

Buddhism in Central Asia III

Impacts of Non-Buddhist Influences, Doctrines

Edited by

Lewis Doney
Carmen Meinert
Henrik H. Sørensen
Yukiyo Kasai



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Lewis Doney, Carmen Meinert, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Yukiyo Kasai

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Uyghur Buddhism and the Impact of Manichaeism and Native Religion: The Case of Religious Terminology

Jens Wilkens

Abstract

Uyghur Buddhism owes its emergence to a specific cultural milieu. Not only is it strongly influenced by Tocharian, Chinese, Sogdian, and—in later times (13th–14th centuries)—also Tibetan Buddhism, but because of the royal patronage granted to Manichaeism, the latter helped shape the religious landscape in the West Uyghur Kingdom (second half of the 9th c.–13th c.). Even though Buddhism has exerted a much stronger influence on Manichaeism than vice versa, the latter has played a certain role in the formation of Buddhist literature among the Uyghurs. Faint traces of the indigenous religion of the Uyghurs can also be found in Buddhist and Manichaean texts from the Turfan oasis and from Dunhuang (敦煌). This chapter attempts to pinpoint these aspects, while discussing methodological problems and limitations to the applicability of certain comparative approaches that might help to determine how we should imagine the native religion of Uyghurs. However minor the impact of Manichaeism and native religion may have been, the development of a particular local form of Buddhism in the West Uyghur Kingdom was helped by this contribution.

1 Introduction¹

The impact of Uyghur Manichaeism on Uyghur Buddhism is a much disputed issue covering such fields as art,² legends,³ terminology, and also literature

1 All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own. A subscript 2 in the translations signifies a word-pair/binomial in the Uyghur original. Parentheses in the translations are simply explanatory additions. Late Middle Chinese (LMC) reconstructions follow Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991).

2 Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 141–153.

3 See, e.g., Yukiyo Kasai, “Ein Kolophon um die Legende von Bokug Kagan,” *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 / *Studies on the Inner Asian Languages* 19 (2004): 1–27.

(for instance, whether Uyghur confession texts for lay people originated first within Manichaeism or Buddhism). To elucidate the complex relationship and to understand the religious dynamics involved, the native religion of the Uyghurs has to be included in the discussion. This is particularly true of religious terminology. For the sake of brevity, the following examination will be dedicated to this topic.

The Turkic speaking Uyghurs became a major political player in the Inner Asian steppe region after the foundation of their empire, the East Uyghur Kaganate in Mongolia (744–840; also known under the name Uyghur Steppe Empire). In terms of the history of religions the adoption of Manichaeism as a court religion, shortly after 760,⁴ represents a turning point in the persecution-ridden history of this religious community, which was founded in third century Mesopotamia by Mani (ca. 216–276/277). Even in the late period of Uyghur Buddhism, during the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368, 元), the Uyghurs preserved accounts on the introduction of Manichaeism during the East Uyghur Kaganate. The fragmentary text with the shelf number 81TB10: 06–3a discovered in the year 1981 at Bezeklik (Xinjiang 新疆) is an important testimony. We owe its reading and interpretation to Peter Zieme who presented his

4 There is no consensus among scholars as to how to date this event exactly. Larry Clark ("The Conversion of Bögü Khan to Manichaeism," in *Studia Manichaica. iv. Internationaler Kongreß zum Manichäismus, Berlin, 14.–18. Juli 1997*, ed. Ronald E. Emmerick, Werner Sundermann, and Peter Zieme (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 115) who sees the reason for the changeable first phase of the Uyghurs' acquaintance with this new religion in the undecided attitude of the ruler, summarises his views as follows after an evaluation of the available sources: "Whether or not Bögü Khan's conversion occurred prior to his becoming Khan, or whether it occurred in the distant Tienshan-Tarim region or closer to home, he issued an official permission for the practice of Manichaeism throughout his realm after he was enthroned in 759, an act that was memorialised by the Manichaeian church as the propagation of 761. Even so, his attachment to this religion did not translate into firm sponsorship or protection until an affirmation of faith was wrested from his adventurous spirit by Manichaeian clerics brought back to the steppe from China in 763." On the date of Bögü Khan's conversion see also the remarks by Takao Moriyasu, "New Developments in the History of East Uighur Manichaeism," *Open Theology* 1 (2015): 319–322. Moriyasu calls some of Clark's assumptions into question but both scholars come to the conclusion that the ruler's conversion did not go smoothly. The most important Uyghur account of Bögü Khan's conversion is found in the two manuscript leaves U 72 and U 73 from the Turfan Collection in Berlin. Nobody seems to have taken the additional fragmentary piece U 206 into account. See Jens Wilkens, *Alltürkische Handschriften Teil 8: Manichäisch-türkische Texte der Berliner Turfansammlung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 80–81, no. 54.

findings in Chinese.⁵ Another text is a kind of historical account known under the title ‘Memorandum’.⁶

There is no consensus among researchers on how to conceive of the religion of the Uyghurs before the conversion of parts of their elite. Some scholars have opted for the (impossible) assumption that it was Buddhism,⁷ while others were in favour of shamanism.⁸ The term ‘shamanism’ itself is a problematic concept in religious studies and a widely accepted definition is not to hand. What is more, the sources we have do not allow us to decide whether the Uyghurs practiced a religion similar those of ethnic groups of Siberia or Mongolia before the Russian Revolution in 1917, in the wake of which the native religions of these regions were seriously affected and sometimes even wiped out.

The Turkic languages underwent contact-induced changes on a linguistic level over millennia until recently. The same is true if we look at the religious sphere, although religious change is not always visible—depending on the diverse character of the source materials. Methodological decisions and which source materials we select greatly influence the results we obtain. If we want to research the native religion of the Uyghurs, the degree of reliability of our results depends largely on how we answer the following basic questions:

- 1) Do we have original sources which allow us to make a sketch of the basic beliefs of the Uyghurs before they converted to Buddhism?

5 Peter Zieme (Cimo 茨默, trans. Wang Ding 王丁), “Youguan Monijiao kaijiao Huihu de yijian xin shiliao 有关摩尼教開教回鶻的一件新史料 [On a New Uyghur Source on the Propagation of Manichaeism],” *Dunhuang xue jikan* 敦煌学辑刊 [Journal of Dunhuang Studies] 2009.3: 1–7, incl. 1 pl.

6 Zhang Tieshan and Peter Zieme, “A Memorandum about the King of the *On Uyghur* and his Realm,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 64.2 (2011): 129–159. See the remarks by Takao Moriyasu, “New Developments in the History of East Uighur Manichaeism,” 319: “The fact that the history of the East Uighur period, a time when Manichaeism flourished, has been preserved in a Uighur text of the Mongol period, when the Uighurs had abandoned Manichaeism and converted completely to Buddhism, clearly demonstrates that from early times they persistently held on to a ‘sense of history’ that engendered in them a desire to preserve works of history.” Zhang and Zieme, “A Memorandum,” 129, are of the opinion that the text describes events from the early period of the West Uyghur Kingdom (10th–11th centuries).

7 For example, Li Tang, “A History of Uighur Religious Conversions (5th–16th Centuries),” *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 44 (2005): 29. For a critical assessment of the assumption that the Uyghurs were Buddhists before converting to Manichaeism see Takao Moriyasu, “Introduction à l’histoire des Ouïghours et de leurs relations avec le Manichéisme et le Bouddhisme,” in *World History Reconsidered through the Silk Road*, ed. Takao Moriyasu (Osaka: Osaka University, 2003), 27–29.

8 This clearly is the opinion in Moriyasu, “Introduction à l’histoire des Ouïghours,” 28.

- 2) If we think we have discovered a possible original source, how representative is it for Uyghur native religious concepts?
- 3) Do later sources preserve important characteristics of the native religion and what do 'atypical elements' in the Manichaean and Buddhist Uyghur texts tell us about a native 'layer' in these two religions?
- 4) What does the shared terminology imply for a reconstruction of inter-religious contacts?

In this chapter I examine such central questions, some of which are interrelated. By doing so, a new scenario for the early history of Uyghur Buddhism can be sketched out, although satisfactory answers are not always possible owing to the character of the source materials.

2 Old Gods and Sacred Places

Starting with the first question, the main sources to hand are archaeological remains and a few texts on memorial steles. But the inscriptions from the East Uyghur Kaganate are mostly uninformative as far as religious themes are concerned. Important information about religious themes, though presented only in very brief allusions is recorded in the trilingual (Chinese, Sogdian, Uyghur in runiform script) Karabalgasun Inscription which was erected during the reign of the eighth Kagan, Ay Tängriḍä Kut Bulmıš Alp Bilgä Kagan (808–821, Chin. Baoyi 保義). The Chinese version, which is the best preserved, mentions the burning of certain "idols" called "images of the demon" (Chin. *moxing* 魔形) after Kagan Būgü's (759–779, Chin. Mouyu 牟羽) conversion to Manichaeism shortly after 760.⁹ For the Sogdian part, Yutaka Yoshida recently established the new reading "idols made by [human] hands" (Sogd. *xy-δ δsty 'krty ptkryt*).¹⁰ The ceremonial renunciation of the ancestral religion is expressed in the two versions with a different emphasis in each case, but we are not informed in the inscription how exactly to imagine it. In the Chinese version, the people are called upon to abandon praying to the spirits and embrace the Religion of Light (= Manichaeism) instead. By royal decree a vegetarian diet is also prescribed as mandatory.

9 Translated in Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot, "Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine (deuxième partie)," *Journal Asiatique* onzième série 1 (1913): 193–194. Būgü was the third Khagan of the East Uyghur Kaganate.

10 Yutaka Yoshida, "Studies of the Karabalgasun Inscription: Edition of the Sogdian Version," *Modern Asian Studies Review* 11 (2020): 50.

The better preserved major inscriptions from the Second Türk Kaganate (ca. 682–744),¹¹ which preceded the East Uyghur Kaganate provide glimpses into the religious ideas and concepts of the Türk elite—who were not necessarily identical to those of their opponents, the Uyghurs.¹² One can only assume that some basic concepts were similar. One of these is definitely the perception of the traditional sacred centre known as “the Ötükän ground” (OT *ötükän yer*) or “the Ötükän mountain meadow” (OT *ötükän yış*) in the inscriptions from the Second Türk Kaganate and the East Uyghur Kaganate.¹³ The bestowal of the royal charisma is apparently connected with this place,¹⁴ an idea still prevalent in the enthronement of the ruler of the West Uyghur Kingdom (OU *idok kut*) as evidenced in a Manichaean text.¹⁵ A colophon mentions a presbyter (OU *m(a)histak*), a cleric of the third rank in the Manichaean hierarchy, by the name of M(a)r New Mani who was based at the Ötükän.¹⁶ In the Buddhist historical account (*Memorandum*) from the Yuan Dynasty, it says about the Uyghur ruler: “He deigned to establish the lands belonging to him as well as the Ötükän people” (OU *özkä sanlıg yerin suvın ötüken bodunun ornatu yarlıkadı*).¹⁷ The narrative refers in all probability to the early years of the West Uyghur Kingdom, which would confirm the significance of the old sacred space even after the Uyghurs’ resettlement in the eastern Tianshan (天山) region. They kept alive the memory of the original seat of nomadic imperial power even during the times of Mongol rule.

11 The three most important inscriptions are from the memorial complexes of the personages Tunyokuk (720–725), Kül Tegin (732), and Bilgä Kagan (735).

12 A survey of the religion of the Orkhon Turks is provided in Jean Paul Roux, “La religion des Turcs de l’Orkhon des VII^e et VIII^e siècles,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 161.1 (1962): 1–24.

13 See Takashi Ōsawa, “The Significance of the Ötüken yer to the Ancient Turks,” in *Ötüken’den İstanbul’a Türkçenin 1290 Yılı (720–2010) 3–5 Aralık 2010, İstanbul. From Ötüken to Istanbul, 1290 Years of Turkish (720–2010) 3rd–5th December 2010, Istanbul*, ed. Mehmet Ölmez et al. (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2011), 405–423. The location is disputed. According to Ōsawa it was rather “a vast area” rather than “a particular region” (p. 405).

