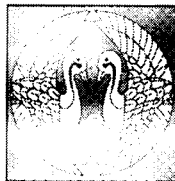


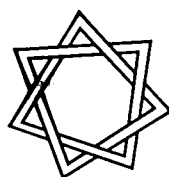
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH



Manuscripta Orientalia

International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research

Vol. 4 No. 4 December 1998



ТБЕСА
St. Petersburg-Helsinki

*M. I. Vorobyeva-Desyatovskaya,
E. N. Tyomkin*

FRAGMENTS OF SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPTS ON BIRCH-BARK FROM KUCHA

Among the Central Asian materials in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, which were discovered and acquired in East Turkestan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Sanskrit manuscript fragments on birch-bark are of special interest. In all likelihood, they were copied in India in the first centuries A.D. and found their way to East Turkestan during the first stage of Buddhism's expansion in the region. A comparison of these fragments with the fragments on birch-bark and palm leaf from the Turfan collection in Germany shows that they are similar both in palaeography and content. Palaeography data allow us to date the fragments of both collections to the Kushan and post-Kushan period. On the basis of contents, the fragments could be divided into several groups, among which the most frequently encountered are excerpts from the Buddhist philosophical canon — the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*, medical texts, *sūtras* from the *Sūtra-piṭaka*, *jātakas* and *avadānas* — extracts from the *Sūtra-piṭaka* and *Vinaya-piṭaka*.

In sum, the St. Petersburg collection contains around 100 fragments of manuscripts on birch-bark which seem to belong to no more than 10–12 manuscripts. The majority of the fragments were acquired by N. F. Petrovsky, the Russian consul in Kashghar. Several fragments from Kucha were brought by M. M. Berezovsky. We know that N. F. Petrovsky usually bought manuscripts from the local population, and the original place of their discovery remain obscure. His shipments frequently consisted of small fragments of birch-bark intermingled with fragments of palm leaf; the first inventory of the collection marked them as manuscripts on palm leaf. For example, call number SI P/43 is common to 10 fragments of various manuscripts of which three are copied on birch-bark and the remainder on palm leaf. Of these three fragments, one, with text on both sides, belongs to a manuscript of medical content; the two others, insignificant in size and with text only on one side, remain

unidentified. The five fragments under call number SI P/31 were published by S. F. Oldenburg [1]. They are copied on a thick bast layer of birch-bark. A part of scroll SI P/32a — from the same layer of birch-bark, dimensions 7.3×57.0 cm — was also published by Oldenburg [2]. This manuscript contains the *Mahāsahasrapramardinī*, which constitutes one of the texts of the *Pañcarakṣā*.

The current publication includes four fragments held under call number SI P/16. In contrast to his usual practice, in this particular case N. F. Petrovsky indicated that these fragments originated from Kucha. In all, 32 fragments are held under this call number. It appears that they belong to three separate manuscripts. The folios of these manuscripts were originally pasted together from two or three thin layers of birch-bark. At present, the bulk of these fragments have come apart. Fortunately, we have succeeded in putting together four larger fragments from the smaller pieces.

Fragment No. 1 was originally two-layered; we were able to unite six separate pieces and to restore fully one layer. The second layer, the reverse side of the folio, contains a number of crumbled places and lacunae. The extant layers were so brittle and fragile that it was only with great difficulty that we managed to join them. Then the fragment was preserved between two plates of glass [3]. Fragment No. 2 consists of two parts and only one layer of birch-bark. It seems that the third fragment belonged originally to a three-layered folio: two layers have survived, but there is no text on the reverse side. The fragment is put together from two pieces with a minor lacuna between them. A small scrap from this fragment has also survived. Finally, the fourth fragment consists of a single layer of birch-bark put together from two pieces. As a result, we were able to join ten of the largest fragments. The remaining 22 tiny fragments apparently belong to three manuscripts — two are two-layered and one is three-layered. Unfortunately, we have not succeeded in putting them together.

