

## A METRICAL SUMMARY OF THE SADDHARMA-PUNDARIKA SUTRA IN GOSTANA-DESA

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In the cities of the Sita (Tarim) basin in Chinese Turkestan, the cities of Khotan (Gostana, Khotana, Hvatana), Yarkand, Kashghar and Tumshuq (near Maralbashi), a people who called themselves Saka and of whom some still live in the inaccessible plateaus of the Pamirs, maintained a flourishing civilisation for about a thousand years. From the early centuries of our era they professed the Buddhist religion and philosophy introduced from India and for this period of nearly a thousand years, though under the power of Chinese, Heftal, Tibetans and again Chinese, they were possessed of independent states. It was ultimately the Turks coming down from the North in the tenth century who put an end to their kingdoms and overturned the Buddhist faith.

In the kingdom of Gostana, where the royal family Visa' ruled, have been discovered within the past seventy years a surprisingly large collection of manuscripts, some complete, others only in fragmentary texts. These testify to the existence of a copious literature among the Saka. The sacred service of the upasampada, the karmavacana was in the Indian language (E 13, 36 himduvanana hauna), but they were aware of the importance of translations into their own language to enable their fellows to understand the Indian books. Thus in P 2782, 44 hvamani hauna khu tye da arthi bvare means 'in language of Hvatana so that they can realise the meaning of this Dharma'. In these manuscripts we have references to and frequently translations of all the various types of Indian Buddhist literature. The serious sutras occur the vinaya; and the lighter tales of the Jatakastava (which has over fifty jataka tales), of the jataka of Nanda (known also in a Buddhist Sanskrit manuscript in the Cambridge University Library), the avadana-narrative of Sudhana and Manohara in verse, the avadana of Asoka and Kunala in prose. The philosophical works of the older Abhidharma are cited and the later sastra; tika, vibhasa, yogasastra, yogasthana, the eight prakarana. In translations (P 5538 b 28; Or 8212 162.37 in my *Khotanese Texts II 3*) we have in whole or in part such texts as the Suvarna-bhasa-Sutra, Bhadracarya-desana Sumukha-sutra, Suramgama-samadhi-sutra, Manjusrinairatmyavatara-sutra Vajracchedika and others. Of non-religious interest the material is less, but we find some lyrical poems, medical texts, a report of a journey from Gostana to the Adhithana 'capital' of Kasmira, and private letters.

It will be seen from these titles that in Gostana-desa the dominant literature was Mahayana and indeed the sravakayana was held definitely lower in esteem as an inferior way of salvation. Yet they recorded in their Annals (preserved in the Tibetan Li-yul-gyi lun-bstan-pa) that Gostana had sixteen Mahasanghika gtsug-lag-khan, vihara, besides the many royal foundations of the more developed faith of the Mahayana.

Gradually it has been possible to interpret the language of the Gostana and Tumshuq manuscripts. It is related to the language of Sogdiana and the Persian further west and therefore stands in some such relation to Sanskrit as a sister language. But in its course as a language of civilisation largely Indian the Indian vocabulary has been copiously called upon and probably one half of the Gostana vocabulary is either from the north-west Prakrit of Gandhara or from Buddhist Sanskrit.

Here it has seemed of interest to introduce the famous text of the Saddharmapundarika-sutra, the Lotus of the Good Dharma, from the Gostana texts. There is no proper translation, but in the manuscript P 2782 (published in *Khotanese Texts* III 58-61) from Tun-huang we find a metrical summary of the Saddharmapundarika referring very briefly to all the twenty-seven parivartas or chapters extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan and Chinese renderings. A patron of the text, probably therefore a danapati, is named in lines 11-12: dyau tceyi sina, that will be a Chinese name Liao Tsai-sing, for whom the sutra had previously been explained. The summary (hambista=Sanskrit samasa) refers only briefly to each parivarta, the whole occupies only 61 lines in the manuscript. A copy of the first nine lines is written also in the manuscript or 8212.162. 82-90 (edited in *Khotanese Texts* II 5-6). The beginning cites the doctrine of the one vehicle, and the Buddhas' path, and professes homage with faith; the mystery is stated to be very great, its meaning concealed. There are the three vehicles but the one hamgrantha—, conjunction. It has the opening of a regular sutra: So I have heard, the teacher (sastar) was residing at one time upon the Grdhrakuta hill surrounded by a vast multitude of rsis and bodhisattvas. He taught in parables, as in that of the burning house (parivarta 3). The Buddhas poured out the rain of mercy of the Dharma upon the beings and sent out rays of light like the moon and the sun. They prepared a smooth path to Nirvana. The sutra is styled in line 11 a mahavaitulya text, a variant of the word mahavai-pulya. After the summary of the various parivartas the promise is made that he who has learned or reads and memorises the Saddharmapundarika-sutra will in a second birth come into the parisuddha ksetra the pure fields of the Buddhas.

It is hardly possible here to give more details, but it is hoped that the texts will shortly be printed in translation with commentary. The actual texts themselves are now mostly in print in transcription in Latin letters in the works of E. Leumann, Sten Konow, H. W. Bailey, J. M. Dresden, and J. P. Asmussen. Others await publication in Leningrad. Facsimiles have been published in several volumes. The interpretation has advanced apace since the texts were first seen last century, but there are still many obscurities where the vocabulary is still unknown; and only long-continued effort will overcome all difficulties. The language itself is very interesting as a new member of the Indo-Iranian group of dialects. But the contents of the manuscripts hold much of great importance for the study of Buddhist literature. It is for instance from a Gostana text that the name of the Bodhisattva Subhadhimukta in the Vimalakirti-nirdesa-sutra is known where neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan translations give the original form of the name (edited in *Khotanese Texts* V 132 the Tibetan 377-8).

Four scholars have come to read these texts with me in Cambridge and there is a young scholar in Leningrad. A translation of all the texts with full commentary and a dictionary are seriously needed if full use is to be made of these fascinating manuscripts for Buddhist studies.