14 Ōsawa, “The Significance of the Ötüken yer,” 410. I cannot follow the author’s contention, however, that the charisma was “delivered to the great Turkic Qaghan by the *Tängri* God on the sacred Mountains through Shamanistic ceremonies.”

15 See Takao Moriyasu, “Manichaeism under the East Uighur Khaganate with Special References to the Fragment Mainz 345 and the Kara-Balgasun Inscription,” in *World History Reconsidered through the Silk Road*, ed. Takao Moriyasu (Osaka: Osaka University, 2003), 54–55.

16 See Moriyasu, “New Developments,” 317: “Although a short text, it is an important one in that it informs us that there was a Manichaean ‘master of doctrine’ in the Ötükän region of Mongolia in the year of the pig (795).”

17 Zhang and Zieme, “A Memorandum,” 139, ll. 39–40. The translation in the edition (p. 142) differs slightly.

Although the so-called Orkhon Inscriptions in runiform writing of the Second Türk Kaganate, dating from around 730, sometimes refer to religious themes, their religious background is disputed.¹⁸ In general, we can assume a similar local diversity of concepts and practices among the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups and political entities as among the Germanic tribes before Christianisation.¹⁹ Turkic speaking communities were scattered over a vast area of Eurasia in medieval times and the sources at our disposal that might give us an idea about their religious concepts and practices are diverse and of varying source value. It is customary to 'reconstruct' a Turkic belief system for the ancient period by recourse to sources from different historical contexts. The danger of this approach has been rightly observed.²⁰ When following a comparative approach to explain certain early Turkic religious motifs or ideas, extreme caution should be exercised (although comparison should not be abandoned completely). Early original sources that did not originate within the literary traditions of Manichaeism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam are rare and not very explicit regarding religious issues, taking for granted that the audience was aware of the religious context in which the texts were produced. Reports from outsiders are often biased and/or ill-informed. There are some common elements, such as the preponderance of the Sky God Tängri and heavenly charisma or royal fortune (*ou kut*) in the titles of Uyghur rulers and the important role both terms play in the royal ideology in the inscriptions of

18 Edina Dallos, "Shamanism or Monotheism? Religious Elements in the Orkhon Inscriptions," *Shaman* 12.1–2 (2004): 63–84.

19 Roux, "La religion des Turcs de l'Orkhon," 4, addresses the problem of whether the information in Byzantine sources from the second half of the sixth century about the Western Turks can be used to explain the religion of the Orkhon Turks of the eighth century. He has answered the question in the affirmative, the argument being, however, questionable: "But if the Turks are easily influenced, they are also very conservative (the Great God Tängri, attested since prehistoric times, still exists in the 20th century, etc.)." Translated from the French original: "Mais, si les Turcs sont fort influençables, ils sont aussi fort conservateurs (le Grand Dieu Tängri, attesté dès la préhistoire, existe encore au xx^e siècle, etc.)." Taking the new decipherment of the Brāhmī inscriptions from Khüis Tolgoi and Bugut into account (see below), the language of the elite of the Turks of the First Kaganate was an archaic variant of Mongolic. See also the sizeable article by Peter Golden, "Religion Among the Qipčaq of Medieval Eurasia," *Central Asiatic Journal* 42.2 (1998): 180–237, in which he discusses indigenous religious concepts and practices of the medieval Kipchaks from a comparative perspective using a wide range of sources as well as the relation to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

20 Dallos, "Shamanism or Monotheism?," 64, who for this very reason uses only the Orkhon inscriptions as source materials.

the Second Türk Kaganate.²¹ These terms are found even in the religious texts of the missionary religions Buddhism, Manichaeism, and the Church of the East produced in the West Uyghur Kingdom and adjacent areas inhabited by Uyghurs (such as Dunhuang and Karakhoto). There, *t(ä)ŋri* and *kut* are highly significant religious concepts, although they are used in different contexts. Despite the great importance of the concept of *t(ä)ŋri* in the native religions of the Turks, it is in all likelihood a foreign term.²²

The religious context of the runiform inscriptions from the East Uyghur Kaganate and of the Orkhon Inscriptions was in all likelihood similar in certain respects. The most important deity in the Orkhon Inscriptions was the Sky God Tängri, followed by his female consort Umay (lit. 'placenta'). Because of the importance of the former, the religion of the early Turks is often depicted under the keyword Tengrism or Tengriism, a much disputed concept.²³ Sometimes the scope of this term is extended to cover the religion of the Uyghurs before the conversion to Manichaeism or even to the Altaic peoples in general.²⁴ Writers from the 19th century, such as Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), Friedrich Welcker (1784–1868) or Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), would have described the Turkic religion of the inscriptions as a kind of 'henotheism'. Some scholars use the term even today.

21 Yukiyo Kasai, "Uyghur Legitimation and the Role of Buddhism," in *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 63.

22 Stefan Georg, "Türkisch/mongolisch *tengri* 'Himmel, Gott' und seine Herkunft," *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 6 (2001): 83–100, who stresses that *t(ä)ŋri* is neither a Turkic nor a Mongolic term (p. 83). He discusses previous inner-Turkic etymological proposals as well as foreign terms underlying *t(ä)ŋri*, including Chinese, etc. Georg sees the origin of the term in a Yeniseic language (proto-Yeniseic **tīŋŋVr-* "high"). According to Georg, *t(ä)ŋri* was borrowed from Turkic into Mongolic. For the semantic development see his remarks on p. 83, n. 2: "There is no doubt that one has to start from the original meaning '(physical) heaven, which only secondarily became 'numen, deity.'" Translated from German original: "Es besteht kein Zweifel, daß man von der ursprünglichen Bedeutung '(physischer) Himmel' auszugehen hat, die erst sekundär zu 'numen, Gottheit' wurde."

23 As Yukiyo Kasai rightly pointed out in her response to the paper I presented during the conference of which this is the proceedings, the general interpretation and characterisation of the religion of the early Turks in scholarly literature depends on the sources on which the scholars based their arguments. While European scholars relied mainly on the early Turkic inscriptions which mention Tengri very often, Japanese scholars focused on Chinese historical sources which describe practice and rituals of the Turks in terms of their own Chinese religious traditions and religious specialists.

24 Jean-Paul Roux, "Tängri: Essai sur le ciel-dieu des peuples altaïques," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 149.1–2 (1956): 49–82, 197–230; 150.1–2 (1957): 27–54, 175–212.

Umay was certainly an important deity, although she is mentioned only twice in the Orkhon Inscriptions.²⁵ A brick inscription found in the vicinity of Ulan Bator and consisting of four fragmentary lines only speaks of “the ruler Tānri” (OT *h(a)n t(ā)jri*) and “the queen Umay” (OT *um(a)y h(a)tun*).²⁶ The inscription is also known as the Nalayh Inscription,²⁷ and is dated around the year 730.²⁸ Here we see a correspondence between earthly and heavenly rulership. In the Kül Tegin Inscription, prince Kül Tegin’s mother is compared with Umay.²⁹ The goddess and the term for ‘matrix, womb’ are known in Mongolian too,³⁰ and it was even argued that the Turks adopted Umay as a female deity from the Mongols in early times.³¹ In Uyghur Buddhist texts, the term *umay* is rarely attested and, if so, in nearly all instances bears the meaning ‘placenta,

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- 25 Wolfgang-Ekkehard Scharlipp, “Die alttürkische Religion und ihre Darstellung bei einigen türkischen Historikern,” *Die Welt des Islams* 31.2 (1991): 175. For short information on this deity see Jean-Paul Roux, “Die alttürkische Mythologie,” in *Götter und Mythen in Zentralasien und Nordasien*, ed. Egidius Schmalzriedt and Hans Wilhelm Haussig (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1999), 261–262. The word *umay* appears in one of the Yenisei inscriptions (supposed to be connected to the Kirghiz), namely in Altın Köl 1, although the interpretation of the sentence in which it is found is difficult. See Erhan Aydın, “Yenisey yazıtlarındaki tek örnekler. *Hapax legomena in Yenisei Inscriptions*,” *Türk Bilig [Turkic Wisdom]* 26 (2013): 37–49, 39.
- 26 Hüseyin Namık Orkun, *Eski Türk Yazıtları [Old Turkic Inscriptions]* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1994), 353.
- 27 Erhan Aydın, “Moğolistan’daki runik harfli eski Türk yazıtlarının envanter sorunları ve bir numaralandırma denemesi [Problems of an Inventory of the Old Turkic Inscriptions in Runic Writing System in Mongolia and an Attempt at Numbering them],” *Eski Türçeden çağdaş Uygurcaya: Mirsultan Osman’ın doğumunun 85. yılına armağan / Festschrift in Honor of Mirsultan Osman on the Occasion of His 85th Birthday*, ed. Aysima Mirsultan, Mihriban Aydın, and Erhan Aydın (Konya: Kömen Yayınları, 2014), 71, no. Mo 73.
- 28 Osman F. Sertkaya, “Köl Tigin’in ölümünün 1250. yıl dönümü dolayısı ile Moğolistan Halk Cumhuriyeti’ndeki Köktürk harfli metinler üzerinde yapılan arkeolojik ve filolojik çalışmalara toplu bir bakış [An Overview of the Archaeological and Philological Studies on Texts in the Köktürk Alphabet in the Mongolian People’s Republic on the Occasion of the 1250th Anniversary of Köl Tegin’s Death],” *Bellesten* 47.185 (1983–1984): 75.
- 29 Kül Tegin East 31, Talât Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları [Orkhon Inscriptions]* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2010), 32.
- 30 Ferdinand D. Lessing, ed., *Mongolian-English Dictionary* (Bloomington, Indiana: The Mongolia Society, 1982), 874a.
- 31 Denis Sinor, “‘Umay’, a Mongol Spirit Honored by the Türks,” in *Guo ji Zhongguo bian jiang xue shu hui yi lun wen ji 國際中國邊疆學術會議論文集 / Proceedings of the International Conference on China Border Area Studies, National Chengchi University, April 22–23, 1984*, ed. Lin Enxian 林恩顯 (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue, 1985), 1–7. Umay is known in several modern Turkic languages. See Sadettin Gömeç, “Umay meselesi [The Problem of Umay],” *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi [Journal of Historical Investigations]* 5.1 (1990): 277–281.

womb'.³² There is one important exception in the eighth scroll of the Uyghur version of the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, the *Altun Yaruk Sudur*. The phrase runs as follows: “the mistress of the placenta named Bhūtamātā who worships the god Buddha” (OU *t(ä)ñri burhanig ayatači buče-mata atl(ı)g umay iyäsi*).³³ The Chinese equivalent is *guizimu* (鬼子母).³⁴ Thus, *umay iyäsi* is a kind of Uyghur gloss which underlines her specific sphere of activity instead of explaining the Sanskrit term. Chinese *guizimu(shen)* (鬼子母[神]) corresponds to Sanskrit Hārītī, a goddess and converted demoness who is believed to protect children and enjoys a great popularity from India to Japan. There is a rich pictorial tradition of her in Central and East Asia, for instance in Kızıl, Turfan, and Dunhuang.³⁵ It is almost certain that by adding the gloss, a faint echo of the native goddess Umay shines through. It was correctly observed that the name of the goddess, obviously one of fertility and child protection, cannot be separated from the term for ‘placenta’.³⁶ The 11th-century Muslim lexicographer and savant Maḥmūd al-Kāšgārī (ca. 1020–1070) refers under this term to the placenta only but mentions a cult dedicated to it all the same. This was rightly interpreted as an attempt to downplay the importance of the ‘pagan’ goddess.³⁷

The native term *t(ä)ñri* is not only a general term for ‘god’ in Buddhism and Manichaeism but it is equally used quite often as an epithet or honorific of Mani and the Buddha. Buddhist texts give additionally ‘god of gods’ (OU *t(ä)ñri t(ä)ñristi*), corresponding to Sanskrit *devadeva* or *devātideva*. These epithets are very common and even used when the source texts from which Uyghur

32 For instance, Vasilij V. Radlov and Sergej E. Malov, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa (sutra zolotogo bleska): Tekst uġurskoj redakcii* (Petrograd: Imperatorskaja Akademija Nauk, 1913–1917), fol. 550:16. See also the term *umay isigi* “puerperal fever” in BT XXIII, 183, no. XXVIII or the phrase *umay keč tüšsär* “if the placenta is expelled late” (BT XXIII, 184, no. XL).

