

# The Maitreya-samiti and Khotanese\*

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§ 0 The legend of the Buddha Maitreya, a wide-spread Buddhist legend of the future savior of the world, evolved through translations and adaptations in a number of Pre-Islamic Central Asian languages.<sup>1</sup> Specifically I would discuss in what follows the Middle Iranian Khotanese version, since other versions, such as Tocharian and Old Turkic (also called Uigur or Old Uigur), have been extensively discussed upon in recent years by specialists in those languages, because of the discoveries and publications of new manuscript fragments. Compared to this the Khotanese version has rather been neglected. In spite of the new edition and translation by the late Professor Emmerick, which appeared more than forty years ago, one still sees, when this Khotanese text is mentioned in relation to other versions, that the pioneer work by Ernst Leumann half a century before Emmerick's book is still relied upon. What is important in the case of the Maitreya legend is, to my mind, unlike the translations of the Buddhist canonical texts, the scriptures, this text develops in the course of diffusion from language to language. It is therefore not possible to leave out the Khotanese Maitreya text in order to obtain an overall picture of the development.

§ 1 One of the most extensive pieces of religious literature in Pre-Islamic Central Asia is Old Turkic *Maitrisimit*, which is now found in two versions, one from Sängim and Murtuq in the Turfan oasis and the other from Hami. One of the colophons of the

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\* An earlier version was read at the *Symposium franco-japonais : «Interactions et translations culturelles en Eurasie» («Dynamic Interactions of Cultures in Eurasia»)*; jointly held by the University of Tokyo and l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, in Paris, December 12-13, 2002. A number of important publications (two articles by Geng, Laut und Pinault 2004, Laut 2006, Wilkens 2008) published since then could not be taken into account. The proceedings of the Berlin conference in April 2008 (*Die Erforschung des Tocharischen und die alttürkische Maitrisimit*; see:

<http://www.bbaw.de/bbaw/Forschung/Forschungsprojekte/turfanforschung/bilder/Symposium2008.pdf>),

when published, would no doubt include papers relevant to the present topic. [February 2009]

<sup>1</sup> For the general background see e.g. Baruch 1946, and Jaini 1988.

first version was deciphered in 1916 by F. W. K. Müller and Emil Sieg, who indicated that the Old Turkic (also called Uigur) version was translated from the *Twɣy* language (which gave rise to the designation of “Tocharian”<sup>2</sup>) and that it ultimately goes back to the Indic (Sanskrit) original. The first part of this statement seems to be confirmed through the publication of the fragments of the “Tocharian” version<sup>3</sup>, while the second part has often been considered suspect. In fact the known Sanskrit versions<sup>4</sup> of the Maitreya legend, the *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa* in the Gilgit<sup>5</sup> and Calcutta<sup>6</sup> manuscripts as well as the *Maitreyāvadāna*, which is the third chapter of the *Divyāvadāna*, the second of the three episode<sup>7</sup>, originally taken from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, *Bhaiṣajya-vastu*, not only are far shorter but also lack some important parts altogether as compared to the 28 chapters (or “acts”) of the Uigur *Maitrisimit* (and presumably the Tocharian *Maitreyasamiti-nāṭaka*). Moreover, the word *samiti* occurs in these texts only in the sense of “assembly (of the audience at the sermon of the Buddha Maitreya)”,<sup>8</sup> synonymous to *pariṣad*, while according to Müller and Sieg the author(s) (of the colophons) in the Tocharian-Old Turkic versions understood the Sanskrit title *Maitreya-samiti* as “Encounter (*Zusammentreffen*) with Maitreya”.

§ 2 The Khotanese version is somewhat in between in length. It occupies the central part of the 22nd Chapter (of 24 extant Chapters) of the *Book of Zambasta* (so named by H. W. Bailey). The first eight folios of this chapter are lost, so we do not know how the chapter began. The end of the chapter is apparently the end of the frame story where the Buddha teaches Ānanda the serious consequences of unlawful acts even under Maitreya, so the beginning of the chapter would have been the first half of the

<sup>2</sup> F. W. K. Müller und E. Sieg, “Maitrisimit und ‘Tocharisch’”.

