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A Note on the Word 'Shaman' in Old Turkic

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The aim of this article is to introduce two Old Turkic text passages in which the word šaman < *Sanskrit* śramaṇa *'monk' (Prakrit* samaṇa*, Gāndhārī* ṣamaṇa*) occurs. While the word was borrowed into several Central Asian languages like Tocharian, Parthian and Sogdian, it has not been found so far either in Old Turkic or in Mongol. As the sphere of the Old Turkic culture is closer to the Tungusic world, the etymology of the term 'shaman' should be discussed in the light of these new data.*

There is a vast literature, which cannot be reviewed here, on the etymology of the word *shaman*. As far as I can see, there are three main theories about its origin. The first claims that it originated directly from the Indian term *śramaṇa* 'monk'. Others believe in a derivation from Tungusic *saman* (*samān*), which comes from the verb *sa-* 'to know'.[1] The third position holds the view that the Indian *śramaṇa* was borrowed into Tungus and spread from there into the world. [2] The modern word forms of *shaman* started with Russian in the 17th century. N. D. Mironov and S. M. Shirokogoroff (1924) summarized the positions best as early as 1924; recently V. Voigt (1984) added his ideas. R. A. Miller and N. Naumann (1994) also provided valuable data, as did G. Kara (1997) in his review of their study.

K.-H. Menges and others followed the third theory, but J. Janhunen expressed his strong doubts (Janhunen 1984, but cf. Miller and Nau-

[1] Cincius 1977: 59ab (*samān*). Hultkrantz 1993: 6–7; 1993/2007: 8: "'Shaman' is possibly a Tunguzian word for 'magician' and 'conjourer', and early it became a *terminus technicus* for the ecstatic performer among the Siberian peoples." And "The endless discussion of the origin of the word shaman is still going on." (1993, 7, fn. 6)

[2] Boyle 1972. Several scholars have pointed out that the gap between Indian/Tocharian and Tungus is nearly unbridgeable, already Schott 1842, and cf. Kara 2001: 111.

mann 1994: 19). R. A. Miller and N. Naumann proposed an etymology but this needs further clarification.[3]

One can follow up the history of Sanskrit *śramaṇa* (Prakrit *samaṇa,* Gāndhārī *ṣamaṇa*) to Tocharian A *ṣāmaṇ,* B *ṣamāṇe*, to Parthian *šmn* (Sims-Williams 1983: 134; Durkin-Meisterernst 2004: 318b–319a) as well as to Sogdian *šmn* (Gharib 1995: 375a, No. 9287) and further to Chinese 沙門 *sha-men*. But so far the word has not been found in Old Turkic sources. While the 'nun' is known to be a borrowing from Sogdian *šmnnč* also in Old Turkic *šamnanč*, the 'monk' is always translated as *toyın*. Thus there is a gap between these data and the "Altaic" world of the shamans, especially the Tungusic word *saman*. S. M. Shirokogoroff (1935: 270b) wrote: "As a matter of fact, we have no direct evidence for showing exactly at which historic moment and who could have carried it so far away and how its other function was substituted to its original one." Usually the word Sanskrit *śramaṇa* = Chinese 沙門 *sha men* was translated into Old Turkic by substitutes such as *toyın*[4] or others.

My sole purpose here is to show that the word *šaman* entered the Uighur language, too, either via Tocharian or Parthian/Sogdian. In the following I present two examples to illustrate this.

First Example

In the fifth book of the *Xuanzang Biography* there is the following statement on a gathering at a ceremony in the monastery of Kanyākubja (Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 2053, Vol. 50: 247b20): 雖六齊之舉袂成帷三吳之揮汗為雨 *sui liu qi zhi ju mei cheng wei san wu zhi hui han wei yu*: "It was said that the region of the Six Princes of Qi was so thickly

[3] Miller and Naumann 1994: 139, fn. 71: "Chin. *sha-men* 沙門 stellt eine spätere, re-sanskritisierte Entlehnung desselben Originals dar (= NJ *shamon*). Es ist indessen in beiden Fällen, bei Chin. *sha-mi* wie *sha-men*, schwierig zu ermitteln, ob Buddh.Skt. *śramaṇa* oder *śramaṇera* die ihnen letztlich unterliegende Form ist; in jedem Fall liegen zu viele zentralasiatische Zwischenformen (Prakrit, Sogdisch, usw.) zwischen dem (den) indischen Original(en) und den chinesischen Entlehnungen." The question if *shamen* goes back to Sanskrit *śramaṇa* or *śramaṇera*, for the time being, cannot be answered. However, it seems, that *shamen* reflects the first form, while *shami* reflects the second.

