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Ingo Strauch

Looking into water-pots and over a Buddhist scribe's shoulder – On the deposition and the use of manuscripts in early Buddhism

Abstract: The article investigates the modes of use of early Buddhist manuscripts in a monastic environment. Based mainly on the evidence of archaeological and manuscript data from North-West India (Gandhāra) it discusses the circumstances under which manuscripts were produced, used and deposited by early Buddhist communities. In this regard, the article critically evaluates the hypothesis of a “ritual burial” of manuscripts in the *stūpas* of “Greater Gandhāra”. A special paragraph is devoted to the unique birch-bark manuscript of a portion of the *Prātimokṣasūtra* from the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts. The two sides of the birch-bark contain two different versions of the initial part of the *naiḥsārgika pātayantika* chapter of the *Prātimokṣasūtra*. A comparison with known canonical texts shows that these two versions can be associated with two different *Prātimokṣasūtra* traditions. They are, however, not identical with any of the known versions which are usually attributed to specific Buddhist schools (*nikāyas*). It therefore seems justified to characterise them as proto-canonical or/and local/regional versions of this fundamental text. The analysis of the language and the contents of the two versions allows cautious conclusions about certain aspects of the role of writing and of manuscripts in the emergence of authoritative canonical texts within Buddhist textual traditions.

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1 Introduction

Buddhists were among the first religious communities in India that took the momentous decision to write down their texts. As far as we know, this process started in the first century BCE. According to the material evidence, the North-West of the Indian subcontinent (“Greater Gandhāra”) was one of the first regions to start this paradigmatic shift. Within a comparatively short time, Buddhism became a true

writing culture engaged in the production, distribution and even veneration of written texts in the shape of manuscripts. This process was preceded by several centuries of oral transmission which had given the texts a specific shape and had also developed a complex system of text contraction and expansion. In many cases, texts were transmitted not in their full length but in a condensed form which could be enlarged according to demands of the situation. Conversely, long texts could be contracted. Fixing such fluid textual bodies into the language of writing presupposed a series of changes and editorial decisions which heavily influenced the actual shape of a given text in its written form.

At the same time, it can be suggested that the process of writing down a text or text corpus was not an abrupt one. It rather took place as a series of consecutive events and was accompanied by a considerable period of simultaneous oral transmission. That these two strands of textual transmission influenced each other is probable, although the mechanisms of these complex processes are largely unknown. Generally we have access only to their results as manifested in the extant canons of different Buddhist schools (*nikāya*).¹ It is therefore generally assumed that these specific text shapes emerged already during the period of oral transmission within one school and can be regarded as characteristic for this school.

But is this really the case? Or is the distinctive shape of a text rather the accidental result of a process which was dependent on the specific time and region or even locality when and where this text was transferred from its oral form into a fixed written shape? It is obvious that this question directly touches the problem what was the basis for the self-identity of Buddhist schools in the centuries that preceded those when they actually made use of a written canon. At the same time our capacity to answer this question is largely dependent on our knowledge of the agents in this process and on the mode of use of manuscripts in a specific institutional environment.

Recently, Gregory Schopen published an article in the volume *Écrire et transmettre en Inde classique* (2009), in which he addresses three crucial questions which can be subsumed as:

1. Where were Buddhist manuscripts produced?
2. Who produced and used them?
3. How were they used?

¹ For the complexity of methodological problems connected with the comparative analysis of these canonical versions see Schopen's discussion of several Vinaya passages (Schopen 1985: 14–22 = Schopen 1997: 25–29).

Schopen discussed these questions mainly on the basis of the manuscript material from Gilgit – certainly one of the most eminent find-spots of Buddhist manuscripts yielding material from about the sixth to eighth centuries CE.

Based on the archaeological evidence, Gérard Fussman had rejected the long prevailing assumption that the building in which the Gilgit manuscripts were discovered was a *stūpa*. According to him, the Gilgit structure “était à la fois le logis et la chapelle d’une lignée d’*ācārya* dont certains exécutèrent des rites de protection demandés par des notables de Gilgit.” With regard to the assumed use of these manuscripts, Fussman concludes: “Les manuscrits de Gilgit sont les ouvrages dont se servaient les *ācārya* dans leur pratique monastique ordinaire, auxquels s’ajoutent des livres copies et dons pieux et cérémoniellement remis au monastère.”²

Schopen critically evaluates this hypothesis and argues, that the building where the manuscripts were kept, might have been “a kind of sacred workshop, a combination of genizah and scriptorium, where old, unusable, or returned manuscripts were kept, along with some master-copies, and where new manuscripts were manufactured and were for sale”.³ With regard to the persons who worked in this workshop, who sold and who used the manuscripts, Schopen concludes, “that more laymen than monks were involved in the production and use of these manuscripts”.⁴

Concerning the mode of the use of manuscripts, Schopen stresses the prominence of texts relating to “healing, apotropaic or death rituals”. The manuscripts were obviously used in this context, quite frequently “in the form of a manuscript [...] as an object of worship”. The question, how “such ritual use or purpose might impact on textual quality or linguistic shape”,⁵ Schopen approaches by investigating the different versions of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra* that are found among the Gilgit material.

In the very beginning of his article Schopen defines the more general, overarching motif of his study, namely: “trying to understand how Indian religious texts were shaped, or the forms they might have circulated in.” According to Schopen, early Mahāyāna literature has a special importance for this purpose, based on the fact that “(m)any of these sūtras – perhaps most – were, for example, translated into Chinese and Tibetan, sometimes very early into Chinese, and many of these early translations can be dated with some certainty. For some Mahāyāna sūtras, moreover, we have what are, by Indian standards, some very early Sanskrit

² Fussman 2004: 134.

³ Schopen 2009: 203.

⁴ Schopen 2009: 203.

⁵ Schopen 2009: 204.

manuscript materials – the very thing so often missing for other Indian texts”. However, as Schopen rightly points out, “most of the ‘early’ manuscript material is later, becoming relatively abundant only for the 5th to the 7th century”.⁶

But what is true for the early Mahāyāna sūtra tradition, is still more valid for texts which are represented in the preserved parts of the literary production of ancient Gandhāra.⁷ The last decades witnessed the discovery of an enormous number of manuscripts produced in the extreme north-west of the Indian subcontinent. The oldest of these manuscripts are on birch-bark and contain texts which are written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and composed in the Gāndhārī language. Both script and language are characteristic for the cultural area, for which Richard Salomon shaped the term “Greater Gandhāra”, and were used up to the late third – early fourth centuries CE.⁸ As radiocarbon dating shows, these birch-bark manuscripts are the oldest preserved Buddhist and even Indian manuscripts. The earliest of them can be dated to the first or even the second century BCE,⁹ i.e., the period in which we assume that Buddhist texts were first written down. The majority of the Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts dates to a slightly later period ranging from the first to third centuries CE. But even they are much earlier than the bulk of the so far known Buddhist manuscripts. Consequently, they provide access to a crucial period of Buddhist religious and literary history, a period, which is otherwise nearly inaccessible to us. For the first time we are now in a position to contrast the evidence of the Chinese translations with an independent Indian tradition, which is contemporary to and in part even older than that of the Chinese.

It seems therefore worthwhile to take up the important issues discussed by Schopen on the basis of this new evidence. For brevity’s sake, I will limit the discussion here mainly to the material of one of these new manuscript collections, the Bajaur Collection, which has been studied in Berlin (and now in Lausanne and Munich) since 2005.¹⁰

⁶ Schopen 2009: 204.

⁷ For a survey of Gandhāran literature, see now Falk and Strauch 2014.

⁸ For the late phase of the use of Kharoṣṭhī, see Salomon 2008 and Strauch 2011.

⁹ The earliest dated Kharoṣṭhī manuscript is the Avadāna fragment of the “Split Collection”. Its radio-carbon dating yielded a calibrated date of “‘BC 184–46’ with a probability of 95.4 %”, a date which Falk considers, however, as “difficult to digest” (Falk 2011: 19).

¹⁰ From 2005–2012 the Bajaur Collection was studied in the framework of a DFG project at Freie Universität Berlin. Since 2012 its edition is part of the project “Buddhist Manuscripts from Gandhara” at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, Munich, in collaboration with the Chair of Buddhist Studies at the University of Lausanne.

