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Truth and Scripture in Early Buddhism: Categorial Reduction as Exegetical Method in Ancient Gandhāra and Beyond

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THE REDISCOVERY OF GĀNḌHAṛĪ LITERATURE

Recent years have witnessed a recovery of early Buddhist manuscript treasures from South Asia that, in scale and significance, can only be compared to the early twentieth-century discovery of a flourishing medieval Buddhist culture in monasteries and settlements along the Silk Roads in what is now Xinjiang (China), and to the discovery, in the 1930s, of a Buddhist manuscript deposit near Gilgit (Pakistan). Like the latter, the recent discoveries hail from the borderlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and, in many cases, predate previously known textual traditions by centuries. Many of the new manuscripts are in Sanskrit and written in varieties of the Brāhmī script, but the very earliest layer among them, dating from as early as the first century BCE to the second century CE is written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and in the local Middle Indo-Aryan language, Gāṇḍhāṛī, with varying degrees of substrate influence from other dialects and, later, increasing Sanskritisation. At the outset of this paper, it will be useful to give a brief overview of Gāṇḍhāṛī manuscript discoveries and of the currently known corpus of Gāṇḍhāṛī literature since the available overviews have already been outdated by the rapid pace of events.1

Until the 1990s, the only substantial Gāṇḍhāṛī manuscript known to scholarship was the so-called Gāṇḍhāṛī Dharmapada (now referred to as the Khotan Dharmapada), discovered in 1892 near Khotan on the southern Silk
Road. This long birch-bark scroll apparently contained the complete text of
a previously unknown version of the Dharmapada but only two-thirds of it
survive and are now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and in
the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in
Saint Petersburg. After a long series of preliminary studies, the Khotan
Dharmapada was definitively edited by John Brough in 1962. 2 Our only other
sources for early Gandhāran Buddhism consisted of a limited number of
Gandhārip inscriptions (some containing literary and doctrinal references),
archaeological and art-historical evidence, and the reports and translations of
early Chinese pilgrims.

The situation changed radically when, in 1994, the British Library acquired
a collection of twenty-nine birch-bark scroll fragments, and the Early Buddhist
Manuscripts Project was established at the University of Washington to study
these earliest remains of Buddhist and South Asian written literature. 4 But
just as work had commenced on the British Library collection, the discovery
of another deposit of twenty-five Gandhāri scroll fragments – the Senior
collection – was announced, and these new manuscripts, likewise, came under
the purview of the Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project. 5 Soon after this, the
discovery of a large Buddhist manuscript deposit in Bamiyan (Afghanistan) –
most of it in Sanskrit but also containing around 200 palm-leaf fragments in
Gandhāri 6 – came to the attention of the scholarly world; the University of
Washington Libraries acquired one Gandhāri birch-bark scroll 7 and the Library
of Congress acquired another; 8 and most recently, two further large collections
of Gandhāri manuscripts (the Bajaur and Split collections) were discovered
in Pakistan and studied at the Freie Universität Berlin. 9 Finally, in 2012 a
long-term centre for Gandhāri manuscript studies was established at the
Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Ludwig Maximilian
University of Munich. The new centre works with the Early Buddhist
Manuscripts Project on the edition and study of the British Library collection,
continues the edition of the Bajaur and Split collections, and compiles
comprehensive reference works on Gandhāri literature and the history of
Buddhism in Gandhāra.

Stepping back and surveying the corpus, the immediate questions are: how
many Gandhāri manuscripts are now known, how many different texts are
preserved in these manuscripts and which genres of Buddhist literature are
represented among them? The poor state of preservation of much of the
material – together with the fact that several different texts can be collected
in one manuscript, while some long texts span more than one scroll – makes
it quite difficult to give a precise answer but a recent attempt by the present
author found seventy-seven Gandhāri birch-bark scrolls and more than eight
Gandhāri palm-leaf manuscripts among the various collections listed above.
These manuscripts contain more than 105 individual Gandhāri texts (counting
each sūtra separately and the British Library *avadāna* material as one item). Breaking this figure down by genre, one arrives at the following: thirty-eight mainstream sūtras; six mainstream-canonical verse collections; four Vinaya texts; five scenes from the life of the Buddha; one treatise on past and future buddhas; two series of *avadāna* (and *pūrvayoga*) stories; four *stotras*; four commentaries on mainstream-canonical texts; thirteen scholastic texts that do not appear to be commentaries; four Mahāyāna sūtras; two magical texts; an abecedarium with mnemonic verses; and three non-Buddhist texts (a text inventory, a business document and a *nājaniti* text); eighteen texts have resisted genre identification so far.

