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ON THE COVER:

A fragment of Saddharmapundarīka-sūtra from the Serindia Collection, Petrovsky Sub-Collection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS. SI 2098, fragment 1 *verso*. Safarali Shomakhmadov, Jens-Uwe Hartmann

Recent Insights into a Manuscript of Ornate Poetry from Toyoq: A new Fragment of Mātṛceṭa's *Varṇārhavarṇa*

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Abstracts: The article continues a series of publications of the Sanskrit manuscript fragments written in the Proto-Śāradā script, kept in the Serindia Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The authors introduce into scientific circulation a fragment of the Varņārhavarņa, the work of the famous Buddhist thinker and poet Mātrceța. The article provides the paleographic analysis of the manuscript fragment, as well as brief information about the author, his works, the Varņārhavarņa structure. The article provides transliteration and translation of the fragment.

Key words: Sanskrit manuscripts, Serindia, Turfan, Toyoq, Proto-Śāradā, Varņārhavarņa, stotra, Mātrceța.

Provenience

The German Turfan Collection in Berlin preserves nearly forty fragments of an unusual Sanskrit manuscript originally found at Toyoq in the Turfan oasis. Although it is written on paper, the usual material of the manuscripts found in Central Asia, the script, a distinct variety of the so-called Gilgit/Bamiyan Type II in the terminology of Lore Sander,¹ rather points to northern India as its origin. There, paper is rarely used; the standard material is either palm leaf or birch bark. Among the thousands of folios preserved in

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¹ SANDER 1968.

the famous Gilgit find in Northern Pakistan, there is only one birch-bark manuscript that contains also a number of paper folios.² The combination of script and material makes the manuscript from Toyoq something special and, as will be shown below, it greatly facilitates the attribution of further fragments! The surviving folios could be assigned to three famous works representing three different literary genres of Buddhist ornate poetry, Mātrceta's Varnārhavarna (a hymn on the Buddha), Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā (a collection of birth stories) and Kumāralāta's Kalpanāmandītikā Drstāntapankti (a collection of tales). In the German collection, the manuscript carries the modern number SHT 638, and it is described in the first of the catalogue volumes (SHT I: 286). According to this description, there are three fragments of the Varnārhavarna (VAV), fourteen of the Jātakamālā (Jm) and thirteen of the Kalpanāmandītikā (KalpM). Once it must have been a very large manuscript; for the VAV the folio numbers 13 and 26 are preserved, for the Jm the number 120, and for the KalpM the numbers 294, 297, 421 and 422. Eight very small fragments had remained unidentified, but later three of them (2-4) could be shown to also belong to the VAV.³ Since folio 13 contains the verses 16-31 of the second chapter of the VAV and folio 26 already verses 9-23 of chapter 8, it is obvious that at least one more text must have preceded the VAV. All the fragments are edited (cf. SHT I: 286 for the details); Weller's edition of the Jm folios and Lüders' of the KalpM are accompanied by facsimiles, and for the VAV Schlingloff published a separate facsimile edition.⁴

This was the state of affairs when in May 2021 a fragment of the VAV was found in the Serindia Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM, RAS). After a close examination, two facts became quickly clear. First, Shin'ichirō Hori had identified the fragment already in 2011,⁵ but not edited, and second, it clearly belonged to the same manuscript as the fragments of SHT 638. As mentioned above, the script is very distinct and combined with material, number of lines, number of akṣaras per line and presumable size of the folios it leaves no doubt that the fragments come from one and the same manuscript. This

² HARTMANN 2017 (Fs. HÖLLMANN): 290, note 3.

³ VAV(UH): 205–214; cf. SHT VI: 218.

⁴ WELLER 1955, Tafel I–III (only the verso sides); LÜDERS 1926, Tafel I–XII; SCHLINGLOFF 1968, no. 227–232. Very good colour photographs of all fragments are nowadays available online (http://turfan.bbaw.de/idp-berlin/).

