

KHAROṢṬHĪ MANUSCRIPTS: A WINDOW ON GANDHĀRAN BUDDHISM*

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INTRODUCTION

In the present article I offer a sketch of Gandhāran Buddhism in the centuries around the turn of the common era by looking at various kinds of evidence which speak to us across the centuries. In doing so I hope to shed a little light on an important stage in the transmission of Buddhism as it spread from India, through Gandhāra and Central Asia to China, Korea, and ultimately Japan. In particular, I will focus on the several collections of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts most of which are quite new to scholarship, the vast majority of these having been discovered only in the past ten years. I will also take a detailed look at the contents of one of these manuscripts in order to illustrate connections with other text collections in Pali and Chinese.

Gandhāran Buddhism is itself a large topic, which cannot be adequately described within the scope of the present article. I will therefore confine my observations to the period in which the Kharoṣṭhī script was used as a literary medium, that is, from the time of Aśoka in the middle of the third century B.C. until about the third century A.D., which I refer to as the Kharoṣṭhī Period.

In addition to looking at the new manuscript materials, other forms of evidence such as inscriptions, art and architecture will be touched upon, as they provide many complementary insights into the Buddhist culture of Gandhāra. The travel accounts of the Chinese pilgrims

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provide much information about Gandhāra and Gandhāran Buddhism, but the first of these, Zhu Shixing 朱士行, reached only as far as Khotan (ca. 260 A.D.; Zürcher [1959: 61]), while subsequent travellers, particularly Faxian 法顯 (fl. 399–414) and Xuanzang 玄奘 (600–64) visited Gandhāra after the Kharoṣṭhī Period.

GANDHĀRA

In ancient India, Gandhāra was the name of the Peshawar Valley, located between the Suleiman Mountains along the modern border with Afghanistan in the west and the Indus River in the east, an area which is now part of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan.



At the time of Alexander the Great's invasion the capital of Gandhāra was Puṣkalāvātī (modern Charsadda), near Peshāwār (Fussman [1994: 18]). In his book, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra*, Richard

Salomon has proposed the term “Greater Gandhāra” to define a larger area covering several neighbouring regions which came under the influence of Gandhāran culture during the centuries around the turn of the Christian era. This larger area includes the important districts of Swāt and Buner as well as the cities of Bamiyan and Taxila (Salomon [1999: 3]). The main distinctive characteristics that define this cultural area were the production of Gandhāran art, particularly sculpture with its unique combination of Indian and Hellenistic styles, and the use of the Gāndhārī language — a Middle Indo-Aryan vernacular related to Sanskrit — and written with the distinctive Kharoṣṭhī script.

KHAROṢṬHĪ

The Kharoṣṭhī script was one of the two writing systems used in Ancient India at the beginning of the historical period. The other was the Brāhmī script, derivatives of which are still used today throughout India and Southeast Asia. The use of Kharoṣṭhī was confined to the Gandhāra region and the culturally related areas of Bactria (e.g., Adzhina-Tepe, Qunduz, Termez) and the Central Asian city states (e.g., Khotan, Kucha, Niya). This script is almost certainly related to Aramaic, and probably evolved during the time that Aramaic was used as the administrative script in the region, i.e., when the Achaemenid empire controlled Gandhāra, 559–336 B.C. (Lamotte [1958: 111]).

Kharoṣṭhī is first found in a fully developed form in the versions of the Aśokan inscriptions located at Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā in northern Pakistan, which have been dated to around 250 B.C. (Hultzsch [1925: xxxv]). The script continued to be used in Gandhāra and neighbouring regions until about the third century A.D. when it was replaced by Brāhmī (Salomon [1996: 375]). At some point during the second century, Kharoṣṭhī began to be used for official documents and epigraphs in the Central Asian cities surrounding the Taklamakan Desert, especially at Niya. The use of Kharoṣṭhī survived there into the third and fourth centuries A.D. and appears to have continued in Kucha and neighbouring areas along of the Northern Silk Road until the fifth or sixth century A.D. (Sander [1999: 72]; Schmidt [2001: 9–12]; Lin [2003: 1]).

Materials written in the Kharoṣṭhī script can be divided into four categories: inscriptions, coin legends, Buddhist manuscripts, and

secular documents mostly written on wood from Central Asia. Interim results of an ongoing project to catalogue this corpus can be found on web site of the British Library/University of Washington Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project: <http://depts.washington.edu/ebmp/>.

GANDHĀRAN BUDDHISM

◦ The Introduction of Buddhism

We do not know exactly when Buddhism was first introduced to Gandhāra. Various possibilities have been suggested, ranging from a point during the time of the Buddha's teaching down to the beginning of the Christian era. The first lay-disciples of the Buddha, the two merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika, are linked to Bactria in some accounts (Lamotte [1958: 72]). Lokesh Chandra and others have accepted this connection and posited the city of Balkh in Afghanistan as the site of their stūpas. Fussman [1994: 34] considers this rather dubious. While the historicity of this story is uncertain, it is not impossible that some merchants from the Northwestern region could have heard the Buddha preach during their travels. On the other hand, this is no proof that Buddhism was in any way established in Gandhāra at this time. There are also stories referred to by Lamotte [1958: 111] of the Buddha visiting the Northwest, which, despite pious inscriptions marking the footprints of Śākyamuni (e.g., Konow [1929: 8]) and other references, should not be accepted as historical fact.