FRAGMENT NO. 1

The dimensions of this two-layered fragment are 16.5×7.0 cm. It represents the left half of the folio with an aperture for stitching located 10 cm from the left edge. Text is found on both sides, eight lines each. This is in all likelihood the original number of lines. The *recto* and *verso* sides

(see *figs. 1* and *2*) were determined approximately; a part of the birch-bark layer on the reverse side is missing. The writing is Indian Brāhmī, type II, early Gupta.

It seems that the text contains a summary of excerpts from Śrāvakayāna's *Vinaya-piṭaka*. This is supported by the

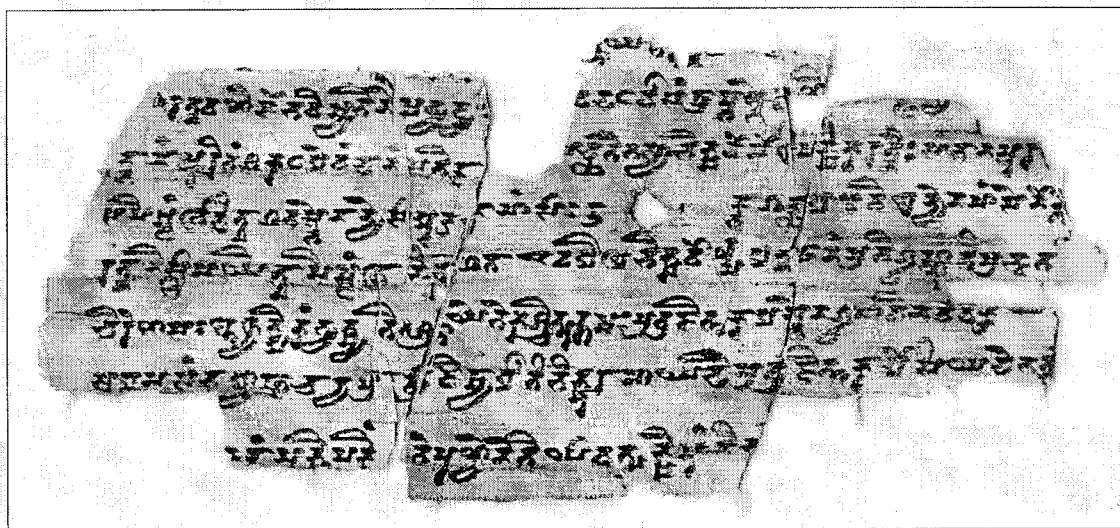


Fig. 1

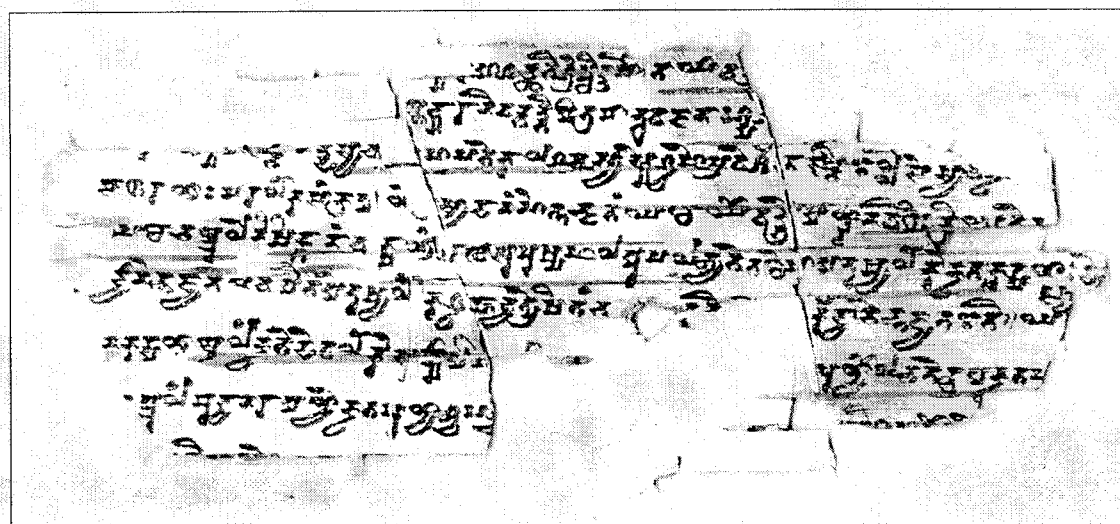


Fig. 2

content of the fragment, to the extent that we were able to ascertain it despite significant lacunae in the text. The text contains several appeals from the Buddha to monks — *bhikṣavo* (*recto*, 3, 5, 8). Setting forth on the path of the Teaching, in accordance with the Śrāvakayāna, is mentioned: *recto* (6) — *kaścīṭ-puruṣaḥ pravrajitu kāmā*, the same — *recto* (7). Finally, beginning with the word *śrūyate* (“they say”, “it has been heard”), we find individual parables evidently uttered by the Buddha for the monks on the necessity of offering gifts for monks and the community, justifying this practice as a basic merit which aids a better reincarnation: see *recto* (3) — *śakaṭam-evam dānaṃ ... yacchati*; *verso* (4) — *dānaṃ hetu ... bhūtaṃ*, etc.

One can distinguish three parables on the *recto* side: lines 1—3 — parable of the merchant who traded in jewelry — *ratna-vaṇija*. The city Aṭavī is mentioned. Lines 4—6 contain a parable about *hamsaḥ* or *hamsāḥ*. Lines 6—8 hold a parable about a man who wished to gain *pravrajya* — “initiation into *upāsaka*”.