⁵ Hori 2011: 6 (SI/P 152 1 = SI 3695).

was a surprise, but that was not yet all: The Petrovsky Collection also contains a fragment of the Jātakamālā and the Petrovsky and Krotkov Collection one each of the KalpM. Hori had not only identified the latter two (SI 2Kr/9 (4) = SI 2041/5 and SI 3695 = SI P/152 2), but also edited them.⁶ The Jātakamālā's fragment (*Kṣāntivādi-jātaka*) (SI 2998) was published in 2022.⁷

How is this distribution over three collections to be explained? The fragments now kept in Berlin were collected by the members of the second so-called Prussian Turfan expedition that visited the Turfan oasis from November 1904 until November 1905.⁸ It was headed by Albert von Le Coq, and it is known that on several occasions Le Coq gave manuscript fragments as a gift to researchers and officials from other countries. Therefore it is quite plausible that the fragments now in Russia were originally also found by Le Coq and his team and on fitting occasions handed over to the Russian consul in Ghulja Nikolay Krotkov and the Russian consul in Kashgar Nikolay Petrovsky.

Mātrceța and his works

As mentioned above, fragment SI 3695/1 is an excerpt from the work of the famous Buddhist thinker and poet Mātrceta, the *Varņārhavarņa*, "The Praise of the Praiseworthy" (another name is *Catuḥśataka* since it consists of nearly 400 verses). A late version of his biography says that, being a brahmin, Mātrceta came to the Nālandā monastery and won a philosophical debate over many learned monks. Nāgārjuna sent Āryadeva to dispute with Mātrceta, who was able to defeat the brahmin. The defeated Mātrceta converted to Buddhism. Information on Mātrceta's biography is very fragmentary and is contained in Chinese and Tibetan texts.⁹ The most complete description of the life of Mātrceta is presented in the "*History of Buddhism in India*" by Tāranātha (1575–634). Apparently, Tāranātha brought together several scattered traditions about the life of Mātrceta.¹⁰

⁶ Hori 2011: 12–15.

⁷ Shomakhmadov 2022.

⁸ For a brief introduction into the history of the German expeditions, their manuscript finds and the first decades of editorial work see SHT I: xi–xxvi.

⁹ VAV (UH): 12–22.

¹⁰ Tāranātha 1990: 130–136.

So, according to one of the legends, Mātrceta lived during the time of Vindusāra Maurya (3rd c. BC), the son of Candragupta Maurya, the dynasty founder and the father of Emperor Aśoka. Mātrceta lived in the city of Kusumapura in the monastery of Kusuma-alamkāra, where he preached the teachings of both the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna. Subsequently, Mātrceta erected a temple dedicated to Avalokiteśvara, where a thousand monks — followers of the Mahāyāna — lived.

Particularly, "The History of Buddhism in India" mentions names associated with Mātrceța. According to Tāranātha, Mātrceța is also known by the following names: brāhmaņa Durdharṣakāla, (Ārya)Śūra, Aśvaghoṣa, Mātrceța, Pitrceța, Durdharṣa, Dhārmika Subhūti. Maticitra, etc.

A number of facts speak against the assertion that Aśvaghoşa and Mātrceța are one person. First of all, from the analysis of the works of both authors, it becomes obvious that the audience for both authors was different. Aśvaghoṣa's writings were addressed to the educated elites of Indian society, not necessarily Buddhist. Mātrceța's poems were exclusively for Buddhist followers. Therefore, the sources of creativity of both poets differed: Aśvaghoṣa relied on various written monuments, of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist content. The basis of Mātrceța's works were exclusively Buddhist texts.¹¹

According to another version of the biography recorded in Tāranātha's text, Mātrceța was born into a brāhmaņa family called Saṃghaguhya, and his maternal grandfather was a lay Buddhist. Having received the name Kāla at birth, the young Mātrceța perfectly studied the Vedas, mantras, tantra and the art of debate. According to legend, the god Mahādeva was his mentor. For his devotion to his parents, he received the name 'Dedicated to mother / father' — *Mātr*- or *Pitrceța*.

So, the Brahmin Mātrceța defeated many Buddhist thinkers in the art of debate, turning them away from the Dharma and making them Non-Buddhists (*tīrthika*). However, Mātrceța's mother, wishing to guide her son on the Dharma Path, told him that victory cannot be considered absolute until the Magadha Buddhists are defeated. And Mātrceța went to Nālandā. His meeting with Āryadeva was mentioned earlier. After converting to Buddhism, according to the legend, Mātrceța saw the bodhisattva Tārā, who ordered him, in atonement for sins, when he was a brahmin, to create many stotras praising the Buddha.