The earliest archaeological evidence generally cited as evidence for an institutional presence of Buddhism in Gandhāra is the Dharmarājikā stūpa at Taxila. The term Dharmarājikā implies a connection with the Dharma king, i.e., the Buddha, and by extension, Aśoka, who is said to have established 84,000 stūpas to honour the Buddha. The Gāndhārī form, *dhamaṛaie*, is found in several Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions connected with this site, and has thus been taken to indicate that it is one of the stūpas built by Aśoka (Konow [1929: 77]). On the basis of this and other evidence Marshall [1951: 235] proposed to date the stūpa to the Mauryan period. However, recent scholars tend to date the site more conservatively to the 2nd century B.C. (Fussman [1994: 19]; Behrendt [2004: 40]).

Aśoka certainly had an interest in the Gandhāra region. According to the Aśokāvadāna, he was viceroy of Taxila before his coronation

(Lamotte [1958: 262])¹, and issued specific orders for the governor of Taxila in his separate Rock-edicts at Dhauli and Jaugada (Hultzsch [1925: 94, 113]). Moreover, we have several versions of his edicts in the northwest, at Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā (in Kharoṣṭhī script), Lampāka (in Aramaic), and Taxila (in Greek).² These edicts, which contain explicit encouragement of a form of morality consistent with, though not exclusive to Buddhism, demonstrate the extent of Mauryan control and influence in the Greater Gandhāra region. In a recent article, K.R. Norman has argued that the messengers (*dūta*) sent by Aśoka, mentioned in his 13th Rock Edict (Hultzsch [1925: 66–70]) were not identical with the missions sent by Moggaliputta following the third council (*Mahāvamsa* XII 9–10; *Dīpavamsa* VIII 1–13; Norman [2004: 78–9]), as has been suggested in several modern works. However, Norman [2004: 81] considers it likely that Buddhism was introduced to Gandhāra at this time, perhaps assisted more by the peace that Aśoka's reign brought and corresponding prosperity and improvements in trade networks than as a direct result of a royal mission.

◦ Foreign Rulers

Following the decline of the Mauryan empire, the Gandhāra region was controlled by a succession of foreign rulers, first by the Bactrian Greeks, then later by Sakas from the Pamirs, Parthians from Seistan, and then, in the first century A.D., by the Kushans. Some of these foreign rulers appear to have supported Buddhism, as we have inscriptions recording the establishment of relics and other pious acts by members of the ruling households as well as by other individuals from the middle of the second century B.C. onwards (Fussman [1994: 20]). There is also the famous account of a dialogue between a Buddhist monk Nāgasena and the Indo-Greek King Menander, who can be dated to approximately 150 B.C. (Lamotte [1958: 414]). This dialogue is preserved in Pali in the *Milindapañha* and also in a Chinese translation, the *Naxian biqiu jing* 那先比丘經 (T. 1670).³ Xuanzang reports that in the second century the Sarvāstivādins

¹ According to the Sinhalese Chronicles, however, he was Viceroy to Ujjayinī (*Dīpavamsa* VI 15, *Mahāvamsa* V 41 cited in Hultzsch [1925: xxxvii]).

² For full bibliographical details on these various inscriptions, see Behrendt [2004: 39].

³ An earlier Chinese translation of the *Milindapañha* from the 3rd century is now lost, see Demiéville [1924].

benefited from the patronage of Kanīṣka I, and that a council was convened in Kashmir to establish the canon and record it on copper plates. (Bureau [1955: 132]; Enomoto [2000: 159]).

Fussman warns us not to take the existence of the *Milindapañha* to mean that Menander was himself a convert to Buddhism (Fussman [1994: 274]). But whether or not Menander, Kanīṣka I or any of these rulers considered themselves to be 'Buddhists' is not a concern for the present study; what is important is that at least some of these rulers were patrons of Buddhism, as is clearly shown in the inscriptions they left. This does not preclude their patronizing other religions also, as historically, religious pluralism seems to have been tolerated in India to a great extent.

◦ Art

The golden age of Buddhism in Gandhāra began during the first century of the Christian era, from which point we see an increase in the number of Buddhist complexes and the evolution of a distinctive school of art. In general terms, Gandhāran art may be characterized as the combination of Hellenistic techniques and styles applied to Indian, especially Buddhist themes. Some authorities also see Iranian influence on Gandhāran art in the use of particular motifs, especially those relating to fire (see Scott [1990: 49–55]).

One of the most significant developments of this time was the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha, which seems to have occurred at about the same time in the Gandhāran school and in the Indian school of art at Mathurā. The question of which region produced the first such image of the Buddha has been keenly but inconclusively debated among art historians for much of the past century. Whatever the truth of the matter, the facts suggest that after the initial creation of the anthropomorphic image, both schools borrowed from each other as they perfected their respective styles (Lohuizen de Leeuw [1979: 400]).

