

Article

Liaoye—a Chinese Ligature in Uigur Manuscripts from the 13th and 14th Centuries*

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The Chinese *liaoye* 了也 means ‘it is finished’. Confining myself here mainly to Uigur Buddhist texts, among which several use Chinese characters as logographs, I would like to point out that this expression often occurs at the end of chapters, books or other text units of a given work. It was most frequently translated into Turkic as *tükädi*, meaning ‘it is finished’. In one case, we also find a phonetic transcription of the Chinese: *lyw y-*¹ (Fig. 1). This transcription corresponds well to the expected pronunciation *lew’jia*². The pronunciation of the first character as *leu* [lyw] is also preserved in a different context in a fragment of the St. Petersburg Collection edited by M. Shōgaito.³

In Chinese, these two characters are written one after the other as is also the case in several Uigur manuscripts using Chinese characters in a mixed system. One example is a manuscript which contains a passage about auspicious and inauspicious days ending in 了也⁴ (Fig. 2). At the end of the fragment Ch/U 7475, we find *liao ye* written horizontally according to the Chinese order (from right to left) (Fig. 3).⁵ However, in some Uigur manuscripts, all of which belong

to the late period of Uigur Buddhist culture, i.e. the Yuan or more roughly the Mongol period (in the 13th and 14th centuries), we find instead of these two characters a special form which looks like a combination of both in one character. One may regard it as a ligature of both. This character could only have come into existence if the Uigur direction of writing is followed, i.e. from left to right. Recently, M. Shōgaito has edited some examples of Chinese texts which also show this ‘Uigur’ feature.⁶

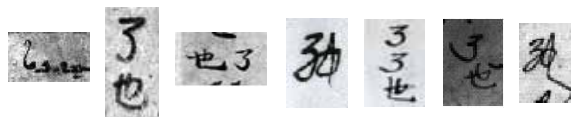


Fig. 1 Fig. 2 Fig. 3 Fig. 4 Fig. 5 Fig. 6 Fig. 7

The first scholar to explain this special character was Tōru Haneda 羽田亨, when he studied the London manuscript of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya-tīkā Tattvārtha* written in Uigur script and mixed with Chinese characters used as logographs for Uigur words. On folio 86a of the manuscript Or. 8212/75A, we find both modes: in line 10 (= 2582) the special sign is used (Fig. 4). It is followed in line 11 (= 2583) by the two characters written separately (the first is doubled) (Fig. 5). T. Haneda⁷ explained the character under discussion as a ligature of *liaoye*. Later, when M. Shōgaito studied this manuscript,⁸ he adopted Haneda’s statement. On the other hand, G. Kara and P. Zieme⁹ referred to the same solution without having received knowledge of Haneda’s and Shōgaito’s results. In the so-called *Totenbuch*, *liaoye* is written separately on two occasions¹⁰ (Fig. 6), but once as a ligature¹¹ (Fig. 7).

* I would like to express my thanks to Mr Wang Ding and Mr Yutaka Yoshida who provided valuable comments on several matters. My colleague Ms Simone-Christiane Raschmann helped me to find relevant data from among the Uigur documents. Most of the manuscripts cited here can be found as digital images in the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) or on the ‘Turfan Studies’ website of the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW/Turfanforschung).

¹ U 3280 (T III M 174) described in Raschmann 2009, No. 551.

² Pulleyblank 1991, pp. 193, 363.

³ Shōgaito 2003, p. 130: *lyw*. Now also Shōgaito 2008, p. 51 fn. 64. Recently, Aydar Mirkamal proposed this explanation also for the following syntagma *uzatu lyw lwk ögdirlig orunta turup* ‘(they) may stay for long *lyw lwk* at this praised place’ in the Mogao Northern Grottoes text B 157:13, cp. Mirkamal 2008, pp. 85–86. Abdurishid Yakup gave no interpretation for this word, but considered it as the first part of the unexplained juncture *lyw ögdür*, cp. Yakup 2006, pp. 28–29.

⁴ Ch/U 6796 + Ch/U 6238 verso line 11, edited by Zieme 2002, p. 388.

⁵ Ch/U 7457 recto line 5. The text has been identified by Rong 2007, p. 442; it corresponds to the Chinese Tantric text T. 878 (Wang Ding located the parallels in vol. 18, p. 337 a13, 15–17, 21). On the verso side is a Tantric text in Uigur which is unrelated to the one on the recto side.