<sup>3</sup> For the relation of the Tocharian and Uigur *Maitreyasamiti* see e.g. K. T. Schmidt 1996, and G.-J. Pinault 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Later texts such as *Maitreyavyākaraṇāvadāna* (= *Avadāna-Kalpalatā*, Chap. 16) as well as the Pāli *Anāgata-Vamsa* (Minayeff, 1886 as well as Leumann 1919, 177-226) and its Siṃhalese (Meddegama 1993) version are not considered here. [See [Hartmann 2006 for a fragment in the Schøyen Collection](#)].

<sup>5</sup> P. C. Majumdar, “Ārya-Maitreya-vyākaraṇa”, in N. Dutt ed.

<sup>6</sup> Lévi 1932.

<sup>7</sup> The first two episodes are translated by Abegg 1928, 153-155. The same parts from the Tibetan Vinaya are translated by Schiefner 1876 (1874).

<sup>8</sup> *tataḥ kāruṇikaḥ śāstā Maitreyo dvipadottamaḥ* |

*samitiṃ vyavalokyātha idam arthaṃ pravakṣyati* || 69 ||

“Then, the compassionate teacher Maitreya, the best of men, looking over the **assembly**, will pronounce these words ...”

frame story. The preserved part begins with an episode where the Buddha entrusts his Śāsana to Mahākāśyapa just before his Nirvāṇa. Here the text seems to allude to the “Account of the duration of the Law enounced by the Great Arhat Nandimitra” 「大阿羅漢難提蜜多羅所說法住記」<sup>9</sup> with a list of 16 Arhats. It is certainly not a part of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* as supposed by Leumann. In spite of the title of Leumann’s book there is absolutely nothing to warrant the use of the word *Maitreya-samiti* in the text of the Khotanese Maitreya story proper (22.112 - 22.311). As will be seen below the Khotanese version has all the ingredients of the Sanskrit *Maitreyāvādāna*, but greatly expanded. At the same time some proper names correspond to the *Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa* and the Chinese versions rather than to the *Maitreyāvādāna*. But I will come back to this later. Although the Khotanese version alone belongs to the Mahāyānist tradition (with the mention of the “Mahāyāna-sūtras” in Z 22.226), there is very few explicit traces of the Mahāyāna within the text.<sup>10</sup> In fact the text incorporates a quotation from the Udānavarga, 4.37-38 (= Z 22.276, 278), and a passage similar to the Mahāvastu,<sup>11</sup> as well as the traditional *catvāri dharmoddānāni* “Four summary statements”.<sup>12</sup> It utilizes many sources.

§ 3 Four Chinese versions of the *Sūtra of the Descent (from Heaven) of Maitreya* are known.<sup>13</sup> They are all translated in German by WATANABE Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 in Leumann’s book. Leumann also provides a synoptic table for these versions together

<sup>9</sup> T 49, 12ff. Translated by Lévi and Chavannes 1916, 6-24. Closer parallel to this Chinese text, the Indian original of which is assured to have existed by these authors, is curiously found on the back cover in wood of the folios of the *Book of Zambasta* (published as SI P 6.1 by Emmerick and Vorob’eva-Desyatovskaya, 34-35) [I owe this remark to Mr. Sh. Hori]. The connection of this account to the Maitreya story has already been suggested by Lévi, “Maitreya le Consolateur” 367. Lamotte, *Histoire* 765ff. and 775 ff. (690ff. and 699ff. in the English edition) also pursues the same line of association.

<sup>10</sup> See the remarks of von Gabain 1957, 18f.

<sup>11</sup> Z 22.130-134 and *Mahāvastu* iii, 240-1, noted by Leumann.

<sup>12</sup> Z 22.101 *anice harbiśśā ṣkoṅgye anātme harbiśśā ṣkauṅgye | dukhīṅgye harbiśśā ṣkoṅgye tsāṣṭā nārvāni nāṣaundi ||*  
 “Impermanent are all the *saṃskāras*. Without self are all the *saṃskāras*.  
 Woe-afflicted are all the *saṃskāras*. Calm, quiet is Nirvāṇa”.