Another characteristic subject of Gandhāran sculpture is narrative scenes depicting events from the Buddha's biography. These scenes were presented as multi-relief panels in a band around the stūpa drum so that the life of the Buddha could be 'read' in sequence during the normal practice of circumambulation (Behrendt [2004: 8]). It may even be possible to trace connections between these reliefs and particular versions of the Buddha's biography, supporting the view

that the life story of the Buddha was a central topic for religious teaching and practice.

On a practical level, in order to achieve a consistent sequence of images, donations of sculptures at Gandhāran Buddhist complexes would have had to have been directed by the monastic authorities. Dehejia has observed that in Gandhāra donations tended to be on a larger scale than appears to be the case in other parts of India, in that “many smaller Gandhāran stupas were built by single donors rather than through multiple individual gifts” (Dehejia [1997: 206]).

◦ Architecture

Gandhāran Buddhist complexes typically consisted of a main stūpa surrounded by a court filled with smaller stūpas, pillars, and images which might be housed in niches. Behrendt [2004: 33] describes two kinds of monasteries typical of Gandhāra: multi-storied quadrangular structures consisting of monastic cells surrounding an open courtyard, with attached service rooms, and mountain vihāras which consisted of groups of small multi-storied structures with just two or three rooms per floor. Both types of monastery structures could be present at the same site, as is the case at the Buddhist complex of Takht-i-bāhī in Swāt. This site has been partially restored and is now one of the best preserved monastic sites in Gandhāra.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Buddhist institutions spread slowly at first from initial outposts at Sirkap (Taxila) and Butkara (Swāt), and then from some point in the 1st century A.D. expanded more rapidly to all parts of the Gandhāra region and beyond. Behrendt [2004: 7] dates the oldest structures at these complexes to the period he calls Phase I, ca. 200 B.C. to middle to late 1st century A.D.. In his Phase II, from the mid-to-late 1st century A.D. to the early 3rd century, these sites expanded greatly, while many other monasteries and stūpas were established in urban areas elsewhere in the region. Also starting from this period, Buddhism began to extend into the mountain areas of the Peshawar basin and Swāt in the form of mountain vihāras, hundreds of which are known to exist but few have been properly studied (Behrendt [2004: 37]).

◦ Inscriptions

There are over 350 known Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, a great many of which can be connected with sites in Greater Gandhāra. Since most of

these inscriptions date to the early centuries of the common era, they support the observation above that the Buddhist presence in Gandhāra expanded during the first century A.D. The inscriptions provide an important means for understanding other aspects of Buddhism in the region, as they typically record donations to monastic groups or commemorate the establishment of a particular structure, such as a stūpa. In such cases, these records often tell us much about religious patronage in ancient Gandhāra, such as the names, status and ethnicity of the donors, the hopes and aspirations connected with the gift; and the distribution and strength of the Buddhist schools active in the region.

A study of the names and titles found in the inscriptions has shown that while the greatest number of donations were made by members of royal households, donations were also made by monks, lay followers, foreigners and officials. They represent diverse nationalities including Indians, Kushans, Persians, and Greeks (Neelis [1992: 74–5]). The names of five of the early Buddhist schools are attested in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions: Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Kāśyapīya, Sarvāstivāda, and Mahāsāṅghika (Fussman [1994: 20–1]).

Often an inscription will include a list of benefits which the donor(s) hoped would result from the particular act of merit being commemorated. Such benefits generally invoke the doctrine of the transfer of merit, and specify a list of beneficiaries of that merit. For example, in the Taxila Silver Scroll:

*sa 1 100 20 10 4 1 1 ayasa aṣaḍasa masasa divase 10 4 1 iśa
diva[se pradi]stavita bhagavato dhatu[o] ura[sa]keṇa [iṃ]tavhria-
putraṇa bahaliṇa noacae ṇagare vastaveṇa teṇa ime pradistavita
bhagavato dhatuo dhamaraie takṣaṣi(*la)e taṇuvae bosī[dhi]-
satva-gahamī maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa khusaṇasa
aroga-dakṣiṇae sarva[bu]dhaṇa puyae prac(*e)ga-budhaṇa puyae
araha(*ta)ṇa pu[ya]e sarvasa(*tva)ṇa puyae mata-pitu puyae
mitramaca-ṇāti-salohi(*ta)ṇa [pu]yae atvaṇo aroga-dakṣiṇae
ṇivanae hotu a[ya] desama-paricago*

Year 136, on the 15th day of the first month, Āshādhā, on this day were established relics of the Lord by Urasaka, of the sons of Iṃtavhria, the Bactrian, the resident of the town of Noacha. By him these relics of the Lord were established in his own bodhisattva chapel, in the Dharmarājikā compound of Takshaṣilā,

for the bestowal of health on the Great King, the King of Kings, the Son of Heaven, the Kuṣāṇā, in honour of all Buddhas, in honour of all Pratyekabuddhas, in honour of the Arhats, in honour of all beings, in honour of mother and father, in honour of friends, ministers, kinsmen, and blood-relations, for the bestowal of health upon himself. May this pious donation lead to Nirvāṇa.

(Text and translation based on Konow [1929:77])

In this case the donor Urasaka dedicates the merit from establishing a relic of the Buddha to the ruling Kuṣāṇā king. He praises a series of other beings and individuals, and hopes for his own good health. The final wish, the attainment of Nirvana, may be directed at himself, or perhaps for all sentient beings which is explicitly stated in other inscriptions (e.g., the Hidda Inscription of the year 28, Konow [1929: 157–8]).