**COMMENTARIES AND SCHOLASTIC TEXTS IN GÂNDHĀRĪ**

By any measure, the commentarial and scholastic works form one of the most important parts of the rediscovered Gândhārī literature. They surpass other represented genres by the sheer volume of preserved text, the two longest of them (see below) amounting to over 400 lines each. (Only one known Gândhārī text, a Mahāyāna sūtra in the Bajaur collection, is longer at over 600 lines.) They also represent one of the few categories of texts (some *avadānas* and Mahāyāna texts among them) that may represent original creations of early Gandhāran Buddhism rather than merely being translated into Gândhārī from other languages of mainland India. But, in spite of this great importance, only three of the commentarial and scholastic texts have been studied in any detail so far. The first of these is a treatise discussing the “nature of existence in the different times” with possible relations to the Sarvāstivādins.10 The other two, to be discussed in detail below, are one commentary (out of a group of three) on a selection of mainstream-canonical verses and another on a version of the *Sangītisūtra*.

Hardly anything is known yet about the other Gândhārī scholastic treatises. Of the three such texts in the British Library collection (BL 10, 17 and 20 + 23), one (BL 17) mentions dependent origination (*paḍicasamupada*)11 and another (BL 20 + 23) is concerned with meditational states (*jaṇa*). The University of Washington scroll appears to discuss the dissolution of the empirical person at the moment of death. Among the eight scholastic texts in the Bajaur collection (BC 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16 and 18), one group (BC 4, 6 and 11) refers to the types of pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukha*), and to the perfection of understanding (*prañaparamida*). Another text (BC 9) discusses the nature of the mind (*citta*) and its relation to the form element (*rupadhātu*) and formless element (*arupadhātu*), citing opinions of “some” (*ke yi*) and “others” (*apare*). Yet another text (BC 12) concerns the perception of form (*ruasaṇa*) and the notion of purification (*śudha, śujadī*). Most of these concepts, with the notable exception of the perfection of understanding, are quite
generic, and much work will be needed to establish the precise intellectual background and arguments of these scholastic texts. It is conceivable, though currently speculative, that the interests and doctrinal content of the non-commentarial texts differed from those of the commentaries since the primary concern of the latter appears to have been the elucidation of mainstream-canonical texts by cross-reference to canon-internal material (see below), rather than an engagement with new intellectual currents. The three major known manuscript deposits differ markedly in the types of scholastic texts they include: the Senior collection – apparently a made-to-order set of sūtra copies\textsuperscript{13} – contains none; the British Library collection is the only one with commentaries on known root texts in addition to other scholastic treatises; and, while the Bajaur collection does not contain any clear commentaries, among its large number of scholastic texts is at least one with a reference to a Mahāyāna feature (alongside at least one Mahāyāna sūtra).

The British Library Verse Commentaries

The British Library collection contains three Gāndhārī commentaries on selections of canonical verses (nīdesā). Based on linguistic and formal features as well as its state of preservation, BL fragment 4 appears to be the oldest of the group and has, therefore, been named Verse Commentary I. It draws its root material from a variety of verse collections, including, at least, a Dharmapada or Udāna, and one sūtra with a Pāli parallel in the Cūlavagga of the Suttanipāta. British Library Verse Commentary II will be discussed in detail in the remainder of this section. Verse Commentary III consists of forty preserved lines added at the end of BL fragment 13, explaining six verses that all appear to be drawn from a Dharmapada or Udāna.

Verse Commentary II (Nird\textsuperscript{**}) comprises 413 lines of preserved text on at least three original scrolls (BL fragments 7, 9, 13 and 18).\textsuperscript{14} It contains thirty-nine unnumbered sections, each of which comments on one or – in two cases – two and three verses. As in the case of Verse Commentary I, the root material of Verse Commentary II is drawn from a wide variety of sources shown in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.1</th>
<th>Sources for the Root Verses of Nird\textsuperscript{**}</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pārāyaṇa</td>
<td>8 verses (sections 7, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapada or Udāna</td>
<td>13 verses (sections 1, 5, 9, 10, 14, 21, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ityukktaka</td>
<td>2 verses (sections 3 and 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabhikasūtra</td>
<td>2 verses (sections 12 and 37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samyakparivrajanyasūtra</td>
<td>1 verse (section 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown sources</td>
<td>8 verses (sections 2, 11, 23, 24, 28, 29, 35 and 39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the longest preserved scroll (BL fragment 9), two groups of ten verse-commentary sections each are bundled together by uddānas (summary sections) citing one keyword or phrase from each of the preceding root verses. Each section of the commentary begins with an identifying lemma, most often the first pāda, for the verse under discussion. None of the verses are given in full and an acquaintance with them is presupposed by the commentary. The identifying lemma is, in all cases, followed by the formula suṭro tatra nideśo “(the preceding is) the (root) text, the explanation on it (follows).” The body of each commentary section usually begins with a discussion of difficult words and the general meaning of the verse, followed by one or more detailed doctrinal analyses structured by the function words asa va (“or,” Skt. attha vā) and sakṣeṇa (“in brief,” Skt. saṃkṣeṇa), as well as the attributive labels ke yī (“some,” Skt. ke cit) and avara (“others,” Skt. apare). More often than not, the parts of one verse are run through more than once and explained from a different perspective each time.