2 The Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts and the theory of the “ritual burial of Buddhist manuscripts”

The Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts consists of fragments of nineteen birch-bark manuscripts written by different scribes and comprising texts from different genres of Buddhist literature.¹¹ It was discovered more than 15 years ago in the Bajaur district of the North-Western Frontier Province (now: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) of Pakistan. Like many of these new discoveries, it was not found in the course of regular excavations. However, the information regarding the location, circumstances and context of the discovery is unusually detailed and could be partially confirmed by independent sources. Nevertheless, there remains a certain degree of doubt. As communicated by the finders of the hoard, the birch-bark manuscripts were found in the ruins of a Buddhist monastery in a stone chamber measuring ca. 0.5 m in diameter. This chamber was situated in one of the monastery’s cells.¹²

As I noted in my first publication on the Bajaur Collection (2007/8), this feature clearly distinguishes the Bajaur collection “from the British Library or Senior collections, which both were found inside earthen pots. It is probable that these pots were deposited inside a *stūpa*, from where they were taken by the illegal diggers. Either they were no longer in a usable and intact condition as R. Salomon suggested with regard to the British Library collection¹³ or they were intentionally written in order to be buried inside a *stūpa* as one might suggest in the case of the Senior collection which was interred as an intact and cohesive collection.¹⁴ The deposition inside a stone chamber, however, is a new feature. Obviously, the Bajaur manuscripts were not ritually buried but stored in a room within the precincts of a Buddhist monastery”.¹⁵ At the same time, I proposed to characterise this room or rather the stone-box as “rather a (part of a) monastic library than an intentional collection of texts. Since, practically, all of the manuscripts are more or less fragmentary, the comparison to a Jewish *genizah* brought forward by Salomon with regard to the British Library fragments (1999: 81–84) could be equally valid for the new Bajaur collection. It seems that old and wornout manuscripts

¹¹ For more detailed information regarding the Bajaur Collection cf. Strauch 2007/8 and Strauch 2008.

¹² See Strauch 2007/8: 6–7.

¹³ Salomon 1999: 69–71.

¹⁴ Salomon 2003: 78–79.

¹⁵ Strauch 2007/8: 6f.

were sorted out and stored in one place, outside the regular library (for which a stone casket would be rather uncomfortable) but still in reach of the monks in case of urgent need. Probably, not all of the texts were partially destroyed. Some of them might have been sorted out for other reasons”.¹⁶

This interpretation – based, I have to admit, on secondary evidence of somewhat disputable reliability – was criticised by Richard Salomon. In his paper “Why Did the Gandhāran Buddhists Bury Their Manuscripts”, he supposes instead that “the Bajaur scrolls, like the other Gandhāran manuscripts, were ritually buried in the relic chamber of a *stūpa*, either loose, or, as I suspect is more likely, in a clay pot or other container which has not been preserved, perhaps because it was broken in the course of an illicit excavation”.¹⁷ This interpretation was recently challenged by G. Fussman who suggested instead to regard the stone-chamber as “un espace aménagé au-dessus du sol dans une cellule, autrement dit un coffre en pierre de 50 cm de côté” and to consider the possibility that this stone box was part of a monastic library.¹⁸

Due to the lack of more reliable information it is hard to decide on an unanimous solution. It seems to me, however, that the fact that the other Gandhāran manuscripts were “ritually buried in the relic chamber of a *stūpa*” is not as certain as Salomon’s statement suggests. We have to bear in mind that in the majority of cases we have not the slightest idea about the circumstances of the manuscripts’ discovery.

Salomon’s theory on a ritual burial of Gandhāran manuscripts is mainly based on two facts:

1. In some cases remains of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts were found inside earthen pots. There is evidence that earthen pots were also used as relic containers or funereal urns. Consequently, it is possible to assume a functional parallelism between both types of filled vessels.
2. In many cases manuscript remains were discovered in the interior of *stūpas* – either among the contents of reliquaries or in relic chambers.

Salomon supports both these points with several pieces of data.¹⁹ But does the evidence he cites exclude alternative explanations? Manuscript fragments have indeed been found inside earthen pots.²⁰ But to evaluate the data it is necessary

¹⁶ Strauch 2007/8: 66.

¹⁷ Salomon 2009: 29.

¹⁸ Fussman 2012: 198.

¹⁹ Salomon 1999: 59–68, 77–81.

²⁰ Although the Khotan Dharmapada is sometimes said to have been stored in a ceramic vessel, its original find-spot and its connection to the ceramic bowl in the vicinity of which it was reported to have been found are unclear (Salomon 1999: 58f.).

to take a closer look at the evidence and its bearing on the hypothesis of a “ritual burial of manuscripts”. Two questions are crucial:

1. What is the specific character of the vessel? Is it a water-pot or a reliquary or a water pot rededicated as a reliquary?
2. What is the character of the manuscript remains discovered under these circumstances?

I will try to answer these questions on the basis of the available evidence for some of the examples quoted by Salomon.

The birch-bark manuscripts of the British Library Collection were sold on the art market in a pot which was dedicated to the Dharmaguptaka school.²¹ Its shape suggests that the vessel was originally a water-pot, rededicated for a secondary use as a depository for manuscripts. The inscription on the pot does not refer to this secondary use; nor does it indicate any association with a burial or relic context. It is, however, quite certain that the manuscripts were originally stored in this pot.

In the case of the Haḍḍa fragments discovered by Masson and Barthoux at various *stūpa* sites we are generally quite weakly informed about the archaeological contexts and the character of these manuscript remains.²² However, what Masson and Barthoux usually describe, suggests that most of their manuscript finds represented rather small pieces of birch-bark of a distinctively different character than our manuscript collections. In illustration I cite Masson’s observations on the relics of the Haḍḍa *stūpas*:

The relics generally found in the topes of Afghanistan are ... enclosed in caskets or vases of copper, brass, and steatite. [...] In the larger vases is usually discovered a portion of fine pulverised earth or of ashes, amongst which have been placed burnt pearls, beads, rings, seals, and other trinkets [...] In some examples the deposits have been accompanied by twists of tuz-leaves inscribed internally with characters. These may have contained the precise information we seek. The only other probable conjecture as to these twists, is that they contain mantras or charms.²³

Masson’s subsequent description makes clear that the script he saw was Kharoṣṭhī. Although Masson was not able to give any further information – also

²¹ The pot bears the inscription: *saghami caūdiśami dhamaūteaṇa [p]arig[r]ahami* “[Given] to the universal community, in the possession of the Dharmaguptakas.” (= Pot D of the British Library Collection, Salomon 1999: 214 = CKI 372). The siglum CKI refers here and further on to the Catalogue of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions compiled by Stefan Baums and Andrew Glass (www.gandhari.org). For further bibliographical information regarding the cited texts, cf. there.

²² The relevant material is collected by Salomon (1999: 77–81).

²³ Wilson 1841: 59–60.

due to the very deteriorated condition of the manuscripts – his report supplies three important pieces of information: First, the majority of reliquaries was made of material other than ceramic. Second, the manuscripts remains were not the only content of the reliquary, but they accompanied the relic. Third, his assumption that the “twists” contained *mantras* or charms, implies that the manuscript remains were rather small and would hardly represent longer Buddhist texts.

Masson mentions only one case, where such a manuscript fragment was found inside a reliquary made from earthenware. In “tope 13” he “fell upon a small earthen jar, enclosing a stone wrapped in tuz-leaves [...] encompassed with a Bactro-Pali (i.e. Kharoṣṭhī, I.S.) inscription, written with a pen, but very carelessly”.²⁴ As Salomon rightly remarks, the inscription is not on the “tuz leaves”, i.e. the birch-bark, but on the small jar itself. It is the so-called “Hidda inscription of the year 28” published by Konow.²⁵ This Haḍḍa pot is one of the few examples of inscribed reliquaries made from earthenware.²⁶ Its inscription and its shape are completely different from what we know of the inscribed water-pots.²⁷ Both inscription and shape make clear that the vessel was intentionally produced as a reliquary.

More ceramic pots from Haḍḍa with manuscript fragments were described by Barthoux, whose description almost literally matches that of Masson.²⁸ Unfortunately, Barthoux’ report cannot help to establish the type of these pots. However, as observed by Tarzi during his excavations in Tepe Shotor in the Haḍḍa area, the use of water-pots as relic containers or funeral vessels is more an exception than the rule.²⁹

²⁴ Wilson 1841: 111.

²⁵ Konow 1929: 157–158, Konow 1935/3 = CKI 155.

²⁶ For another earthenware reliquary dated Year 44 (of the Kaniṣka era) see Strauch 2007: 79–83 (CKI 511). Despite the somewhat unusual shape of the vessel and its non-standard inscription I do not share the doubts expressed by Salomon (2012: 171, fn. 15). It is, however, possible that the pot was not intentionally produced as a reliquary, but rededicated. Its inscription is incised on the burnt surface.

²⁷ The archaeological and inscriptional evidence on earthenware reliquaries has been briefly discussed by Strauch (2007: 81f.)

²⁸ Cf. Barthoux 1933: 60: “le contenu des poteries n’était plus qu’une sorte de terre à laquelle étaient mélangés des débris de manuscrits (papier d’écorce) [...] ou des monnaies.”

²⁹ Cf. Tarzi 2005: 224: “Dans de rares cas, et à défaut d’urne funéraire, l’une des jarres globulaires ou le chaudron du moine lui servait d’ostothèque pour contenir les restes de son corps incinéré.” The ordinary funeral pots of Tepe Shotor are described by Tarzi: “Toutefois ces urnes ne portent pas d’inscription. Dans la plupart des cas, ce sont de simples pots contenant les os incinérés des moines, posés au pied des murs extérieurs des monastères” (2005: 224). They are obviously different from the numerous globular water jars – several of them inscribed – which were also excavated at this site.

