



BOOK OF ZAMBASTA

BOOK OF ZAMBASTA, a Khotanese poem on Buddhism. It is the longest indigenous literary composition in the Khotanese language and played a crucial role in the decipherment of the Khotanese language. Since the original name of the work is not attested, Harold W. Bailey proposed calling it the *Book of Zambasta*, because it was written at the request of an official called Ysaṃbasta (pronounced Zambasta). In earlier literature it was referred to simply as “manuscript E” because the first two folios of the principal ms. that had come to light were assigned the letter E as reference in a list made by E. Leumann of all the material in Khotanese known to him at that time (*ZDMG* 62, 1908, pp. 103-06). In some recent literature it is referred to as Z after Zambasta.

The complete text of Z is not extant, and it is not certain what the full extent of the work originally was. It is possible to identify isolated folios as belonging to the main ms. of Z because of the distinctive appearance and arrangement of the ms. Particularly unusual is the division of each ms. line into four equal sections corresponding approximately to metrical *pādas*. The folio with the largest number is folio 440, whose verso is blank, which makes it probable that folio 440 was the last of the work, but we cannot be sure whether the folios preceding folio 143 (not extant) also belonged to the same text because manuscripts often contained more than one text. However, even if the ms. extended only from folio 143 to folio 440 and thus consisted of 298 folios, it was a sizeable poem. Of the 298 folios 207 have so far been identified. In addition, a considerable number of fragments—in one case a complete folio-



—have been identified as belonging to other ms. copies of the same text. The main ms. had six lines on each side of the folio, but fragments have been found of ms. copies having three, four, five, and even eight lines on each side. The work evidently enjoyed great popularity and was often copied.

Of the 207 folios identified as belonging to the main ms. of Z, 192 are now in Leningrad, six in London, and one each in the USA, West Germany, and Japan. Folio 270, for many years feared lost, is now in the Museum für Indische Kunst in West Berlin. The first six folios that were discovered (269, 271, 334, 335, 385, and 389) became the possession of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. It is fortunate that they were all published in good facsimiles by S. Konow (1914), as they appear to be no longer in existence.

The first major publication of folios belonging to Z was the publication of eighteen of the Leningrad folios together with two of the Calcutta folios by E. Leumann (1919). Leumann continued to work on the text until his death in 1931, but his major work treating 173 folios of Z was published posthumously by his son Manu Leumann (1933-36). Leumann's edition was a remarkable achievement. He succeeded in deciphering the difficult script with an accuracy that remains unrivaled, and his edition reflects a profound knowledge of Old Khotanese grammar. It was the subject of extensive reviews by S. Konow (*NTS* 7, 1934, pp. 5-55, 11, 1939, pp. 5-89) and H. W. Bailey (*BSO(A)S* 9/1, 1937, pp. 69--78).

After the publication of Leumann's edition of Z a further nineteen folios of Z were discovered in Leningrad and one in London. The Leningrad material was published with a translation of the ten complete folios only, facsimiles, and a glossary by Vorob'eva-Desyatovskaya and Vorob'ev-Desyatovskii (1965). A substantially improved edition and translation of all nineteen Leningrad folios was published with glossaries by Emmerick (1966, 1967). All this new material was incorporated in the complete edition and translation published by Emmerick (1968). Since then the number of known fragments from other copies of the text has more than doubled, but no new folios of the main ms. have been found. Only one of the variant fragments contains lines from parts missing in the main ms. (variant 15, Emmerick, 1968, p. 434). There is no up-to-date, complete glossary of Z. Students of the text must consult both the glossary in Leumann's edition and the glossaries in Emmerick's editions of the Leningrad material. Bailey's *Prolexis* is a dictionary of select words.

