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The Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts – a preliminary survey

1. The discovery

In 1999 a cardbox containing a number of folded birch bark scrolls was brought to Mr. M. Nasim Khan, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Department of Archaeology of the University of Peshawar (cf. NASIM KHAN & SOHAIL KHAN 2004 (2006): 10, fig. 2). Already some time before he had heard about this discovery while working on a field trip in the Bajaur area. According to these rumours and the description given by the person who delivered this parcel and claimed to be the finder, the manuscripts were found in the vicinity of the village Miān Kili in the Dir district,¹ but on the Bajaur side of the river which marks the border between both districts. The exact find-spot of the manuscripts was indicated as the ruins of a Buddhist monastery called today simply *maḥal* (Pers./Arab. “house, palace”) (cf. figs. 1,2).



fig. 1: Map with Miān Kili and its position within “Greater Gandhāra”

¹ The place can easily be located with help of Google Earth at 34° 49' 24" North, 71° 40' 17" East.

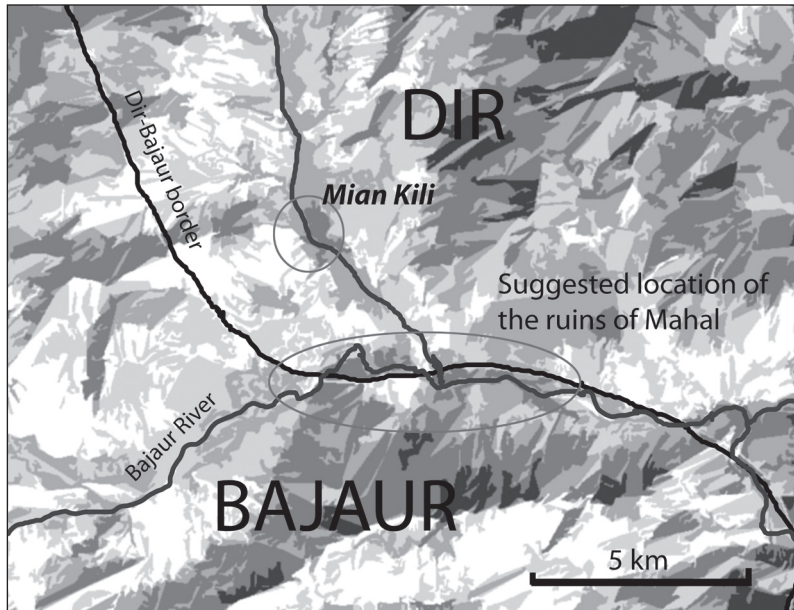


fig. 2: Map showing the suggested findspot of the manuscripts

It was stated that the scrolls were found *in situ* deposited in one of the cells of the monastery in a stone chamber formed by large plates and measuring ca. 50 cm in diameter. This description, however, raises some questions regarding the character of this manuscript deposit. Generally, the conditions under which the manuscripts were kept and finally discovered are unknown. Only the British Library (BL) and the Senior Collections (RS) can perhaps throw some light on the actual situation of the deposits. Both of them were sold on the art market inside large earthen pots. According to RICHARD SALOMON these pots can be associated with funeral vessels which were abundantly found in the area around Haḍḍa, the supposed origin of both collections (1999: 243-246). If this is accepted, the manuscripts can be regarded as having been “ritually buried”, either in a *stūpa* or in the vicinity of a Buddhist monastery.² In view of numerous early reports about

² In the case of the BL collection this interpretation was mainly based on the rather deteriorated and often incomplete condition of most of the manuscripts, which are said to be discarded and ritually buried (SALOMON 1999: 81-84). This explanation was doubted by LENZ for whom the question remains open (2003:110). After the discovery of the almost completely preserved manuscripts of the Senior collection SALOMON considers two theories: “a ritual interment for worn out old manuscripts” or “an accompaniment to funereal ceremonies for deceased monks” (2006b: 353).

manuscript remains within *stūpas* or relic chambers (SALOMON 1999: 59-65) this explanation is at present the most plausible one. Nonetheless, this does by no way imply that all other early Buddhist manuscripts should have been treated in the same way. Thus the majority, by far, of the Central Asian manuscripts is reported not to have come from a *stūpa* or burial context but was found deposited inside the rooms of monasteries – either in a library or in a monk’s cell – or inside the pedestals of statues (cf. for the Turfan fragments SANDER 1968: 8-21). Similarly, the huge collection of Gilgit manuscripts was not found inside a *stūpa*, as suggested some time ago, but most probably in a building serving as library (FUSSMAN 2004). Therefore it cannot be excluded that our new collection deviates from this supposed *stūpa*-burial pattern and represents a manuscript library or a part thereof not yet ritually buried but being either still in use or just kept aside for being referred to in case of need. In this case the reported stone chamber should be considered as a box for protecting the scrolls from external damage through animals or sunlight.

On the other hand, however, we also have to take into consideration that the description given by the finder might simply be wrong and what was designated as “cell” was indeed the remains of a *stūpa*. The device called in NASIM KHAN’S article “a stone chamber” can be compared with similar constructions of relic chambers which were indeed found inside *stūpas*, like e.g. the one depicted in KURITA 2003: 349, fig. 33. Similar relic chambers are also described by Masson, e.g. in Bīmārān near Jalalabad (WILSON 1841: 79).

On the basis of the yet available evidence it is not possible to decide which of these possibilities is preferable. Thus at the time being the Bajaur Collection cannot help to settle this question which has to remain unsolved also with regard to the other Gandhāran manuscript hoards.

Despite later attempts to change the find-spot from Pakistan into Afghanistan (cf. NASIM KHAN & SOHAIL KHAN 2006 (2004): 10), the reports about the Bajaur origin of the collection seem to remain the most reliable ones. During my stay in Peshawar in spring 2008 they were also confirmed by an independent source. It was therefore decided to name the new collection according to its provenance “Bajaur Collection”.

2. Conservation and Research

In the years following the discovery the scrolls were unrolled and re-stored by M. Nasim Khan and his team at the University of Peshawar (cf. NASIM KHAN & SOHAIL KHAN 2004 (2006): 10-12). The restoration process resulted in the preservation of the scrolls within 35 glass frames

(and a debris box containing very small remains of birch bark). Today all of these frames are kept in the premises of the Department of Archaeology of the University of Peshawar for research purposes. In 2004 Nasim Khan invited us to take part in the scientific investigation of the manuscript collection. Accordingly, since October 2005 the collection has been studied in the framework of a project headed by Professor Harry Falk and sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. From 2005 till 2007 this project was part of a more comprehensive cooperation between the Department of Archaeology of the University of Peshawar and the Freie Universität Berlin (“Pak-German projects”). Accordingly, the Pakistan side published a first introductory article in 2006 (NASIM KHAN & SOHAIL KHAN 2004 (2006)). The present article will shortly introduce the results of the German research in this initial phase of the project which was dedicated to the identification and preliminary cataloguing of the manuscripts.