Another factor has to be considered: Although many of the fragments from Haḍḍa come from *stūpas*, more precisely from the interior of reliquaries (a fact which is also due to the limited extent of the excavations carried out, which were mainly concentrated on the *stūpa* sites), there are significant deviations from this pattern: Thus Barthoux mentions several cases in which manuscript remains were discovered in the debris of chambers.³⁰

One of the few cases where we are quite well informed about the archaeological context of a manuscript find comes from the Jauliāñ monastery at Taxila. In cell 29 the excavators discovered “fragments of a Sanskrit manuscript [...] in an earthenware vessel [...]. The manuscript, which was written on birch-bark, had been half incinerated when the monastery was burnt down [...]”.³¹ According to its palaeography, the manuscript belongs to the fifth c. CE and seems to contain “a narrative and not a didactic composition, and to have embodied a large number of verses”.³² Remarkably, the pot containing the manuscript was not found in a *stūpa*, but in a cell.³³

As archaeological parallels for the “burial of books in later Buddhist practice” Salomon also referred to the “birch bark manuscripts dating from about the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. [...] found inside painted clay vases buried in the *stūpas* at Merv and Bairam Ali in Turkmenistan”.³⁴ According to the description given by Staviskiy, the Merv vase containing the manuscripts was found within the precincts of the *stūpa* complex Gyaur Kala, but not inside the *stūpa*.³⁵ As the excavators report, it was deposited in the foundation structures of the *stūpa*. The painting on the nearly 50 cm high, richly decorated vase depicts “the life and death of a certain high-ranked noble man. Neither by its shape nor by the contents of the painting the vase is connected to Buddhism”.³⁶ Based on this description, the function of the vase as a reliquary is at least doubtful.

³⁰ Barthoux 1933: 61, cf. Salomon 1999: 63.

³¹ Marshall 1951: 387. See also Marshall 1921: 20. The fragmentary manuscript is described and partially edited by Chanda 1921: 66–75. See also plate xxix for images of some of the altogether 52 fragments.

³² Marshall 1951: 387.

³³ Cf. also Salomon 1999: 77.

³⁴ Salomon 1999: 84.

³⁵ Staviskiy 1998: 98–99.

³⁶ Translated from the Russian of Staviskiy 1998: 100. For an image of the vase see fig. 74 on p. 99. According to Vorob'eva-Desyatovskaya (1983: 69) the excavators assumed that the vase was deposited “below the structures of the *stūpa* during the restoration works in the 5th–6th cc.”. This information is confirmed by Koshelenko (1966) who provides a detailed analysis of the vase's decoration including high-quality colour images.

The archaeological context of the Bairam Ali manuscripts, which contain texts of the Vinaya and *avadāna/jātaka* genres, is equally uncertain.³⁷ The complex “Gyaur Kala II” near Merv, from where they were allegedly procured, was completely destroyed by the local population before excavations could be carried out. Vorob’eva-Desyatovskaya describes the discovery of the Bairam Ali manuscript as follows:

The discovery was in fact incidental: while levelling the field, the driver of a bulldozer demolished a small hill. Among the clumps of earth he discovered an earthenware pot that was broken to smithereens. On the ground were scattered ancient coins, a certain statue and a bundle of birch-bark leafs sticking together and bearing unintelligible signs.³⁸

Even the character of this complex is not clear, although it is assumed that it was a *stūpa*, which was perhaps part of a larger complex.³⁹ Due to these circumstances, neither of the cases can serve as archaeological parallels for the practice of the burial of manuscripts in Buddhist *stūpas*.

Subsuming this evidence, it seems that there is not a single archaeologically confirmed instance of a water-pot (or vase) deposited in a *stūpa* as a reused reliquary containing manuscript remains.⁴⁰

The fact, however, that manuscript remains were part of the contents of relic containers cannot be denied. But as far as the fragmentary reports by Masson and Barthoux allow us to judge, almost all of these manuscript remains, which were found in Haḍḍa, Jalalabad and the adjacent areas, seem to belong to a common type. Usually they are described as tiny fragments similar to apotropaic amulets. In many cases these manuscripts might have contained a text of the Pratītyasamutpāda family⁴¹ or of the group of apotropaic, *dhāraṇī* like texts. In accordance

³⁷ See for Vorob’eva-Desyatovskaya’s edition of this manuscript Bongard-Levin et al. 2004: 273–336.

³⁸ Translated from the Russian of Vorob’eva-Desyatovskaya 2004: 273. It should be noted that this description differs remarkably from that given by the same author in 1983: “The manuscript in the shape of a bundle of leafs sticking together was located in an earthenware vessel that was immured in a Buddhist *stūpa*” (translated from Vorob’eva-Desyatovskaya 1983: 69). Litvinskiy even speaks about excavations carried out at this site, evidently ignoring or hiding the fact that the discovery of this manuscript was an incidental event (Litvinskiy 1992: 436 = Litvinsky 1999: 13).

³⁹ Staviskiy 1998: 100–103.

⁴⁰ It should also be kept in mind that the majority of Buddhist manuscripts discovered in Xinjiang were found in the cells of Buddhist monastic institutions (cf. for the Turfan oasis Sander 1968: 8–21).

⁴¹ For such a manuscript cf. the birch-bark with the Brāhmī text of a Pratītyasamutpādasūtra described by Hartmann (2009: 101–103). According to reports, it was found by local workers “in

with this character of text, remains of such manuscripts were found in different contexts. Some of them were found inside a *stūpa* as part of the contents of a relic container. Others were deposited in the hands of Buddha statues, in holes in the walls, etc.⁴² This type of manuscript deposit – which were definitely perceived as a kind of relic – should be strictly distinguished from cases where an entire manuscript or even a manuscript collection is found. Here our evidence is far from satisfying.

The same situation was observed by David Drewes, who discussed the deposition of manuscripts and books in *stūpas* on the basis of a comprehensive survey of archaeological data from early Buddhist sites in South Asia.⁴³ Subsuming the available evidence he says: “[...] actual ‘books’ were deposited in *stūpas* only very rarely. When texts were put in *stūpas* they were usually very short sūtras or quotations from sūtras pressed into or inscribed on clay or metal.”⁴⁴

Taking up our two initial questions, it can be subsumed:

There are numerous cases of vessels containing manuscripts. If the character of a vessel can be clearly determined as an (original or rededicated) reliquary, the manuscript remains are usually very small and contain texts with a specific ritual function (Prāṭītyasamutpāda, mantra, etc.). If larger manuscripts or entire manuscript collections are concerned, they can be stored in water-pots or other types of vessels (e.g. Merv). There is no unanimous evidence that forces us to place these vessels in the interior of a *stūpa*. Their function as reliquaries cannot be determined on the basis of the available evidence.

However, there is one collection of Gandhāran manuscripts which clearly supports Salomon’s interpretation: The Senior collection was obviously deposited in an earthen pot bearing an inscription in a “formulaic pattern that is regularly associated with the relic deposits or *stūpa* foundations”.⁴⁵ The inscription on the lid of the pot even specifies the place of its deposition: *thubami* “in the *stūpa*”.⁴⁶ Usually such vessels contain relics. If the manuscripts are the original contents of the pot – and there is good reason to believe this⁴⁷ – the Senior Collec-

the niche of the smaller of the two Buddhas at Bamiyan” (Hartmann 2009: 101). For this class of manuscripts see also Salomon 1999: 85–86.

⁴² Cf. Barthoux 1933: 61, Salomon 1999: 64.

⁴³ Drewes 2007: 126–133.

⁴⁴ Drewes 2007: 133.

⁴⁵ Salomon 2009: 26.

⁴⁶ CKI 245, Salomon 2003: 76.

⁴⁷ In his review of Glass 2007, Fussman expresses serious doubts with regard to this fact: “Il n’est pas exclu que les rouleaux à l’origine ne se trouvaient pas dans le vase supposé les avoir contenus et qu’ils y aient été placés soit après leur découverte, pour les transporter, soit au moment de la vente, pour en augmenter le prix parce que le premier lot de manuscrits parvenu à

tion would indeed represent a case of a collection of Gandhāran manuscripts perceived as Buddhist relics, which were meant for being deposited inside a *stūpa*.

But is it possible to generalise this evidence? The Senior Collection is exceptional. It is written by a single scribe and seems to represent a collection of texts which was done according to a previously established plan, or – as Mark Allon says – a “commissioned collection”.⁴⁸ It is possible that this collection was made for being deposited inside a *stūpa* and for consecrating it.