◦ Trade and Travel

In ancient times, trade networks passing through Gandhāra linked the Indian subcontinent with the Silk Road. Gandhāra was a critical transit zone in the exchange of goods between India, China, and the Mediterranean. A recent study of long-distance trade in the Gandhāra region (Neelis [2001]) details the symbiotic relationship between Buddhism and these trade networks. Buddhism provided spiritual support for merchants on their arduous journeys, while the merchants' donations supported the Buddhist institutions. Travelling together, monks and merchants played a crucial role in the transmission of Buddhism along these trade routes.

Evidence for this relationship is seen in the graffiti left at several sites along the upper Indus by merchants travelling through the mountainous regions. The graffiti at these sites is dominated by Buddhist names as well as stūpas and other Buddhist icons that have been etched onto the rocks. The drawings provided a sacred space for the travellers in the otherwise imposing and hostile terrain. When in the safety of the towns and cities, the same merchants would no doubt have made donations of various kinds to the Buddhist monasteries. Records of such gifts are sometimes preserved in inscriptions of the type seen above. It has also been noted that the monasteries themselves may even have created a demand for certain luxury items such as the precious gems used in reliquary deposits (Neelis 2001: 491).

At least eight popular Jātaka stories have been connected with sites in Gandhāra (Lamotte [1958: 367–8]). For example, the Viśvantara Jātaka was linked to the site that is now Shāhbāzgarhī. This seems to reflect a desire on the part of Gandhāran Buddhists, to connect their land with the scriptures. There may also have been economic incentives to such associations as such sites would, no doubt, have become pilgrimage destinations.

◦ Mahāyāna

One of the most keenly debated topics in modern Buddhist scholarship has been the origins of the Mahāyāna. Some of the theories put forward by scholars suggest an origin in the Gandhāra region in the centuries around the turn of the Christian era, i.e., during the Kharoṣṭhī period. The following are some of the arguments used to support this view:

- apparent doctrinal connections between the Mahāyāna and schools prevalent in the Northwest;
- a belief that foreign, especially Iranian, influence provided some of the impetus for this movement;
- some early inscriptions and sculptures from Gandhāra suggest Mahāyāna connections;
- the Gandhāra region is the presumed source for the earliest Chinese translations, many of which were Mahāyāna sūtras, and possibly written in the Kharoṣṭhī script (Karashima [1992]; Boucher [1998a] [1998b]).

Rather than rehearsing the arguments here, I propose to consider the problem only in terms of what evidence the Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts can bring to the equation, therefore I will return to this question later.

KHAROṢṬHĪ MANUSCRIPTS

◦ New Discoveries

In the past ten years there have been several significant discoveries of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts which together have revolutionized our knowledge of this important period in the history of Buddhism. Previously, only one significant manuscript was known: this was the Khotan Dharmapada, a Gāndhārī version of one of the most popular early Buddhist texts. Other small manuscript fragments have been discovered in Afghanistan and Pakistan over the past 170 years, but

those that were not too small to warrant special study were destroyed or lost after their discovery (see Salomon [1999: 59–65]). Since 1994 several groups and collections of manuscripts have been discovered, so that the corpus of known Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts now consists of hundreds of fragments in more than ten separate collections around the world. The most important among these are the Khotan Dharmapada, the British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments, the Senior Collection, the Bamiyan Kharoṣṭhī Fragments, the Pelliot Collection, and the University of Washington Scroll.

◦ The Khotan Dharmapada

The Khotan Dharmapada manuscript was found in Central Asia in or before 1892. It is reported to have been discovered in a cave near the town of Kohmārī Mazar, about 21 kilometres from Khotan, but there are doubts about this account (Stein [1907: 185–8]). The complete scroll was divided into three parts by its discoverers before being sold to foreign manuscript collectors. One part was sold to the French expedition of Dutreuil de Rhins and Grenard. A second part was acquired by N.F. Petrovskiĭ, the Russian Consul-General in Kashgar, and sent to S.F. Oldenburg in St. Petersburg. The third part has never been found (Brough [1962: 2]). This birch bark manuscript consists of a single text written by a single scribe but for two verses added to the end of the manuscript. The text contains a colophon which indicates it was the property of a monk called Buddhavarma, and it may have been written by him. It is likely to date to the second century A.D. A definitive edition of this manuscript has been published by Brough [1962].

◦ The British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments

In 1994, the British Library Oriental and India Office Collections acquired a collection of twenty-nine scrolls written on birch bark. A study by Richard Salomon has concluded that they most likely date from the first half of the 1st century A.D., which makes them the oldest known collection of Buddhist manuscripts (Salomon [1999: 141–55]). Unfortunately, the exact find spot of these manuscripts is unknown, but a connection with the Buddhist monastic complex at Haḍḍa near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan seems likely. The collection contains an assortment of fragments by 21 different scribes. The collection contains just one partially preserved colophon which, like that of the

Khotan Dharmapada, identifies the ‘book’ (*postaga*, Skt. *pustaka*) as the property of an individual monk (Salomon [1999: 40–1]).

