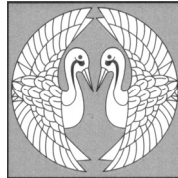


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SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPTS OF THE SERINDIA COLLECTION (IOM RAS) AS SOURCES ON THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN KHOTAN

Abstract. This paper provides the information about the study of the Sanskrit manuscript fragments kept in the Serindia Collection of the IOM RAS. Among the Buddhist handwritten rarities discovered in the 19th—20th centuries in so-called Serindia Sanskrit manuscripts are of particular importance. Sanskrit originals of Buddhist texts preserved in Central Asian manuscripts represent what little remained of the vast Sanskrit written heritage of ancient and early medieval Buddhism. Sanskrit manuscripts are highly valuable historical sources for studying the history of spread of Buddhism throughout Central Asia and the process of reception of the Indo-Buddhist culture outside India in the first millennium AD. The article focuses on the study of Sanskrit manuscripts, which circulated in Khotan. Among the manuscripts, which constitute the Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection, written monuments related to Khotan are represented most extensively both in terms of quantity of fragments and volume of preserved texts. A comprehensive study of this part of the Serindia Collection made it possible to classify Sanskrit manuscripts in relation to external characteristics and repertoire, to outline chronologically traceable stages of spread of Buddhism in Khotan and to work out the periodization of the history of Buddhism in this Central Asian subregion.

Keywords: Buddhism, Khotan, manuscripts, Sanskrit, Serindia Collection, IOM, RAS

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Introduction

The study of the history of Buddhism in Central Asia relies on written sources, which are based on canonical Buddhist texts in Sanskrit. As Buddhism had moved beyond the borders of its historical homeland, subsequent aspects of its existence were reflected in Central Asian written monuments, which can be used to trace the further history of the spread and functioning of Buddhism outside India. In this regard, of fundamental importance are Sanskrit manuscripts found in a vast region of the eastern part of Central Asia, which formed the contact area of cross-cultural interactions between the great civilizations of the East, including India and China. In scientific literature this contact area is also known as Serindia [1], covering the territory of oases of the Tarim Basin (present-day China's Xinjiang region) [2]. Through Serindia ran the branches of the Great Silk Road, along which various oasis city-states of the Tarim Basin, primarily Khotan, Turfan, Kucha, formed as the major Buddhist centres in the first millennium AD. It is in these territories that Buddhist handwritten rarities in multiple languages were discovered in the late 19th — early 20th centuries.

Central Asian Buddhist written monuments in Sanskrit stored in St. Petersburg within the Serindia Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM RAS; formerly the Asiatic Museum) present an exceptionally important material for studying the history of Buddhism and the process of its spread through Central Asia to the Far East. The St. Petersburg Serindia Collection of Sanskrit manuscripts containing primary sources, original Buddhist texts, offer a valuable resource for studying the formation and development of Buddhist thought outside India, issues of Buddhist religious philosophy, as well as various aspects of the historical and cultural representation of Buddhism in Central Asia.

The Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection contains over 700 storage units, among which there are numerous fragments of Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts from Khotan, Turfan, Kucha and other Serindian subregions. In terms of breadth of the preserved textual repertoire, it should be noted, that out of the whole variety of Buddhist texts the Serindia Collection has all the main gen-

res of Buddhist literature belonging to the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions. Along with the manuscripts containing widespread Mahayana texts of *Prajñāpāramitā* and the Lotus Sutra, there can be found manuscript fragments of *Vinaya*, *Abhidharma*, *avadānas* and *jātakas*, as well as numerous texts containing *dhāraṇīs*, which were very popular among Buddhists of Serindia. At the same time, speaking about quantity of fragments and volume of preserved texts, the most extensive part among the Sanskrit written monuments of the Serindia Collection is constituted by the manuscripts found in the southern oases of the Tarim Basin with its major centre in Khotan (more than 300 units of storage).

In Russia and Europe, a qualitative shift in the scientific research of Buddhism took place at the end of the 19th century, when due to discovery of Central Asian Buddhist written monuments it became possible to commence a comprehensive study of the ancient and early medieval history of Buddhism based on Sanskrit primary sources. It is noteworthy, that it was Russian researchers, who inspired the strong rise of expeditionary and archaeological activities of scientists from all over the world, aimed at studying the history and culture of Serindia. At the International Congress of Orientalists held in Rome in 1899 academicians Vasilii V. Radlov (1837—1918) and Sergei F. Oldenburg (1863—1934) reported on the written monuments and art objects found in Turfan by the expedition of Dmitrii A. Klementz (1848—1914) [3]. These data gained such a high interest in academic community, that special committees for the archaeological study of Central Asia were established in some European countries. During the active work of Russian and foreign expeditions, plenty of monuments of the pre-Muslim culture of Central Asia were discovered and extensive collections of manuscripts in different scripts and languages were obtained and transferred to various depositories around the world.

The formation of the St. Petersburg Serindia Collection in general and its Sanskrit part in particular never would have happened without expeditions to Central Asia, organized by the Russian Committee for Middle and East Asia Exploration, namely, the expedition of Mikhail M. Berezovskii (1848—1912) to Kucha (1905—1907), two expeditions to Turfan and Dunhuang (1909—1910 and 1914—1915) headed by Sergei F. Oldenburg and two expeditions of Sergei E. Malov (1880—1957) to various parts of Serindia, including Khotan (1909—1911 and 1913—1915). Besides the finds made during expeditions, many Sanskrit manuscripts were acquired by the Russian officials in Central Asia, specifically by Consul General in Kashgar Nikolai

F. Petrovskii (1837—1908), Consul General in Urumqi Nikolai N. Krotkov (1869—1919), secretary of the Consulate in Kashgar Mikhail I. Lavrov (1877—1934). It stands to mention, that N. F. Petrovskii made an essential contribution in assembling the St. Petersburg collection of Sanskrit written monuments from Serindia. While serving in Central Asia (since 867), N. F. Petrovskii was engaged in collecting artefacts, manuscripts and art objects. In every possible way he fostered the development of scientific research of Serindia and initiated a wide study of the written heritage of India in Central Asia. N. F. Petrovskii actively purchased from local traders and treasure hunters manuscripts, predominately, related to Khotan. At present, among the manuscripts, which constitute the Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection, the Petrovskii subcollection [4] is the most extensive and representative.

