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MULTILINGUALISM AND HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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VELIZAR SADOVSKI AND GEBHARD SELZ

VOLUME I

BUDDHISM AMONG THE IRANIAN
PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ASIA

ED. BY MATTEO DE CHIARA, MAURO MAGGI
AND GIULIANA MARTINI

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EDITORIAL PREFACE

Historical-comparative and contrastive-typological studies of the phenomenon of Multilingualism have been continuously increasing in the last decades, especially for what concerns the cultural history of Iran and Central Asia – but also cultural and intellectual processes on the entire territory of the so-called “Asia Maior” from Antiquity up to the Early Modern period. For this reason, a number of recent research projects joint into an interdisciplinary forum on the topics of “Multilingualism, *Linguae francae* and History of Knowledge” in different linguistic and chronological contexts – the *Multilingualism Research Group*, whose activities culminated in a series of annual meetings that have been taking place in the last years from 2008 onwards, hosted by various scholarly institutions of Europe and Asia.

The circle of partner institutions engaged in the scholarly debates within the *Multilingualism Research Group* has been enlarging itself constantly ever since the first meetings in 2008 and 2009: The forum unites partners from the University of Oslo (Jens E. BRAARVIG), the TOPOI Cluster at the *Freie Universität* and the *Max-Planck-Gesellschaft* in Berlin (Florentina BADALANOVA, Mark GELLER), the University of Bologna (Antonio PANAINO), of the *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität* of Munich (Olav HACKSTEIN, Peter-Arnold MUMM), the *DARIOSH* Project at *L’Orientale* University of Naples (Adriano ROSSI) and the University of Viterbo (Ela FILIPPONE), of “La Sapienza” University of Rome (Mauro MAGGI), the University of Vienna (Gebhard SELZ and his team, in co-ordination with the European project group *Classifiers*), and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Bert FRAGNER, Florian SCHWARZ, Velizar SADOVSKI).

Since the very beginning, this scholarly co-operation has been enjoying extremely generous support from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, its *Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (and especially its Institute of Iranian Studies) as well as the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft in Berlin – and it is no chance that Vienna and Berlin hosted five of the major project meetings since 2009. It is a pleasant obligation to the authors of these lines, as co-initiators and coordinators of the joint platform, to express their sincere gratitude to both renowned scholarly institutions for giving the research forum its academic home. The present book, which appears in the prestigious Academy series *Sitzungsberichte der ÖAW*, is the first volume of a multi-volume publication of the project results dedicated to inter- and transdisciplinary aspects of the

impact of Multilingualism and *linguae francae* on the border between various traditions and with regard to philological and historical subjects of cross-cultural relevance.

Several thematic conferences and panels on the rôle of Multilingualism in history of knowledge took place in Athens (2009)¹, Vienna (2009,² 2010³, 2011⁴), Berlin (2010⁵, 2011⁶), Sofia (2008, 2011), and Marburg/Lahn (2010)⁷; a special conference panel “Buddhism among Iranian peoples” has been convened in Taipei, Taiwan (2011) and a seminar on multilingualism in Chinese Turkestan was organized at the University of Munich in 2009. The proceedings of the last-mentioned two meetings give the material for the first two volumes of our publication project; the third one, now in preparation for press,

¹ *Multilingualism, Linguae Francae, and the Global History of Religious and Scientific Concepts*. An international conference, Norwegian Institute at Athens, April 2–5, 2009, conveners: Jens E. BRAARVIG and †Malcolm HYMAN. Cf. http://www.norwinst.gr/uk/events_2009.html (last look-up of all internet links: September 10, 2011).

² *Classification as a Hermeneutic Tool*. A Workshop at the Oriental Institute, Vienna University, November 2, 2009, convener: Gebhard SELZ. Cf. http://orientalistik.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/inst_orientalistik/Classification_plakat.pdf.

³ *Multilingual Lists, Catalogues, and Classification Systems*. A workshop within the Interdisciplinary Conference *Multilingualism in Central Asia, Near and Middle East from Antiquity to Early Modern Times*, organized by the Institute of Iranian Studies and the International Relations Department of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, March 1–3, 2010, conveners: Bernhard PLUNGER, Velizar SADOVSKI, Florian SCHWARZ. Cf. http://www.oew.ac.at/iran/german/konferenz_multilingualism.html.

⁴ *Lists, Catalogues, and Classification Systems from Comparative and Historical Point of View*. A workshop of the Multilingualism Research Group, held in the framework of the Interdisciplinary Conference *Multilingualism and History of Knowledge in Asia from Antiquity till Early Modern Times*, Vienna, November 3–5, 2011, organized by the Institute of Iranian Studies and the International Relations Department of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, November 3–5, 2011; conveners like in fn. 3.

⁵ *Crossing Boundaries: Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra*, TOPOI conference, Berlin, November 8–10, 2010, convener: Markham J. GELLER. Cf. <http://www.topoi.org/event/crossing-boundaries-multilingualism-lingua-franca-and-lingua-sacra/>.

⁶ Problems of lists in magical and medical texts have been discussed in a series of papers on the TOPOI Conference *Knowledge to Die For: Transmission of Prohibited and Esoteric Knowledge through Space and Time*, Berlin, May 2–4, 2011, convener: Florentina BADALANOVA GELLER. Cf. <http://www.topoi.org/event/knowledge-to-die-for-transmission-of-prohibited-and-esoteric-knowledge-through-space-and-time/>.

