



SOGDIAN LITERATURE I. BUDDHIST

SOGDIAN LITERATURE

i. Buddhist

A considerable number of Buddhist Sogdian texts dating from around the 8th century CE were unearthed from “Caves of the Thousand Buddhas” at Dunhuang in western China and from Turfan in Chinese Turkestan. The bulk of Buddhist Sogdian texts were discovered by expeditions from Europe and are currently preserved in the libraries and museums in France (Pelliot collection, Bibliothèque Nationale), England (Stein collection, British Library), Germany (the so-called German Turfan Collection), and Russia (Oldenburg and Krotokov collections). The study of Buddhist texts was initiated with the publications of two studies by Robert Gauthiot (1911-12 and 1912), a scholarly attempt that was continued by Frederic Rosenberg, Hans Reichelt, and others. Fundamental editions are by Émile Benveniste (1940 and 1945), D. N. MacKenzie (1970 and 1976), F. W. K. Müller and Wolfgang Lentz (1934 = ST ii), and A. N. Ragoza (1980). A series of articles involving the editing of individual texts were published by Kogi Kudara and Werner Sundermann, and by Sundermann, and Yutaka Yoshida. Buddhist Sogdian literature has been surveyed by Olaf Hansen (1968), David Utz, (1978) and Yoshida (2009a and 2015). Virtually all the texts discovered in Dunhuang have been already published, but a considerable number of manuscripts from the German



collection remains to be edited, the catalogue of which is in preparation (Reck forthcoming b).

As the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (602-64 CE) witnessed around 630 CE in Samarqand, Sogdians were Zoroastrians and did not believe in Buddhism (Watters, p. 94). This observation combined with the fact that very few Buddhist remains have been excavated from former Sogdiana leads one to assume that Buddhism did not spread to Sogdiana (Compareti, pp. 18-20). Thus, the discovery of many Buddhist Sogdian texts from Dunhuang and Turfan indicates that the Sogdians adopted the religion only after they immigrated to the area where Buddhism was flourishing. This situation, described by Tremblay (pp. 95-97) as “a colonial phenomenon,” clearly manifests itself in the fact that the bulk of the Sogdian texts are based on the Chinese prototypes, including some apocryphal texts. Their dependence on the contemporary Chinese Buddhism may also be reflected by a few Chinese texts phonetically transcribed in Sogdian script (see below).

The texts are written on paper and the manuscripts are either books of the *poṭhī* type imitating Indian palm leaf manuscripts or scrolls consisting of folios of Chinese paper joined together. Almost all the Buddhist texts are written in the Sogdian formal script, which is often referred to as Sūtra script. Buddhist Sogdian texts were copied on brand-new sheets of paper and are in stark contrast with Manichean Sogdian texts, many of which are written on the back of Buddhist Chinese texts. Only one text, the so-called “The Sūtra of the condemnation of intoxicating drink,” discovered in Dunhuang, bears the date (i.e., 728 CE) when it was translated in Luoyang (MacKenzie, 1976, p. 8). There is no linguistic or paleographic indication that the others are significantly younger or older than this one. Some of the Chinese originals were produced by monks, such as Xuanzang (645-64), Śikṣānanda (695-704), Yijing (700-13), and Amoghavajra (746-74), who were translating during the 7th to 8th centuries (Demiéville et. al, pp. 235-87). The places of translation noted in the colophons are Luoyang (MacKenzie, 1976, p. 8), Changan (P[elliot sogdien] 2), and Dunhuang (P8). Most of the Buddhist Sogdian texts are more or less correct translations based on Chinese originals; only a few seem to have been based on prototypes in either Sanskrit or Tocharian, although it has not been possible to trace their originals. A colophon found in one Turfan text states that it had been translated from the Kucmean language or Tocharian B, (Henning, pp. 59-62; Kudara and Sundermann, 1987, pp. 347-48). On the occasionally inaccurate translations from the Chinese originals, see Yoshida



(2009a, pp. 320-23) and Meisterernst and Durkin-Meisterernst (2005, 2009, and 2012).