The discovery of Central Asian written monuments gave researchers a new set of sources on the history of Buddhism and required its introduction into scientific circulation. From the date of receipt of the discovered manuscripts to the Asiatic Museum, the first publisher of Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts Sergei F. Oldenburg conducted identification of scripts and texts as well as palaeographic and codicological investigation of manuscripts, preparing them for publication. After a long break in the 1950s the research and introduction to scientific use of Sanskrit manuscripts were resumed by Vladimir S. Vorobiov-Desiatovskii (1927—1956), and somewhat later continued by Margarita I. Vorobiova-Desiatovskaia (1933—2021), Grigorii M. Bongard-Levin (1933—2008), Eduard N. Tiomkin (1928—2019). Since 2010s the study of Sanskrit manuscripts of the Serindia Collection has been continued by Safarali H. Shomakhmadov (born in 1976) [5]. Thanks to the work of several generations of scientists, many Sanskrit written monuments were described in terms of palaeography and codicology, identified with Buddhist texts, and introduced into science. Nevertheless, despite the impressive amount of research done and the solid contribution of Russian scholars to the study of Buddhist written heritage, the work with the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Serindia Collection has not been completed yet. A bulk of manuscripts remains unexplored and unknown even in the professional community of specialists in the study of Indian and Central Asian written heritage. The study of the St. Petersburg collection of Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts is crucial, since they contain Sanskrit primary sources and may offer additional or even completely new data for studying the original Sanskrit canon and reconstructing the religious picture in Serindia.

Sanskrit Manuscripts from Khotan as Sources on the History of Buddhism

The extension of Buddhism beyond the boundaries of India at the end of the first millennium BC and its rapid spread over vast territories of Central Asia can be determined by several factors. Firstly, under conditions of a benevolent attitude towards Buddhism by the Indian ruling elite and due to intensive support for Buddhist missionary work, starting from the reign of King Ashoka

(268—232 BC) of the Mauryan Empire (322—187 BC), a powerful stream of learned monk-preachers poured into regions located at a considerable distance from the Buddhist heartland in India. Secondly, the intimate relationship between Buddhist communities and merchants, as well as the formation and functioning of the trade routes of the Great Silk Road, provided favourable con-

ditions for the transmission of Buddhism to various Central Asian regions and created a mechanism for supplying the emerging Buddhist centres with the necessary religious paraphernalia [6], most notably, with manuscripts.

In the early period, the rapid spread of Buddhism was facilitated by the actions of King Ashoka, in whose reign missions were deputed to different countries for the propagation of Buddhism. The Buddhist mission to Kashmir and Gandhara was especially successful, ensuring the long-term presence and dominance of Buddhism in North and Northwest India. It is likely, that these territories were the cradle of the Buddhist Sanskrit written tradition, since the early history of the spread of Buddhism can be traced through Sanskrit manuscripts copied in Kashmir. In that same region developed and centred the Hinayana school of Sarvastivada, that left its own version of Canon of scriptures in Sanskrit including *Abhidharma-piṭaka* collection. This school made the largest contribution to the compilation of the philosophical treatises of Abhidharma, and Kashmir was long to be a stronghold of Buddhism and one of the major centres of early Buddhist philosophical thought. Sarvastivada was also very influential school in terms of its spread outside India: traces of its presence, above all, Sanskrit fragments of its Canon, were found in various parts of Central Asia including oasis city-states of the Tarim Basin.

The spread of Buddhism after the death of King Ashoka continued by the succeeding rulers and polities, among which the Kushans, undoubtedly, played a key role in the diffusion of Buddhism beyond South Asia. Under the patronage of the Kushan rulers, and especially during the glorious reign of the famous sovereign Kanishka (AD 78—101), Buddhism experienced an era of flourishing. Being at the zenith of its power in the second century the Kushan Empire was stretching from Central Asia across the territory of Afghanistan and Northwest India to the Gangetic plains of Northeast India. Similar to King Ashoka the Kushans supported missionary work and the expansion of Buddhism from India to the north of their possessions in Bactria. The long-distance spread of Buddhism was facilitated during the Kushan period by the development of extensive and integrated trade routes connecting the oasis city-states of the Tarim Basin with South Asia.

Under the Kushans Kashmir as well as Gandhara consolidated its position as main Buddhist strongholds and leading centres for Buddhist learning, where monastic schools and scriptoria for copying texts in Prakrit [7] and Sanskrit began functioning. The proximity of the southern oases of the Tarim Basin to Northwest India and Kashmir resulted in the powerful diffusion of the influence of Indo-Buddhist culture in Serindia by the travels of Buddhist missionaries and Indian immigrants through land routes into southern Serindian subregions including Khotan. Armed with the necessary manuscripts and other religious attributes Buddhist monk-preachers from Gandhara and Kashmir travelled with caravans along the trading networks, spreading Buddhist ideas. This led to penetration of Buddhism and the first manuscripts into Khotan in the first centuries AD.

Thus, **the first stage in the history of Buddhism in Khotan**, its genealogy and distribution in this subregion, proceeded during the era of the Kushan Empire, covering the 1st—3rd centuries AD. This period is characterized by active borrowing of the Indo-Buddhist written heritage, namely, palm leaf and birch-bark manuscripts containing texts in Prakrit and Sanskrit from Gandhara and Kashmir. The emergence of manuscripts written in traditional Indian materials in Khotan was caused by the import of Buddhist manuscripts into the oasis cities of the Tarim Basin directly from India [8].

Sanskrit manuscripts provide valuable information not only about the history of Buddhism in Central Asia, but also about the way, how the achievements of Indian culture were perceived in the new ethnocultural environment and resulted in the formation of the Serindian manuscript tradition. In this regard, palaeographic analysis of manuscripts is particularly important, since palaeography is the main criterion for determining the dating and localization of manuscripts copied in Brāhmī writing system. Manuscripts discovered over a vast area stretching from the Gilgit-Bamiyan region (the border territories of the present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) to the eastern edge of the Tarim Basin, are written in clearly distinguishable graphic variations of Brāhmī, which differ depending on place and time of copying. The palaeography of Brāhmī manuscripts was extensively studied by German specialists, who prepared an approximate description of types and subtypes of script attested in the manuscripts stored in the Berlin Turfan Collection. The study of the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Serindia Collection is based on the classification of Central Asian Brāhmī types developed by L. Sander, which we believe best reflects the process of reception of Indo-Buddhist culture in Serindia [9].