33 Radlov and Malov, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, fols. 509:23–510:2.

34 The whole phrase in the underlying Chinese text is: *jingli guizimu* 敬禮鬼子母 (T. 665.16, 438c3). Johannes Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra: Das Goldglanz-sūtra, ein Sanskrittext des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus. I-Tsing's chinesische Version und ihre tibetische Übersetzung. Erster Band: I-Tsing's chinesische Version übersetzt, eingeleitet, erläutert und mit einem photomechanischen Nachdruck des chinesischen Textes versehen* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 264, n. 8, suggests to read according to the variant *fo* (佛) instead of *li* (禮). The Uyghur translation corroborates Nobel's suggestion.

35 Emmanuelle Lesbre, “La conversion de Hārītī au Buddha: origine du thème iconographique et interprétations picturales chinoises,” *Arts Asiatiques* 55 (2000): 98–119.

36 Louis Bazin, “La déesse-mère chez les Turcs pré-islamiques,” *Bulletin de la Société Ernest Renan* 2 (1953): 124–126.

37 *Ibid.*, 125.

translations were made have no equivalent. In Manichaeism, the elect are sometimes designated as *t(ä)ñrilär*, ‘gods’.³⁸

3 Native Religious Vocabulary

When the Uyghurs translated Manichaean and Buddhist texts into their own language they adopted a large number of foreign words to express religious concepts. On the other hand, they had a whole set of native terms at their disposal that sometimes evolved semantically within a new religious context.³⁹ This is a kind of cross-religious vocabulary. These terms include the following, to name only a few:

- 1) *arviš* ‘magic, magic formula’, *arvišči* ‘wizard, magician’, *arva-* ‘to bewitch, cast spells’;
- 2) *bügü* ‘sorcerer, wizard’ (attested mainly in titles of rulers but also in the standard epithet of the Buddha: *bügü biliglig* ‘possessing supernatural knowledge’);⁴⁰ in referring to the native concept of *bügü* the Uyghur Buddhists adhered to the traditional notion of divine knowledge, but at the same time they stressed that the Buddha is true possessor of superknowledge;
- 3) *idok* ‘holy, sacred’;
- 4) *ırk* ‘oracle, omen, lot, die’;
- 5) *kam* ‘religious specialist of the native religion, priest of a foreign religion’ (‘shaman’ in some modern Turkic languages);
- 6) *kut* the term was already mentioned as ‘fortune, royal fortune’ but there are several other inherited meanings. The hendiadys *kut wahšik* is common in Manichaean and Buddhist texts as ‘protective spirit₂’. The term *wahšik* ~ *vahšik* was borrowed from Sogdian *w’xšyk*, whereas *kut* ‘protective spirit’ must be a native Turkic term hailing from pre-Manichaean times. We even find *kut* as ‘soul, departed soul, spirit’ in Manichaean and,

38 Takao Moriyasu, *Die Geschichte des uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße: Forschungen zu manichäischen Quellen und ihrem geschichtlichen Hintergrund* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 63.

39 On terms related to sorcery, etc., see Jens Wilkens, “Magic, Sorcery and Related Terms in Early Turkic,” in *Historical Linguistics and Philology of Central Asia: Essays in Turkic and Mongolic Studies*, ed. Bayarma Khabtagaeva (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 201–226.

40 On *bügü* and derived terms see Wilkens, “Magic, Sorcery and Related Terms,” 206–209.

rarely, in Buddhist texts too.⁴¹ In some Buddhist texts, the native idea of *kut* as related to the lifespan of a certain person is preserved. They will have a long life if *kut* is thick and a short one if it is thin.⁴² This concept is also attested in the Second Karabalgasun Inscription.⁴³ Important derived words are *kutlug* ‘possessing fortune, fortunate, charismatic person’, *kutsuz* ‘without fortune, unlucky’ and *kutad-* ‘to enjoy divine favour, bring good fortune’. Presumably old synonyms or quasi-synonyms of *kut* are *kiv* and *ülüg*;

- 7) *öz konok* ‘vital spot = seat of the soul’ (corresponding to Skt. *marman*);
- 8) *saviş* ‘incantation, jinx’ (extremely rare and not attested in Manichaean texts);
- 9) next to *t(ä)ñri* ‘god’ mentioned above there are several derived terms and compounds: *t(ä)ñrim* ‘a title; goddess (lit. ‘my god’), *t(ä)ñri hatunu* ‘goddess’, *t(ä)ñriçi* ‘religious specialist, a person who deals with the gods’, *t(ä)ñridäm* ‘godlike, heavenly’, *t(ä)ñrilig* ‘belonging to the gods’, *t(ä)ñrilik* ‘temple, a place to worship ‘pagan’ gods’,⁴⁴ only very rarely does *t(ä)ñrilik* permit the interpretation ‘Buddhist temple’;⁴⁵
- 10) *törö*, the term has a broad semantic spectrum ranging from ‘custom, moral, law, prescription, precept, manners, tradition’ over ‘phenomenon, appearance’ and ‘ceremony, rite, obsequies, funeral’ to ‘thing, fact’, and so

41 For the complex semantics of *kut* see Jens Wilkens, *Handwörterbuch des Altuigurischen: Altuigurisch—Deutsch—Türkisch* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2021), 428b. Occasionally, *kut* is the equivalent of Skt. *puṇya* ‘merit’.

42 See Jens Wilkens, “Sacred Space in Uyghur Buddhism,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia 1—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 195–196. A further important instance of this idea can now be added from the *Mātrisimit*: “may our mother, lady Silig Kün, who is like the present god(dess) of fortune, be joyful for a long time—with a long life and a thick *kut*, without ailments₂, without dangers, in joy₂ and in enjoyment of the world” (OU *közünü turur kut t(ä)ñrisi täg ögümüz kün silig kunçuy yüz yulkatägi uzun özin kaln kutn igsiz togasız adas(i)z tudasız ögrünçü mänjin yertinçü mänşin ürkä ögrünçüüllig ärmäki bolzun*). See BT IX, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980), 25–26, pl. 1 v. 6–12.

43 Jens Wilkens, “Zwischen Historiografie und Ideologie: Der literarische Charakter der alttürkischen Runeninschriften,” in *Geschichten und Geschichte: Historiographie und Hagiographie in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Peter Schalk et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2010), 314, n. 123.

44 Purely speculative, without any evidence in the source materials is the explanation in Emel Esin, “*Balıq* and *Ordu* (The Early Turkish Circumvallations, in Architectural Aspects),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 27.3–4 (1983): 173: “For the sake of convenience, the term *teñgrilik* will be used to designate a temple of heaven, or of astrologic deities which at a later date were a feature of celestial cults.”

45 See BT XLVI, 67, ll. 04 and 05.

forth.⁴⁶ The term *törö* is already important in the Orkhon Inscriptions, where it signifies among other things ‘governmental power’.⁴⁷ (Next to ‘custom, law, tradition’ this seems to be the basic meaning.) In Buddhism, the word is one of the Uyghur equivalents of the Sanskrit term *dharma*.⁴⁸ There are many derivatives including *töröçi* ‘religious specialist’;

- 11) *üzüt* ‘spirit, imperishable factor in a human being’;⁴⁹
- 12) *yagış* ‘sacrifice’, *yagışla-* ‘to sacrifice’, *yagışluk (oron)* ‘sacrificial altar, offering site’.

Some of the above terms are rarely attested, but they still reflect their native origin.

4 The Central Asian Connection: Cosmological Terms

There are some terms in Uyghur Buddhist texts pertaining to the semantic field of cosmology that reveal the impact of either the former native religion of the Uyghurs or Manichaeism. The two most frequently used terms for ‘world’ in Uyghur Buddhist texts are, first, *yertinçü* and, second, *yer suv*, a composite term comprised of two components, namely *yer* ‘earth’ and *suv* ‘water’.⁵⁰ This latter combination (in the spelling *yer sub*) is already found in the earliest Turkic

46 Wilkens, *Handwörterbuch des Altuigurischen*, 739a–b.

47 In the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription from the time of the first Türk Kaganate discussed below the term is already present as *drö*. The language of the inscription is in an early form of Mongolic. Alexander Vovin, “A Sketch of the Earliest Mongolic Language: the Brāhmī Bugut and Khüis Tolgoi Inscriptions,” *International Journal of Eurasian Linguistics* 1 (2019): 167, 168.

48 For further Sanskrit equivalents see Wilkens, *Handwörterbuch des Altuigurischen*, 739a.

49 For *üzüt* in a Buddhist context signifying ‘spirit’ in a description of hells see Annemarie von Gabain, *Maitrisimit: Faksimile der alttürkischen Version eines Werkes der buddhistischen Vaibhāṣika-Schule II [Beiheft]* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 85, l. 18. In the *Säkiz Yügmäk Yaruk Sudur* [Sūtra of Brilliance of the Eight Accumulations], ‘spirits and demons’ (OU *üzüt yäklär*) is present in the oldest manuscript testimonies and render Chinese *guishen* (鬼神). See BT XXXIII, 190, § 293 Ia and Ib. The recension Ia has additionally ‘the powerful ones below the earth’ (OU *yer altınki ärkliglär*). The existence in one of the hells is the context also in: “after the souls have escaped from the torments of hell” (OU *üzütlär tamutakı ämgäktin ozuq*) in Gabdul Rašid Rachmati, *Türkische Turfan-Texte VII* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), 49 (text 40:30). The religious communication is possible with a *üzüt* in: “one should give a departed soul food” (OU *üzütkä aš bergül*) Rachmati, *Türkische Turfantexte VII*, 35 (text 25:8).

50 Sometimes the terms are combined to *yertinçü yer suv*. On the descendants of *yer suv* in modern Turkic languages see Mehmet Ölmez, “Türkçede dinî tabirler üzerine [On Religious Terms in Turkic],” *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* [Researches in Turkic Languages] 15 (2005): 214.

sources, the Orkhon Inscriptions. In these inscriptions the term does not only convey a cosmological but also a spiritual meaning.⁵¹ Next to the Sky God Tängri and the female goddess Umay the *yer sub* are the only numina mentioned by name in these epigraphic sources. Judging from the rather vague wording in the inscriptions, they are a collective of spiritual helpers or guardians with a connection to the land perceived as sacred. The spiritual connotation of *yer suv* is apparently no longer present in Old Uyghur.