There are examples of many different genres of Buddhist texts among these scrolls including sūtra, verse, commentary, previous births stories illustrating the effects of karma (*pūrvayoga*), and abhidharma. None of the texts in this collection can be directly connected to Mahāyāna literature. The collection seems to have been a ritual deposit of old and used manuscripts (Salomon [1999: 81–4]). A catalogue and overview of the collection has been made by Salomon [1999]. To date, editions and studies of five of the twenty-nine fragments have been published in three volumes of the Gandhāran Buddhist Texts series: Salomon 2000, Allon [2001], and Lenz 2003. Another two volumes on fragments in this collection are currently under preparation: Cox, in progress; Salomon, in progress.

◦ The Senior Collection

The Senior Collection is a private collection in the United Kingdom, consisting of twenty-four scroll fragments on birch bark. Like the British Library scrolls, their provenance is unknown, but they are also likely to be from Haḍḍa. On the basis of an inscription on the pot in which they were found, they can be dated to the first half of the 2nd century A.D. As such, they are about 100 years younger than the British Library manuscripts (Salomon [2003: 77–8]). The scrolls in the Senior Collection are the work of a single scribe and with one exception⁴ they represent texts of the sutra genre especially the Saṃyuktāgama. Two of the scrolls (7 and 8) appear to be a sort of inventory for the collection as a whole, which despite problems matching the sequence of the texts to their entries in the inventory, have led Salomon [2003: 80] to conclude that it “represents a unified, organized collection”. On the whole, the fragments are in much better condition than the British Library scrolls. An overview of this collection is currently under preparation (Allon, in progress), as are studies on some of individual manuscripts.

◦ The Bamiyan Kharoṣṭhī Fragments

In about 1996 thousands of palm leaf fragments were found in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, reportedly in a cave near the smaller of the

⁴ Scroll 14 in the collection contains part of the introduction and first chapter of the Anavatapta-gāthā (Salomon [2003: 79]).

two giant Buddha statues. Among these fragments are a few hundred written in the Kharoṣṭhī script, which may date to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Today these fragments are preserved in three private collections: the Schøyen collection in Norway, which has about 230 fragments; the Hirayama collection, in Kamakura with 26 small fragments; and the Hayashidera collection in Toyama with 18 small fragments. Additional related fragments are known to exist, but their current whereabouts are unknown. To date, only a few of the Kharoṣṭhī fragments have been identified, and these belong to just two known texts: the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, a Śrāvakayāna text from the Dīrghāgama (Allon and Salomon [2000]), and the *Bhadrakalpikā-sūtra*. This second identification was made with the help of Prof. Matsuda Kazunobu. The Tibetan and Chinese traditions regard the *Bhadrakalpikā-sūtra* as a Mahāyāna text. Therefore these fragments may be part of the oldest known manuscript of a Mahāyāna sūtra. However, some care must be taken before making this connection, as it is not certain that this text would have been considered a Mahāyāna work at this time.

Some of the fragments in these collections contain folio numbers in the hundreds. This tells us that some of these early manuscripts were very long and may have preserved multiple texts in the same volume. Studies of these fragments are being published in the Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection series (Braarvig [2000]).

◦ The Pelliot Collection

Eight small Kharoṣṭhī fragments on palm-leaf are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. They were acquired by Paul Pelliot at Subashi and Khitai Bazar, near Kucha, during his expedition to the northern silk route in what is now the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region. Fragment 1 in this collection is a rare example of a Sanskrit text written in Kharoṣṭhī script. A study and edition of these fragments has been published by Salomon [1998b].

◦ The University of Washington Kharoṣṭhī Scroll

Two years ago the University of Washington Library purchased 8 fragments of another birch bark scroll. Once again, regrettably, the details of the scroll's origin are entirely unknown. This scroll contains a single text written by a single scribe. So far this text has resisted

identification, but it appears to be a commentary on a text similar to the Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta (MN III 237–47).

◦ Other Fragments

A few other Kharoṣṭhī fragments have either been illustrated or mentioned in publications over the past 160 years. Those fragments which are still accessible, either because they are extant or because they have been illustrated somewhere, have been included in the Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project's Catalogue of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts (<http://depts.washington.edu/ebmp/manuscripts.php>).

The Lou-lan Fragment: A Kharoṣṭhī fragment on paper discovered by the Sven Hedin Expedition in Lou-lan. It was illustrated with a tentative reading by E. J. Rapson in Conrady 1920 pl. 38 no. 36.

The Masson Fragment: A tiny fragment of Kharoṣṭhī on palm-leaf was discovered in by Charles Masson near Jalalabad in 1834. It was illustrated in Wilson [1841: pl. 3 no. 11].

The Oldenburg Fragment: A fragment of a Kharoṣṭhī document on palm-leaf is kept in the S. F. Oldenburg Collection in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (Salomon [1999: 59]).

The Otani Collection: Two Kharoṣṭhī fragments on paper are included in the Otani collection (no. 6101 and 6102). Photographs and a tentative reading by T. Hasuike were published last year (Ryukoku University [2003: 50–1]). Line drawings of the fragments with a revised reading has recently appeared (Hasuike [2004: 95–6]).