Along with the Prakrit texts written in Kharoshthi script [10] on birch bark (1st—2nd centuries AD) [11], the earliest Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts copied in Kushan Brāhmī on palm leaf (2nd—3rd centuries AD) reflect the first stage of the history of Buddhism in Khotan historically attested by written monuments. It is worth noting, that the coexistence of manuscript fragments in Prakrit and Sanskrit around approximately the same time probably indicates a transitional period, when Prakrits and Kharoshthi script were being gradually replaced by Sanskrit and Brāhmī [12].

The spread of Buddhism in Serindia apparently started with the fact that the earliest Sanskrit written monuments which came into circulation in Khotan and other Serindian subregions were manuscripts containing abhidharmic texts copied in Northwest India and Kashmir. Although the Sanskrit Abhidharma was almost completely lost, some manuscript fragments of the abhidharmic texts written in Kushan Brāhmī have been preserved in various collections all over the world, including the Serindia Collection. The earliest surviving Sanskrit manuscripts are extremely rare, preserved in a very fragmented and scattered condition, and for the most part do not provide complete context.

Among the identified palm leaf manuscripts recorded in Kushan Brāhmī, the Sanskrit part of the Serin-

dia Collection contains the earliest fragments of the Sarvastivada's Abhidharma (call Nos. SI 1424—1425). It is noteworthy, that these fragments refer to the same manuscript as the fragments kept in the Berlin Turfan Collection. In scientific literature this manuscript is called the "Spitzer Manuscript" [13]. It was discovered by the expedition of A. von Le Coq in the north of Serindia, in a cave temple in the vicinity of Kyzyl. Probably, the same applies to Petersburg fragments of this manuscript, which belong to the Berezovskii subcollection and were found in the northern part of Serindia during the expedition of Mikhail M. Berezovskii to Kucha. Some palm leaf fragments apparently with a similar repertoire written in Kushan Brāhmī, are kept within the Petrovskii subcollection, which, as already mentioned, consists of findings predominately related to Khotan, therefore, the south of Serindia can also be considered as an area of circulation of the earliest Sanskrit palm leaf manuscripts. The Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection includes about 20 storage units presenting palm leaf fragments, mostly of small size with only a few Brāhmī *akṣaras* (graphemic symbols) on them. Such fragments with partially survived writings allow to determine the type of script and reveal an approximate dating, but do not provide enough context to identify them with the certain texts of the canonical Abhidharma collection.

The basic form of Indian and Central Asian Buddhist manuscripts is pothi [14], which is associated with the traditional Indian writing material, since the prototype of the pothi format was the rectangular shape of palm leaves. Its essence lies in the fact, that the oblong leaves of a finished manuscript were stacked on top of each other, fastened through holes for binding, which were usually made closer to the left edge of a pothi-folio, and for better preservation they could be clamped between two boards (wooden covers). Pothi remained the classic form of Serindian manuscripts even after the transition to paper as the main writing material. As for the writing implements, utensils of the scribes included calamus (pen made of tamarisk twigs sharpened at one end) and black iron gall ink, which seem to be monotypic regarding Central Asian manuscripts of the further stages.

The description of the codicological features of Sanskrit manuscripts on palm leaves is somewhat complicated by the fragmentation of storage units: only two relatively complete leaves with pagination have been preserved in the Serindia Collection (SI 1424 (*fig. 1*), SI 1425). The approximate size of a complete pothi-folio measures 4.0 × 20.0 cm. The pagination was put down on the left margin of the recto (front) side of the folio, and it is worth mentioning, that all manuscripts of subsequent periods found in Khotan were paginated the same way. As far as can be judged from the Serindia Collection, manuscripts dated to Kushan period do not have graphically outlined margins, and holes for binding were not decoratively highlighted. The guidelines for margins and lines as well as decorative circles to mark binding holes became typical at later stages in the development of manuscript tradition in Khotan.

As can be seen from the above, among the manuscripts of the Serindia Collection, reflecting the initial

period of the history of Buddhism in Serindia, along with birch bark fragments in Prakrit, there have been preserved the earliest Sanskrit palm leaf fragments written in Kushan Brāhmī. Judging by contents of these scraps of Sanskrit manuscripts, it is acceptable to assume that the dominant Buddhist school, extending its influence over Serindia at that time, was Sarvastivada, the tradition of which enjoyed much authority in the domains of the Kushan Empire.

The second stage in the history of Buddhism in Khotan is associated with the period of independence of the oasis city-states of Serindia in the 3rd—6th centuries, when Buddhism gradually becomes the dominant religion in many subregions of Central Asia, promoting the formation of local manuscript traditions and marking the beginning of the ideological dominance of Mahayana Buddhism outside India, particularly, in the southern oases of the Tarim Basin.

Due to the natural and climatic features of Serindia, being an extensive area of sandy steppes with city-states isolated from each other by desert, its unification under a single force and control over this entire region by the power of any single state were scarcely possible. Oasis city-states of the Tarim Basin were mostly well-defended independent or semi-independent possessions. Any significant increase in the influence of a particular state turned into an attempt in gaining control over neighbouring territories. Regarding the southern branch of the Silk Road, the states, that dictated their will to weaker neighbours, were Kroraina (also known as Loulan) [15] and Khotan, which both had very close ties with Northwest India and Kashmir and were strongly influenced by Indo-Buddhist culture.

At this stage, Buddhism became the state religion and dominant ideology in the south of Serindia. This can be confirmed by the Prakrit documents on wood, leather and paper found in Kroraina [16]. These findings do not give accurate data on the circumstances of the spread of Buddhism; however, the texts indicate, that in the 3rd century AD Buddhism took deep roots in Kroraina [17], and the same also seems to be true for neighbouring Khotan. After the 4th century AD Kroraina as an independent state and trading centre fell into decay, which was probably caused by the destruction of the irrigation scheme, and some of its territories passed under the control of Khotan.