In contrast, the religious imagery of the celestial bodies presents an interesting case of preservation of native Inner Asian ideas. Again, the look at the above-mentioned atypical elements in Uyghur Buddhist texts is crucial here. In the eighth scroll of the *Altun Yaruk Sudur*, the Uyghur version of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, a passage describes the far-reaching benefits if a just ruler is guided by the *dharma*. Here it says: “the sun and the moon, the palaces, will not confuse (their) right measure₂” (OU *künli aylı ordolar kolu[sın] täjın šaşurmaz*).⁵² The Chinese text by Yijing (635–713, 義淨) on which the Uyghur translation is based has a slightly different wording: *riyue wuguaidu* (日月無乖度)⁵³ which I would tend to translate as “the sun and the moon won’t leave their orbit.” In the *Säkiz Yügümäk Yaruk Sudur* [Sūtra of Brilliance of the Eight Accumulations], a translation from Chinese, the palaces of the sun and the moon are also mentioned, although in the Chinese original we find only *riyue* (日月).⁵⁴ Another sentence speaks of the “light of the gods residing in the sun and the moon, the two bright palaces” (OU *kün t(ä)ñri ay t(ä)ñri iki y(a)ruk ordolar içintäki t(ä)ñrilär y(a)ruki*).⁵⁵ In the *Maitrisimit* [Meeting with Maitreya], a Uyghur translation of the Tocharian A *Maitreyasamitināṭaka*, Buddha Maitreya holds a long speech and addresses his dialogue partners as follows: “and you have settled in the palace of the moon” (OU *yänä ay t(ä)ñri ordosinta*

51 See the table in Dallos, “Shamanism or Monotheism?,” 73, which specifies for what actions the *yer sub* are responsible in the Orkhon Turkic sources. See also the tables on p. 74 giving the number of attestations and whether the *yer sub* are mentioned together with other numina. It is noteworthy that *yer* (‘earth’) alone is a distinct numen. It is doubtful whether the opposition assumed in *ibid.*, 76 between *yer sub* (‘profane’) vs. *ıdok yer sub* (‘sacred’) is valid.

52 Radlov and Malov, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, fols. 565.22–566.1.

53 T. 665.16, 443c22.

54 BT XXXIII, 176, § 242, Ia: *kün ay t(ä)ñri iki y(a)ruk ordolar*; Ib: *kün t(ä)ñri ay t(ä)ñri iki yaruk ordo*, both can be translated as: “the sun and the moon, the two bright palaces”. In recension Ia § 243 reads additionally: “the palaces adorned with sparkling₂ jewels,” *y(a)ruk y(a)ltr(i)kl(i)gr(a)dnen y(a)ratmuş ordolar* (BT XXXIII, 176). For the Chinese parallel see *ibid.*, 177. See also *ibid.*, 220, § 404.

55 BT XXXIII, 184, §§ 272–273, cited according to recension Ia, recension Ib being very similar.

olurduyuzlar).⁵⁶ Another Buddhist text, a Uyghur original composition, uses the image of the sun and the moon as palaces. The context is a description of the Mt. Sumeru and its four sides consisting of four kinds of jewels: “the sun and the moon revolve in their (respective) palaces⁵⁷ around (him)” (OU *kün ay t(ä)ñri ordosinta tägzinür*).⁵⁸ Apart from an astrological text discussed a few lines further down in this chapter, I could find one instance where the Chinese original actually mentions a ‘hall’ if not a palace is the eighth chapter of the Uyghur translation of the biography of Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘): “by observing first of all in the sky the palace of the moon which is marked with the seal of the hare” (OU *kök t(ä)ñritä*⁵⁹ *äj başlayu tavişgan tamgalıg ay t(ä)ñri ordosın körüp [...]*).⁶⁰ The Chinese text has *suitian chutu, jianyuedian er chenghui* (素天初兔，鑒月殿而澄輝, T. 2053.50, 267a) which was partly misunderstood by the Uyghur translator.⁶¹ I quote the translation of the Chinese by Li Rongxi: “[...] and the New Rabbit appearing in the clear sky illuminates the hall of the Moon with lucid brilliance.”⁶²

One might assume that the expression would reflect a Manichaeic image because in Uyghur Manichaeic texts the sun and the moon are imagined as palaces, too. Prominent examples are from the confession for auditors, the *Xwāstwānift*: “And second: (sins) against the sun and the moon and the gods residing in the two radiant palaces” (OU *ekinti yämä kün ay täñrikä eki yaruk*

56 BT IX, vol. 1, 148, pl. 164, r. 32–v. 1. For the palace of the moon see also Willi Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, *Türkische Turfantexte. v* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1931), 4, l. A 5.

57 In Uyghur in the singular.

58 Peter Zieme, “Nachträge zu ‘Die Lehre des Buddha und das Königshaus des Westuigurischen Reichs: Die vier Begegnungen,’” *Journal of Old Turkic Studies* 5.1 (2021): 196, l. 4. The interpretation of this short sentence is difficult. The editor translates it as “with the sun and the moon he wanders (?)” Translated from German original: “Mit Sonne und Mond wandelt er (?)” (Zieme, “Nachträge,” 198).

59 ‘The blue heaven’ (OU *kök t(ä)ñri*) is a traditional native Turkic designation found already in the Orkhon inscriptions. See Dallos, “Shamanism or Monotheism?,” 67 and 72.

60 Klaus Röhrborn, *Die alttürkische Xuanzang-Biographie VIII, nach der Handschrift von Paris, Peking und St. Petersburg sowie nach dem Transkript von Annemarie v. Gabain herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 160, ll. 1830–1832. Another instance where the Chinese original mentions a celestial palace is in Radlov and Malov, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, fol. 399:15 with the corresponding Chinese original in T. 665:16, 427a4.

61 Röhrborn, *Die alttürkische Xuanzang-Biographie VIII*, 261 (commentary to l. 1832).

62 Li Rongxi, *A Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Great Cien Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty Translated from the Chinese of Śramaṇa Huili and Shi Yancong* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995), 268.

ordo icrä olurugma täñrilärkä).⁶³ A similar wording is found a few lines further down.⁶⁴ Another Manichaean text refers several times to the palaces of the moon and the sun.⁶⁵ Despite these Manichaean examples, a Manichaean origin of the Buddhist ones is not necessarily certain because the image of the palace is one of the atypical elements in Manichaeism. Only in a Chinese Manichaean text, the so-called *Traité Manichéen*, do we find the sun imagined as a palace.⁶⁶ Although Uyghur Manichaeism is heavily dependent on the Middle Iranian literary traditions, the image of the sun and the moon as palaces was introduced by the Uyghurs. Otherwise they are conceived of as ships,⁶⁷ ferries, or chariots. The obvious conclusion would be that an indigenous concept was preserved in Uyghur Manichaean and Buddhist texts. In Chinese literature planets are associated with their respective palaces, too.⁶⁸ One Uyghur text is a translation of a Chinese original which enumerates nine planetary palaces.⁶⁹ That the image of the sun and the moon as palaces appears in Uyghur literature *before* translations from Chinese were produced could point to *early Inner Asian-Chinese religious contacts*.

The terms for the two celestial bodies are also worth mentioning. In the quotes from Uyghur original Buddhist sources, I have translated the terms *ay t(ä)ñri* and *kün t(ä)ñri* as ‘moon’ and ‘sun’ respectively. Literally they are

63 Quoted after the slightly normalised reading text in Larry Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts: Texts, Translations, Commentary. Volume 11: Liturgical Texts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 83 (11A). My translation differs from Clark’s. Because the gods residing in the sun and the moon are explicitly differentiated from the two luminaries Clark’s translation “Sun and Moon Gods” (p. 89) is less preferable. On the three deities residing in each luminary see Gábor Kósa, “The Manichaean Attitude to Natural Phenomena as Reflected in the Berlin *Kephalaia*,” *Open Theology* 1 (2015): 258.

64 Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts. 11*, 83 (11B).

65 Albert von Le Coq, *Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho. III nebst einem christlichen Bruchstück aus Bulayiq* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922), 7–8, no. 2.

66 Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Chinesische Manichaica, mit textkritischen Anmerkungen und Glossar* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987), 92–93.

67 For a pictorial representation of the sun and the moon as ships in the Chinese Cosmology painting see Gábor Kósa, “Ships and Ferries in the Manichaean Cosmology Painting,” in *Danfeng canggui—Zhang Xun bainian danchen jinian wenji* 丹枫苍桧—章巽百岁诞辰纪念集 [Collection of Papers for the 100th Anniversary of Zhang Xun’s Birthday], ed. Rui Chuanming 芮传明 and Zhang Jiaping 章嘉平 (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2015), 41–67.

68 Also pointed out by Henrik H. Sørensen during the Final Conference of the ERC project *BuddhistRoad*.

69 Rachmati, *Türkische Turfantexte VII*, 21–22 (text 13) with sinological remarks by Wolfram Eberhard on p. 99.

‘moon god’ and ‘sun god’.⁷⁰ We have a full documentation of *ay t(ä)ñri* in the dictionary *Uigurisches Wörterbuch*⁷¹ in which Sogdian *m’x βγ-* (nominative *m’x βγγ*) was identified as the base of the Uyghur calque,⁷² although a possible Tocharian model was also taken into consideration.⁷³ In a Manichaean context the Sogdian term *xwrβγ-* (nominative *xwrβγγ*) ‘sun god’ is attested.⁷⁴ The Tocharian terms retrieved from Buddhist texts are as follows with the element ‘god’ as the second part of the compounds: TochB *meññäkte*, TochA *maññkät* ‘moon’ and TochB *kaumñäkte*, TochA *komñkät* ‘sun’. In both languages, the word for ‘earth’ is formed in the same way (TochB *keññäkte*, TochA *tkaññkät*), for which we have several corresponding terms in Uyghur: *yer t(ä)ñri*, *yer t(ä)ñrisi* and *yer t(ä)ñri hatuni*—the latter formation emphasising the female aspect of the deity.⁷⁵ One can only agree with the conclusion drawn by Werner Winter, who examined the three Tocharian expressions: “All three of these may be taken to have been part of a Central Asian pre-Buddhist pantheon.”⁷⁶ The Uyghur terms corroborate this assumption.

But it is not necessarily certain that the Uyghurs copied the terms from another language *when making their translations*. That the sun and the moon were designated as ‘sun god’ and ‘moon god’ could also be regarded as a Central Asian areal linguistic phenomenon that would have to be dated to a much earlier period than the late ninth century, when Uyghur Manichaean literature started to emerge in the West Uyghur Kingdom. To actually find the ultimate source would be extremely difficult. In my view, the Tocharian side makes it likely that the terms were pre-Manichaean but certainly helpful for the Manichaeans in their proselytising endeavours in a Central Asian context. There is some discussion in scholarship as to whether the important role of the sun and the moon in terms of royal investiture is an important trait of pre-Manichaean native Uyghur religion, or whether the phenomenon is related to Manichaeism. It is true that the sun and/or the moon as bestowers of

70 See also Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, “The Sun and the Moon as Gods in Central Asia,” *South Asian Religious Art Bulletin* 2 (1983): 11.

71 Klaus Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch: Sprachmaterial der vorislamischen türkischen Texte aus Zentralasien—Neubearbeitung—II. Nomina—Pronomina—Partikeln. Band 2: aš—äžük* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2017), 98–100.

72 Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch*, 98 after Walter Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), 85.

73 Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch*, 98, without actually quoting the terms.

74 Nicholas Sims-Williams and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Sogdian and Bactrian* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 221b.

75 Wilkens, *Handwörterbuch des Altuigurischen*, 890a.

76 Werner Winter, “Tocharian B *ñakte*, A *ñkät* ‘God’: Two Nouns, their Derivatives, their Etymology,” *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 15 (1987): 310.

royal charisma (*kut* or its synonym *üliüg* respectively) appear in titles of Uyghur kings only after the conversion to Manichaeism.⁷⁷ As the idea of the two luminaries as the source of regal power is not developed elsewhere in Manichaeism, a Manichaean origin for this concept cannot be proven with certainty. It is difficult to assess how indigenous Uyghur ideas relate to Manichaean ones in this context because of the dearth of sources on pre-Manichaean Uyghur religion. At any rate, this phenomenon is still reflected in some throne names of Uyghur rulers in the West Uyghur Kingdom.⁷⁸

5 Manichaean and Native Terms for Deities in Buddhist Texts

Among the Uyghur manuscripts, the majority of the Manichaean ones form the oldest layer. They are several decades or approximately a century older than the earliest Buddhist ones. It is possible that the Uyghurs produced Manichaean manuscripts already during the time of the East Uyghur Kaganate,⁷⁹ and brought them with them to the eastern Tianshan region after their empire had been destroyed by the Kirghiz. Yet, so far there is no evidence for such a scenario. The religious texts of the Uyghurs were probably all written after the demise of their Kaganate, during which presumably only parts of the Uyghur elite had converted to Manichaeism.⁸⁰ Consequently, it is likely that when the Uyghurs founded the West Uyghur Kingdom parts of the populace still followed customs of the native religion. This complex religio-cultural *mélange*, combined with the customs of a predominantly Buddhist population in the Tarim Basin and in the Hexi Corridor (Chin. Hexi zoulang 河西走廊), certainly shaped the emergence of Uyghur Buddhism to some degree.

