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EARLY MAHĀYĀNA IN GANDHĀRA

New Evidence from the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra

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INTRODUCTION: MAHĀYĀNA SUTRAS IN GANDHĀRAN LITERATURE

The region of Greater Gandhāra was most probably one of the earliest and most influential strongholds of Indian Mahāyāna. Many elements of Gandhāran art – including the great number of bodhisattva depictions and the complex steles studied by Harrison & Luczanits (2011) – can be tentatively interpreted in terms of Mahāyāna ideas (see also Rhi 2003; 2011). However, only a few of these pieces are inscribed, and even these inscriptions hardly contain any data which

would be able to substantiate this interpretation. This Gandhāran evidence corresponds with what we generally know about references to Mahāyāna in Indian epigraphical records.[1]

This situation has changed considerably during the last decade. Numerous manuscripts – most of them birch-barks – have been discovered in the area of Greater Gandhāra, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and composed in the Middle Indian language Gāndhārī.[2] Although the majority of them belong to so-called Śrāvakayāna or 'Mainstream Buddhist' traditions, there is now an increasing number of texts which can clearly be attributed to the Mahāyāna movement(s). As recently described by Allon & Salomon (2010), by the year 2010 six texts among the Gandhāran material could be attributed to the group of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Recently, Harrison announced the discovery of a further early Mahāyāna *sūtra* among the manuscripts of a hitherto unpublished, private collection. Its text can be identified with the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (Harrison & Hartmann 2014: xvi, n. 19). Another, yet unidentified Mahāyāna text is part of the Hirayama Collection (Matsuda 2013: 351–350[178–179]), and more recently a fragment of what appears to be a different, hitherto unknown Mahāyāna *sūtra* has come to light. Thus we have now manuscript evidence for Gāndhārī versions of nine Mahāyāna *sūtras*:

- 'Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra' (BajC 2, see Strauch 2010);
- Skt. *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* (*c*. 60 fragments, Schøyen Collection, see Allon & Salomon 2010: 6f.; Baums, Glass et al. 2016);
- Skt. *Bodhisattvapiṭaka-sūtra* (MS 17, see Allon & Salomon 2010: 8; Baums et al. 2016);
- Skt. *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (G. *prañaparamida*, SplitC 5, see Falk 2011; Falk & Karashima 2012; 2013);
- Skt. *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (unpublished private collection, see Harrison & Hartmann 2014: xvi, n. 19);
- Skt. *Sarva-puṇya-samuccaya-samādhi-sūtra* (MS 89, see Allon & Salomon 2010: 7f.; Harrison et al. 2016);
- Skt. **Sucitti-sūtra* (unpublished private collection, see Allon & Salomon 2010: 11);
- unidentified Mahāyāna *sūtra* (Hirayama Collection, see Matsuda 2013: 351–350);

- unidentified Mahāyāna *sūtra* (see the chapter by Paul Harrison in this volume).

These *sūtras* are supplemented by texts of a more scholastic character from the Bajaur Collection (BajC 4, 6, 11). References to early Mahāyāna concepts and the phraseology of these treatises point to their Mahāyāna character (Strauch 2008: 119).[3] Some of these texts are represented by very fragmentary manuscripts. Although they provide important proof for the circulation of a certain text in Greater Gandhāra, they hardly allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the structure and the contents of the respective texts.

According to their assumed age of production, the manuscripts of Mahāyāna *sūtras* listed above can be divided into two major groups. The younger of them consists of manuscripts kept now in the Schøyen and Hirayama Collections. These manuscripts are said to come from Bamiyan and are written on palm leaves in the *pothi* format. Their orthography represents a rather advanced stage of Sanskritisation. These formal features as well as the available radiocarbon dating point to a date in the 3rd, perhaps even early 4th century AD (Allon et al. 2006: 289f.). The three texts which have been identified among the Bamiyan manuscripts are the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, the *Sarva-puṇya-samuccaya-samādhi-sūtra* and the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka-sūtra* (Allon & Salomon 2010: 6–9), that is, the texts which are known from other Buddhist textual traditions and for which now an additional Gāndhārī version is available.

The second, older group of Mahāyāna texts is represented by manuscripts written on birch bark in the more archaic scroll format. Here again we encounter a text which is well known throughout the Buddhist world: a Gāndhārī version of the *Aṣṭasāhāsrikā-prajñāpāramitā (Aṣṭa)*. In its colophon the text calls itself 'Prajñāpāramitā' *(prañaparamida)* (Falk & Karashima 2012: 25). The preserved portion of the manuscript corresponds to chapters 1 and 5 of the *Aṣṭa*. Contrary to the texts from the first, younger group, the *Aṣṭa* belongs to those Mahāyāna *sūtras* which were translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema in the second century CE (*T224*). The text of this Gāndhārī version, together with its Sanskrit and Chinese (Lokakṣema) parallels, was published by Falk & Karashima (2012; 2013). Evaluating the interrelationship of these three versions, both authors conclude that:

...there is no straight line from Gāndhārī to Lokakṣema or to the Sanskrit *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. Instead, a fork model looks more promising, starting from an Urtext, leading in three directions, first to our Gāndhārī ms. which is minimally enlarged compared to older versions. Then a text from another tradition still held in Gāndhārī was used by Lokakṣema. The parts unique to his texts and the AS (= Sanskrit Aṣṭa) show that both are ultimately based on a Gāndhārī tradition which was further enlarged compared to our preserved one. The AS goes back to this further enlarged text and again enlarged it substantially. But it did not use a ms of the strand leading to Lokakṣema, because the said transposition of contents is not found in it. (Falk & Karashima 2013: 100)

The radiocarbon analysis of the manuscript yielded a calibrated date of 74 CE for the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript (Falk 2011: 20). Consequently, it predates Lokakṣema's version by nearly a century.

The second text among the early Gandhāran Mahāyāna *sūtras* which has a parallel among Lokakṣema's translations is the recently discovered fragment of a version of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*. It corresponds to the *Banzhou sanmei jing* (*T* 418). The remaining texts from the early group, namely, the **Sucitti-sūtra* and the 'Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra', are more difficult to evaluate. The fact that they are written on birch-bark manuscripts of the early scroll type and the missing Sanskritisation of their language confirm their assumed early date which should not be too far from the first or second century CE. With regard to their contents we can only tentatively rely on parallels from other traditions. Thus the **Sucitti-sūtra*, as briefly described by Allon & Salomon (2010: 11), 'contains fragments of a text corresponding to a Mahayana sutra preserved in three Chinese translations which describes the encounter between the Buddha and the young son of the famous layman Vimalakīrti'. In the Gāndhārī version the son's name is given as Suciti (Skt., Sucitti). Although the preserved text corresponds in certain respects to the Chinese translations in the Taisho (*T* 477, *T* 478, *T* 479), it is not identical with any of these versions, but seems to represent an independent version of this *sūtra*.

By far the largest text among the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* in Gāndhārī is the so-called Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, a hitherto unidentified text which is currently being studied by Ingo Strauch and Andrea Schlosser

within the framework of a collaboration between the Chair of Buddhist Studies at the Université de Lausanne and the Buddhist Manuscripts from Gandhāra project of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. It seems that this Gāndhārī text represents a hitherto unknown Mahāyāna *sūtra*. It has not been possible to trace a parallel to this text in the extant Mahāyāna literature, be it in Sanskrit or in Chinese or Tibetan translation.[4] The manuscript does not contain any colophon which would indicate the title of the text. Due to the prominent role played by the Buddha Akṣobhya and his Abhirati land we earlier decided to name the text provisionally *Akṣobhya-sūtra* (Strauch 2008; see also Strauch 2010). Further analysis has shown that this title hardly corresponds to the *sūtra*'s structure and contents. Moreover, the title causes confusion with the well-known *Akṣobhya-vyūha* which is preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations. It seems therefore preferable to call the Gāndhārī text more neutrally 'Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra' or, according to its manuscript siglum, 'BajC 2'.

The manuscript's difficult state of preservation and the large extent of the text do not allow a quick publication. A final edition and translation of the text is only to be expected after its thorough reconstruction and comparison with other extant traditions.[5]

The work done so far, however, permits us to give a general overview of the *sūtra*'s main characteristics and their bearing on the history of early Mahāyāna in northwest India. On the one hand, the present article resumes the results of a series of studies which accompany the editorial process and inform the academic public about the current state of research.[6] On the other hand, it will add some new material that can contribute to the discussion on early Mahāyāna and especially on the relation of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra to Prajñāpāramitā literature.

THE BAJAUR MAHĀYĀNA SŪTRA: PHYSICAL FEATURES AND TEXTUAL STRUCTURE

The Bajaur Collection of mainly Buddhist Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts is especially important due to the fact that the place of its discovery can be determined with an exceptionally high degree of certainty. According to reliable reports the manuscripts were found in a stone

box which was deposited in one of the cells of a ruined Buddhist monastery near the village of Mian Kili in the Bajaur district of Pakistan (Strauch 2007/2008: 4–5; Strauch 2008: 103). According to their palaeographical and linguistic features the manuscripts were written in the first or second century CE. This estimation confirms the attribution of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra to the earlier phase of Gandhāran Mahāyāna literature.