If we look again at the Bajaur Collection, it is much more related to the British Library Collection. Both are heterogeneous compilations of texts written by numerous scribes and containing different genres of Buddhist literature. The state of the manuscripts’ preservation is different – ranging from almost completely preserved scrolls up to manuscripts with large portions missing. With regard to these features, the characterisation brought forward by Salomon for the British Library Collection (*genizah*) or even by Schopen for the Gilgit manuscripts – *genizah* cum scriptorium – might work quite well. In both cases the manuscripts were seemingly deposited in a way that excluded them from direct access. It is therefore possible that these manuscripts were not in actual use, but sorted out for different reasons. The assumption that the containers of both collections were “ritually buried” cannot be disproved, but there is also little evidence to verify it. Other scenarios seem to be equally plausible.

During excavations, water-pots were mostly discovered in the context of monastic cells or courtyards.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, the Brāhmī manuscript from the Jauliāñ monastery was found in a cell. Thus in the case of Gandhāran manuscripts stored in water-pots one might also argue from a more practical perspective: Putting manuscripts into such a type of vessel is a quite effective protection for any kind of external damage – especially against insects. And such a more prosaic approach would also pave the way for Schopen’s idea of a scriptorium. Based on this interpretation, both the British Library and the Bajaur Collection would represent compilations of manuscripts coming from the interior of the scriptorium of a Buddhist monastery, kept within the precincts of the monastery in a protective depository. This is one possibility, but by far not an exclusive one.

Although our texts are usually not very informative about this side of the monastic life, there is one passage from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya which

la British Library se trouvait dans un vase semblable dont l’inscription ajoutait à leur valeur” (2012: 193). I do not share these doubts nor his reservations regarding the assumed function of the pot as relic container (cf. Fussman 2012: 194).

⁴⁸ Allon 2007: 4.

⁴⁹ See Tarzi 2005 and Marshall 1951: 380. A useful survey on the percentage of water-pots in excavated sites in Gandhāra is given by Tarzi 2005: 219–222.

seems to shed at least some light on this issue. In his paper on “Deaths, Funerals, and the Division of Property in a Monastic Code” Schopen cites a passage from the *Cīvaravastu* as preserved among the Gilgit manuscripts. The passage describes the division of a householder’s property who died before being ordained and – as he was childless – left all his estate to the Buddhist community after having sent a written will to the Jetavana garden at Śrāvastī.⁵⁰ The Buddha then prescribes how the order should handle different types of property. With regard to books (*pustaka*), he says:⁵¹

*pustakānāṃ buddhavadānapustakā avibhājyā cāturdīśāya bhikṣusaṃghāya (sā)dhāraṇā koṣṭhikāyāṃ prakṣeptavyāḥ bahiḥśāstrapustakāḥ bhikṣubhir vikrīya bhājayitavyāḥ*⁵²

Of books, books of the word of the Buddha are not to be distributed but to be deposited in the storehouse as property in common for the Community of Monks from the Four Directions. The books containing the treatises of non-Buddhists are to be sold, and the sum received is to be distributed among the monks.⁵³

As Schopen has shown elsewhere,⁵⁴ Dutt’s erroneous reading of the text (*dhāraṇa-koṣṭhikāyāṃ*) created a ghost-word that was also incorporated in Edgerton’s Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary. As the subsequent passage of the *Cīvaravastu* shows, *sādhāraṇa-* and *koṣṭhikā-* have to be perceived as two separate words. The term *koṣṭhikā* is rendered in the Tibetan parallel of this passage and elsewhere in the *Vinaya* as *mdzod* “store-house, magazine, depository, strong-box”.⁵⁵

Manuscripts were not the only objects deposited in a *koṣṭhikā*. A passage from the *Vinayavibhaṅga* tells us, that also money given to the order as perpetuity (*akṣayanīṇī*) was kept in a *mdzod/koṣṭhikā*.⁵⁶ And our *Cīvaravastu* passage continues:⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Schopen 1995: 498–500 = 2004: 117–119.

⁵¹ Fol. 174b, l.4, read from the facsimile in Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995, plate 861.

⁵² Dutt’s edition reads this passage: *pustakānāṃ buddhavadānapustakā avibhajya cāturdīśāya bhikṣusaṃghāya dhāraṇakoṣṭhikāyāṃ prakṣeptavyāḥ / bahiḥśāstrapustakā bhikṣubhir vikrīya bhājayitavyāḥ* (Dutt 1942: 143, lines 5–7). I express my gratitude to Lore Sander (Berlin) for discussing the manuscript readings during a meeting in May 2014.

⁵³ Translation by Schopen 1995: 500 = 2004: 119, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Schopen 1994: 530–531 = 2004: 50–51.

⁵⁵ Jäschke 1881, s.v.

⁵⁶ Schopen 1994: 529 = 2004: 48.

⁵⁷ Fol. 174b, lines 4–5, read from the facsimile in Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995, plate 861.

*patralekhyam yac chighram śakyate *sādhayitum*⁵⁸ *tasya dravyavibhāga tad bhikṣubhir bhājayitavyam na śakyate tac cāturdiśāya bhikṣusaṃghāya sādharmaṇam koṣṭhikāyām prakṣeptavyaḥ* (read: -vyam)⁵⁹

Any written lien that can be quickly realized – the share of the money from that is to be distributed among the monks. And that which is not able to be so realized is to be deposited in the storehouse as property in common for the Community of Monks from the Four Directions.⁶⁰

Now the question arises: Can our Gandhāran collections be regarded as parts of such a *koṣṭhikā*? The description given for the Bajaur Collection (a stone chamber) would at least not contradict this explanation. There is, however, yet another indication. Among the birch-bark scrolls of the Bajaur Collection there is one manuscript which contains exactly this type of written document, which the second Cīvaravastu passage calls *patralekhyā* – a kind of loan document. The Bajaur fragment 15 uses the closely related term *hastalekha*. As the address line of the document indicates, it originally belonged to a person named Bhudamitra from Mitrasthāna.⁶¹ As far as the rather fragmentarily preserved text permits interpretation, the transaction recorded here was a credit business with no direct link with the monastic community. Thus a possible explanation for its being stored in a monastic depository of manuscripts could be based on the passage of the Cīvaravastu: a layperson bequeathed or donated this loan document to the Buddhist community, which kept it until it could be realised.

In the light of the Cīvaravastu we could thus consider a third possibility – after Salomon’s “ritual burial” theory and Schopen’s *genizah* cum scriptorium hypothesis (related to Gilgit): The (or some of the) collections of Gandhāran

⁵⁸ Thus Dutt and the Tibetan and Chinese translations (cf. below fn. 60). The manuscript reads *śakyate ta da dha yi tum*, which could be interpreted as an erroneous reading for *tad ādhāyitum*. The latter word can be possibly connected with Skt. *ā-dhā* “to deposit”. For the infinitive form cf. Buddhist Sanskrit *antaradhāyitum* (Edgerton 1953: 217) and Pāli *antaradhāyitum* (CPD s.v. *antaradhāyati*). It is possible that the scribe of the Gilgit manuscript had a corrupt manuscript at his hand and therefore “corrected” the expected *sādhayitum* resulting in a somewhat odd sentence.

⁵⁹ Dutt’s edition: *patralekhyam yac chighram śakyate sādhayitum tasya dravyavibhāge tad bhikṣubhir bhājayitavyam / na śakyate tac cāturdiśāya bhikṣusaṃghāya dhāraṇa / koṣṭhikāyām prakṣeptavyam* / (Dutt 1942: 143, lines 7–9).

⁶⁰ Translation by Schopen 1995: 500 = 2004: 119. As Schopen (1995: 485 = 2004: 105) rightly remarks, this passage of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya was the source of the 36th chapter of Yijing’s “Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago”. Yijing’s translation says: “If deeds and contracts are payable at once, (the money is) to be realised and to be immediately distributed; if they are not payable at once, the deeds should be kept in the treasury, and when they fall due, (the money) should be devoted to the use of the Assembly.” (Takakusu 1998: 192).

⁶¹ Strauch 2007/8: 65.

manuscripts could also be perceived as parts of a monastery's treasury, where according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya books, legal documents and money could be deposited.

The preceding discussion does not aim at arguing that Salomon's theory about the ritual burial of Gandhāran manuscripts is wrong. There are indeed serious arguments which are in its favour. But as tempting or convincing these arguments may be, we should keep in mind that we have no positive evidence for their support. Thus the "ritual interment" or "burial" of Gandhāran manuscripts remains a theory – until archaeological or literary evidence can prove it. Based on this evaluation, one should remain open to other explanations.

2 Gandhāran colophons: places and agents of manuscript production

But how were these manuscripts produced and used before they were deposited either in a reused water-pot or in a stone chamber, and which were perhaps part of a monastic library, scriptorium or storehouse?

In general our manuscripts are completely silent about this side of their history. As noticed by Schopen,⁶² colophons would be the appropriate place if we want to know who wrote a manuscript, on whose behalf and for what purpose. But unfortunately, such colophons are nearly entirely missing in the case of Gandhāran manuscripts.

