

Buddhist Sanskrit Texts from
Northern Turkestan
and their relation to the Chinese
Tripiṭaka*

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Exactly one hundred years ago, Augustus Frederic Rudolf Hoernle created a sensation in the scholarly world when he began the publication of the so-called Bower manuscript in Calcutta in 1893.¹ It was named after its discoverer, Lieutenant Hamilton Bower, who had been sent to Central Asia by the Government of India to hunt down a murderer. He happened to acquire the manuscript in the oasis of Kucha early in 1890, and from there it found its way to Hoernle, who received it in February 1891 and presented a first decipherment only two months later. In the introduction to his final edition, Hoernle himself proudly stated that "it was the discovery of the Bower manuscript and its publication in Calcutta which started the whole modern movement of the archaeological exploration of Eastern Turkestan."²

Whether it was exclusively the Bower manuscript which launched the manuscript race in Eastern Turkestan is difficult to ascertain; but it

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¹ Augustus Frederic Rudolf Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript. Facsimile Leaves, Nagari Transcript, Romanised Transliteration and English Translation with Notes* (Calcutta: Archaeological Survey of India, 1893-1912).

² Hoernle, p. ii.

greatly aroused the interest of scholars, and this interest was nourished by further manuscript findings from Central Asia which became known in Europe in the last years of the nineteenth century. Probably the most important of these was the fragmentary manuscript of the Kharoṣṭhī-script Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*, brought back from Khotan in two parts, one by the Russian Consul-General in Kashgar, N. F. Petrovskij, and the other by the French traveller Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins. Although purchased as early as 1892, both parts were first introduced to the scholarly world in 1897, when they were displayed at the Eleventh International Congress of Orientalists in Paris.³

As a result, expeditions with archaeological aims were sent from several countries to the then political no-man's-land of Eastern Turkestan, the first being a Russian expedition headed by D. Klementz in 1898. Immediately after the turn of the century, British, Chinese, German, Finnish, French and Japanese expeditions followed. When they returned, they brought with them an overwhelming wealth of materials from the ruined towns and deserted cave monasteries along the ancient Silk Road, and almost all collections of Central Asian art and manuscripts

³ Cf. John Brough, *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 2-3.

in the respective countries go back to these expeditions.

Immediately after the return of the expeditions, work on the manuscripts was started, and with astonishing speed publications began to appear: the first German expedition left Berlin on August 11, 1902, returned in spring 1903, and the first articles on Sanskrit manuscripts appeared as early as 1904.⁴ From an evaluation of the findings several facts very soon became clear: first, there was a striking difference between Buddhist manuscripts from the northern route of the Silk Road and those from the southern with regard to script as well as contents, the latter representing Mahāyāna texts, while the former, with a few exceptions, belonged to texts of the Śrāvakayāna. Second, whether from the southern or the northern route, fragments were the rule and not the exception among the Sanskrit texts.

This extremely fragmentary state of the

⁴ The first one was Richard Pischel, "Bruchstücke des Sanskritkanons der Buddhisten aus Idyikutšari, Chinesisch-Turkestan," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1904): 807-827. Cf. the useful list of publications arranged according to date in *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* 1, ed. Ernst Waldschmidt (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965), pp. xxvi-xxxii, and continued in the subsequent *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* volumes.

manuscripts probably helps to explain why work on the Sanskrit texts nearly came to a standstill after the first euphoria had died down. Initially, the expectation seems to have prevailed that the manuscripts would allow the reconstruction of, if not the whole, then at least major parts of the lost canonical scriptures in Sanskrit, as transmitted by the Buddhists of Eastern Turkestan. Very soon, however, it was recognized that the findings did not consist of more or less complete manuscripts, but rather of an endless number of fragments from single leaves. The main task, therefore, was to put the pieces together and, very much like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, to join single fragments, whenever possible, to one folio or to one text or even to one manuscript. Evidently, this state of affairs acted less as a challenge than as a deterrent, and the publication of the various collections was not continued everywhere with the energy and the effort due to materials of such importance for the history of Buddhist literature in general and that of Central Asia in particular.

