BRILL

INDO-IRANIAN JOURNAL 58 (2015) 71–100

brill.com/iij

Book Reviews

Hiromi Habata

Die zentralasiatischen Sanskrit-Fragmente des Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra (Indica et Tibetica 51), Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2007, LXXV + 203 pp. ISBN 978 3 923 77652 8. € 32.00

The *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* (MPM; known informally as the 'Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*') is a sūtra from the middle period of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, probably composed sometime between 200 and 400 CE.[1] Fǎxiǎn 法顯 and Buddhabhadra translated the MPM into Chinese in 417–418 CE (T 376), supposedly based on a Sanskrit original from Pāṭaliputra. Simultaneously (414–421 CE), the Central Asian monk Dharmakṣema produced another Chinese translation (T 374) based on Sanskrit originals from India (his first part) and Khotan (two further parts). Only the first ten out of forty books of Dharmakṣema's text correspond to other known versions of the MPM (just translated into English by Mark Blum).[2] Later in the fifth century, a so-called 'southern recension' (T 375) of Dharmakṣema's text was prepared (translated into English by Kōshō Yamamoto).[3] In the beginning of the ninth century, a faithful (to judge by the extant Sanskrit) Tibetan translation was prepared by Jinamitra, Jñānagarbha and Devacandra (partially translated into Japanese by Masahiro Shimoda).[4]

1 Hajime Nakamura, 1980, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Biographical Notes*, Hirakata City: KUFS Publication Japan, p. 212.

2 Mark L. Blum, 2013, *The Nirvana Sutra* (*Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra*)*, Volume 1*, Berkeley: Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America.

3 Kosho Yamamoto, 1973–1975, *The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana-sutra: A Complete Translation from the Classical Chinese Language in 3 Volumes*, Ube: Karinbunko (Karin Buddhological Series 5).

4 Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, 1993, 蔵文和訳『大乗涅槃経』 Zōbun wayaku "Daijōne-

 | DOI: 10.1163/15728536-05800001

Like the mainstream Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, the MPM recounts the final days of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Unlike the mainstream sūtra, it does not include the final wanderings of the Buddha, but starts with him and his retinue already in Kuśinagarī. The main interlocutor in the MPM is the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī; Ānanda and Kāśyapa (and, the text points out, king Ajātaśatru) remain absent. The Indian MPM was probably (like the Tibetan translation and the first ten books of Dharmakṣema's text) divided into five chapters that cover supplications for the Buddha to remain in this world and a discourse on his longevity; a description of the indestructible diamond body of the Buddha; the name and transmission of the sūtra; and answers to varied questions of those surrounding the Buddha (liv). The MPM ends with the Buddha turning on his side, ready to enter nirvāṇa, and in contrast to the mainstream sūtra does not describe his cremation and the distribution of his relics. Key concepts of the MPM are the *buddhadhātu* and *tathāgatagarbha*—the buddha nature inherent in all living beings—and the precept of vegetarianism. Only one quotation of the MPM is known from Indian Buddhist literature (in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*), but as the 'last relevation' of the Buddha during his lifetime it became a centrally important text in the development of East Asian Buddhism. The textual development of the Indian MPM has formed the topic of a study by Masahiro Shimoda,[5] and its history in East Asia has been treated by Kōgaku Fuse.[6]

In stark contrast to its influence and numerous translations, the Indian text of the MPM is only known through 37 manuscript fragments from Central Asia (the subject matter of the book under review) and a single fragment from Japan. The Central Asian fragments belong to 26 folios of three original manuscripts and were found between the late 1880s and 1906 in the ruins of the main temple at Khadalik east of Khotan on the Southern Silk Road. They are now preserved in the British Library in London (29 fragments) and in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (eight fragments). The first fragmentary London folio (S[anskrit-]F[ragment] 22 in Habata's numbering) was identified and published by Kaigyoku Watanabe in 1909, and republished by F.W. Thomas in Hoernle's *Manuscript Remains of Bud-*

hangyō", 東京 Tōkyō: インド学仏教学叢書編集委員会 Indogaku bukkyōgaku sōsho Henshū Inkai (Bibliotheca Indologica et Buddhica 4).