Cf. Bodhisattvabhūmi (Wogihara ed., 277; Dutt ed., 155) *catvārīmāni dharmoddānāni ... anityāḥ sarva-saṃskārāḥ ... duḥkhāḥ sarva-saṃskārāḥ ... anātmānāḥ sarva-dharmā ... śāntaṃ nirvāṇam ...*

with the Khotanese and the *Maitreyāvadāna*, which was the only available Sanskrit text at that time. Soon after Leumann's book came out, P. Demiéville published a detailed review that focused on the Chinese part of Leumann's book, insisting, among other points, on the importance of another group of the Maitreya sūtras dealing with Maitreya's Ascent to the Tuṣita Heaven in the past. However, we could pass this part for the time being since the Sanskrit and Khotanese versions exclusively deal with the future Maitreya. Although these Chinese versions are translations, they can provide information at relatively early dates as to various stages of development of the Sanskrit text.

§ 4 On the Tocharian *Maitreyasamiti-nāṭaka* and Old Turkic *Maitrisimit nom bitig* I have very little to say.<sup>14</sup> Professor Pinault's paper will deal with them. I will present here only the basic data for these two versions. The Tocharian version is very fragmentary. What is remarkable is that it is made in the style of a drama (as the Sanskrit title *nāṭaka* "drama" shows).<sup>15</sup> A new group of fragments are found in China in 1974 and published recently.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately (for Iranologists) the published pieces all belong to the story of Earlier Life of Maitreya, which is absent from the Sanskrit and Khotanese versions.

The Old Turkic version<sup>17</sup> is the most extensive. The manuscript fragments from Sängim and Murtuq may be considered to represent the single largest text among the findings of the German Turfan Expeditions.<sup>18</sup> Still von Gabain (1957, 12) estimates that nine tenths of the original work were lost. The Hami manuscripts discovered in 1959 and still in the process of publication<sup>19</sup> are said to preserve more text, but still

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<sup>13</sup> They are: T 453 (竺法護・譯 = Extract from the *Ekottarāgama*, Chap. 44), T 456 (鳩摩羅什・譯; early 4th cent.), T 455 (義淨・譯; early 8th cent.; all in verse; closest to the Skt. *Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa*) and T 454 (= abridgment of T 456 according to Demiéville).

<sup>14</sup> On the correspondences between these two versions see K. T. Schmidt 1996 and Pinault 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Sieg und Siegling 1921.

<sup>16</sup> Ji, Winter and Pinault 1998.

<sup>17</sup> See the bibliography in Elverskog 1997.

<sup>18</sup> For the summary of the text by chapters see Gabain 1957, 31-57. The entire text is transliterated, translated and provided with a glossary by Tekin 1980.

<sup>19</sup> For the description of the manuscript fragments by chapters see Laut 1986, 18-45. For the summary of the contents see Klimkeit 1996. Publications so far of the transcribed text and translation with commentary are found in Geng, Klimkeit (and Laut) 1987-1998.

incomplete. Both are divided into 28 “chapters” (chapters 1-25 between an introductory chapter and two chapters of the conclusion). Each chapter has, when preserved, a title and the indication of the scene where the narrative takes place).

§ 5 In contrast to the book-length Old Turkic version the Sanskrit and Khotanese texts of the Maitreya legend is much shorter. In Sanskrit the narrative is made in the future tense consistently, while in Khotanese, which lacks the future, the verbs are in the present tense. Here I summarize the story after the Khotanese version.

The world is much more spacious and level, with the climate and vegetation extremely pleasant. Men are good-natured, with no afflictions or punishments for wrong-doing. The life of men is 80,000 years, and girls are married at 500 years of age. Men are 40 *pukas*<sup>20</sup> tall. Illnesses are few, even the death is not painful.

