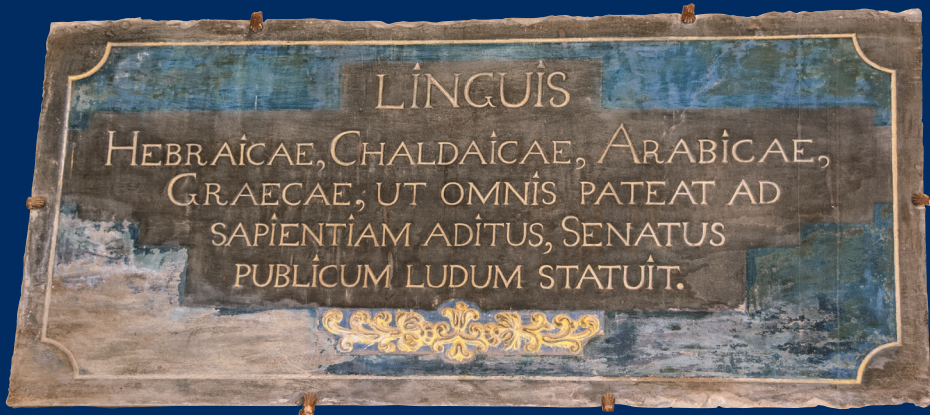


JOHANNES BRONKHORST

REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGINS
OF MAHĀYĀNA

EN

SÉPTIMO CENTENARIO DE
LOS ESTUDIOS ORIENTALES
EN SALAMANCA



Ediciones Universidad
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EN EL CONCILIO celebrado en Vienne (Francia) en 1311, el papa Clemente V decretó un Canon en el que se autorizaba y ordenaba a las universidades de Salamanca, Oxford, París y Bolonia la enseñanza de lenguas orientales, en concreto, de «árabe, hebreo y caldeo». El canon conciliar de Clemente V no cayó en papel mojado y tuvo como consecuencia el comienzo inmediato en Salamanca de la enseñanza de lenguas orientales entre las que ocupó un lugar preferente el hebreo. De hecho, el hebreo permaneció en el elenco de enseñanzas de la Universidad de Salamanca desde esa fecha hasta la desamortización de Mendizábal (1836). Doscientos años más tarde (1521) se introdujeron las enseñanzas de hebreo en la Universidad de Alcalá que corrieron la misma suerte que los estudios de Salamanca con la mencionada desamortización. A mediados del s. XIX hubo un nuevo impulso de los estudio de hebreo que se introdujeron en las Universidades de Madrid, Barcelona y, una vez más, Salamanca. En nuestra Universidad, sin embargo, se vieron dramáticamente interrumpidos en 1936 y no se restauraron hasta 1990, si bien en Salamanca la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca los había introducido ya en los años 70 del siglo pasado.

En cuanto al árabe, aparte del impulso inicial en Salamanca como consecuencia del canon y de algunas escuelas de lenguas vinculadas a la actividad misionera, los estudios de árabe propiamente dichos comienzan mucho más tarde. Es Carlos III quien, con Campomanes y otros eruditos ilustrados, decidió importar arabistas, como el libanés Casiri, para poder comprender los tesoros científicos que guardaba la colección de manuscritos de El Escorial. A partir de ese momento, y especialmente en el siglo XIX, figuras de peso como José Antonio Conde, Pascual Gayangos o Francisco Codera encarnaron la preocupación por estudiar el pasado árabe de la Península Ibérica con un interés muy específico. Puede decirse que con ellos y con otras figuras representativas, ya en el siglo XX, como Francisco Pons Boigüés, Julián Ribera, Miguel Asín, Emilio García Gómez, los estudios árabes o el arabismo (como se ha llamado tradicionalmente) adquirieron categoría científica.

En este sentido, las iniciativas políticas favorecieron de algún modo el interés, la difusión y, no siempre en idéntica medida, los contactos con otros países y con el propio mundo árabe. Así, en 1910, se creó en Granada el Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino, que editó asimismo una revista, publicada hasta 1925. En cambio, no tuvieron éxito la creación de una Escuela de Africanistas en 1919, ni la de un Centro de Estudios Africanos en 1923. Con todo, el 4 de febrero de 1932 se crearon por ley las Escuelas de Estudios Árabes de Madrid y Granada, cuya finalidad era «proteger y fomentar los estudios árabes

en España». A la de Granada se le asignaban, además de la enseñanza del árabe, la del «hebreo y rabínico, y la atracción de la juventud musulmana, labores que completarán con trabajos de investigación científica». A partir de ese momento, y con la creación de la revista *Al-Ándalus* al año siguiente, puede hablarse de una consagración de los estudios árabes en España. Dicha consagración se traslució asimismo en las universidades, en las que empezó a incluirse la docencia del árabe de manera regular. Se produjo asimismo cierta proyección internacional, dado que, en 1960, Félix María Pareja creó la *Union Européenne des Arabisants et des Islamisants*, en la que siempre ha habido desde entonces una notable presencia de arabistas españoles. El resultado de toda esta actividad académica fue la creación del título de licenciado en filología árabe que, hasta la actual reforma de planes adaptados al EEES, se impartía en ocho universidades españolas.

Así pues, las lenguas incluidas en el canon, aunque con interrupciones, han mantenido en España una tradición más o menos vigorosa y tras un crecimiento exponencial a lo largo del s. xx, podemos afirmar que a fecha de hoy los estudios de árabe y hebreo gozan en España de excelente salud y que están al máximo nivel tanto en la docencia como en la investigación. Un desarrollo muy importante han experimentado igualmente los estudios del Próximo Oriente Antiguo auspiciados tanto por los historiadores de la Antigüedad como por los estudios bíblicos y por los estudios comparativos de lenguas semitas.