Two parables were probably on the *verso* side: one (see line 1) is about the daughter of the head of the merchants — *śreṣṭhi-duhitā*. The second evidently begins in the fifth line and continues until the end of the fragment. It tells of someone who offered gifts in the form of flowers and fruits and in his rebirth left the “world of people” — *manuṣya-loka* (lines 5 and 6) and was born into the “beautiful world of the gods” — *alamkṛte devaloke* (line 7).

TRANSLITERATION

Recto

1.] ... [śr]ūyat[ī] [
2. X *ratna-vaṇijo bhaviṣyati naiṣadyajya* X X X X *dad-aṭavī samprāptas-te*
vaṇi[ja] [
3. [sa]ntānaṃ pūritaṃ śakaṭam-evam dānaṃ patirca X [ya]cchati tasya bhikṣavo
bodhipakṣika-ratnaiḥ samtāna-pūri [
4. *sa piṣṭam khāditvā gatas-tenānye samudraka-hamsā ukta gacch[ā]ma-iti*
anyena hamseno X t [
5. *ratnaṃ nisthāpayitvā piṣṭam khāditvā gatā evamithā*¹ *bhikṣavo* ‘*lpam*
-annaṃ dānaṃ pratigrhṇati prabhūta [
6. [a]cireṇa saḥ adhyātmikaṃ vyakṣati || śrūyete² *kaścīṭ-puruṣaḥ pravrajitu kāmā*
-tena gr̥ha-vibhava-v[ā]stu X [
7. *s-tam-upasamkrāmyā-āha-ācārya pravrajīṣyāmi-iti bhikṣur-āha yadi pravrajitu*
kāmo siyad-etad X [
8. X X X X X *daṃ p[r]atipak[ṣ]i[ka] te punyenetī yavat-p[r]akṣiptaṃ bhikṣ[avo]*

Verso

1. X X *mā gacchati śreṣṭhi-duhitā yāva* [
2. *sta dvārā nivartanti mātra bāndhavajanāḥ śma* [
3. X X X X X *t-nandasya cā ... ha pate kāla-gatasya svve gr̥he*
praveśo nāsti illise syād X [g]r [
4. *sa dhāraṇāḥ paraloka-saṃkramaṇe* X *sya dānaṃ hetu bhūtaṃ*
yathā vaktre maṇḍana-vidhiḥ kriya [e] n X [
5. *yathā cā mūle niṣiktānāṃ vakṣaṇāṃ* [su]kha supuṣpa-phalam-
upalabhyate tattheha manuṣya-loke kṛta-karmaṇasyaḥ de [
6. [ko]dyāne bhujyata evam-eta manuṣya-loka gr̥hādyat-preṣitaṃ
bha []ti X X *kodyāne bhujyata iti* || ya [
7. X *karmaṇa alamkṛte devaloke sa svvā ma* []i ... *punyo labhane* ‘*rthamakṛta* X [
8. X *mūlaṃm-udyāna-ramaṇye kṛta puṇyaśca pa* X [

¹ Instead of *evam-yathā* ?