The capital is Ketumatī, which is now Vārāṇasī, with walls made of seven jewels, trees covered with a network of bells. Śaṅkha is king, a *cakravartin*. The Nāga kings erect a golden pillar (*stunā*) a thousand *pukas* tall for him. He has four treasuries in four countries.

Subrahma, a brahmin, is father of Maitreya, Brahmāvatī is his mother. He has 32 *lakṣaṇas* (signs). He goes out to the tree called Nāgapuṣpa (for meditation). ... [lacuna] ... The god Brahma announces that Maitreya is the next Buddha after Śākyamuni to rescue the beings from woes.

In celebration of the news of the coming of the new Buddha Śaṅkha gives the bejeweled pillar to the brahmins, who promptly breaks it up. Seeing this Maitreya, disgusted, perceives the impermanency and has the desire to renounce the world.

King Śaṅkha with other kings, 84,000 brahmins, 84,000 noble women, 84,000 princes and myriad-thousand of others, follow the steps of Maitreya.

In a garden called Saṃpuṣpita (fully-flowered) Maitreya preaches the Teaching of the Buddha Śākyamuni to the gathering. (Once, not three times like the Sanskrit *Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa* and all the Chinese versions).

As Maitreya enters Ketumatī together with all the followers, all the gods and celestial beings praise him.

Maitreya with the Bhikṣusaṅgha goes out to Mount Kukkuṭapāda (rooster’s feet) where Mahākāśyapa is miraculously keeps meditating. After honoring Maitreya Mahākāśyapa flies up in the sky. He emits fire from his body and realizes *parinirvāṇa*.

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<sup>20</sup> Probably a loan word from Tocharian (A *poke*, B *pokai* “arm”). Corresponding Sanskrit has *hasta*- “hand, forearm”.

From the big toe of his foot Maitreya emits a ray, which extends over to the Hells. Those who merit being rescued see the Buddha Maitreya from the Hell and are reborn. Those who are not worthy do not see Maitreya and remain there.

§ 6 Apart from the lengthy sermons of Maitreya and other divine personages in the Khotanese version, which are either totally absent (*Maitreyāvadāna*) or much shorter (*Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa*) in Sanskrit, the basic framework of the two Sanskrit texts are not much different from the Khotanese. Still it would be convenient to tabulate some of important differences.

<b>Maitreyāvadāna</b>	<b>Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa</b>
No description of Jambudvīpa	Lengthy description of Jambudvīpa
Father of Maitreya is Brahmāyu	Father of Maitreya is Subrahmaṇa
Three kings of three other countries give the <i>yūpa</i> (pillar) to Śaṅkha, who gives it to Brahmāyu, who gives it to Maitreya, who gives it to brahmins. They tear it down.	Śaṅkha has the <i>yūpa</i> (pillar) erected, which he gives to brahmins. 1,000 brahmins tear it apart.
No sermons	3 Sermons at Supuṣpita garden
No return to Ketumatī	Return to Ketumatī
Visiting Mahākāśyapa in Mount Gurupādaka	No Kāśyapa episode

The discrepancy in Maitreya's father's name may be accidental, since the Chinese translation by Yijing 義淨 of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya* (T. 24. 25a) has 善淨, which corresponds to \*Subrahma, not Brahmāyu. It is clear from this comparison that the *Maitreyāvadāna* selects only three components from the Maitreya legend; the birth of the future Buddha, the *yūpa* episode which was a crucial moment in his career to enlightenment,<sup>21</sup> and the Kāśyapa episode. The *Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa* leaves out this last part. Again the discrepancy between the names of the mountain (all the other

<sup>21</sup> The three episodes of the *Maitreyāvadāna*, each of which is provided at the end with the identifications of the personages with the characters at the Buddha's time, must have been originally independent stories. What links the first and the second episodes is *yūpa* "pillar". In the first episode King Mahāpraṇāda had the golden, bejeweled pillar sunk into the Gaṅgā.

versions, Khotanese, Tocharian and Old Turkic, go with *Kukkuṭapādaka*, except the Chinese version of Kumārajīva has 狼跡山 “footsteps of wolves”: T 14, 433b) can be resolved with Xuanzang’s testimony that two names, *Kukkuṭapādaka* and *Gurupādaka*, were both in use (*Travels*, Vol. 9, passage just before Rājagrha).