The following remarks will be confined to the Buddhist texts from the northern route of the Silk Road, that is, to manuscripts found in Tumšūq, in the area of Kucha, in Šorčuq, and in the Turfan oasis, and an attempt will be made to

compare this literature with the corresponding parts of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. There is, of course, a fundamental problem connected with the Sanskrit manuscripts in question. The time framework originally considered to be within the scope of this volume is the formative period of Chinese Buddhism, i.e., the first to fifth centuries of our era, but only a few of the manuscripts I am treating can be dated before the fifth century, the various scripts or rather the development thereof providing the only criterion for establishing a tentative chronology. The bulk of the manuscripts are generally held to stem from the fifth to the tenth centuries, and therefore the form of Buddhism represented by these manuscripts cannot be dated before the fifth century. However, there are indications that the same or at least a very similar form of Buddhism using the same texts prevailed in the same area already prior to the fifth century. One of the problems still unsettled in this connection is the question of whether the canonical scriptures among these texts were, until the fifth century, still transmitted orally and only in the fifth century put into writing, or whether they had been written down earlier, but in a language largely dominated by Middle Indic forms, and were fully Sanskritized only in the fifth century, which rendered older manuscripts obsolete. In any case, it is rather likely that the Buddhism documented

by the manuscripts was established in Northern Turkestan well before the fifth century.

Along the northern route, manuscripts were collected by the Frenchman Paul Pelliot, by a total of four German expeditions, by the Russians, and finally by local agents of the British Consul-General in Kashgar, George Macartney, who passed them on to the already mentioned A. F. Rudolf Hoernle. The findings of Pelliot are now kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and those of the Germans in the State Library in Berlin; the Russian manuscripts are preserved in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, and those surveyed by Hoernle belong to the India Office Library in London. Of these four collections, the German one is by far the largest; altogether it consists of more than 4400 catalog numbers, some of which represent a hundred or more single fragments.⁵ Regrettably enough, none of the four collections is published in its entirety, and, as mentioned before, the publication of the British, French and Russian collections has barely begun. However, since the

⁵ One example would be *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* Cat.-No. 32, another one the Yoga manual, cf. *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* Cat.-No. 150 and Dieter Schlingloff, *Ein buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 10-11.

French and the British collections are now available on microfilm, it is possible to gain a fairly clear picture of their contents.

On examining them more closely, one soon realizes that the percentages of fragments from single texts or specific groups of texts are fairly equally distributed within the respective collections. This holds true for the British, the French, and the German collections, and most probably for the Russian one too, as far as can be gathered from the pertinent publications by Grigorij M. Bongard-Levin and Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya.⁶ Recently, a colleague and I have calculated the percentages for the Hoernle collection, after trying to identify as many fragments as possible⁷; these figures will

⁶ *Indian Texts from Central Asia (Leningrad Manuscript Collection)* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1986), also published without the tables, but with a short addition on p. 174, as "Indian Texts from Central Asia (Central Asian Collection of the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, USSR)," *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, ed. G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1985), 1: 159-174; cf. also *Pamjatniki indijskoj pis'mennosti iz central'noj azii. Izdanie tekstov, issledovanie, perevod i kommentarij*, Pt. 2 (Moskva: Akademija Nauk, 1990).

⁷ J.-U. Hartmann and Klaus Wille, "Die nordturkistanischen Sanskrit-Handschriften der Sammlung Hoernle (Funde buddhistischer Sanskrit-Handschriften, II)," *Sanskrit-Texte aus dem buddhistischen Kanon: Neuentdeckungen und Neueditionen*, Pt. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). A similar list for

serve for an overview of the collection which can, at least in terms of percentages, be transferred to the others as well.

The Hoernle collection contains Sanskrit manuscripts from the northern as well as from the southern route. As mentioned above, the fragments were not collected by Hoernle himself, but bought by Macartney in Kashgar from local agents. Understandably enough, the discovery sites are not really known. Therefore, the distinction between fragments from the northern and those from the southern route is based solely on the difference of the scripts. Altogether the Hoernle collection contains 594 Sanskrit fragments from Northern Turkestan including 45 Sanskrit-Tokharian bilinguals. Of these, 456 fragments or three quarters of the total number have so far been identified. The text represented by the largest number of fragments is the *Udānavarga*: 150 fragments or 25% of the whole collection could be attributed to this work alone. Another 27% of all the fragments belong to the *Sūtrapiṭaka*, but are by no means equally

the Pelliot collection is in preparation, because the catalog recently published by a Japanese team (Taijun Inokuchi et al., *A Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts Brought from Central Asia by Paul Pelliot Preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale* [Kyoto: Ryukoku University Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies, 1989]) does not present any new identifications and only reproduces what was already known to Bernard Pauly.

distributed among the various Āgamas; it is quite surprising that nearly half of this number (13%) belong to just one section of the *Dīrghāgama* consisting of merely six sūtras, to which I will return later. In other words, half of the Hoernle collection is made up of fragments from the *Udānavarga* and the *Sūtrapīṭaka*.