⁷ *Organization of knowledge in Asian Cultures: Lists, catalogues and classification systems between orality and scriptuality*. Panel in the framework of the 31st German Congress of Oriental Studies, Marburg, September 20–24, 2010, conveners: Jens E. BRAARVIG, Mark GELLER and Velizar SADOVSKI. Cf. http://www.dot2010.de/index.php?ID_seite=872&sprache=2.

will contain the materials of one of the recent meetings at the *ÖAW* in Vienna. The conferences held at Athens, Vienna, and Berlin included also specific workshops on problems of Multilingualism in classification and systematization of knowledge (among others, in form of lists and catalogues) in ancient civilizations, such as the ones of the multilingual state formations in Iran and Near East in Antiquity and Middle Age (like the Achaemenid and the Sasanid Empires). Highlights of the relevant papers will appear in a further, fourth volume. The entire number of the individual issues of this publication planned at present amounts to seven volumes edited by the four undersigned *Herausgeber*, like in the case of the present volume, in close co-operation with the conveners of the respective conference.

Since several years, the meetings of the *Multilingualism Research Group* have been showing how researchers of various competences can shed light on most complex phenomena concerning the history of knowledge and scholarship in a broad context of language and ethnic variety in various social and geographic areas. From the very beginning on, our conferences have confirmed that these phenomena exhibit common features of high importance for various scholarly disciplines, which can be analyzed only by the joint efforts of professionals highly specialized in their own fields but open for sharing their knowledge in a cross-cultural context and with colleagues working on completely other disciplines (which, like History of Mathematics, Astronomy, and Natural Sciences, reach far beyond the traditional fields of Humanities and Social Sciences) but confronted with similar research topics. That is why we agreed upon our desire that this unique experience of working within this team, in a warm and stimulating inter-human atmosphere, should continue in the same spirit, and that our papers and talks should continuously find their material, “multi-lingual” expression in published form soon after the project meetings concerned have taken place – for *uerba uolant* but *exempla trahunt*!

For their enthusiasm and engagement in this intense process of intellectual exchange we are grateful to all individuals involved and their home institutions. And last, but not least, we thank again the Austrian Academy of Sciences for giving us a tribune for scholarly communication, Prof. Bert G. FRAGNER (Vienna) as Co-editor of the renowned series, in which our volumes will appear, and Prof. Rüdiger SCHMITT (Laboe) – in his quality not only of Academy Member proposing this volume for print to the Publication Commission of the Academy but also as active participant in the research

group, with a number of important contributions to the assessment of multilingualism in the Old Persian inscriptions of Dareios and Xerxes as projection of processes of multicultural osmosis in the historical framework of the Iranian *Weltreich* of the Achaemenid dynasty, to which we dedicated special chapters in the upcoming Volumes III and IV of our publication.

Vienna – Berlin – London – Oslo, New Year 2012

Jens E. BRAARVIG, Markham J. GELLER, Velizar SADOVSKI, Gebhard J. SELZ

MULTILINGUALISM AND HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE

VOLUME I

BUDDHISM AMONG THE IRANIAN PEOPLES
OF CENTRAL ASIA

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PREFACE

This volume, which represents the specific contribution on the part of the University of Rome La Sapienza to the activities of the international project “Multilingualism and the History of Knowledge”, contains nine papers that cover a diversity of themes relating to the presence and practice of Buddhism among the Iranian peoples of Central Asia, that is chiefly among the Khotanese and the Sogdians. Six of the papers were presented at the panel “Buddhism among Iranian peoples” convened by Mauro MAGGI at the XVIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, held at Dharma Drum Buddhist College, New Taipei City (Taiwan), from 20 to 25 June 2011. Three other articles that widen the scope of the volume and enhance its usefulness have been contributed by scholars who could not be accommodated into the panel due to time constraints or could not participate in the congress.

The panel at the origin of this volume was envisioned as an attempt to integrate the resources of Indo-Iranian philology with those of Buddhist philology. It is hoped that the volume will help to bridge the gap between these fields of study which have so far only partially fulfilled their potential for cross-fertilisation towards a better understanding of the transmission of Indian Buddhism through Central Asia to China and thereby to Tibet and the rest of East Asia.

The articles in the first two parts focus on linguistically Iranian Buddhist texts (Khotanese and Sogdian), while the third part comprises contributions dealing with non-Iranian sources (Tocharian and Chinese) that are relevant to the history of Buddhism in Khotan and among the Sogdians and the Tumshuqese.

We thank Geraint D. EVANS for his careful revision of the English and SHI Changrui 釋長叡 and HONG Peiyong 洪佩英 for checking the Pinyin transcriptions of Chinese. Last but not least, Dharma Drum Buddhist College (Taiwan) has generously made available a contribution towards the costs of publication, for which we are grateful.

Matteo DE CHIARA
Mauro MAGGI
Giuliana MARTINI

ABBREVIATIONS

JOURNALS AND SERIES

AAWG	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse.
AAWL	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz. Geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse.
ABORI	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.</i>
AcAs	<i>Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture.</i>
AcIr	Acta Iranica.
AcOr	<i>Acta Orientalia.</i>
ADAW	Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst.
AKM	Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.
AM	<i>Asia Major.</i>
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen.</i>
AOH	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae.</i>
ARIRIAB	<i>Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University.</i>
ASGM	<i>Atti del Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese.</i>
AsS	<i>Asiatische Studien.</i>
BAI	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute.</i>
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient.</i>
BEHE	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Section des sciences historiques et philologiques
BSO(A)S	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies.</i>
BTT	Berliner Turfantexte.
CII	Corpus inscriptionum Iranicarum.
EastBuddh	<i>The Eastern Buddhist.</i>
EIr	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> , ed. E. YARSHATER, London 1985–.
EW	<i>East and West.</i>
GBT	Gandhāran Buddhist texts.
IF	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen.</i>