The fact that the Bajaur Collection was part of a manuscript deposit together with texts of the so-called Mainstream Buddhism can contribute to the discussion about the institutional background of Gandhāran Mahāyāna. Among the texts of the collection are also a *sūtra* from a *Madhyamāgama* (see Strauch 2014; 2016) and even vinaya texts. This clearly shows that followers of the Mahāyāna lived in monasteries of traditional Buddhism and did not maintain their own separate institutions.

The BajC 2 manuscript comprises about 600 lines written on the obverse and reverse of a large composite scroll more than 2 metres long and around 18 cm wide. The text is composed in the conventional *sūtra* style; its *nidāna* and its end are, however, missing. Thus the possibility cannot be excluded that the original extent of the text exceeded the extent of what is preserved.

Since parts of the manuscript are missing or destroyed, it has to be reconstructed. Although this process is not yet completed, it has been possible to establish the sequence of the fragments and thus to reconstruct the structure of the text as a whole. Due to the absence of parallels we have to base the study of the text on our observations on this reconstruction and its relationship to other representatives of early Mahāyāna literature.

The structure of the *sūtra* can be determined with the help of metrical portions which are inserted into the text at different places. Altogether five textual units with ten to thirty-two verses structure the text into several sections. The relationship of these verses to the non-metrical passages is twofold. Some of them conclude the preceding section by way of summary, others form a kind of transition between sections.[7]

Moreover, the text can be divided into two different narrative levels. The first level is the dialogue between the Buddha and Śāriputra. It introduces the *sūtra* in the shape of an initial instruction given by

the Buddha to Śāriputra and is again taken up in its middle part. According to the preserved text this dialogue takes place at the Vulture Peak in Rājagṛha:

asa ho imasa dharma-deśeṇae · savavato ta grijaü](*ḍo pravado sa) r[v]a[do] suarṇa-vaṇeṇa · ohaṣeṇa phudo ◇ uraḍo ya gaṃdha-yadaṇi gayati yasa ṇa purve ◇ uraḍaṇi ca oh[o]ṣaṇi paśati yasa ṇa purve [ura]ḍaṇi ya puṣpaṇi ghadha-yadaṇi mala-yadaṇi ◇ avhipravarṣati yasa ṇa pu[rve] (BajC 2: 2C.27–29)[8]

And due to his dharma teaching[9] the entire Vulture Peak (Gṛdhrakūṭa) is filled with a golden radiance, and one smells excellent fragrances like never before. And one sees excellent lights like never before. And excellent flowers, fragrances [and] garlands are raining down like never before.

The interpretation of the preserved letters *grijaü* as Gṛdhrakūṭa is confirmed by the *nidāna* of the Gāndhārī *Prajñāpāramitā* which shares the setting of the text's narrative: + + + *ś(r)udo ekasamae bhagava rayagaha viharati grijaüḍe pravade...* (r 1-01). The Gāndhārī text corresponds to the Sanskrit text of the *Aṣṭa*: *evaṃ mayā śrutam. ekasmin samaye bhagavān rājagṛhe viharati sma gṛdhrakūṭe parvate* (Falk & Karashima 2012: 28).[10]

The second narrative level is represented by a dialogue between the Buddha and 84,000 *devaputras* who approach the Buddha after the initial instruction and ask to be trained in what they call *bodhisattvaśikṣā* 'training for a bodhisattva'. This level forms the main part of the *sūtra*: it follows the initial instruction and concludes the whole text.

In the following discussion we will concentrate on two parts of the *sūtra*: the initial instruction given by the Buddha to Śāriputra and the following instruction of the *devaputras* which is labelled as 'training for a bodhisattva' (*bodhisattvaśikṣā*). In these two parts the main doctrinal issues of the text are presented. They therefore allow for an evaluation of the variety of Mahāyāna represented by this text as a whole. My discussion will focus in particular on the relationship between the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra and other early Mahāyāna sutras, in particular those of the Prajñāpāramitā literature.

THE INITIAL INSTRUCTION: A DISCOURSE ON
DHARMAS AND THE *ĀRYAŚRĀVAKA*

Based on the notions developed in Abhidharma (and particularly Sarvāstivāda) scholasticism, the initial dialogue provides an extensive discussion of the character of dharmas. In a certain way, the discourse described here paves the way for the teaching of the entire *sūtra* and establishes a theoretical framework which prepares the listener for the following instruction in the bodhisattva path.

To exemplify the approach of the *sūtra* I quote the following typical passage. Śāriputra addresses the Buddha with the following words:

[atvo ṇa saman]u[pa]śami kudo ◊ ṇiratvo ◊ bhavo ṇa samaṇupaśa[mi k]u(*do avha)[vo] · ji[vo] ṇa samaṇu[paśa](*mi kudo) [ṇi]jivo ◊ [ayao] ṇa samaṇupaśami [kud](*o) (*a)[vayao] ◊ [upa]ti ṇa samaṇupaśami kudo aṇupati · avisakharo ṇa samaṇupa[śami k](*udo aṇavisakharo · sabhava ṇa samaṇupaśa)[mi] kudo asabha[va ·] (*u)graho ṇa samaṇupaśami ◊ kudo aṇugraho · ◊ ualabho ṇa samaṇupaśami kudo aṇuala[bho] (* · ◊) [upado dharmaṇa] ṇa sa(*ma)[ṇ]u(*paśami ku)[d](*o) [aṇ](*u)[pa]do ◊ svabhava dha[rma]ṇa ◊ ṇa samaṇupaśami kudo ◊ asvabhava · · ṇiroso dharmaṇa {·} ◊ ṇa samaṇupaśami kudo aṇiros(*o) (*lakṣaṇo dharmaṇa ◊ ṇa samaṇu)paśami kudo alakṣaṇo ◊ sakil[e]śo dhamaṇa · [ṇa sa]maṇu-paśam⟨*i ⟩ {◦} kudo vodaṇo ◦ (BajC 2: 3G.36–3EF.30)

I do not perceive a self (*ātman*), let alone [a dharma] devoid of a self (*nirātman*). I do not perceive an entity (*bhāva*), let alone [a dharma] devoid of an entity (*abhāva*), I do not perceive a life-principle (*jīva*), (*let alone) [a dharma] devoid of a life-principle (*nirjīva*). I do not perceive a growth (*ācaya*), let alone decline (*apacaya*). I do not perceive an origin (*utpatti*), let alone a non-origin (*anutpatti*). I do not perceive a [mental] construction (*abhisaṃskāra*), let alone (*a non-construction (*anabhisaṃskāra*)). I do not perceive a coming-into-existence (*sambhava*), let alone a non-coming-into-existence (*asambhava*). I do not perceive a grasping (*udgraha*), let alone a non-grasping (*anudgraha*). I do not perceive an apprehension (*upalambha*), let alone a non-apprehension (*anupalambha*). I do not perceive an origination (*utpāda*) of dharmas, let alone a non-origination (*anutpāda*). I do not perceive an inherent nature (*svabhāva*) of dharmas, let alone a non-inherent nature (*asvabhāva*). I do

not perceive a cessation (*nirodha*) of dharmas, let alone a non-cessation (*anirodha*). I do (*not) perceive (*a distinctive feature (*lakṣaṇa*) of dharmas), let alone a non-distinctive feature (*alakṣaṇa*). I do not perceive a defilement (*saṃkleśa*) of dharmas, let alone a purification (*vyavadāna*).

The association of this passage with the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is obvious. And, indeed, Śāriputra's speech is concluded by a phrase which contains the adjective *śuño* (Skt. *śūnya*) 'empty'.[11]

According to this passage the dharmas can be characterised as, *inter alia*, selfless (*nirātman*), not produced (*anutpāda*), not constructed (*anabhisaṃskāra*), not to be apprehended (*anupalambha*), having no cessation (*anirodha*), no inherent nature (*asvabhāva*), no characteristic marks (*alakṣaṇa*), no defilements (*asaṃkleśa*), no purification (*avyavadāna*). This description not only agrees completely with what we find in Madhyamaka philosophical treatises, but also with the characteristics of dharmas as described in early Mahāyāna *sūtra* texts. Although this concept was probably first formulated within the Prajñāpāramitā literature, it left its traces in many early Mahāyāna texts of different affiliations, especially in those which are preoccupied with philosophical issues.[12] Thus, references to the emptiness of dharmas, their selflessness (*nairātmya*) and essenceless (*niḥsvabhāva*) and related notions are found in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*,[13] the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, the *Śūraṃgama-samādhi-sūtra* and the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, to name only a few of them (see the contribution to this volume by Johannes Bronkhorst).