¹¹ VAV (UH): 14.

So, among the works attributed to Mātrceta, the following are known:

Prasādapratibhodbhava (= Śatapañcāśatka = Adhyardhaśataka), Anaparāddha-stotra, Samyaksambuddhalakṣaṇa-stotra, Ekottarika-stava, Triratnamangala-stotra, Triratna-stotra, Sugatapañcatrimśat-stotra, Praṇidhānasaptati, Caturviparyakathā, Kaliyugaparikathā, Mahārājakaniṣkalekha, Āryatārā-stotra, Āryatārādevī-stotra-sarvārthasādhana-nāmastotrarāja, Mātrcetagīti and others.

And, of course, "Praise for the Praiseworthy". The Chinese monk Yijing (635-713) who went as a pilgrim to India highly appreciated the artistic and religious qualities of VAV.¹²

Varņārhavarņa's structure

The text of VAV consists of 12 chapters:

1. Aśakyastava ("The Praise to the Incomparable (He who is above all praises)"). The chapter is an introduction to the whole work, especially the introduction to the Second chapter. This chapter raises the important question of the futility of expressing aspects of the Buddha in the 'conventional (common) language'.

2. *Mūrdhābhişeka* ("The Head Sprinkling", i.e. "Concecration"). Although of the previous chapter about the impossibility of describing the qualities of the Buddha through human language, in this chapter Mātrceța praises the individual qualities of the Bhagavān through such epithets as *śramaņa*, *brāhmaņa*, *lokācārya*, *snātaka*, *nṛsimha*, *mahānāga*.

3. *Sarvajñātāsiddhi* ("The Fullness of Omniscience"). The chapter is devoted to describing both the bodily appearance of the Buddha and aspects of gaining Omniscience.

4. *Balavaiśaradyastava* ("The Praise to the Powers and the Confidences (Fearlessness)"). The chapter characterizes the ten Powers of the Tathāgata (*daśa tathāgatabalāni*) and four 'fearlessnesses' (*vaiśāradya*) as factors in the Omniscience manifestation.

5. *Vāgviśuddhi* ("The Speech Purification"). The chapter describes the properties of Buddha's speech, the concept of two truths — the relative truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and the absolute one (*paramārthasatya*), as well as idea of the Single Utterance (*ekasvara*).

¹² NANCE 2011: 14.

6. *Avivādastava* ("The Praise to the Indisputability [of the Teaching]"). The chapter substantiates the indisputability and truth of the Dharma; the topic of conducting a public dispute (*vivāda*) is touched upon.

7. *Brahmānuvāda* ("The Explanation of Brahma"). In this chapter, the Buddhist teaching is explained through the Brahmanical terms. Thus, the Buddha is described as Brahma and the Dharma — as Brahman.

8. Upakārastava ("The Praise of the [Buddha's] Blessings"). The chapter describes the benefits that the Buddha's Teaching brings to people — liberation from afflictions (*kleśas*), the achievement of Nirvāṇa, the practice of arhat, pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva, 'four analytical knowledge' (*catvāri pratisaṃvida*ħ).

9. *Apratikārastava* ("The Praise of the impossibility of repaying [the Buddha for his beneficence]"). The chapter says that it is impossible to thank the Buddha for his immeasurable deeds aimed at saving all sentient beings.

10. *Śarīraikadeśastava* ("The Praise of the parts of the [Buddha's] Body"). The chapter describes the iconic marks (special characteristics of the body's parts) of the Great Person (*Mahāpuruṣa*).

11. *Prabhūtastava* ("The Praise of the Great [Buddha's tongue]"). The chapter describes the Buddha's tongue; epithets for beautiful women are actively used. At the end of the chapter, a comparison is made with the goddess Sarasvatī.

12. *Bhavodvejaka* ("The Creation of Fear of Existence"). The chapter says that, despite the impeccability of the Buddha's teaching, after his Parinirvāṇa, the world is gradually moving towards the "Age of the Dharma's End".