Strategically important location on the Southern Silk Road made Khotan one of the most powerful and wealthy Buddhist city-states and cultural centres, being famed far beyond Serindia. In the first millennium AD Khotan played an essential role in maintaining and transmitting Indo-Buddhist culture throughout Serindia. Thanks to close connections with Kashmir and Gandhara Khotan became a kind of cultural bridge serving for diffusion of Buddhist doctrines through textual transmission. Distribution of manuscripts to Khotan and other Serindian subregions facilitated the introduction of Indian language and writing system in Serindia, having much impact on the preservation and further development of Indo-Buddhist cultural heritage.

The earliest known manuscripts of the period of Khotan's existence as an independent Buddhist state con-

tinued to be copied on birch bark and palm leaves and imported to the Serindian centres of the Buddhist culture from India. According to palaeography, these manuscripts written in Indian (or Northwestern) Gupta type of Brāhmī script date to the 4th—5th centuries. Among the rarest specimens of palm leaf manuscripts in the Serindia Collection, Indian Gupta type of writing was revealed in fragments containing texts of Abhidharma (SI 1426–27). The few examples of the identified birch bark manuscripts written in that same script are presented by the fragments from Vinaya (SI 1943 (*fig. 2*)) and Abhidharma (SI 6583) of the Sarvastivada tradition.

According to L. Sander's classification, Central Asian types of Brāhmī script began to come into use by the middle of the first millennium AD [18]. Brāhmī script varieties revealed in manuscripts found in Serindia can be divided into three broad groups, namely, Indian Brāhmī [19], and developed on its basis two Central Asian branches — North Turkestan and South Turkestan Brāhmī. Both Central Asian groups are divided into various subtypes, however the very first Central Asian type of Brāhmī attested in Serindian manuscripts, the so-called Turkestan Gupta, developed before the division into North Turkestan (Tocharian) and South Turkestan (Khotanese) subtypes, though already having some of their features. There are about 60 storage units, presenting birch bark fragments in Turkestan Gupta, which are stored mainly in the subcollection of N. F. Petrovskii. The use of the Central Asian subtype of Brāhmī in Sanskrit manuscripts on Indian birch bark in the 4th—5th centuries, testifies the importation of not only manuscripts, but also the raw material from India to Khotan and the other Serindian city-states [20].

Subsequently from Turkestan Gupta two separate Central Asian Brāhmī varieties were derived: (i) Early Turkestan Brāhmī, type 1 (the “prototype” of North Turkestan Brāhmī subtypes) [21]; (ii) Early Turkestan Brāhmī, type 2, which gave rise to the formation of the South Turkestan group of Brāhmī subtypes. The South Turkestan branch, being developed in the southern oases of the Tarim Basin, served for writing the local language (Khotanese-Saka) as well as Sanskrit and, according to the classification of L. Sander, it chronologically included the following types: Early Turkestan Brāhmī (type 2, *ca.* 5th—6th centuries), Early South Turkestan Brāhmī (*ca.* 7th—8th cc.); South Turkestan Brāhmī (*ca.* 8th—19th centuries); Late South Turkestan Brāhmī (*ca.* 9th—10th centuries).

Within that same timeframe (3rd—6th centuries) papermaking in Serindia began to develop rapidly, and the stage was thus set for a transition from importing manuscripts and writing materials from India to manufacturing of Central Asian paper and mass production of manuscripts directly on the territory of the oases of the Tarim Basin. The use of paper in Serindia increased the number of manuscripts in circulation, greatly simplifying the process of copying and distribution of Buddhist texts. As the chief writing material in Khotan paper came into active use around the 5th century, gradually replacing wood and traditional Indian materials.

Paper manuscripts copied in the South Turkestan Brāhmī subtypes on paper constitute the largest segment of the Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection. Among them the earliest examples, relating to the period of independent Khotan, are presented by the Sanskrit manuscripts written in aforementioned Early Turkestan Brāhmī (type 2), thus dating palaeographically to the 5th—6th centuries.

The transformation of Brāhmī writing and the introduction of paper as the chief medium for copying texts caused the design of the primary features of the local manuscript tradition. Manuscripts on paper retained traditional patterns of pothi format, namely, the rectangular shape of folios, imitating palm leaves, the holes for binding closer to the left edge, numeration of folios on the left margin of the recto pages [22], protection by covers made of wood. The innovations appeared in paper manuscripts of Southern Silk Route included guidelines (drawing of lines and delineation of margins), which seemed not typical for early palm leaf and birch bark manuscripts. Paper manuscripts copied in the southern oases possess a decorative circle [23] to mark a hole for binding. Judging from the Serindia Collection, Sanskrit manuscripts of this period already had coloured miniatures drawn in circles (SI 2019 (*fig. 3*)) or empty double decorative circles left for miniatures (SI 3687 (*fig. 4*)). Perhaps, the flourishing of manuscript culture in Serindia resulted in the increasing cult of sacred books, so that coloured miniatures began to be employed as an essential element of the lavishly performed manuscripts, which were ordered by rich families to gain religious merits.

During the period of use of Early Turkestan Brāhmī subtype, the standard size of manuscripts measured about 10 cm in height and from 25 to 35 cm in width, as exemplified in the Serindia Collection by the Sanskrit manuscripts of *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* [24] (SI 3037/2) and the Lotus Sutra (SI 3030, SI 3330). Somewhat less common are folios of a larger format (20.0×60.0 cm): *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (SI 3684, SI 3687). At this stage in the development of Serindian manuscript culture the following feature of the production of handwritten materials is of particular codicological interest: a gluing strip preserved on some fragments. Pothi manuscripts of a large size were prepared by gluing procedure, so at first folios of the required size were made by gluing from several parts, and then texts were copied. Such procedure was somehow typical for producing manuscripts intended to include a large amount of text, for instance various sutras of Mahayana. The Serindia Collection shows some examples of folios with gluing strips being visible in the central part (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*: SI 2017, SI 2019) as well as individual fragments, which were separated after the glue dried up (*Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*: SI 3045, SI 4646). Manuscripts of a large format, produced by gluing from several pieces, could be a necessary measure associated with a shortage of writing material and still insufficiently developed technology of paper manufacturing in Serindia in the middle of the first millennium. Besides this codicological detail, manuscripts of this period were usually