The Buddhist Sogdian texts are unique among those in other Central Asian languages such as Tocharian, Khotanese, and Uighur, not to mention Tibetan, Tangut and Mongolian, in the fact that Buddhism never attained the status of a state religion among the Sogdians. This means that there were no state organized *saṃghas* or communities among Sogdian monks, and that Sogdian Buddhists were not able to enjoy support from the state for translating and copying texts. Lack of organized community may have prevented the establishment of standard Buddhist terminology in Sogdian. Recently some *vinaya* texts have been discovered where *poyiti* □□□ ~ Skt. *prāyaścitta*, *pāyattika* (atonement), etc., is rendered with *p'ytyk*, *p'yt*, and *p'yty* (Yoshida, 2010, p. 92, n. 13; on the background of the various Indian forms of this term, see von Hinüber). This situation is only understandable when one considers the fact that the Sogdians did not belong to a particular school, nor did they have their own tradition of ordination, but they just adopted forms found in the originals they were translating. Nevertheless, the texts that have come down to us share a considerable number of Buddhist terms. For example, *wytxwy* ('t) *sryβt'm*, translating Chinese *fannaο* □□ ~ Skt. *kleśa* (affliction, distress) is most conspicuous in that the combination is quite common among Buddhist texts but unknown in other texts. *Pk'β'm* ~ Skt. *bhagavān* (the holy one) is another term encountered in various texts both from Dunhuang and Turfan; it is based on Chinese *baοqiefan* □□□, which in turn is the transposition of the Sanskrit word (Sims-Williams, 1983, p. 138; on the problems of Indian proper names in Sogdian texts, see also Provasi).

It is almost always the case that we have only small fragments of Sogdian texts, of which the originals are often large *sūtras*. In such cases one cannot be certain whether the Sogdian versions were entire translations of the originals or only excerpts of interesting parts. One informative case is some eighty fragments of a *poṭhī* book of the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* from the German Turfan collection (see below). Since the identified fragments correspond to various places among the 40 volumes of the Chinese original, it seems reasonable to assume that there once existed an entire translation of the *sūtra* and to presume that the same applies to the fragments of the other large *sūtras* such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprañāpāramitā-sūtra*, and *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*.

In what follows the Buddhist Sogdian texts are surveyed in accordance with



their contents. Those texts that were discovered by Paul Pelliot and published by Émile Benveniste (1940) are referred to as P[elliot sogdien] 2, etc., while the Chinese originals are quoted by text numbers in the T[aishō shinshū daizōkyō] (ed. Junjiro Takakusu et al., Tokyo, 1924-35).

Narratives. The best-known Buddhist Sogdian text is the *Vessantara Jātaka*, which is perhaps a native Sogdian composition, a retelling rather than a translation (Sims-Williams, 1989, p. 175). Durkin-Meisterernst (2009) claims a non-Chinese text as its original, while Yutaka Yoshida (2013a) argues that the Sogdian text was adapted from the most popular Chinese version *Taizixudanjing* (T 171), “The *Sūtra* about Prince Xiudana.” The *Araṇemi-jātaka* was very popular in the Northern Tarim Basin, of which Tocharian A and B, Tumshuqese, and Uighur versions are known. The Sogdian text is unique in that every *poṭhī* folio is illustrated on one side (Sundermann, 2001; Ebert). A story about king Kāñcanasāra from the fifth chapter of the *Daśakaramapathāvadānamāla*, a cycle of legends that were collected to expound ten kinds of acts, is found in one *poṭhī* folio. Compared with the corresponding Uighur version, the Sogdian seems to represent an independent recension based on a lost Tocharian prototype (Sundermann, 2006).

So far six manuscripts of the *Sanḅhāṭa-sūtra* have been identified and the text seems to have been especially liked by Buddhist Sogdians (Sims-Williams, 1981; Yakubovitch and Yoshida). The *sūtra* does not treat particular aspects of Buddhist doctrines, but the narratives, parables, and similes extensively used by the Buddha are aimed at illustrating the intrinsic saving virtues of Buddhist teaching (Canevascini, p. ix.). The Sogdian version does not agree closely with any other known recension and must be a free adaptation.

A parable about two brothers is known but has not been identified. In the text a parable is narrated about two men originating from the same town, a rich fisherman and a poor farmer (Yoshida, 2009a, pp. 307-8). Another unidentified story about a dispute between the Buddha and heretics is attested by dozen of fragments from the Russian collection. King Bim̐bisāra, king of Magadha and a disciple of the Buddha, and the ascetic Upaka also play a role in the story (Sims-Williams, 1981; Livshits). In another fragment from the German collection King Prasenajit of Kosala asks the Buddha a question about the time of the appearance of the *cakravartin* king. The king’s question and the Buddha’s answer are closely paralleled by a passage in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (T 1558; see Yoshida, 1986, p. 519). One unique fragment is a bilingual text of the *Divyāvadāna* in Sanskrit and Sogdian both



written in Brāhmī script (Sims-Williams, 1996, p. 307).