⁶ Shōgaito (forthcoming).

⁷ Haneda 1958, pp. 166–167. I am grateful to Ms Yukiyo Kasai for her help.


⁸ Shōgaito 1974, p. 044.

⁹ Zieme / Kara 1978, p. 10.

¹⁰ Or. 8212/109, fol. 55b (ed. 1222), Or. 8212/109, fol. 58b (ed. 1297a).

¹¹ Or. 8212/109, fol. 46a (ed. 1001).

Recently, Geng Shimin published parts of a newly found manuscript of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya-ṭīkā Tattvārtha* from Lanzhou in which the ligature also appears. But he concluded:

‘Here, as to the special sign ¹², I don’t think it is a ligature consisting of two Chinese characters 了也 (as Profs Haneda and Shōgaito did it). It would be a sign of ‘goodness’ put at the end of a chapter or a book. It seems to me that it is a deformed swastika _ put at the end of a book (like the Mongolian Buddhist scriptures). It would have the same meaning like the Chinese ‘善哉 shanzai (good)’ and the Sanskrit ‘薩¹³土 sādu (good)’ after it. In addition, in LM, after this special sign two Chinese characters 了也 (liao ye ‘finished’) are added. This point also proves that it is only a sign denoting the ‘auspiciousness’ at the end of a book or chapter.’¹⁴

This example shows that both forms were used, firstly the ligature, secondly the normal form.

It is also found in another Uigur manuscript edited by Semih Tezcan in 1974.¹⁵ After my 2006 article on some quotations in the *Insadi-sūtra* appeared¹⁶, I discussed one passage with Masahiro Shōgaito during his stay in Berlin. Following the suggestion presented by Geng Shimin in 2002 I concluded that in the *Insadi* manuscript, too, the character in question can be interpreted as a form of the *svastika*. Thus I read the character 卍 preceding the ligature as 萬 *wan* ‘ten-thousand’. M. Shōgaito rejected this reading, and I looked into my previous study of 1991, where I had already given the correct reading and interpretation of the sentence.¹⁷ Thus the sentence has to be read as follows 我正心誦學了也 (Fig. 8) *wo Zhengxin songxue liaoye* ‘I, Zhengxin (= Old Uigur Čisim), have recited and learned (it). It is finished.’

The recto side of the Chinese Buddhist scroll Ch/U 6845¹⁸ contains some Uigur attempts at copying Chinese characters taken from the original text. To the right of the character on the upper margin, the scribe used the special character (Fig. 9).

In the composite booklet U 5335, which contains a selection of poetical Chinese texts written only in Uigur script,

Chinese characters are rarely used. One of these cases is *liao* which appears seven times¹⁹, while only two times in a transcriptional form: *lyv*²⁰ different from the one cited above (*lyw*). The Chinese character *liao* could be used in the same way as *liaoye*.



Fig. 8 Fig. 9 Fig. 10 Fig. 11

As the ligature, i.e. the combination of two single characters *liao ye* is not known from Chinese or other traditions using the Chinese script, one has to conclude that it was introduced by the Uigurs, possibly induced by other words written in this way such as *ymäter* ‘one also says’ known from the mixed Chinese/Uigur *Āgama* and *Abhidharma* texts (Fig. 10). Not only were these words written as one word, they were also combined in a kind of ligature written side by side (from left to right) (Fig. 11).

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¹² I would like to express my thanks to Professor Geng Shimin for having provided me with a copy of the original text.

¹³ Written wrongly 莎.

¹⁴ Geng 2002, pp. 79–80. I would like to explain the repetition of *liaoye* written with two separate characters rather as an attempt to make the matter clear in the event of the ligature being unknown.

¹⁵ Tezcan 1974.

¹⁶ Zieme 2006, p. 11.

¹⁷ Zieme 1991, p. 316.

¹⁸ Cp. Raschmann 2009, No. 502.

¹⁹ U 5335: p. 3 l.4, p. 21 l. 5, p. 24 l. 6 and 10, p. 26 l. 2, p. 27 l. 6, p. 28 l. 11.

²⁰ U 5335: p. 15 l. 1, p. 28 l. 8.

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