§ 7 In the whole Maitreya legend the episode of the destruction of the pillar is a decisive turning point, a Damascus-like experience for Maitreya. Most of the painters who decorated the walls and ceilings of the cave temples in Dunhuang and its vicinities with the scenes from the Maitreya-sūtras did not fail to include the “pillar destroyed”. However, the Chinese word used in the translation of Sanskrit *yūpa* is generally *chuang* 幢, whose primary meaning is “banner, streamer” made of cloth and hung from a tall flag-pole, and which generally translates Skt. *dhvaja*, *ketu* (“flag, banner”).<sup>22</sup> In the paintings it seems that a conflation has occurred with another meaning of *chuang*, namely “a multi-storied stone pagoda as a Buddhist monument”, which is also very far from the Sanskrit *yūpa* “sacrificial post”.<sup>23</sup> The scenes from Mogao Cave 148 (High Tang), Cave 186 (Middle Tang), Cave 9 (Late Tang), and Cave 61 (Five Dynasties) all show multi-storied, pagoda-like, round towers.<sup>24</sup> The famous Maitreya scenes from Cave 25 of the Anxi Yulinku 安西榆林窟 (Middle Tang), which show a two-storied, square building, are based on Kumārajīva’s Chinese version, which abandons *chuang* and uses *qibao tai* 七寶臺 “seven-jeweled platform” for translating *sapta-ratna-mayaṃ yūpaṃ* “a post adorned with seven jewels”.<sup>25</sup>

It seems merely accidental that the pillar episode has not emerged in Tocharian and Old Turkish versions. In fact it is only with the discovery of the Hami manuscripts

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<sup>22</sup> *Chuang* 幢 (丁福保: 佛學大辭典): “(物名)梵名馱縛若 *Dhvaja*, 又曰計都 *Ketu*, 譯曰幢。為竿柱高出, 以種種之絲帛莊嚴者。藉表麾群生, 制魔眾, 而於佛前建之, 或於幢上置如意寶珠, 號之為與願印, 寶生如來, 或地藏菩薩之三昧耶形也。大日經疏九曰: 「梵云馱縛若, 此翻為幢。梵云計都, 此翻為旗。其相稍異, 幢但以種種雜色絲標幟莊嚴, 計都相亦大同, 而更加旒旗密號, 如兵家畫作象龍鳥獸等種種類形, 以為三軍節度。」演密鈔五曰: 「釋名曰: 幢者童也 (童獨也), 其貌童童然, 即軍中獨出之謂也。」 ”

<sup>23</sup> A similar character with the tree radical 幢 means only “post, pole”. But the Chinese texts are consistent in using 幢.

<sup>24</sup> Wang 2002, 110 (plate 94), 112 (plate 96), 113 (plate 97) and 114 (plate 98).

<sup>25</sup> Wang 2002, 80 (plate 60).

that we know the title of Chapter 12, which is still unpublished, mentions it.<sup>26</sup> In the Turfan manuscripts of the Uigur *Maitrisimit* Chapter 12 is completely lost. In Tocharian there is a large sheet which covers the end of Chapter 11 and the beginning of Chapter 12.<sup>27</sup> Professor Pinault suggests<sup>28</sup> that another fragment with the mention of a “diamond pillar of King Mahā-Praṇāda” must belong to this chapter. One would wish that a full translation be given so that non-specialists can see the context. King Mahā-Praṇāda and his pillar (*siruq* in Uigur) are the topics of the first episode of the Sanskrit *Maitreyāvadāna*, and in Chapter 4 of the Old Turkic version it is alluded to three times in the Hami manuscripts<sup>29</sup> and once in the Turfan manuscripts.<sup>30</sup> Likewise the third episode of the *Maitreyāvadāna*, with King Vāsava (who will be Śaṅkha in the future) and King Dhanasaṃmata (who will be Maitreya in the future), is alluded to in Chapter 16 of both groups of the Uigur *Maitrisimit* manuscripts.<sup>31</sup>