Among the rest, 9% could be attributed to Vinaya texts, the *Prātimokṣasūtra* (7%) being by far the best represented. A considerable number of fragments belongs to stotra texts, namely 13%, the overwhelming majority of which (11%) stem from the two famous Buddhastotras of Mātṛceṭa, the *Prasādapratibhodbhava* and the *Varṇārhavarna*. Finally, there are single fragments from Abhidharma texts, from Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita*, from a sūtra commentary, from so-called donation formulas, from the "Yoga Manual," and so on.

In all, more than 60% of the fragments can be attributed to exactly ten texts, viz. the *Prātimokṣasūtra*, the "Six Sūtras" section of the *Dīrghāgama*, the *Udānavarga* and the two Buddhastotras of Mātṛceṭa. I hasten to caution that these percentage figures do **not**, of course, reflect the absolute proportion of a work among the manuscripts, but only the proportion of its fragments; this, however, is directly connected with the length of a work. The *Prasāda-*

pratibhodbhava, for instance, contains only 153 verses, the *Udānavarga*, however, contains more than one thousand which is nearly seven times as many; therefore the twenty-two fragments of the *Prasādapratibhodbhava* against the 150 of the *Udānavarga* may very well indicate that originally there had been a rather similar number of manuscripts. Therefore, these figures should be taken with the necessary caution. They hint, however, at a quite interesting numerical predominance of certain texts reflecting in all probability a corresponding predilection of the people using these texts.

To which Buddhist school do these works belong? The only case that I know of in which the name of a school seems to be mentioned is a regrettably still unpublished birchbark manuscript in the Russian collection which is referred to by G. M. Bongard-Levin.⁸ It was found in the vicinity of Merv (Turkmenia) and is said to consist of about 300 leaves (in reality probably fragments). According to Bongard-Levin, its tentative date is the seventh century C.E.; it is

⁸ *Studies in Ancient India and Central Asia* (Calcutta: Indian Studies Past and Present, 1971), 223; cf. the review by J.W. de Jong in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 16 (1974): 232. Gregory Schopen kindly informs me that the manuscript is probably written on paper and not on birchbark as claimed in the description; his information is based on a recent oral communication from G. M. Bongard-Levin (letter dated Feb. 6, 1993).

said to contain several Buddhist works including the "Suttavibhaṅga," and to have been copied by a scribe belonging to the school of the Sarvāstivādins. From the short reference it is impossible to guess whether the word Sarvāstivāda really appears as an epithet in the colophon or whether it is simply supplied by Bongard-Levin because the Vinaya text - apparently contained in the manuscript can be identified as belonging to that school.

Apart from this still rather mysterious case, schools are never mentioned in the manuscripts. For an assessment of the school affiliation, scholars turned to the Vinaya fragments and compared them to the surviving versions, mainly to those in Chinese translations. As is well known, the Chinese canon contains translations of the Vinaya of several Buddhist schools, and the school affiliation of each of these Vinayas is beyond doubt. A closer examination based on a comparison with the Chinese version revealed long ago that the overwhelming majority of Vinaya manuscripts belongs to the school of the Sarvāstivādins. To express this ratio with a few figures: the six volumes of the catalog of the German collection of Sanskrit manuscripts from

Central Asia⁹ which have thus far appeared contain descriptions of altogether 112 manuscripts of the Sarvāstivāda *Prātimokṣasūtra* as against one of the Dharmaguptaka version and none of the version of the Mūlasarvāstivādins; there are, however, a number of fragments of the *Vinayavibhaṅga* and the *Vinayavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.