² Instead of *śrūyate* ?

FRAGMENT NO. 2

Dimensions: 11.0 × 6.0 cm. It is an ordinary layer of birch-bark, broken off on the right and left (see fig. 3); it is quite possible that the upper and lower edges are missing. Seven incomplete lines of text have survived on one side. In accordance with the classification proposed by Lore Sander, the writing can be classed as Indian Brāhmī, type II, early Gupta.

The text provides explanation of the term *śūnyatā-samādhi* (in the manuscript — *śūnyatā-samādhi*). According to the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (Nos. 1541–1544), this term is part of the matrix *śūnyatā-samādhi*, *apraṇihitā-samādhi*, *ānimittā-samādhi*. An analogous text is kept in the Turfan collection in Germany [4].

TRANSLITERATION

1.] Xm-avakrāmati darṣana-mārge paṃcadaśasu citta-kṣaṇeṣu srota āpa[nna] [
2.] vat-parityaktā. yofitayā śūnyatā[yā] samanvāgataḥ pratyutpannenāpi [
3.] [a]vasthāsya śūnyatām samādhiṃ niṣṛtya niyāmam-avakrāmati.
samudayābhip[
4.] nyātotpādita nirodhitā kṛtā praṇidhitam ca saṃmukhi bhūtaṃ yovā
pra[tyutpa] [
5.] X nirodhitā vā parityaktā na samanvāgataḥ kāsyavasthāsya praṇihī[ta
6.] pati phalaṃ prāpya pūrvavadyāvad-akopyatām prati[
7.] X [śu]nyatayā samanvāgato 'tīta[

FRAGMENT NO. 3

The dimensions of this three-layered fragment of two joined pieces with a small lacuna between them: 16.5 × 7.0 cm (see fig. 4). The fragment represents the left part of the folio and contains 10 lines of text on one side. The writing is Indian Brāhmī, type II, early Gupta. A scrap from the fragment (3.0 × 2.0 cm) has also survived, although it could not be joined to the others.

The fragment contains a text analogous to that of fragment No. 1. Line 1 evidently contains the end of a parable designated by the number 10. Further, a new parable begins; its name has not been preserved. A certain “daughter” is mentioned (line 5) who *pravṛddha-*

snehāśruṣoṣa — “dried the tears with great tenderness”, most likely of her elderly parents. Apparently, she also offered gifts (*dhanam-ādāyā*, line 4) for the sake of rebirth in a different world (*lokāntara saṃkramaṇe* ‘*rthasya pradāna-mṛtenānyonyu*, line 5).

This parable ends on line 10 and a new one begins. Its title is *Māndhātā*, which is the name of the ruler-*cakravartin* (*cakravartin-rājā*) from former times, who was considered one of the early reincarnations of the Buddha Shakyamuni. His name is repeatedly mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*. In the *Divyāvadāna*, *avdana* No. 17 indicated with his name.