3. The physical features

The Bajaur collection comprises altogether fragments from ca. 19 different birch bark scrolls, written by at least 18 different scribes.³

The size of the scrolls is rather different. While the largest fragment (BC 2) measures more than 220 cm with altogether ca. 640 carefully written lines of text, the shortest birch bark is just about 6 cm long and 13 cm wide (BC 7). Similarly heterogenous is the fragments' state of preservation. Some scrolls are almost completely preserved, many of them miss one side – a feature which was also to be observed with many manuscripts of the BL collection. A few are almost entirely broken into many small fragments. In these cases it is presently difficult to establish exact measurements or even the contents of the text.

The formats represented in the Bajaur Collection correspond to the varieties known from other collections (SALOMON 1999: 87-106). Although, due to the fragmentary condition of some remains, it is not in all cases possible to determine the original format, the majority of the Bajaur material can be ascribed to the group of long, rather narrow scrolls with a width from only 11+x cm to about 18 cm. Out of the 19 scrolls eleven belong to this type. Their length can considerably vary reaching from only 7 cm up to the above mentioned 220 cm. Up to a length of about 45 cm the scrolls

³ It cannot be excluded that further research reveals that some of the scrolls and scribes treated here separately are indeed identical. The numbers are therefore provisional.

are usually formed of a single sheet of birch bark. Scrolls exceeding this length are glued together forming thus the so-called “composite scrolls” also known from the BL collection. The method of stitching together the different birch bark strips generally corresponds to that described by Salomon for the BL collection and the Khotan Dharmapada (SALOMON 1999: 92-98). Only in the case of the extremely long fragment 2 we observe a somewhat different method where not only simple strips are laid one above the other, but the juncture is consolidated by a vertical piece of bark glued beneath the horizontal parts. This method obviously enlarges the surface for glueing and probably also improves the stability of the juncture (fig.3).⁴

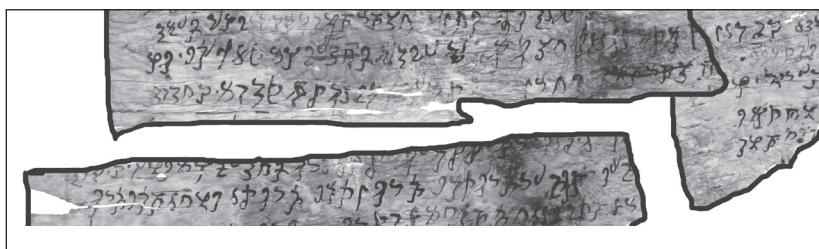


fig 3: Juncture of the composite scroll BC 2

Scrolls of the long, narrow type often show sewn margins which were probably meant for the protection of the fragile edges, but also prevented the dry birch bark from horizontal breaks (cf. SALOMON 1999: 94). Formally, these stitches were also perceived as a writing margin as can be deduced from unstitched scrolls which show a vertical margin line instead (figs. 4 and 5).

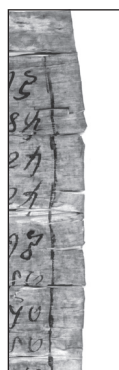
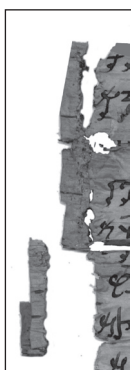


fig. 4: Stitched margin of fragment BC 1 fig. 5: Margin indicated with ink (BC 3)

⁴ It seems that the same method was also used in BL fragment 1 depicted in SALOMON 1999: 93.

A considerable number of manuscripts belongs to the so-called wide, short format written on a sheet of birch bark which is usually wider than 20 cm. Scrolls of this type were often folded in the middle after enrollment. In some cases this resulted either in the complete vertical break of the scroll or in the loss of considerable portions of one of its sides. The wide type was generally used for relatively short texts, like e.g. most of the scholastic texts of the Bajaur Collection.

Usually, in both format types both sides of the scrolls are inscribed, while the text of the obverse is continued on the reverse turning the scroll simply upside down. In few cases the reverse remained blank (BC 8, 10, 15). Sometimes this blank space was used later to add another text (BC 1, 9, 13).

4. Palaeography, language and date of the collection

All manuscripts of the collection are written in Kharoṣṭhī script. In the present state of research it is possible to distinguish eighteen different hands. It cannot be excluded, however, that this figure is still subject to change. Some of the scripts are very similar to each other and possibly belong to the same scribe. The differences which caused the present distinction might eventually turn out to be due to a different writing tool or writing surface.

The scripts represented in the Bajaur Collection can be stylistically divided into two distinctive groups which are characterized by a different attitude towards cursivity. Whereas the first group contains writing styles which abstain from joining letters and write clearly distinct and separate signs, the second group is characterized by varying degrees of cursivity.

As a sort of “Leit-Akṣara” serves the letter *ka*. In the non-cursive group A it is written in its archaic style with the right hook added separately to the vertical stem of the sign (fig. 6).

The cursive type combines the right arm with the leftward hook on the top and adds this line like an umbrella to the vertical stem (fig. 7). Related to both types, but different from them, is a transitional form which shows the same cursive development but still preserves the old form with a dip in the middle (cf. for this development GLASS 2007: 95). This type of *ka* can occur either in non-cursive (A: 7, 9, 15) or cursive varieties (B: 6, 8) of Kharoṣṭhī. For the moment I call these scripts “transitional”. Although according to their general appearance they can be classified either as non-cursive or cursive scripts their akṣaras share features of both groups.











Scribe	1	2	3	7	9	10	11	15	16	17
Fragment	BC 1r	BC 1v	BC 2	BC 7	BC 9r	BC 9v	BC 10	BC 15	BC 17r	BC 17v
										

fig. 6: The akṣara *ka* in the scripts of group A









Scribe	4	5	6	8	12	13	14	18
Fragment	BC 3	BC 4, 11, 18	BC 5	BC 8	BC 12	BC 13	BC 6, 19	BC 14, 16
								

fig. 7: The akṣara *ka* in the scripts of group B

Only scripts which belong to group A show sometimes a tendency to the use of footmarks. Whereas scribe 1 uses these footmarks throughout, other scribes add them only to certain letters. Thus the different attitude to the use of footmarks is another criteria for differentiation between groups A and B and between the different scribes of group A.

Due to the many common features shared by all hands of the Bajaur Collection we suggest a common palaeographical background for the scripts of both groups. Despite their different degrees of cursivity the shape of most of the letters reflects a uniform stage of development of Kharoṣṭhī and indicates a common regional and historical context.

The following table (fig. 8) compares the letters *ka*, *ca*, *cha*, *ya* and *sa* of three representative alphabets of the BC (scribe 3 for group A, scribe 13 for group B, scribe 15 for the transitional style) with the samples from three other collections. Two of these collections can be dated on the basis of radio-carbon dating. In addition, the date of the Senior scribe is supported by the inscription on the pot in which the manuscripts were kept. It is dated to the year 12 which most probably corresponds to AD 139/40.⁵ Rather uncertain

⁵ For the epigraph see SALOMON 2003: 76-77. The radio-carbon datings of the Senior scribe which roughly correspond to the inscription's date and the results of the dating of the respective Schøyen fragments (MS 2179/42, MS 2179/65, MS 2179/116) are communicated in ALLON *et al.* 2006: 284. Unfortunately, the ¹⁴C ranges of the mss. MS 2179/42 (commen-

are the dates of the BL fragments. The given figures are based on SALOMON'S suggestion on historical and palaeographical grounds (1999: 141-155) but need further confirmation especially with regard to a ranking within the collection.