Sin embargo, España se ha mantenido bastante rezagada en un cambio de paradigma importante de los Estudios Orientales que comenzó a producirse en el resto de Europa en el s. xviii y que se consumó en el s. xix. En el resto del continente la limitación del estudio de lenguas orientales a aquellas conectadas con el estudio de la Biblia empezó a romperse en el siglo xviii, cuando los relatos de viajeros audaces y el incremento de las relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales proporcionaron a las universidades noticias y materiales que muy pronto empezaron a estudiarse regularmente, dando lugar a estudios sobre culturas orientales que en el siglo xix crecieron exponencialmente, y modificaron en profundidad la percepción europea de nuestra propia cultura, ampliando sus horizontes y permitiendo comparaciones fecundas.

España quedó al margen de esta evolución. De hecho, como ya hemos mencionado, a mediados del s. xix con la desamortización de Mendizábal provocó una cierta involución en el estudio de lenguas orientales. Tras su restablecimiento, los estudios Orientales siguieron limitados a las lenguas bíblicas y el árabe. Sólo en el s. xx la profunda transformación del escenario geopolítico y el importantísimo papel que las culturas asiáticas han pasado a desempeñar en nuestro mundo, así como algunas iniciativas individuales y el estudio de algunas lenguas de nuestra familia lingüística habladas en Asia han contribuido a una diversificación de los Estudios Orientales en la Universidad española y también en la Universidad de Salamanca.

En este nuevo escenario algunas áreas de los Estudios Orientales como la de los Estudios de Asia Oriental han conseguido implantarse ya en la Universidad española y también en la de Salamanca como enseñanzas regulares. De hecho, estos estudios se institucionalizaron en el año 2003 y se imparten ya en las principales universidades como las Autónomas de Madrid y Barcelona, la Universidad

de Salamanca o la de Granada. En cambio, otras áreas como los estudios de Anatolística, Iranística o Indología se encuentran en una fase de implantación más limitada. Sin embargo, ello no es óbice para una intensa actividad investigadora y docente al más alto nivel.

Dado que el canon conciliar marca el comienzo de los estudios orientales en la Universidad española y europea, el Grupo de Investigación Estudios Orientales de Salamanca (EOS) tuvo la iniciativa de convocar a todos los orientalistas de la Universidad de Salamanca para conmemorar este hecho por medio de un congreso y una posterior publicación. Más allá de la celebración de una efeméride, tanto el congreso como la publicación tenían un doble objetivo. Por un lado, conmemorar el 700 Aniversario de la introducción de los Estudios Orientales en la Universidad de Salamanca y mostrar a la comunidad científica el largo y complejo pasado de nuestra disciplina y su vigor presente, a pesar de las obvias dificultades por las que atraviesa. Por otro, reunir a una nutrida representación de los orientalistas españoles que trabajan en distintos ámbitos del orientalismo y poner en común nuestros conocimientos y resultados de investigación. El Congreso se celebró entre los días 28 a 30 de septiembre de 2011 en la Universidad de Salamanca y contó con la asistencia de más de cien participantes. Fue una nutrida presentación de los orientalistas españoles que dio buena muestra del vigor y calidad de estos estudios en la Universidad española, a pesar de la deficiente implantación oficial de algunas de sus secciones. Un buen ejemplo de ello fue la nutrida representación de especialistas en India, Irán o Anatolia, entre otras. Además contó la presencia de especialistas invitados de las otras Universidades mencionadas en el canon. Por la Universidad de Bolonia intervino (aunque a distancia por una enfermedad que el impidió el desplazamiento) Antonio Panaino. Como representante de París vino Jean Kellens, profesor del Collège de France de Lenguas y Religiones Indo-iránicas. Por Oxford, el profesor Jacob Dahl.

El congreso contó con sesiones paralelas dedicadas a las principales áreas de la Orientalística. Los artículos del presente volumen han sido agrupados con respecto al mismo criterio. Cada sección contó con una conferencia plenaria y tuvo uno o dos responsables científicos. Estos últimos han sido igualmente los responsables de la selección de trabajos para cada uno de los capítulos de este libro. A continuación se relatan las diferentes secciones presentes en el congreso, así como sus responsables científicos y los conferenciantes plenarios. Los responsables científicos de las diferentes secciones fueron los siguientes: para Árabe y Estudios Islámicos, Miguel Ángel Manzano y Rachid Elhour; para Estudios Hebreos y Arameos, Ricardo Muñoz Solla y Efrem Yildiz; para Egiptología, José Manuel Galán; para Próximo Oriente Antiguo, Joaquín Sanmartín; para India e Irán, Ana Agud y Alberto Cantera; para Anatolística, Virgilio Trabazo; y, finalmente, para Asia Oriental, Alfonso Falero. Las conferencias plenarias estuvieron a cargo de Manuel Marín (Árabe y Estudios Islámicos); Natalio Fernández Marcos (Estudios Hebreos y Arameos); José Manuel Galán (Egiptología); Gregorio del Olmo (Próximo Oriente Antiguo); Johannes Bronkhorst (India e Irán); Ignasi Adiego (Anatolística) y Fernando Rodríguez Izquierdo (Asia Oriental).

La dirección del congreso estuvo en manos de Alberto Cantera y las tareas de secretaría en las Ricardo Muñoz Solla. La celebración del Congreso y la publicación de este volumen conmemorativo de los 700 aniversario han sido posibles gracias a la concesión de una Acción Complementaria (FFI2011-12798-E: EOS700: 700 años de Estudios Orientales en Salamanca. 700 años de Estudio Orientales en Europa) del Ministerio de Ciencia y Innovación asociada al «Proyecto de Investigación Archivo Digital Avéstico 2: trabajos preliminares para una edición de la liturgia larga zoroástrica» financiado igualmente por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.