In Uyghur Buddhism, names of deities and other supernatural beings usually appear in their Tocharian A or B forms, or less often in Sogdian garb that are ultimately of Indic (Sanskrit or Middle Indic) origin. There are some

77 Klimkeit, "The Sun and the Moon as Gods in Central Asia," 11–12.

78 Ibid., 11, noted that already the Xiongnu (匈奴) "ascribed to sun and moon a special power investing kingship with authority." On the sun and the moon as gods in Central Asian art starting with Kuṣāṇa coinage see pp. 15–21.

79 Moriyasu, "New Developments," discusses the few written Manichaean sources relating to the East Uyghur Kaganate. Not all these sources were actually produced during the period of the East Uyghur Kaganate. This issue is briefly discussed also in Moriyasu, "New Developments," 319.

80 The Middle Persian *Maḥrnāmag* ("Hymnbook"), begun in 762 and completed between 808 and 821, mentions male and female members of the Uyghur nobility and thus makes a case for contacts between Manichaeans in the Tarim Basin (the book was begun in Ark = modern-day Karašahr) and those in the East Uyghur Kaganate.

important exceptions however. The most high ranking gods Brahmā and Indra/Śakra appear under their Sogdian Manichaean names *äzrua* (*t(ä)ηri*) and *hormuzta* (*t(ä)ηri*). In Manichaeism the former is the name of the highest divinity, the Father of Greatness, while the latter designates Primal Man, an important figure in Manichaean cosmogony who sets out with his five sons—the five light elements—to confront the Realm of Darkness in a primordial battle. The Uyghur equivalent of the Buddhist Māra is *š(i)mnu*, also a loan from Sogdian already in Uyghur Manichaean texts where it designates the antagonist of the Father of Greatness, the King of Darkness. Due to the poor attestation of Sogdian Buddhist literature it is difficult to decide whether the transference of the Manichaean names to Buddhist deities occurred already in Sogdian Buddhism or first in Uyghur circles. The former is more likely because the correspondence Sogdian *ʾzrwʾ* (= Skt. Brahmā) is established for Buddhist Sogdian.⁸¹ For Buddhist Sogdian *šmnw* (= Skt. Māra), too, we now have clear evidence.⁸² The impact of Manichaeism on Uyghur Buddhist terminology is thus indirect in this particular case. (As an aside it should be mentioned that the Mongols copied the three Uyghur terms.)

The king of the underworld, Yama, is only very rarely found under his Indic name in Uyghur Buddhist texts. I could trace only one instance in an unpublished block-print from the Turfan Collection in Berlin, where Yama appears in the form we would expect for terms borrowed via Tocharian, namely *yame*.⁸³ A direct Sanskrit loan is *yamarača* (Skt. *yamarāja*), a form that is likewise attested only once.⁸⁴ The term was probably chosen for this text only because a word beginning with *y*^o was needed to conform with the poetic principle of strophic alliteration (Germ. *Stabreim*). The same applies for *yamadeve* (Skt.

81 Badrozaman Gharib, *Sogdian Dictionary: Sogdian-Persian-English* (Tehran: Farhangon Publications, 2004), 93, no. 2336.

82 Yutaka Yoshida, "On the Sogdian *Prātihārya-Sūtra* and the Related Problems," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 72.2 (2019): 146, l. 17. In Tocharian the terms are *mārñakte* (TochB) and *mārñkät* (TochA). See Winter, "Tocharian B *ñakte*, A *ñkät* 'God,'" 304.

83 Shelf-mark: U 4261 r. 1 (with the gloss in Brāhmī script *ya mye*). There is a description of this fragment in the catalogue by Abdurishid Yakup, *Alltürkische Handschriften Teil 15: Die uigurischen Blockdrucke der Berliner Turfansammlung Teil 3: Stabreimdichtungen, Kalendarisches, Bilder, unbestimmte Fragmente und Nachträge* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2009), 75–76, no. 107, who does not cite the first line. In one text the direct loan from Sanskrit *yama* is the name of a hell which the editors interpret as "the hell (ruled by) Yama." See Zhang Tieshan and Peter Zieme, "An Old Uigur Version of the *Kasibhāradvāja Sutta* Extended by a Poem," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 72.2 (2019): 200, and *ibid.*, n. 65.

84 Reşid Rahmeti Arat, *Eski Türk şiiri* [Old Turkic Poetry] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 122, l. 43.

yamadeva).⁸⁵ In all other texts the deity is called *ärklig han* ‘the Powerful King’,⁸⁶ a designation already found in the earliest Buddhist texts such as the *Maitrisimit*.⁸⁷ In a Manichaean text which is even older than the *Maitrisimit*, namely in the Uyghur translation of the *Sermon on the Light Nous*, *ärklig han* is mentioned in the following sentence: “and incessantly he thinks about appearing before the Powerful King (= the Righteous Judge) and his gaze and standing before his countenance” (*ymä üzüksüz ärklig han anar köziñä köziñü yüzün utru tururča sakınur*).⁸⁸ Another Manichaean text broaches the issue of the fate of the individual soul after death. The text sustained secondary damage after the first edition but the name *ärklig han* is preserved in the directive case.⁸⁹ In Chinese Manichaeism this personage is called ‘King of Justice’ (Chin. *pingdengwang* 平等王). (Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot have already pointed out that this term appears in the Buddhist *Sūtra of the Ten Kings*.⁹⁰)

It is likely that the Powerful King is a pre-Manichaean and pre-Buddhist deity worshipped by the Uyghurs before conversion to the two missionary religions took place.⁹¹ In Manichaeism, the Powerful King is the Uyghur equivalent of the figure of the Righteous Judge. The same deity goes by the name ‘the Righteous Official’ (OU *köni buryuk*), who oversees the judgement of the dead

85 BT XIII, 143, text 29:5 and 153, text 38:41. In another text, in which *yamadeve* is found, strophic alliteration is not applied in this particular section but many words beginning with the letter *y*^o are found all the same. Thus ‘normal’ alliteration might have been an intention of the author. See Peter Zieme, “Die Lehre des Buddha und das Königshaus des Westuigurischen Reichs: Die vier Begegnungen,” *Journal of Old Turkic Studies* 4.2 (2020): 602, l. 073.

86 Most examples are recorded in Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch*, 268.

87 See Geng Shimin and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, “Das 16. Kapitel der Hami-Version der *Maitrisimit*,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 85: “above, in the heaven (called) end of (the realm) of form, as far as the palace of Yama” (OU *üstün öñ alkinçusi t(ä)ñri yer-intä ärklig han ordosıya tägi*, fol. 11a 2–3). See also p. 86 (on the same leaf 11 a 25). In one text the Sanskrit term *yamaloka* (*yamalok*) is glossed with an Uyghur equivalent: “in *yamaloka*, the world of *ärklig han* (= Yama)” (OU *yamalok ärklig [han yertinçüsin]tä*). For a discussion of this passage see BT XLVII, 313–314. We find the Uyghur expression *ärklig han yerinçüsi* “the world of Yama” also in other texts, for instance in the *Uşñşavijayādhārañi*. See Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Müller, *Uigurica II* (Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1911), 33 (upper document, ll. 7–8), 34 (ll. 16–17 in the variant *ärklig hannuñ yertinçüsi*), 39 (ll. 95–96), 45 (ll. 42–43 in the variant *ärklig hannuñ yertinçüsi*).

88 Le Coq, *Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho*. III, 22 v. 7–9.

89 Ibid., 31, upper document, l. 7.

90 Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot, “Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine,” *Journal Asiatique* 18 (1911): 584.

91 Roux, “Die alttürkische Mythologie,” 194.

and weighing of the souls in a set of scales.⁹² Most of the Uyghur Manichaean texts are translations from Middle Iranian and their terminology (calques and loanwords) is heavily dependent on Parthian, Middle Persian, and Sogdian terms. Equivalents in Middle Iranian are attested only for *kōni buryuk*, namely Parthian *d'dbr rštygr* and Sogdian *rštyy 'xtw* ('Righteous Judge').⁹³ That *ärklig han* as a religious term is an atypical element in Uyghur Manichaeism shows that the Uyghur Manichaeans introduced the name to convey the idea of the Righteous Judge, which certainly resonated with their native religious tradition. This is all the more interesting because the Righteous Judge is not a ruler of the netherworld, as in Buddhism and probably in native Uyghur religion, but he is located in the atmosphere according to textual and visual materials.⁹⁴

Looking for evidence in sources outside the corpus of Uyghur Buddhist and Manichaean texts, the deity is obviously mentioned in one of the Yenisei Inscriptions (Altın Köl 1) without the honorific title *han*: "the powerful one parted us" (OU *bizni ärklig adirt(t)*).⁹⁵ The majority of the Yenisei Inscriptions—a corpus that is in all probability connected with the Kirghiz—can be classified as memorial texts resembling epitaphs in which are often expressed the thoughts that the deceased think on parting from their relatives, and so forth. Thus the interpretation that *ärklig* refers to a 'liminal' deity guarding the spheres of life and death makes sense. There is no proof that *ärklig* in the runiform inscription corresponds to the native Uyghur deity that later

92 Albert von Le Coq, *Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho. II* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1919), 12, r. 6.

93 See Werner Sundermann, "Namen von Göttern, Dämonen und Menschen in iranischen Versionen des manichäischen Mythos," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 6 (1979): 100. On the Bactrian equivalent *rštyg l'dbr* cf. Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Bactrian Fragment in Manichaean Script (M 1224)," in *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit: Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Werner Sundermann*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, Christiane Reck, and Dieter Weber (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2009), 250, l. v. 8 and pls. x–xi. On the terminological correspondences, see also in the same volume Jens Wilkens, "Ein manichäischer Alptraum?" in *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit: Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Werner Sundermann*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, Christiane Reck, and Dieter Weber (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2009), 339–340.

94 See Zsuzsanna Gulácsi and Jason BeDuhn, "Picturing Mani's Cosmology: Analysis of Doctrinal Iconography on a Manichaean Hanging Scroll from 13th/14th-Century Southern China," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series* 25 (2011): 66, 83, pls. 4–16 and fig. 13.

95 After Sir Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 186b. See also Erhan Aydın, "S. Gerard Clauson'un etimolojik sözlüğüne Yenisey yazıtlarıyla ilgili veriler [Data Related to the Yenisei Inscriptions in the Etymological Dictionary by Sir Gerard Clauson]," *Turkish Studies* 4.4 (2009): 105.

developed into the Manichaeic and Buddhist *ärklig han* in Uyghur texts, but there is at least a relatively high probability that this conclusion is justified.