5 Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, 1997, 涅槃経の研究—大乗経典の研究方法試論 *Nehangyō no kenkyū—daijō kyōten no kenkyū hōhō shiron*, 東京 Tōkyō: 春秋社 Shunjūsha.

6 Fuse Kōgaku 布施浩岳, 1942, 涅槃宗之研究 *Nehanshū no kenkyū*, 東京 Tōkyō, 叢文閣 Sōbunkaku.

dhist Literature.[7] Twenty further London folios were identified by Kazunobu Matsuda (SF 2, 4–7, 9–11, 16–18, 20–21, 23–24) and Habata herself (SF 1, 3, 14–15, 19) in 1988 and 1993, and published in facsimile and transcription.[8] One further London fragment (belonging to folio SF 21) was identified by Seishi Karashima in 2007.

The Japanese fragment (SF 13) was discovered by Junjirō Takakusu in Kōyasan in 1916. It was included by Takakusu and Watanabe in the 大正新脩大藏經 Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (T 12 p. 604) and republished by Akira Yuyama in 1981.[9]

The existence of Sanskrit fragments of the MPM in the Saint Petersburg collection was first noted by S.F. Ol'denburg in 1920. Five of these fragments were studied in the 1950s by V.S. Vorob'ev-Desiatovskii and, after his death, by G.M. Bongard-Levin (who discovered a sixth fragment), Ė.N. Temkin and M.I. Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia, resulting in a published overview of the material in 1965[10] and the publication of transcriptions and facsimiles in 1985 (in Russian) and 1986 (in English), with an addendum in 1990.[11] Most recently, two

---

7 Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, 1909, 大般涅槃経の梵文断片 Daihatsunehangyō no bonbun danpen, 宗教界 *Shūkyōkai* 5.2.

F.W. Thomas, 1916, Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, in A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature Found in Eastern Turkestan*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 93–97.

8 Matsuda Kazunobu 松田和信, 1988, インド省図書館所蔵中央アジア出土大乗涅槃経梵文断簡集 : スタイン ・ヘルン レ・コレクション *Indoshō toshokan shozō chūō ajia shutsudo Daijōnehangyō bonbun dankanshū: Sutain Herunre Korekushon*, 東京 Tōkyō: 東洋文庫 Tōyō Bunko (Studia Tibetica, 14).

Habata Hiromi 幅田裕美, 1993, 大乗 〈涅槃経〉の未否定の梵文断片について 1 Daijō ‹Nehangyō› no mihitei no bonbun danpen ni tsuite 1, 印度哲学仏教学 *Indo tetsugaku bukkyōgaku* 8: 129–144.

9 Akira Yuyama, 1981, *Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, 1: Koyasan Manuscript*, Tokyo: Reiyukai Library (Studia philologica Buddhica, Occasional Paper Series, 4).

10 Г. М. Бонгард-Левин, М. И. Воробьева-Десятовская, Э. Н. Темкин, 1965, Новые санскритские документы из Центральной Азии, *Програма Научной Конференции по языкам Индии, Пакистана, Непала и Цейлона*, Москва, pp. 43–55.

11 Г. М. Бонгард-Левин, М. И. Воробьева-Десятовская, 1985, *Памятники индийской письменности из Центральной Азии: выпуск 1*, Москва: Издательство «Наука», Главная редакция Восточной литературы (Памятники письменности Востока, 73,1 = Bibliotheca Buddhica, 33), pp. 37–64.

G.M. Bongard-Levin, 1986, *New Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*Central Asian Manuscript Collection at Leningrad*), Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies (Studia Philologica Buddhica, Occasional Paper Series, 6).