§ 8 The story of Maitreya during the lifetime of the Buddha Śākyamuni is prominent in Tocharian and Old Turkic versions, while it is totally absent from the Sanskrit and Khotanese ones. It has often been remarked that the teacher of young Maitreya, *Bādhari* in Tocharian and Old Turkic versions, is the same character as *Bāvarī* in the Pāli *Sutta-nipāta* as well as Chapter 57 of the *Sūtra of the Wise and Fool*.<sup>32</sup> This very early Pāli text does not tell much beyond the fact that the circle of disciples around the Buddha included persons called *Bāvarī* and *Metteya*, while the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Fool*, whose ultimate sources are said to go back to Khotan, poses a complicated problems of textual recension. Although Chapter 57 in question is found in two major classes of the Chinese canons, the Tibetan *mDzangs-blun*<sup>33</sup> does not have it. One does not know where and when it was incorporated into the collection of tales.

In this connection mention must be made of a very convenient book published recently in Hongkong (Wang 2002). It is a classified collection of the paintings concerning the Maitreya-sūtra (i. e. the Sūtra of the Descent of Maitreya in Chinese) in

<sup>26</sup> Laut, 1986, 28.

<sup>27</sup> Partly translated in Müller-Sieg, 1916, 405.

<sup>28</sup> Pinault 1999, 200.

<sup>29</sup> Geng and Klimkeit 1988, 223, 225, 265.

<sup>30</sup> Tekin 1980, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Tekin 1980, 136; Geng and Klimkeit 1985, 98.

<sup>32</sup> Sieg und Siegling, 1921, 254, and Lévi, 1925, Ji et al. 1998. Cf. also *Bhaddālī* in the first episode of the *Maitreyāvadāna*.

<sup>33</sup> I. J. Schmidt 1843.

the cave temples of Dunhuang. I have referred to some pictures of the “pillar” episodes in this Album (notes 24 and 25 above). At the end of the book the editor gives very useful, chronologically arranged tables which show the topics or scenes of the paintings in each cave.<sup>34</sup> It is clear from these tables that “the earlier life of Maitreya” was not part of the story as it was understood in Dunhuang. On the other hand, the editor remarks that another Maitreya-sūtra, one dealing with the Ascent of Maitreya to the Tuṣita heaven, was most popular in Sui, and during Tang it was gradually replaced by the Descent sūtra (*ibid.* 31f.). As far as our knowledge goes, it is only the Tocharians who combined all the Maitreya materials in a grand scale, and handed it over to the Uigurs.

**§ 9** Although the Sanskrit *Maitreya-Vyākaraṇa* ends without the episode of visiting Kāśyapa in the mountain, the shorter *Maitreyāvādāna* shows that it was associated with the Maitreya cycle at an early date. In the Dunhuang paintings, on the other hand, it is the concluding part of the Maitreya story. Moreover, the tables of the Album mentioned above shows that in High Tang and Middle Tang most of the paintings have this scene, but the number of caves having it sharply decreases in Late Tang and Five Dynasties, and in Song there is none. This tendency may be reflected in the difference between the two Sanskrit versions. These tables also show that the “Glimpse of the Hells” which follows the mountain scene was not a part of the story in Dunhuang, nor is there any trace of it in the Sanskrit versions. It could have been added in the west, and it is a link that connects the Khotanese version with the Tocharian Uigur versions, where four verses in the Khotanese are expanded to six full chapters.

**§ 10** In conclusion, the comparison of the components of the Maitreya legend in various appearances reveals that the Khotanese version occupies a place that bridges the Sanskrit texts and the hugely expanded Tocharian-Uigur versions. At the same time the Dunhuang paintings can show which elements were fashionable in different periods during the second half of the first millennium.

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<sup>34</sup> Wang 2002, 250-253.

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