Salamanca, octubre de 2012
Los editores

INDIA E IRÁN

Reflections on the origins of Mahāyāna¹

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THERE IS A GROWING tendency among scholars to discard questions about the (single) origin of Mahāyāna as inappropriate. Schopen (1975: 181 [52]) was perhaps the first to suggest a multiple origin, offering «the assumption that since each [Mahāyāna] text placed itself at the center of its own cult, early Mahāyāna (from a sociological point of view), rather than being an identifiable single group, was in the beginning a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults, all of the same pattern, but each associated with its specific text». He was soon followed by Harrison (1978: 35), who observed that Mahāyāna «was from the outset undeniably multi-faceted». Some thirty years after his first assumption, Schopen stated again (2004: 492): «it has become increasingly clear that Mahāyāna Buddhism was never one thing, but rather, it seems, a loosely bound bundle of many, and... could contain... contradictions, or at least antipodal elements». Silk (2002: 371) reminds us that

various early Mahāyāna sūtras express somewhat, and sometimes radically, different points of view, and often seem to have been written in response to diverse stimuli. For example, the tenor of such (apparently) early sūtras as the *Kāśyapaaparivarta* and the *Rāṣṭrapālapariṣcchā* on the one hand seems to have little in common with the logic and rhetoric behind

¹ I have been able to profit from Douglas Osto's as yet unfinished article «Reimagining early Mahāyāna: a review of the contemporary state of the field», which he kindly sent me; see also OSTO 2008: 106 ff.

the likewise putatively early *Pratyutpannasamṃmukhāvasthita*, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* *Prajñāpāramitā* or *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* on the other.

Shimoda (2009: 7) suggests that «the Mahāyāna initially existed in the form of diverse phenomena to which the same name eventually began to be applied». Boucher (2008: xii) sums up recent work, saying: «Much of the recent scholarship on the early Mahāyāna points to a tradition that arose not as a single, well-defined, unitary movement, but from multiple trajectories emanating from and alongside Mainstream Buddhism». Ruegg (2004: 33) adds a geographic dimension: «The geographical spread of early Mahāyāna would appear to have been characterized by polycentric diffusion»². A decade before him, Harrison (1995: 56) called Mahāyāna «a pan-Buddhist movement –or, better, a loose set of movements».

This paper does not intend to find fault with these new insights into early Mahāyāna. However, it wishes to draw attention to a factor that is habitually overlooked in this discussion, namely, the dependence of most early Mahāyāna texts on the scholastic developments that had taken place during the final centuries preceding the Common Era, in northwestern India³. This, as we will see, may have chronological and geographical consequences⁴.

Consider the following statement by Paul Williams (1989: 16):

It is sometimes thought that one of the characteristics of early Mahāyāna was a teaching of the emptiness of dharmas (*dharmasūnyatā*) –a teaching that these constituents, too, lack inherent existence, are not ultimate realities, in the same way as our everyday world is not an ultimate reality for the Abhidharma. ...As a characteristic of early Mahāyāna this is false.

Williams then draws attention to some non-Mahāyāna texts –the *Lokānuvartana Sūtra* and the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra* of Harivarman– that teach the emptiness of dharmas. In other words, Williams does not deny that the teaching of emptiness of dharmas is a characteristic of many early Mahāyāna works; he merely points out that the same teaching is also found in certain non-Mahāyāna works. David Seyfort Ruegg makes a similar observation (2004: 39):

² RUEGG explains (2004: 33-34): «From the start, an important part in the spread of Mahāyāna was no doubt played both by the Northwest of the Indian subcontinent and by the Āndhra country in south-central India, but presumably neither was the sole place of its origin. Bihar, Bengal and Nepal too were important centres of Mahāyāna. Sri Lanka also was involved in the history of the Mahāyāna...».

³ An important exception is HARRISON 1978: 39-40: «[The philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā*] attacked the qualified realism of the prevalent Sarvāstivādins and held that all dharmas ... are essentially empty (*sūnyā*) and devoid of objective reality or 'own-being' (*svabhāva*). Walsler's recent book (2005) appears to overlook the direct or indirect dependence of many Mahāyāna works on northwestern scholasticism.

⁴ Peter SKILLING (2010: 6) rightly reminds us «that the monastics who practised Mahāyāna took Śrāvaka vows, and shared the same monasteries with their fellow ordinands. Above all, we should not forget that those who practised Mahāyāna accepted the Śrāvaka *Pitakas*. They followed one or the other *vinaya*, they studied and recited *sūtras*, and they studied the *abhidharma*. The point to be made in this article is that, in order to study Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma must exist, and one must have access to it.

The doctrine of the non-substantiality of phenomena (*dbarmanairātmya/dbarmaniḥsvabbāvatā*, i.e. *svabbāva-sūnyatā* ‘Emptiness of self-existence’) has very often been regarded as criterial, indeed diagnostic, for identifying a teaching or work as Mahāyānist. For this there may of course be a justification. But it has nevertheless to be recalled that by the authorities of the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyānist philosophy, it is regularly argued that not only the Mahāyānist but even the Śrāvakayānist Arhat must of necessity have an understanding (if only a somewhat limited one) of *dbarmanairātmya*.

Once again, Ruegg does not deny that the emptiness of dharmas is a teaching that is almost omnipresent in early Mahāyāna texts. Like Williams, he merely points out that it is not limited to these texts.