<i>IJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian journal.</i>
IndTib	Indica et Tibetica.
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal asiatique.</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</i>
<i>JIAAA</i>	<i>Journal of Inner Asian art and archaeology.</i>
<i>JIABS</i>	<i>Journal of the International Associations of Buddhist Studies.</i>
<i>JIBS</i>	<i>Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies / Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū 印度学仏教学研究.</i>
<i>JICABS</i>	<i>Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies.</i>
<i>JIP</i>	<i>Journal of Indian philosophy.</i>
<i>JPTS</i>	<i>Journal of the Pali Text Society.</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.</i>
<i>Kratylos</i>	<i>Kratylos: kritisches Berichts- und Rezensionsorgan für indogermanische und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft.</i>
LOS	London Oriental series.
LSIE	Leiden studies in Indo-European.
<i>MemToyoBunko</i>	<i>Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko (Oriental Library).</i>
<i>MsOr</i>	<i>Manuscripta Orientalia.</i>
<i>MSS</i>	<i>Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft.</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap.</i>
<i>OLZ</i>	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung.</i>
PIOL	Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain.
PÉFEO	Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient.
<i>SIAL</i>	<i>Studies on the Inner Asian languages.</i>
<i>SIMA</i>	<i>Studia Iranica, Mesopotamica et Anatolica.</i>
SOR	Serie orientale Roma.
<i>SPAW</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse.</i>
SRS	Silk Road Studies.
<i>StII</i>	<i>Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik.</i>
<i>StIr</i>	<i>Studia Iranica.</i>
STT	Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden.
SWTF	Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden. Beihefte.

<i>TIES</i>	<i>Tocharian and Indo-European studies.</i>
TLSM	Trends in linguistics. Studies and monographs
<i>TULIP</i>	<i>Tokyo University linguistic papers.</i>
<i>UAJb</i>	<i>Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher.</i>
VOHD	Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland.
VSUA	Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica.
<i>WZKS(O)</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd(- und Ost)asiens.</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft.</i>

PART 1

KHOTANESE TEXTS

BODHISATTVA TEXTS, IDEOLOGIES AND RITUALS IN KHOTAN IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES

Giuliana MARTINI

This article discusses the apparently hegemonic position of the Mahāyāna, the Great Vehicle, in the Khotanese Buddhist scene of the fifth and sixth centuries.¹ The earliest extant textual materials in Khotanese – dating to this period – are all of “Mahāyāna” character (i.e., they in various ways identify themselves as such) or tend to be overlaid with “Mahāyāna” ideology (i.e., they are quoted, reworked, and included within literary compositions to serve the purposes of “Mahāyāna” *imaginaire*). The evidence for the local circulation of Mahāyāna sūtras in Indic languages also points in the same direction. In the following pages I investigate more closely the local religio-historical dynamics which may underlie such a situation. I focus on the interplay of doctrinal and institutional trends that resulted in the seemingly overarching establishment of Mahāyāna thought and rituals in Khotan, sup-

¹ This is an enlarged and revised version of a chapter of my doctoral dissertation (MARTINI 2010b). In addition to my presentation at the XVI IABS Congress, I gave a lecture based on this study at the Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship, University of Hamburg, on July 12th, 2011. I am especially grateful to Martin DELHEY, Jens-Uwe HARTMANN, and Cristina SCHERRER-SCHAUB for their comments and criticism after my presentations, and to Bhikkhu ANĀLAYO, Mauro MAGGI, YAMABE Nobuyoshi, Jan NATTIER, Peter SKILLING, Alberto TODESCHINI, Vincent TOURNIER, and SHI Kongmu 釋空目 for their close readings and discussions of earlier drafts. Last but not least, I ought to acknowledge the great personal and academic generosity of Antonello PALUMBO: without his critical reading of the last draft and profuse comments and corrections, the religio-historical reconstruction I have ventured with this article would have been more imprecise and simply out of focus. – All quotations and translations from the *Book of Zambasta* are, with modifications and adaptations, after EMMERICK 1968. References to Pali texts are to the Pali Text Society editions, unless otherwise indicated. References to Tibetan canonical texts are to the Peking and Derge editions quoted by catalogue numbers (Ötani and Tōhoku respectively). For all languages and text editions, on occurrence, I have adjusted the sandhi, punctuation, capitalisation, etc. For the word “bodhisattva” I retain the form current in English, although with hesitation because, as discussed by BHATTACHARYA 2010, the spelling *bodhisatva* is the “standard” in Buddhist Sanskrit. The Khotanese materials themselves, beginning with the *Book of Zambasta*, reflect this particular spelling; it is, however, theoretically possible that this might reflect the peculiarities of Khotanese orthography (“In the group [tw] Old Khotanese, usually also Late Khotanese, has *tv* (not *ttv*)”, EMMERICK 1981, 186).

ported by the local creation of a polemical doxography of the Buddhist careers or vehicles (*yānas*), which appears to have been directly aimed at promoting the path, vows, and rituals of the bodhisattva, that is, of the follower of the Mahāyāna. I explore ritual and ideological aspects of a selection of significant passages found in the *Book of Zambasta* – probably the earliest extant original Khotanese text, dating from about the mid-fifth century² – in the light of their Indian sources and parallels preserved in other languages. An analysis of these materials suggests (a) that the polemical discourse is complementary to the presence of a Khotanese parallel to the chapter on the bodhisattva’s moral conduct of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi (Śīlapaṭala)*, which is included in the *Book of Zambasta* as its chapter 12, and (b) that to some extent such a polemical discourse becomes, for the Khotanese bodhisattva, foundational to the very setting out on the Mahāyāna path.