Internal evidence enables us to divide the extant folios of the poem into



twenty-four chapters devoted to different aspects of Buddhism. The chapters are as follows: 1. Little survives of this chapter, which appears to be a *sūtra* spoken by Samantabhadra. 2. The well-known tale of the Buddha's conversion of *Bhadra* the magician. 3. On *maitrā* "love." 4. The whole world is merely *parikalpa* "false assumption." 5. Śākyamuni's return to and three months' sojourn in Kapilavastu, the city of his birth. 6. This chapter claims to contain one verse from each *sūtra*, but only three have been identified. 7-9. The doctrine of *sūnyatā* "emptiness." 10. The *bodhisambhāra* "equipment for enlightenment," namely the six *pāramitās* "perfections" and compassion. 11. On compassion, the perfections, love, the resolution to attain enlightenment, and the *upāyas* "expedients." 12. The *saṃvara* "moral restraint" necessary for Bodhisattvas (q.v.) and the ceremony for formal undertaking of the vow to observe restraint. 13. A comparison of the three Vehicles of Buddhism, the Mahāyāna, the Pratyekabuddhayāna, and the Śrāvakāyana. 14. The traditional life of the Buddha is rejected in favor of the Mahayanist transcendental account. 15. Only the first folio extolling the importance of faith is complete. 16-18. Only every second line is preserved; chapter 16 appears to supplement chapter 10; chapter 17 contains a description of the mountains in the various seasons, but concludes that there is no pleasure here in the cycle of existence; chapter 18 contains a description of old age and cites examples of evildoers. 19. Most lines of this chapter are incomplete; its colophon refers to it as the *straiya-parivāra* "chapter concerning women"; it contains a warning against the wiles of women and cites instances of female evildoers. 20. This chapter is introduced in *sūtra* style ("Thus I have heard . . ."); it begins with a splendid and often quoted description of spring and its effects upon the young monks; they are taken by the Buddha to a cemetery, which is described in detail, and there the Buddha preaches to them concerning the impermanence of pleasures in this life. 21. Only two folios containing a description of a cemetery (cf. chap. 20) are extant. 22. This is the best known chapter of Z; about to leave this world Śākyamuni gives an account of what it will be like under his successor Maitreya; he concludes with a description of the coming decay of the Order (*Śāsana*). 23. King Udayana ordered an image of the Buddha to be made and the Buddha descended to the land of Saṃkāśa. 24. The final and longest chapter contains an account of the Buddha's life and a prophetic description of the future decline of the Order.

The author of the *Book of Zambasta* alludes several times to his translation activity. In one passage he asks for forgiveness for any inaccuracy in his work (2.189) and in another he complains that although the Chinese and others all



have their translations of Buddhist literature the Khotanese prefer the Indian originals (23.4-6). However, except in the case of chapter 6, Z itself does not appear to be simply a translation from another language although the author has made extensive use of Indian sources. A number of passages of Z were translated into Late Khotanese by the compiler of the *Mañjuśrīnairātmyāvatārasūtra*. They were printed facing each other in Emmerick, 1968, pp. 440-53.

Z clearly represents the culmination of a long period of literary activity. Noteworthy is the use of three different verse meters. One of these, type C requiring a light penult, is found only in Old Khotanese and clearly presented the author with a challenge. This meter is used for songs (Khotanese *ggāha*-, *nvāga*-). (For an analysis of the meters see Emmerick, 1968, pp. xxi, 437-40.) The *Book of Zambasta* is the chief source of our knowledge of Khotanese metrics, whose precise nature has been a matter of dispute. E. Leumann and his son believed that the Khotanese metrical system was related to the Greek hexameter and was therefore of great importance for the understanding of Indo-European metrics. They were undoubtedly justified in insisting on taking into account syllabic quantity in their analysis. However, by the time of the composition of the *Book of Zambasta* the original nature of the metrical system appears already to be obscured on account of its development towards an accentual system such as is found in Late Khotanese. It may well have been based originally on an Indian model.

The date of composition of the *Book of Zambasta* remains unknown. However, there is reason to believe that it should not be dated earlier than the seventh century a.d. (cf. Konow, 1939, esp. pp. 35ff.). The extant ms. copies are of later date, but they too cannot be dated precisely. The language of Z is Old Khotanese, but the manuscripts were copied by scribes who spoke Late Khotanese (cf. Emmerick, 1987).

As the longest extant poem in Old Khotanese the *Book of Zambasta* is one of the main sources of our information concerning the Old Khotanese language, although it does not represent such an early stage of the language as is attested by, e.g., the Khotanese *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* (cf. Emmerick, 1970, pp. xix-xxi).

As the earliest substantial work concerning Buddhism written in Khotanese the *Book of Zambasta* is of importance for the history of Buddhism. Although it does not appear to contain much that is original as far as doctrine is



concerned, since the author appears to have confined himself largely to paraphrasing Indian sources, it does shed light on the current state of Buddhism in Khotan.

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