**. The fourth word is found in a grammatical variant, **ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς ἡγοῦμεν ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς ἁγίον λαόν**, “the praises of.” One even wonders if the original phrase should have been **ἡμεῖς ἅγιος λαός ἡμεῖς ἁγιασθέντες**, “a holy nation, a redeemed congregation,” found in this verse. Another advantage of I Peter 2:9 over Psalm 72:17 as the source for this passage is that the former is clearly referring to the Church, whereas the latter refers to “the nations” in general.

## CONCLUSION

This text clearly demonstrates the way that Uyghur Turkic Christians at Turfan were connected with both the liturgical traditions of the Church of the East rooted in Mesopotamia and Persia and the surrounding Turkic culture. They recited both standard liturgical prayers in Syriac, prayers shared with their co-religionists in the Middle East which are still uttered in services of the Church of the East today, and prayers in their own tongue, as an acknowledgment of the need to make their faith intelligible to those around them, even to the extent of including common cultural practices such as merit transfer. In so doing, they acknowledged both their roots in Syriac Christianity and the cultural milieu in which they lived and thus managed to navigate a

<sup>77</sup> I am not aware of the use of this specific phrase elsewhere in the Church of the East, but would welcome suggestions from other scholars who know the literature better than I.

middle path between the extremes of cultural irrelevance on the one hand and religious syncretism on the other.

#### APPENDIX – TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF THE COLOPHON<sup>78</sup>

**Side 5**, line 2 to **side 7**, line 6:

*ud yıl ram ay üc otuzka mn bäküz bitidim buyanı atam yonanka tögün  
amin amin tep muni tög beş kata bitip ävdä ogul kız okitip äšidmäki bolzun  
amin*

“(In the) year of the Cow/Ox, the first month, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (day), I Bacchus wrote (this). May its merit reach my father Jonah. Saying “Amen, Amen” and writing like this five times, may a boy (or) girl be heard reciting (it) in the house, Amen.”

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<sup>78</sup> The transcription of the Uyghur text into Latin script is taken directly from Zieme, “Notes,” 177-178. Again, my translation differs slightly from that in Zieme, “Notes,” 178.

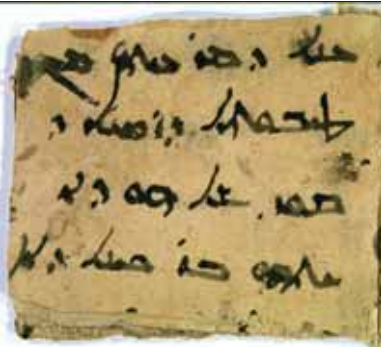
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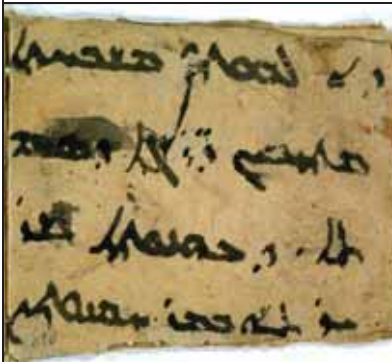
IMAGES



Side 8 (orig. side 1): Syriac  
prayer



Side 9 (orig. side 2): Syriac  
prayer



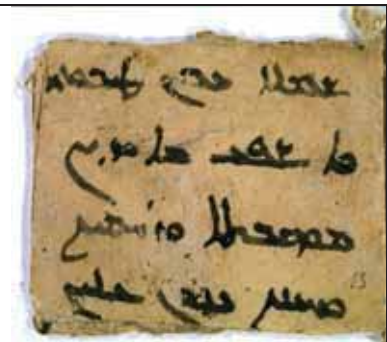
Side 10 (orig. side 3): Syriac  
prayer



Side 11 (orig. side 4): Syriac  
prayer



Side 12 (orig. side 5): Syriac  
prayer



Side 13 (orig. side 6): Syriac  
prayer



Side 14 (orig. side 7): Syriac  
prayer



Side 15 (orig. side 8): Syriac  
prayer



Side 16 (orig. side 9): Uyghur  
prayer in Uyghur script



Side 17 (orig. side 10): Uyghur  
prayer in Uyghur script





**Side 18** (orig. side 11): Uyghur  
prayer in Uyghur script



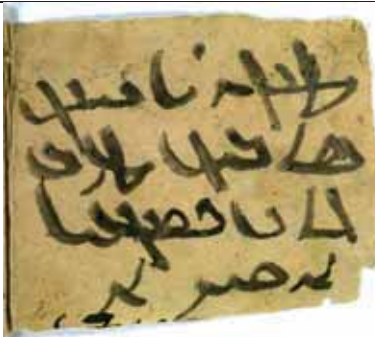
**Side 19** (orig. side 12): Uyghur  
prayer in Uyghur script



**Side 20** (orig. side 13): Uyghur  
prayer in Syriac script



**Side 1** (orig. side 14): Uyghur  
prayer in Syriac script



**Side 2** (orig. side 15): Uyghur  
prayer in Syriac script



**Side 3** (orig. side 16): Uyghur  
prayer in Syriac script



**Side 4** (orig. side 17): Uyghur prayer in Syriac script



**Side 5** (orig. side 18): Uyghur prayer in Syriac script + Uyghur colophon



**Side 6** (orig. side 19): Uyghur colophon on “back cover”



**Side 7** (orig. side 20): Uyghur colophon on “front cover”