Texts concerning popular ethics and vinayas. Those texts expounding good and bad actions as causes of good and bad effects were also popular. The so-called “Sūtra of the causes and effects of actions” (MacKenzie, 1970) is translated from a Chinese apocryphal *sūtra* (T 2881). The so far unidentified “Sūtra of the condemnation of intoxicating drink” (MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 7-11) is another such text. One source of bad effects is eating meat, which was strictly prohibited in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is the only subject of P2 where relevant passages are cited from the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (T 670), the *Aṅgulimāliya-sūtra* (T 120), and the *Dafangguanghuayanshiepinyin* “Sūtra of the chapter on the ten bad actions of the great and spacious garland” (T 2875; Yoshida, 2013b, pp. 164-69), the last being a Chinese apocryphal *sūtra*. The commandment not to consume meat and alcohol is the topic of the unidentified Dunhuang text P21. The eight commandments for lay Buddhists and the rewards for observing them are the subject of the *Dīrghanakḥaparivrājakaparipṛcchā-sūtra* (T 584, P5). In the manuscript, this text is followed by another text (P17; Yoshida, 1985a), a formula for receiving the eight commandments; it is similar to but not identical with a group of popular Dunhuang Chinese texts called *Shoubaguanzhaiwen* “Formula for receiving the Eight Commandments.”

The commandments of Mahāyāna Buddhism or *bodhisattva-sīkṣāpada* are expounded in the *Brahmajāla-sūtra* (T 1484), which is also translated into Sogdian (Yoshida, 2008b). One *poṭhī* folio discovered in Turfan comprises the end part of *Foshuofanjiezuibaoqingzhong jing* “Sūtra Spoken by Buddha on the Lightness and Heaviness of the Sin of Transgressing the Commandments” (T 1467) and the beginning of *Foshuoshifeishi jing* “Sūtra spoken by Buddha on time and not-time” (T 794; Kudara and Sundermann, 1987). The *Śuka-sūtra* or *Karmavibhaṅga* (T 80) deals with acts and their effects in secular life, but what has survived from the Dunhuang Sogdian text breaks off right after the beginning of the story (see text 93 in Ragoza). An unpublished Turfan fragment (So 14700[22]) also contains a passage from this same text.

Mention should also be made of *vinayas* and *prātimokṣas* in Sogdian. Also known are small fragments of the *Caturvargavinaya-prātimokṣa* (T 1430; Yoshida, 2000) and three fragments showing a text similar to the 20th to 24th *pāyattikas* of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (T 1428; Yoshida, 2008a and 2015).

Texts concerning beneficent Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Sogdian lay Buddhists were attracted by a creed that included spells to procure material benefits, the



pacification of angry ghosts, and other favors. Bhaiṣajyaguru (Medicine Buddha) and Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara were particularly popular. Four different manuscripts of the Sogdian version of the *Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabharāja-sūtra* have been found (Yoshida, 2009a, p. 293), which is quite exceptional among the Buddhist Sogdian texts, where each text is usually represented by only one copy. The two manuscripts so far published (P6 and Kudara and Sundermann, 1992) are based on Xuanzang's version (T 450). The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was no less popular, and several Sogdian texts concerning him are known. One of them calls itself as "Sūtra of the Glorification of 108 Names of Āryavalokiteśvara" (P8), which contains a long list of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other supernatural beings followed by short *dhāraṇīs* (magic spells in Sanskrit) and the merits one obtains by reciting them. Its original has not been identified but another copy of the same text (P8bis; see also Sims-Williams, 1976, pp. 51-53) indicates its popularity among the Sogdians. According to its colophon, the text was translated in Dunhuang on the commission of Chorakk of the Xan (Kang □) family, who wanted to share the merits with his family members both alive and dead.

Pelliot sogdien 7 is a complete text of the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-sūtra* followed by its *dhāraṇī*. The Sogdian text does not agree with any of the Chinese versions (Meisterernst and Durkin-Meisterernst, 2009). Another form of Avalokiteśvara popular among Sogdians is Ruyilunguanyin called *ckrβrt cynt'mny* (< Skt. *cakravartī-cintāmaṇi*) in Sogdian. One text from Dunhuang (MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 12-17) is translated from the *Padmacintāmaṇīdhāraṇī-sūtra* (T 1082). Two passages cited from the same text are found in another Dunhuang text (P14, P15 and P30; three fragments from one manuscript; see Yoshida, 2009a, pp. 296), which contains a short passage from a ritual manual based on the same *sūtra* entitled the *Guanzizaipusaruyilunniansongyigui* (T 1085) "Avalokiteśvara-bodhisattva- cintācakra-adhyāyakalpa" by Amoghavajra. A Brāhmī text of the *dhāraṇī* of yet another form of Avalokiteśvara named Nīlakaṇṭha accompanied by its phonetic transcription in Sogdian script is also encountered among the Dunhuang texts (La Vallée Poussin and Gauthiot; Lévi).