Scribe	Date (AD)	<i>ka</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>cha</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>sa</i>
BL 1	ca. 25-40					
BL 2	ca. 25-40					
BL 9	ca. 25-40					
BL 21	ca. 25-40			 (chi)		
MS 22	ca. 52-234					
MS 23	ca. 72-245			—		
RS	ca. 140					
MS 18	ca. 210-417			 (che)		

tary/scholastic text) and MS 2179/65 (Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra) (= scribes MS 22, 23) are too wide to confirm the suggested rather late dates (cf. ALLON & SALOMON 2000: 267: “second or early third century A.D.”). Presumably, they should be dated into the end of the given period, i.e. the beginning of the 3rd c. AD. As Thomas Oberlies indicated to me, the problems of ¹⁴C dating for early Buddhist manuscripts were extensively discussed on the 12th conference of the IABS at London between Allon, Salomon and Sander. Cf. also FRANCO 2005 with regard to the Spitzer manuscript.
















BC 3				 (chi)		
BC 13						
BC 15				 (che)		

fig. 8: Kharoṣṭhī test letters (after GLASS 2007: 106, table 15)

The comparison shows that the scripts belonging to group A – here represented by scribe 3 and the transitional alphabet of scribe 15 – are most closely related to the BL scribes provisionally datable into the first century AD. The cursive scripts of group B show most resemblance to the second century Senior scribe. Although the tools of Kharoṣṭhī palaeography are not yet able to establish absolute or at least relative chronologies of scripts with a sufficient degree of reliability, it seems possible to place the manuscripts of the Bajaur Collection stylistically between the BL and Senior scribes which would speak in favour of a date within the first and second centuries AD with a preference to the later half of this period.

Also with regard to the degree of Sanskritisation which can serve as a further chronological criteria the BC is most closely related to the BL and RS collections and rather different from the later Schøyen and Pelliot manuscripts which show a marked tendency towards Sanskrit orthography and are supposed to go back to a date from around the 3rd century AD.⁶ With the exception of one fragment (BC 9r) which contains a Rājanīti text written in Sanskrit (see below) all texts of the BC are composed in the ordinary variety of a somewhat standardized Buddhist Gāndhārī with features of a “translationese” which reveals the underlying Buddhist Middle-Indian original either of the texts or of the specific language which was used in a Buddhist religious context. Thus the orthography and the language of the Bajaur manuscripts support the suggested dating into the first two centuries AD.

⁶ Cf. for the relationship between Sanskritisation and chronology SALOMON 1998: 150 and SALOMON 2001.

5. The texts of the Bajaur Collection and the “Gandhāran Canon”

The Bajaur Collection continues a remarkable series of discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts collections in the North-West of the Indian sub-continent (cf. ALLON 2007b and ALLON, forthcoming). The ones written in Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī language belong to a period from at latest the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. Thus the majority of them not only represents the oldest Buddhist manuscripts, but also the oldest manuscripts of texts written in an Indian script and Indian language at all. At present the following major collections or single manuscripts are known (cited here in the order of their publication/introduction with their sigla and the main sources of information).⁷

1. Khotan Dharmapada (KDhp): BROUGH 1962 (ed.)
2. Pelliot manuscripts (PC): SALOMON 1998 (ed.)
3. British Library Collection (BL): SALOMON 1999, ALLON 2001 (ed.), LENZ 2003 (ed.), SALOMON, forthcoming b (ed.)
4. “Bāmiyān fragments” of the Schøyen and other collections (MS): ALLON & SALOMON 2000 (ed.)
5. Senior Collection (RS): SALOMON 2003, GLASS 2007 (ed.), ALLON 2007a
6. University of Washington Scroll (UW)
7. Library of Congress Scroll (LC)
8. Bajaur Collection (BC): STRAUCH 2007/2008, STRAUCH, in progress (ed.)
9. Split Collection (SC)⁸

In most cases, the original findspots of these manuscripts are unknown. But if a provenance is suggested, it is either in Chinese Turkestan (KDhp, PC) or in Afghanistan (BL, RS: Haḍḍa, Schøyen: Bāmiyān⁹). The only

⁷ Text editions are indicated by (ed.). Useful surveys about the first six items of this list are GLASS 2004, SALOMON 2006b and now ALLON 2007b. ALLON, forthcoming will include some information about the LC scroll. Information from these sources is not separately indicated.

⁸ The “Split collection” was first introduced by HARRY FALK in a paper read at the XVth conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Atlanta (June 2008). See for the abstract http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/indologie/bajaur/termine/20080627_2.html. Its name and sigla were suggested to the author by HARRY FALK (September 2008).

⁹ Cf. now with further evidence and photographs of the suggested find-spot Zargaran near Bāmiyān BRAARVIG 2006: plates I, II. For the provenance of the KDhp see SALOMON 1999: 58-59, for the Pelliot manuscripts SALOMON 1998: 124.

exception are the two last mentioned collections which are both said to come from Bajaur (NWFP, Pakistan). Not only this origin but also the fact that this provenance is relatively well attested is therefore of special significance. It proves beyond doubt that Gandhāran literature flourished not only in regions beyond the Hindukush but also in Gandhāra proper, or at least at the edges of the Gandhāran core territory.

The genres so far represented by the known collections of Gāndhārī manuscripts cover a wide range of Buddhist literature. For giving a quick overview and enabling cross-references the hitherto represented texts and text genres will be subsumed in the following table (fig. 9).¹⁰

	KDhp	PC	BL	MS	RS	UW	LC	BC	SC
Śrāvakayāna Canonical Texts	Dhp	/				/			
<i>Vinaya</i>					/				
Prātimokṣasūtra									
Karmavācānā									
Vinaya related narrative prose					/				
<i>Āgama Sūtra</i>	Dhp								
Dirghāgama									
Madhyamāgama									
Samyuktāgama									
Ekottarikāgama									
Kṣudrakāgama	Dhp								
Unidentified/unspecified									
<i>Abhidharma</i>		/	/			/		/	
Para-canonical (Śrāvakayāna) texts									
Avadāna / pūrvayoga									
Rakṣā sūtras / Dhāraṇī									
Scholastic texts / commentaries									
Buddha praises / stotra									
Miscellaneous texts									
Mahāyāna texts									
Sūtras									
Scholastic texts									
Non-Buddhist texts									
Nīti texts									
Secular documents									

fig. 9: Table visualizing the contents of the extant collections of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts

¹⁰ The data compiled in the table are mainly drawn from the sources cited above. Uncer-