A rare exception is the Prajñāpāramitā scroll of the "Split Collection". The scroll concludes with the statement:

paṭhamage postage prañaparamidaē budha[mitra] ///

idraśavasa sadhaviharisa imeṇa ca kuśālamuleṇa sarvasatvamatrapi(trap)u(?yae) ///

This is the first book of the Prajñāpāramitā, (of) Buddhāmitra [...], the room-companion of Indraśrava. And may it be, through this root of bliss, [...] for the veneration of all living beings, for mother and father.⁶³

With regard to the questions raised above, this colophon highlights two points:

1. The text was either written, commissioned or owned (the verb is unfortunately missing) by a Buddhist monk as the term *sadhavihari* (Pāli *saddhivihārika*, Sanskrit *sārdhamvihārin*) indicates.

⁶² Schopen 2009: 196, fn. 10.

⁶³ Falk and Karashima 2012: 25.

2. Writing (or commissioning the writing) was expected to yield religious merit (*kuśalamūla*).

Another rare case of a Gandhāran colophon comes from the British Library Collection.⁶⁴ It reads:

/// .[e] postag. gasa[e] pacaviśadi 20 4 1 saghaśravasa śamaṇasa.⁶⁵
[. . .] book; twenty-five (25) verses; of the monk Saṅghaśrava.⁶⁶

Again a verb is missing – so we cannot know who exactly Saṅghaśrava was – either the scribe, the commissioner, the author or even the owner of the text/manuscript. But again the status of this person is explicitly referred to. He is designated as *śamaṇa*, a term which in the context of Gandhāran Buddhism is used to signify a Buddhist monk.

According to the preserved fragments, both these colophons were written at the end of the scroll. In both cases the scroll itself is designated as *postaga*, Skt. *pustaka*, a term which entered India from its Western, Iranian neighbours probably in the first centuries CE.⁶⁷ As the example of the Split manuscript shows, the term was used to designate the physical unit “scroll, manuscript” rather than the text itself. The scroll named *paṭhamage postage*, “first scroll/manuscript” contained the initial five chapters of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtra.⁶⁸

This term is also used in the third – well-known – colophon, which belongs to the Khotan manuscript of the Dharmapada edited by John Brough (1962). In the case of the Dharmapada the colophon is written in the beginning of the text.⁶⁹

budhavarmasa śamaṇasa
budhaṇadisadhavayarisa
ida dharmapadasa postaka
dharmāśraveṇa likhida araṇi

This book of the Dharmapada, of the *śramaṇa* Buddhavarman, pupil of Buddhanandin, has been written by Dharmāśrava in the monastery.

⁶⁴ Salomon 1999: 40–42.

⁶⁵ Quoted from Baums 2009: 609–610, see also Lenz 2010: 154.

⁶⁶ Salomon 1999: 41.

⁶⁷ See Falk 1993: 305–306, Falk 2010. The radio-carbon dating fixes the calibrated age of the Prajñāpāramitā scroll to 74 CE (Falk 2011: 20). Therefore this colophon might represent one of the earliest attestations of this term in an Indian language.

⁶⁸ Cf. Falk and Karashima 2012: 25.

⁶⁹ As pointed out by Stefan Baums at the XV. Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Vienna, August 2014, Brough’s reading *dharmuyane* in line 4 (1962: 119) has to be corrected to *dharmāśraveṇa*. For more comments on the implications of this correction see Baums 2014: 203–205.

Again the persons who are connected with this manuscript belong to the monastic community. The first of them Buddhanandin (G. *budhaṇadi*) is explicitly designated as *śamaṇa* “monk” and *sadhavayari*, which corresponds to the word *sadhavihari* of the Prajñāpāramitā colophon. As in the two other colophons his name is given in the genitive case. Since the second person – Dharmāśrava – is clearly indicated as the scribe, Buddhanandin was most probably the person, who owned this manuscript. This evidence can also help to better understand the colophons of the other two Gandhāran texts. In both cases, the genitive most probably indicates the owner of the manuscript scrolls, rather than their scribe.

The evidence of the Khotan Dharmapada colophon adds another important piece of information. Its concluding phrase *dharmāśraveṇa likhida araṇi* seems to indicate the place where the manuscript was produced. Based on his erroneous reading *dharmuyane* Brough translated “in the Dharmodyāna in the forest”. Taking up Brough’s alternative translation “in the park (called) ‘Garden of Religion’”, with *dharmodyāna* as “the name of the *araṇya* in question”,⁷⁰ Salomon translates: “in the Dharmodyāna forest”.⁷¹ But what does this mean? Were Buddhist texts indeed copied by monks living in forests? Is this consequently one further indication for the activities of “forest monks” in Greater Gandhāra?⁷²

Although the Gāndhārī term *araṇa/raṇa* goes back to Old Indian *araṇya*, it was often used in Gandhāra in a technical sense meaning “monastery/monastic complex”. According to the inscriptional data these monastic complexes comprised *vihāras* and *stūpas*. Inscriptions report about their foundation (*pratiṣṭhāpana*) or about the erection of relics within their precincts.⁷³ If we apply this well attested connotation of Gāndhārī *araṇa/raṇa* to the colophon of the Khotan Dharmapada, it becomes obvious that this manuscript was not written in a forest, but in a Buddhist monastery.

To sum up: The evidence of the Gandhāran colophons indicates a clear monastic background for the production of manuscripts. Contrary to what Schopen assumed for the Gilgit manuscripts, there is no evidence for the participation of Buddhist lay followers in this process.

⁷⁰ Brough 1962: 177.

⁷¹ Salomon 1999: 41.

⁷² For a good summary about the role of this monastic group – especially in the context of early Mahāyāna – see Boucher (2008: 40–63). A concise summary and evaluation of the discussion is provided by Drewes (2010: 57–62).

⁷³ Cf. the discussion in Strauch 2007: 80.

4 The inventory of written texts of Gandhāran Buddhist literature

Beside the testimony of the archaeological context or the colophons, the inventory of a collection can give us an idea about the use of texts within a specific Buddhist environment. In the case of the Gilgit manuscripts, both Fussman and Schopen stressed the importance of protective texts. The popularity of this genre among the manuscripts can indicate the position of protective texts and rites in the Buddhism of Gilgit in the 6th/7th c. AD. What can the inventory of Gandhāran collections tell us about the character of the Buddhism practised there and about the role of manuscripts in it?

At present we know the following single manuscripts and collections of Gāndhārī manuscripts:⁷⁴

Name	Manuscripts/ scribes	Date (c. CE)	Main source of information
Manuscript collections			
British Library Collection	28/21	1	Salomon 1999
Senior Collection	24/1	1 – 2	Salomon 2003, Allon 2007
Bamiyan fragments of the Schøyen and other private collections	> 50 / > 50	2 – 4	Allon & Salomon 2000, Allon et al. 2006
Central Asian fragments (Pelliot Collection, Oldenburg Collection)	5–8/5–8	2 – 4	Salomon 1998 Vorob'eva-Desyatovskaya 2006
Bajaur Collection	19/18	1 – 2	Strauch 2007/8, Strauch 2008
Split Collection	5/5	–1 – 2	Falk 2011
Unpublished private collection	1+x/1+x	1 – 2	Allon & Salomon 2010: 11
Single manuscripts			
Khotan Dharmapada	1/1	1 – 2	Brough 1962
Library of Congress Scroll	1/2	1 – 2	Salomon & Baums 2007
University of Washington Scroll	1/1	1 – 2	Glass 2004: 141f.

⁷⁴ The following tables are extracted in a slightly modified shape from Falk and Strauch (2014).

The distribution of genres among the manuscripts can be subsumed in the following survey:

Mss. collection/single ms.	British Library	Senior Collection	Bamiyan fragments	Central Asian fragments	Bajaur Collection	Split Collection	Unpublished collection	Khotan Dharmapada	Library of Congress	University of Washington
Suggested date (c. CE)	1-2	1-2	2-4	2-4	1-2	-1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Śrāvākayāna Canonical Texts	X	X	X		X	X		X		
<i>Vinaya</i>		X			X					
Prātimokṣasūtra					X					
Karmavācanā					X					
Vinaya related narrative prose		X								
<i>Āgama sūtra/verse texts</i>	X	X	X		X	X		X		
Dīrghāgama	X	X	X							
Madhyamāgama		X								
Saṃyuktāgama		X								
Ekottarikāgama	X									
Kṣudrakāgama	X					X		X		
Unidentified/unspecified	X	X								
<i>Abhidharma</i> (see below)	X		X	X	X					
Para-canonical (Śrāvākayāna) texts	X		X	X	X	X			X	X
Scholastic texts / commentaries	X		X	X	X					X
Scholastic treatises	X				X					
Commentaries	X									X
Unspecified texts			X	X						
Rakṣā sūtras / Dhāraṇī					X					
Avadāna / pūrvayoga (collections)	X			X		X				
Buddha praises / stotra	X				X	X				

Mss. collection/single ms.		British Library	Senior Collection	Bamiyan fragments	Central Asian fragments	Bajaur Collection	Split Collection	Unpublished collection	Khotan Dharmapada	Library of Congress	University of Washington
Suggested date (c. CE)		1-2	1-2	2-4	2-4	1-2	-1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Miscellaneous/undetermined texts	Miscellaneous/undetermined texts	X			X	X	X			X	
	Verse texts	X				X					
	Prose texts	X			X					X	
	Unspecified texts/fragments				X						
Mahāyāna texts				X		X	X	X			
	Sūtras			X		X	X	X			
	Scholastic texts					X					
Non-Buddhist texts						X					
	Nīti texts					X					
	Secular documents					X					

With the exception of the Senior Collection all collections share a rather diverse character and contain texts from a wide range of Buddhist genres, including canonical *āgama sūtra* texts of early Buddhism, Abhidharma or scholastic texts, paracanonical texts of different types and Mahāyāna *sūtras*. While all these genres are also represented in the Bajaur Collection, it even contains examples of Vinaya texts and a non-Buddhist text.