Shahr-I Zuhak Fragments: Four small fragments of Kharoṣṭhī on palm-leaf were illustrated by Pauly [1967 pl. 4 nos. E–H].

Additional discoveries now lost, are discussed in Salomon [1999: 59–65].

THE SENIOR COLLECTION — SCROLL 5

Fragment 5 in the Senior Collection is a manuscript in scroll format. The text comprises 42 lines, 21 on each side, and four sūtras, with two on each side. Both the left and right margins of the scroll are largely intact, but, a vertical strip from the centre of the scrolls is missing due to deterioration where the rolled manuscript was folded in half (see Lenz [2003: 3–4]). Only about 10% of the total text has been lost, making this one of the best preserved Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts.

Richard Salomon has identified three of the sūtras on this scroll (sūtras 2–4) with parallels in the Pali *Samyutta-nikāya*, which is a collection of short suttas arranged thematically. Only fragments of the corresponding text in the Sanskrit tradition, the *Samyuktāgama*, have survived, however, the most extensive of the three Chinese translations, *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經 (T 99, Salomon [2003: 79]), is reported to have been made from a Sanskrit original (Yinshun [1983: 1]), and contains parallels to these three sūtras.⁵ While the Senior Collection as a whole contains many texts with parallels in these collections, I accept Salomon’s arguments that this collection itself does not constitute a remnant of a Gāndhārī *Samyuktāgama* [2003: 79–80]. For the present purposes, I am concerned to investigate whether we can deduce that such a collection existed at the time this collection was redacted and provided a basis for this anthology. That is to say, were these sūtras chosen at random from a freely circulating body of sūtra material, or do they reflect a conscious selection from a more-or-less defined corpus?

◦ Sūtra One — The *Saṅga-sutra⁶, lines 1–14.

No direct parallels to this sūtra have been identified in Pali or Chinese. However, the content of the sūtra does correspond in part with other sūtras from the *Samyutta-nikāya/Samyuktāgama* and *Aṅguttara-nikāya/Ekottarikāgama*⁷ collections. However, the topic of this sūtra, the four *saṃjñās*, differs from the other texts preserved on this manuscript as it is not directly connected with the five aggregates (*skandhas*). Since this is the topic of the other three sūtras, and they belong to chapter on the aggregates (Khandha-vagga/Pañcopādāna-skandha-nipāta) in both the Pali and Chinese version, there is an issue with understanding the relationship of this text to the rest of the

⁵ In addition to T 99, two partial translations of the *Samyuktāgama* are preserved in Chinese. T 100, also called *Za ahan jing*, or *Beyi za ahan jing* 別譯雜阿含經, consists of 364 sūtras. This is the work of an unknown translator and may be earlier than T 99 (Harrison [2003: 1]). T 101, also entitled *Za ahan jing* (T 101), consists of 25 sūtras and is probably the work of An Shigao 安世高 (Harrison [2003: 1–2]). Parallels to the Gāndhārī sutras on Senior 5 do not appear in either of these translations.

⁶ No sutra titles are given in the Gāndhārī manuscript. For the sake of convenience I have provided hypothetical Gāndhārī titles on the basis of the titles used for Pali parallels in the modern printed editions. In the case of the first sutra, where no direct parallel has been identified, I have provided a title based on a key term from the text.

⁷ The Pali *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and Sanskrit *Ekottarikāgama* collections have a numerical basis of arrangement.

manuscript. The introductory nidāna is missing, but otherwise this sūtra seems to be complete.

◦ Sūtra Two — The Natuspahu-sutra, lines 15–21.

This sūtra has direct parallels in Pali and Chinese, as well as partial parallels in Sanskrit and Tibetan.⁸ In Pali, the Natumhāka-sutta is the first sutta of the Natumhākavagga, and constitutes sutta 33 in the Mūlapaññāsa of the Khandhasaṃyutta, which is in part 1 of the Khandhavagga (SN III 33–4; Bodhi [2000: 877]). In Chinese, this corresponds to sūtra number 269 in the Taishō: Qilin 祇林 (T 2 no. 99 p. 70b1–c1). To judge by the Pali parallel, it appears to be complete.

◦ Sūtra Three — The Nivridābahulo-sutra, lines 22–7.

Like the preceding one, this sūtra has parallels in both Pali and Chinese. In Pali, the Nibbidābahula-sutta⁹ is the eleventh sutta of the Kukkuḷavagga, and constitutes sutta 40 in the Uparipaññāsa of the Khandhasaṃyutta, which is in part 1 of the Khandhavagga (SN III 179; Bodhi 2000: 977–8). In Chinese, this corresponds to sūtra number 47 in the Taishō: Xin 信 (T 2 no. 99 p. 12a9–17). This sūtra also appears to be complete.

◦ Sūtra Four — The *Vasijaḍa-sutra, lines 28–42.

The last sūtra on Senior Fragment 5 also has direct parallels in Pali and Chinese. In Pali, the Vāsijaḍa- or Nāvā-sutta is the ninth sutta of the Pupphavagga, and constitutes sutta 49 in the Majjhimapaññāsa of the Khandhasaṃyutta, which is in part 1 of the Khandhavagga (SN III 152–5; Bodhi [2000: 959–61]). In Chinese, this corresponds to sūtra number 263 in the Taishō: Yingshuo 應說 (T 2 no. 99 p. 67a22–c3). This sūtra is incomplete, corresponding only to the first two thirds of the Pali version; and it may have continued onto a separate scroll which has not survived.