1. THE MAHĀYĀNA IN KHOTAN

The Dharma of Khotan as we know it from the surviving texts – texts in vernacular and texts in Sanskrit whose circulation in the Southern Silk Road kingdom we can infer from manuscript evidence, quotations of Indian scriptures in Khotanese works, and a few historical records – appears to be exclusively affiliated with Mahāyāna thought and soteriology. There are a number of chapters in the *Book of Zambasta* that, if read in isolation, need not be considered as specifically Mahāyāna, for example a version of the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* (chapter 22), in that they represent the bodhisattva ideal and other eschatological expectations that are the common inheritance of the Indian Buddhism of the Middle Period, long before the emergence of “Mahāyāna” as a term and a token of sectarian religious identity. The case of the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*, however, is particularly noteworthy in that, compared to the other extant versions, the Khotanese recension is somehow “sealed” with the mark of the Bodhisattvayāna. As a matter of fact, especially for the earlier period of the (unknown) history of Khotanese Buddhism, as with the overall history of the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism,³ it is not always possible to unequivocally describe a Buddhist community as ei-

² The dating based on structure and palaeography of the earliest extant folio of the *Book of Zambasta* from the mid-fifth century by MAGGI 2004a is confirmed on palaeographic grounds by SANDER 2009; I have discussed it on the basis of doctrinal and religio-historical analysis in MARTINI 2010b, 2011a, and 2012.

³ I adopt the periodisation “Middle Period”, demarcating the formative period of both the Vinaya collections and Mahāyāna sūtras, after SCHOPEN 1995, 476.

ther non-Mahāyāna or Mahāyāna, since the development of what would become the fully grown Mahāyāna was a multifaceted and gradual process of evolution. However what matters the most as an overriding principle in the present context is that the materials of the *Book of Zambasta* are presented and incorporated within the “Mahāyāna” program that informs the *Book of Zambasta*, a composition that, while partaking of the many developments that occurred in Buddhist thought in the course of the Middle Period between the beginning of the Christian era and the start of the sixth century, elaborates them from the perspective of a self-conscious Mahāyāna identity, including practical and theoretical aspects of meditation, traditional narratives, Buddhological notions, and eschatological promises.

Notably, not a single manuscript fragment in the Khotanese language containing early Buddhist sūtras or Tripiṭaka collections, which were circulating along the Silk Road at least since Kushan times in Indian languages and scripts, has so far come to light.⁴ This situation might be coincidental and could indeed change with new findings. However, the extant evidence, taken together with the lack of any direct or indirect traces of the circulation of non-Mahāyāna scriptures in Khotan even in their original Indian languages, seems to point to a lack of concern with the older scriptures, which may have not been considered worth the effort of being passed on, copied, or translated. By the fifth century, in Southern Central Asia, the appropriate textual contexts for the formulation and diffusion of new philosophical and religious ideas were obviously quite other than the early Āgamas, and we witness an evolving understanding of the notion of canon and canonisation.

In other words, if one were to judge from the virtually exclusive presence of Mahāyāna sūtras and literary works, compounded with the dearth of Khotanese translations of the early canonical collections, one may come to the conclusion that from the outset, at least as an *argumentum e silentio*, the Dharma in Khotan was transmitted with neither a living nor a literary concern for the early Āgamas and that it was received in the framework of a canonical paradigm that had absorbed the Middle Period materials and was privileging the adaptation, translation, and propagation of Mahāyāna texts. Only the manuscript containing a Gandhari recension of the *Dharmapada*, discovered by Jules-Léon DUTREUIL DE RHINS in a cave at Kohmārī Mazār in the Khotan area in 1892 and probably

⁴ The same holds for the Vinayas, but the case of the absence of Khotanese translations of the Vinaya(s) is more complex. I briefly touch on this topic below.

produced between the first and the third century C.E., constitutes an artefact evidencing the transmission of Āgama-related materials in Khotan at an early period.⁵ The earlier scriptures had by and large lapsed as a point of reference, the Middle Period materials were being recast within a Mahāyāna frame of reference, and thus the very beginnings of a Buddhist literature in the vernacular indicate that the Mahāyāna would seem to have emerged on the Khotanese religious scenario as fully-fledgedly hegemonic, with Mahāyāna literacy seemingly the driving force behind the inception of a written literature in the local language.⁶ On the other hand, an at least partial explanation for the virtually total absence of non-Mahāyāna canonical scriptures can be found in the persistence of the oral transmission. According to Faxian 法顯 (c. 337-422), who went in search of copies of the Vinaya, even in the fifth century there was an active *bhāṇaka* tradition at the least for the Vinaya.⁷ This is confirmed by the fact that at least three Āgamas, the *Madhyama-*, *Ekottarika-* and *Dirgha-āgama*, were translated into Chinese between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century on the basis of oral recitations carried out in Indic languages.⁸ In fact, in the context of the Northern Silk Road sites, Lore SANDER suggests that the *bhāṇaka* tradition “may explain the

⁵ As remarked by NEELIS 2011, 296 n. 20, “[i]t is uncertain whether or not this manuscript ... was actually written in Khotan, since arguments for its local composition based on the scroll format and linguistic features have been disconfirmed by recent discoveries of other Gāndhārī scrolls, including one example of another Dharmapada fragment”, on which see SALOMON 1999, 102, 120, and 129-130 and LENZ 2003. It is very likely that texts such as the edifying tales of *avadāna* literature that embody the bodhisattva ethos and career but do not represent the Mahāyāna as a spiritual path on its own in sectarian terms were well known in early Khotanese Buddhism, though all surviving *avadānas* or *avadāna*-like works extant in Khotanese are in Late Khotanese and are contained in late manuscripts from Dunhuang rather than from the Khotan area; for a survey of Khotanese *avadāna* literature see MAGGI 2009, 361-370.

⁶ On the oral and aural aspects of the early spread of the Dharma to Khotan see MARTINI 2013.