TRANSLITERATION

1.] : 10 : mam [
2. X X X X X vyāvanāgatass¹ samayas-tāva ... suhrdbhir-vṛtaḥ
āpṛcchanti va bāndha[vajanāḥ] [
3. dy[th]nu [yu X X ndena kila rājñā cintitama ... denonmukha
mukhaṃ nārī-janaṃ prasthi [
4. pi veṣe sthāpita vānyadi² kaścid-dhanam-ādāyā ... pya mā[yā]yuṣo
dīpasyeva nāśa-[vijana]-sama[ye] dv[
5. duhitarā³ pravṛddha-sneh[ā]śruṣoṣa X X X [i ... lokāntara saṃkramaṇe
'rthasya pradāna-mṛtenānyonyuhā [
6. mukhe prakṣiptaṃ tadidānīm ma X ... [i]i X X X X X X X X
prāyamav[i]cca [
7. nidhir-labdho na hi nirdhana [
8. pto na tu nidhir-labdha ityathā [
9. bhaviṣyati dhānam paratra ne [
10. [e X m = māndhātā X

¹ Two letters *s* are written in a single *akṣara*, a third — in the word *samaya* — is located above the line.

² Instead of *vānyādi*?

³ Instead of *duhitā*, N. sg. from *duhitṛ*?