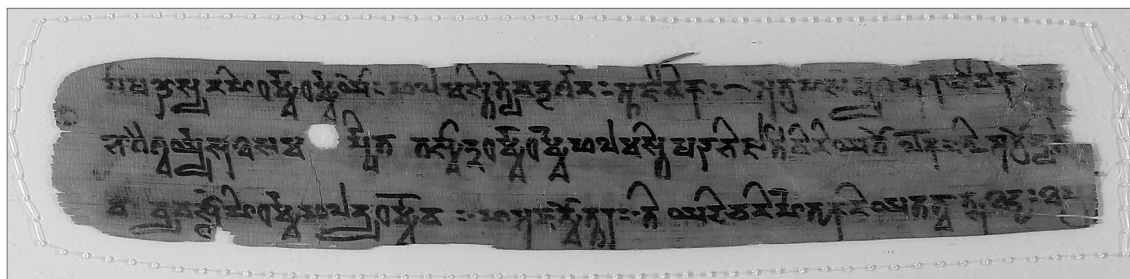


Fig. 1

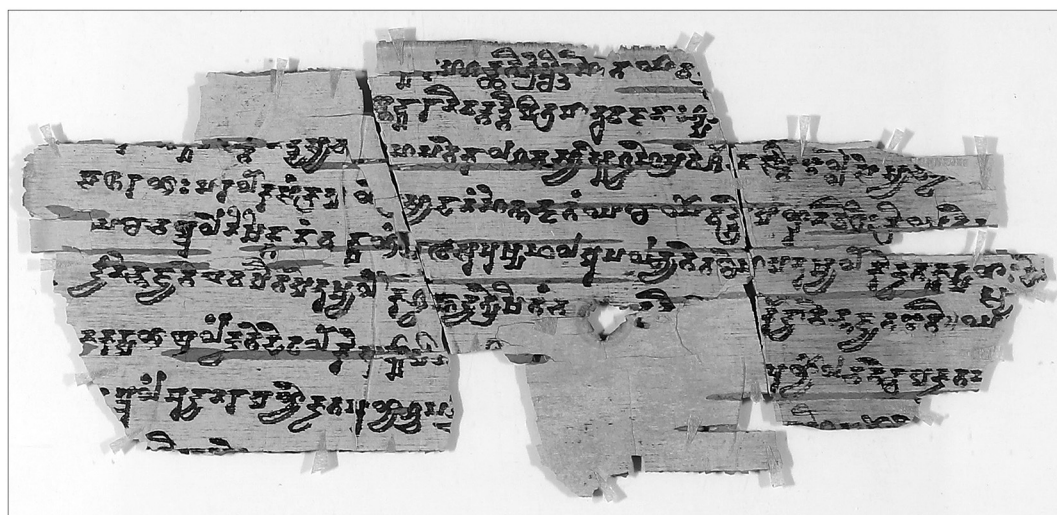


Fig. 2

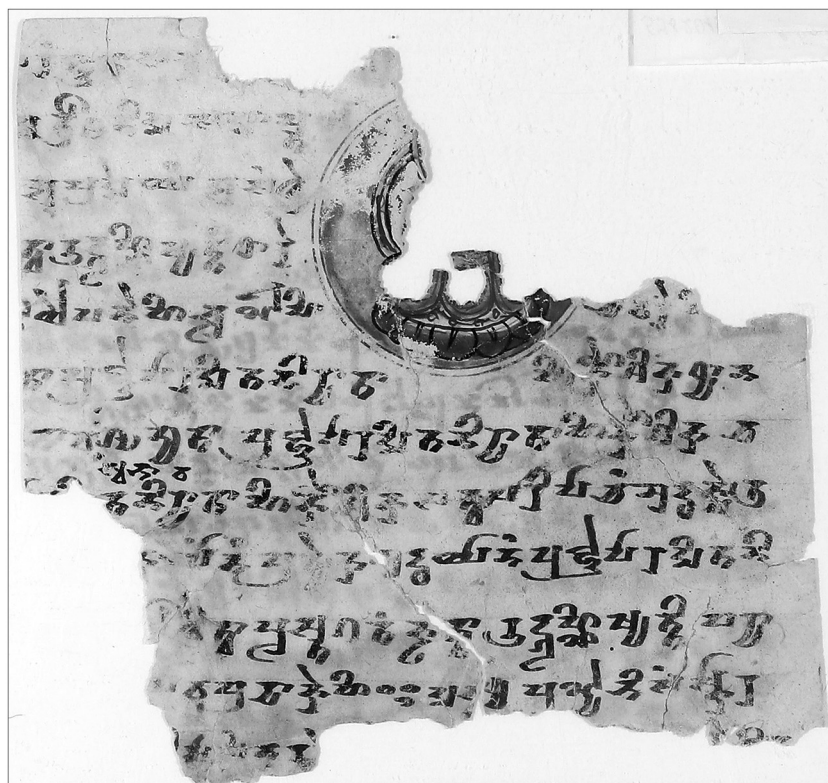


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

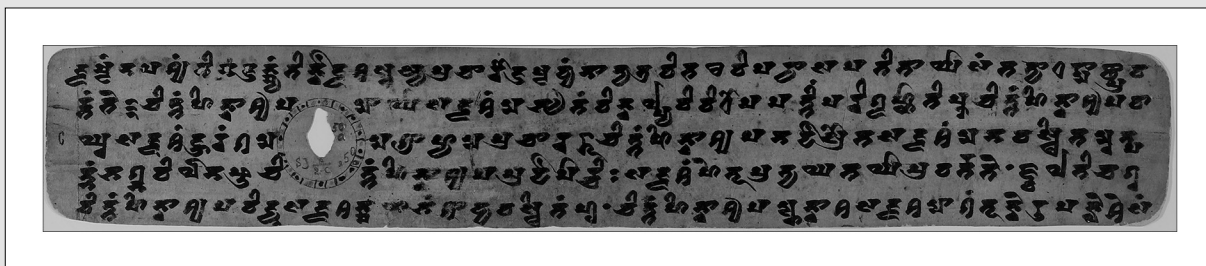


Fig. 5

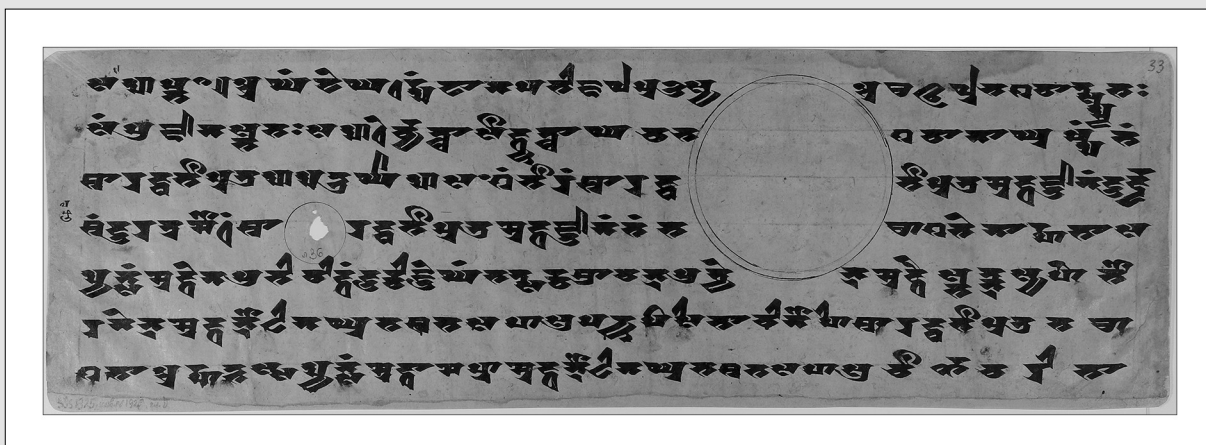


Fig. 6

copied in a small, neat, close-written handwriting. Perhaps, scribes intended to save space in every possible way, trying to fit more Brāhmī *akṣaras* in a line. Such an “economical” arrangement of the text could justify the fact, that the writing material was still in short supply at that time.

Analysis of the repertoire of the most popular Buddhist texts from Khotan in the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Serindia Collection dating back to the period of independence of the southern oases of the Tarim Basin suggests, that a dominant role in the spiritual life of South Serindia gradually assumed Mahayana in the tradition of the Madhyamaka school [25]. Mahayana sutras began to enjoy great popularity in Khotan in 5th—6th centuries, especially the texts of the *Prajñāpāramitā* series and the Lotus Sutra, which, judging from the Serindia Collection, were very actively copied in Khotanese monastic scriptoria. At this period Sanskrit retained its position as the main language of the Buddhist written tradition in Serindia, while rare for this time manuscripts written in the local language (Khotanese-Saka) testify the beginning of translation activity as an important component of the process of reception of Buddhism in the Khotanese state [26].

The third stage in the history of Buddhism in Khotan fell on the period of the 7th—8th centuries, which in its socio-political aspect was marked by the vassalage of the oasis city-states of the Tarim Basin to the Tang Empire. During this period Khotan became part of the so-called “Four Garrisons” (Khotan, Kucha, Kashgar, and Karashar), the most important centres of Serindia, which functioned as bases for the Tang’s Protectorate General Anxi (“Pacified West”), established by the Tang authorities in order to carry out the imperial policy in “Western Regions”, including Serindia. Although the Tang influence extended over main subregions of Serindia, it covered Khotan sporadically, resulted in superficial changes in the Khotanese administrative structure and did not lead to the total Sinicization of local culture and everyday life.

Relations between the Tang Empire and Khotan were maintained in the format of an exchange of embassy missions: visits of Khotanese envoys to the Chang’an court were treated as a manifestation of vassal obedience, and reciprocal embassies were arranged with the aim of delivering imperial decrees and introducing Chinese-style administrative and territorial units in Khotan. The embassies were accompanied by Buddhist monks, who brought to China manuscripts of Sanskrit Mahayana texts that remained popular in the south of Serindia.