This survey does not necessarily imply that all the attested texts belong to the same canon of a single Buddhist *nikāya*.¹¹ Although there is strong evidence that some of the Gāndhārī texts or text collections belong to the Dharmaguptaka school this does not automatically mean that this attribution can be generalized for all of them.¹² A clear attribution is also complicated by the fact that our knowledge about the actual shape of the Dharmaguptaka canon is rather limited. According to the Vinaya of that school its complete canon consisted originally of three *piṭakas*: the Vinayapiṭaka, the Sūtrapiṭaka with Dīrghāgama, Madhyamāgama, Ekottarāgama, Saṃyuktāgama and Kṣudrakapiṭaka, and the Abhidharmapiṭaka.¹³ Later traditions, like Paramārtha, add two further piṭakas – a Dhāraṇī - (or Mantra-)Piṭaka and a Bodhisattvapiṭaka which both, however, are not likely to have ever existed or have to be regarded as additions by a later Mahāyāna group of the Dharmaguptakas (HEIRMAN 2002,1: 42). Except the Vinaya (T 1428) there is only one more part of the canon – the Dīrghāgama – which passed down to us in Chinese translation (T 1).¹⁴ The shape of the remaining parts of the Sūtrapiṭaka is consequently mainly unknown. It is also uncertain, whether the Śāriputrābhidharmaśāstra preserved in Chinese (T 1548) is really part of the Dharmaguptaka Abhidharma.¹⁵

Consequently, the strongest internal evidence for a Dharmaguptaka connection is given in the case of Dīrghāgama (DĀ) texts. Unfortunately only few of them have been so far identified among the Gāndhārī manuscripts. Although both the Saṅgītisūtra of BL 15 and the Śrāmaṇyaphalasūtra of RS 2 show many common features with the respective Chinese DĀ versions there is no complete coincidence of texts (cf. SALOMON 2006b: 358-364). Similarly, the G Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra of the MS resembles in many respects the Chinese DĀ version but is in no way identical or absolutely parallel with it (ALLON & SALOMON 2000: 271-273).

tain cases – like the doubtful canonical character of the Gāndhārī Abhidharma/commentary texts – are indicated by a diagonal stroke. If the Dharmapada is the only text of the Kṣudrakāgama, this is indicated by Dh.

¹¹ The question of a Gāndhārī canon is extensively discussed by SALOMON 1999: 156-167 and 2006b.

¹² For the BL collection see SALOMON 1999: 166-175, for the Senior mss. cf. ALLON 2007a: 5-6, for the Schøyen Collection cf. ALLON & SALOMON 2000: 271-273. Cf. also the discussion in SALOMON 2006b: 358-364.

¹³ T 1428, p. 868b2-26, cited after HEIRMAN 2002, 1: 42, see also LAMOTTE 1988: 151.

¹⁴ For references regarding the school affiliation of the Chinese DĀ cf. SALOMON 1999: 173-174.

¹⁵ A survey about some minor fragments of Dharmaguptaka sūtra texts and further references are given in OBERLIES 2003: 43-44.

The extracts from a Prātimokṣasūtra and a small collection of Karmavācanā from the Bajaur Collection can now provide a new, perhaps more promising field for comparison of the Gāndhārī material with different traditions. But despite the high number of parallels from different schools – either in the Indian “original” or in Chinese or Tibetan translations – the pattern remained the same as in the case of the DĀ texts: Among all available parallels there is a strong affinity towards the Dharmaguptakas. Nevertheless, some features of the G texts coincide with other traditions and prove that the texts as we have them in the G corpus are not identical with those texts which are part of the (mostly) later Chinese collections.

Thus even the technical texts – like our Vinaya fragments – which according to SALOMON should represent “distinctive sectarian versions” did not provide the expected “most direct, reliable, and definitive markers of sectarian identity” (1999: 174-175).

The importance of this fact for the fluidity and interdependence of the textual material prior to its fixing as written canons as well as the question how this somewhat fluid textual situation influenced the factual identity of a Buddhist community (*nikāya*) cannot be discussed here. But it is mainly this situation which makes me wonder whether we should really look for a school affiliation of a certain text. It seems much more fruitful to search for a literary or textual tradition which is reflected in different recensions of a text. This tradition/recension may have been subsequently adapted by a certain school which incorporated it into its canon. But there is no need to think that it has always been associated exclusively to that one school or that a school used only one of these current traditions/recensions. In the same way there is no need to surmise that the extant canons preserved all these traditions. On the contrary it is much more probable that many of these traditions got lost. In other words: in the early age of Buddhist literature which we are dealing with the boundaries of recensions must not coincide with sectarian boundaries, a later definition of a recension in terms of a school affiliation does not automatically imply the sectarian affiliation of the text in the time of its composition.

6. The Bajaur Collection: texts and genres

With regard to the heterogeneity of its contents as well as the multitude of scribes, the Bajaur Collection is most closely related to the British Library Collection. Like the latter one it contains an Āgama sūtra and a relatively large number of scholastic texts, which are, however, much shorter than those of the BL and also seem to bear a different character.

On the other hand, there are some literary genres which are completely missing. Thus the otherwise rather popular *avadāna/pūrvayoga* texts which are part of BL, PC and SC have no counterpart in the Bajaur Collection. At the same time it contains several texts which distinguish it considerably from all its predecessors and belong to categories which are hitherto completely absent from Gāndhārī literature.

The following survey lists all the fragments of the BC which are either identified or preliminarily classified under their respective literary genres:

1. Vinaya

1.1. Prātimokṣasūtra: BC 13

1.2. Karmavācanā: BC 7

2. Canonical Āgama sūtras

*Dakṣiṇāvibhaṅgasūtra (Madhyamāgama): BC 1

3. Para-Canonical Texts

3.1. Scholastic and commentarial texts (Abhidharma): BC 9v, 4, 6, 11, 14, 16, 18, 12, 19

3.2. Rakṣā sūtras / Dhāraṇī: BC 1v (?), BC 3

3.3. Buddha praises / stotra: BC 8, BC 10

3.4. Miscellaneous texts: Arapaṇa verse collection: BC 5

4. Mahāyāna Texts

4.1. Sūtra: BC 2

4.2. Scholastic texts (?): BC 4, 6, 11 (?)

5. Non-Buddhist texts

5.1. A Rājanīti/Arthaśāstra text: BC 9r

5.2. A legal document: BC 15

The second part of this article presents a short evaluation of the main characteristics of the above mentioned texts and fragments. More detailed data will be given in the forthcoming catalogue (STRAUCH, in progress).

6.1. Vinaya

The two Vinaya fragments of the BC represent the earliest Vinaya manuscripts at all. They are also older than the earliest Chinese translations of Vinaya texts which date only from the 4th/5th century AD.

6.1.1. Prātimokṣasūtra

The fragment BC 13 contains two different versions of the beginning of the Niḥsargika Pācittiya portion of the Prātimokṣasūtra. The term for this category of offences is occurring here as *ṇesagi payati* - a form

which has already been suggested by OSKAR VON HINÜBER as the expected G equivalent of its manifold variants in the different Prātimokṣasūtra traditions (1988: 66). The obverse was inscribed first and comprises rules 1-9. The reverse was inscribed by the same scribe but in a larger script due to the minor quality of the birch bark surface which is typical for this type of material. This is the reason why the extract stops on the reverse already in the middle of rule 8.