This picture is remarkably different from what we know from early Central Asian manuscript culture. The earliest manuscripts, which are datable according to their Kuṣāṇa period script into the second to third centuries CE, belong exclusively to Abhidharma and paracanonical material.⁷⁵ Although these categories are also quite prominently represented in Gāndhārī literature, it seems that the Buddhist culture of this region felt much less hesitation in writing down rather large portions of *sūtra* literature and even texts from the Vinaya. One explanation for this fact can be seen in the status of the script in the culture of this region. It is

⁷⁵ Sander 1991 and 1999: 79–83 = 2012: 35–37.

now widely accepted that the Kharoṣṭhī script is at least slightly older than the second important Indian script, Brāhmī. That it had gained a quite respected status in the region of its use is indicated already by the fact that the King Aśoka decided not to introduce here the newly developed Brāhmī script but to adapt Kharoṣṭhī for the purpose of his edicts. Probably influenced by the important role script played in the neighbouring Iranian culture, Gandhāra seems to have acquired quite early the character of a writing culture. The Buddhists, who came into this region as early as in the 3rd c. BCE, willingly adapted this feature of the Gandhāran culture and started to write down their texts at a comparatively early period of Buddhist history. It is important to note that the act of writing was apparently not confined to any specific genre of Buddhist literature. Instead, the inventory of Gandhāran Buddhist literature seems to reflect a process which embraced all branches of Buddhist literary and intellectual activities. According to the evidence of our collections, specialists in all branches of Buddhist literature – including *vinayadhāras*, *avadānists*, and *bodhisattvayānikas* – participated in this movement. Palaeographical analysis shows that the scribes specialised in particular genres. Usually manuscripts that can be attributed to the same scribe belong to the same genre, e.g. “the *avadānist*” of the British Library Collection,⁷⁶ or the scribe 5 of the Bajaur Collection, who is responsible for several manuscripts of scholastic texts (BajC 4, 11, 18).⁷⁷

5 The Bajaur Prātimokṣasūtra fragment and the mode of use of manuscripts

The process of writing down, and the interaction between oral and written modes of textual transmission, were described by Peter Skilling:

The relation between writing and Buddhist literature in this period was interactive and dynamic. The movement into a new storage system – from memory to the written word – did not mean that the exercise of memory was abandoned, or even that it was eclipsed – only its functions and contexts changed. Literature – and other arts – flourished, and the use of the written word inspired new possibilities. Any writing down entailed redaction and revision, as texts moved from one storage system to another.⁷⁸

Due to the lack of early manuscript material we are usually not very well informed about the mechanisms which characterised this process, and about the specific

⁷⁶ See Lenz 2010: 6.

⁷⁷ See Strauch 2007/8: 34–35.

⁷⁸ Skilling 2009: 72.

use of manuscripts. Fortunately, some of the Gandhāran manuscripts can help to fill this gap.

Among the Bajaur fragments I could identify the text of a portion of the Buddhist Prātimokṣasūtra, the basic text on Buddhist discipline.⁷⁹ This fact alone is of considerable importance, since it had frequently been suggested that texts of this category were committed to writing at a much later period, in the fourth or even fifth century CE.⁸⁰

Much more than any other Buddhist text, the Prātimokṣasūtra is connected with oral performance. It had to be recited on every fortnight during the *uposatha* ceremony by the monastic community. It can be suggested that this text was known by heart to at least a considerable number of monks or nuns.⁸¹ Therefore it can be expected that this manuscript can provide some evidence for the mechanisms, which accompanied the paradigmatic change from oral to written culture, and for the role of manuscripts in this process.

But there is still another aspect, which is important when discussing this Prātimokṣasūtra fragment. It is usually assumed that the identity of a Buddhist community is largely dependent on its reference to a common ordination lineage, which is again based on a common Vinaya including – of course – a common Prātimokṣasūtra. Consequently, monks living together within the boundaries of one monastery and belonging to the same Buddhist school (*nikāya*) should all recite the same text of a clearly identifiable Prātimokṣasūtra.

The Bajaur manuscript, however, seems to contradict this plausible rule: The fragment BajC 13 is a single sheet of birch bark, measuring 16 cm in width × 23 cm in height. It is inscribed on both sides with two different versions of the beginning of the *naiḥsargika pātayantika* section of the Prātimokṣasūtra. The letters on the upper right part of the obverse are partially faded, probably due to the contact with some kind of liquid.

The thirty *naiḥsargika pātayantika* rules form the fourth section of all extant Prātimokṣasūtras and cover offences, which are related to the monks' property. Their first ten, called in Pāli *cīvaravagga*, deal with matters concerning the monks' robes. The obverse of the Bajaur manuscript contains the first nine rules, while the reverse remained incomplete due to the lack of space and stopped in the middle of rule 8. Why the primary text on the obverse contains only nine rules, but not the whole ten, is difficult to explain. But it is possible that the preserved manuscript was originally intended to form part of a larger scroll, which should

⁷⁹ See Strauch 2007/8: 26–33 and 2008: 116–117.

⁸⁰ Sander 1991 and 1999: 80–81 = 2012: 36, Salomon 1999: 163–164.

⁸¹ That not all of the monks knew this text, was recently shown by Schopen on the basis of passages from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (2010).

contain the entire text of the *Prātimokṣasūtra* including the first three sections that preceded the *naiḥsargika pātayantika* rules. Such an intention could be the reason for the rather large space left in the upper portion of the manuscript's recto side (see Figure 1).

It is possible that it was intended for gluing this piece of birch-bark to another one in order to form a larger composite scroll. In any case, this intention – if it ever existed – was quite soon abandoned as shown by the reverse, where the text starts from the very top. Obviously, the piece of birch-bark was now perceived as an independent manuscript.

According to the palaeographical analysis the same scribe wrote both sides. Consequently it can be assumed, that the scribe, who was in the possession of, or responsible for the manuscript, wrote two versions of a *Prātimokṣasūtra* passage, if not at the same time, but certainly within a couple of years.

The versions he used can be characterised with the help of the numerous parallels known for the *Prātimokṣasūtra* from different Buddhist traditions.⁸² According to a comparative analysis conducted on the basis of these parallels, neither of the *Gāndhārī* versions is identical with any of the known *Prātimokṣasūtra* texts, be it in Indian languages or in Chinese or Tibetan translations. On the other hand, they can be clearly attributed to different textual traditions: While the text on the obverse is more closely related to the *Theravāda* and *Dharmaguptaka*/*Kāśyapiya* versions, the text on the reverse can be associated with the *Prātimokṣasūtras* of the *Sarvāstivādins* and *Mūlasarvāstivādins*.

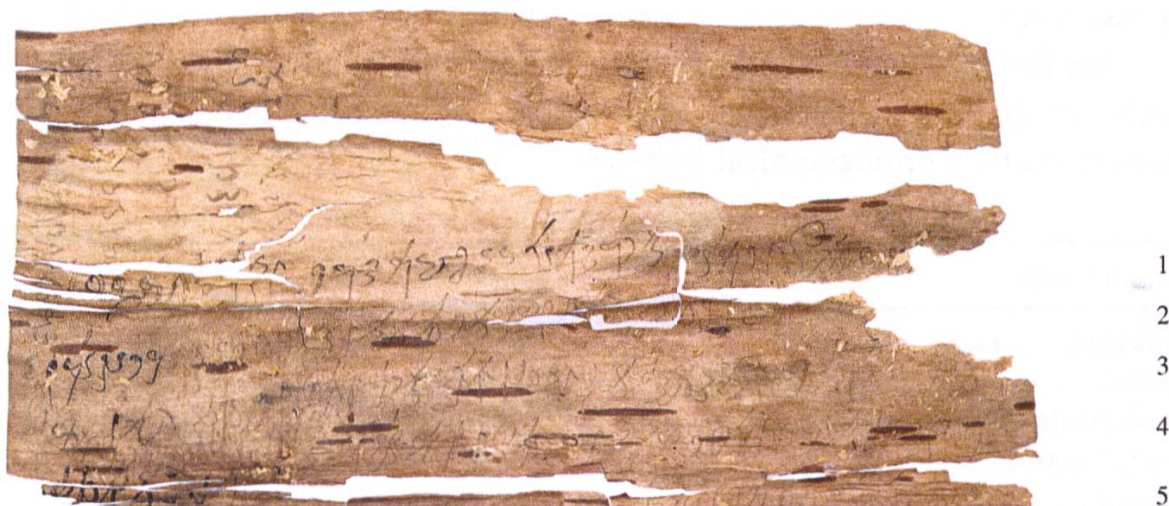


Fig. 1: Upper portion of the manuscript BajC 1 with empty space at the top.