⁷ Trans. DEEG 2005, 561; for sūtras see the life of Kumārajīva, trans. LIU 1969, 176 (reference from SANDER 1991, 141-142 n. 36).

⁸ The original translation of an *Ekottarika-āgama* was based on a text recited in 384 by the Indian monk Dharmanandin, which was then translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念. In fact, Dao'an's 道安 (312-385) preface to *T. 125 (Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含經)* at *T. II 549a11* indicates that Dharmanandin was a reciter of two *āgamas*, which presumably are the *Madhyama-āgama (Zhong ahan jing 中阿含經, T. 26)* and the *Ekottarika-āgama (Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含, T. 125)* then translated by Zhu Fonian; the *Dirgha-āgama (Chang ahan jing 長阿含經, T. 1)* was also translated by Zhu Fonian on the basis of a text recited by Buddhayaśas in the early fifth century.

total absence of Hīnayāna Vinaya and Sūtra texts before the fifth century AD. The situation changed only when the different nations of the Tarim Basin began to translate Buddhist works into their own languages. According to the manuscripts found, this did not occur before the end of the fifth to the sixth centuries AD”.⁹

One may thus look at the situation from a reverse perspective and it may then rather be the sudden appearance and multiplication of manuscripts (Āgamas in the northern sites, Mahāyāna works in Khotan) at that time and in the following period to call for an explanation. SANDER comments that “[m]any reasons may be advanced for the sudden translation activities at the end of the fifth to the beginning of the sixth centuries in Kučā and at about the same time in Khotan ... Was it [i.e., a widespread interest in Buddhist literature] enforced by the Mahāyānist idea of regarding the reciting, copying, writing, translation and even the possession of Buddhist books as being meritorious?”.¹⁰ On this hypothesis, the beginnings of a Mahāyāna written literature in Khotanese – in which the written medium is a crucial aspect of the formation and the transmission of the texts in addition to being at the centre of the ideology of merit based on the Mahāyāna “books”¹¹ – may be one of the key factors that explain the explosion of (non-Mahāyāna) Āgama manuscripts in the non-Mahāyāna centres of the region by way of reaction. An *oppositio in imitando*, in other words. Were this the case, then the dearth of early Āgamas in Khotan (in Indic languages or Khotanese) may be explained partly by an early and at least to an extent continued presence of the oral transmission, and partly by the fact that, once the Mahāyāna had fully exploded in Khotan, the local predominant interest and patronage were by then invested in the new scriptures.

In fact, Khotan is renowned for having become a stronghold of the Great Vehicle in Central Asia from the third-fourth centuries until it was conquered by the Islamised Qarakhānids shortly before 1006.¹² This is witnessed by the activity of Khotanese translators and Buddhist travellers in Central Asia and China, as well as by the accounts of Chinese pilgrims.

⁹ SANDER 1991, 142. In n. 37 she adds as a word of caveat that “[i]t must not be forgotten that the dates given depend on palaeographical studies and that this is a rather weak basis. Established dates are rare”.

¹⁰ SANDER 1991, 142 n. 37.

¹¹ See especially HARRISON 2003 and SHIMODA 2009.

¹² Only a few Khotanese texts from the second half of the tenth century are specifically attributable to tantric Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna.

The predominant position of the Mahāyāna tallies with the already mentioned primary evidence of the extant Khotanese and Sanskrit Buddhist texts themselves, the overwhelming majority of which are Mahāyānist in inspiration.¹³

To briefly look back at the silent pre-Mahāyāna age – in the sense of the period prior to the development of a sectarian, exclusive, and eventually hegemonic Mahāyāna ideology, which in fact coincides with the period before the Buddhist presence in the Central Asian kingdom has left its traces in literature – it is hardly possible to determine exactly when Buddhism was introduced into Khotan.¹⁴ As already remarked by Paolo DAFFINÀ, a substantial spread of the Dharma into Chinese Turkestan is hard to conceive of before and independently of the Kushan expansion into the region.¹⁵ On the other hand, if Buddhism had already penetrated into China via the two branches of the continental Silk Road between the first half of the first century coinciding with the period of the consolidation of Chinese power in Central Asia (the middle of the first century being the period in which the existence of Buddhism is attested for the first time in contemporary Chinese sources), then it could well have reached Khotan as early as

¹³ Of the three Chinese monks who visited Khotan roughly 120 years apart – Faxian, who spent three months in Khotan in 401, Songyun 宋雲 (fl. c. 518-522), who was in the Central Asian kingdom in 519, and Xuanzang 玄奘 (600-664), who reached Khotan in 644 on his way back from India and remained there seven to eight months – Faxian especially gives a lengthy description of Mahāyāna temples and Buddhist rituals in Khotan. On the activity of Khotanese masters and translators see KUMAMOTO 1999; on the accounts of Faxian and Xuanzang see STEIN 1907, 173-175, LAMOTTE 1954, 392-394, DEEG 2005, 86-97, and DEEG 2009, 47-51 (who also positions the role played by so-called “pilgrims” within the aspect of collecting and presenting to China information on the Western Regions and that of the Buddhist propagandistic and educational needs met by these accounts).

¹⁴ The *Li yul lung bstan pa* (Prophecy of the Li [= Khotan] country, ed. and trans. EMMERICK 1967, 22-25), which relates a local tradition according to which Buddhism reached Khotan 165 years after the foundation of Khotan (ascribed by the same source to a son of Aśoka 234 years after the death of the Buddha) is regarded as trustworthy by EMMERICK 1992, 3 on the grounds that it mentions Aśoka but resists the easy temptation to assign the introduction of Buddhism directly to him and places it in the first century B.C.E. instead (the exact date depending on whichever dates of Aśoka one opts for, cf. MAGGI 2009, 340 with n. 41); the likelihood of this date is rejected by YAMAZAKI 1990, who prefers the period between the second and the third centuries C.E. The available literary and historical sources await closer study; an assessment of the Buddhist foundation legend of Khotan with a critical discussion of the sources and historical trajectories of transmission of this legend is under preparation by Max DEEG.