As far as can be judged from palaeographic grounds, the period of the Tang’s Protectorate over Serindia (7th—8th centuries) includes Buddhist written monuments in Sanskrit, copied in Early South Turkestan Brāhmī. In the Serindia Collection the quantity of such manuscripts (mostly small fragments) amounts to 50 storage units. The characteristics of writing and design of manuscripts share similarities with those in the previous subtype, which suggests that Early South Turkestan Brāhmī subtype was somewhat “transitional”, linking two adjacent stages that were most fully supplied with written monu-

ments [27]. Nevertheless, this period was also marked by quite significant manuscripts, which provided additional information about the development of the Serindian manuscript culture.

Sanskrit manuscripts from Khotan related to this period were made exclusively on paper of a light yellowish-brown or pale brown colour, however the writing material differed in its quality: this could be a high-quality laid paper [28] with perfectly shredded paper-pulp or “woven” paper without laid lines but with traces of fibre and small pieces of pulp impurities visible, when the pothi folio is backlighted.

Similarly to the external characteristics of the previous stage of written tradition in Khotan, manuscripts of the 7th—8th centuries possess decorative circles around the hole for binding, guidelines denoting borders of text, as well as the setting of pagination on the left margin-recto. Regarding the average size of Sanskrit manuscripts of this period kept in the Serindia Collection, it can only be accurately determined for the manuscript of the *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* (SI 1905 (fig. 5)), containing 75 well-preserved folios, which measure 6.0×40.0 cm. This manuscript is also notable for the fact that wooden covers have been preserved for it, indicating that special bookbinding materials were made at this time for protection and better preservation most likely for voluminous manuscripts with a large number of folios. Within the Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection there is one more example of wooden tablets preserved for covering the Kashghar manuscript of N. F. Petrovskii, the famous copy of the Sanskrit Lotus Sutra (SI 1925-27), which relates to the last period of the history of Buddhism in Khotan.

From the viewpoint of repertoire, during the period of the Tang’s Protectorate in Serindia, according to the Serindia Collection, in Khotan come to the fore the Mahayana writings that also gained popularity in Chinese Buddhism. The illustrative examples of manuscripts written down in Early South Turkestan Brāhmī are folios and fragments containing texts from various Mahayana sutras: the Lotus Sutra (SI 1941, SI 6784), *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (SI 6785) and the sutras of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection (“The Collection of Great Treasures”) [29] — *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* (SI 1905, SI 2014) and *Ratnarāśi-sūtra* (SI 2013) [30].