A comparison of the two G versions with the extant Prātimokṣasūtras of various schools clearly shows that both are not identical with any of them. Nevertheless it is possible to determine a certain degree of relationship to the existing Prātimokṣasūtras. Thus it becomes obvious that the text on the obverse is closely related to the Dharmaguptaka/Kāśyapīya versions which according to PACHOW go back to a common source called by him “Old Sthaviravādin” (2000: 41).

On the other hand, the text on the reverse is more related to the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions than to any other known Prātimokṣasūtra. Since it also shows a number of features which are not shared by the Sarv/Mūl versions and seem to go back to an older original I consider this G version an offshoot of a Pre-Sarvāstivāda Prātimokṣasūtra which could be identified with Pachow’s “Old Sarvāstivādin” text.

It seems that both texts of BC 13 preserved Prātimokṣasūtra versions which predate the known standardized texts and therefore offer a valuable insight into the formative state of the canonized Prātimokṣasūtras.

Why this manuscript contained two versions of this text is difficult to explain. It is not likely that any of them was really used by the monastic community for ritual purposes. Surely, the authoritative Prātimokṣasūtra text was known by heart and did not need to be fixed by writing. It is therefore quite probable that the written texts of BC 13 represent different versions which came to the knowledge of a certain monk who fixed them for “scientific” reasons, e.g. for comparing them with each other or with the version current in his community.

6.1.2. Karmavācanā

BC 7 is a very small fragment of birch bark which is inscribed on both sides: The recto contains the text of the so-called *śayanāsanagrāhaka* appointment (cf. HÄRTEL 1956: 157-169), the verso has the formula for the *varṣopagamana* (cf. HÄRTEL 1956: 124-129). The texts of these formulae are part of various Karmavācanā collections as well as of the respective Vibhaṅga portions of different Vinayas.¹⁶ Although there is

¹⁶ For a comprehensive bibliography of the available Karmavācanā collections in different

a high degree of coincidence none of these (later) versions completely agrees with the G texts of both formulae. Like in the case of the Prātimokṣasūtra fragment, a reason for this might be seen in the fact, that the G texts predate the earliest available Karmavācanā formulae for at least three centuries. It can be suggested that the process of standardization and interdependent levelling of versions was not yet completed at this period.

6.2. Canonical Āgama sūtras

Fragment BC 1 contains a nearly complete Gāndhārī version of a sūtra parallel to the Pāli Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅgasutta given as No. 142 of the Majjhimanikāya (MN III 253-257). In the Chinese translation of the Madhyamāgama (T 26), prepared by Gautama Saṅghadeva in 397-398, it is No. 180 (T 26 721c21) and bears the title 瞿曇彌經 Qu tan mi jing transliterating Skt. Gautamīsūtra. The Chinese translation and a single small Sanskrit fragment from the Turfan collection (WALDSCHMIDT 1971: 241-242, Nr. 979) belong to the Sarvāstivādins, whose Madhyamāgama is the only one completely preserved in the Chinese canon.

Recently another Sanskrit fragment of this sūtra was identified among the texts of the Schøyen collection (= MS 2379/15). Although its text is not yet published, a preliminary examination showed that it is not identical with the G version.¹⁷

Another translation into Chinese from an independent version was prepared in 1001 AD by Dānapāla (T 84). Its Chinese title (分別布施經) corresponds to the Pāli name of the text. Although it considerably differs from the version of T 26 and shows some structural parallels to the P and G versions it cannot be identified with either of them. Its school affiliation is obscure.

Another independent version of this sūtra is cited in Śamathadeva's commentary on the Abhidharmakośa, the Upāyikā Abhidharmakośaṭīkā (cf. MEJOR 1991: 63-74), extant today only in the Tibetan translation of Jayaśrī. This translation is now part of different recensions of the Tanjur (e.g. P 5595, D 4094). As was shown by SCHMITHAUSEN (1987: 338-343), Śamathadeva's quotations show generally stronger parallels to Mūlasarvāstivādin texts preserved in the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama than to the extant texts of the Sarvāstivādin Madhyamāgama. It is therefore highly probable that

languages see YUYAMA 1979 (Sarvāstivādins: 4-6, Mūlasarvāstivādins: 17-19, Dharmaguptaka: 34-36, Mahīśāsakas: 37, "unbekannte Schule": 44). More recent data are included in OBERLIES 2003.

¹⁷ I am very grateful to Klaus Wille, who indicated this parallel to me while reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this article, and to Jens-Uwe Hartmann, who generously provided the transliteration and photographs of MS 2379/15 to me.

Śamathadeva quoted from a Madhyamāgama of the Mūlasarvāstivādin tradition.

A comparison of the G version with these parallels shows that it does not coincide with either of them. Since we have no Dharmaguptaka version of this sūtra it cannot be excluded that the G version of BC 1 belongs to this school.

6.3. Para-Canonical Texts

6.3.1. Scholastic and commentarial texts (Abhidharma)

The majority of the BC texts of this category are very short and belong to the worst preserved of the entire collection. Altogether nine of the nineteen BC fragments are provisionally ascribed to this category. Despite this high number of texts this genre covers less than 30 % of the collection's extent.

BC 9v: One of them, the text on the reverse of fragment 9, is very well preserved and contains a commentary type text citing different opinions on dogmatical questions revolving around the character of *cittas*. Phrases like *keci(d) aho / keyi aho* (Skt. *kecid āhuḥ*) “some say” or *apare aho* (Skt. *apare āhuḥ*) “others say” are characteristic for this type of texts.

The remaining eight fragments are poorly preserved. According to the legible portions six of them can be divided among two different groups which share a common terminology.

BC 4, 6, 11 (Group A): Group A comprises fragments 4, 6 and 11. Their content is mainly devoted to the definition of various kinds of *sukha* / *G. suha* and their relationship to each other and to *dukha* “suffering”. The repeated use of terms like *bodhimaṇḍa*, *gagaṇadivāliasaṃmal(o)ḡadhadu* = Skt. *gaṅgānadīvālukasama-lokadhātu* as well as phrases referring to *praṇaparamida* (4,2v) (Skt. *praññāpāramitā*) and the six *pāramitās* (*edeṣa ṣahi paramidehi*) (11,2r) could indicate that the texts might even be located within the circle of early Mahāyāna literature.

BC 14, 16, 18 (Group B), BC 12, BC 19: The poor state of preservation and very limited extent of these fragments presently does not allow us to make any reasonable statements about their contents. Due to a number of parallels in the phraseology and terminology of BC 14, 16, 18 it is, however, possible to determine these fragments as parts of a common text (tradition). With regard to BC 12 and BC 19 it is at present not possible to give any further details about their contents.

6.3.2. Rakṣā sūtras / Dhāraṇī

It is not sure whether the text which was added in large, careless letters on the reverse of the badly preserved parts 1 and 2 of fragment 1 (BC 1v) really belongs to this category of post-canonical Buddhist literature. Words like *mīgili ° pitili* which are characteristic for mantras and references to *yakṣas* and *nāgas* suggest this attribution which has to remain, however, provisional.