In its word explanations, Verse Commentary II shows clear similarities with the early commentary preserved in Pāli under the title Niddesa (in most external references to it) or Suttaniddesa (in its own colophon). The Pāli Niddesa explains a total of 369 verses corresponding to the Pāli Āṭṭhakavagga, most of the Pāriyāpannavagga, and the Khaggāvīśasutta, and thus overlaps in its coverage of root material with Gāndhāri Verse Commentary II. The main exegetical building blocks of the Pāli Niddesa are stereotyped passages triggered by specific words or phrases in the verse to be explained and repeated in any other place where the word or phrase in question occurs. These stereotyped passages employ a variety of explanatory techniques, including strings of synonyms and explanation by categorisation. Two of the explanatory parallels between Verse Commentary II and the Pāli Niddesa are illustrated in the following:

marisagaravavaśivāyanamedo' Nird* section 14 (l. 9.121) : mārisā ti piyavacanam garuvacanam sagāravasappatisādhivacanam etam Nidd II 31.26; cf. bhagavā ti gāravādhipacanam Nidd II 22.20 et passim.

[elabuyo - elo vucati - subho - abuyo vucadi - pad[u](*m)/o]10 Nird* section 18 (ll. 9.182-83) : elambujam ... elam vuccati udakam, ambu vuccati udakam (B° S om.), ambujam vuccati padumam Nidd I 202.27-29.

It is further possible, though difficult to prove, that there are connections between the explanatory structure of the Pāli Niddesa and the particular selection of verses presented in Verse Commentary II. No less than fifty of the exegetical building blocks of the Niddesa in turn incorporate canonical verses in their explanation, resulting in a pattern of associations between verses containing a triggering word and verses used in its explanation. In two such cases, both verses of an associative pattern are contained as root material in
Verse Commentary II. The word bhāvitatto triggers a Niddesa explanation containing a block of verses that includes Sn 516:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bhāvitatto (Sn 1049 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 13)</th>
<th>dantam nayanti samitim (Dhp 321–323) + vidhāsu na ukkappati (SN III 84) + yassindriyāni bhāvitāni (Sn 516 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

and the word bhikkhu triggers an explanation containing the verse Sn 514:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>bhikkhu (Sn 783, 1015, 1039 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 16, 1041)</th>
<th>pajjena katena attanā (Sn 514 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 37)</th>
</tr>
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The occurrence of parallels to Sn 1039 and Sn 514 as sections 16 and 37 of Verse Commentary II could easily be dismissed as coincidence, but it seems significant that the parallels to Sn 1049 and Sn 516 occur directly adjacent to each other as sections 13 and 12 of Verse Commentary II, and a further three of the verses explained in Verse Commentary II (section 21 = Ud I 6, section 25 = Sn 741 and section 28 = Sn 740) are themselves used in the explanatory material of the Pāli Niddesa. One further exegetical parallel is provided by a verse cited in explanation of Sn 516 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 12 in Paramatthajotikā II:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yassindriyāni bhāvitāni (Sn 516 = Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 12)</th>
<th>yassāha tero . . . nābhikankkhāmi maranam nābhikankkhāmi jivitam</th>
</tr>
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The intended verse in Th 196, 606, etc., uses the verb abhinandāmi instead of abhikaṇkhāmi, and Gāndhāri Verse Commentary II provides an exactly corresponding quotation:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>yasa(l)i/driyan&lt;&quot;i&gt; subhavidani (Nird\textsuperscript{1,2} section 12)</th>
<th>ya vuto nabhinađamati marano navinamami jvido</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

While the above points of contact with the tradition represented by the Pāli Niddesa provide an important clue towards a common stock of inherited exegetical material, the most prominent and distinctive service of Verse Commentary II lends it an overall character that is very different from that of the Niddesa. This commentarial service consists in the systematic equation of each part of a root verse with corresponding members of fundamental doctrinal categories. More than one category is regularly employed in the explanation of each verse, and the members of each of the categories enter into complex relationships. The following passage from section 32 = Sn 366 may serve as an example:

\begin{verbatim}
(*va)da[di ma na ușamea (*.) mohapraha[na [- akrotho ca . na satrasea . doṣapraha[na .
\end{verbatim}
dukhāṣayō - avaro [ho] nīdanaprāhaṇena samudēaprahaṇ[a] · [sa][*m][e][*tve][ṇa] · dukhāpariṇa - pariṇavaṇaṁ - niroṣa<[*sa]kṣia> ₋

The categories employed in this example are: (1) rāga, dosa, moha (Skt. rāga, dveṣa, moha; = the three nīḍaṇa, Skt. nīḍāṇa); (2) saukādiṣeṣa and anupādiṣeṣa (Skt. sapūdiṣeṣa and anupūdiṣeṣa; = the two nīvaṇadhātu, Skt. nīvaṇadhātu); (3) kileṣa(vaṭa), kama(vaṭa), dukha(vaṭa) (Skt. kileṣavartman, karmavartman, duḥkhavartman); and (4) dukhāpariṇa, samudēaprahaṇa, niroṣa<[*sa]kṣia (Skt. duḥkhāparijñāṇa, samudaya-praṭhāṇa, nirodhasākṣātkriyā; = three of the Four Truths). Their relationship to the parts of the root verse and to each other is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