¹⁵ DAFFINÀ 1975, 191.

the late first century B.C.E., although probably without being predominant in Khotanese society – which does not contrast with DAFFINÀ'S view.¹⁶

Historically, the consolidation of a position of pre-eminence of the Khotanese kingdom over the other city-states in the Tarim Basin had been taking place since the first century C.E.,¹⁷ when Khotan flourished as a regional commercial and religious centre of the southwestern Tarim Basin, serving as a connecting point between China, India, Western Central Asia, and Iran. However, although Buddhist establishments may have been rather well set up in Khotan by 200 C.E.,¹⁸ evidence for stūpas and residential monasteries seems to be lacking before the late third and early fourth centuries.¹⁹

Now, according to the *Li yul lung bstan pa* (Prophecy of the Li country), Mahāsāṅghika and Sarvāstivāda Nikāyas were present in Khotan when the Khotanese king defeated and converted to Buddhism the lord of Kashgar in about 100 C.E.²⁰ Reference to the Mahāsāṅghikas is also given in another passage of the same work which connects the building of altogether sixteen monasteries belonging to the Mahāsāṅghikas to King Vijaya Dharma (I) and his elder brother and spiritual mentor, the arhat Dharmānanda, providing the following information: “When the Mahāsāṅghika lineage and the monk Dharmānanda had first come into the Li Country, in Hu-then, the *saṅghas* of the eight monasteries of 'Dro-tir and of the eight monasteries of Kam-sheg belonged to the Mahāsāṅghika lineage”.²¹

In the same *Prophecy of the Li country* a monastery of the Sarvāstivādins appears on the stage at a slightly later time in the course of the reign of King Vijaya Dharma (I). The Sarvāstivādins who occupy this monastery

¹⁶ MAGGI 2009, 340.

¹⁷ ZHANG 1996, 284.

¹⁸ This is the opinion of RHIE 1999, 322; see also ZÜRCHER 1990, 174-175 with nn. 42-44. I ought to add that over the past three decades systematic archaeological excavations have been carried out by Chinese archaeologists in the Khotan area, some in conjunction with Japanese and French teams. I am unfortunately unable to access the recently published preliminary reports. Thus, for the time being, I limit myself to pointing to the importance of the archaeological data in the hope that archaeologists will be able to tell if and how my religio-historical hypothesis relates to the stratigraphy of the excavated sites.

¹⁹ NEELIS 2011, 297.

²⁰ EMMERICK 1967, 40-47; 1983, 963; 1990, 494-495; and MAGGI 2009, 341.

²¹ Ed. and trans. after EMMERICK 1967, 40-41 with modifications; for the religious aetiology of this event see EMMERICK 1967, 35-41. On the location of the 'Dro district cf. THOMAS 1935, 114 n. 4.

are explicitly defined “Hīnayānists” (*sarbātibād kyi sde theg pa chung ngu* ‘the small vehicle of the Sarvāstivāda school’). This label may be used in the neutral sense of designating one of the traditional “eighteen schools”. It needs not necessarily imply that the later compiler(s) of the text perceived the adherence of the local communities of the Mahāsāṅghikas to the “Mahāyāna” as opposite to a Sarvāstivāda loyalty to the “Hīnayāna”. The late *Prophecy* most probably includes earlier Khotanese annalistic sources. I am inclined to understand the label “Hīnayāna” in this context perhaps as reflecting an established usage in earlier or later historiography rather than as necessarily an indicator of a special Mahāyāna partisanship on the part of the original Khotanese source.

The account of the *Prophecy of the Li country* is difficult to locate in history. There is no external evidence (neither Khotanese documents nor Chinese sources) that allows for a dating of the sequence of Khotanese kings that are listed in the early section of this work of historical hagiography that deals with the meritorious deeds performed by Vijaya Dharma (I).²² Although it is not possible to arrive at an absolute chronology, the fact that Vijaya Dharma (I) appears as the fifteenth in a list of fifty-seven kings starting from the period of Aśoka Maurya (mid-third century B.C.E.) and ending in the second part of the tenth century, makes it probable that he reigned roughly in the third or fourth century C.E.

Next, there is the well-known account of the journey of the Chinese monk Zhu Shixing 朱士行 (fl. c. 255-260) to Khotan, a journey which is, in the words of Erik ZÜRCHER, “the first recorded case of a Chinese leaving his country in quest of Buddhist scriptures, and the first clearly localised Chinese account of Buddhism in Central Asia”.²³ Zhu Shixing travelled

²² On the problematic dates of the later kings mentioned in the *Li yul lung bstan pa* see HILL 1988, EMMERICK 1992, 46-47, KUMAMOTO 1996, and SKJÆRVØ 2002, lxvi-lxviii (with references).