As only one example for a closely related parallel to this passage from the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, I quote the following section of the twelfth chapter of the *Aṣṭa*:

śūnyam iti devaputrā atra lakṣaṇāni sthāpyante / ānimittam iti apraṇihitam iti devaputrā atra lakṣaṇāni sthāpyante / anabhisaṃskāra iti anutpāda iti anirodha iti asaṃkleśa iti avyavadānam iti abhāva iti nirvāṇam iti dharmadhātur iti tathateti devaputrā atra lakṣaṇāni sthāpyante (Aṣṭa, ch. 12, ed. Vaidya 1960: 135)

Devaputras, the marks are here fixed on to the fact that they are empty. Devaputras, the marks are here fixed on to the fact that they are signless, wishless. Devaputras, the marks are here fixed on to the fact that

they are without construction, without production, without cessation, without defilements, without purification, without an entity, that they are Nirvana, the realm of Dharma, the Suchness. (see Conze 1975: 177)[14]

The Tathagata's response to these positions comprises another characteristic statement:

(*e)[va vuto] bhagava aï[śpa] (*śa)[r](*ip)u(*tro edad=oya sarva-dharma)[na] śariputra · na aṣi prañayati · na maje prañayati · na p(*r)ayoṣaṇo prañayati ॰ yado ya · śariputra sarva-dharma[na] (*na aṣi praña)yati na maje prañayati [·] na prayoṣaṇo prañayati · na taṣa śariputra dha(*r)maṣa [haṇi] praña[yati] na ṭhi[di] (*pra)[ñayati na veul](*o)[do pra](*ñayati ॰) yado ya śariputra ◇ sarva-dharmaṇa ◇ · na haṇi prañaïdi · ◇ na ṭhidi prañaya[d]i ◇ na veulodo prañayadi ◇ ida ta śariputra · pragidie (*acalo aṇalao dha)[rm](*o ॰ ya) [śa]riputra ◇ acalo aṇalao ◇ dharma ◇ ida ta śariputra · imasvi dharma-viṇae ◇ saro (BajC 2: 3H.44+1F.33−36)

Thus addressed, the Blessed One (*said) to the venerable Śāriputra: (*Of all dharmas), Śāriputra, a beginning (*ādi*) is not conceived, a middle (*madhya*) is not conceived, an end (*paryavasāna*) is not conceived. And because, Śāriputra, of all dharmas a beginning is not conceived, a middle is not conceived, an end is not conceived, of this [single] dharma, Śāriputra, a decrease (*hāni*) is not conceived, a persistence (*sthiti*) is not conceived, an extension (*vaipulyatā*) is not conceived. And because, Śāriputra, of all dharmas a decrease is not conceived, a persistence is not conceived, an extension is not conceived, this [single] dharma, Śāriputra, is by nature (*immovable (*acala*) and baseless (*anālaya*)). (*Which) dharma, Śāriputra, is immovable and baseless, this, Śāriputra, is the essence (*sāra*) in this dharma and discipline.

Again, this statement and the way of reasoning of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra can be compared with a passage from the *Aṣṭa*:

sarvadharmāṇāṃ hi kauśika yato nānto na madhyaṃ na paryavasānam upalabhyate, tataḥ kauśika anantapāramiteyaṃ yad uta prajñāpāramitā (...) punar aparaṃ kauśika yasmāt sarvadharmā anantā aparyantāḥ, na teṣām anto vā madhyaṃ vā paryavasānaṃ vā upalabhyate, tasmāt

kauśika anantapāramiteyaṃ yad uta prajñāpāramitā (Aṣṭa, ch. 2, ed. Vaidya 1960: 32)

The Perfection of Wisdom is an infinite perfection because one cannot apprehend the beginning, middle, or end of any dharma. (...) Moreover, Kauśika, the Perfection of Wisdom is an infinite perfection because all dharmas are limitless (and) boundless, and their beginning, middle, or end are not apprehended. (see Conze 1975: 101)

The idea of *śūnyatā* as represented in this initial portion of the Gāndhārī *sūtra* is not characterised in the text as a typical Mahāyāna – or better: Bodhisattvayāna – feature, but is instead explicitly linked with the *śrāvaka* path. The notions of dharmas just described are qualified by the text as characteristic features of the *śrāvaka's* holy conduct (*brahmacarya*). Thus, the initial portion develops Mahāyāna ideas on the basis of existing and well-known Śrāvakayāna concepts, reinterpreting them according to notions of emptiness. A similar procedure was noticed by Harrison with regard to the interpretation of *buddhānusmṛti* in the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*. Harrison characterises it as:

interpretation of a 'Mahāyāna-ised' form of *buddhānusmṛti* in terms of the doctrines of Śūnyatā (which) reveals tensions within the Mahāyāna, and within Buddhism in general, which stem not from differences in practice so much as from differences of attitude and approach (Harrison 1978: 55).

The Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra contains another example of this strategy of reinterpreting. The initial instruction is concluded by a passage which again makes clear who actually is the recipient of this teaching. This passage describes the qualities of an *āryaśrāvaka* – a noble disciple, a category which is also designated by the terms *āryapudgala* or *srotaāpanna* 'Stream-Enterer,' those advanced Buddhist practitioners who have already entered the way to arhatship. The typical feature of these *āryaśrāvakas* is determined by the term *abhejaprasada* (Skt., *abhedyaprasāda*), 'unbreakable confidence'. This term is parallel to the Pāli *aveccapasādo*, 'unwavering confidence, perfect faith'. In canonical Āgama texts it is used to describe one of the

main characteristics of an *āryaśrāvaka* or *srotaāpanna* and regularly refers to the three jewels Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha (see PTSD, s.v.). It is closely related conceptually to the so-called *sotāpattyaṅgas* consisting of 'unwavering confidence, perfect faith' in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha and, as a fourth 'member', 'noble morality' (*ārya(kānta)-śīla*). Our Gāndhārī sutra subsumes all these four elements under the category *abhedyaprasāda*.[15]

According to the traditional texts, this 'unwavering confidence' and the closely associated 'noble morality' are based on an active conceptualisation of the relevant items. As a typical example I quote from the translation of the Pāli *Saṃgīti-suttanta* the passage relating to Dharma (DN 33):

> He is possessed of unwavering confidence in the Sangha, thus: 'Well-directed is the Sangha of the Lord's disciples, of upright conduct, on the right path, on the perfect path; that is to say the four pairs of persons, the eight kinds of men. The Sangha of the Lord's disciples is worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of veneration, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.' (Walshe 1995: 491)[16]

In contrast to this positive definition, the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra links these qualities again with the concept of emptiness. According to the text's statements the *abhedyaprasāda* of an *āryaśrāvaka* is explicitly based on the fact that he does not perceive (*na samanupaśyati*) a Buddha, a Dharma, a Saṃgha or the 'noble morality'. With regard to the Saṃgha the text argues:

> ya[sa] yeva tu[a] (*śariputra) dharma ṇa samaṇupaśasi ◇ yeṇa dharmeṇa samuṇagado raha di vohariasi ◇ evam=eva śariputra ◇ yeṇa dharmeṇa ◇ mama ṣavaga-sagho ṣavaga-(*sa)[gha] saṃkho gachati ◇ ta dharmo aria · ṣavago ◇ yoṇiśo vavarikṣata ◇ · ṇa aṣigachadi ◇ yado ya ṇa aṣigachadi tado ya (*sagho a)[bhejo]-praṣadeṇa sam[uṇa]gado bhoti ◇ (BajC 2: 1CD.18–21)

> Just as you, Śāriputra, do not perceive a dharma by possessing which you are designated an arhat, in the same way, Śāriputra, an *āryaśrāvaka* does not find a dharma by which my assembly of disciples is reckoned as an assembly of disciples, even when thoroughly investigating it. And

because he does not find it, he is endowed with unbreakable confidence (*in the assembly).

Again, a typical Mainstream Buddhist concept is interpreted in terms of the doctrine of emptiness using what Jan Nattier calls the 'rhetoric of absence' (2003a: 179). The typical representative of this rhetoric of absence or negation in the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra is the verbal form *na samanupaśyati* 'he does not perceive'.

It is important to notice that the whole initial portion does not even mention the category of a bodhisattva: it is explicitly addressed towards *śrāvakas*. Thus the initial part is not only a discourse about the character of dharmas: it is simultaneously a teaching for advanced *śrāvakas* (*āryaśrāvaka*). However, the specific way in which the character of these *śrāvakas* is described shows that the classical Mainstream Buddhist concept of an *āryaśrāvaka* is reinterpreted here in terms of the doctrine of emptiness. As a matter of fact, the course of these advanced *śrāvakas* completely corresponds to that of the bodhisattvas, which is described in the subsequent section.