Based on this relationship among the Vinaya manuscripts, it was further concluded that most of the other canonical Nikāya Buddhist texts from the same finds should be ascribed to the same school, i.e., to the school of the Sarvāstivādins. In the case of sūtra texts the Chinese translations cannot be used directly as a basis for the school identification, even though all four Āgamas have been translated into Chinese, because unlike the Vinaya texts their school affiliation is never mentioned. Moreover, from internal evidence as well as from comparison with the Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts it becomes clear that the four Āgamas preserved in Chinese translation cannot go back to the Sūtrapīṭaka of one and the same school. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that only the *Madhyamāgama* and the *Samyuktāgama* of the Chinese

⁹ *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, pts. 1-6, ed. Ernst Waldschmidt, Lore Sander, and Klaus Wille (Wiesbaden, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965-1989).

canon belong to the Sarvāstivādins, while the *Dīrghāgama* is held to represent the version of the Dharmaguptakas; the problem of the school affiliation of the *Ekottarikāgama* is still unresolved.¹⁰ The ascription of the *Madhyamāgama* and *Samyuktāgama* to the Sarvāstivādins is corroborated by the fact that among the Sanskrit manuscripts closely corresponding fragments can only be found for texts contained in the Chinese *Madhyamāgama* and *Samyuktāgama*. Similar to the case of the vinaya texts, fragments from other Sūtrapīṭakas are rare: so far, in all the collections only one fragment could be identified as probably belonging to the Sūtrapīṭaka of the Dharmaguptakas.¹¹

It becomes evident, then, that the rather homogeneous Buddhist literature transmitted in

¹⁰ Ernst Waldschmidt, "Central Asian Sūtra Fragments and Their Relation to the Chinese Āgamas," *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, II)*, ed. Heinz Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 136-139; Egaku Mayeda, "Japanese Studies on the Schools of the Chinese Āgamas," *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur, (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, III, no. 1)*, ed. Heinz Bechert, Vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 94-103; Fumio Enomoto, "On the Formation of the Original Texts of the Chinese Āgamas," *Buddhist Studies Review* 3, no. 1 (1986): 19-30.

¹¹ This is a fragment of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* published by Ernst Waldschmidt in "Drei Fragmente buddhistischer Sūtras aus den Turfanhandschriften," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (1968): 3-16.

the monasteries of Northern Turkestan did not necessarily serve as a model for or as the sole source of the transmission of Nikāya Buddhist texts to China despite the rather short distance, compared to the distance from other centres of Nikāya Buddhism, and despite the surely excellent connections, at least in terms of trade, between China and the oasis towns of Turkestan. Quite the contrary impression suggests itself, if one searches in the Chinese Tripiṭaka for the texts most popular in Central Asia. I mentioned the *Udānavarga* as the text most often found among the Sanskrit fragments; of course this text has been translated several times into Chinese, but not exactly the version which must have been so extremely wide-spread in Central Asia.¹² Of Mātṛceṭa's two Buddhastotras, also remarkably popular in Central Asia as documented by the number of Sanskrit fragments and by translations into Tokharian and even one into Uigur,¹³ only the shorter *Prasādapratibhodbhava* found its way into the Chinese canon, and not from Central Asia, but in a translation made by the famous

¹² For the various recensions of this text cf. Hideaki Nakatani, "Remarques sur la transmission des *Dharmapada*," *Bulletin d'études indiennes* 2 (1984): 135-151.

¹³ Jens-Uwe Hartmann, ed., *Das Varnārhavarṇastotra des Mātṛceṭa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); J.-U. Hartmann and Dieter Maue, "Neue Spuren von Mātṛceṭas *Varnārhavarṇa*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 141 (1991): 69-82.

Yijing, who was much impressed by the popularity of the two hymns during his travels in India and who devoted a whole section of his travel account to their description.

Parts of the longer hymn, the *Varṇārhavarṇa*, reached China much earlier, although this was probably never recognized by the Chinese Buddhists because they came in the form of quotations without an indication of their source. The stotra is cited twice at length in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa* (i.e., the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論),¹⁴ which was translated by Kumārajīva, a native of Kucha who had been brought to China in 384 C.E. and finished his work on this text in 406 C.E. The *Da zhidu lun* reflects very well the high esteem in which certain poetic works were held at the time in the domain of Sanskrit Buddhism, since it also contains a long quotation from a work written by Aśvaghōṣa, another towering figure among the early Buddhist poets. This citation is from the *Saundarananda*, but is introduced by the author of the *Da zhidu lun* with the rather misleading title *Chan jing* 禪經 (“Dhyāna-sūtra”), and consequently it went unnoticed until recently.¹⁵ Although both

¹⁴ T 1509.222c22ff. (= *Varṇārhavarṇa* V.3, 5-22 and VI.1-4, 6-7) and T 1509.66b10ff. (= VII.17-22); for this identification see Hartmann, *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, 31-32.