The G *Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra

Much better preserved is the text of fragment BC 3 which contains a G sūtra about the encounter of the Buddha with the *nāgarāja* Manasvin. This *nāga* king is exclusively known from Northern Buddhist texts like the Lalitavistara (ed. LEFMANN 1902: 204, lines 9-10; 219, line 9), the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra (ed. VAIDYA 1960: 2.17), and the Mahāvvyutpatti (chapter 168, ed. SAKAKI 1965: 227-231). His special association with magical practices is indicated by his mentioning in protective texts like the Mahāmāyūrī (ed. TAKUBO 1972: 5, 41, cf. ed. OLDENBURG 1899: 221, 247) and the so-called Ātānātikahṛdaya, a Central Asian appendix to the respective sūtra (ed. HOFFMANN 1939: 104 (repr. 120), v. 14, cf. SANDER 1987: 207-208).

In the G sūtra Manasvin presents to the Buddha a spell named *manasvi-nagaraya-vija* (Skt. *manasvi-nāgarāja-vidyā*) which is said to protect from various evil influences. The spell itself contains names of poisons which are part of a comprehensive list preserved in the Mahāmāyūrī (ed. TAKUBO 1972: 55, cf. ed. OLDENBURG 1899: 257-258). A comparable event is reported in a short Tibetan text with the title *'phags pa klu'i rgyal po gzi can gyis žus pa žes bya ba'i gzuñs* (Q 659, 1065¹⁸). Despite the corrupted Skt. translations of this title in the various Kanjurs and catalogues, the Mahāvvyutpatti refers under the heading (3285) *klu'i rgyal po gzi can* to Skt. *manasvi-nāgarāja*. It should therefore be possible to reconstruct the correct Skt. title of this Tibetan sūtra as *Ārya-Manasvi-nāgarāja-paripṛcchā-nāma-dhāraṇī*. Although the text of the Tibetan *dhāraṇī* differs considerably from that of the G sūtra, the spells of both texts show a strong resemblance not only to each other, but also independently to the list of poisons of the Mahāmāyūrī. This proves that all these texts, i.e. the G *Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra, the Tibetan *'phags pa klu'i rgyal po gzi can gyis žus pa žes bya ba'i gzuñs* and the Mahāmāyūrī can be attributed to the same tradition. The obvious differences between them, however, show that they do not represent offshoots or even parallel versions of a common source text but rather different ends of a broad textual tradition

¹⁸ For parallels in other Kanjurs see EIMER 1989: 106, Nr. 284.

which is part of the *rakṣā* literature of the Śrāvakayāna. According to PETER SKILLING (1992: 113) this genre can be classified into the following groups:

- “1) the *paritta* of the Theravādins;
- 2) the Mahāsūtras of the Mūlasarvāstivādins;
- 3) the *svasti*-, *svastyayana*-, or *maṅgala-gāthā* of various schools; and
- 4) certain texts of the Pañcarakṣā collections.”

Although these four groups developed not independently from each other and consequently share many common features the G*Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra can according to the above sketched characterization be associated with the circle of Pañcarakṣā literature. This attribution is also corroborated by its literary style which is closely related to that of some of the Pañcarakṣā texts, like the Mahāmāyūrī or the Mahāsāhasrapramardinī (cf. SKILLING 1992: 138-144), but also with other post-canonical texts of this genre like the *vyākaraṇa* of the Nagaropamasūtra (cf. ed. BONGARD-LEVIN *et al.* 1996: 30-37).

6.3.3. Buddha praises / stotra

Two fragments represent this popular class of texts. One of them (BC 8) seems to be written in the Śārdūlavikrīḍita metre and comprises only four verses which share a common structure.

Fragment BC 10 is a probably non-metrical text about the *praśaśaṅhanas* (Skt. *prāśaṃsyasthāna*, P. *pāsaṃsathāna*) “praiseworthy things” of a Buddha who is characterized by conventional attributes like *nilinakileśa* “whose passions are hidden” (P. *nilīna* + P. *kilesa* / Skt. *kleśa*), *viśudhiprato* “who has attained purity” (Skt. *viśuddhiprāpta*) or *svadīaśivadeasabuda* “controlled through the power of mindfulness” (P. *satādhipateyya* / Skt. *smṛty*^o + P. *saṃvuta* / Skt. *saṃvṛta*).

6.3.4. Miscellaneous texts:

A verse collection arranged according to the Arapacana alphabet
Fragment BC 5 contains a collection of Buddhist verses which are arranged according to the Arapacana syllabary, the regular alphabet of the Kharoṣṭhī script (cf. SALOMON 1990, 1993). Both lines of each verse begin with the same Kharoṣṭhī letter. Thus it can be suggested that the verses were intentionally composed for this text. Some of the initial words are identical with some of the keywords which are repeatedly cited in Buddhist literature in association with the Arapacana alphabet or related lists, like e.g. the *mukhapadas*.¹⁹ But this coincidence is by far

¹⁹ Cf. for these lists BROUGH 1977. For the connection of Arapacana keywords with the *mukhapadas* of Mahāyāna Buddhism cf. now PAGEL 2007: 18-38. According to him, the

too small for attributing the Bajaur text to any of the known traditions. In view of this early attestation of an alphabetically organized text with initial words which are so distinctively different from any of the known lists it should be questioned whether BROUGH's theory about the origin of the Arapacana alphabet can be maintained. According to BROUGH the alphabet was created to memorize via certain keywords an important Buddhist text (1977: 94). Although there is no way to prove the contrary of this theory BROUGH's hypothesis lacks the clear positive evidence that such a text ever existed. At a first glance the discovery of BC 5 seems to support this text based explanation for the origin of the Arapacana alphabet. The differences in the keywords, however, between BC 5 and the various later traditions clearly point to the opposite direction. More probably, it was the alphabet, thought to be a (complete?) inventory of Kharoṣṭhī signs (not Gāndhārī sounds!), which came first and became subsequently used to arrange the sequence of a certain text or a list of dogmatically important issues.

Although one half of the scroll is missing its length is nearly completely preserved. Thus the complete inventory of the Arapacana alphabet from its 2nd letter *ra* up to its last letter *ḍha* is for the first time attested in a contemporary manuscript in its original Kharoṣṭhī script.

There are few other extracts of the Arapacana alphabet in Kharoṣṭhī. One of them is the famous Niya tablet 512 showing the letters *sa* (16) to *ṅa* (27) (cf. SALOMON 1990), another has been found recently on a potsherd from Kara Tepe (Termez, Uzbekistan) and contains the letters [*pa*] (3) up to *cha* (30) (SALOMON, forthcoming a). Taken this epigraphical evidence together with the numerous instances of Kharoṣṭhī letters in Arapacana order as location markers in Gandhāran art and architecture (cf. SALOMON 2006a, KOIZUMI 2007) and comparing it with the text of BC 5, it becomes obvious that the content of the alphabet was very stable and consistent within the sphere of Kharoṣṭhī writing. All alphabets attested so far agree completely with regard to the inventory and order of akṣaras.