THE CENTRAL PART: THE BODHISATTVA PATH

Why? The *bodhicittotpāda*

This teaching of the Buddha is followed by supernatural phenomena indicating the end of the instruction. The Earth trembles, golden radiance fills the entire *buddhakṣetra*, flowers rain down, and heavenly instruments sound. Excited by this the gods up in heaven are delighted and 84,000 gods (*devaputra*) approach the Buddha to ask the following question, which introduces the second and main part of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra and sets the frame for the entire remaining text. Here the real bodhisattva teaching begins.

uvari d[e]va-sagho ◊ pramudida ya ah<*o>su ◊ paramena pramoja-
ṭhanena samuna(*gado) cadur-aśidi ca deva-sahasa ◊ vaya bhaṣati
◊ vae bhate bhagava · e[daṣa dha]ma[ṣa danaṣa] ◊ aṣamochedae
anatarahanae ca · baha-jana-hidae baha-ja[na](*suha)[e loanu]apae
◊ arthae hidae suhae ◊ deva-manuśana ◊ budhanetri-anuchedae ◊

sarva-satva-hidae sarva-satva-suhae loaunapae tasagada-śaśa(*nasa)
anatara[ha]nae · vurdhie vehulae · asamoṣae · bhavana-paripurie ◇ ·
anutarae sama-sabosae · cito upadema · anutarae sama-sabusie (*cito
upade)ma · yaṣa-pranatae · vae ◇ bhate bhagava ◇ bosisatva-śikṣae
śikṣiśama · ◇ (BajC 2: 7B.8–7C.13)

Above, the assembly of gods was overjoyed, having as they did the greatest occasion for joy. And the 84,000 gods said: 'We, venerable Blessed One, are directing our mind (*cittam utpādayāmaḥ*) to the highest perfect awakening (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*), so that the gift of this Dharma is not destroyed and does not disappear (*etasya dharmasya dānasya asamucchedāya anantardhānāya ca*), for the welfare of many people, for the happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the welfare [and] the happiness of gods and men, so that the Buddhas' guideline is not cut off (*buddhanetryanuccheda*), for the welfare of all beings, for the happiness of all beings, out of compassion for the world, so that the Tathāgata's teaching does not disappear [but] develops [and] increases, so that it is not forgotten (*tathāgataśāsanasya anantardhānāya vṛddhyai vaipulyāya asaṃmosāya*) [but] fulfilled by [meditative] cultivation (*bhāvanāpāripūri*).[17] To the highest perfect awakening, as it was announced (*yathāprajñapta*), (*? we are directing our mind*). We, venerable Blessed One, want to be trained in the training of a bodhisattva (*bodhisattvaśikṣāyāṃ śikṣiṣyāmaḥ*)'.

This request clearly defines the topic of the main, second part: it is Bodhisattvaśikṣā, the training for bodhisattvas. And it also says why the *devaputras* want to be trained in this particular way. As Peter Skilling points out in his paper in this volume, a principal concern of bodhisattvas was the non-interruption or continuity of the lineage of the buddhas or of the three jewels. Conventional phrases in many Mahāyāna sutras illustrate this concern. It is therefore not surprising to find some of them in the part introducing the instruction in the bodhisattva path. The most characteristic phrases are:

1. *eda[sa dha]ma[sa danaśa] aśamochedae anatarahanae ca* – 'for the non-destruction and non-disappearance of the gift of this Dharma';
2. *budhanetri-anuchedae* – 'for the non-interruption of the Buddhas' guideline';

3. *tasagada-śaśa(*ṇasa) aṇatara[ha]ṇae* – 'for the non-disappearance of the Tathāgata's teaching'.

These phrases clearly parallel the formulae cited by Peter Skilling, among them numerous references in the *Aṣṭa: mā buddhanetrī-samucchedo bhūt, mā saddharmāntardhānam* (ed. Vaidya 1960: 33).

The portion *vurdhie vehulae · aṣamoṣae · bhavaṇaparipurie* seems to be shaped after a canonical formula which is repeatedly used to describe the cultivation of wholesome factors (*kuśaladharma*): see e.g. *idha bhikkhave bhikkhu uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ṭhitiyā asammosāya bhīyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti* (AN II 74) – 'Here, a *bhikkhu* generates desire for the maintenance of arisen wholesome qualities, for their non-decline, increase, expansion, and fulfillment by development' (Bodhi 1995: 458).

The wish to be trained in this specific discipline is preceded by an act which regularly figures as the initial stage in a bodhisattva's career: 'the arising of the thought of awakening' (*bodhicittotpāda*), referred to here by the verbal phrase *cito upadema* (Skt., *cittam utpādayāmaḥ*). As was shown by Harrison (1993) on the basis of Lokakṣema's translations, '[t]he chief concern of Mahāyāna sutras is, of course, the career of the bodhisattva' (171). The texts do not refer to 'a systematic theory of ten stages or *bhūmis*,' but agree with regard to four major events (Harrison: 'key stages') in the biography of a bodhisattva:

1. 'the initial thought of awakening' (*bodhicittotpāda*);
2. 'the realisation of the fact that dharmas are not produced' (*dharmakṣānti*);
3. 'the attainment of the stage of non-regression whereupon a bodhisattva is assured of reaching his or her goal' (*avaivartya*);
4. 'the prediction (*vyākaraṇa*), when the Buddha under whom the bodhisattva is currently serving predicts his or her eventual awakening'.

The Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra refers in the beginning of the *devaputras*' instruction explicitly to the first of these events, and we will see that the other three are also properly indicated, making the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, despite some unusual features, a typical early representative of its genre.

How? The abandonment of notions (*saṃjñā*)

The teaching called here bodhisattva training has to be interpreted as a natural outcome of the preceding instruction regarding the character of dharmas. Based on the assumption that all dharmas are empty (*śūnya*) and without an inherent nature (*asvabhāva*), they cannot be apprehended (*anupalambha*). Any notion/apperception (*saṃjñā*) of them as real entities (*bhāva*) must therefore be considered a false view or error and has to be strictly avoided by a person accepting the doctrine of emptiness.[18] Consequently the training of a bodhisattva is described as a strict obedience to the principle of non-apperception/non-notion. The bodhisattva is expected to avoid any kind of notion (*saṃjñā*). This idea is declined along various dogmatic categories, such as the elements of personality (*ātman, sattva, bhāva*, and *jīva*), the constituents of materiality (earth, water, fire, air, space), up to the five *skandhas: ruasañā* (Skt., *rūpasaṃjñā*), *vedanasaña* (Skt., *vedanāsaṃjñā*), *sañasaña* (Skt., *saṃjñāsaṃjñā*), **sakharasaña* (Skt., *saṃskārasaṃjñā*), *viñanasaña* (Skt., *vijñānasaṃjñā*).

Typical statements of this kind are represented by the following two extracts. Firstly, with regard to the Self:

savena savo va · devaputrao · atva-saña na uvaṭhavidava ◊ no ya anatvo dhamo paḍi /// (BajC 2: 7C14)

Devaputras, in no case at all should a notion of a self (*ātmasaṃjñā*) be formed, and (*one should) not (*be) attached (? *pratibaddha*) to a dharma devoid of a self (*anātman*).

Secondly, with regard to the constituents of materiality:

(...) (*na prasavi prasa)[vi-saña] ahosu · ◊ na [ava] ava-saña ◊ na teya · teya-saña · na vada vada{va}-saña ahosu · na agaśa agaśa-saña aho(*su) [+] ? ? [na loga] loga-saña ahosu · na pare loge paraloga-saña ahosu ◊ (BajC 2: 7E.38–39)

(...) for earth they have no notion of earth (*pṛthivīsaṃjñā*), for water no notion of water (*āpsaṃjñā*), for fire no notion of fire (*tejaḥsaṃjñā*), for air no notion of air (*vātasaṃjñā*), for space no notion of space (*ākāśasaṃjñā*).

They have for [this] world no notion of [this] world (*lokasaṃjñā*), for the other world they have no notion of the other world (*paralokasaṃjñā*).

This principle of non-notion is also found in other early Mahāyāna texts, again in particular in those of the Prajñāpāramitā circle. Thus the *Aṣṭa* describes one of the features of a bodhisattva's irreversibility (*avaivartya*) as follows:

punar aparaṃ subhūte avinivartanīyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvo na rūpasaṃjñām abhisaṃskāroti, na rūpasaṃjñām utpādayati / evaṃ na vedanāsaṃjñām na saṃjñāsaṃjñām na saṃskārasaṃjñām / na vijñānasaṃjñām abhisaṃskaroti, na vijñānasaṃjñām utpādayati / tat kasya hetoḥ? tathā hi avinivartanīyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ svalakṣaṇaśūnyair dharmair bodhisattvanyāmāvakrāntaḥ / tam api dharmaṃ nopalabhate nābhisaṃskāroti notpādayati / tata ucyate anutpādajñānakṣāntiko bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'vinivartanīya iti // (Aṣṭa ch.17, ed. Vaidya 1960: 165)

Furthermore, Subhūti, a non-retrogressive bodhisattva mahāsattva does not construct or produce a notion of form. In the same way he does not construct nor produce a notion of feeling, a notion of perception, a notion of formation, a notion of consciousness. Why? For the non-retrogressive bodhisattva mahāsattva – who has through dharmas which are empty of their own marks definitely entered on the certainty that he will win salvation as a bodhisattva – does not apprehend even that dharma, and so he does not construct nor produce it. One says, therefore, that 'a bodhisattva Mahāsattva is non-retrogressive if he patiently accepts the cognition of non-production' (see Conze 1975: 203).