¹⁵ T 1509.185c (= *Saundarananda* XVII.42-50, 52-54); cf. Jens-Uwe Hartmann, “Neue Aśvaghōṣa- und Mātṛceta-Fragmente aus Ostturkistan,” *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in*

of the famous epics of Aśvaghōṣa, the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundarananda*, are represented by several manuscripts in Central Asia, only the *Buddhacarita* has been rendered into Chinese.¹⁶ I do not know of any convincing attempt at explaining the absence of some of the most famous poetic works in the Chinese Tripiṭaka; differences of language and differences of poetic sentiment might help to explain their absence, but surely they do not account sufficiently for it.

Whatever the reasons may be, poetic texts were apparently of lesser interest to the Chinese Buddhists, and this applies not only to the works of Aśvaghōṣa and Mātṛceta, but to the other poems current in Central Asia as well. To give just one example: when Dieter Schlingloff published his book on Buddhist stotras in Sanskrit texts from Eastern Turkestan, he could not point to a Chinese translation of any of the hymns.¹⁷ Apparently, there were certain boundaries which really did resist crossing.

When turning to the Sūtrapitaka, the relation between the texts found in Central Asia and those preserved in Chinese translation is *Göttingen* (1988): 72-73.

¹⁶ At the beginning of the fifth century by Dharmakṣema, an Indian monk who came to China via Kashmir and Kucha.

¹⁷ *Buddhistische Stotras aus ostturkistanischen Sanskrittexten* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 14.

more difficult to establish. As mentioned before, the Chinese *Madhyamāgama* and *Samyuktāgama* represent the version of the Sarvāstivādins, and whenever Sanskrit fragments belonging to one of these collections could be successfully identified, it was with the help of the Chinese translations. Perhaps the first to notice the close relation was Sylvain Lévi. When in 1904 Richard Pischel edited some fragments of a xylograph and tried in vain to find a corresponding section in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, Lévi published a short article in the same year (!), in which he identified the corresponding texts of the Chinese *Samyuktāgama* and demonstrated the verbal congruences.¹⁸

In the meantime, however, it has been noted that the Central Asian Sanskrit versions cannot be identical with the copy from which the Chinese translations were made. Oskar von Hinüber was able to show in a study of the Upāligāthās in the *Madhyamāgama* that the Chinese translation of this work presupposes a Middle Indic, most probably Gāndhārī, original, while the same text, as preserved in fragments from Central Asia, is fully Sanskritized.¹⁹ Ernst Waldschmidt found in

¹⁸ "Le *Samyuktāgama* sanscrit et les Feuilles Grünwedel," *T'oung Pao* 5 (1904): 297-309.

¹⁹ "Sanskrit und Gāndhārī in Zentralasien," *Sprachen des Buddhismus in Zentralasien*, ed. Klaus Röhrborn, Wolfgang Veenker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), 27-34.

his study of a Sanskrit manuscript most probably belonging to the *Mahāvarga* section of the *Madhyamāgama* that there was a very close relationship in the wording between the Sanskrit and the Chinese text, but he also observed certain differences in the sequence of the individual sūtras.²⁰

Surprisingly, the *Dīrghāgama* of the Sarvāstivādins was never translated into Chinese. In the case of the Vinaya, versions of several Buddhist schools were translated and included in the canon. Although the Sūtrapiṭaka versions vary no less in contents, structure and wording than do the Vinayapiṭakas, these differences seem to have been of minor importance to Chinese eyes. It appears that with regard to sūtra texts questions of school affiliation played a less predominant role than they do nowadays in the eyes of scholars; this is also indicated by the fact that no school ascription for any of the sūtra translations is preserved in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. Possibly it was felt to be sufficient to have each of the four Āgamas translated, simply because the complete Sūtrapiṭaka was known to contain all four, without giving further thought to their respective origins and school affiliations.