Neither Williams nor Ruegg mention what I consider most important: that the very question of the emptiness or otherwise of dharmas is based on the ontological schemes elaborated in Greater Gandhāra, perhaps by the Sarvāstivādins, but this is not certain. All these texts, whether Mahāyāna or not, testify to the influence this ontology had come to exert on Buddhist thought all over India. However, this ontology had originally been limited to a geographical region, and may have taken a while before leaving this region. The fact that Mahāyāna texts taught the emptiness of dharmas may not therefore signify that this is a typically or exclusively Mahāyāna position, but it does emphasize the dependence of much of Mahāyāna literature on developments that had begun in a small corner of north-western India. The question is, did the Mahāyāna texts concerned undergo this influence in Greater Gandhāra itself, or did it do so elsewhere, when the originally Gandharan ontology had spread to other parts of the subcontinent? The answer to this question cannot but lie in chronology: when did this Abhidharmic ontology leave Greater Gandhāra, and when were the earliest Mahāyāna texts that betray its influence composed? If these Mahāyāna texts were composed before Abhidharmic ontology left Greater Gandhāra, then these texts must have been composed in Greater Gandhāra⁶.

With this in mind, let us look at a recent article by Allon and Salomon (2010). These two authors argue that the earliest evidence of Mahāyāna that has reached us comes from Gandhāra: «three... manuscripts have... been discovered which testify to the existence of Mahayana literature in Gāndhārī... reaching back, apparently, into the formative period of the Mahayana itself» (p. 9). They conclude «that the Mahayana was already a significant, if perhaps still a minority presence in the earlier period of the Buddhist manuscripts in Gandhāra» (p. 12). Allon and Salomon raise the question whether «Gandhāra played a formative role in the emergence of Mahayana», and whether texts like the ones that have survived «were originally composed in this region» (p. 17). They caution however that these types

⁵ So already DESSEIN 2009: 53: «it appears that it was in the north that early Mahayanistic ideas were fitted into the framework of Sarvāstivāda abhidharmic developments». Cp. SKILLING 2010: 17 n.° 49: «In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (chap. 9, v. 41), a rhetorical opponent of the Mahāyāna questions the usefulness of the teaching of emptiness: it is the realization of the Four Truths of the Noble that leads to liberation –what use is emptiness?».

⁶ Perhaps Kaśmīra, too, should be taken into consideration; see below.

of texts may have been available at other major Buddhist centers throughout the subcontinent during this period: «It is merely the subcontinental climate, which is so deleterious to the preservation of organic materials, that has denied us the evidence» (p. 17).

Allon and Salomon's caution is justified and appreciated. However, as observed above, the region of Greater Gandhāra did not only distinguish itself from other Buddhist regions through its climate, or through its exceptional aptitude to preserve manuscripts that could not survive elsewhere. The Buddhism of Greater Gandhāra distinguishes itself equally through the intellectual revolution that had taken place there during the centuries immediately preceding the Common Era. It is here that the modification and elaboration of Abhidharma took place that became the basis of virtually all forms of subcontinental Buddhism. Clearly Greater Gandhāra was not just one other Buddhist center. It may be justified to consider it the most important Buddhist center of the Indian subcontinent around the beginning of the Common Era. The fact that it has a climate that is favorable to the preservation of organic materials may be looked upon as a fortunate extra.

Consider now the following. Allon and Salomon draw attention to various early fragments of early Mahāyāna texts that have recently become available. The following passage in their article is of particular interest (p. 10):

The so-called «split» collection of Gāndhārī manuscripts, which has not yet been published but which is being studied by Harry Falk, contains a manuscript with texts corresponding to the first (on the recto side) and fifth (verso) chapters of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. This scroll has been radiocarbon dated to a range of 23-43 CE (probability 14.3 percent) or 47-127 (probability 81.1 percent), and a date in the later first or early second century CE is consistent with its paleographic and linguistic characteristics. Therefore in this Gāndhārī Prajñāpāramitā manuscript we have the earliest firm dating for a Mahayana sutra manuscript in any language, as well as the earliest specific attestation of Mahayana literature in early Gandhāra.

Falk's article has meanwhile come out (2011) and studies, among other things, the manuscript referred to in this passage. We learn from it (p. 20) that

[a] comparison with the Chinese translation of Lokakṣema, dated 179/180, and the classical version as translated by Kumārajīva clearly shows a development from a simple to a more developed text. The Gāndhārī text looks archaic and is less verbose than what Lokakṣema translated. It can be shown that his version was already slightly inflated by the insertion of stock phrases, appositions and synonyms. The Sanskrit version, finally, expanded still further.

The special point to be emphasized is that the «Perfection of Wisdom», which is the subject matter of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in its surviving Sanskrit version, only makes sense against the background of the overhaul of Buddhist scholasticism that had taken place in Greater Gandhāra during the last centuries preceding the Common Era. It was in Greater Gandhāra, during this period, that Buddhist scholasticism developed an ontology centered around its lists of

7 The Gāndhārī text calls itself, in a colophon, just *Prajñāpāramitā*.

dharmas. Lists of dharmas had been drawn up before the scholastic revolution in Greater Gandhāra, and went on being drawn up elsewhere with the goal of preserving the teaching of the Buddha. But the Buddhists of Greater Gandhāra were the first to use these lists of dharmas to construe an ontology, unheard of until then. They looked upon the dharmas as the only really existing things, rejecting the existence of entities that were made up of them. No effort was spared to systematize the ontological scheme developed in this manner, and the influence exerted by it on more recent forms of Buddhism in the subcontinent and beyond was to be immense. But initially this was a geographically limited phenomenon⁸. It may even be possible to approximately date the beginning of this intellectual revolution. I have argued in a number of publications that various features of the grammarian Patañjali's (*Vyākaraṇa-*) *Mahābhāṣya* must be explained in the light of his acquaintance with the fundamentals of the newly developed Abhidharma⁹. This would imply that the intellectual revolution in northwestern Buddhism had begun before the middle of the second century BCE. If it is furthermore correct to think, as I have argued elsewhere, that this intellectual revolution was inspired by the interaction between Buddhists and Indo-Greeks, it may be justified to situate the beginning of the new Abhidharma at a time following the renewed conquest of Gandhāra by the Indo-Greeks; this was in 185 BCE¹⁰. The foundations for the new Abhidharma may therefore have been laid toward the middle of the second century BCE.