This passage of the *Aṣṭa* clearly links the practice of non-notion/ non-apperception with two of the abovementioned 'key stages' in the career of a bodhisattva: the status of non-retrogression (*avaivartya*) and the tolerance towards the fact that dharmas are non-arisen (*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*). Both these characteristics are closely linked with each other and characterise the bodhisattva on a rather high level of his spiritual career.[19] We will see further that this association is also made by the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra. But for now we will concentrate on the question of what actually this practice of non-

apperception implies. For this purpose, it is useful to look at parallels from *Aṅguttara-nikāya* texts. In the *Samādhi-suttanta*, for example, the Buddha describes a meditative state which is called *samādhipaṭilābha* ('winning of concentration'). As an illustration for the parallelism of both concepts I cite only one passage here:

idhānanda bhikkhu evaṃ saññī hoti: etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ panītaṃ yad idaṃ sabbasankhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānanti. Evaṃ kho ānanda siyā bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhipaṭilābho yathā neva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavisaññī assa, na āpasmiṃ āposaññī assa, na tejasmiṃ tejosaññī assa, na vāyasmiṃ vāyosaññī assa, na ākāsānañcāyatane ākāsānañcāyatanasaññī assa, na viññāṇañcāyatane viññāṇañcāyatanasaññī assa, na ākiñcaññāyatane ākiñcaññāyatanasaññī assa, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatane nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasaññī assa, na idhaloke idhalokasaññī assa, na paraloke paralokasaññī assa, saññī ca pana assāti. (AN V 8)

Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is percipient thus: 'This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all activities, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.' It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu could obtain such a state of concentration that he would not be percipient of earth in relation to earth; of water in relation to water; of fire in relation to fire; of air in relation to air; of the base of the infinity of space in relation to the base of the infinity of space; of the base of the infinity of consciousness in relation to the base of the infinity of consciousness; of the base of nothingness in relation to the base of nothingness; of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception in relation to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; of this world in relation to this world; of the other world in relation to the other world, but he would still be percipient. (Bodhi 2012: 1343–1344)

The parallelism of both concepts, specifically, the concepts described in the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* and in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, is obvious. It shows that the abandonment of all kinds of notions, described in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* as the main concern of the bodhisattva path, was in a Mainstream Buddhist text perceived as the result of a meditative practice. It might be interesting to note that in the immediately fol-

lowing *Sāriputta-suttanta* Śāriputra associates this type of meditation with a single perception which arose during that meditation: the perception of nirvana.

> kiṃ saññī panāyasmā sāriputto tasmiṃ samaye ahosīti? Bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ, bhavanirodho nibbānanti kho me āvuso aññāva saññā uppajjati, aññāva saññā nirujjhati, seyyathāpi āvuso sakalikaggissa jhāyamānassa aññāva acci uppajjati, aññāva acci nirujjhati, evam eva kho me āvuso bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ bhavanirodho nibbānanti aññāva saññā uppajjati, aññāva saññā nirujjhati. Bhavanirodho nibbānanti saññī ca panāhaṃ āvuso tasmiṃ samaye ahosinti (AN V 9–10)

> But of what was the venerable Sāriputta percipient on that occasion? One perception arose and another perception ceased in me: 'The cessation of existence is nibbāna; the cessation of existence is nibbāna.' Just as, when a fire of twigs is burning, one flame arises and another flame ceases, so one perception arose and another perception ceased in me: 'The cessation of existence is nibbāna; the cessation of existence is nibbāna'. On that occasion, friend, I was percipient: 'The cessation of existence is nibbāna.' (Bodhi 2012: 1345)

The comparison of both these closely related passages perfectly illustrates the gap which divided Mainstream Buddhism from the concepts of early Mahāyāna. In the same way it shows how strongly Mahāyāna was indebted to these earlier conceptions. The step from this older meditation practice to the status of general non-apperception based on the idea of emptiness is indeed not too far, given the fact that nirvana itself is described in early Mahāyāna (Madhyamaka) philosophy as the equivalent of emptiness:

> Tous les dharma sont originellement calmes (*ādiśānta*) et naturellement nirvânés (*prakṛtiparinirvṛta*). Étant sans naissance, les dharma sont, dès l'origine et par nature, apaisés et étaints. Qui dit vacuité dit Nirvāṇa. Selon le bouddhisme ancien, est Saṃsāra ce qui est soumis au *pratītyasamutpāda*, est Nirvāṇa ce qui échappe à ce processus. Mais pour le Madhyamaka, les dharma, qui ne naissent point, ne sont pas produits en raison des causes et ne transmigrent pas (*na saṃsaranti*): ils sont donc nirvânés. Pour eux le Saṃsāra se confond avec le

Nirvāṇa. Vacuité, Saṃsāra et Nirvāṇa se confondent. (Lamotte 1987: 43)

There is no need to stress that this evidence is in general correspondence to what Harrison has repeatedly referred to: the character of early Mahāyāna as an ascetic movement with strong affinity to meditational practices which are based on models developed within the boundaries of so-called Mainstream Buddhism (see, e.g., Harrison 2003: 118–122). Whether they are particularly linked to monks living in an *araṇya* – whatever this word means in the context of Greater Gandhāra[20] – our text, unfortunately, does not reveal.

The chapter about this training for bodhisattvas (*bodhisattvaśikṣā*) culminates in the following statement describing the character of the dharma called 'awakening' (*bodhi*):

na y[a]tra bhate bhagava [k]o yi dharma (*ualabhati ◊ yado va) [avisa]-bhu[ji]ati ◊ yo vi avisabhujiati ◊ ye va avisabujiati ◊ ya pi avisabhujiati ◊ yeṇa vi avisabhujiati (* yo vi avisabhu)jidavo ya bhate ◊ ṇa yatra ko yi ◊ ualabhati dharmo yo avisabhujea ◊ sakṣiatavo ya ◊ · ṇa yatra ko yi ualabhati yo sakṣigarea (*ya pi) sakṣigarea ◊ yeṇa pi sakṣigarea ◊ yado v<*i> sakṣigarea ◊ bosi yeva · vae bhate ◊ ṇa samaṇupaśama ◊ ṇa uvalavama (BajC 2: 7D.23–26)

No dharma is (*apprehended) here (*upalabhyate*), venerable Blessed One, because of which (*yataḥ*) one becomes fully awakened (*abhisaṃbudhyate*), which (*yaḥ* [masc., sing.]) becomes fully awakened, which (*ye* [neut., sing.?) becomes fully awakened, which (*yā* [fem., sing.]) becomes fully awakened, by which (*yena*) one becomes fully awakened and to which one should become fully awakened. Venerable, no dharma is apprehended, which would become fully awakened and can be realised (*sākṣīkartavya*). No [dharma] is apprehended, which [masc., sing.] would realise, which [fem., sing.] would realise, by which one would realise, because of which one would realise. Even awakening itself, venerable Blessed One, we do not perceive, we do not apprehend.

This idea is taken up in a later paragraph of the *sūtra* by similar words:

[va]e bhate bhagava ta dharma ṇa samaṇupaśama ya bosi yaṣa vi boṣi yo vi bosi avisabujiśati · ajadi(*e)[hi] bhate bhagava ◊ sarvadharmehi

◊ aṭhidiehi aṇuvatidiehi · ki vatra boṣi · kaṣa vatra bosi (*·) ki vatra avi(*sabujiśa)[ti] (BajC 2: 7B'.33–35)

Venerable Blessed One, we do not perceive (na samanupaśyāmaḥ) a dharma which is awakening (yā bodhiḥ), nor of whom there is awakening (yasyāpi bodhiḥ), nor who will be fully awakened to awakening. Venerable Blessed One, among all unborn (ajātikaiḥ), transient (asthitikaiḥ), undescending (anutpattikaiḥ?) dharmas, which one here (kim atra) is awakening, of whom here (kasyātra) is awakening, which here will be fully awakened?