The "Long Collection" presents a very good

²⁰ "Remarks on the *Madhyamāgama* Ms. Cat.-No. 412," *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* 4: 2-4.

example of how much the various versions of one Āgama can differ.²¹ It is the only collection for which three different versions can be compared, namely the *Dīrghāgama* of the Central Asian Sarvāstivādins written in Sanskrit, the complete *Dīghanikāya* of the South Asian Theravādins written in Pāli, and the complete Chinese translation of a *Dirghāgama* of unknown origin which is generally held to belong to the school of the Dharmaguptakas and to derive from an original written in Gāndhārī.²² Of these three, the *Dīghanikāya* and the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* are rather closely related: the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* contains altogether 30 sūtras, and for 28 of them a corresponding text can be found within the 34 suttas of the *Dīghanikāya*. The grouping of texts, however, is different in most cases, although some of the texts correspond even with regard to their sequence.

²¹ The following is based on J.-U. Hartmann, *Untersuchungen zum Dīrghāgama der Sarvāstivādins* (Göttingen, 1992) (unpublished Habilitationsschrift).

²² André Bareau, "L'origine du *Dīrgha-āgama* traduit en Chinois par Buddhayaśas," *Essays Offered to G. H. Luce*, Vol. 1 (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1966), 49ff.; E. Waldschmidt, "Central Asian Sūtra Fragments and Their Relation to the Chinese Āgamas," 136; E. Mayeda, "Japanese Studies on the Schools of the Chinese Āgamas," 97; F. Enomoto, "On the Formation of the Original Texts of the Chinese Āgamas," 25; for further literature cf. Hisashi Matsumura, *The Mahāsudarsānāvādāna and the Mahāsudarsānasūtra* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1988), p. L n. 64.

If the two complete versions are compared with the Central Asian *Dirghāgama* as far as it can be reconstructed from the manuscript fragments, considerable differences of structure can be observed. This holds true for its size as well, because the Central Asian *Dīrghāgama* contains works which are completely unknown to the Pāli tradition, e.g. the *Māyājālasūtra*, which is also absent from the Chinese canon, or the *Arthavistarasūtra*, missing in the Pāli canon but twice translated separately into Chinese. Further differences can be observed in the classification of certain sūtras which are common to both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda tradition. This is because the Central Asian *Dīrghāgama* contains several works the corresponding Pāli versions of which are found in the *Majjhimanikāya*, e.g. the *Caṅkīsutta*, the *Pañcattayasutta* and the *Bodhirājakumārasutta*. Moreover, differences can be seen with regard to the sequence of those texts which are common to all three versions and, finally, with regard to the sections into which all the versions are divided. The Sarvāstivāda *Dīrghāgama* contains at least one part, namely the *Ṣaṭsūtrakaniṣāṭṭha* or "Six Sūtras Section," which as a section is missing in both of the other versions, though some of its contents are also found in the Pāli and the Chinese.

As mentioned above, this section was very

popular in Central Asia, as the large number of fragments indicates. It contains the following six sūtras: *Daśottarasūtra*, *Arthavistarāsūtra*, *Saṅgītisūtra*, *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*, *Mahāvādānasūtra* and *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. The section is clearly divided into two parts, since the first three texts are not taught by the Buddha himself but by Śāriputra, and each is referred to as a *dharmaparyāya*. With one exception (in the introduction to the *Saṅgītisūtra*), narrative passages are totally absent in the first three texts, which consist almost exclusively of groups of Buddhist technical terms, e.g. the three kinds of suffering, the four truths, the five powers, the eightfold path, etc. In the *Daśottara* and the *Saṅgīti* sūtras these groups of terms are basically arranged according to numerical criteria. The formalization is carried to the extreme in the *Daśottarasūtra*: this work consists of ten times ten groups of terms, the first decade containing ten single terms, the second decade containing ten groups of two terms, and so on up to the last decade containing ten groups of ten terms each. Moreover, this numerical scheme is connected with one of content, because the groups are arranged in such a manner that the first group in every decade is one which effects much, the second group in every decade one which has to be practised, the third is one which has to be known, the fourth one which has to be abandoned, and so forth up to the tenth which has to be realised.

Compared to this elaborate scheme, the structure of the second text, the *Saṅgītisūtra*, is much looser. The only element for organizing the groups is the number of terms in each group. As in the *Daśottarasūtra*, the text starts with single terms and ends with groups of ten. The number of groups within one numerical section is not fixed; it varies between two within the section of groups of nine and ten terms and fifty within the section of groups of three and four terms. There are several overlappings of *Daśottara* and *Saṅgīti* sūtras, which are usually abbreviated in the manuscripts with a reference *yathā daśottare* or the like.