◦ Assessment

As mentioned above, the first sūtra seems not to belong to the

⁸ Complete details of these additional parallels will appear in my edition and study of this manuscript which is currently under preparation.

⁹ The modern printed editions of the Pali canon agree in calling this sutta Nibbidābahula against the reading in the uddāna found at the end of the Kukkuḷavagga. The PTS edition alone follows the uddāna and gives the title as Kulaputtana Dukkha.

Khandhavagga/Pañcopādānaskandha-nipāta, whereas the parallels to the sutras 2–4 are included in this section in both the Pali and Chinese versions. Also, since this sūtra lacks a direct parallel, it is not helpful in determining whether the grouping found in the Gāndhārī manuscript is related to the arrangement in Pali and Chinese. Therefore, the following table gives the details of the parallels for Gāndhārī sutras 2, 3 and 4 only.

| Senior 5 | Pali | | Chinese (Taishō) | |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|------------------|-------|
| | Vagga | Sutta | Chapter | Sutra |
| 2 – Natuspahu | Natumhāka | 22.33 | 10 | 269 |
| 3 – Nivriḍabahulo | Kukkuḷa | 22.146 | 2 | 47 |
| 4 – *Vasijaḍa | Puppha | 22.101 | 10 | 263 |

At some point between the time of Guṇabhadra's translation (ca. 435–6 A.D.)¹⁰ and the Sung edition of the canon (ca. 971–83 A.D., Lancaster [1979: x]), the sequence of the sutras in the *Za ahan jing* (T 99) was corrupted (Yinshun [1983: 1]). Several modern scholars¹¹ have worked on the problem of the original sequence by examining references to the *Samyuktāgama* in other sources. The main works involved are: the commentary on the *Samyuktāgama* preserved in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (T 1579; Derge 4039), citations in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (T 1558/9; Derge 4090) and its commentary, the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā* (Derge 4094), and the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*. For the purposes of the present study, I follow the order proposed by Mukai [1985: 27–41]. Reordering the Chinese parallels to the Gāndhārī sutras according to this scheme gives a slightly improved association.

| Senior 5 | Chinese (Taishō) | | Mukai | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Chapter | Sutra | Chapter | Sutra |
| 2 – Natuspahu | 10 | 269 | 2 | 29 |
| 3 – Nivriḍabahulo | 2 | 47 | 4 | 64 |
| 4 – *Vasijaḍa | 10 | 263 | 2 | 23 |

¹⁰ This more exact dating is based on Enomoto's work [2001: 32]. Other works date the translation more broadly to 435–45 A.D. (Yinshun [1983: 1]).

¹¹ Among the most important contributions are: Lü [1924], Yinshun [1983], and Mukai [1985]. A more complete list of related studies can be found in Nagasaki [2004: 49–50].

In his commentary on the *Samyutta-nikāya*, the *Sārathapakāsinī*, Buddhaghosa does not comment on the Nibbidābahula-sutta. The reason for this seems to be that, except for the first sentence, the sutta is identical to another sutta treated earlier, the Anudhamma-sutta (SN III 40–1). Now if we consider the Anudhamma-sutta to be equivalent to the Gāndhārī Nivriḍābahula-sutra, the connection between the various parallel texts becomes even clearer.

| Senior 5 | Pali | Sutta | Mukai | |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|---------|-------|
| | | | Chapter | Sutra |
| 2 – Natuspahu | Natumhāka | 22.33 | 2 | 29 |
| 3 – Nivriḍābahulo | Natumhāka | 22.39 | 1 | 15 |
| 4 – *Vasijaḍa | Puppha | 22.101 | 2 | 23 |

This arrangement shows close connections between sutras 2 and 3 in the Pali *Samyutta-nikāya* and between sūtras 2 and 4 in the Chinese translation of the *Samyuktāgama*. In each case the sūtras occur in the same chapter. This situation seems to suggest an underlying corpus of sūtras which is somehow connected with the Pali and Chinese versions. Admittedly, this is a very small sample, but I suspect that extending this analysis to the other *Samyuktāgama*-type sutras in the Senior collection will corroborate rather than contradict this preliminary observation.

Another factor to consider is the role of the sūtra citations in what Salomon has termed the ‘index scrolls’ (Senior scrolls 7 and 8) which do not show the same ordering as the arrangement of the sutras in scroll 5 (see [2003: 80]). The fact that the citation of the *Vasijaḍa-sutra on scroll 8, is separated from the sutras 2 and 3 on scrolls 7, may or may not be significant. But if we are to understand anything by this arrangement, it might indicate a greater kinship in the arrangement of the Gāndhārī sūtras with the ordering seen in Pali, rather than Chinese where sutras 2 and 4 are in closer association.

| Senior 5 | Index Scrolls | Pali Vagga | Sutta | Mukai | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | | | Chapter | Sutra |
| 2 – Natuspahu | 7, line 16 | Natumhāka | 33 | 2 | 29 |
| 3 – Nivriḍābahulo | 7, line 15 | Natumhāka | 39 | 1 | 15 |
| 4 – *Vasijaḍa | 8, line 5 | Puppha | 101 | 2 | 23 |

CONCLUSIONS

The recent discoveries of several collections of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts provide a unique glimpse of the literary life of Gandhāran Buddhists in the early centuries of the common era. It will be many years before this material has been fully edited and studied, and new discoveries are likely to turn up from time to time, so the conclusions offered here are necessarily only preliminary.