The fragment we are studying contains the end of the 7th chapter (*Brahmānuvāda*) — stanzas 17–22, its colophon, and the beginning of the 8th chapter (*Upakārastava*) – stanzas 1–7.

The manuscript description

Description of the German fragments: SHT I: 286 (and SHT VI: 218 with the identification of the fragments 2-4 as belonging to one folio and covering the verses VAV 6.25–40); the manuscript contains VAV, Jm, KalpM.¹³

 $^{^{13}}$ For a survey of fragments in the German collection written in Proto-Śārada cf. HARTMANN 2017: 79–82.

Facsimiles: folio 421 (= dd) of the KalpM as plate 37 in SHT I.¹⁴

Although the folio number is lost, our fragment must belong to folio 25, since the text immediately precedes the verses preserved in SHT 638 b. This is a fragment from the left part of the folio, where the folio number 26 is preserved.¹⁵

Since the edition of VAV, one fragment has been published which confirms text reconstructed in 7.17c. This is Or.15007/189 (published by Klaus Wille in BLSF III: 59) which adds two vowels: recto d /// .ā .e + + /// for $(sugat)\bar{a}(v)e(n)[i]kaivais\bar{a}$. Together with SI 3696/1 r2 the gap is closed.

Symbols used in the transliteration

- + a lost glyph(s)
- [] glyph(s) whose reading(s) is (are) uncertain
- .. one illegible glyph
- . illegible part of a glyph
- /// beginning or end of a fragment when damaged
- \parallel the double danda punctuation mark

Transliteration of the fragment

SI 3695/1 recto: VAV 7.17b-colophon

- 1 /// ++..++++..+++++///
- 2 /// nāt* suga[t]. veņi + + + ///
- 3 /// [kt]. vi_ghasāśinah || ito [bā] + ///
- 4 /// sya\ti tam tasmim pūrvāpa + + ///
- 5 /// + ni yah śraddadhyāt tanmayānīti sa bā[h].e ///
- 6 /// + + s[t]i sambhavah || brahmān[u] .ā[d]o + + ///

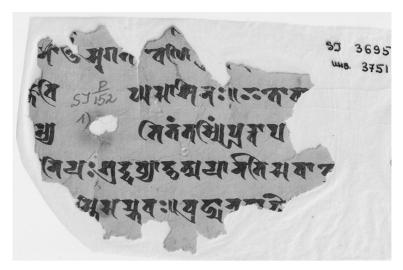
¹⁴ Folios 13, 26 and 31 (all VAV) in SCHLINGLOFF 1968: no. 227–232; facsimiles of all fragments available on http://turfan.bbaw.de/idp-berlin/.

¹⁵ See: SCHLINGLOFF 1968: no. 230.

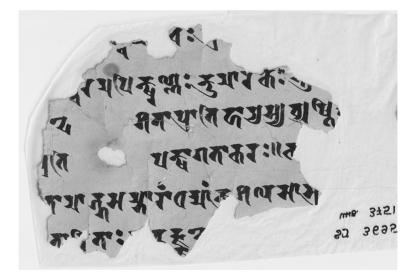
- r2: cf. VAV 7.17b-c sarvam tat tava śāsanāt | sugatāveņikaivaisā;
- r3: cf. VAV 7.18d–19a tvatsūktavighasāśinaķ || 18 ito bāhyeşu yat sūktam;
- r4: cf. VAV 7.20a-b kah śraddhāsyati tat tasmin pūrvāparaparāhatam |;
- r5: cf. VAV 7.21b–d sahakāraphalāni yaķ | śraddadhyāt tanmayānīti sa bāhyeşu subhāşitam ||;
- r6: cf. VAV 7.22d–colophon *tvadanyatrāsti saṃbhavaḥ* || 22 varņārhavarņe buddhastotre **brahmānuvādo** nāma saptamaḥ paricchedaḥ 7 ||; in this manuscript the colophon is abbreviated to the chapter title.