**FIGURE 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorical Reduction in Section 32 of Nird¹²</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yo vadadi ma na uṇāmea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akrotho ca na satrāsa bhikhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladha parabhoyāna na maja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>same so loge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parivayeva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mohaprahaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dosaprahaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ragaprahaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anuṣaṇiseṣa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nīdanaksaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ kileṣaksaya, kamakṣaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dukhākṣaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dukhāpariṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ samuṇadhātaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ niroṣa&lt;[*sa]kṣia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example passage thus provides three separate, alternative categorial reductions of the root verse. The first unlabelled run of the verse equates its parts with the two nīvaṇadhātu by way of the three nīḍāṇa. The second run of the verse, marked by asa va (Skt. atha vā), reduces its parts to the three vartmans, employing a back-reference (nīdanakṣayena) to the first reduction as a technical device for grouping together the first three pādas of the verse. The third and last run of the verse, marked by avaro ha (Skt. aparāḥ khalu), reduces its parts to three of the Four Truths, again employing a back-reference (nīdanaprāhaṇena) as a technical device for grouping together the first three pādas.

Thirteen categories are used regularly in Verse Commentary II for this method of categorial reduction (numbers in parentheses indicate their frequency of occurrence):

1. Four Floods (oha): flood of desire (kamoha), flood of view (drīthoha), flood of ignorance (avijoha), flood of existence (bhavoha) (4)
2. Four Barbs (sala): barb of lust (vagasa), barb of hate (doṣaṭa), barb of view (drīthiṣa), barb of conceit (maṇaṭa) (4)
3. Four Actions (kama): dark (kriṣā), bright (sukra), dark and bright (kriṣaṣukra), neither dark nor bright (akriṣaṣukra) (2)
4. Three Sources (nīdaṇa): lust (rāga), hate (dosā), delusion (moha) (10)
5. Three Painfulnesses (dukhada): painfulness of pain (dukhadukhada),
painfulness of determination (sakharadukhada), painfulness of change (viparinamadukhada) (1)

6. Three Categories (kadha): virtue category (silakadha), concentration category (samasikadha), understanding category (prañkadha) (8)

7. Three Courses (vata): course of defilement (kilesavatā), course of action (kamavatā), course of suffering (dukhavatā) (12)\(^\text{18}\)

8. Two Roots (mula): craving (taṣa) and ignorance (avija) (18)\(^\text{19}\)

9. Lust for sense-pleasure (kamaraga) and malice (vavada) (2)

10. Fondness (anunea) and resentment (paḍia) (2)

11. Two Paths (maga): quiet (śamasa) and insight (vivasāna) (18)

12. Two Outcomes (nisada) or Liberations (vimuti) (18)\(^\text{20}\)

13. Two Extinction Elements (nivaṇḍhatu): with fuel remaining (saūadiśeṣa) and without fuel remaining (ānuadiśeṣa)

The Four Truths occupy a special and superordinate position in the system of categorial reduction because, in contrast to the preceding categories, they combine the aspects of defilement, path and liberation. It is due to this special nature of the Four Truths that only three and not the complete set were used in the above example:

14. Four Truths (saca): diagnosis of suffering (dukhaparīṇa), abandoning of the origin (samudeaprahana), the path (maga),\(^\text{21}\) realisation of the cessation (nirosa\text{*ksia}) (12)

Another special place in the system is occupied by the following two groups, each of which represents stages on the path to liberation:

15. Four Planes (bhumi): plane of seeing (dasanabhumi), plane of development (bhavanabhumi), plane of immediacy (anatariabhumi), state of having accomplished (krīdavida) (4)

16. Five Makers of a Teacher (śastugaraga): state of having raised oneself (uṭhaveda), state of being established (pradiṭhaveda), state of knowing (naṇida), mastery (vriṣavida), state of liberation (vimutida) (4)

The commentarial service of categorial reduction is combined with that of explanatory quotation in one section (no. 16) that, among other reductions, equates each part of its root verse (a parallel of Sn 1039) with one key expression from a parallel of the Pamsudhovakasutta (AN I 253-58). Two other sections (nos. 25 and 28) similarly interweave each part of their root verses with the second chain (starting with taṣa = trṣa) of the formula of Dependent Arising.