Г. М. Бонгард-Левин, М. И. Воробьева-Десятовская, 1990, *Памятники индийской письменности из Центральной Азии: выпуск 2*, Москва: «Наука», Главная редакция

further MPM fragments were identified in the Saint Petersburg collection by Matsuda and Habata.[12]

Matsuda observed in 1986 that one fragment from London and one fragment from Saint Petersburg belonged to the same folio (SF 2) of the same original manuscript (manuscript A),[13] and Jikidō Takasaki in his review of Bongard-Levin 1986[14] paired up two other London and Saint Petersburg fragments to form folio SF 24 of manuscript A. Habata adds two further such pairings in her edition (SF 1 and 4, both from manuscript A), and notes that the remaining two Saint Petersburg fragments known in 2007 also belong to manuscripts A and B in the London collection, which in addition houses fragments of a third manuscript C. All three manuscripts were written on paper in Central Asia and date probably from the 5th or 6th century CE. Paleography and language together show that B is the oldest and C the youngest of the trio. The middle manuscript, A, was demonstrably an anthology with at least the **Aṣṭabuddhakasūtra*, *Sarvavaipulyasaṃgrahasūtra*, *Vajracchedikā* and *Anantamukhanirhāradhāraṇī*, of which the MPM probably formed the first text and took up approximately 179 folios (xxxi–xxxiii). A comprehensive edition of the Sanskrit MPM reuniting the fragments of these three manuscripts, divided among two collections in two different countries, had thus become a desideratum.

Habata, in this revised version of her 2005 University of Freiburg dissertation, sets out to fill this need (xxiii). Her book consists of two main parts—an introductory study (xix–lxxv) and an annotated edition of selected Sanskrit fragments of the MPM (1–105) and their parallel passages in the Tibetan translation (107–134)—followed by a handy concordance of the Tibetan translation, the two Chinese translations and the Sanskrit fragments and quotation (135–155), a complete Sanskrit word index (157–184), a separate index listing difficult words that require further study (185–186), an appendix reproducing the MPM quotation in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (187), and a list of references (188–202). The book concludes with an addendum (203) announcing the identification of the additional fragment of folio SF 21 (manuscript C) which occurred too late in the editorial process for it to be integrated into the book.

Восточной литературы (Памятники письменности Востока, 73,2 = Bibliotheca Buddhica, 34), pp. 256–259.

12 Communication by Habata at the Second International Workshop on the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra, University of Munich, 27–29 July 2010.

13 Bongard-Levin 1986: 10–12.

14 Takasaki Jikidō 高崎直道, 1987, 大乗の大般涅槃経梵文断間について: ボンガード

The first part of the introduction properly focuses on the history of discovery and research on the Sanskrit fragments rather than the general content and importance of the MPM (xxi–xlii). It does so exhaustively, and Habata can draw on her intimate familiarity with both the European and the Japanese history of research on the text, to both of which she has herself made many contributions. Her use of the Russian research is limited to Bongard-Levin's 1986 English-medium publication, but not to any ill effect since this summarizes all findings on the Saint Petersburg collection up to the time that Habata was writing (with the single exception of Bongard-Levin and Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia's 1990 addendum noted above). The introduction goes on to discuss the proper title of the sūtra (*Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra*; xliii–xlv), its affiliation with the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda school (the evidence is laid out in a 1996 Japanese article by Habata[15] a summary of which would have been welcome) and genre classification as *mahāsūtra* and *vaitulya* (xlv–li), and the structure of the text (the Central Asian Sanskrit text appears to have agreed with the five-chapter structure of the Tibetan translation; li–lv).

The remainder of the introduction (lvii–lxxv) consists of a detailed discussion of the linguistic peculiarities and background of the Sanskrit fragments. They are written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit of Edgerton's type II, with a tangible Middle Indian substrate in the verses, but only traces of it in the prose (lvi). The degree of Sanskritization varies from manuscript B (most Middle Indian features) to manuscript C (most Sanskritized), agreeing with their relative paleographic dating (lxxv).