⁸² Most of these parallels are indicated in the survey made by Akira Yuyama (1979), which was supplemented by Oberlies (2003) and Yamagiwa (2007). For a synoptic treatment of the rules in their different versions see also Pachow 2000: 91–97.

What is the significance of this evidence for the integrity of texts – even of those of a canonical character – and the significance of textual versions in the process of writing them down?

Of course, we could suppose that our Gāndhārī manuscript contains the Prātimokṣasūtras of other, perhaps even unknown schools. But due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of *nikāyas*, which are attested in Gandhāran epigraphy, are identified with one of the well-known groups, i.e. Mahāsāṃghika, Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda and Kāśyapīya, it seems more plausible to suggest that our texts should belong to one of them. If this can be accepted, we have to conclude: In the period of the writing down of our manuscripts the Prātimokṣasūtras of the Buddhist schools have not yet reached the shape which they feature in the later authoritative text compilations. Consequently, even the formation of the Prātimokṣasūtra texts was not completed in the first or even second centuries CE, but seems to have undergone substantial changes in the process of writing down.

If this was indeed the fact, one might suspect that mainly the writing down of these texts paved the ground for a harmonised and coherent Prātimokṣasūtra text tradition within one school. The technique of writing and its opportunities of text preservation and distribution probably directly influenced the emergence of authoritative and codified texts, which were acknowledged and used by communities on a supra-regional level.

According to this hypothesis the Gāndhārī manuscript allows a view into the workshop of one of the proponents of this harmonising process. It seems therefore worthwhile to have a closer look at the formal aspects of this manuscript and its two texts.

The first observation concerns the orthographical features of both versions. Although they are written by the same scribe, they show few, but distinctive differences in their orthographical usages:⁸³

BajC 13 recto	BajC 13 verso	Sanskrit	Pāli
<i>aride[ga]</i>	<i>arideka</i>	<i>atireka</i>	<i>atireka</i>
<i>ṇistida</i>	<i>ṇiṭhida</i>	<i>niṣṭhita</i>	<i>niṭṭhita</i>
<i>paḍighiṇita</i>	<i>pradighiṇidave</i>	<i>pratigṛhītavyaṃ</i>	<i>paṭiggahetabbam</i>
<i>parighiṇ<e>a</i>	<i>pradigh[iṇea]</i>	<i>pratigṛhṇīyād</i>	<i>paṭigaṇheyya</i>
<i>taṣida</i>	<i>tatrīda</i>	<i>tatrā(ya)ṃ</i>	<i>tatthāyaṃ</i>

⁸³ For comparison columns 3 and 4 cite the Sanskrit and Pāli forms as attested in the parallel texts of the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda Prātimokṣasūtras (ed. von Simson 2000: 184–188, ed. Pruitt and Norman 2001: 28).

These examples clearly show that both versions follow different orthographical conventions and represent phonologically distinct versions. Of special significance is the pair *taṣida* : *tatrīda*. While the latter variant reflects the usual phonological realisation of Old Indian *tr* in Gāndhārī, the first variant seems to presuppose a Middle Indian form *tatthida* (< Skt. **tatredam*) which is typical for most of the Indian Prakrits except Gāndhārī. An underlying *tatthida* written according to the prevailing orthographical conventions of the first century CE as *tathida* was obviously erroneously interpreted by the author of this version as *tathā-idam* and “Gāndhārised” to *taṣida* with the usual spirantisation of medial *th*. In this case we would have to suggest that the Gāndhārī version A preserved a clear trace of the translational process from an original in a different Middle Indian dialect.

The orthographical and phonological differences listed here might support the suggestion that both versions of the Bajaur manuscript represent distinct regional or local varieties of the Prātimokṣasūtra current in “Greater Gandhāra”. They were copied by the scribe in exactly the same form as he listened or – more probably – read them, without showing any effort to harmonise them in the process of redaction.

Moreover, there is another interesting feature in the Bajaur manuscript, which shows, that such an intention was not completely alien to our scribe. As shown in Figure 2, the scribe used the originally empty space of the obverse side to add an additional passage to the text of the third rule.

Without this addition the rule reads:

- 3 [...] *ṇistidacivareṇa bhikhuṇa ubhadasa kaḍḍhiṇa*
- 4 *bhikhusa a[ga]lacivara upajea agakṣamaṇabhikhuṇa paḍighiṇita sa[yi parivu]radi*
kṣipram=e[va]
- 5 *kritva dharidave [ṇ]oya parivura maṣaparam[e] bhikhuṇa ta civare ṇikṣividave*
aparivurasa parivurie
- 6 *(sa)[ta](e) [civa]rapracaśa<e> tadutvari ṇikṣivea aparivurasa parivurie sata<e> va*
civarapracāśae
- 7 /// (3)

When the *kaḍḍhiṇa* frame is taken up by the monk whose robe material is used up, (cloth for) a robe out of season may accrue to a monk. The desirous monk, having taken it, may keep it, after having quickly made (a robe out of it), if it is complete. If it is not complete, the monk may deposit this robe (cloth) for at most one month (with the aim) to make the incomplete complete, there being expectation (to get a complete) robe. If he would deposit it for longer than that (with the aim) to make the incomplete complete, even there being expectation (to get a complete) robe, (it is a *naiḥsargika pāyatti* offence).

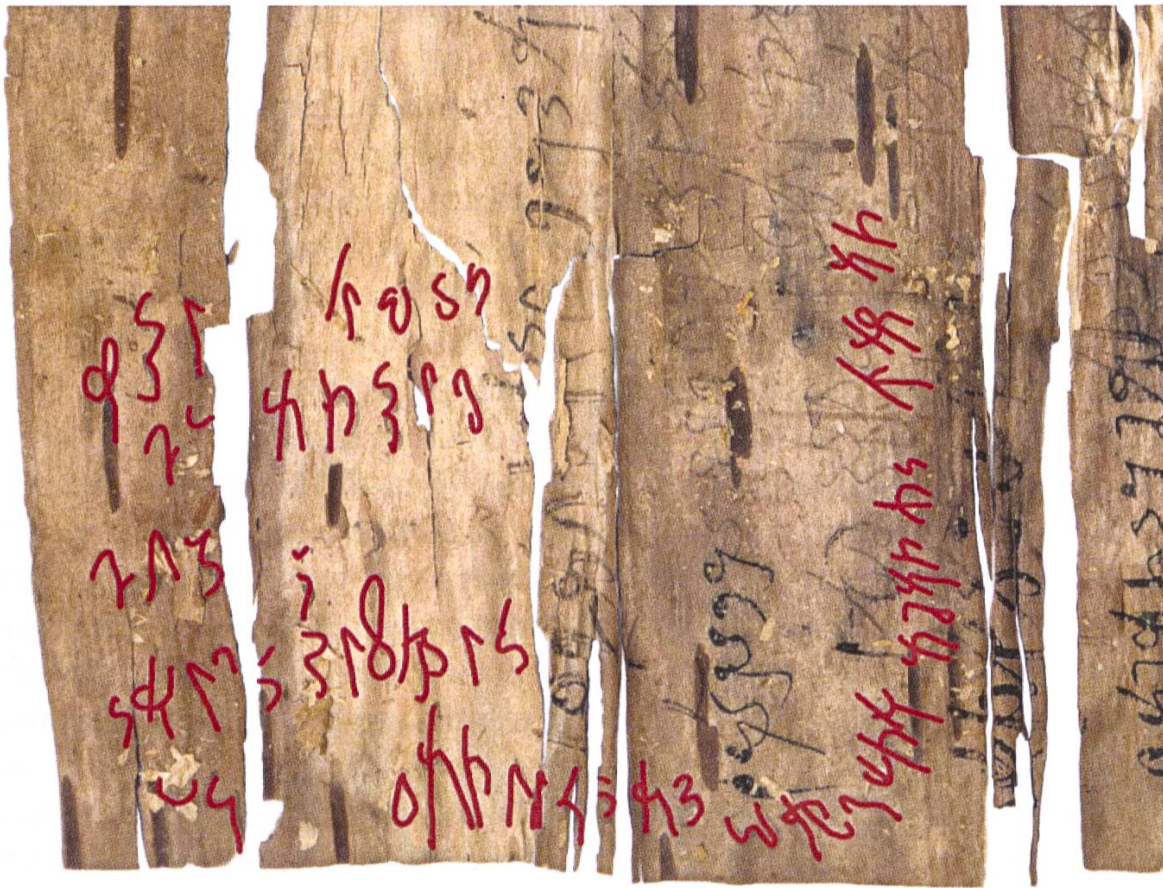


Fig. 2: Detail of the obverse of BajC 1 with inserted text highlighted.