The British Library Saṅgītisūtra Commentary

Besides the Verse Commentaries and other scholastic texts, the British Library collection contains a Gândhârî commentary on a version of the Saṅgītisūtra corresponding, with very minor deviations, to the Chinese translation
contained in the Chang āhān jing 长阿含經 (T 1) and attributed to the Dharmaguptakas. This Sangitisūtra commentary also uses categorial reduction as one of its exegetical methods but differs from the Verse Commentaries in the precise inventory of categories that it employs and in other details. The following categories are used where categorial reduction is carried out explicitly as illustrated above:

1. Four Perversions: perception of beauty in the body (kaesuhasamṇa), perception of happiness in feelings (vedānasuhasamṇa), perception of permanence in the mind (citenicasamṇa), perception of a self in the dharmas (dhamesuapamasamṇa)

2. Four Bases for Supernormal Power: energy concentration (viriasamāsi), will concentration (chamdasamāsi), inquiry concentration (vimamsasamāsi), mind concentration (citasamāsi)

3. Four Bonds (yoa): bond of sensual desires (kamayoa), bond of existence (bhavayoa), bond of views (driṭhiyoa), bond of ignorance (avijayoa)

4. Three Categories (kamdha): virtue category (silakamdha), understanding category (pramñakamdha), concentration category (samaṣkamdha)

5. Three Bad Roots (akuśalamula): greed (lobha), hate (doṣa), delusion (moha)

6. Three Sources: lust (raka), hate (doṣa), delusion (moha)

7. Two Roots (mula): craving (taṣa) and ignorance (avija)

8. Two Paths (maga): quiet (samaṣa) and insight (vivaṣaṇa)

9. shame (iri) and conscience (otrapa) 

One category with five members is used in the same way as the above:

10. Five Faculties (ėdia): energy faculty (viridria), faith faculty (sadhidria), understanding faculty (pramñidria), mindfulness faculty (spadidria), concentration faculty (samaṣidria).

As in Verse Commentary II, two groups representing stages on the path to liberation are used in the Sangitisūtra commentary. The now familiar

11. Five Makers of a Teacher occur in the following expression (in the section on the four sōdavatiamga):

arihadi vimutida sammasambudbo di ṇanida puruṣādammasarasi di dhammena <<vi>> uḥavijida [ṣa]rasma pradīśhavedi budbo bhaka(*va) sasta devamanuṣaṇa di visvii)[dal] 22

However, in an interesting departure from Verse Commentary II, the Sangitisūtra commentary employs the group of seven śrāvakabhūmi known from Buddhist Sanskrit literature:

12. Seven Planes (bhumi): plane of insight into the bright (sukravivaṣaṇabhumi), plane of the religious community (gotrahubbhumi), plane of the aśtamaka (ayhamaabhumi), plane of seeing (daśānabhumi), delicate plane (tanuabhumi), plane of development (bhavaṇabhumi), plane of having accomplished (kiḍaviḥbhumi).
As pointed out above, the Four Truths by their nature occupy a special superordinate position in the system of categorial reduction and this is made explicit by their employment in the Śaṅgītisūtra commentary. Every group of ten items of the root text is bundled together by an uddāna (introduced by the expression saṃksītāmamtro = Skt. saṃkṣiptamāṇtrāḥ) listing a keyword or phrase for each item, but the uddāna itself is then subjected to categorial reduction converging on the Four Truths. The following uddāna occurs after the tenth item of the chapter of fours (the four yoṇi):

\[
\begin{align*}
\end{align*}
\]

Only once are the Three Rounds (kilesavata, kammavaṭa, dukhavata) employed in this fashion in an uddāna and they are not otherwise used in the Śaṅgītisūtra commentary.

Among other peculiarities, the Śaṅgītisūtra commentary frequently points out categories without actually carrying out the reduction in detail (e.g. in the section on the three cakhu: vistaru trihi vijah) and it differs from the Verse Commentaries in the form (but not the system) of its function words (avaro payao = Skt. aparāḥ paryāyāḥ instead of asa va, amña = Skt. anye instead of avari, saṃksītāmamtro = Skt. saṃkṣiptamāṇtrāḥ instead of sakṣeṇa). It is noteworthy that its categorial reductions are much less complex than those of Verse Commentary II, with hardly an example of multi-level coordination and back-reference. But since the Śaṅgītisūtra root text itself consists of abstract categories, some of which are themselves used in categorial reduction, and since the special reductions within the uddāna sections provide an additional layer of relations, the overall complexity of the Śaṅgītisūtra commentary may, in fact, be no less than that of the Verse Commentaries.

**PETAKOPADESA AND NETTIPPAKARANĀ**

The closest parallel to the Gāndhārī commentaries' system of categorial reduction is afforded by two exegetical manuals preserved in Pāli, the Petakopadesa and the Nettippakarana. A detailed comparison between the Gāndhārī commentaries and these manuals allows further conclusions about their historical relationship and provides a key towards understanding the purpose of the method of categorial reduction.

The Petakopadesa is, by all appearances, the older of the two Pāli texts and will form the basis of the subsequent presentation, while the Nettippakarana represents a later rearrangement of the same subject matter and the form in which it became productive in Theravāda Buddhism. Both texts are addressed to experts in the transmission of the Buddhist canon (Pāli piṭakadhana, Bharhut petaki) and teach a method for determining the basic truths underlying any
of the varied utterances of the Buddha, and for establishing any utterance's place in the context of the Buddha's teaching as a whole. One function of this method is to verify the authenticity of a given text; this is in line with the Mahāpadesasutta's (DN II 123-26, AN II 167-70) prescript that teachings need to be “confronted with the sūtra” (sutte otāretabbāni) and “compared with the vinaya” (vinaye sandassetabbāni). Another function of the method is to establish the intended audience of a given utterance and to identify equivalent formulations suitable for other types of audiences.

The Petakopadesa presents this method in four main chapters. The Sāsana-paṭṭhāna (Peṭ 23-59; cf. Nett 127.25-193) contains a typology and classification of utterances of the Buddha; the Haravibhaṅga (Peṭ 81-111; cf. Nett 5.9-84) introduces and illustrates sixteen “kinds of deducing” (hāra) of the basic terms of a given utterance; the Hārasampata (Peṭ 141-241; Nett 85-109.19) shows how the sixteen hāra can be used in conjunction by applying all of them to sixteen sample utterances of the Buddha, following the classification established in the Sāsanapaṭṭhāna; the Nayasamutthāna (Peṭ 242-60; cf. Nett 109.20-127.24) teaches a set of “guidelines” (naya) or mappings between basic terms, and from basic terms to their meaning and purpose (namely the conveyance of different types of audiences to liberation).

The Nayasamutthāna and its system of mappings between terms and meanings is most relevant for the understanding of the Gāndhārī commentaries and their categorial reduction. Three naya (sīhavikilita, tipukkhala and nandiyāvatta) provide overall frameworks for mappings that involve sets of four, three and two terms, respectively. One naya (disālocanā) establishes the meaning equivalence of terms on the negative and positive side, respectively, and provides the connection with the intended audience, on the one hand, and with the purpose of liberation, on the other. The fifth and last naya (ankusa) performs the conversion between negative and positive terms. Tables 2.2-2.4 provide an overview of this mapping procedure as set out in the Petakopadesa (the Nettipakaranā differs significantly in its inventory of terms). Sīhavikilìta, tipukkhala and nandiyāvatta are illustrated by one chart each. Within the charts, vertical arrows indicate the operation of disālocanā and horizontal arrows the operation of the ankusa.

It is immediately apparent that many (but not all) of the sets of terms laid out in the Nayasamutthāna correspond to the overlapping sets of terms employed by the Verse Commentaries and by the Saṅgītisūtra commentary in their categorial mappings. Beyond the negative and positive terms of the Nayasamutthāna (representing suffering and the path), two Nayasamutthāna sets of liberation terms (the four sāmaññaphala and the two vimutti) are used in the Gāndhārī commentaries, and the basic sub-classification of the audience into tanhācarita and diṭṭhīcarita likewise occurs in both the Verse Commentaries and the Saṅgītisūtra commentary. Several peculiar expressions in the Gāndhārī
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorial Mapping in the Pêtañopadesa (Sihavîkijita)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 2.2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taññhãcarito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mudindriyo</td>
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<tr>
<td>cattãro ãbhãra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cattãro vippallãsa</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cattãri upãdãna</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cattãro yogã</td>
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<td>cattãro ganthã</td>
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<td>cattãro âsavã</td>
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<td>cattãro oghã</td>
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<tr>
<td>cattāri sallā</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>catasso vinīṇā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cattāri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agatigamanāni</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tīṇi akusalamūlānī</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&lt;\text{tīṇi āramma-}&lt;\text{nānī}&gt;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo phassā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tīso vedanā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo upavicārā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo sankilesā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo vitakkā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo paridāggha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tīṇi sankbatalakka- &lt;\text{nānī}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tīso dukkhatā</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 2.4

Categorial mapping in the *Petakopadesa* (Nandiyāvatta)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>diṭṭhicarito</th>
<th>taṇhācarito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avijñā</td>
<td>taṇhā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahirikam</td>
<td>anottrappam</td>
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<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asati</td>
<td>asampajaññam</td>
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<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nivaranānī</td>
<td>samyojanānī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ajjhosānām</td>
<td>abhiniveso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahaṅkāro</td>
<td>mamāṅkāro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asaddhiyaṃ</td>
<td>dovacassāṃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kosajjāṃ</td>
<td>ayoniso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vicikicchā</td>
<td>abhijjhā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asaddhammasavananā</td>
<td>asamāpatti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rāgavirāgā</th>
<th>avijñāviraṃ</th>
<th>cetovimuttī</th>
<th>paññāvīmuttī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pariyośānaṃ</td>
<td>pariyośānaṃ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

texts also find an explanation in the *Petakopadesa* method as set out above: the Verse Commentaries, for instance, repeatedly stress that “the Makers of a Teacher and the Truths are to be known” (*sastugarāgaṇaṇaṇa saca ca*), a reference to the reduction of any given utterance to basic terms and meanings and, ultimately, the Four Truths of the noble; and the *Sāṅgītisūtra* commentary uses the word *hatave* (Skt. *hartavyam*) in expressions such as *caṇḍu[bi] paṇḍivadaḥi hatave* “one should deduce by means of the Four Ways,” i.e. “the Four Ways should be deduced as basic terms underlying the text,” with a likely reference to the *Petakopadesa* notion of hāna. A substantial number of other technical terms is also shared between the *Petakopadesa*, the *Nettipakarāṇa* and the Gāndhārī commentaries, such as, for example, the compound *attābhāvavattuḥ* “matter of selfhood,” which, in Pāli, is not attested outside the exegetical manuals.

Most telling, however, is a stylistic comparison between the Gāndhārī commentaries and an explicit application of the *Petakopadesa* method. The Pāli *Aṭṭhakathās* and *Ṭikās* appear to have been composed on the background of an acquaintance with the *Petakopadesa* (or rather the *Nettipakarāṇa*) method, and Dhammapāla, in particular, took a strong interest in it, composing a commentary on the *Nettipakarāṇa* itself and adding example applications of the method to the first *sutta* explanation of each of his three
Nikāya sub-commentaries.²⁹ Stylistically, however, the Pāli Āṭṭhakathās and Tikās are very different from the Gāndhāri commentaries and do not provide a convenient basis for literary comparison. Rescue comes in the form of a series of sixteen short sample commentaries embedded within the Hārasampāta chapter of the Petakopadesa itself, between each scriptural example and the explicit application of each hāra to it. These sample commentaries conclude with the words ayam suttanīdeso or equivalent expressions, recalling the formula sutro tatra nideso at the beginning of each Verse Commentary section. One such sample commentary is reproduced in the appendix to this article, and even though detailed comparison with the Verse Commentary sample given above (pp. 26-27) will have to be left to the reader, it is worth pointing out one striking formal similarity between the two texts: the words dānena and silena in part [C] of the Pāli text are used to establish a back-reference by way of dānamayikapuññakiriyavattu and silamayikapuññakiriyavattu in part [A] to the first and second pāda of the root verse in a way precisely corresponding to the operation of back-references in Verse Commentary II as illustrated above.

CONCLUSION

Much work remains to be done on the Gāndhāri commentaries and the tracing of their exegetical and literary connections. The present paper purposely restricted itself to a comparison with Pāli material that is roughly contemporary with the first-century CE Gāndhāri commentaries. Once the historical background of the Verse Commentaries is more securely established, it will become necessary to compare them in greater detail to later works, and here, in particular, the Sarirārthagathā in the Yogācārabhūmi and Vasubandhu’s Gāthārthasamgraha, both of them commentaries on selections of canonical verses like the Gāndhāri Verse Commentaries, and to Vasubandhu’s Vākyāyukti, the first Buddhist exegetical manual preserved after the Petakopadesa and Nettippakarana.

The following picture emerges from the investigations summarised above: the Gāndhāri Verse Commentaries and Saṅgītisūtra commentary share a certain stock of exegetical material with the Pāli Niddesa, on the one hand, and an unknown source of Paramatthajjotika II, on the other. It may be presumed that this shared stock goes back to a very early period of Buddhist exegesis that predates all available commentaries and that was based in mainland India. The method of categorial reduction, on the other hand, is characteristic of the Gāndhāri commentaries investigated so far and appears to have been a living tradition in first-to-second-century CE Gandhāra. There are several strong indications that the Gāndhāri method of categorial reduction implements exegetical principles and specific tools later set out in the family of manuals
preserved for us in the Pāli Petakopadesa and Nettippakarana, as well as in the Yinchiru jing (T603), which was recently identified as a treatise corresponding to chapter six of the Petakopadesa. The Petakopadesa had independently been suspected to be of north Indian origin and, in view of the new Gandhāri and Chinese evidence, it seems not unlikely that the Pāli Petakopadesa is a translation of a north Indian and possibly Gandhāri original. Even its title appears to indicate this: Nanamoli’s rendering “Piṭaka-Disclosure” leaves the guna/vṛddhi grade of petaka unexplained, and “disclosure” is not the usual meaning of upadesa. Already in 1908, Rudolf Fuchs wondered whether the first member of the compound might not be petaki “piṭaka student” (or rather “piṭaka master”) and our newfound knowledge of Gandhāri grammar shows that the expected regular form of a compound pedagi + uadeśa would, in fact, precisely be pedagoadeśa (cf. spadoṭhana ← spadi + uṭhana), which on superficial phonetic transposition would explain the curious Pāli form petakopadesa with unexpected o (if from petaki + upadesa) instead of regular ū.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE SUTTANIDDESA
FROM THE PETAKOPADESA

dadato puññam pavaddhāti samyamato veraṃ na ciyati
kusalo ca jahāti pāpakām rāgadosamohakkhayā sa nibbuto
(Ud VIII 5)

[dadato puññam pavaddhāti] ti gāthā. [A] dadato dānamayikapuññākiriya-vattu vuttaṃ. samyamato veraṃ na ciyati ti sīlamayikapuññākiriya-vattu vuttaṃ. kusalo ca jahāti pāpakām ti lobhassa ca mohassa ca byāpādassā ca paḥānām āha. rāgadosamohakkhayā sa nibbuto ti lobhassa ca mohassa ca byāpādassā ca chandarāgavinayam (Ee chandarāgam vinayam) āha ti. [B] dadato puññam pavaddhāti ti gāthā alohbo kusalamūḷāṃ bhavati. samyamato veraṃ na ciyati ti adoso kusalamūḷāṃ bhavati (Ee bhavati ti).

vuttā. [235] [G] dadato puṇṇaṁ pavaḍḍhati, saṁyamato veraṁ na ciyati ti saggāgaminī (Ee magganiyā) paṭipadā vuttā. kusalo ca jahati pāpakan ti sekkhavimutti. rágadosamohakkhayā sa nibbuto ti asekkhavimutti. [H] dadato puṇṇaṁ pavaḍḍhati, saṁyamato veraṁ na ciyati ti dānakathāṃ silakathāṃ saggakathāṃ (Ee maggakathāṃ) lokikāṇaṁ dhammānaṁ desanām āha. kusalo ca jahati pāpakan ti loke ādīnavānupassanā. rágadosamohakkhayā sa nibbuto ti “sāmukkaṃsikā dhammadesanā” (Ee: sāmukkaṃsikāyā dhammadesanā ye pi paṭividdhā). [I] dadato puṇṇaṁ pavaḍḍhati ti pāṇānaṃ abhayadānena pāṇātipātā veramāṇi sattānaṃ (Ee sattānaṃ) abhayaṁ deti. evaṁ sabbāni sikkhāpādāni kātabbāni. saṁyamato veraṁ na ciyati ti sile patitṭhāya cittha saṁyameti, tassa saṁyamato pāripūriṁ gacchati. rágadosamohakkhayā sa nibbuto ti dve vimuttiyo. ayaṁ suttaniddeso.32

NOTES

3. See Baums, “Catalog”.
5. Allon, “The Senior Manuscripts.”
8. See Salomon and Baums, “Sanskrit Iksväku.”
10. Salomon, Ancient Buddhist Scrolls, pp. 29-30. This text is being edited by Collett Cox.
15. “Dear sir: this is a respectful form of address.”
16. “Water lotus (elabuya): Water is called ela. A lotus is called abuya.”
17. “He does not rise (when he thinks) ‘someone honors me’: abandoning of delusion. When reviled he is not frightened: abandoning of hate. Receiving food from others he does not exult: abandoning of lust. That is (the extinction element) with fuel remaining. That one wanders about right (in the world): (the extincion element) without fuel remaining. Or: By abandoning of the sources, there is exhaustion of defilement, exhaustion of action. Wanders about in the world: exhaustion of pain. Now somebody else: By abandoning of the motives (is meant) abandoning of the origin. By rightness (is meant) the diagnosis of pain. By wandering about (is meant) realization of the cessation.”
18. The three courses are also called vatani (Pāli vattani, Skt. vartani); this appears to be a dialect variant of the more common vata (Pāli vatta, Skt. vartman).
19. The roots, paths and outcomes or liberations are usually referred to in conjunction with each other and are, therefore, counted together.
20. These are cedovimuti (Skt. cetovimukti) and pranavimuti (Skt. prajñāvimukti).
21. Short for magabhavana (Skt. mārgabhāvana).
22. "Worthy one: the state of liberation. Completely enlightened: the state of knowing. Driver of humans who need to be tamed: the state of having raised oneself by the dharma; he establishes as a driver, the Lord Buddha, teacher of gods and men mastery after men."
24. The Nettippakarana has been edited by Hardy, The Nettipakarana. It has been translated by Nāṇamoli, The Guide. A study of its method is presented in Bond, "The Word of the Buddha."
26. This prescript is discussed in Lamotte, "La critique d’authenticité dans le bouddhisme."
27. In the translation of Nāṇamoli, The Guide and Nāṇamoli, The Piṭaka-Disclosure, the hāra concerns are: teaching, investigation, construing, footings, characteristics, fourfold array, conversion, analysis, reversal, synonyms, descriptions, ways of entry, clearing up, terms of expression and requisites.
29. The twelfth-century commentator Sāriputra imitated his famous predecessor in adding such a section to the first sutta explanation of his Anguttaranikāya sub-commentary.
30. Zacchetti, "An early Chinese Translation," and Zacchetti, "Inventing a New Idiom." Nāṇamoli, The Guide, p. xx already pointed out: "Pe ch. vi is a kind of 'omnibus chapter.' Its position is unexplained, though it can be taken to introduce ch. vii. It is the only one which contains some exemplifying material definitely not found in the Netti." In view of the discovery of a separate Chinese translation, it is possible that Peṭakopadesa chapter six was originally an independent text of the "Peṭakopadesa family" that became part of the Peṭakopadesa as we have it at a later stage.
32. The text follows the edition of Barua, Peṭakopadesa with emendations from Nāṇamoli, The Piṭaka-Disclosure.

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