Habata attempts to go one step further and determine the specific Middle Indian dialect underlying the fragments, in particular to answer the question whether it may have been Gāndhārī. The main characteristics distinguishing Gāndhārī from other forms of Middle Indian are the preservation of three sibilants *ś*, *ṣ* and *s*; preservation of postconsonantal *r*; development of intervocalic *th* and *dh* to *z*; development of sibilant + *m* or *v* to (ultimately) sibilant + *p*; and development of the word *iha* to *iśa*. The first two of these are shared traits with Sanskrit, so only the last three can be used in principle to detect Gāndhārī substrate influence on Sanskrit. Unfortunately, the MPM Sanskrit fragments do not contain any of these clear indicators.

レヴィン教授の近業によせて Daijō no Daihatsunehangyō bonbun dankan ni tsuite: Bongādo Revin no kyōju no kingyō ni yosete, 佛教学 *Bukkyōgaku* 22: (1)–(20).

15 Habata Hiromi 幅田裕美, 1996, 大乗 〈涅槃経〉における阿含の引用について Daijō ‹Nehangyō› ni okeru agon no in'yō ni tsuite, 印度哲学仏教学 *Indo tetsugaku bukkyōgaku* 11: 77–93.

A special characteristic of Central Asian (but not Indian) Gāndhārī is the the voicing of voiceless stops after a nasal segment, and Habata does present evidence for the phenomenon in forms such as *gaṃgara* for *kaṃkara* and *taṃndra* for *tantra* (lxiii–lxiv). A related characteristic of Central Asian Gāndhārī is the full assimiliation of voiced stops after a nasal segment, and again Habata presents one clear example in the form of the name *Manyuśrī* (if the spelling indicates *ññ*) for *Mañjuśrī* (lxiv); an indirect reflection may be the spelling *bi⟨*ṃ⟩bhara* for *bimbara*, as an incorrect Sanskritization based on a Central Asian Gāndhārī form **biṃmara* (lix). The problem with these two phonetic traits is that they may not be original features of Central Asian Gāndhārī, but due to the influence of another Central Asian language on the use of both Gāndhārī and Sanskrit in the area of Khotan. The spelling *ny* for expected *ñj* is attested both in Khotanese and in Northwest Indian manuscripts, so this evidence remains inconclusive (lxiv).

Some of the other examples adduced by Habata cannot be used as evidence for a Gāndhārī substrate: the misspelling *ubhaya* for *upāya* (lx) is unlikely to reflect Gāndhārī pronunciation and Kharoṣṭhī orthography which keep both words distinct as *uhaya* and *uvaya*; the metrical infelicity of *nirvbāsyāmi* (53) cannot be healed by underlying Gāndhārī **nirvayiśami* because the *ś* in the Kharoṣṭhī spelling of this form would indicate a geminate; the gerund formation in *-tvī* (lxxiv), attested only once in *uptvī*, is not the regular Gāndhārī formation either, although it occurs sporadically in Central Asian Gāndhārī and thus presents the same indeterminacy as *ny* for *ñj*; and the string *anta*[*rdhi*]*tānuvīkṣya* (lxviii) is better separated *anta*[*rdhi*]*tān uvīkṣya* (cf. BHSD s.v. *udvīkṣya* 'worthy to be gazed at') than taking it as evidence for a Gāndhārī-style accusative plural in *-ā*.

In the greater picture, the question of a possible Gāndhārī substrate for the MPM (and, by implication, an original Gāndhārī version of the text) is also intimately connected with its time of composition. If it did, in fact, come into being as late as the 4th century CE, then it is unlikely that it was ever written down in the (by this time moribund) Kharoṣṭhī script, and this would seem to be supported by the fact that the Buddhist 'mystical alphabet' in the fourteenth chapter of Fǎxiǎn's translation agrees with the order of the Brāhmī, not the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet (liii). What we can say is that the original MPM was in all likelihood composed by speakers of Prakrit and written down in a Sanskritized form of Prakrit (i.e., Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit), and that the Central Asian manuscripts in particular were copied in a linguistic environment with some features that we also find reflected in the Niya documents, the Khotan Dharmapada and in some Khotanese texts.