Some scholars proposed an inadequate identification of *ärklig* in Altın Köl I because they disregarded the textual history and religious context of a particular Uyghur text. In the *Säkiz Yügmäk Yaruk Sudur* the attendants of Yama (OU *Ärklig Han*) are mentioned. All of them are ‘intermediary beings’ related to astrology imagined as military leaders of the underworld and are called “the powerful ones [...] who command the army of the Powerful King (i.e., Yama)” (OU *ärklig han süüsün başlaquçı* [...] *ärkligläär*).⁹⁶ One of these generals is called simply *ärklig* ‘the powerful one’. As rightly observed by the first editors of the text, the Uyghur name is a rather free translation of the Chinese term *jiangjun* (將軍) ‘general’.⁹⁷ According to the context, this deity represents the planet Venus. This has caused some confusion among some Turcologists because they thought that the deity mentioned in the Yenissei Inscription must be the planet Venus too,⁹⁸ and even that “Venus was previously regarded as a warrior in Turkish mythology.”⁹⁹ But there is no evidence for these assumptions because the Uyghur *Säkiz Yügmäk Yaruk Sudur* is a translation from the Chinese *Ba yang jing* 八陽經 [Sūtra of the Eight Bright Ones] and is therefore dependent on its religious background and imagery. The designation *ärklig*

96 BT XXXIII, 136, § 91 Ia and Ib. The Chinese parallel has a different wording.

97 Willi Bang, Annemarie von Gabain, and Gabdul Rašid Rachmati, *Türkische Turfantexte. VI: Das buddhistische Sūtra Säkiz Yügmäk* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1934), 60.

98 Hatice Şirin User, “Çolpan ‘The Planet Venus’ in Turkic,” *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 19 (2014): 169–170, n. 2 lists scholars who in her view made this identification. However, Bang, von Gabain and Rachmati did not mention the Altın Köl I Inscription at all nor did Peter Zieme accept this interpretation. Cf. Peter Zieme, “Die alttürkischen Planetennamen,” in: *Laut- und Wortgeschichte der Türkssprachen: Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums Berlin, 7. bis 10. Juli 1992*, ed. Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Marek Stachowski (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 202. Şirin User cites also Németh as a propounder of this theory. But if we check the article by Julius Németh, “Über alttürkische Sternnamen,” *Acta Linguistica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 18.1–2 (1968): 1–6 we find that he mentions *ärklig* as a Uyghur name of Venus on p. 3 but he does not refer to the Altın Köl I Inscription. However, Roux, “Die alttürkische Mythologie,” 194 indeed says that the god mentioned in the inscription represents the planet Venus and gives the following theory: “The fact that Venus appears above the horizon in the east every morning has easily given rise to the idea that Ä. (= Ärklig, J.W.) is a god of hell.” Translated from the German original: “Die Tatsache, daß die Venus jeden Morgen im Osten über dem Horizont erscheint, hat leicht die Vorstellung entstehen lassen können, daß Ä. (= Ärklig, JW) ein Höllengott sei.” The interpretation is following in the footsteps of the 19th-century ‘naturalist mythology school’ (Germ. Naturmythologische Schule).

99 Şirin User, “Çolpan ‘The Planet Venus’ in Turkic,” 169.

for the planet Venus is found only in this text.¹⁰⁰ The religious context of the Yenissei Inscription is completely different.

The Mongols borrowed the expression *ärklik* into their own language. When they refer to the king of the underworld, we find both the variants *erlig* and *erglig*¹⁰¹ and the longer expression *erlig nom-un qayan* “Erlig, the supreme ruler of the *dharmā*.”¹⁰²

6 Manichaeism and Early Chinese Terminology in Uyghur Buddhist Texts

One of the fields in which Manichaeism had a certain impact on Uyghur Buddhism is religious terminology.¹⁰³ Takao Moriyasu chose the three Sogdian terms borrowed into Uyghur, *ġ(a)hšap(u)t* ‘precepts, commandment’, *nizvani* ‘affliction, defilement, passion’ (corresponding to *kleśa* in Uyghur Buddhist texts), and *nom* ‘religion, religious community, doctrine’, to disprove the co-called Sogdian hypothesis,¹⁰⁴ namely that Sogdian Buddhism exerted a certain influence in the early phase in the development of Uyghur Buddhism. Recently, Antje Wendtland re-examined the three terms from the point of view of Sogdian studies.¹⁰⁵ Some of her findings should be mentioned here. Firstly,

100 This was correctly observed in Zieme, “Die alttürkischen Planetennamen,” 202.

101 For Uyghur *ärklik* in texts in Uyghur (ʀLYK) and Tibetan script (*e-rlig*) from Dunhuang as a base for the Mongolian form *erlig* see Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch*, 267.

102 Lessing, *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, 331a.

103 It is remarkable, for instance, that the oldest Uyghur manuscript to attest the term bodhisattva (spelled *bodis(a)v* borrowed either via Sogdian *pwtysβ* or early New Persian *bwdysf*) is a Manichaean text from Kočo containing a scene from the legend of the Buddha. See Albert von Le Coq, “Ein christliches und ein manichäisches Manuskriptfragment in türkischer Sprache aus Turfan (Chinesisch-Turkistan),” *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 48 (1909): pl. 14, 1208, lower document, l. 1, 1209, l. 14, and 1210, header, l. 1. In this Manichaean piece bodhisattva is the name of the prince. This particular spelling <PWTYSV> is significant because only an early Uyghur Buddhist text in Tibetan script from Dunhuang (ca. 10th c.) shows comparable spellings. See Dieter Maue and Klaus Röhrborn, “Ein ‘buddhistischer Katechismus’ in alttürkischer Sprache und tibetischer Schrift (Teil 1),” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 134 (1984): 286–313, here: 308, l. 19: <*bō dye seb*>, l. 21: <*bō dye sib*>, and 309, l. 30, damaged: <*bhō dhē* |||>.

104 Takao Moriyasu, “L’origine du Bouddhisme chez les Turcs et l’apparition des textes bouddhiques en turc ancien,” in *Documents et archives provenant de l’Asie Centrale: Actes du Colloque Franco-Japonais organisé par l’Association Franco-Japonaise des Études Orientales*, ed. Akira Haneda (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1990), 147–165, especially: 151–154.

105 Antje Wendtland, “Zum manichäischen Ursprung sogdischer Lehnwörter in buddhistischen uigurischen Texten: Gab es ein manichäisches religiöses Vokabular im

Wendtland argues that *nwm* is not attested in Buddhist Sogdian but only in Manichaean and Christian texts, whereas the Sogdian counterpart (*nyzβ'ny*) to Uyghur *nizvani* is found in the literature of all three major religions: Buddhism, Manichaeism, and the Church of the East.¹⁰⁶ Secondly, Wendtland has voiced the opinion that the three terms are not specifically Manichaean but rather part of the common religious vocabulary of Sogdian everyday language, and so not of the specialised terminology of the Buddhist Sogdian texts.¹⁰⁷ Wendtland thinks that especially the Buddhist variant *škš'pt* instead of *čxš'pδ*¹⁰⁸ was only used in learned circles of Buddhist monks. Indeed, spellings have to be taken into account too. And in the case of the latter term, the conclusion is perfectly clear: Uyghur Manichaean and Buddhist texts follow the conventions of Sogdian Manichaean texts.¹⁰⁹

With Uyghur *nom* the issue is somewhat more complex, because new materials have come to light. Because *nom* is one of the most important religious terms in Uyghur literature—if not the most important one—with several thousands of examples, it is essential to trace the religious context in which it was borrowed. However, this is not as simple as it seems. The straight path, namely a loan from Manichaean Sogdian in Uyghur Manichaeism from which the term was adopted for Uyghur Buddhist texts, is not necessarily the correct one. The first source which casts doubt on this hypothesis is a trilingual manuscript in Sanskrit, Tocharian B, and a Turkic language of an archaic cast but very similar to Uyghur written in Brāhmī script. On this leaf, there are three examples for *nom* (Brāhmī in transliteration: *nau-m*).¹¹⁰ The expected word *č(a)hšap(a)t* for 'precept, commandment' is not used. Instead we find *nom bitig*. In standard Old Uyghur *nom bitig* is often used for 'sūtra' or 'Buddhist scripture' in general. For Sanskrit *dharma* we find *burhagan nom bitig* in the threefold refuge formula whereas in Uyghur sources it is simply *nom*. As proven by the editor, the manuscript is certainly archaic and displays a more western form of Turkic compared with Uyghur. The terminology is instructive, for instance *burhagan* (Brāhmī in transliteration: *pū rkā kām ~ pū rka kaṃ*) instead of

Sogdischen?," in: *Der östliche Manichäismus im Spiegel seiner Buch- und Schriftkultur: Vorträge des Göttinger Symposiums vom 11./12. März 2015*, ed. Zekine Özertural and Gökhan Şilfeler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 141–150.

106 Wendtland, "Zum manichäischen Ursprung sogdischer Lehnwörter," 145, 147.

107 Ibid., 149.

108 Further spellings for both variants in Wendtland, "Zum manichäischen Ursprung sogdischer Lehnwörter," 142. The "Manichaean" variant is found in one Buddhist Sogdian text.

109 For *nom*, of course, there is only one spelling.

110 Dieter Maue, "Three Languages on one Leaf: On 10L Toch 81 with Special Regard to the Turkic Part," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71.1 (2008): 62–63.

standard Old Uyghur *burhan* ('buddha'). So too is the phonology, for example *toñin* (Brāhmī in transliteration: *to ñin*) instead of standard Old Uyghur *toyin* ('Buddhist monk'). This proves that at an early stage Turks in the Tarim Basin came into contact with Buddhism—with Maitreyan Buddhism of Tocharian (B) descent¹¹¹ to be precise—and that Chinese Buddhism made an impact on terminology at that stage. The semantics of the words used in this manuscript are also atypical because *toñin* does not denote a single Buddhist monk, as in standard Old Uyghur, but the community of monks (Skt. *saṃgha*).¹¹²

In Uyghur we can observe that the term *burhan* 'buddha' occurs first in early Manichaean manuscripts from the West Uyghur Kingdom and refers to Mani and other apostles of light. If we had no access to the trilingual manuscript, we might speculate that *burhan* was first coined by Uyghur Manichaeans. Yet, we have *burhagan* in a more western variant of Turkic. This suggests that the Uyghur Manichaeans had recourse to a set of Buddhist terms developed in a Turkic-speaking *Buddhist* community that already used *burhan* to designate the Buddha.¹¹³ It is difficult to say whether the adoption of the term occurred in the Tarim Basin after the establishment of the West Uyghur Kingdom or before. I am rather inclined to assume the latter, especially when we take the phonetic side into account. Already in classical Uyghur, namely in the translation of the

111 The form *maitreya* (Brāhmī in transliteration: *mai tre ye*) is one of the variants of Skt. *maitreya* in Tocharian B. The standard Uyghur name is *maitre* (spelled <M'YTRY>) borrowed from late Sogdian. In Manichaean texts the name appears rarely and only in the spellings <MYTRY> (Uyghur script) and <MYTRY> (Manichaean script). See on these issues Dieter Maue, "Uigurisch <m'ytry>: Zu einem vernachlässigten Problem," in *Die Erforschung des Tocharischen und die alttürkische Maitrisimit: Symposium anlässlich des 100. Jahrestages der Entzifferung des Tocharischen Berlin, 3. und 4. April 2008*, ed. Yukiyo Kasai, Abdurishid Yakup, and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 139–159.

112 Maue, "Three Languages on one Leaf," 67. In Uyghur Manichaean texts there is only one certain example of *toyin* (spelled <TWWYYN>) used for "Buddhist monk" in Larry Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts. Texts, Translations, Commentary. Vol. III: Ecclesiastical Texts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 50, L. EB 232. Clark now has corrected the other supposed example on p. 238, L. EH 612 of his edition. See the first edition in BT V, n. to l. 364.