²³ ZÜRCHER 2007, 61. On Central Asian Buddhism in general see SANDER 1979 (critically reviewed by EMMERICK 1987), PURI 1987 (critically reviewed by NATTIER 1990), EMMERICK 1987, EMMERICK-SKJÆRVØ 1990, KLIMKEIT 1990, PINAULT 1994, LITVINSKY-VO-ROBYOVA-DESYATOVSKAYA 1996, XU 1998 (with special reference to Tokharians), LITVINSKY 1968 and 1999, the contributions in McRAE and NATTIER 1999, HARTMANN 2000 and 2005, and TREMBLAY 2007 (a general introductory survey relying on secondary literature). On the role played by Khotan and Khotanese translators see LAMOTTE 1954 and 1960, and the survey and references in ZÜRCHER 2007, 61-63, and see KUMAMOTO 1999, 346-355 and DEEG 2009, 37 n. 34 (mentioning a quotation about the Mahāyāna in Khotan and Karghalik from an unidentified *Xiyu ji* 西域記 recorded in the *Fahua zhuanji* 法華傳記, T. 2060 at T. 50b4 ff.) and 47-51 for relevant Chinese sources.

west probably in 260 in search of the Sanskrit *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. He found the text he was looking for in Khotan. According to tradition, only after an ordeal which was to provide the proof for the truth and supernatural imprimatur could he copy the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and then entrust it to a Khotanese pupil, who brought the text to China in 282, where the Khotanese monk Mokṣala 竺叔蘭 translated it into Chinese in 291 (*T.* 221). According to the biographical account, Zhu Shixing met with the opposition of the Khotanese “Hīnayānists” who tried to prevent a further spread eastwards of the heretical “Brahmanical book”.²⁴ Zhu Shixing volunteered to subject the book to a fire ordeal. The scripture came out of it successfully. ZÜRCHER comments that, “[i]f this story would have any historical base, it would clearly indicate that around the middle of the third century Hīnayāna Buddhism prevailed even at Khotan, and that the Mahāyāna was still a rather despised minority. But the whole story is rather suspect”.²⁵ He points out that the immunity to fire of certain sacred scriptures forms a well-known theme in Chinese Buddhist hagiography and that, “[m]ost of all, the story of the ordeal at Khotan is reminiscent of the supernatural contest between Daoist masters in the presence of emperor Ming in 69 AD”, affirming that, “[n]evertheless, the tradition may be early”, possibly transmitted by one of Zhu Shixing’s disciples who returned to China after the master’s death in Khotan. Thus ZÜRCHER concludes that “[i]t is therefore quite probable that at the time of Zhu Shixing’s arrival in or shortly after 260 Khotan was already the stronghold of Mahāyāna in Central Asia, in contrast with the predominantly Hīnayānistic Northern centre of Kuchā”.²⁶

In 296, a further copy of the Sanskrit original of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* was brought to Chang’an by another Khotanese monk, Gītāmītra. Later, around the end of the fourth century, Zhi Faling 支法領 found in

²⁴ For the sources of the account (the earliest of which dates from the first years of the fourth century) cf. ZÜRCHER 2007, 61-63 with nn. 340-341; 1990, 175; and DEEG 2006, 110.

²⁵ ZÜRCHER 2007, 63 and 341 n. 194, where he refers to HATANI 1933, 212 and MOCHIZUKI 1954-1958, 222 holding this opinion.

²⁶ ZÜRCHER 2007, 62. DEEG 2006, 110 further comments: “Dieser Widerspruch in einem chinesischen hagiographischen Text, dem Gaosen-zhuan des Huijiao, des frühen sechsten Jahrhunderts und die Tendenz, diese Texte historisierend zu lesen, führten selbst einen so vorsichtigen gelehrten wie Zürcher zu den eigentlich unvereinbaren Aussagen, Khotan sei in dieser Zeit „schon das Bollwerk des Mahāyāna in Zentralasien“ gewesen, daß aber zur selben Zeit „Hīnayāna Buddhismus sogar in Khotan vorherrschte, und daß Mahāyāna noch der Glaube einer verabscheuten Minderheit war“.”

Khotan the text of the shorter recension of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* (T. 278).²⁷ And, finally, when Faxian visited Khotan in the year 401, he described an exceedingly large number of monks and monasteries whose vast majority belonged to the Mahāyāna, that also enjoyed royal patronage.²⁸

While it seems to be the case that Khotan had indeed already become *the* Mahāyāna centre of the region in the third century, it is not possible to ascertain whether the Mahāyāna had already gained universal acceptance in Khotan itself. That is to say, we do not know whether historically Khotan had become more or less suddenly the “stronghold of Mahayāna in Central Asia” prompted, for example, by a decisive act of royal sponsorship or else only after religious internecine tension among different groups and their political supporters was settled to a constant value – that of the “Mahāyāna” – in the course of a longer process, perhaps again with the help and as a result of royal patronage. And we do not know the role played by the “Mahāyāna” as an ideological construct, if any, at this early stage.

Regardless of its historical value, it seems to me that the topos of supernatural sanction of the “new scriptures” of the Mahāyāna along with its memory preserved by the tradition lends itself to two alternative readings. In both cases the narrative would appear to express and meet real ideological needs and preoccupations, either from a Khotanese perspective or on the part of the Chinese. Firstly, it could be interpreted in such a way as to alert the historian to the likelihood of the existence of religious ideas and groups that were actively competing to assert their respective legitimacy and struggling for support. Or else it could be entirely the result of a projection on the part of Chinese Mahāyānists seeking legitimacy for the sake of their own religion back in China, who may thus have ultimately been less concerned with Khotan than with Chinese Buddhist historiography.

The legend is attested in Sengrui’s 僧叡 (352-436) *Yuyi lun* 喻疑論, a “manifesto of Mahāyāna fundamentalism” composed around 420 C.E. that is heavily involved with the pro-Mahāyāna polemical and sectarian context of the time. As noted by Antonello PALUMBO, “[i]n this remarkable text no notice is taken of external opponents of Buddhism; all polemical exertion is directed instead at the internal enemy, the stubborn upholder of the ‘Small Vehicle’, vaguely identified at one point with the Buddhists of Central Asia

²⁷ Zhi Faling’s journey to Khotan is mentioned in the anonymous preface to the Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, *Sifen lu* 四分律, T. 1428 at T. XXII 567a22-576a25. On the transmission of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* in Khotan see MARTINI 2011, 147-151; for Central Asian Sanskrit fragments of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* see now HORI 2012.