Habata's edition presents the Sanskrit fragments in instalments of numbered sections, usually corresponding to one or two sentences, chosen by her and anchored to the extant folios ("2.3," for instance, indicates the third meaning unit in folio SF 2). The numbering would arguably be more useful if it were anchored to the structure of the complete text (Habata provides such an overall numbering scheme in the concordance at the end of the book), and thus convey an idea of where a Sanskrit sentence fits into the overall discourse, but her (valid) overriding concern appears to have been to stay as close as possible to the primary evidence of the fragments. The same concern is reflected in the presentation of those passages where the texts of fragments from two manuscripts overlap (such as manuscripts C and B in SF 6): Habata presents the transcriptions of both fragments separately and indicates their overlap by highlighting, but it might have been helpful for the reader to additionally present a single reconstructed text based on the two closely related witnesses. These quibbles apart, the edition, translation and annotation of the fragments is a model of philological accuracy and diligence.

One wishes, however, that time and space had allowed for the inclusion and equally exemplary treatment of all extant Sanskrit fragments of the MPM. The title of the book suggests complete coverage, and the introduction likewise declares this the aim of the work ("Ziel der vorliegenden Arbeit ist es, den Sanskrittext des MPM soweit wie möglich aus allen erhaltenen Fragmenten zu rekonstruieren und zu interpretieren," xxiii). For those not already intimately familiar with the material it takes a little while to realize that only ten out of the 24 folios known in 2007 are covered in Habata's edition: folios SF 1, 2, 4, 24 from manuscript A, folios SF 5, 7, 12 from manuscript B, and folios SF 6, 9, 16 from manuscript C. The rationale of this selection is not given and not readily apparent. Since the publication of the book under review, Habata has edited a different but overlapping selection of the London fragments, in a similar format but without annotations, in the series *The British Library Sanskrit Fragments*:[16] folios 11, 14, 10 from manuscript A, folio 18 from manuscript B, and folios 3, 20, 21 from manuscript C. This brings the total number of folios treated by her up to 17, and the title of her *BLSF* article promises a second part that will presumably contain the remaining London folios of the MPM, five of which (SF 17, 22, 23 from manuscript A, SF 10 from manuscript B, and SF 15 from manuscript C) have not yet been edited by her.

16 Hiromi Habata, 2009, The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* Manuscripts in the Stein and Hoernle Collections (1), in Seishi Karashima and Klaus Wille, eds., *The British Library Sanskrit Fragments, Volume II.1*, Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University (Buddhist Manuscripts from Central Asia), pp. 551–588.

One very much hopes that Habata will eventually assemble her work on the MPM Sanskrit fragments into a new monograph (a second edition of the work under review) that will include all known fragments (also the two newly identified folios in the Saint Petersburg collection and the Kōyasan fragment) and present them to the same exacting scholarly standards as the work under review, together with photographic reproductions of the source material. The publication of Mark Blum's new translation of the first ten books of Dharmakṣema's translation, and the recent completion of Habata's own critical edition of the complete Tibetan text of the MPM[17] (announced on p. xxxv) provide a new solid basis for a complete edition of the Sanskrit fragments. Until such time, the book under review joins the facsimile editions and transcriptions of Bongard-Levin and Matsuda as an indispensable tool for anybody studying the Sanskrit MPM, and the author is to be congratulated on her achievement in setting a very high philological standard for any future treatment of this material.[18]

Stefan Baums
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
baums@lmu.de

17 Hiromi Habata, 2013, *A Critical Edition of the Tibetan Translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag (Contributions to Tibetan Studies 10).

18 The production value of Habata's book is likewise excellent: this handsome hardcover edition is thread-bound and printed on durable paper in an attractive layout provided by the author herself. The number of misprints is negligible and only four have been noticed (12: Früchten → Früchte; 16: auf deren steinigen Abhängen, auf denen → die steinige Abhänge haben, auf denen; 36: Senkforn → Senfkorn; 100: prinzlichen → den prinzlichen).