113 A short pilgrim inscription in Brāhmī script in Sanskrit and Uyghur or a similar dialect of Turkic from Kumtura from the western part of the Tarim Basin contains the phrase *bur bolayn* "I want to become a buddha." The editor proposes that the usual term *burhan* was still felt by the Uyghurs to be separable into two parts (*bur* and *han*) and that the scribe omitted the second part as an expression of modesty. See Dieter Maue, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 1: Dokumente in Brāhmī und tibetischer Schrift* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), 203, n. 4. It is possible that *bur* and *burhan* correspond to English 'buddha' and 'the Buddha'. But it is equally conceivable that *burhan* was not yet established in the Turkic speaking communities in the Western part of the Tarim Basin as a standard term at the time when the pilgrim inscription was inscribed.

biography of Xuanzang made at the turn of the first millennium,¹¹⁴ the Chinese character *fo* (佛) is represented in the spelling <VYR> /fir/ which corresponds to LMC *ffijyt*. We have to reckon with Turkic-speaking Buddhist communities in eastern Central Asia centuries *before* the West Uyghur Kingdom was founded. The process of standardisation of the Buddhist terminology took place around the turn of the first millennium, perhaps in the first half of the tenth century. The enormous impact of Tocharian B Buddhist terminology on Uyghur can perhaps best be explained if we assume an inner-Uyghur or inner-Turkic line of transmission starting from the western and moving to the eastern part of the Tarim Basin under Tocharian B influence. Although Tocharian B was known in the Turfan region too, it would be rather difficult to explain the great amount of Tocharian B words of Sanskrit origin because translations into Uyghur were made from Tocharian A texts.

Uyghur Buddhism may have drawn inspiration from a variety of sources, which may also have informed the terminology. In addition to a presumably early Buddhist mission of a Turkic-speaking community in the western part of the Tarim Basin, another recently deciphered source is also significant, as it suggests a knowledge of Buddhism in the Steppe region in the early seventh century. The memorial Khüis Tolgoi Inscription was engraved during the time of the First Türk Kaganate. It was found between the Orkhon river and the Tuul river system in Mongolia written vertically on two stones in a variant of Turkestan Brāhmī. The language was identified by an international team of scholars as (Para-)Mongolian resembling mainstream Mongolian.¹¹⁵ The same scholars solved the riddle of the Brāhmī part of the Bugut Inscription¹¹⁶ and deciphered short inscriptions in the same alphabet on stone balbals (= representations of slain enemies in a memorial complex), the so-called Keregentas Inscriptions. All testimonies are in the same archaic (Para-)Mongolic language and preliminarily identified as Ruanruan (蠕蠕). Only in the rather short

114 In the compound *firten* (Chin. *fodian* 佛殿, LMC *ffijyt thian*), 'buddha hall'. See Klaus Röhrborn, *Die alttürkische Xuanzang-Biographie VII, nach der Handschrift von Leningrad, Paris und Peking sowie nach dem Transkript von Annemarie von Gabain herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 107, l. 1184. Cf. also the early manuscript of the *Araṇemijātaka* from Dunhuang (ca. 10th c.) which already attests the personal name F(a)rdu or F(1)rdu (Chin. *fonu* 佛奴, LMC *ffijyt nuš*) edited in James Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours du IX^e-X^e siècle de Touen-Houang*, vol. 1 (Paris: Peeters, 1986), 6, l. 10'.

115 See the article by Dieter Maue and Mehmet Ölmez, with the cooperation of Étienne de la Vaissière and Alexander Vovin, "The Khüis Tolgoi Inscription," *Studia Uralo-Altaica* 52 (2019): 73–89.

116 On the Sogdian part see the new edition by Yutaka Yoshida, "Sogdian Version of the Bugut Inscription Revisited," *Journal Asiatique* 307.1 (2019): 97–108.

inscription of Khüis Tolgoi dated between 604 and 620,¹¹⁷ a certain knowledge of Buddhism must be surmised,¹¹⁸ because the Buddhist terms *bodi-satva* (1st and 8th column)¹¹⁹ and *buda* (2nd column) appear.¹²⁰ The text contains the phrase *buda qayan* which corresponds to *bur hagan* in the trilingual text in Sanskrit, Tocharian B, and Turkic edited by Maue as mentioned by the editors, although the term is phonetically much closer to the Sanskrit one. The same goes for *bodi-satva*.

The Bugut and the Khüis Tolgoi Inscriptions both date from the period of the First Türk Kaganate which split into two parts in 581 (an eastern and a western part lasting until 630 and 657 respectively). It is not certain that the hypothetical identification of *Ruanruan* as the language of the inscriptions is correct. However, it is highly significant that inscriptions found in the territory of the First Türk Kaganate are in a local language that is not Turkic. Presumably the elite were not speakers of a Turkic language. Also the names and titles of the rulers of the First Türk Kaganate are all of foreign origin. At least the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription clearly testifies to a certain familiarity with Buddhist concepts in a society largely dominated by a nomadic lifestyle and in a region which later became the centre of the East Uyghur Kaganate. The use of Brāhmī is also significant. It is true that Buddhist terms are completely absent from the inscriptions dating from Second Türk Kaganate and the East Uyghur Kaganate, but we already knew that a term such as *nom* is found in the Sogdian part of the Bugut Inscription.¹²¹ Given the linguistic landscape of the First and Second Türk Kaganate (as well as the ensuing Uyghur Kaganate) and the sources such as the archaic trilingual manuscript that attest the term *nom*, it cannot be regarded as an established fact that the Uyghur Buddhists adopted the term from the Manichaeans.

The early Chinese-influenced terms *burhan* and *toñin* (standard Old Uyghur *toyın*) have already been mentioned. The foreign terms in Old Uyghur that are ultimately of Chinese origin are especially difficult to evaluate. This group apparently includes also terms such as *bahši* ‘religious teacher’ (Chin. *boshi* 博士, LMC *pak šhr*) and *buši* ‘alms, offering’ (Chin. *bushi* 布施, LMC *puǎ*’

117 Vovin, “A Sketch of the Earliest Mongolic Language,” 163.

118 For the Bugut Inscription see Alexander Vovin, “Groping in the Dark: The First Attempt to Interpret the Bugut Brāhmī Inscription,” *Journal Asiatique* 307.1 (2019): 121–134.

119 “Bodhisattva is either a given name of the Turkic *qayan* from the First Khanate, or rather Bodhisattva could be meant here as a honorific title.” (Maue, Ölmez, de la Vaissière, and Vovin, “The Khüis Tolgoi Inscription,” 78).

120 Ibid., 78.

121 See now the edition by Yoshida, “Sogdian Version of the Bugut Inscription Revisited,” 104 (B–11), 105 (B–2:10 = twice; B–3:4).

ḡi)¹²² that belong to an early layer of linguistic borrowings found already in the Manichaean texts. It is unlikely that they entered the religious vocabulary of Uyghur Manichaeism directly from Chinese. I would propose that they belong to an early stratum of Chinese Buddhist terms in an archaic variant of Old Turkic not attested as such. Because these terms are absent from the Middle Iranian languages, it is reasonable to assume this layer of early Chinese Buddhist terms must be older than the oldest extant Uyghur Manichaean manuscripts. This can only mean that they were adopted by Uyghurs already during the period East Uyghur Kaganate, but it has yet to be determined in what region exactly. The most likely scenario is contacts between Manichaean Uyghurs and speakers of a similar variant of Turkic who already adhered to Buddhism. It is possible that these terms entered the Uyghur Manichaean vocabulary after the establishment of the West Uyghur Kingdom under local Chinese Buddhist influence, but this possibility is not as attractive—as the phonetic side of *burhan* shows.

Other loanwords of clear Manichaean origin came to be used in Uyghur Buddhist texts. Thus, Uyghur *dentar* ‘elect’ (Sogd. *dyndʾr*, Middle Persian *dyndr*) is also one of the terms for a Buddhist monk while in other Buddhist texts it is the equivalent of Sanskrit *śramaṇa* or *brāhmaṇa*. In Christian texts it usually means ‘priest’. While the usual Uyghur Buddhist term for ‘monastery’ is *vrhar* (Sogd. *βryʾr*, Skt. *vihāra*), occasionally the Manichaean term *manistan* is used.¹²³

7 Native Religion in the *Irk Bitig* and in Other Texts

I already mentioned in my introductory questions the difficulty of identifying original Uyghur sources that might give us an idea of their native religion. In some texts that discuss mantic practices and concepts, we cannot identify specific Buddhist or Manichaean ideas.¹²⁴ The religious background of these

122 The latter is first attested in Uyghur Manichaean texts. See the full documentation of the entry *buṣi* in Jens Wilkens, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch: Sprachmaterial der vorislamischen türkischen Texte aus Zentralasien. III. Fremdelemente. Band 2: bodivan—čigžin* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2023).

123 For instance, see BT XIII, 189, text 59:2.

124 In this respect the *Irk Bitig* apparently has a similar background as the Tibetan dice divination manuscripts with pips from Dunhuang, Turfan and Mazār Tāgh (8th to 9th c.) that do not “easily classify as belonging to either the Buddhist or the Bon religions” as put by Brandon Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations: Early Tibetan Dice Divination by the Numbers,” in *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination—Past and Present*, ed. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 11. On Tibetan

sources must be considered indeterminate, especially since the category of ‘folk religion’ that is often used to describe them is too vague. One must always expect that some texts may be translations from other languages. There are several different methods of divination, some of which were certainly applied by specialists.¹²⁵ The most well-known text is the *Irk Bitig* [Book of Omens] in runiform script found in the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) at Dunhuang by Aurel Stein (British Library, Or.8212/161).¹²⁶ Despite the peculiar vocabulary here and there, the language of the *Book of Omens* can be classified as Uyghur. The script alone presents no counter-argument, as texts in runiform writing from Turfan and Dunhuang are found at the same sites as Uyghur Manichaean or Buddhist texts.¹²⁷ The majority of the manuscripts in the runiform alphabet have a Manichaean background. The colophon of the *Book of Omens*¹²⁸ points to a newly ordained Manichaean elect (*kič(i)g de<n>t(a)r*) as the scribe of the text, although the content itself has no connection whatsoever with Manichaeism. To make things even more interesting, the runiform text is not the only one in the booklet in butterfly-binding. It also contains two Buddhist texts in Chinese which were added a few decades later.¹²⁹ This

dice divination, see also in the same volume Ai Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis of Old Tibetan Dice Divination Texts,” in *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination—Past and Present*, ed. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 49–72. I would like to express my thanks to Lewis Doney and Ai Nishida for making this important article accessible to me.

- 125 For a short overview see Michael Knüppel, “Zur alttürkischen Mantik,” *Anthropos* 106 (2011): 21–29.
- 126 For an edition and English translation see Talat Tekin, *Irk Bitig: The Book of Omens* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993).
- 127 The runiform texts from Miran have to be mentioned as this site is off the beaten track of the usual sites of Uyghur manuscripts. See Vilhelm Thomsen, “Dr. M. A. Stein’s Manuscripts in Turkish ‘Runic’ Script from Miran and Tun-huang,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1912): 181–227.
- 128 On the colophon see James Russell Hamilton, “Le colophon de l’*İrk Bitig*,” *Turcica* 7 (1975): 7–19, Peter Zieme, “Runik harfli birkaç pasaj üzerine kimi yorum önerileri [Some Proposals for a Solution Concerning Some Passages in Runic Script],” *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı—Belleten* 2000 [Yearbook of Researches on the Turkish Language—Bulletin 2000] (2001): 378, and Peter Zieme, “Mānistān ‘Kloster’ und manichäische Kolophone,” in *Zur lichten Heimat: Studien zu Manichäismus, Iranistik und Zentralasienkunde im Gedenken an Werner Sundermann*, ed. Team “Turfanforschung” (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 746.
- 129 On the book format and the two Buddhist texts see the detailed study by Volker Rybatzki and Hu Hong, “The *İrk Bitig*, the Book of Divination: New Discoveries Concerning its Structure and Content,” in *Interpreting the Turkic Runiform Sources and the Position of the Altai Corpus*, ed. Irina Nevskaya and Marcel Erdal (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2015), 149–173. On p. 154 the authors refer to their discovery of the sheet numbers in Chinese intended for the binder.

circumstance gives rise to speculation about the religious leanings of the book's last owner, and his ethnicity. The Turkic or Old Uyghur part, probably written in 930 or 942,¹³⁰ represents a divination manual. The manner of divination is with three rectangular prolonged dice with one, two, three or four pips on each side, known also from texts and dice retrieved from other parts of Asia.¹³¹ The pips in the manuscript are headers of an oracular response connected with one of the theoretically possible 64 combinations—although 65 declarations are actually given—and followed by the text, in other words the oracular response proper and its evaluation.¹³² The arrangement of the responses in the *Book of Omens* is only partly systematic, beginning for example with the combinations 2/2/2, 4/4/4, 3/3/3, 1/1/1¹³³ and the corresponding texts are all first-person utterances which appear also in other sections of the text here and there. In the divination text found in part IV of the Bower manuscript the first four combinations are 4/4/4, 3/3/3, 2/2/2, 1/1/1.¹³⁴ The ensuing responses were recently characterised as an “apparent chaos.”¹³⁵ The following similarities between the *Book of Omens* and the Tibetan sources on dice divination can be mentioned:

- 1) the form of the three dice;¹³⁶
- 2) the arrangement of the pips as headers,¹³⁷ and the ensuing oracular responses in the manuscripts;
- 3) the evaluation following at the end of each entry;¹³⁸
- 4) a similar dating of the manuscripts (9th and 10th c.);

130 Rybatzki and Hu, “The Īrq Bitig,” 163. Tekin, *Irk Bitig*, 2, dates the Turkic text to the ninth century.

131 Such as the *pāśaka* in Sanskrit. On the material aspect of the dice found in Central Asia (Niya, Mazār Tāgh, etc.) and elsewhere see Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 13–22. On the cultural history of dice divination in Central Asia see Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, *ReOrienting Histories of Medicine: Encounters along the Silk Roads* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 41–61.