The fourth stage in the history of Buddhism in Khotan took place during the Tibetan domination in Serindia (8th—9th centuries). Relations between the Khotanese state and Tibet, apparently, were mutually beneficial. Khotan benefited from the military protection of the Tibetan army, while strengthening its political influence in Serindia. With the general guidance from the Tibetan military and civil officials, Khotan remained under the rule of the Khotanese royal house of the Viśa (Skt. “Vijita”, or “conquered”) [31]: the collection of taxes, grain, and indemnities in favour of the Tibetan army was carried out by the Khotanese local authorities [32]. At the same time, Tibet was at a lower stage of socio-economic development than the occupied Serindian states, the areas of ancient civilizations. Khotan, being more highly developed in the cultural sense, had a beneficial effect on its “patron”, playing a key role in

the spread of Mahayana in the Tibetan Empire and, quite likely, influencing the formation of Tibetan writing system of Brahmic origin.

This stage coincided with the period in the history of Buddhism, when it withered and almost expired in its historical homeland, and the cultural ties between India and Central Asia were discontinued. The Muslim conquests in India ended the flow of Buddhist texts and teachings and the functioning of Indian Buddhist monasteries, religious and educational centres that trained Buddhist translators and preachers for Central Asia and China. At the same time, with the arrival of the Arabs in the 8th century era of Islam began in the western part of Central Asia, where Buddhism had vanished forever. Such historical conditions predetermined the consolidation of the status of the international Buddhist centres for the Serindian oasis city-states. Islamic conquests caused influx of Buddhists from neighbouring regions to Serindia, which led to growth of the Buddhist community in Khotan, where Buddhism became a truly mass religion. Widespread distribution of Buddhism among the masses intensified its ritual aspects, opening doors for Buddhist tradition of Vajrayana.

The period of the 8th—9th centuries can be described as the time of the highest flowering of Buddhism in Serindia, that is evidenced by a significant increase not only in the number of adherents of Buddhism, but also in the number of manuscripts being in circulation. This stage in the history of Buddhism in Khotan was marked by increasingly intensive copying of Sanskrit texts of Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism in parallel with translations of Sanskrit manuscripts into Khotanese-Saka, Chinese and Tibetan.

Sanskrit manuscripts of this time, written in South Turkestan Brāhmī subtype, prevail in the Serindia Collection both in terms of quantity and volume, and in terms of their qualitative composition, presenting an even wider range of Buddhist works compared to previous periods. The external features of the manuscripts written in South Turkestan Brāhmī are similar to the characteristics of the previous stages: rectangular pothi-form, type of writing material (predominately, laid paper of light yellowish-brown colour), guidelines and decorative circles, standards of pagination (left margin-recto). Among the Sanskrit written monuments, dated back to the 8th—9th centuries, the Serindia Collection presents a bulk of manuscripts from Khotan, copied in a bold and clear handwriting with a large dimension between lines. Apparently, paper material was no longer in shortage at that time, and there was no special need in saving space by copying the text with smaller handwriting. This is especially evident in the case of “deluxe editions”, large-size luxuriously performed San-

skrit manuscripts, which could contain colourful miniatures or big empty decorative circles intended to include such miniatures. The best example of such manuscripts in the Serindia Collection is the abovementioned Kashgar manuscript of N. F. Petrovskii (SI 1925 (*fig. 6*), 1927), which is the most complete and the largest existing Central Asian manuscript of the Sanskrit Lotus Sutra (over 400 folios and fragments) [33].

It is worth noting, that the manuscripts of this time were quite diverse in terms of size, and it is likely, that this could correlate with the textual repertoire. The largest formats are found in the manuscripts of the most authoritative and revered Mahayana texts of the Lotus Sutra — 18.0×57.0 (SI 1925–27), 14.0×54.0 (SI 3025) and the *Prajñāpāramitā* — 23.0×53.0 cm (SI 2080), 20.0×58.0 cm (SI 3682). Among Sanskrit manuscripts containing other Buddhist works, there are many varieties with different sizes, including very small formats — 4.0×17.0 cm (SI 2086, *Dharmaśārīra-sūtra*), 4.0×25.0 cm (SI 3026, *Sumukhanāma-dhāraṇī*; SI 3027, *Buddhanāma-sūtra*).

As for the repertoire of manuscripts, along with those Mahayana sutras, which remained popular in Khotan throughout the second half of the first millennium AD (especially, *Prajñāpāramitā* texts and the Lotus Sutra), in the 8th—9th centuries amid the development of tantric ideas and practices the great popularity was enjoyed by texts of Vajrayana tradition, containing Buddhist prayers, incantations and special sounds — *dhāraṇīs* [34]. Among the other Sanskrit manuscripts written in South Turkestan Brāhmī the Serindia Collection contains an almost complete text of the “proto-Mahayana” sutra *Ajitasenavyākaraṇa* (SI 2085), fragments of the Mahayana texts of *Dharmaśārīra-sūtra* (SI 2086, SI 3014), *Samādhirāja-sūtra* (SI 3001, SI 3005), and a large set of still unidentified manuscript fragments. Based on the contents of the Sanskrit manuscripts identified in the Serindia Collection, it can be assumed, that in the 5th—9th centuries only a dozen and a half mainly Mahayana sutras enjoyed wide popularity in Khotan.

Sanskrit texts continued to be copied in Serindia until the end of the first millennium AD, when Islam was brought to these territories and the epoch of Buddhist Khotan was closed. In the middle of the 10th century, the territory from the Lake Issik-Kul to Kashgar was Islamized, and around 1006 the conquest of Khotan by the Turkish rulers of Kashgar finally resulted in its conversion to Islam [35]. The latest Sanskrit manuscripts from Khotan are those written in Late South Turkestan Brāhmī subtype, palaeographically dating back to the 9th—10th centuries. In the Serindia Collection they are presented by no more than 10—15 storage units.