A passage which closely resembles the text of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra is found in the twenty-second chapter of the Aṣṭa called kalyāṇamitra-parivarta.

tam apy ahaṃ bhagavan dharmaṃ na samanupaśyāmi, yo dharmo 'bhisaṃbudhyate, yo dharmo 'bhisaṃboddhavyaḥ, yena vā dharmeṇābhisaṃbudhyate / tat kasya hetoḥ? sarvadharmeṣu bhagavan anupalabhyamāneṣu na me evaṃ bhavati – ayaṃ dharmo 'bhisaṃbudhyate, ayaṃ dharmo 'bhisaṃboddhavyaḥ, anena vā dharmeṇābhisaṃbudhyate iti / (Aṣṭa, ch. 22, ed. Vaidya 1960: 202)

Blessed One, I also do not perceive a dharma, which becomes fully awakened, which is to become fully awakened, or by which (one) becomes fully awakened. Why that? Because all dharmas, Blessed One, are not being apprehended, it does not occur to me that 'this dharma becomes fully awakened, this dharma is to become fully awakened, by this dharma (one) becomes fully awakened'. (see Conze 1975: 241)

Another passage of the Aṣṭa makes it explicitly clear that this character of awakening has to be explained by the concept of emptiness:

śūnyatvād bhagavan sarvadharmāṇām / na sa kaścid dharmaḥ saṃvidyate yo dharmaḥ śakyo 'bhisaṃboddhum / tathā hi bhagavan sarvadharmāḥ śūnyāḥ / yasyāpi bhagavan dharmasya prahāṇāya dharmo deśyate, so 'pi dharmo na saṃvidyate / evaṃ yaś cābhisaṃbudhyeta anuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim, yac cābhisaṃboddhavyam, yaś ca jānīyāt, yac ca jñātavyaṃ sarva ete dharmāḥ śūnyāḥ / anenāpi bhagavan paryāyeṇa

mamaivaṃ bhavati – svabhisaṃbhavā anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhir abhisaṃ-
boddhuṃ na durabhisaṃbhaveti (Aṣṭa, ch.16, ed. Vaidya 1960: 156–157)

For, owing to the emptiness of all dharmas, Blessed One, no dharma
exists that can become fully awakened. In the same way, all dharmas
are empty, Blessed One. Also, the dharma for the abandonment of which
the dharma (teaching) is shown, Blessed One, does not exist. And in
the same way, (he) who becomes fully awakened to highest perfect
awakening, and what (one) is to become fully awakened to, and (he)
who would know, and what is to be known – all these dharmas are
empty. Also, in this way, Blessed One, it occurs to me 'becoming fully
awakened to highest perfect awakening is easy to attain, not hard to
attain'. (see Conze 1975: 196–197)

Of course, argumentations like this are frequent in Prajñāpāramitā
literature. As Bronkhorst notes in his contribution to this volume,
'[o]ntological issues like this, relating to the question whether this or
that item is a dharma, or indeed whether dharmas themselves exist,
fill the first chapter of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*' (see p. 127).
One of the issues discussed in the first chapter of the *Aṣṭa* relates to a
dharma called Bodhisattva or Prajñāpāramitā. This passage is also part
of the Gāndhārī *Prajñāpāramitā* (Falk & Karashima 2012: 32–33, MS
1-11–1-13). As Bronkhorst showed, the Gāndhārī text does not contain a
reference to the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), but coincides
with Lokakṣema's version and mentions only the Bodhisattva. It here
confirms the overall impression about the close relationship between
the Gāndhārī text and Lokakṣema's version. Even so, all available
versions conclude the passage with the following sentence (quoted
from Falk & Karashima 2012: 34):

G.   avi ho vaṇa ° bhaṃte bhagava ° saye he bosisatvasa ° eva (1-15:) + + + +
Skt. api tu khalu punar bhagavan saced evaṃ bhāṣyamāne

G.   [u]vadiśamaṇa ° cito ṇa oliati °
Skt. deśyamāne upadiśyamāne bodhisattvasya cittaṃ nāvalīyate *na
samlīyate na viṣīdati na viṣādam āpadyate*

G.   ṇa viparaprithibhavati °

Skt. nāsya viprṣṭhībhavati, *mānasam na bhagnapṛṣṭhībhavati nottrasyati na saṃtrasyati*

G. na saṃtraso avajati eṣa yeva (1-16:) + + + + + + + [paramidae ° a] nuśaśaṇi °
Skt. na saṃtrāsam āpadyate eṣa eva bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ prajñāpāramitāyām anuśāsanīyaḥ

G. eṣayeva bosisatvasa praṇaparamida °
Skt. eṣaivāsya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya prajñāpāramitā veditavyā

The parallel passage in Lokakṣema's version runs as follows:

(When) ⟨the *Prajñāpāramitā*⟩ is expounded in this manner, (and if) a *bodhisattva*, having heard it, does not become slothful in mind, frightened, terrified, embarrassed, nor fearful, (then this) *bodhisattva* should be recognised as studying it, should be regarded as dwelling in it, should be considered as studying it. (Falk & Karashima 2012: 35)

Passages like this, which describe the capacity of bodhisattvas to endure the complex consequences of the doctrine of emptiness, are typical for Mahāyāna sutras (Strauch 2010: 42). The same statement is also part of the Bodhisattva instruction of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra and proves once more the close affinity of this text with contemporary Prajñāpāramitā literature. This affinity not only concerns the doctrinal issues discussed in both texts or text groups, but is also obvious with regard to compositional principles.

ime eva-rua dharma ṣutva cito ṇa sa[ṃ]sidadi ◊ oghahati aṣimuca(*ti)
+ + + + + + + + + + + + (*pa)[ḍi]gakṣida[vo] +? + + [sa]ṭhido ya aya
bosisatva ◊ ṇa [vi]vaṭaśati aṇutara-sama-sabosie · ṇa pracuava(*ṭiśati
a)[ṇu]tara-[sa](*ma)-[sa]bosie (BajC 2: 7Fv.52–54)

Who, having heard such a dharma, does not lose heart, [but] plunges in [and] believes resolutely, (*his awakening) is to be expected. And standing firm (*saṃsthita*?) this bodhisattva will not turn away from the highest perfect awakening, he will not turn back from the highest perfect awakening. (see Strauch 2010: 42)

As already shown above, the *Aṣṭa* associated the practice of non-apperception/non-notion explicitly with the status of non-retrogression. The same association is now also made by the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, thereby introducing the second 'key stage' in a bodhisattva's career: non-retrogression (*avaivartya*).

What for? *Dharmakṣānti, avaivartya* and the *vyākaraṇa*

The Gāndhārī *sūtra* continues with a lengthy exposition of the merits (*puṇya*) which are to be expected from successful bodhisattva training. According to Harrison's (1990: xxxii–xxxiii) observations about the structural categories of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, which can to a certain degree be generalised for other Mahāyāna sutras, this long passage belongs to the group of 'propaganda or promotion'. But contrary to many other texts, which use this category to glorify the texts themselves, the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra celebrates here the capacity of *dharma-kṣānti*. Although the typical compound *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti* is not used by the Gandhāran text, the way in which the term *dharma-kṣānti* is used, as well as its direct link with the *avaivartya* stage, make it clear that it is namely this characteristic of an advanced bodhisattva which is referred to here (for a detailed discussion see Strauch 2010: 29–44). This long glorifying passage is introduced with the following words:

yada vae ◊ [bha](*te bhagava bhagavado) [bha]ṣidasa artho ◊ ayaṇama
◊ ya ca bhate bhagava bosisatva mahasatva ima triṣa(*hasa-mahaṣa)-
[ha]ṣa-logadhadu ◊ sarva-radaṇa-paripuro daṇo dadea · ya ca bosisatvo
mahaṣatvo iśa dharmehi kṣati pradilavhea · oga(*pea a)[si]mucea[21] ◊
avhapatiea · ◊ {{ya ca bhate bhagava}} ◊ aya teṇa --- purima(*e)[ṇa]
bah[u]daro puño praṣavati (BajC 2: 7Fv.54–56)

(*Venerable), as we understand the meaning of what the (*Blessed One) has said, [it is as follows]: Venerable Blessed One, if some bodhisattva mahāsattva would fill this three-thousandfold, many-thousandfold world system with all kinds of treasures and would give it as a gift, and if some [other] bodhisattva mahāsattva would obtain 'endurance towards the factors of existence' (*dharmeṣu kṣānti*) here, would have

confidence in it, would believe it resolutely, would trust it, then the latter engenders a lot more merit than the former.

Here follows what Harrison (1987: 80) so vividly described as an extensive self-glorification, where 'kalpas can tick by while one wades through chapter after chapter proclaiming the merits of this doctrine or practice'. The doctrine or practice that is celebrated by our text is *dharma-kṣānti* – in contrast to the Prajñāpāramitā texts, for instance, where the *prajñāpāramitā* occupies the respective place in the formula. Moreover, our text does not refer to any additional activities connected to *dharma-kṣānti* – no mention of recitation or transmission or writing, which is otherwise common in this kind of passage. In fact, these formulaic passages are the most important source for references to writing and its assumed role in the genesis and institutional background of early Mahāyāna. Most of the arguments brought forward by Schopen for the existence of a book-cult in early Mahāyāna (1975) – as well as those rejected by Drewes (2007) – are taken from passages like this. In a later article Schopen rates the value of these passages as follows:

> Passages of this type are – perhaps more than anything else we have seen so far – characteristic of early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature. They are quite literally found everywhere, and their sheer commonality, together with their seemingly inflated rhetoric, may, ironically, have numbed us to their significance. More than anything else, they express in a language that is perhaps foreign to us, but perfectly suited to their intended audience, the value that is placed on specific things. (Schopen 2005: 125f.)

If we take this evaluation seriously, we have to conclude that the overwhelming concern of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, and its most celebrated practice, is *dharma-kṣānti*. That is in fact what being a bodhisattva means according to our text. With *dharma-kṣānti* we have also attested the third constituent of a bodhisattva's life.