SI 3695/1 verso: VAV 8.1d-8c

- 1 /// + + .v. [y]. + [va]h.r. + + + + +
- 2 /// + .v.ram api kṣuṇṇaḥ kumārak.ḥ [st]r. + ///
- 3 /// de⊖śanāprātihāryasya vy. <u>s</u>ti .. ///
- 4 /// [pr]. ti⊖pakṣāgatākaraḥ || [k]. + + ///
- 5 /// [t]ā mārggasambhārām dharmām [k]. śalasā[sr]. ///
- 6 /// + [t] $\bar{a}[di]t\bar{a}h$ |+ [t]. rjja[no] + + + + + ///
- v1: cf. VAV 8.1d–2a svayambhuvah || 1 pranāśapathabāhulyāt;
- v2: cf. VAV 8.3a–c mahānāgair iva svairam api kşuņņaķ kumārakaiķ | strījanenāpi;
- v3: cf. VAV 8.4c-d *deśanāprātihāryasya vyuṣțir vyuṣțimatām vara* ||;
- v4: cf. VAV 8.5d–6a *-pratipakṣāgadākaraḥ* || 5 *kāmarāgādidagdhānām*; *-āgatā-* against the well-attested *-āgadā-* must be a scribal error;
- v5: cf. VAV 8.7a-b *bruvatā mārgasambhārān dharmān kuśalasāsravān* |; here (*mārgga*-) and in the next line (*samtarjjano*-) the manuscript shows gemination, a rather typical phenomenon in later manuscripts from the northwest of the subcontinent.
- v6: cf. VAV 8.8b-c sāmānyākāratāditāh | samtarjanolmukānīva.



Pl. 1. A fragment of Varņārhavarņa from the Serindia Collection, Petrovsky Sub-Collection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS. SI 3695/1 recto



Pl. 2. A fragment of Varņārhavarņa from the Serindia Collection, Petrovsky Sub-Collection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS. SI 3695/1 verso

Translation

7. Brahmānuvāda

17. Everything that is beautifully spoken in the world is said in your **Teaching**; [ability to] speak beautifully is **Sugata**'s exceptional ability.

18. But all the Dharma scholars who, apart from you, are seen in an impeccable practice of speech, are **devourers of the remnants of what** [you] said beautifully.

19. The 'beautiful speech' of **those who are outside** [Dharma] is also [similar to the Buddha's words], as are the footprints of the woodworm [similar to] writing; their nature is unequal, as are gold and iron.

20. How **can one believe this** ['beautiful speech'] **of that** [non-Buddhist teaching], contradictory **before** and after? [This is also ridiculous] as if the $Gos\bar{i}rsa$ sandalwood tree was growing in the Castor-oil plant.¹⁶

21. Whoever **believes** that 'beautiful speech' can come from **external** [teachings] is [like] **those who** believe that ripe mango **fruits** grow on the Neem tree.¹⁷

22. There is no other 'birth place' for the pearls of 'beautiful speech' except for you. As well as for sandalwood, there is **no other place of growth** than the Malaya Mountains.¹⁸

8. Upakārastava

1. [The Path] by which 'Rhinoceroses'¹⁹ sometimes walk at some point in a mighty, silent, carefree, **self-arising** step,

¹⁶ Gośīrṣa Sandalwood has a great value in the Indian religious tradition. Castor-oil (*Ricinus*) is poisonous to living beings.

¹⁷ Fruits of Neem tree is bitter and its leaves are chewed at funeral ceremonies.

¹⁸ The Malaya Mountains are a range of mountains, mentioned in Indian sacred texts.

¹⁹ Here the one of two types of Pratyekabuddhas are meant. According to Vasubandhu, the author of *Abhidharmakośa* (5 c.), Pratyekabuddhas are of two kinds: 'those who live in communities' (*varga-cāriṇaḥ*), and 'rhinoceros-like' ones (*khadgaviṣāna-kalpaḥ*), i.e. living alone, not needing others (AKB: 181–183). According to Yasomitra, the author of *Sphutārthā Abhidharmakoṣavyākhyā*, the varga-cāriṇāḥ are the first śravakas to attain arhatship on their own as early as the Buddha's time (SAKV: 337). According to another point of view, 'Those who live in communities' cannot be included in the category of the first śravakas. These are 'ordinary people' (*prthag-jana*) who in previous births realized the dharmas leading to the four stages of the 'deep penetration' (*nirvedhabhāgīya*), and in the present birth, following their own path, have reached Awakening. The status of 'Those who are like a rhinoceros' is acquired within one hundred Great Kalpas through the special practice of achieving the conditions of Awakening (*bodhisambhāra*). The conditions are as follows: moral behavior (*śīla*), the practice of concentration of consciousness (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*). Just like

2. this path to Nirvāṇa, which is so extremely difficult to achieve because of the many paths [leading] to the loss of [achieved progress in the religious practice],²⁰ you turned into the Great Royal Path.