One of the most important aspects of the new material is that it confirms the hypothesis that Buddhist literature was preserved in Gāndhārī, i.e., that the Khotan Dharmapada manuscript was not just an isolated example of a Buddhist text in this language. The scrolls and fragments that have come down to us must be just a fraction of a sizeable body of literature that once existed in Gāndhārī. While it may not be possible to speak of a Gāndhārī canon in sense of a defined corpus of sacred writings, the evidence from the Senior collection shows that organizing and anthologizing texts was taking place at this time, and thus that at least the preliminary processes of canonization were underway. Furthermore, the Senior collection seems to provide indirect evidence that some sort of *Samyuktāgama* collection existed at this time, and was at least known of in Gāndhārī. However, simply on the basis of this comparison of the arrangements, we cannot be sure that the *Samyuktāgama*-like corpus underlying our Gāndhārī manuscript was written in the Gāndhārī language. Therefore, it is too soon to conclude that there was a Gāndhārī *Samyuktāgama* (either written or oral), though this seems likely.

The discovery of collections of manuscripts representing the work of multiple scribes, such as the British Library and Bamiyan fragments, shows that monasteries kept 'libraries' of manuscripts. On the other hand, the discovery of individual texts as such as the Dharmapada and colophons mentioning the name of an owner suggest that manuscripts could also be the private property of individual monks.

The Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts seem to mark the very beginning of a Buddhist manuscript tradition. This is evidenced by the primitive style and techniques used in their production. Scribes were relatively unschooled in writing, with most of them having distinctive handwriting styles that make no attempt to conform to a particular ideal. This contrasts with the strict style and conventions seen in later

periods, for example in the Niya documents where it is much more difficult to identify individual scribes, or the Brāhmī manuscripts from Gilgit and Turfan where such identifications are practically impossible. Some of the errors in these texts suggest they were copied from earlier Gāndhārī texts, as occasionally mistakes appear which can be attributed to confusions dependent on the Kharoṣṭhī script.

Other kinds of orthographic peculiarities and spelling ‘errors’ in the manuscripts, such as confusions between aspirates and non-aspirates, may suggest that some of the scribes were not native speakers of an Indian language, i.e., that they were foreigners who had learned Gāndhārī as a second language. This is not surprising as we know from inscriptions and other records that Gandhāra was an ethnically, and presumably linguistically, diverse region, with Gāndhārī serving as a *lingua franca* across a large area. More evidence for the role of foreigners in Gandhāran Buddhism is found in some of the previous-birth stories. These stories typically accord high status to the foreigners, for example, an unnamed Saka teaches the Dharma to a monk (Lenz [2003: 182–92]). This seems to indicate an attempt on the part of the monasteries to appeal to a foreign ruling class for support and patronage.

The genres found in the Gāndhārī fragments include examples of most of the main classes of early Buddhist literature with the notable exception of Vinaya literature (with the exception of verse and sutra-type texts such as the Anavatapta-gāthā and the Śrāmaṇya-phala-sūtra that are incorporated into some Vinaya collections). The best represented genre is sūtra, including verse texts of the type which in Pali are preserved in the Khuddaka-nikāya. These are invariably written in a form of ‘translationese’ Gāndhārī which is heavily dependent on the source dialect, presumably some form of Middle Indo-Aryan from the Gangetic basin. However, the British Library collection also contains many avadāna or pūrvayoga texts, which are written in a more colloquial language that seems to be closer to spoken Gāndhārī. As such, they are thought to be local compositions. The Abhidharma and Commentarial texts may also represent local compositions, as they are written in a more natural form of Gāndhārī than the sutra texts, but draw heavily on the technical vocabulary associated with these genres in other Buddhist literatures.¹²

¹² On the classification of linguistic forms of Gāndhārī in the Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, see Salomon [2002: 122–8].

One of the traditional pursuits of manuscript studies is to reconstruct the original text from the available witnesses, by removing corruptions that have crept into the tradition. However, when these early Gāndhārī texts are compared with parallels in Pali, Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan, the picture that emerges tends to add to the complexities rather than simplifying them. This adds weight to view that a thorough analysis of all the available versions of a given text will not lead to the ‘original version’ and thus the truth and essence of Buddhism. On the contrary, it appears that from the very beginning, or at least as far back as we will ever be able to trace them, there always were multiple versions of the basic texts.

With the possible exception of the fragments of the *Bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra* from Bamiyan, we have no evidence among the Kharoṣṭhī materials to add to the debate on the emergence of the Mahāyāna. Given the limited size and extent of the corpus, an argument based on the absence of Mahāyāna works should be resisted. It is hoped that further study of the fragments from Bamiyan will give a better idea of the date of this material, and perhaps yield additional identifications of Mahāyāna texts.

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