Quite different from the scheme of *Daśottara* and *Saṅgīti* sūtras is that of the *Arthavistarāsūtra*, in which the groups of terms are not arranged according to numerical criteria but according to their content. It begins with a group of twelve favourable circumstances which are a prerequisite for an encounter with the Buddhist teaching, namely a human rebirth, the possession of a complete set of sense organs, the appearance of a Buddha, the continuation of his teaching, etc., and it ends with the ten factors of an Arhat (*aśaikṣadharmā*, i.e., the eightfold path and *samyagvimukti* and *samyagjñāna*) and the ten conditions of an Ārya (*āryāvāsa*).

Apparently a version of the way to liberation is described which begins with the preconditions and ends with the attributes of the person who has reached the goal. In between, groups of terms are arranged which describe obstacles or helping factors on the way. Some of these groups are, at least to my knowledge, unknown from any other work. The logical connection between the single groups is partly very clear, but partly difficult to reconstruct. The first group of twelve favorable prerequisites is followed by another one consisting of twenty factors which should characterize a teaching of the dharma, then a group of sixteen attributes which should be present in the listener. Next follow groups of ten and of five factors in which the consequences and results of right listening are described. Rather abruptly there follows another group of ten factors which aid the noble disciple (*āryaśrāvaka*) in ripening his wisdom. A comparatively large portion of the work is devoted to a group of ten concepts (*saṃjñā*) which should be developed by the *āryaśrāvaka*, namely the notion of impurity, of impermanence, etc. up to the notion of death. For each of these notions obstacles and results are extensively listed.

The remaining three sūtras of the *Ṣaṣṭhārikā-nipāta* are completely different in content. The fourth one, the *Catuspariṣatsūtra*, begins with the description of the Buddha's enlightenment—

surprisingly not with *evaṃ mayā śrutam* etc., the usual opening formula of Buddhist sūtras, but simply with the statement *bodhisatvo bhagavān urubilvāyāṃ viharan*, "the bodhisattva, the illustrious one, staying in Urubilvā." It continues with a biographical record of the events following upon the enlightenment, i.e., Brahma's exhortation to teach the doctrine, the journey to Benares and the first sermon to the five disciples, further conversions in Benares, return to Gayā, the conversion of Urubilvākāśyapa and of other ascetics, the meeting with and conversion of King Bimbisāra and the conversion of the two foremost disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. The text ends rather abruptly with a mocking of the begging monks by the inhabitants of Rājagṛha and the fitting response of the Buddha. The usual formula concluding a sūtra is as absent as the introductory sentence.

Next follows the *Mahāvadānasūtra*: the monks are surprised that the Buddha knows about the attributes of Buddhas of the past. Their astonishment induces the Buddha to tell them details from the lives of his six predecessors, e.g. their respective castes, parents, bodhi trees, two main disciples, etc. Then, taking Vipasyin, the first of his six predecessors, as an example, he describes the typical career of a Buddha. From the time of his conception up to his first teaching

a Buddha's life follows a recurring pattern, and therefore the career of Vipāśyin, which is told in detail, serves *mutatis mutandis* as a model for all the following Buddhas including the present Buddha Śākyamuni himself. Thus, the sūtra contains the beginning of the biography of the Buddha, although it is preceded by the *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra* which comprises the second part; evidently the arrangement follows the logic of the frame story, and not the chronology of the biography as such. The sūtra contains the usual introductory formula, but not the usual ending.

The final *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* begins with the strife between King Ajātaśatru of Magadha and the Vṛjji confederation and the mission of Ajātaśatru's minister to the Buddha in order to inquire about the probable result of a military campaign against the Vṛjis. The text continues with a description of the last journeys of the Buddha, the events surrounding the foundation of Pāṭaliputra, the last rainy season, Māra's urging the Buddha to enter parinirvāṇa, the meal in the house of Cunda, etc. On the occasion of his arrival in Kuśinagara, the Buddha relates the episode of King Mahāsudarśana, which is included in the *Dīghanikāya* as an independent text. Then follows the description of the parinirvāṇa and of the events connected with the funeral and the impending war over the relics. The text ends

with the distribution of the relics.