Major Mahāyāna sūtras. Sogdians were also keen on translating the major Mahāyāna *sūtras* that were popular in China and Central Asia. *Sūtras* belonging to the Prajñāpāramitā literature are the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra* (T 236, twoss: STii, text 8; MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 3-5), *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñā-*



pāramitā-sūtra (T 223, two mss: Yoshida, 1986; Kudara and Sundermann, 1988), and *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra* (T 251; Reck, forthcoming a). Two unidentified commentaries of the Chinese version of the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra* are found among the Turfan fragments, in which quotations from the *sūtra* have been identified (Yoshida, 2009b; Reck, 2013). One is called “Treatise on the Wisdom of Vajra” and the other “Treatise on Vajra.”

The Sogdian translation of the *Mahāyānamahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T 374) is represented by as many as four different manuscripts, since the *sūtra* was obviously very popular among the Sogdians: (i) STii, texts 10 and 10a (also Reck, forthcoming c); (ii) Utz (1976) and Sundermann (2008 and 2010); (iii) Yoshida, (1994a); and (iv) Yoshida (2013b, pp. 158-59). The *Dabanniepanjinghoufen* “Latter part of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*” (T 377) is also known (Yoshida, 1995). Two independent recensions of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* (T 475) have reached us, one from Dunhuang (MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 18-31) and the other from Turfan (Reck, 2012). Similarly, two versions of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* have been identified, one from Dunhuang based on T 278 (P20; Yoshida, 2013b) and the other from Turfan on T 279 (Yoshida, 1986). Two manuscripts of the *Viśeṣacintibrahmapariṣcchā-sūtra* (T 586) have survived, one from Shorchuq near modern Karashahr (Yanqi) in Chinese Turkistan (Kudara and Sundermann 1991) and the other from Turfan (Kudara and Sundermann, 1998), but it is not known whether or not the two are independent recensions. Among the fragments discovered in Turfan, one finds a *poṭhī* folio of the *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra* (T 360; Yoshida, 2010), one scroll fragment of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* (T 665; STii, text 7), and another scroll fragment of the *Buddhabhāṣitamahābhīṣekarddhidhāraṇī-sūtra* (T 1331; text 57 in Ragoza; Yoshida, 2009a, p. 302). A long scroll of the *Buddhānusmṛtisamādhisāgara-sūtra* (T 643; MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 53-77), generally referred to as “Dhyāna-text,” comprises as many as 404 lines.

Texts based on Chinese apocryphal sutras. As mentioned above, the “Sūtra of the Causes and Effects of Actions” was translated from a Chinese apocryphal *sūtra*, as was the *Dafanguanguhuayanshiepinjing*. Similarly, renderings of some other apocryphas are known. It is interesting to note that these Chinese *sūtras* were favorite texts of the monks of contemporary Chan or Meditation School and are often cited in the works produced by them: two manuscripts of the *Fawangjing* (T 2883) “Dharmarāja-sūtra,” one from Turfan (Yoshida, 1985b) and the other from Dunhuang (P23; Yoshida, 2009a, p. 316). The so-



called “Dhūta-text” has turned out to be a translation of the *Foweixinwangpusashuotoutuo jing* “The *sūtra* expounded by the Buddha for Bodhisattva Citta-rāja” (T 2886; MacKenzie, 1976, pp. 33-51; Yoshida, 1996). A passage from the *Jiujingdabeijing* “The *Sūtra* on the Ultimate Great Mercy” (T 2880) is cited in P9 (Yoshida, 1984). Still unpublished are fragments of the *Lengqieshiziji* (T 2837) “Records of the masters of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*,” which is one of the earliest texts of Chan Buddhism composed in the early 8th century (Yoshida, 2015, p. 173). Pelliot sogdien 16 expounds upon *sūnyatā* or emptiness and seems to be related to the Chan Buddhism (Yoshida, 2009a, pp. 316-17). This short Sogdian text follows a Sanskrit text of the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra* and the Sogdian version of the famous mantra (Bailey). In view of the colophon written in Uighur the manuscript seems to be datable to the 10th century (Sims-Williams and Hamilton, p. 40).

Employment of Chinese texts. That Buddhist Sogdians read and copied not only Sogdian but also Chinese texts is known from a few Buddhist Chinese texts that are phonetically transcribed in Sogdian script. One is a text in which a passage from the *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra* (T 1666) is cited (Yoshida, 2013b). Each transcription is accompanied by a corresponding Chinese character. The Chinese pronunciation suggests that it was produced in the first half of the 8th century. There is also the transcription of the *Jingangwuliwen* “Five salutations to the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra*,” which was a popular Chinese text in the 10th century Dunhuang (Yoshida, 1994b). A Sogdian title of the Chinese text is written on the back of one Buddhist Chinese text (Yoshida, 2009a, p. 326). Another Chinese text bears a Chinese colophon written by a Sogdian named Shi Lushan, who copied it and expressed a wish to see his travelling son as soon as possible (Yoshida, 2009a, pp. 290-91).

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