²⁸ Ed. DEEG 2005, 580, trans. DEEG 2005, 511 and 2009, 48; see also ZÜRCHER 2007, 61-63.

(the ‘thirty-six countries’), but otherwise defined by the mere incapacity to acknowledge the holy truths of the sacred Mahāyāna texts”.²⁹

One interpretation of the topos of the sacred sanction could be to align it to what Max DEEG reads as the artificial creation of a Hīnayāna opponent in China³⁰ and to the tendency of “pilgrims” to carry back with them stories and materials that provide the king in China with a model that could be implemented in the actualisation of an ideal Buddhist kingdom.³¹ The perception of such a religious opponent in China, however, cannot be entirely artificial or ascribed to a Chinese idiosyncrasy. The changes that took place in China between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, the translation of Mahāyāna treatises and writings, and the general realignment of religious identities can hardly be made sense of as the exclusive expression of some kind of Chinese idiosyncrasy. The *Book of Zambasta* and its programme are best read as a constitutive element of a complex process of religio-historical heterogenesis in addition, needless to say, to the local Khotanese perspective.

In fact, as we will see in the following pages, the Khotanese situation displays affinities to the polemical turns and religious controversy of fifth-century China, which in turn has to be situated in the waves and rhetorics of “conversions” that connect the histories of the Late Antique Eurasia, with the “divisive emergence of religious identities” from the Mediterranean to Imperial China.³² Moreover, the discourse of legitimation of Mahāyāna scriptures in the sixth-century *Tarkajvālā*, which employs sectarian terminology with regard to the eighteen early schools, charged with being an “inferior aspiration”, *hīnādhimukta* (*theḡ pa dman pa*),³³ offers an interesting connection in this respect in that it testifies that the fundamentalist divide had made itself felt back in India itself.

²⁹ Quotations from PALUMBO forthcoming (§ “Great Vehicle vs. Small Vehicle: from the Sarvāstivāda to the Taoists”).

³⁰ DEEG 2005 and 2009.

³¹ On the fictive or unreal opponent in the Chinese polemics against the Hīnayāna see DEEG 2009. Along similar lines, I discuss below the figure of the “significant Other” in the context of the Khotanese Mahāyāna propaganda. DEEG 2005, 37 and 2009, 51, speaks of a “speculum-motive” with regard to the writings of the Chinese pilgrims: part of their propagandistic and “educational” agenda was to hold a mirror in front of the ruler in order to show him what an ideal Buddhist kingdom should look like.

³² PALUMBO forthcoming.

³³ *Dbu ma'i snying po'i 'grel pa rtog ge 'bar ba*, Tōhoku 3856 and Ōtani 5256. On the Mahāyānist agenda of this work in general see ECKEL 2008; on the polemical significance of the occurrences of *theḡ pa dman pa* see ANĀLAYO forthcoming.

In terms of the historical milieu in which these dialectics are to be situated, it is tempting to imagine a landscape not too dissimilar to that of Late Antique Eurasia, namely an alliance between an emergent political power and a church or a particular faction of a certain church. The designated church or faction would have been the Mahāyāna, which would then promote itself and be promoted by means of a hegemonic ascendancy. As far as we know, Khotanese Buddhism seems to have never undergone a process of canonisation in the sense of a programmed, centrally subsidised cultural operation of scriptural selection, classification and translation – i.e., we do not know of the sponsoring or production of a “Khotanese” Tripitaka or comparable collections. Yet, it seems to me that the actual writing down of the Mahāyāna Dharma in the local Khotanese language, to coincide with the beginning of a written literature in this vernacular, may have constituted, in practice, a centrally sponsored act of canonisation, with ensuing mutual acknowledgement, promotion, and support between the political and religious institutions. The early Khotanese polemical scholasticism of the ideological monument to the Mahāyāna that is the *Book of Zambasta* – reminiscent of the scholasticisms of the polemicists of the Catholic Middle Ages in Europe – would thus serve well the purposes of legitimation on three interconnected levels: (a) self-referentially and self-representationally (the Mahāyāna church performing its own supremacy to itself), (b) in relation to the political patron, and (c) towards actual competing factions and groups.

The pious activities of the early Khotanese kings recorded in the *Prophecy of the Li country* would then quite appropriately serve the purposes of being religious annals at the service of political legitimation. Perhaps a non-Iranian or even an Iranian ruling house in need of sacred sanction was keen on embracing the ideal of the Buddhist *cakravartin* and was equally ready to adopt Sanskrit proper names (as those featured in the names of the kings associated with sponsorship of Buddhism monasteries and monuments in the Prophecy of the Li country, e.g. Vijaya Saṃbhava, Vijaya Vīrya, Vijaya Jaya, etc.) and thus to undergo religious consecration through, say, rituals such as the *rājābhiṣeka*. The *Book of Zambasta* indeed contains the oldest Khotanese reference to the celebration of the quinquennial assembly of the *pañcavārṣika*.³⁴ Chronologically speaking, the earliest literary traces of a “Buddhist” *pañcavārṣika* all seem to point to the second half of the

³⁴ Z 22.97, 24.466, and 24.474. For a reference to the *pañcavārṣika* in vv. CP 231 (*pajavaṣṭā*) = A 237 (*pañjyavaṣāri*) of the Khotanese *Sudhanāvadāna* see DE CHIARA 2013, 110 (ed.) and 111 (trans.). BAILEY, *KT* 4.17 mentions the origin of the *Tales of the wise and of the fool* in Khotan during a *pañcavārṣika*. On the *pañcavārṣika* in Khotan see DEEG 1995.