The use of an alphabet for arranging a compilation of verses is, however, unique not only in Gandhāran literature, but in early Buddhist literature in general. It can be best compared with the contemporary form of abecedarian hymns in Semitic alphabets, like e.g. the Parthian hymns of the Berlin Turfan collection (BOYCE 1952, cf. NATTIER 2003a: 292n.).

discrepancies in the headwords of the different traditions are due to a process of updating, preserving the alphabet but changing the keywords according to changing dogmatical needs (23f.).

It can be suggested that such literary devices influenced the composition of the Gāndhārī Arapacana verse collection from Bajaur.²⁰

6.4. Mahāyāna Texts

6.4.1. Sūtra

By far the largest text of the collection is represented by scroll **BC 2** which comprises with its altogether around 640 lines nearly 50 % of the entire collection. Not all parts of this large scroll are equally well preserved, portions are missing, the sequence of broken pieces has to be reestablished. Although the process of reconstructing and editing the manuscripts is still going on, it is presently possible to communicate some preliminary information regarding its structure and contents.

The text is composed in conventional sūtra style with features which are common for post-canonical and particularly Mahāyāna sūtras. Its introduction (*nidāna*) as well as its end are missing. The prose text is interrupted by metrical passages ranging from ten up to thirty-two verses which usually sum up the contents of the preceding paragraph. The whole text is arranged as an instruction by the Buddha Śākyamuni to his disciple Śāriputra.

After an introductory dialogue between the Buddha and Śāriputra the main instruction follows. It is describing the teaching of Buddha Akṣobhya to 84000 *devaputras* which focusses on the character of *saṃjñās* and their relationship to enlightenment (*saṃbodhi*). Akṣobhya's instruction is followed by supernatural phenomena (e.g. earthquake) and the praise of the *devaputras*. Its final goal is described as *dharmadharmehi kṣati* "patient acceptance towards conditions of being" (Skt. *dharmakṣānti*)²¹ which is subsequently compared to several types of *puṇya* rewarding actions, like e.g. the worship of Tathāgatas, Pratyekabuddhas and their *stūpas*.

The text continues with a detailed description of Akṣobhya's personal *buddhakṣetra* Abhirati. The whole passage is composed in future tense and given thus the shape of a prophecy uttered by the Buddha Śākyamuni. This literary device as well as the following description of this land and its characteristics recall the central Buddhist text on the Buddha Akṣobhya, the Akṣobhyavyūha (AV). This text was translated probably in the 2nd half of the 2nd century AD into Chinese (= T 313) and belongs to the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras.²² Later it became incorporated into the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra collec-

²⁰ For more references for abecedarian hymns, also in other traditions, cf. LATTKE 1991 : 489, s.vv. Abecedarius, Alphabetisch.

²¹ For an extensive discussion of this term translated as "Patient Acceptance" see PAGEL 1995: 182-201. Cf. also NATTIER 2003a: 244 n. 240.

²² Traditionally T 313 is regarded as a Lokakṣema translation. Recent research, however, produced serious doubts regarding this assignment. According to JAN NATTIER, "the text as

tion and was translated again by Bodhiruci around 700 (= T 310 [6]). Both versions substantially agree with each other, although DANTINNE suggests that both were done from different Indian recensions (1983: 38-39). With regard to *Lokakṣema's version (T 313) he even proposes a Gāndhārī original (DANTINNE 1983: 1). According to him the same original was the basis of the Tibetan translation from about 800 (1983: 38-39) which is supposed to be nearer to the Indian source.²³ No Indian original – neither in Sanskrit nor a Middle-Indian dialect – of either of these versions survived.

The conception of the Abhirati paradise was, however, also incorporated into other early Mahāyāna works, like e.g. the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra (Vn) and the Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra,²⁴ and shares some distinctive features with the closely related Sukhāvātī conception (cf. NATTIER 2000, 2003b).

When comparing the G sūtra with any of these texts it turns out to be, however, most closely related to the AV. Its description of the Abhirati *buddhakṣetra* and of the characteristics of the *śrāvakas* and Bodhisattvas dwelling therein shares many features which are otherwise exclusive to the AV text. On the other hand, the above described composition and the way that this topic is integrated into the general outline of the text definitely distinguishes the Gāndhārī sūtra from the AV versions. The portions which are common to both texts – i.e. the Abhirati description and the *śrāvaka*/Bodhisattva portion – correspond only to chapters 2-4 of the AV which – according to the survey given by KWAN (1985: 83) – are about

- “2) The Excellent Qualities of the Buddha Land of Akṣobhya
- 3) The Accomplishments of the Disciples
- 4) The Accomplishments of the Bodhisattvas.”

Moreover, of these three chapters only the first is dealt with in some detail, chapters 2 and 3 cover only some sentences. Thus the portion of the G sūtra which is parallel to the AV is equivalent to less than 10 %

we have it has been surely thoroughly revised” (2008: 86). But its chronological attribution into the 2nd century AD is not affected by this discussion (NATTIER 2003b: 198, n.19). Cf. also HARRISON 1993: 166-167.

²³ The Tibetan text has been critically edited by SATŌ 2002. Chapters 1-3 have been translated on the basis of Bodhiruci's translation (T 310) in comparison with both T 313 and the Tibetan text by DANTINNE (1983). A complete translation of the AV on the base of Bodhiruci's text is given in CHANG (1983: 315-338).

²⁴ Cf. NATTIER 2000: 77-80. For the Abhirati passage in Lokakṣema's translation of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtra (T 224) see also KWAN 1985: 131-150. The chapter about Akṣobhya is translated from the Chinese version of the Vn (T 475) by LAMOTTE 1976: 238-251 and McRAE 2004: 185-190. For the now available Sanskrit text see VIMALAKĪRTINIRDEŚA 2006: 109-115. The Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka (KP) passage dealing with Akṣobhya (161,1-174,17) is according to YAMADA “based on the AV. The KP chooses and rearranges suitable vows in the AV, sometimes abbreviating them and at other times enlarging them” (1968,1: 236).

of the entire G text. The topics of both the first and the last chapter of the Akṣobhyavyūha, i.e. “1) Resolutions and Predictions of Buddhahood” and “5) The Parinirvāṇa (of Akṣobhya)”, are not mentioned at all. Instead of this, other doctrinal subjects, which are not remote to early Mahāyāna literature, but otherwise not explicitly associated with Akṣobhya, are dealt with. Whereas the AV is a text on Akṣobhya’s life, bearing almost the character of a biography,²⁵ its G relative seems to be a text on Akṣobhya’s teaching, both centered around a description of his land and its virtues.

Although the part of the G sūtra which parallels the central portion of the AV generally appears like a condensed and abbreviated form of it, it cannot be characterized as a borrowing from this text, like e.g. in the case of the Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra. The thorough comparison of the respective passages reveals that both texts – the G *Akṣobhyasūtra and the Akṣobhyavyūha – are most probably not dependent upon each other but should be regarded as based on a common concept/text. This makes the G sūtra a particularly valuable, since independent, source of the early variety of “Pure land” Buddhism which centers around the Buddha Akṣobhya and his Abhirati Buddha field.