132 In early Tibetan dice divination, the Indian *Pāśakakevali*, the divination texts in the Bower manuscript, and in a Chinese divination text from Dunhuang the total number of responses is also 64. See Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 24.

133 Tekin, *Irk Bitig*, 8.

134 Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 29.

135 *Ibid.*, 32.

136 It is also possible that dice divination was performed with a single die so that three tosses were necessary. See for the Tibetan material Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis,” 52.

137 In the *Irk Bitig* the pips are small circles in black ink filled in with red ink. In some Tibetan divination texts red ink is also used for the pips. See Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis,” 53.

138 As Nishida argues in *ibid.*, 55, the Tibetan dice divination texts “were not merely personal or individual elaborations—even though the correlation between the triads and final evaluations appears arbitrary—because they were probably produced by groups of professionals and because they share a certain fixed pattern for drawing the final evaluations.”

- 5) the occasional first person utterances “sometimes from the mouth of a god”;¹³⁹
- 6) the references to fortune (Tib. *phya*,¹⁴⁰ 〇U *kut*);
- 7) the significant role played by animals in both traditions;¹⁴¹
- 8) the importance of hunting in both traditions;
- 9) references to the landscape and a non-urban lifestyle;
- 10) the “allusive and archaic language”;¹⁴²
- 11) the enigmatic imagery;
- 12) colour terms are relevant in some evaluations.

The content is often classified as belonging to the sphere of ‘folk religion’.¹⁴³ But how representative is the worldview underlying the *Book of Omens*? Does it give us a reliable idea of the Uyghur native religion? A word of caution is appropriate here. Although the images the book invokes are at first glance seemingly drawn from daily life, a closer view reveals that they are enigmatic vignettes and only to be decoded by the system of the oracle book itself, viz. whether the omen is good, extremely good, or bad.

Looking for further materials which might shed a light on Uyghur native religion an early manuscript housed in the Turfan Collection in Berlin comes to mind. It is torn into several pieces and was written in a very early variant of the Uyghur script on the verso of a Chinese scroll bearing the text of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*.¹⁴⁴ A poetic style shows through here and there.

139 Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 13, n. 5. See also Nishida, “A Preliminary Analysis,” 65.

140 On the difference between the good fortune of human beings (Tib. *phya*) and the rejuvenation of well-being (Tib. *gyang*), and the overlap of these two categories in the Tibetan dice divination texts, see Brandon Dotson, “Hunting for Fortune. Wild Animals, Goddesses, and the Play of Perspectives in Early Tibetan Dice Divination,” *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines* 50 (2019): 6–9. Such a distinction is unknown in the Turkic-speaking world.

141 Dotson, “Hunting for Fortune,” 1–2. In the *Irk Bitig*, wild and domestic animals are equally important.

142 Dotson, “Three Dice, Four Faces, and Sixty-Four Combinations,” 12.

143 See, e.g., Rybatzki and Hu, “The İrq Bitig,” 155. The authors point out the structural differences between the *Irk Bitig* and Tibetan *mo*-divination as well Indic dice divination. As closest parallels they mention Uyghur and Sogdian “Nestorian texts” as well as a Tibetan divinatory text from Turfan. They also refer to the seemingly “mathematically illogical” way of arranging the omens in the *Irk Bitig* and in the *Zhouyi* 周易 [Changes of the Zhou] (p. 156).

144 Edited by Semih Tezcan and Peter Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche. Ein neuer Text,” *Journal of Turkology* 2.2 (1994): 259–271. Peter Zieme (“Fragmente von Erzählungen, Sprichwörtern und Reimsprüchen aus der altuigurischen Zeit,” *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü dergisi* / *Journal of Social Sciences* 13 (2013): 473–496, 483) discovered later another small fragment of this manuscript.

I discussed the text briefly at the last *BuddhistRoad* conference and presented my interpretation that it is an incantation and invocation with highly enigmatic and allusive phrasing including images drawn from nature.¹⁴⁵ The editors already assumed that the piece might be an original composition.¹⁴⁶ They also adduced parallels for the peculiar motif of the three suns (a white one, a black one, and a grey one) in lines 15–17 of the text among some ethnic groups of Siberia.¹⁴⁷ And they add: “If cosmogonic ideas of shamans could really be taken as a basis, we would have a first indication of shamanism among the ancient Turks in the Turfan region.”¹⁴⁸ I agree that the incantation is one of the few specimens that might belong to the native religion of the Uyghurs, irrespective of whether or not a shamanistic background can be postulated. The deity invoked is called ‘The only holy Tǎŋrikǎn’ (OU *bir idok t(ä)ŋrikǎn*), a title otherwise used for Uyghur rulers.¹⁴⁹ The sun, the moon, and the thunderbolt are mentioned in subsequent lines with the addition of *t(ä)ŋri*.¹⁵⁰ The same triad (OU *kün ay t(ä)ŋri y(a)šın t(ä)ŋri*) is mentioned in a Manichaean hymn after the four aspects of the Father of Greatness and before the Light Nour (OU *nom küt*), Lord Mani (OU *m(a)rmanī*) and the apostles (OU *frešti*).¹⁵¹ But the incantation seems to invoke a set of demons connected with nature, which would be difficult to account for in a Manichaean text.¹⁵² The god (or goddess) of lightning is identified in Uyghur Manichaeism with the Maiden of Light (OU *yašin t(ä)ŋri k(a)ni rošn t(ä)ŋri*).¹⁵³ Yet, this terminology is one of the atypical elements because only in Chinese Manichaeism do we find a similar, but not exactly matching expression in *dianguangming* (電光明) ‘Flash of Lightning’.¹⁵⁴ In Iranian Manichaeism, on which Uyghur Manichaeism is otherwise heavily dependent especially in terms of terminology, the Maiden of Light is not

145 Jens Wilkens, “Practice and Rituals in Uyghur Buddhist Texts: A Preliminary Appraisal,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia II—Practices and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer*, ed. Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 458–461.

146 Tezcan and Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche,” 263.

147 Translated from *ibid.*, 266–267: “Wenn wirklich kosmogonische Vorstellungen von Schamanen zugrundegelegt werden könnten, hätten wir einen ersten Hinweis auf Schamanismus bei den alten Türken im Turfangebiet.”

148 *Ibid.*, 267.

149 *Ibid.*, 263, l. 20.

150 *Ibid.*, 262, ll. 11–13.

151 *Le Coq, Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho. II, 10, ll. 2–4 middle.*

152 Tezcan and Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche,” 262, ll. 5–9.

153 Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts. II*, 211, l. LH411. In one text the God(ess) of Lightning is called the daughter of the Father of Greatness. See Zekine Özertural, *Der uigurische Manichäismus: Neubearbeitung von Texten aus Manichaica I und III von Albert von Le Coq* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 68–69, ll. 186–189.

154 Kósa, “The Manichaean Attitude to Natural Phenomena,” 259.

associated with lightning. Thus, the triad *kün ay t(ä)ñri y(a)šin t(ä)ñri* is most likely an original native one interpreted in a Manichaean context. (Perceiving native religious concepts through the lens of Manichaean theological ideas made proselytising easier for the Manichaean missionaries.) With the incantation we do get closer to original native Uyghur concepts, although it is not representative for the Uyghur native religion in general. The incantation and the *Book of Omens* are, in all probability, limited to a specialised group of practitioners.

8 Conclusion

The above study shows that the religious terminology of the Uyghurs allows certain conclusions to be drawn about processes in the history of religions of Inner Asia. However, it also reveals certain limitations in the basic character of the source materials. As we have seen, newly discovered texts—however insignificant they may seem at first glance—can complicate the overall picture considerably. Simple solutions are not always the best ones. The source material sometimes makes it necessary to postulate complex historical scenarios. In certain cases definitive answers cannot be given. The interactions of the indigenous religion of the Uyghurs, Manichaeism, and Buddhism can be traced mainly in the field of terminology. Here, every single piece of evidence can be important. The combined evidence of the sources discussed above suggests what I would call the ‘pre-history’ of Uyghur Buddhist terminology. Traces are found in the Uyghur Manichaean and Buddhist terminologies themselves, perhaps best exemplified by the term *burhan*. Thus Uyghur Buddhist terminology does not start with the earliest extant translations of Buddhist texts.

The newly deciphered (Para-)Mongolian Inscriptions suggest a kind of “nomadic Buddhism” in the steppe, which was at least nascent. The Uyghurs do not necessarily have to have learned the basics of Buddhism for the first time in the oasis towns of the Tarim Basin after their migration in the middle of the ninth century, even if they had not yet converted to Buddhism. A term such as *nom* must have had a long tradition in the steppes of Inner Asia before Manichaeism became the court religion in the East Uyghur Kaganate. Since Sogdian, as one of the official languages of the First Türk Kaganate, must have had supra-regional status, the use of *nom* in the Sogdian part of the Bugut Inscription is relevant to the history of this term in the steppe region. (It is worth noting that the history of this important concept in Sogdian has also not been sufficiently studied yet.) Looking at the additional evidence from the archaic trilingual manuscript in Brāhmī, in which *nom bitig* bears the meaning

‘precepts, commandment’, it can be assumed that *nom* essentially had a legal connotation before its scope widened and it denoted also ‘religious community’, ‘doctrine’ and ‘holy scripture’.

Some religious terms borrowed from other languages, such as *buši*, *buyan*, *dentar*, or *nom*, developed into a common vocabulary not only for Manichaeism and Buddhist but also for Christian texts. Thus, religious contacts between the three major religions of the Uyghurs must have been considerable. The fact that the terminology of another religion was not used in a polemical or pejorative way might also indirectly tell us something about the relations between the religions involved. Religious polemics in Turfan texts are attested, but they do not play a significant role.

Despite an extensive philological investigation of Uyghur Buddhist texts, evidence for the impact of the native religion of the Uyghurs is scant. A survival of pre-Buddhist ideas about the Sky God Tängri, the goddess Umay, and the Powerful King god Ärklig Han seems pretty certain, though. The same applies for Inner Asian-Chinese notions concerning the sun and the moon which are depicted as palaces in Manichaeism and Buddhist texts. The identification of atypical elements in the texts from both religions is generally a helpful tool and especially in this particular case.

The first basic question formulated in the introduction, namely whether there are sources that report details about the native religion of the Uyghurs, can be answered positively, but with one qualification. The *Book of Omens* and the incantation examined in section 7 very likely preserve native religious ideas, but in all probability only those of a highly specialised religious elite.