It is not known for how long this form of Abhidharma remained confined to Greater Gandhāra. There is, as a matter of fact, reason to think that Kaśmīra was implicated in this development virtually from its beginning. It is here that the three extant *Vibhāṣā* compendia were composed. The most recent of these three, the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, refers to the «former king, Kaniṣka, of Gandhāra»¹¹. Kaniṣka's realm appears to have begun in 127 CE¹². The *Mahāvibhāṣā* is presumably younger than this, but not much. The other two *Vibhāṣās* are slightly older, and may therefore belong to the first century CE. However, indirect evidence pushes the date further back. It appears that the grammarian Patañjali lived in Kaśmīra in the middle of the second century BCE. Patañjali betrays familiarity with a number of fundamental concepts of Sarvāstivāda scholasticism¹³.

This form of Abhidharma subsequently spread beyond Greater Gandhāra and Kaśmīra. Perhaps Nāgārjuna is the first author from a different region and familiar with the new Abhidharma whose writings have been preserved¹⁴. Nāgārjuna's date

⁸ See BRONKHORST 1999; 2009: 81-114.

⁹ BRONKHORST 1987: 43-71; 1994; 2002; 2004: esp. §§ 8-9.

¹⁰ SALOMON 2005.

¹¹ WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 232; DESSEIN 2009: 44.

¹² FALK 2001; see further GOLZIO 2008.

¹³ Bronkhorst, forthcoming, with references to further literature. Note that the word Sarvāstivāda is here used in a general and imprecise manner; it is not at all certain that the early Abhidharma developments in northwestern India belonged to that school in particular.

¹⁴ The influence of the new Abhidharma on Jainism, too, may go back to an early date and a region different from Greater Gandhāra; see BRONKHORST 2011: 130 ff.

appears to be the end of the second or the beginning of the third century CE¹⁵. Inscriptional evidence confirms that there were Sarvāstivādins in northern India outside Gandhāra from the first century CE onward¹⁶. In other words, the scholastic form of Abhidharma developed in Greater Gandhāra and Kaśmīra spread beyond this region at least from the first century CE on¹⁷.

The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, as are other texts of the same genre, is largely built on the scholastic achievements of Greater Gandhāra; it draws conclusions from these. One of its recurring themes is its emphasis that everything that is not a dharma does not exist. This is the inevitable corollary of the conviction that only dharmas really exist, but one that is rarely emphasized in the Abhidharma texts. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* goes further and claims that the dharmas themselves do not exist either, that they are empty (*śūnya*). Once again, all this only makes sense against the historical background of the Abhidharma elaborated in Greater Gandhāra. Another recurring theme concerns the beginning and end of dharmas. This is clearly the elaboration of a question with which the scholiasts of Greater Gandhāra were confronted: did they have to postulate the existence of a dharma called «beginning» (*jāti, utpatti*) in order to account for the fact that dharmas, being momentary, have a beginning in time? The scholiasts explored this possibility, and ended up with improbable dharmas such as «the beginning of beginning» (*jātijāti*). The position taken in numerous Mahāyāna texts is that dharmas have no beginning (and no end). This makes perfect sense among thinkers who are steeped in Gandharan scholasticism, but nowhere else.

Let us look at one passage from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Without the prior conviction that only dharmas exist, it is pointless to claim that something does not exist because it is not a dharma. Yet this is the point frequently made in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Consider the following passage, in the abbreviated translation of Edward Conze (1958: 1-2):

Thereupon the Venerable Subhūti, by the Buddha's might, said to the Lord: The Lord has said, «make it clear now, Subhūti, to the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, starting from perfect wisdom, how the Bodhisattvas, the great beings go forth into perfect wisdom!» When one speaks of a 'Bodhisattva', what dharma does that word 'Bodhisattva' denote? I do not, O Lord, see that dharma 'Bodhisattva', nor a dharma called 'perfection of wisdom'. Since I neither find, nor apprehend, nor see a dharma 'Bodhisattva', nor a 'perfection of wisdom', what Bodhisattva shall I instruct and admonish in what perfection of wisdom? And yet, O Lord, if, when this is pointed out, a Bodhisattva's heart does not become cowed, nor stolid, does not despair nor despond, if he does not turn away or become dejected, does not tremble, is not frightened or terrified, it is just this Bodhisattva, this great being who should be instructed in perfect wisdom.

¹⁵ WALSER 2002; 2005: 86.

¹⁶ HBI, p. 578.

¹⁷ For the relative chronology of the earlier Abhidharma works, see DESSEIN 1996. We should not forget, of course, that the grammarian Patañjali was already acquainted with the fundamental notions of the new Abhidharma soon after 150 BCE. Different signs point in the direction that Patañjali lived in Kaśmīra; see «Vedic schools in northwestern India», in preparation.

Ontological 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*, one of the two chapters of which parts have been preserved on the manuscript from Gandhāra. Is this already true of the early manuscript from Gandhāra?