3. [The path is so easy] that the 'crown princes'- $kum\bar{a}rak\bar{a}h^{21}$ walk leisurely along it like the 'Great Nāgas',²² even women whose strength and insight are two fingers wider;

4. it results from the **miracle** of your **Teaching**, which has immeasurable power (and) belongs only to the Buddha, the best of those who have **beauty**.

5. For those bitten by various venomous vipers, you are the source of **specific and general antidotes**.

6. For those who are burned by the **passion of desire**, etc., you offer a cure for this disease by proclaiming the dharmas that begin with the meditation on impurity²³.

²¹ $Kum\bar{a}ra(ka)$ ('crown prince') is the bodhisattva who will become a Buddha because of the Buddha is the *Dharmarāja* ('King of Dharma').

²² 'Great Nāgas' (mahānāgāh) is the epithet of great śravakas (MV: 82), i.e. arhats.

²³ Navāsubhāh samjňā — 'nine realizations of the abominable'. This practice of yogic concentration is necessary for ascetics, whose main opponent is their own passionate attraction to color, form, touch, vanity. So, someone who is seduced by color should contemplate figuratively or, in reality (in a cemetery, in places of cremation, blue or blackened corpses; those who are attracted by the form should meditate on a corpse whose integrity is broken — cut into pieces, gnawed by animals, etc.; those subject to a passion for pleasant tactile sensations should observe corpses at various stages of decomposition — infested with worms, overflowing with pus, etc. The contemplation of any corpse contributes to getting rid of vanity. With figurative (only in one's own mind) contemplation of repulsive objects, one should subject to mental 'corpse decomposition' first a part of one's body, then the whole body; after that, the 'procedure' should be repeated on third-party objects, expanding the area of contemplation to the 'sea of skeletons'. There are three stages of cultivation in this practice: 'beginner', 'having mastered the skill', 'having outstanding mental concentration' (AKB: 337; Mppu: 1314–1316, 1320–1326).

The Mahāyāna 'innovation' consists in the observation that, unlike the śravakas, whom, according to *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa* (Mppu), the practice of contemplation of repulsive objects should turn away from color, form, etc. and bring them closer to attaining Nirvāņa, bodhisattvas comprehend this type of concentration in order to teach it to other people. In addition, the concept of *śūnyavāda* prescribes to treat the type of decaying corpses

real rhinos live alone, the Khadgavişāna-kalpāh avoid other people, do not preach the Dharma, because they are afraid to be distracted from the state of deep concentration of mind.

²⁰ According to Vasubandhu, it is necessary to distinguish three kinds of falling away: the loss of what was gained; the loss of the unacquired and the loss of the object of pleasure. The first type of loss occurs when an arhat falls away from previously gained spiritual or good qualities. The second is if he does not gain any of those good qualities that should be gained. The third, losing the object of pleasure — if the arhat can no longer realize the previously gained qualities (AKB: 345–346).

7. By speaking of the good and (at the same time) impure dharmas²⁴ that make up the **Path**, you have created an inner and mutual distinction of things.

Abbreviations

AKB: Vasubandhu. Abhidharmakoşabhāşyam. Ed. by P. Pradhan 1975.

- BLSF III: Karashima, Seishi, Jundo Nagashima, Klaus Wille 2015: *The British Library Sanskrit Fragments III*, Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University.
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neutrally, without a feeling of disgust and the color of a decaying corpse (a blue-colored corpse, yellow, decaying sludge, red blood and muscles, white bones of the skeleton) to contemplate only as colors — blue, yellow, red, white. (Mppu: 1327–1328).

²⁴ It means good dharmas but 'with afflictions' (*sāsrava*) and 'causal' (*saṃskṛta*), for example, the dharma of the 'Truth of Path' (*mārgasatya*) (AKB: 3).

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