Thus, the *Ṣaṣṭūtrakanipāta* is clearly divided into two parts, both consisting of three formally related works. The first part is characterized by lists of terms, while the second—the *Mahāvadāna*, *Catuṣpariṣat* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa* sūtras—is exclusively narrative, combining the three sūtras most essential for the biography—and also hagiography—of the Buddha.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the *Ṣaṣṭūtrakanipāta*, with its balanced combination of doctrinal and edifying elements, enjoyed a special popularity in Central Asia, which is documented by the comparatively large number of manuscripts and fragments in which the six sūtras are preserved.²³ This can only be explained by assuming a far larger number of manuscripts containing only the *Ṣaṣṭūtrakanipāta* than those comprising the whole *Dīrghāgama*. Since regrettably few colophons are preserved, nothing is generally known about the contents and origin of a manuscript, but there is one case where we can be fairly sure that a colophon refers to a separate copy of the *Ṣaṣṭūtrakanipāta*: at the beginning of a

²³ Cf. the "General Index of Contents for the Manuscripts dealt with in Part 1-4," Sūtra section, in *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden* 4: 355-359, with its significantly high percentage of catalog numbers containing texts of the *Ṣaṣṭūtrakanipāta*.

Tokharian fragment containing a dedication of merit it is said that "together with the son Läläkkompe we have written the book *Ṣaṣṣūtra*," and very likely this Tokharian text served as a colophon concluding a Sanskrit copy of the *Ṣaṣṣūtrakanipāta*.²⁴

Despite its great popularity in Northern Turkestan, the *Ṣaṣṣūtraka* section was never translated into Chinese. One of its texts, the *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*, is completely unknown as a separate sūtra in the Chinese canon; since, however, large parts of the same text are also transmitted in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, they are known in China through Yijing's translation of this Vinaya. Four others, the *Daśottara*, *Sanḡīti*, *Mahāvādāna* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa* sūtras, are included in the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* and are therefore known in the Dharmaguptaka version which is quite different from that of the Sarvāstivādins. One text, the *Arthavistarasūtra*, has been translated twice into Chinese, once by Paramārtha in 563 C.E. (T 97) and once by An Shigao in the second century (T 98). Both represent the same recension as the one included

²⁴ Cf. *Tocharische Sprachreste. Bd. I: Die Texte*, ed. E. Sieg and W. Siegling (Berlin/Leipzig: Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger Walter de Gruyter, 1921), no. 311a2. A Sanskrit text ending with a Tokharian colophon is not at all unusual in manuscripts from the Northern Silk Road, since it was, among others, the Tokharians who followed and transmitted Buddhism there.

in the Central Asian *Dīrghāgama*, although the translation of An Shigao is at times difficult to comprehend, to say the least. One of its main problems lies in the fact that, time and again, different Chinese translations appear for what must have been the same term in the underlying original, whether it had already been written in Sanskrit or still in a Middle Indian dialect. An Shigao also translated the *Daśottarasūtra*, again the same recension as the Central Asian one,²⁵ and it is interesting to note that these two texts were considered important enough to be rendered into Chinese as early as in the second century, but that this did not initiate any systematic translation work on Sarvāstivāda sūtra scriptures.

To sum up once again: of the ten texts especially widespread in Northern Turkestan, namely the Sarvāstivāda *Prātimokṣasūtra*, the Six Sūtras Section of the *Dīrghāgama*, the *Udānavarga*, and the two hymns by Mātṛceṭa, only five are available in the Chinese canon in the same or at least a closely related recension. Of these five, only three could possibly be derived from originals stemming from Central Asia, but this connection cannot be proven for any of them. In

²⁵ Cf. J.W. de Jong, "The *Daśottarasūtra*," *Kanakura Hakushi Koki Kinen: Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Ronshū* (Kyōto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1966), 3-25 (= J.W. de Jong, *Buddhist Studies*, ed. Gregory Schopen [Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979], 251-273).

other words, the texts held in highest esteem by the Buddhists of Northern Turkestan played an amazingly small role in the transmission of Buddhist literature into China, at least as far as can be judged from the surviving Sanskrit fragments.

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BUDDHISM ACROSS BOUNDARIES—
CHINESE BUDDHISM AND
THE WESTERN REGIONS

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*Buddhism Across Boundaries—
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by Erik Zürcher, Lore Sander, and others

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