The last sentence translated above looks like this in the surviving Sanskrit version¹⁸:

[api tu khalu punar bhagavan saced evaṃ bhāṣyamāṇe deśyamāṇe upadiśyamāṇe bodhisattvasya] cittam nāvalīyate na saṃlīyate na viśīdati na viśādam āpadyate nāsya viprsthībhavati mānasam na bhagnaprsthībhavati not-trasyati na samtrasyati na samtrāsam āpadyate [eṣa eva bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ prajñāpāramitāyām anusāsanīyaḥ]

I have chosen this passage because Falk, in his discussion of the Gāndhārī manuscript, presents this very passage by way of illustration. It turns out that only the underlined parts of the central portion of this sentence have something corresponding to them in the Gāndhārī manuscript: *cito na oliati na viparathī bhavati na samtrāso avajati*. Falk does not give a full edition of the text¹⁹, but this example supports the reasonable supposition that also the manuscript from Gandhāra dealt with at least some of the philosophical issues that had been raised and developed in Greater Gandhāra²⁰.

Let us get to the main point. The Gāndhārī manuscript, or rather the text it contains, may conceivably have been composed when this kind of Abhidharma thought was still the exclusive property of Greater Gandhāra²¹. If so, this text was itself composed in Greater Gandhāra, and it becomes tempting to conclude that the kind of Mahāyāna to which it gives expression began in that part of the subcontinent.

¹⁸ ASP (Vaidya) p. 3, l. 10-13. Cp. KARASHIMA 2011: 4.

¹⁹ He announces (p. 22): «An edition combining the Gāndhārī readings from the birch-bark, the Chinese translation[s] by Lokakṣema, Kumārajīva etc. and the standard Sanskrit version, will be published in next year's issue of ARIRIAB as a joint work of S. Karashima and myself».

²⁰ SCHMITHAUSEN (1977: 44 ff.) has plausibly argued, on the basis of the Chinese translations of this passage, that originally it only spoke of the non-existence of the Bodhisattva, not of the non-existence of the «perfection of wisdom» (*prajñāpāramitā*). He concludes from this that the passage was enlarged, so as to include, beside the *pudgalanairātmya* that is behind the non-existence of a Bodhisattva, also the Mahayanist *dharmanairātmya*, which is behind the non-existence of *Prajñāpāramitā*. This conclusion is doubtful. It is based on the assumption that *Prajñāpāramitā* is a dharma. This assumption conflicts both with the wording of the passage under consideration –*tam apy abam bhagavan dbarmam na samanupaśyāmi yad uta prajñāpāramitā nāma* «I do not, O Lord, see a dharma called “perfection of wisdom” –and, to the best of my knowledge, with the traditional lists of dharmas. It is true that *prajñā* «wisdom» figures in those lists, but *prajñāpāramitā* does not. Just as the scholiasts distinguished between dharmas and their beginning, or birth (*jāti*), they would distinguish between «wisdom» and the «perfection of wisdom»; the former exists (because it is a dharma), the latter does not (because it is not a dharma).

²¹ With respect to Bactria, FUSSMAN (2011: 36), summing up a discussion, states: «On dira donc que la présence au moins occasionnelle de moines mahayanistes à Kara-Tepa et Fajaz-Tepa n'est pas exclu, qu'elle est même probable, mais qu'il n'existe aucun indice le démontrant». The *nikāya*-affiliation of these two monasteries was *mahāsāṅghika* (*id.*, p. 35).

This tentative conclusion is in need of specification. What is being discussed is the kind of Mahāyāna that leans heavily on the scholastic developments initiated in Greater Gandhāra. This may signify that the kind of Mahāyāna that draws inspiration from the scholastic innovations of Greater Gandhāra might possibly have originated there. The same is not necessarily true of Mahāyāna in all of its forms. The Bodhisattva ideal, after which Mahāyāna is also known as Bodhisattva-yāna, may well exist without the scholastic ideas elaborated in Greater Gandhāra, and may indeed have existed without them²². This is the conclusion that one is tempted to draw from various passages in both Mahāyāna and Mainstream (Sarvāstivāda) texts collected by Fujita (2009). There were apparently Buddhists who pursued the goal of becoming Buddhas, i.e. they were bodhisattvas, and yet they did not follow many of the distinctive teachings that we find in most Mahāyāna texts²³.

This is even true of a text that is usually considered a Mahāyāna text, presumably one of the oldest that has survived, the *Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra*²⁴. Nattier (2003: 179 ff.) draws attention to what she calls «the absence of the rhetoric of absence itself». She explains, «the *Ugra* lacks anything that could be construed as a “philosophy of emptiness”». She concludes (p. 182): «It is tempting, therefore –and it may well be correct– to view the *Ugra* as representing a preliminary stage in the emergence of the bodhisattva vehicle, a phase centered on the project of “constructing” ideas about the practices of the bodhisattva that preceded a later “deconstructionist” –or better, dereifying– move».