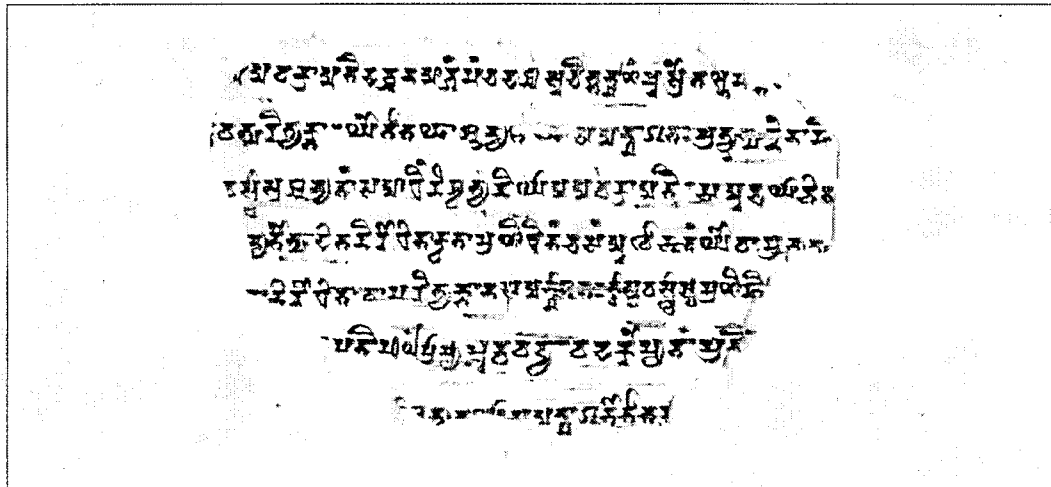


Fig. 3

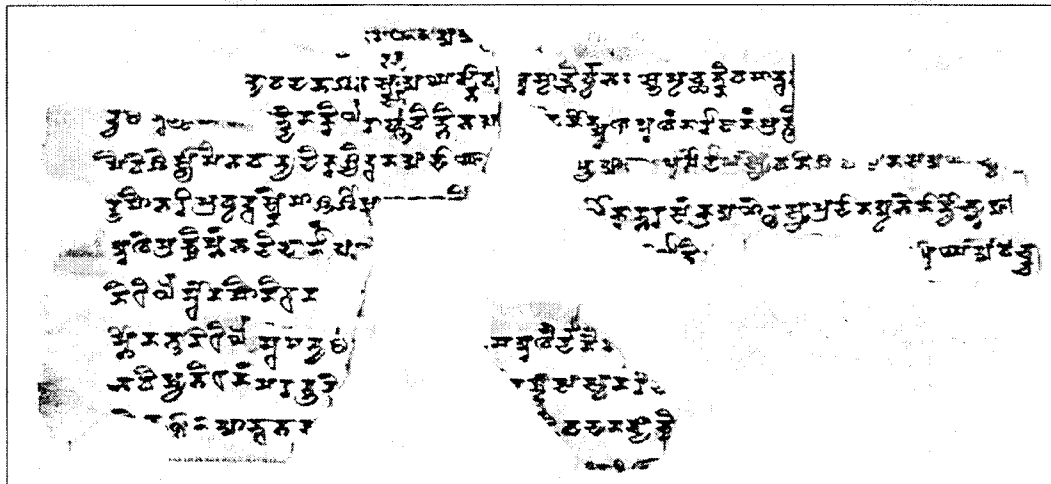


Fig. 4

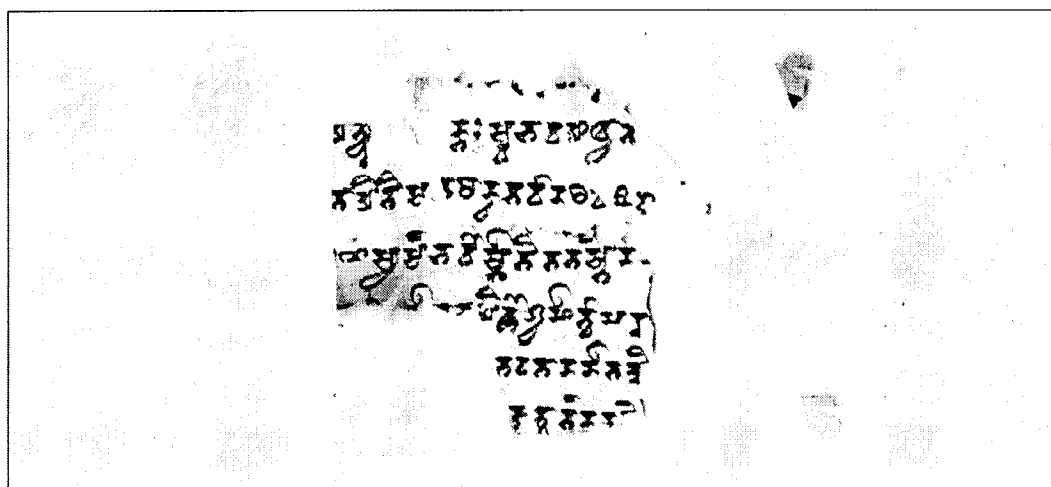


Fig. 5

SCRAP OF FRAGMENT NO. 3

1.] X ba mukhair-dīnaiḥ [
2.]ṣṭraṃ sa sva na roc [
3.] []i vadanasyākṣi [
4.] X X X X

FRAGMENT NO. 4

The dimensions of the fragment are 6.0 × 4.5 cm. The fragment is one-layer birch-bark one side of which contains nearly seven lines (see *fig. 5*). The writing is Indian

Brāhmī, type II, early Gupta. This is possibly an excerpt from a *sūtra*. In the fragment the term *svabhāva* is discussed.

TRANSLITERATION

1.] X X X X [
2.]m[i]tyuktaḥ svabhāvam-ākhyāt[am] [
3.]tam-iti sa tathā kṛta vānatha¹-v[i]ṣ[u]d[dh]ā [
4.]ṇasya saṃbhavo 'sīti tatas-tena X [
5.]X X X X X mito grhītvā parā [
6.]tava tā na nīta mi [
7.]kṛtvā taṃ na X []e [

Notes

1. S. F. Ol'denburg, "Otryvki kashgarskikh i sanskritskikh rukopisei iz sobraniia N. F. Petrovskogo" ("The excerpts from the Kashghar and Sanskrit manuscripts from the N. F. Petrovsky collection"), *Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdeleniia Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*, XI (1899), pp. 214—5, text 10, table X.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 215—8, text 12, table XIII.
3. The work belongs to N. M. Brovenko, a conservator at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies.
4. See K-939, fol. 1[32], mentioned in *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil 1, No. 15.

Illustrations

- Fig. 1.** Fragment No. 1 (*recto*), 16.5 × 7.0 cm.
Fig. 2. Fragment No. 1 (*verso*).
Fig. 3. Fragment No. 2, 11.0 × 6.0 cm.
Fig. 4. Fragment No. 3, 16.5 × 7.0 cm, and a scrap of fragment No. 3, 3.0 × 2.0 cm.
Fig. 5. Fragment No. 4, 6.0 × 4.5 cm.

¹ Instead of *vānātha* ?