As expected for the version on the obverse, the text of this rule basically corresponds to the text of the Theravāda Prātimokṣasūtra

*niṭṭhitacīvarasmiṃ bhikkhunā ubbhatasmiṃ kaṭhine bhikkhuno paṇ'eva akālacīvaraṃ uppajjeyya, ākaṇkhamānena bhikkhunā paṭiggahetabbaṃ, paṭiggahetvā khippameva kāretabbaṃ. noc'assa pāripūri, māsaparamaṃ tena bhikkhunā taṃ cīvaraṃ nikkhipitabbaṃ unassa pāripūriyā satiyā paccāsāya, tato ce uttarim nikkhipeyya satiyā pi paccāsāya, nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ*⁸⁴

The robe material having been used up, the kathina frame having been removed by a bhikkhu, should out-of-season robe material accrue to a bhikkhu, it is to be accepted by the bhikkhu if he wishes. Having accepted it, it is to be made up quickly. But should it not be sufficient⁸⁵ for him, that robe material is to be deposited by that bhikkhu for a month at most, there being expectation that the deficiency may be supplied. If he should deposit it for longer than that, even with there being expectation, there is an offence entailing expiation with forfeiture.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Vin III 203, 32–38, ed. Pruitt and Norman 2001: 28.

⁸⁵ Thus Pruitt and Norman for *pāripūri* “fulfilment, accomplishment”, rendered in the Gāndhārī versions as *parivuri/parivura*.

⁸⁶ Translation by Pruitt and Norman 2001: 29.

To this text the scribe added after the word *paḍighiṇita* the following passage. The faded and partially even abraded letters allow only a tentative reconstruction:

- 4a *parighiṇi(ta) [sa]yi parivuri kṣipam=e[va]*
 4b *kritva dharidave ṇ(o) ya pari[vu](*)ri (masapa)ra[me]*
 4c *teṇa bhikhuṇa sa [c](iva)[ra] ṇ(i)kṣi[ta]*
 4d *+ + + [c](ivarapra)caśae*
 4e *uṇasa pari(vu)[r](i)e*
 4f *tadutva<ri> ṇi(kṣivea) ṇ(e)sag[i]*

Having taken it, if it is complete, (he) may keep it, after having quickly made (a robe out of it). If it is not complete the monk (may) deposit it for at most one month (...) there being expectation (to get a complete) robe (and with the aim) to make the deficient complete. If he would deposit it for longer than that, it is a *naiḥsargika* (*pāyatti* offence).

Why this insertion was necessary can easily be seen on the reverse. Here the scribe obviously committed a typical haplographic mistake when copying the text and omitted the text between two identical words. The resulting version on the reverse side reads:

- 5 *ṇi[ṭh]idacivareṇa bhikhuṇa ubhadasa kaḍḍhiṇa bhi[khusa] (a)[galaci](va)[ra] (*uvajea)*
 6 *agakṣamaṇabhikhuṇa pradigṇidave sayi parivuryea maṣaparama teṇa bhikhuṇa*
 7 *sa civare ṇikṣividave tadutvari ṇikṣivea ṇesagipa[ya](ti) [° 1 1 1]*

When the *kaṭhina* frame is taken up by the monk whose robe material is used up, (cloth for) a robe out of season (*may accrue) to a monk. The desirous monk may accept (it). If it should be complete, the monk may deposit the robe for at most one month. If he would deposit it for longer than that, it is a *naiḥsargika* *pāyatti* (offence).

It can easily be recognised that in this form the rule is corrupt. Obviously, the scribe erroneously “jumped” from one *parivuryea* to the next and skipped the text in between. Due to this mistake the sense of the rule, according to which the cloth can only be kept if it does *not* suffice to prepare a robe, is completely corrupted and turned to its opposite.

According to the Sarvāstivāda version, which is most closely related to the text of the reverse, the correct wording of the rule would be (the missing portion of the Gāndhārī text indicated here by non-italics):

niṣṭhitacīvarasya bhikṣor uddhṛte kaṭhine utpadyetākālacīvaram āk(ā)ṇkṣamāṇena tena bhikṣuṇā pratigṛhītavyaṃ pratigṛhya sacet paripūryeta kṣipram eva kṛ(tvā) dhārayitavyaṃ no cet paripūryeta māsaparamaṃ tena bhikṣuṇā tac cīvaraṃ upanikṣi(ṭṭavyaṃ) satyā(ṇ) cīvarapratyāśāyām ūnasya vā paripūryarthaṃ tata uttaram upanikṣipen niḥsargikā pātaya(n)tikā⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Ed. von Simson 2000: 184–185.

Wenn ein Mönch, der seine Gewänder fertig hat, nach Aufhebung der Kaṭhina-Zeremonie außer der Zeit Stoff für ein Gewand erhält, dann darf er ihn, wenn er will, annehmen. Wenn er ihn angenommen hat und er ausreicht, dann soll er ihn unverzüglich verarbeiten und darf ihn behalten. Wenn er aber nicht ausreicht, dann soll dieser Mönch den Gewandstoff für höchstens einen Monat aufbewahren, wenn erwartet werden kann, dass (daraus) ein Gewand (wird) oder um das Fehlende zu ergänzen. Wenn er ihn länger aufbewahrt, ist es ein Niḥsargikā-Pātayantikā-Vergehen.⁸⁸

Probably, while checking the results of his work, the scribe noticed this blunder. But instead of inserting the missing text where it was missing, he inserted it into the parallel rule on the obverse, probably mainly due to the fact that there was sufficient space on the top of the manuscript. As indicated by the abbreviated shape of the concluding phrase of the rule, the text, which the scribe inserted there, is closely related to that of the Sarvāstivāda version:

Version A

Gāndhārī version A (obverse): *tadutvari ṇikṣivea aparivurasa parivurie sata<e>
va civarapracaśae ///*

Pāli version: *tato ce uttarim nikkhipeyya satiyā pi paccāsāya,
nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ*

Version B

Inserted Gāndhārī text: *tadutva<ri> ṇi(kṣivea) ṇ(e)sag[i]*

Gāndhārī version B (reverse): *tadutvari ṇikṣivea ṇesagipa[ya](ti)*

Sarvāstivāda version: *tata uttaram upanikṣipen niḥsargikā
pātaya(n)tikā*

Thus it is highly probable, that the text inserted on the obverse indeed represents the corrected text of version B of the reverse which is usually very close to the text of the standard Sarvāstivāda Prātimokṣasūtra.

But what does this mean for the status of both versions and for the way, how the Gāndhārī scribe worked with them:

1. It is obvious that the scribe conducted a comparative analysis of both versions and noticed completely correctly which part of version A corresponds to version B.
2. With inserting the missing text of version B into the text of version A, the scribe manifested that he had no hesitation to produce a conflated version on the recto. Does this mean, that the Prātimokṣasūtra on the recto had become obsolete and had been replaced by the more modern version B? And if this is

⁸⁸ Translation by von Simson 2000: 282.

this case: Does this also mean that the monastic community had changed its school affiliation?

Both these questions cannot be answered on the basis of the available evidence. But the Prātimokṣasūtra fragment of the Bajaur Collection demonstrates how writing opened new possibilities for textual development on the basis of the conscious comparison of different text versions. In many cases these developments were probably caused by textual corruptions, which occurred in the process of writing.

The Bajaur Prātimokṣasūtra fragment obviously represents an intermediate state in the development of codified canonical texts – a state when a living oral tradition, which was rooted in a distinct local or probably regional context, was confronted with a growing production of written texts, which somehow petrified these local versions and distributed them into different contexts. The process of harmonisation had of course to take place between the oral versions and the written texts and between the different written texts themselves. Only such a process could eventually result in the emergence of generally accepted and supraregionally used canons with a codified and authoritative textual shape.

6 Summary

The manuscripts of Buddhist Gandhāra were produced in a monastic context. From the very beginning the process of writing down involved texts from a variety of Buddhist genres – including canonical texts of the Sūtra and Vinaya literature.

The preserved collections of manuscripts vary according to their character. Some of them (e.g. the Senior Collection) were most probably intentionally prepared in order to be deposited inside a *stūpa* as representatives of the Buddha's relics. Others can be more properly characterised as remains of monastic libraries, scriptoriums or storehouses (Bajaur Collection, British Library Collection). It is possible, that they consisted of manuscripts, which were sorted out after a certain period of use for different reasons and subsequently deposited in a kind of Buddhist *genizah* or perhaps even inside a *stūpa*.

Traces of the period preceding this final deposition allow a cautious view into the working mode of a scriptorium of a Gandhāran Buddhist monastery. It is obvious that texts were not only copied there – from a written or oral template. Different written versions of a text could also undergo a kind of comparative analysis – a process by which differences between them were noticed and new versions could emerge.

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