

DEPARTMENT FÜR ASIENSTUDIEN
INSTITUT FÜR INDOLOGIE UND TIBETOLOGIE

Wir laden ein
zu einem Gastvortrag von

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über

Was the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*
Compiled in Gandhāra in Gāndhārī?

Dienstag, 16.04.13, 18 h c.t.

Raum D Z001 Hauptgebäude

(Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1)

Was the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* Compiled in Gandhāra in Gāndhārī?

Each Mahāyāna scripture must have its own complex background and history. Probably, many of the early ones were originally transmitted in Middle Indic or in a mixed language of Middle Indic with Sanskrit elements, and later „translated“ gradually into (Buddhist) Sanskrit. This long cherished hypothesis has been proven by newly-discovered fragments of a Gāndhārī version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Falk/Karashima 2012, 2013), dating back with an 81.1% probability, based on a C14 test, to between 47~147 C.E. Even the oldest Sanskrit Buddhist texts, representing the form in which we usually have access to them, are, in other words, the result of constant sanskritisation, wrong back-formations, reductions, additions and interpolations over the centuries. This means that when we attempt to understand early Mahāyāna scriptures properly so as to draw nearer to their original features or trace their transmission, if we restrict ourselves only to extant Sanskrit manuscripts, most of which date from the eleventh century onwards, the explanatory value of such studies is rather limited. In addition to Sanskrit texts, we should investigate all other available materials in order to flesh out this history. The Chinese translations, particularly those which were made between the second and the sixth century, which thus antedate most of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts, are indispensable sources as, in most cases, the exact periods of their translations are known. Apart from these Chinese translations, old Sanskrit and Gāndhārī fragments, discovered in Central Asia and „Greater Gandhāra“ (present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan), Khotanese texts, Tibetan translations and so on, may provide substantial clues to tracing the origination, development and alternation of Buddhist scriptures. Especially the Gāndhārī manuscripts of Mahāyāna scriptures, dating even back to the first century, which have been discovered in recent years, may change our understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism.