

# Canon and Commentary in the Earliest Buddhist Manuscripts

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## Summary

The earliest Buddhist manuscripts were written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī language, initially on birchbark scrolls and later on palm-leaf pothi-format manuscripts (i.e., bound or wrapped palm-leaf folios). The core area of this manuscript culture was the region of Gandhāra in northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, but its influence extended to neighboring areas and, along the Silk Roads, into Central Asia and China. After sporadic finds throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (including one substantial Dharmapada manuscript in 1892), approximately 150 such early Buddhist manuscripts have come to light in the past thirty years. They provide a direct view into a transitional period, ranging from the 1st century BCE to the 4th century CE, in which Buddhist literature switched from a primarily oral to a primarily written mode of transmission and underwent a process of canonization. Scholastic texts employing new exegetical procedures were composed and Mahāyāna texts began to appear. The change of manuscript format from scroll to pothi eventually enabled new textualities, in particular the production of very extensive written texts including complete sections of a Buddhist canon that approached the content and form known from other Buddhist traditions. All major genres and divisions of Buddhist literature are attested among these manuscript finds, which are gradually being edited, providing a new basis for scholarly understanding of the early history of Buddhism and the way that texts were used in early Buddhist monasteries.

**Keywords:** early Buddhist manuscripts, Gāndhārī, canon, commentary, scholastic texts

**Subjects:** Buddhism

## History of Research

The earliest Buddhist manuscripts, written on birchbark scrolls, were found in modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan—the ancient region of Gandhāra—and, in one case, in western China.<sup>1</sup> They date as far back as the first century BCE and are written in the local Middle Indo-Aryan language Gāndhārī and the local Kharoṣṭhī script. In the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, a Buddhist community at Bamiyan in Afghanistan produced Sanskrit manuscripts in the pan-Indian Brāhmī script in parallel with Gāndhārī manuscripts, using palm leaves and the pothi format or a bound or wrapped folio for both. By the 5th century CE, the pothi, Sanskrit, and Brāhmī had completely taken over from the Gāndhārī manuscript tradition.<sup>2</sup> This earliest Buddhist manuscript tradition, thus spanning a period of approximately 500 years, provides unique insights into the early development of Buddhist canonical and commentarial literature.

The first discovery of a Gāndhārī manuscript was made in 1892 near the city of Khotan on the southern Silk Road in the form of an exceptionally long birchbark scroll containing a previously unknown version of the Dharmapada.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript was apparently complete on discovery,

but was divided, with one-third each reaching Paris and St. Petersburg and the third third now lost. The discovery prompted a long scholarly discussion about a then-hypothetical Gāndhārī canon.<sup>4</sup> Gāndhārī language and Kharoṣṭhī script were used around the 3rd century CE for administrative purposes in the neighboring Kroraina kingdom, but only very few and small literary fragments are preserved among these documents.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the earliest Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts showed signs of having been made from Gāndhārī originals, and the school affiliation of the Chinese Dīrghāgama (T 1) in particular pointed to the Dharmaguptakas as the most likely producers of such Gāndhārī texts.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 20th century, finds of Gāndhārī inscriptions from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan accumulated, providing evidence of widespread literacy in the Gandhāran Buddhist milieu, and eventually a series of substantial new manuscript discoveries laid to rest any doubt about the existence of an extensive written Gāndhārī Buddhist literature. Unfortunately, none of these recent discoveries is the result of proper archeological excavation, and the findspots of the vast majority of manuscripts—including all the earlier ones on birchbark—remain unknown, depriving scholarship of invaluable information about their geography and use contexts. The first new collection of twenty-nine Gāndhārī manuscripts was acquired by the British Library in 1994 from the private collector Robert Senior, who retained another collection of twenty-four scrolls in his personal possession.<sup>7</sup> Each of these two collections appears to represent an original manuscript deposit made in a clay pot with a dedicatory inscription, in the case of the British Library collection naming the Dharmaguptaka school and in that of the Senior collection providing a date around the year 140 CE.

Next, a large number of early palm-leaf and later birchbark folio fragments from Bamiyan came to light; these are now scattered across several collections, the majority being held by the private collector Martin Schøyen in Norway.<sup>8</sup> Two further collections of birchbark scrolls—the Bajaur collection of nineteen scrolls and the so-called “split collection” of five scrolls—came to light in Pakistan, where they remain.<sup>9</sup> The Bajaur collection was allegedly found in a stone chest in a monastery, while the find context of the split collection remains entirely unknown. Most recently, a large number of further privately held scrolls that appear to be connected (at least in terms of collecting if not deposit) to the split collection have become accessible to scholars; little is as yet known about the extent and contents of this group of manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> Altogether, approximately 150 birchbark scrolls and about the same number of small palm-leaf fragments in the Gāndhārī language are now known and have been discussed in at least a preliminary fashion in publications.<sup>11</sup>

## Historical Overview

While a history of Gāndhārī literature cannot yet be written, three phases may be distinguished in terms of their textuality: (1) written and oral Buddhist literature in Gandhāra preceding the earliest preserved manuscripts (3rd–2nd centuries BCE), (2) an increasing body of written Buddhist texts without a written canon (1st century BCE to 2nd century CE), and (3) the incipient formation of written canons and transition to a new writing culture. Throughout these phases,

there occurred three distinct but interlocked processes of the writing down of texts, the production of commentaries on them and scholastic treatises, and the delimitation of canons of texts.<sup>12</sup>

The first specimen of writing from Gandhāra are the two sets of Major Rock Edicts of the Emperor Aśoka at Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra (3rd century BCE).<sup>13</sup> The Aśokan epigraphic corpus can be subdivided into more and less explicitly Buddhist inscriptions, and the Major Rock Edicts belong to the latter group. Nonetheless, the later tradition does see Aśoka as the original spreader of Buddhism to Gandhāra, as evidenced by elements such as Mauryan pillars in the artistic production and references to the Mauryas and Aśoka in the epigraphic record.<sup>14</sup> The precise point in time when the technology of writing was first applied by Buddhist patrons and institutions to Buddhist literature in Gandhāra remains unknown, but the tradition of Buddhist relic donation inscriptions starting under Indo-Greek rulers in the 2nd century BCE suggests a likely terminus ad quem.<sup>15</sup> The fact that an already flourishing literature is encountered in the finds from the 1st century BCE, while the preceding stages are lost, can be attributed to the new custom of depositing manuscripts in a kind of burial or dharma relic installation in sealed clay pots at this time.<sup>16</sup> One can only speculate about the first genres of Buddhist literature committed to writing in Gandhāra; canonical sūtras and verses, commentaries, and story collections all seem likely candidates.

The second phase of Gāndhārī literature (1st century BCE to 2nd century CE) is characterized by a continued oral transmission as the primary vehicle for the four main canonical text collections (*āgamas*).<sup>17</sup> The manuscript record contains copies of only select Dīrgha, Madhyama, and Kṣudraka texts, as well as of small subgroups of sūtras from the Ekottarikā and Saṃyukta collections. This state of affairs is mirrored by the earliest Chinese translations, presumably based on Gāndhārī originals, among which one also finds selections of Ekottarikā and Saṃyukta sūtras of the same type. Some originally incomplete copies of canonical texts may have had a symbolic rather than practical function as physical instantiations of the word of the Buddha.<sup>18</sup> The existence of complete canonical text collections outside the written record is confirmed by the expression *ekotaria* in a 1st-century CE manuscript, as well as the epithet *trepidaḡa* (roughly, “sacred canon”) for a learned monk in a donative inscription.<sup>19</sup> Commentaries and independent scholastic texts are richly attested among the manuscript finds of this phase, and judging from their way of expression as well as traces of damage and repair, these were very much intended for practical use. (A relief of three monks in debate holding manuscripts illustrates just such a use.<sup>20</sup>) Individual, uncollected Mahāyānasūtras, including a Prajñāpāramitā, also form an integral part of this phase, as do original poetical compositions.

The third phase of Gāndhārī Buddhist literature (3rd and 4th centuries CE) sees a transition in manuscript formats from the scroll to the pothi, which appears to have enabled the production of more extensive written texts and their efficient use.<sup>21</sup> This innovation can first be observed in the finds from Bamiyan and eventually spread over the entire northwest of the subcontinent, though it remains unclear when exactly it reached the heartland of Gandhāra. On the part of the canonical collections, fragments of an originally complete Ekottarikā manuscript have been found at Bamiyan, and this is mirrored by the appearance of complete Dīrgha, Madhyama, Ekottarikā and Saṃyukta collections in Chinese translations at the same time.<sup>22</sup> In parallel with this

development, a new category of very extensive Mahāyānasūtras developed, exemplified most clearly by fragments of a Bhadrakalpikasūtra manuscript from Bamiyan.<sup>23</sup> The assembly of several Mahāyānasūtras into larger collections is, however, not yet in evidence in this period.

## Oral and Written Canons

The definition of “canon” in Buddhism (as in other religions) is a complex matter. One first has to distinguish between orally transmitted canons and those given physical form in writing. The very act of putting a body of texts in writing implies organization and selection of material and can thus contribute to the clearer definition and potential narrowing of a canon. In parallel with this transition from oral to written form, exegetical activity in commentaries and independent scholastic treatises further shapes the form and arrangement of canonical texts. While selection, abridgement, and anthologization were at work on what has been called the “practical canons” of Buddhist communities, at the same time a “notional canon” (the totality of the teachings of the Buddha, the *buddhavaṇṇa*) remained authoritative, whether or not it was available in its entirety in a given place and time.<sup>24</sup> Eventually, the scriptures of the new Mahāyāna movement began to undergo similar processes of collection and authentication as the old Buddhist canon and to form canons of their own, even though the eventual results are outside the scope of the period covered here. Finally, one has to exercise caution when considering the institutional frames and scopes of the canons in question. Buddhist schools such as the Dharmaguptakas, the Sarvāstivādins, and the several others known to have operated in Gandhāra may have shaped at least partly distinctive canons, but regional factors certainly also played a role in the availability and form of canonical texts. Bearing all this in mind, the following will give an overview of the Gāndhārī literature now known that may be considered canonical, following for convenience the traditional divisions of the Pali canon.

## Sūtra

### Dīrghāgama

Two manuscripts are extant containing texts belonging to the Dīrghāgama. One manuscript of the Senior collection preserves the beginning of the Śrāmaṇyaphalasūtra, a dialog between King Ajātaśatru and the Buddha;<sup>25</sup> this remains unpublished except for two small samples from six lines.<sup>26</sup> Among the Bamiyan palm-leaf fragments, there are several of a manuscript of the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, recounting the last days of the Buddha.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that the Śrāmaṇyaphalasūtra scroll contained only this text (or part of this text), whereas the palm-leaf manuscript of the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra may have contained additional texts. A third Dīrghāgama text, the Saṃgītisūtra, is preserved embedded in a commentary on it.<sup>28</sup>

## Madhyamāgama

Five Madhyamāgama texts are preserved in whole or part in Gāndhārī versions. The most extensive is a version of the Dākṣiṇāvibhaṅgasūtra in the Bajaur collection.<sup>29</sup> The Senior collection contains the remains of probably four Madhyamāgama texts: a parallel to the Pali Dhammacetiyaśutta;<sup>30</sup> probably a version of the Shìzhě jīng 侍者經;<sup>31</sup> probably the Saṃkhāruppattisutta;<sup>32</sup> and the Cūḷagosiṅgasutta.<sup>33</sup> Only the last of these has been published in its entirety. In addition, a list of text keywords that was found as part of the Senior collection suggests the presence in its milieu of a further ten Madhyamāgama texts.<sup>34</sup> The Dhātuvibhaṅgasūtra of the Madhyamāgama is attested in the form of a commentary on it.<sup>35</sup> Both the Dīrghāgama and the Madhyamāgama sūtra manuscripts currently known from the Gāndhārī finds contain one single text each, and there is no evidence of multiple texts of these classes having been physically collected together.

## Ekottarikāgama

One scroll of the British Library collection contains, on its recto, three short thematically connected texts (the “Droṇa,” “Buddhavaṇṇa,” and “Pradhāna” sūtras), two of which have parallels in the Section of Fours of the Pali Aṅguttaranikāya, and all three of which thus appear to be an extract from an otherwise orally transmitted Ekottarikāgama of the second phase of Gāndhārī Buddhist literature.<sup>36</sup> The existence of such a collection is independently confirmed by the reference *yasa ekotariae* in a commentarial text of the period.<sup>37</sup> Among the Bamiyan palm-leaf fragments of the third phase are small remains of at least twelve sūtras from the Sections of the Sixes, maybe the Sevens, the Nines, Tens, and Elevens of an apparently originally complete Ekottarikāgama manuscript.<sup>38</sup> These two different kinds of remains from within the Gāndhārī tradition illustrate neatly how a change of manuscript format went hand in hand with a different, more extensive written textuality.

## Samyuktāgama

Samyuktāgama sūtras are so far only attested in seven scrolls of the Senior collection. One of them contains a group of fourteen or more short sūtras that correspond (though in different order) to the first fourteen sūtras of the Pali Vanasamyutta.<sup>39</sup> Two further manuscripts contain a total of six sūtras corresponding to six noncontiguous sūtras in the Pali Khandhasamyutta.<sup>40</sup> The texts of another two manuscripts are, judging from the Pali, sourced from a number of different Samyuttas (Opamma-, Khandha-, Sacca-, and maybe Saḷāyatanaśamyutta).<sup>41</sup> Finally, two manuscripts contain one sūtra each, from the Sotāpatti- and Saḷāyatanaśamyuttas.<sup>42</sup> The Samyuktāgama manuscripts in the Senior collection thus illustrate several different patterns of selection and anthologization in putting material from a still primarily oral Samyuktāgama collection in writing. Among the three Chinese Samyuktāgama translations, that of Ān Shìgāo (T 101, made around 148–168 CE), containing a selection of twenty-five sūtras, reflects this situation most closely and may well have been based on a Gāndhārī original. The two later translations (T 100, 350–430 CE, two divisions, and T 99, 435–426 CE, complete) appear to reflect, with about a hundred years’ delay, the later type of textuality that is seen at Bamiyan.

## Kṣudraka

The so-called minor texts (Kṣudraka) of early Buddhism entered the canons of various Buddhist schools in widely different places, and the Gāndhārī evidence confirms that in the first centuries of the written tradition, they were transmitted separately.<sup>43</sup> Three Kṣudraka texts are preserved in early manuscripts: the Dharmapada, the Arthapada, and the Khadgaviṣṇasūtra. Of these, the Dharmapada is attested three times. The Khotan Dharmapada manuscript contains a recension of the text distinct from the Pali and other known versions and must have encompassed approximately 500 lines when it was complete, starting with a Brāhmaṇavarga followed by a Bhikṣuvarga.<sup>44</sup> The British Library collection contains a fragmentary scroll preserving the end of the Bhikṣuvarga, which may have formed part of a multiscroll set of the Brāhmaṇavarga with the Bhikṣuvarga.<sup>45</sup> One scroll of the split collection contains a collection of Dharmapada verses that can be tentatively grouped into five chapters, but without precise agreement with any of the other versions.<sup>46</sup> Another fragmentary scroll of the split collection preserves approximately one-quarter of a version of the Arthapada, corresponding to the Māgandiyasutta up to the Sāriputtasutta in the Pali version integrated into the Suttanipāta.<sup>47</sup> Another part of the Pāli Suttanipāta collection that is still separately transmitted among the Gāndhārī manuscripts is the Khadgaviṣṇasūtra.<sup>48</sup> From a reference in a commentary to a *posalo parayaṇio*, it is clear that a version of the Pārāyaṇa also formed a part of early Gandhāran Buddhist literature, and likely that a written version (apparently lost) also existed.<sup>49</sup> Finally, one of the Gāndhārī wooden documents from Niya contains the introductory verse of the Udānavarga, attesting to the presence of this text (whether in Gāndhārī or Sanskrit) in Central Asia during the latter part of the Gāndhārī period.<sup>50</sup> It is unclear whether any other prominent Kṣudraka texts known from other traditions, such as an Udāna proper or a Sthavira- or Sthavirīgāthā, were transmitted in a written Gāndhārī version, but quotations from them in the Gāndhārī verse commentaries attest at least to their oral presence in the tradition.<sup>51</sup> A text whose position in the canon is unclear, but that has connections with the Kṣudraka class, are the Anavataptagāthā. They are preserved in two Gāndhārī manuscript remains in the British Library and Senior collections.<sup>52</sup>

## Mahāyānasūtra

Scriptures of the Mahāyāna movement are also well represented among the early manuscript finds from Gandhāra with at least nine different texts. The split collection contains one scroll that preserves part of the first and fifth chapter of a Prajñāpāramitā corresponding closely to the Aṣṭasāhasrikā.<sup>53</sup> Next to this foundational Mahāyāna text, small fragments of three other early Mahāyānasūtras are preserved among the recent discoveries related to the split collection: namely, the Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi;<sup>54</sup> a text that resembles the Samādhirājasūtra;<sup>55</sup> and what has been termed the \*Sucinṭisūtra.<sup>56</sup> At the other end of the scale, the Bajaur collection contains a very extensive and well-preserved unknown Mahāyānasūtra describing a buddha paradise and comparing it to that of the Buddha Akṣobhya.<sup>57</sup> The same collection contains a group of related short scrolls with a scholastic discussion touching on Mahāyāna issues such as the bodhisattva path.<sup>58</sup>

Not a Mahāyāna text proper, but laying the ground for later Mahāyāna developments, is the Bahubuddhasūtra contained in a Gāndhārī scroll in the Library of Congress, detailing the relationships of our Buddha Śākyamuni with fourteen other buddhas of the past and future.<sup>59</sup> A much more developed example of this genre is the Bhadrakalpikasūtra, describing 1,004 buddhas of our present world age, which is preserved in a number of small fragments from what must have been a pothi manuscript of approximately 400 folios at Bamiyan.<sup>60</sup> Also at Bamiyan were found small pothi fragments of the Bodhisattvapiṭakasūtra;<sup>61</sup> the Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhī;<sup>62</sup> and a further, unidentified Mahāyānasūtra.<sup>63</sup> Even in the later phase of Gāndhārī literature at Bamiyan, all of these Mahāyānasūtras appear to have been transmitted individually; the earliest example of a Mahāyānasūtra anthology occurs among the Sanskrit fragments from Bamiyan and dates to the 5th century CE.<sup>64</sup>

### Vinaya

Examples of Vinaya texts have come to light in the Bajaur collection. One manuscript unites two different versions of the Prātimokṣasūtra, and another contains a set of Karmavācanā rules.<sup>65</sup> It is unclear whether three scrolls containing episodes from the life of the buddha in the Senior collection were embedded in a Vinaya context.<sup>66</sup>

### Commentary and Abhidharma

While most of canonical Gāndhārī literature is known from parallel versions in other languages, the situation is entirely the opposite when it comes to commentarial and scholastic texts. There are numerous examples of the genre, but not a single one of them could yet be identified with a text known from other traditions; rather, we seem to have to do with original productions of Gandhāran Buddhism. This presents special challenges for the decipherment and understanding of these manuscripts, but also provides a unique glimpse into a living early Buddhist exegetical community. At the level of commentarial building blocks and exegetical techniques, some parallels, however, can be identified with Pali and Chinese Buddhist texts, revealing connections between Gandhāra and other regions and currents of early Buddhism. Commentaries proper and independent scholastic texts appear at the same time in the manuscript record, and there is no reason to assume that the latter evolved from the former. Rather, the systematic scholastic discussion of doctrinal topics occurs in canonical discourses already, and both commentaries and independent scholastic texts can be seen as evolving on this shared basis. In the case of commentaries, this happened in dialog with a (or several) root texts, while the development of other scholastic texts was driven more immediately by the doctrinal topics of concern.

Only four commentaries proper are currently known from the Gāndhārī tradition, all belonging to its second phase (1st to 2nd centuries CE). One is a commentary on a complete version of the Saṃgītisūtra on a scroll in the British Library collection.<sup>67</sup> In the arrangement of the sections of the root text, this commentary agrees almost perfectly with the translation of the Saṃgītisūtra in the Chinese Dīrghāgama (T 1), differing markedly from the Pali and Sanskrit versions of the root text. This suggests that the Chinese translation goes back to an original from the Gandhāran

tradition, and possibly that this original, like the Chinese translation, should be attributed to the Dharmaguptaka school. The main exegetical services of the Saṃgītisūtra commentary are the explanation of the root terms, often by way of etymology (*nirvacana*), their illustration using similes (*aupamya*), and their mapping to other doctrinal sets (such that for example the four *saṃjñā* are equated with the three *dhātu*). This kind of mapping, or “categorical reduction,” is also applied to the larger structure of the text in special summary (*uddāna*) sections that, in effect, reduce the entire doctrinal edifice covered in the Saṃgītisūtra to the four truths (*satya*) and the three courses (of dependent arising; *vartman*).<sup>68</sup> This procedure of categorical reduction as well as some of the technical terminology associated with it has close parallels in the Pali Peṭakopadesa and Nettippakaraṇa as well as in Ān Shìgāo’s Yīnchírù jīng 陰持入經 (T 604), pointing to Gandhāra as the origin of this exegetical procedure.<sup>69</sup>

The other three Gāndhārī commentaries are closely related texts on at least four separate scrolls of the British Library collection that explain selections of verses from the Dharmapada, the Arthapada, and the Pārāyaṇa as well as some other Kṣudraka texts.<sup>70</sup> Commentaries such as these may thus have been instrumental in defining the class of Kṣudraka texts that eventually found a home in different locations in the different Buddhist schools’ canons. The rationale for the particular selection of verses made in these commentaries as well as their order is not apparent, other than that they are generally speaking popular and well-known verses in early Buddhism, and it is likely that an unknown context of use (maybe pedagogical or ritual) lay behind the production of these texts. The three verse commentaries share with the Saṃgītisūtra commentary the procedure of categorical reduction and additionally employ word explanations with parallels in the Pali Suttaniddesa that are best considered a shared inheritance from the earliest period of Buddhist exegesis. Also, like the Saṃgītisūtra commentary, the verse commentaries contain references to and quotations from other canonical texts, attesting, for instance, to the notion of an Ekottarikā collection of sūtras. Both the Saṃgītisūtra commentary and the verse commentaries frequently introduce multiple alternative explanations of their root text without expressing a preference.

In addition to these clear commentaries, a manuscript in the University of Washington Libraries contains a discussion of the Dhātuvibhaṅgasūtra of the Madhyamāgama, but the fragmentary state of the text does not allow a decision as to whether it is a straightforward commentary on this sūtra or another type of text introducing this discussion in a different context.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, a scholastic text that is clearly not a commentary is preserved in a 1st-century CE manuscript in the British Library collection.<sup>72</sup> It discusses, apparently in a practice-oriented context concerned with defilements, the existence of past and future factors. The form of this discussion is polemical, with an unidentified proponent engaging with Kāśyapīya and Sarvāstivāda opponents. The closest literary parallel to this type of text is the Pali Kathāvatthu.

Very little can be said at the current stage of research about the other scholastic texts that are preserved in the British Library and Bajaur collections other than general indications of their concerns based on the employed vocabulary. Thus, in the former collection, CKM 12 discusses the Buddhist path in relation to defilements, and CKM 19 dependent arising and a variety of topics related to religious practice. CKM 22 likewise appears to cover a broad range of topics related to practice, but does so in a catechetical format. In addition, the British Library contains several



minor scholastic fragments that remain even more poorly understood.<sup>73</sup> In the Bajaur collection, manuscript CKM 272 discusses the character of types of thought (*citta*); fragments CKM 277, 279, and 281 appear to form a group, but it has not been possible to determine their content or that of fragment CKM 275 more precisely.<sup>74</sup> The Bajaur collection contains several Mahāyāna-related scholastic fragments.<sup>75</sup>

## Miscellaneous Texts

Canonical and scholastic early Buddhist texts coexisted with texts of other genres used in Gandhāran Buddhist monasteries. These include a number of original poetic compositions in praise of the Buddha, Buddhist story collections and story outlines, an apotropaic text, and even a non-Buddhist treatise on statecraft written in Kharoṣṭhī script and Sanskrit language that caught the interest of a Gandhāran Buddhist monk.<sup>76</sup>

## Review of the Literature

The earliest accounts of Gandhāran Buddhist manuscript finds, now lost, are owed to 19th-century Western travelers in the northwestern Indian borderlands, especially Charles Masson in 1841 and Martin Honigberger in 1851.<sup>77</sup> First sample editions of the two preserved portions of the Khotan Dharmapada by Émile Senart and Sergei Ol'denburg", both published in 1891, gave rise to several decades of intensive detailed scholarship on this text by Senart, Heinrich Lüders, Sten Konow, Benimadhab Barua, and Sailendranath Mitra and H. W. Bailey, and, eventually, a definitive edition by John Brough in 1962.<sup>78</sup> The "Gāndhārī hypothesis" concerning the existence of a written Gāndhārī Buddhist canon was summarized by Franz Bernhard in 1970.<sup>79</sup> Gérard Fussman published a synthesis of the state of Gāndhārī studies in 1989.<sup>80</sup> The first set of the manuscripts newly discovered since the 1990s reached the British Library in 1994, while another stayed with the private collector Robert Senior.<sup>81</sup> These two collections and the subsequent discoveries of Gāndhārī birchbark manuscripts are gradually being published in the Gandhāran Buddhist Texts series starting in the year 2000.<sup>82</sup> Also since 2000, the palm-leaf fragments from Bamiyan are being edited in the Buddhist manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection series.<sup>83</sup> The progress of the editorial and interpretive work on the Gāndhārī manuscripts and related epigraphic material has been charted by Stefan Baums and Andrew Glass.<sup>84</sup> Concurrently with the editorial activities, a first *Dictionary of Gāndhārī* is being compiled by Baums and Glass.<sup>85</sup> Provisional summaries of the manuscript culture and literature of ancient Gandhāra have been published by Baums and Richard Salomon, as well as discussions of the development of Gāndhārī canonical literature by Salomon and Mark Allon, and that of scholastic literature by Baums and Collett Cox.<sup>86</sup> In addition to the complete publication of the known manuscripts, a comprehensive study of the connections of Gāndhārī with Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist literature remains a desideratum.

### Further Reading

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