A central position in the Gāndhārī *sūtra* is occupied by the fourth element: the prediction (*vyākaraṇa*).[22] It is described here as a kind of mass prediction: all 84,000 *devaputras* will become buddhas after their instruction in the bodhisattva training and the explanation of the merits resulting from the received *dharma-kṣānti*. All of them

will bear one and the same name, which the Gāndhārī *sūtra* gives as Viholapravha[ṣa] (Skt., Vipulaprabhāsa).[23] The buddha-field which is predicted for these *devaputras* is compared with Abhirati, the land of the Buddha Akṣobhya. In the relevant passage, the land of Abhirati is clearly referred to as a contemporary world. A typical phrase is:

sayaṣavi edarahi akṣobhasa tasagadaṣa arahadasama-sabu(*dhasa ṇa
ya tatra budhakṣetrami) (...) bhaviśati (BajC 2: 5A.22–23)

Just as now (in the buddha field Abhirati) of the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Awakened Akṣobhya, (*there in the buddha-field)...[there] will not be....

The features which are attributed to this predicted buddha-field are remarkably parallel to the description found in the *Akṣobhya-vyūha*. As discussed by Nattier (2000), Abhirati is also described in other early texts, such as the *Aṣṭa*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* and the *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* – but none of these secondary Abhirati descriptions is nearly as complete as that of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra when compared with the *Akṣobhya-vyūha* (Strauch 2010). This parallelism also concerns the *śrāvaka* careers of Abhirati's inhabitants, who are said to be promoted to arhatship just after hearing four dharma instructions from the mouth of Akṣobhya. As in the *Akṣobhya-vyūha*, Abhirati is represented here as an *arhat-kṣetra* (Harrison 1987: 83f.), where the ideals of the *śrāvakayāna* are held in high esteem.

However, the prediction is not the only occasion on which Abhirati is referred to in the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra. In a later part it describes the kinds of rebirths which the *devaputras* on the bodhisattva path can expect. Of course, they are promised exalted states of rebirth, either as divine beings with the ten heavenly attributes or as human beings in a rich family. But the highest rebirth is that in the *buddhakṣetra* Abhirati. Here they are said to be endowed with magical powers which allow them to wander through the worlds and to instruct beings in worlds where there is no buddha, thus practising what Nattier (2000: 84, 89–91) calls 'intergalactic travel'.

ede śari(*putra) (...) atra avhiradie logadhadue uavajiśati ◊ te atra
uavaṇa samaṇa · ṇa bhuya jado + + v[a]hi uavajiśati · ṇo ya akhaṇaṣu

pracayaïśati ido pači · (...) sarvatri ya jadiṣu tasagad[o] aragaïśati ◊
tatro ya keśamaṣu oroavata kaṣa[yaṇi va](*straṇi) paruita agaro ·
aṇagarya parvayiśati ◊ yava[jiva] ya bramacarya caṣati (...) (*ta)tra yeva
mahada irdhi-bhaleṇa gachiśati gatva ya dharma śruśati (...) yatra ya
budhakṣetrami ◊ tasagada ṇa bhaviśati (*ta)tra yeva gatva teṣa satvaṇa
dharma deśiśa(*ti) (Extract from Baj2: 4F'.4–4D'.19)

These (*devaputras), Śāriputra, (...) will be reborn here in the world
system Abhirati. Being born here, they will never again be born (...).
And they will not be reborn in inopportune rebirths after that. (...) And
in all births they will please (ārāgayati) a Tathāgata. (...) And there (i.e.,
in Abhirati), having cut off hair and beard, and having put on yellow
clothes, they will leave [their] home for the homeless state. And as long
as they live they will live the holy life (brahmacarya) (...) and by great
magic power (ṛddhibala) they will even go (*to other buddha fields),
and having gone [there], they will hear the dharma. (...) And in which
buddha-field there will be no Tathāgata, there indeed they will go
[themselves] and teach the dharma to the beings.

Nearly the same features of Abhirati are mentioned in the nine-
teenth chapter of the *Aṣṭa* where the rebirth of Gaṅgadevā is described:

iyam ānanda gaṅgadevā bhaginī anāgate 'dhvani suvarṇapuṣpo nāma
tathāgato bhaviṣyati arhan samyaksaṃbuddho (...) seyam ānanda
gaṅgadevā bhaginī strībhāvaṃ vivartya puruṣabhāvaṃ pratilabhya
itaś cyutvā akṣobhyasya tathāgatasyārhataḥ samyaksaṃbuddhasya
buddhakṣetre abhiratyāṃ lokadhātāv upapatsyate / tatra copapannā
akṣobhyasya tathāgatāsyārhataḥ samyaksaṃbuddhasyāntike
brahmacaryaṃ cariṣyati / tataś cyutā satī buddhakṣetrād
buddhakṣetraṃ saṃkramiṣyati avirahitā tathāgatadarśanena (...) tatra
ca avirahitā bhaviṣyati buddhair bhagavadbhir yāvan nānuttarāṃ
samyaksaṃbodhim abhisaṃbudhyate (Aṣṭa, ch. 19, ed. Vaidya 1960: 181)

This lady Gaṅgadevā, Ānanda, will, in a future period, become a
Tathāgata, 'Golden Flower' by name, an Arhat, a Perfectly Awakened
One (...). Ānanda, this lady Gaṅgadevā will be reborn in Abhirati, the
buddha-field of Akṣobhya, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Awakened
One, having ceased to be a woman and having become a man and

having gone down from here. Being reborn there, she will live the holy conduct in the presence of Akṣobhya, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Awakened One. After her decease there she will pass from buddha-field to buddha-field, never deprived of the sight of a Tathāgata (...) And there she will not be deprived of the buddhas, the Blessed Ones, until she becomes fully awakened to the highest perfect awakening. (see Conze 1975: 219–220)

Three points, which are mentioned in both texts, are remarkable. They show the consistency of the underlying concept of Abhirati as represented here:

1. rebirth in Abhirati ensures that one will be reborn afterwards only in the presence of another Buddha – in the so-called *kṣaṇa* status;
2. moreover, living in Abhirati includes the lifestyle of an ascetic, with the typical hairstyle and the *brahmacarya* life – this is one of Abhirati's main features;
3. being a bodhisattva reborn in Abhirati means being able to switch over to other worlds; while the *Aṣṭa* mentions only the option of getting into worlds where a Tathāgata is present, the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra explicitly refers to the 'teaching commitments' of a bodhisattva in a world where no Tathāgata lives.[24]

Both these functions – a paradigm for other future buddha-fields and a rewarding place of rebirth – show that Abhirati played a crucial role in the cosmology of the circles which can be associated with the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra. It seems therefore justified to attribute this text to a phase, or a regional variety, of early Mahāyāna which had not (yet) taken part in the overall development which eventually resulted in the predominance of Amitābha and his land Sukhāvatī (see Schopen 1977). According to Nattier (2000; 2003b), this type of Mahāyāna represents a transitional phase in the development of Pure Land Buddhism. The Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra seems to belong to its few surviving witnesses.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

I would like to divide my conclusions into two groups: those drawn from the positive evidence of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, and those based on the *sūtra*'s silence. Based on the assumption that this *sūtra* is a work composed in the Indian northwest in the first or second century CE – if not earlier – these conclusions might also claim a more general character for Gandhāran Mahāyāna as a whole.

With regard to the positive evidence of the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra, we can begin by noting that the doctrinal position of the *sūtra* is strongly influenced by the concept of emptiness. Although the terms *śūnyatā* or *śūnya* occur only rarely, the overall argumentation of the text in all its doctrinal parts is characterised by a kind of 'rhetoric of negation' which is typical for the representation of this concept. Not only is this rhetoric predominantly concerned with instruction in the bodhisattva path, but it is also concerned with instruction directed towards the category of *āryaśrāvaka*.

Secondly, as is known from the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* translated by Lokakṣema, the conception of the bodhisattva path concentrates on four major events: *bodhicittotpāda*, *dharma-kṣānti*, *avaivartya*, and *vyākaraṇa*.

Thirdly, the main motivation for pursuing the bodhisattva path is the desire to ensure the continuation of the Buddha's teaching and lineage. The bodhisattva path leading to awakening is described mainly in terms of a meditational practice characterised by the feature of 'non-apperception'. This meditational practice is largely based on conceptions developed within Mainstream Buddhism.

Fourthly, the idea that our present buddha-field is not the only one, but coexists with the contemporary buddha-fields of other buddhas, in which a bodhisattva can be reborn, is a foundational idea for this text. It might therefore be argued that such a notion of parallel buddha-fields is one of the cosmological prerequisites for the development of early Mahāyāna. The complex steles from Gandhāra examined by Harrison and Luczanits might indicate that this notion was particularly popular in the Indian northwest. The popularity of Akṣobhya and the complete absence of any references to Amitābha and Sukhāvatī as witnessed by the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra should be taken into account when evaluating the

concrete character of these early notions of 'Pure Lands' in Gandhāra.