[4] One might note the function of Yakut *toyon* 'lord' (? < Old Turkic *toyın*) in the shamanist terminology of the Yakuts, cf. Marazzi 1994: 77, 78.

inhabited that when the people raised their sleeves they might form curtains, and that in the area of the Three Wus when the people wiped their sweat, it would rain like a shower." (Li 1995: 145–146)

This sentence was translated by Šiŋqo Šäli Tutuŋ into Uigur as follows: *altı šaman üzä [t]arutup yiŋ učların bintavir kılturdačı üč liŋ üzä bošurup tärlärin yagmur kıltačılar* (HT V 13, 23–26, Tugusheva 1991: 38, ll. 22–25). L. Iu. Tugusheva (1991: 179) translated this phrase only partly, leaving several words without translation, so that the sentence as a whole remained unclear. I suggest the following translation which is rather far from Li's rendering of the Chinese text: "[Suppose] that six *šaman* narrow their sleeves forming a curtain, that three *liŋ* shed their sweat and make rain."

The Chinese city names *qi* and *wu* were not translated into Old Uigur; rather they were reinterpreted by the translator. He chose equivalents with which he was more familiar. In the second case, *liŋ*, it might be that he either misread the Chinese character or interpreted it as 令 *ling* in the meaning of a "Geist, der über Regen gebietet" (Bauer 1971: 144). The special character should be 靈 *ling* 'Zauberkraft', a character which was explained by E. Hauer (1925: 32) as follows: "Zwei Leute 人人 verrichten eine Arbeit 工, indem sie, wie es heute noch die sibirischen Schamanen tun, bis zur Erschöpfung um einen Pfahl herumtanzen, daher das ganze Schriftbild 巫 *wu* = Zauberer, Beschwörer. Die Zauberer schreien (drei Männer 口口口 als Ausdruck des lauten Geschreis) nach 雨 Regen, der natürlich fallen muß, wenn das Beschwören beharrlich fortgesetzt wird. Daher die Grundbedeutung 'Zauberkraft'." (Hauer 1925: 32)

If this is true, the other word may also have been interpreted in a similar way. 齊 could easily be misread for 齋 *zhai* 'feast' and then replaced by a word designating religious people, namely 'monks', not, however, using the term *toyın*, but *šaman* < Sogdian, Parthian *šmn* < Sanskrit *śramaṇa* 'monk'.

Second Example

The Berlin fragment U 5618 (T II D 296)[5] has on one side, which is regarded as the verso[6], the following text:

[5] Turfan Collection of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften: U 5618.

[6] The recto side contains a *bōz* document and was described in Raschmann 2007, no. 254, p. 245.

01 [at]ı küsi yadıltı ištilt[i]
02 -larka ayagl(ı)g čiltäglig boltı . öt[rü]
03 sakıntı amtı mäniŋ arvıšım sidi [ ]
04 ulug ögrünčülüg bolup takı adın ’[ ]
05 -ti dyan { } šamanlarag bıšruntı [ ]
06 tavranu kečmädin ara kop nizvan[i]
07 arhant kutıŋa tägdi . arhant kutın [bultukta]
08 ärt[iŋü sä]vinčlig bolup upagupti [ ]
09 kälip[7] adakıŋa yinčürü töpün yükü[nüp]
10 [ ]g bašl(ı)g ’[ ]

“His [name] and fame spread and was heard [everywhere,] by [all people] he was respected and honoured. Th[en ...] he thought: Now my spell *siddhi* [. . .], he became very joyful, then other [. . .]. He practised the *šaman*s in the *dhyāna*. [Thus . . .] striving in the meantime [he overcame ?] all *kleśa*s and reached the arhatship. [Having reached] the arhatship, he became extremely joyful, Upagupta[8] [. . .] came and fell at his feet [. . .] at the top [. . .].”

This small fragment refers to the legends surrounding Upagupta[9], a famous meditation master. As the fragment is too small, establishing an exact location is impossible.

Conclusion

So far these are the only two examples in which the word *šaman* appears in Old Turkic. In the second example it clearly refers to monks. But the first occurrence shows that the word *šaman*—which must be regarded as rare—was chosen to designate a kind of shamanic person, thus increasing the possibility of establishing a bridge between Inner Asian Shamanism and the Indian/Buddhist world. But even if we find more examples and further bridges can be built, it remains a fact that this bridge can be only a linguistic one because the original concepts of shamanism and Buddhism were very distinct at the beginning. It was only in Tibet and Mongolia that some fusion between the two occurred.

[7] With lesser probability one could read *k(a)šip* ‘Kāśyapa’.

[8] Strong 1992: 71: “Upagupta himself, it should be remembered, was the head of the Naṭabhaṭika monastery on mount Urumuṇḍa, which Śāṇakavāsin founded. Not enough has been made yet of the fact that this monastery, in our texts, is repeatedly called ‘the foremost of all the Buddha’s forest-haunts [araṇyāyatana], where the lodgings [seats-beds] are conducive to meditation [śamatha]’. (. . .) And there, too, he instructed monks from all over India who came to seek him out as a meditation master. In fact, at one point, the *Aśokarājāvadāna* even declares that the Buddha predicted that Upagupta would be ‘the foremost of all those who are instructors of meditation’.” New insights in Deeg 2007.

[9] HT VII, 1999–2006.

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