6.4.2. Scholastic texts

As indicated above (6.3.1), perhaps the texts of group A of the scholastic/commentarial texts (BC 4, 6, 11) can be attributed to the Mahāyāna circle of Buddhist literature.

6.5. Non-Buddhist texts

6.5.1. A Rājanīti/Arthaśāstra text

The text on the obverse of the well preserved fragment 9 (BC 9r) is the only non-Gāndhārī text of the collection. It belongs to the rare instances of Kharoṣṭhī texts written in Sanskrit. This peculiarity can be best explained by the genre of the text, which can clearly be attributed to the early Nīti/Arthaśāstra of India. The text comprises ca. 40 verses composed in the Āryā meter and dealing with conventional topics of Rājanīti/Arthaśāstra literature, like e.g. the components of the state, the royal treasury, the sources of income etc.

Although its language is Sanskrit, it is not written in one of the later varieties of Kharoṣṭhī which were adapted to Sanskrit or Sanskritized Buddhist texts and contained not only numerous newly introduced ligature signs and special notations for long vowels but even signs for

²⁵ Cf. for this aspect NATTIER 2003b: 186.

virāma and visarga (cf. SALOMON 1998, 2001). The BC text is written in a conventional Kharoṣṭhī without serious attempts to reproduce Sanskrit phonology. Only in some rare cases unusual ligatures like *tsnaṃ* ೗ indicate its peculiar character. Usually Skt. consonant clusters are substituted by their G representatives (e.g. *jñā* = *ñā*, *kta* = *ta*). Prima facie the text therefore looks like ordinary Gāndhārī. But phonetical features like external and internal sandhi (cf. the following *mitraṃṇyathopakaraṇaṅ[i]* = Skt. *mitrāṇy athopakaraṇāni*) and morphological forms which are characteristic only for Sanskrit reveal its true language.

Kharoṣṭhī transliteration

*atmarthamaṃtriṇa kośadaṃḍa-
mitraṃṇyathopakaraṇaṅ[i]
jaṇapataḍurḡe cobhe
nṛpatiśariraṃ bhavati kritsnaṃ*

Sanskrit transcription

*ātmārthamantriṇaḥ kośadaṃḍa-
mitrāṇy athopakaraṇāni
janapadaḍurḡe cobhe
nṛpatiśarīraṃ bhavati kṛtsnam*

<u>Translation</u>	<u>Metrical structure of the Skt. text</u>
“The ruler, the ministers, the treasure,	-- ∪ ∪ ∪ -- ∪ ∪ ∪
the army, and the allies, and the instru- ments,	-- ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪
both the countryside and the fortress	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ -- --
form the complete body of the king.”	∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ -- ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ -

It is known that later Buddhist communities which had a special link to secular power incorporated Indian Nīti material into their own traditions. This was particularly popular in South-East Asia, where these texts were translated into Pāli (cf. VON HINÜBER 1996: 194-196, §§ 420-423, BECHERT & BRAUN 1981: xxxvii-lxvii), but also in Ceylon where they were adapted in their Sanskrit original (e.g. STERNBACH 1967-68, 1969, 1971, 1972).

Our G text shows that this usage was also known in Gandhāra in a much earlier period of Buddhist history. That Buddhists had access and made extensive use of this and related branches of literature has already been shown by SCHLINGLOFF (1969a, 1969b) with regard to the nearly contemporary Spitzer Manuscript which contained a list of *parvans* of the Mahābhārata, among them the Śāntiparvan, and even references to the Arthaśāstra (1969a: 325) and the Mānavadharmāśāstra and its juridical chapters (1969a: 326, 1969b: 335).²⁶ Still more compelling, however, are works like Nāgārjuna’s

²⁶ Cf. also FRANCO 2004: 17 with further references.

Ratnāvalī which prove that the Artha- and Dharmaśāstra topics were not only introduced into Buddhist texts but intensively adapted and reinterpreted according to the main Buddhist, particularly Mahāyāna, doctrinal conceptions (cf. SCHERRER-SCHAUB 2007). Whereas, however, Nāgārjuna's text shows an undoubtedly Buddhist flavor, the G Nīti text lacks any clear evidence for a religious attribution. Nonetheless, works like the Ratnāvalī might in fact provide a good explanation for the incorporation of a Rājanīti text into a Buddhist library. Future research will hopefully bring more light into this matter.

6.5.2. A legal document

Another non-Buddhist text is the legal document on **BC 15**. It is fixing the conditions of a loan given by a man Bhudamitra (Skt. Bhūtamitra), son of Kaṭhea (Skt. Kāṣṭhaka/Kāṣṭhika), inhabitant of Mitrasthāna. The terminology of this letter is characteristic for this textual genre and comprises terms like *hastalekha* (“handwritten document”), *samūlaka* (“together with the capital”) and *savadhika* (Skt. *savṛddhika* “together with interest”). The transaction was signed by several witnesses (*sakṣi*: Skt. *sākṣin*). They put their hand-written signature under the text in full or abbreviated form.

According to its address line the document was kept by Bhudamitra who lived in Mitrasthāna. If the finding place of the collection is still the place where the document was originally sent and finally deposited this could be an indication of the ancient place-name of Miān Kili.

7. Conclusion and Outlook

Although the Bajaur Collection contains some texts which belong to already attested categories of Gandhāran Buddhist literature – like commentarial/scholastic literature, an Āgama sūtra or stotra like texts – its examples of hitherto unattested types of texts considerably complete our picture of early Gandhāran Buddhism. With the largest fragment so far of an early Mahāyāna sūtra in Gāndhārī and the earliest manuscripts of Vinaya texts the collection can claim to be one of the outstanding discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts of the last century.

Having Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna texts side by side – together with genres like *rakṣā/dhāraṇī* literature and Arthaśāstra/Rājanīti material – throws a significant light on the community who was responsible for the compilation of this collection. Analyzing its texts and their relationship to each other and determining their place within the wider perspective of Bud-

dhist literature and history can therefore also make a large contribution to the ongoing discussion on the emergence and characteristics of early Mahāyāna Buddhism and its institutional background.

After the initial work of documenting and cataloguing the manuscripts has been almost completed, the second phase of the Bajaur Collection Project has already begun. At present the texts of BC 1, 3, 5 and 13 – i.e. the G *Dakṣiṇāvibhaṅgasūtra, the *Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra and the two Vinaya fragments – are being prepared for edition and will be published in the forthcoming catalogue-cum-edition volume (STRAUCH, in progress). Parallel to this work the reconstruction and reading of the *Akṣobhyasūtra and the Rājanīti fragment (BC 2 and 9) are ongoing.

It will certainly take more than just a couple of years to prepare all the manuscripts of the collection for publication and to answer at least some of the questions raised above. But thanks to the close cooperation with the Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project of the University of Washington, Seattle and with many other colleagues who are engaged in Buddhist studies we feel ready to accept this challenge.

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