Regarding the issues discussed with regard to early Mahāyāna there remain some problems to be addressed: the role of 'forest monks' and *dharmabhāṇakas*, the position of the 'cult of the book' or at least 'cult of the text', and the importance of the concept of the *prajñāpāramitā*. It seems to be one of the most important characteristics of our Gāndhārī text that none of these elements plays a decisive, or even a marginal, role in the *sūtra*'s discourses. However, a number of conclusions can be drawn from our discussion.

Firstly, as far as the setting of the *sūtra* and its contents allow us to judge, there is no special affiliation to a group of forest monks. The bodhisattva path is described as a kind of meditation training, without any reference to a specific social group.

Secondly, the Bajaur Mahāyāna Sūtra completely neglects the group of *dharmabhāṇakas*. The term simply does not occur.

Thirdly, the same can be said about the cult of the book. The whole text does not contain anything that could be construed as a reference to the so-called book-cult, nor does it contain any passages which would place the text itself in the centre of any devotional practices.

Fourthly, the last silence we have to address is the complete absence of any references to the concept of *prajñāpāramitā*. Although the Gāndhārī *sūtra* is very closely related to early Prajñāpāramitā literature, both on the formal and on the doctrinal level, any concrete and explicit reference to this concept is missing. Even the term *prajñā-pāramitā* does not occur in any of the preserved portions of the text.

Explaining and interpreting the tension between these two categories of items – what is there and what is not – is the main challenge in the exploration of this text. But it will definitely bring us at least some steps nearer to what might be called early Mahāyāna – although I am sure we have to be aware that we are indeed talking about an iceberg, as Paul Harrison suggests in his introductory chapter.

NOTES

[1] This phenomenon was studied and critically evaluated by Schopen in his groundbreaking article 'Mahāyāna in Indian inscriptions' (1979). More recent epigraphical data are discussed by Allon & Salomon (2010: 3–5).

[2] For a comprehensive survey on Gandhāran literature – including the Mahāyāna material – see Falk & Strauch 2014.

[3] Two of these treatises (BajC 4 + 11) have been edited by Schlosser (2016) in her dissertation, On the Bodhisattva Path in Gandhāra. Edition of Fragment 4 and 11 of the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts.

[4] My thanks go to Paul Harrison, Matsuda Kazunobu, and Jan Nattier who assisted me in the search for parallel texts.

[5] In 2017, the preliminary edition and translation of the entire text were made available as an online version, which can be accessed on the homepage of the Bavarian Academy project: http://www.en.gandhara.indologie.uni-muenchen.de/workshop/index.html.

[6] This series comprises by now the following articles: Strauch (2010), Schlosser & Strauch (2016a; 2016b), Strauch (forthcoming).

[7] For the complex relationship of metrical and non-metrical portions in early Mahāyāna *sūtras* see also Nattier 2003a: 43–44 & n. 73; Williams 2009: 46–47.

[8] The transliteration of the Gāndhārī uses the following conventions: [ ] uncertain reading; (*) editorial restoration of lost text; ⟨* ⟩ editorial addition of omitted text; ⟪ ⟫ scribal insertion; { } editorial deletion of redundant text; {{ }} scribal deletion; *point (.)* lost part of an *akṣara; question mark (?)* illegible *akṣara; plus sign (+)* lost *akṣara;* /// textual loss at left or right edge of support. All transliterations and translations are based on the preliminary edition and translation by Schlosser and Strauch (see n. 5 above).

[9] G., *dharmadeśeṇae* probably for *dharmadeśaṇae* (Skt., *dharmadeśanayā* or °*deśanāyām*).

[10] Contrary to Vaidya, I use here the form *gṛdhrakūṭa* as repeatedly given by Wogihara in his edition of Haribhadra's *Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā* (1932). The Gāndhārī name of the Vulture Peak is also partially preserved in the text of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* describing the Buddha's encounter with Māra after the Awakening: *[ra]yagrihe viharami gri[ja]* /// (Allon & Salomon 2000: 251). For a detailed discussion about this unusual location of the reported event, see Allon & Salomon 2000: 253. A slightly sanskritised Gāndhārī form is attested in the recently published Brāhmī inscription on a ceramic vessel from Tape Ṣotor: *[gh]rijak[ū]-ṭammi* (Tarzi et al. 2015: 150–151).

[11] The missing context of this phrase does not permit a reliable reconstruction.

[12] For the distinction between 'philosophical' and 'religious' strata in the development of early Mahāyāna literature see Williams 2009: 47f.

[13] As Lamotte (1987: 39–51) showed, the philosophy displayed in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* – another early Mahāyāna text which was translated by Zhi Qian in the years 222–229 – 'représente un Madhyamaka à l'état pur' (1987: 37).

[14] See also *Aṣṭa* §18 in Vaidya 1960: 173. My translations of the *Aṣṭa* passages in this article are throughout based on the abbreviated translations by Conze 1975, but adjusted to the terminology used in this article and corrected or extended, if they are misleading or incomplete.

[15] This feature is shared by some other traditions. For a detailed analysis of this passage and the relation to Abhidharma developments, see Schlosser & Strauch 2016a: part 2.

[16] *saṅghe aveccappasādena samannāgato hoti: supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho, ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho, ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho, sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho, yad idaṃ cattāri purisayugāni,*

aṭṭha purisapuggalā, esa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho āhuṇeyyo pāhuṇeyayā dakkhiṇeyyo añjalikaraṇīyo anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassā'ti (DN III 227).
[17] Due to the disputed analysis of the compound, the sense of this phrase is not completely clear. The expression is already found as *bhāvanāparipūrī* or *'paripūrī* in the canonical language: *evam assa ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo bhāvanāparipūriṃ gacchati* (MN III 289) – 'Thus this Noble Eightfold Path comes to fulfilment in him by development' (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995: 1138). The phrase *bhāvanāparipūriṃ gam-* is repeated here for various doctrinal issues. A comparable usage can be observed in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (DN 22) where the compound is dissolved as *bhāvanāya pāripūrī hoti* (DN II 303–304). Walshe (1995: 343) translates '(how) the complete development (of...) comes about', whereas Anālayo's (2003: 11) translation of this phrase corresponds to that of Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi: 'how [...] can be perfected by development'.

The expression is also found in several Prajñāpāramitā texts with regard to the *pāramitās*. Thus the *Aṣṭa* (§ 28) contains the following statement: *prajñāpāramitāyāṃ hi subhūte carato bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya dānapāramitā bhāvanāparipūriṃ gacchati, evaṃ śīlapāramitā kṣāntipāramitā vīryapāramitā dhyānapāramitā bhāvanāparipūriṃ gacchati / prajñāpāramitāyāṃ hi subhūte carato bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya sarvāḥ ṣaṭ pāramitā bhāvanāparipūriṃ gacchanti, sarvāṇi copāyakauśalyāni bhāvanāparipūriṃ gacchanti* (Vaidya 1961: 233). Conze (1958: 196) translates the phrase as 'arrives at its most perfect development'. It is presently impossible to definitely decide for one of these options.

[18] See Harrison 1990: xviii: 'there is nothing which can provide a basis for 'apprehension' or 'objectification' (*upalambha*), by which term is intended that process of the mind which seizes on the objects as entities or existing things (*bhāva*), and regards them as possessing an independent and objective reality. The perception or apperception of existing things (*bhāva-saṃjñā*) is thus seen as the gravest of errors, in that it leads us to fixate on, and become attached to that which, as a mere construct of our minds, should not form the basis of any form of attachment whatsoever. And from this attachment springs all the suffering which characterises the existence of unawakened beings'.

[19] In most texts, e.g. the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, the *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti* and the status of *avaivartya* are attributed to the eighth *bhūmi* where a Bodhisattva also receives the prediction of his future Buddhahood (*vyākaraṇa*) (see Harrison 1993: 171–172).

[20] In many Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions and probably also in the colophon of the Khotan *Dharmapada* the term *(a)raña* designates a monastery or a monastic complex. See Strauch 2007: 79–80.

[21] This reconstruction of *oga(*pea)* was possible thanks to Paul Harrison who informed me that 'the mysterious sequence *ogapita*, etc. occurs in a similar context in the *Pratyutpanna* fragment (in that fragment following *as[i]mucea* and preceding *abhiṣadha-)*'. As Harrison pointed out, the Tibetan parallel *brtags shing* indicates that the word should represent Sanskrit *avakalp-* (see *BHSD*, s.v. *avakalpayati*).

[22] For an extensive description of this chapter and numerous quotations of the Gāndhārī text see Strauch 2010: 45–62. The following brief summary is based on this study.

[23] The corresponding verses give their name as Mahapravha (Skt., Mahāprabha).

[24] The Bajaur Mahāyāna Sutra seems to share this feature with the *Akṣobhya-vyūha*, which contains the following statement: 'Śāriputra, if a Bodhisattva wishes

to see numerous hundreds of thousands of [millions of] billions of myriads of Buddhas in one lifetime, he should vow to be born in the land of Tathagata Akṣobhya. After his birth there, he will see innumerable Buddhas and plant all kinds of good roots; he can also expound the essence of the Dharma to numerous hundreds of thousands of sentient beings to increase their good roots' (Chang 1983: 328).

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