It is clear from Nattier’s remark that she is tempted to order the *Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra* chronologically. This tendency presents her with some difficulties, in that the *Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra* is not the only Mahāyāna Sūtra that ignores the «philosophy of emptiness»: it shares this feature with the *Akṣobhyavyūha* and the *Sukhāvātūvyūha*, both of which seem «unconcerned about any possible hazards of reification» (p. 180 f.). This is why she concludes (p. 182): «... it is clear that the move from affirmation to antireification did not proceed in one-way fashion. On the contrary, what we see in later literature is more like a series of zigzag developments, with each

²² Cfr. RUEGG 2004: 51: «no single philosophical doctrine and no single religious practice –not even the Bodhisattva-ideal or the *svabbāva-sūnyatā- (niḥsvabbāvatā)* or *dbarmanairātmya*-doctrine– can of and by itself be claimed to be the main religious or philosophical source of the Mahāyāna as a whole». Ruegg presumably includes the Bodhisattva-ideal in this enumeration because this ideal also existed outside Mahāyāna. Cp. SCHOPEN 2004: 493-494: «There is ... a kind of general consensus that if there is a single defining characteristic of the Mahāyāna it is that for Mahāyāna the ultimate religious goal is no longer nirvāṇa, but rather the attainment of full awakening or buddhahood by all. This goal in one form or another and, however nuanced, attenuated, or temporally postponed, characterizes virtually every form of Mahāyāna Buddhism that we know». VETTER (1994, 2001) argues «against the generally held notion that Mahāyāna and Prajñāpāramitā are identical, and for the thesis that the two came together at a certain moment in time, and yet did not always and everywhere remain united» (2001: 59).

²³ See further RUEGG 2004: 11 with note 15. Fujita’s article relies heavily on Sarvāstivāda materials, but suggests that there may have been bodhisattvas also in other Nikāyas. The Sarvāstivādins, needless to add, were the very Buddhists who elaborated, or at any rate preserved, the scholastic ideas of Greater Gandhāra here under discussion. WILLIAMS’S (1989: 26 ff.) discussion of the *Ajitasena Sūtra* may be of interest here.

²⁴ NATTIER (2003: 10) cautiously specifies that the *Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra* «should not... be called a ‘Mahāyāna sūtra’ –not, that is, without considerable qualification».

new idea about the bodhisattva path first asserted in positive (or “constructionist”) fashion, and then negated in subsequent texts». If one thinks only in chronologically linear terms, it may indeed be necessary to think of «zigzag developments», but there is of course no obligation to do so. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that certain schools of Mahāyāna (if «school» is the term to use here) remained unaffected by the new Abhidharma, unlike most other Mahāyāna schools, yet survived beside them.

Schopen (2004: 495) speaks about «the notion that [Mahāyāna] was a reaction to a narrow scholasticism on the part of monastic, Hīnayāna, Buddhism»; he thinks that this notion should have seemed silly from the start. Such a view, he continues, was only even possible by completely ignoring most of Buddhist literature and putting undue emphasis on Abhidharma. Schopen’s point is well taken, but overlooks the fact that most of the Mahāyāna texts have been profoundly influenced by Gandharan Abhidharma, whether directly or indirectly. A few examples must suffice to illustrate the point. Harrison (1990: xviii) says the following about the *Pratyutpannabuddhasamṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra*:

what it is at pains to get across to its readers and hearers is the same attitude to phenomena that we find emphasised in the Prajñāpāramitā literature –namely, that all phenomena, or rather all dharmas ... are empty (*śūnya*), that is, devoid of essence, independent existence or ‘own-being’ (*svabhāva*). Since this is so, 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 of experience as entities or existing things (*bhāva*), and regards them as possessing an independent and objective reality²⁵.

About the *Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra*, Lamotte (1965/1998: 40-41) observed:

The essential aim of the [*Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra*] is to inculcate into its listeners or readers the Puḍgala- and Dharmanairātmya. Not only do beings not exist, but things are empty of self-nature, unarisen, undestroyed, originally calm and naturally abiding in Nirvāṇa, free of marks and in consequence inexpressible and unthinkable, the same and devoid of duality.

Once again we are here confronted with the kind of thought that could only arise on the basis of Gandharan Abhidharma. About the *Ratnakūṭa* texts, Pagel (1995: 100) observes:

Like practically all other Mahāyāna sūtras, the Ratnakūṭa’s bodhisattva texts operate within the gnoseologic parameter of Mahāyāna ontology. This is most ostensibly borne out by the frequency with which they draw connections with its axioms of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), sameness (*samatā*) and non-objectifiability (*anupalambha*) that most accept as the philosophic substratum for their exposition.

The following passage from the *Kāśyapaṭivarta* shows the preoccupation of this text, too, with the ontological status of dharmas²⁶:

²⁵ See however HARRISON 1978: 55: «In its interpretation of a ‘Mahāyāna-ised’ form of *buddhānusmṛti* in terms of the doctrine of Śūnyatā [the *Pratyutpanna-sūtra*] reveals tensions within the Mahāyāna».

²⁶ *Kāśyapaṭivarta*, ed. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, pp. 25-26, § 63; tr. FRAUWALLNER 1969/2010: 178-179 (replacing *factors* with *dharmas*); cp. WELLER 1970: 122-123 [1201-1202].

This also, Kāśyapa, is the middle way, the regarding of dharmas in accordance with truth: that one does not make the dharmas empty through emptiness but, rather, the dharmas themselves are empty; that one does not make the dharmas signless through the signless but, rather, the dharmas themselves are signless; ...that one does not make the dharmas unarisen through non-arising, but, rather the dharmas themselves are unarisen; that one does not make the dharmas unborn through not being born, but, rather, the dharmas themselves are unborn; and that one does not make the dharmas essenceless through essencelessness (*asvabhāvatā*), but, rather, the dharmas themselves are essenceless.

Even Sūtras that lay less emphasis on «philosophy» often betray that they, too, accept ideas that are based on Gandharan scholasticism. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, for example, lays relatively little emphasis on these ontological concerns²⁷, but it is not, in its present form, without them. Consider the following passage, in which the Buddha criticizes the follower of the Śrāvakayāna²⁸:

Therefore the follower of the Śrāvakayāna [who has cut his various ties] thinks like this and speaks like this: «There are no other dharmas to be realized. I have reached Nirvāṇa».

Then the Tathāgata teaches him the Doctrine. He who has not attained all dharmas, how can Nirvāṇa belong to him? The Lord establishes him in enlightenment: He in whom the thought of enlightenment has arisen is not in Saṃsāra nor has he reached Nirvāṇa. Having understood, he sees the universe in all ten directions as being empty (*śūnya*), similar to something fabricated, similar to magic, similar to a dream, a mirage, and echo. He sees all dharmas as not having arisen, as not having come to an end, not bound and not loose, not dark and not bright.

Here the preoccupation with the ontological status of dharmas is evident, but it is not impossible that this portion is a late addition to the text²⁹. The *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchāsūtra*, too, concentrates on other issues than ontology, but reveals its ontological position in several passages, such as the following³⁰:

Like a lion, [the Blessed One] announces that all dharmas are without substratum and are empty...

²⁷ Cf. NATTIER 2003: 181: «Even the Lotus Sūtra-widely read through the lens of “emptiness” philosophy by both traditional East Asian *śūnyatā*, and in general seems more concerned with urging its listeners to have faith in their own future Buddhahood than in encouraging them to “deconstruct” their concepts».

²⁸ SADDHARMAP(V) p. 93 l. 9-15; SADDHARMAP(W) p. 127 l. 2-11: *tena śrāvakayānīyaḥ evaṃ jānāti, evaṃ ca vācaṃ bhāṣate: na santy apare dbarmā abhisamboddbhavyāḥ/ nirvāṇaprāpto 'smīti/ atba kbalu tathāgatas tasmai dbarmaṃ deśayati/ yena sarvadbarmā na prāptāḥ, kutas tasya nirvāṇam iti? taṃ bhagavān bodbau samādāpayati/ sa utpannabodbicitto na saṃsārasbbito na nirvāṇaprāpto bhavati/ so 'vadbudhya traidbārukaṃ daśasu dīkṣu sūnyam nirmītopamaṃ māyopamaṃ svapnamarīcipratīśrutkopamaṃ lokaṃ paśyati/ sa sarvadbarmān anuṭpannān aniruddbān abadbān amuktān atamondbakārān naprakāśān paśyati/*. Cp. KOTSUKI 2010: V.44b.1-3 (pp. 66-67); MIZUFUNE 2011: V.56b.5-57a.1 (pp. 81-82).

²⁹ KARASHIMA 2001: 172: «The portion in the Lotus Sutra where we can clearly see the influence of the *śūnyatā* thought system, is in the second half of the *Oṣadbī-parivarta* (V). Hence this verse portion, which is not found in Kumārajīva's translation, is thought to have been interpolated at a much later time». See further VETTER 2001: 83 ff.

³⁰ RP p. 2 l. 9; p. 3 l. 15-16 (tr. BOUCHER 2008: 114-115). On the presence of old Āryā-verses in this text, see KLAUS 2008.

Just as a lion, roaring in a mountain cave, frightens prey here in the world, so too does the Lord of Men, resounding that [all dharmas] are empty and without substratum, frighten those adhering to heretical schools.

...
 Focused on emptiness and signlessness, he considers all conditioned things to be like illusions.

According to Osto (2008: 19), «the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, while not specifically elaborating a Madhyamaka or Yogācāra position, contains passages that support aspects of both schools». What this means is that «all phenomena (dharmas) lack inherent existence or independent essence (*svabhāva*) and therefore are characterized by their emptiness (*śūnyatā*)» (p. 18).

It follows from our reflections that Gandharan influence *may* conceivably have modified an already existing preoccupation with the path to Buddhahood. This earlier preoccupation with Buddhahood might in that case not have originated in Greater Gandhāra. But even if this were to be the case, it could still be maintained that the elements in Mahāyāna that depend on the scholastic innovations of Greater Gandhāra –the ontological tendency, the interrogations about the existence of this or that dharma or about dharmas in general, the concern with emptiness, the wish to abolish conceptual constructs (*vikalpa*)– were introduced in that part of the subcontinent.

It follows from the above that early Mahāyāna may have drawn inspiration from the intellectual revolution that had taken place in Greater Gandhāra. It is even possible that it underwent this influence, at least initially, in that very region.

By way of conclusion it will be interesting to recall Enomoto's (2000) theory to explain the use of the expression Mūlasarvāstivāda beside Sarvāstivāda: «the name Mūlasarvāstivādin was used by Sarvāstivādins to claim (ahistorically) that they were the “root” of all other *nikāyas*»³¹. Given the enormous influence exerted by Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma on other schools of Buddhism, some of whose manifestations have been considered in this paper, the Sarvāstivādins' ahistorical claim becomes more than understandable.

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³¹ SKILLING 2010: 9 n.º 31; see further SKILLING 2002: 374-376; WYNNE 2008.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARIRIAB	Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University.
AS	Asiatische Studien, Études Asiatiques, Bern.
ASp (Vaidya)	Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1960 (BST 4).
BBU	Bibliotheca Buddhica, St. Petersburg (Leningrad).
BST	Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, Darbhanga.
EB	The Eastern Buddhist, Kyōto.
HBI	Étienne Lamotte, Histoire du bouddhisme indien, des origines à l'ère Śāka, Louvain 1958.
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal, Den Haag, Dordrecht.
KLSCHR	Kleine Schriften [Glasenapp-Stiftung], Wiesbaden, Stuttgart.
RP	Rāṣṭrapālapariṣcchā, ed. L. Finot, Petersburg 1901 (BBU 2).
SADDHARMAP (V)	Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga 1960 (BST 6).
SADDHARMAP (W)	Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra, ed. U. Wogihara and C. Tsuchida, Tokyo 1958.
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens, Wien.



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