Conclusion

This article reflects the stages of the history of Buddhism in Khotan in the 1st—9th centuries, starting from the penetration of the first Buddhist texts from Gandhara and Kashmir into Serindia, through the formation of Buddhism as an influential religious ideology in the

Serindian subregions and to the period of the highest flourishing of Buddhism in Khotan. The periodization of the history of Buddhism in Khotan, developed on the basis of the St. Petersburg Serindia Collection (IOM RAS), includes four periods: (i) penetration of

Indian Buddhism into the southern oases of Serindia (1st—3rd centuries); (ii) reception of Buddhism in Khotan during the period of independence of the oasis city-states of Serindia (3rd—6th centuries); (iii) Buddhism in Khotan during the Tang Empire Protectorate (7th—8th centuries); (iv) Buddhism in Khotan during the period of Tibetan rule (8th—9th centuries). The study of Sanskrit written monuments, which were in circulation in Khotan, makes it possible to characterize the features of spread of Buddhism in the southern part of Serindia in antiquity and the early Middle Ages

and allows us to conclude that, despite various conditions of historical and cultural environment (Indian influence in the Kushan era, the period of independent development, socio-political dependence on China and Tibet), the process of spread, rooting and functioning of Buddhism in Khotan, accompanied by the formation of Serindian manuscript culture, proceeded steadily and constantly throughout the existence of the Buddhist Sanskrit tradition in Serindia, which defined the culture of that region for a whole millennium, being a link in religious movements of Central and East Asia.

Notes

1. The toponym “Serindia” emphasizes the peculiarities of the geographical location, as well as the historical development of the region, that existed on the crossroads between India and China. “Serinda”, or “Serindia” literally means “China and India”, since, according to Greco-Roman sources, the Chinese were called “seres” (“dressed in silk”). This term occurs in the 6th century in the work of the historian Procopius of Caesarea (Procopius of Caesarea, 1950: 431).

2. In the former geographical nomenclature, the term “East Turkestan” was also widely used to designate the territory of the Tarim Basin.

3. *Peschery*..., 2008: 30.

4. The Serindia Collection has about 7000 storage units, which on the basis of language can be subdivided into different parts containing texts in Old Uyghur, Sanskrit, Gandhari, Khotanese-Saka and Tumshuqese-Saka, Tocharian A and B, Sogdian, Middle Persian, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Arabic. In terms of its structure, the Sanskrit and the other parts of the Serindia Collection include several subcollections of different size and contents bearing the names of their acquirers (researchers and officials).

5. For more detailed information about the history of study of Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts by Russian scholars see: Meshezhnikov & Shomakhmadov, 2020.

6. Sen, 2015: 447.

7. Prakrit (Skt. *prākṛta*: “natural”) is a common name for the Middle Indo-Aryan languages and dialects being the descendants of Old Indo-Aryan and the predecessors of the modern Indo-Aryan languages.

8. In addition to the exotic for Central Asia Indian writing materials, before the appearance of paper in Serindia wood remained the primary and traditional medium for copying texts. However, wood was used mostly for writing business documents. A rare exception of religious text in Sanskrit written on wood in the Serindia Collection is presented by wooden tablets containing *dhāraṇī* (kept under the call number SI 6586).

9. Of particular interest is L. Sander's comprehensive study on the palaeography of Turfan manuscripts (Sander, 1968). In addition, in a special paper devoted to the palaeographic features of written monuments found in Khotan, L. Sander describes the group of subtypes of Central Asian Brāhmī used for writing texts in the southern part of Serindia in the second half of the first millennium AD (Sander, 2005).

10. Due to its structural features, Kharoshthi script was successfully used only for texts in Prakrits, but it was not adapted for Sanskrit and other languages of the Indo-Iranian

group. Brāhmī script, on the contrary, perfectly suited for writing Sanskrit texts, and subsequently was even adapted for the local languages of the oases of the Tarim Basin.

11. A vivid example of a birch bark Buddhist manuscript, written in Kharoshthi script, is presented by the manuscript fragments of Dharmapada (1st—2nd centuries AD) in Gandhari Prakrit, found in Khotan. Although the Gandhari Dharmapada was found in Serindia, it is most likely that the manuscript had been produced in India, as evidenced by birch bark as a traditional North Indian writing material. It is known that the production of birch bark manuscripts was widespread in the northern part of Hindustan, since the widely used birch bark *Betula utilis* (the Himalayan birch) grows in the Himalayan zone from Kashmir to Sikkim, so with a high degree of certainty, it indicates that the Prakrit Dharmapada as well as the other birch bark manuscripts were copied in India and subsequently imported to Serindia. Currently, fragments of this Dharmapada manuscript are kept in two manuscript collections. Several parts of the manuscript were acquired by N. F. Petrovskii in the 1890s and sent to the Asiatic Museum (presently kept in the Serindia Collection under the call No. SI 3329). However, some parts of that same manuscript were obtained in 1892 by the French expedition of J.-L. Dutreuil de Rhins (1846—1894).

12. As indicated by the manuscripts produced in Gandhara and Kashmir and spread outside India, the changes in language and writing system used for Buddhist texts during the Kushan period can be described in the following sequence: (i) written fixation of Buddhist texts in Prakrits using Kharoshthi script; (ii) appearance of texts in Sanskrit written in Brāhmī script and the existence of Kharoshthi and Brāhmī side by side; (iii) complete displacement of the Prakrits and Kharoshthi due to the increasing role of Sanskrit and Brāhmī.

13. This name was given in honour of Moritz Spitzer (1900—1982), the first researcher of this manuscript.

14. *Pothi* refers to the Sanskrit term *pustaka* (“book”).

15. Based on the analysis of Chinese sources dating to the Han Dynasty, A. Stein identified the name Kroraina with the Tarim Basin city-state of Loulan located on the north-eastern shore of Lop Nur (Litvinskiy (ed.), 1992: 85).

16. The documents written in Kharoshthi script date back to the 3rd—4th centuries AD and represent the official correspondence of local administration, commercial documents and contracts of the local people of Kroraina (Voroiova-Desiatovskaia, 1988: 26). The largest collection of Prakrit documents was found by the expedition of A. Stein on the territory of ancient settlements near Niya and Lop Nur.

17. The titles of the rulers of Kroraina included Buddhist epithets (*dharmiya*, *devaputra*); in official correspondence the term *pracaśa bodhisattva* (“embodied bodhisattva”) was used when appealing to the ruler or the higher nobility of Kroraina; most of the names attested in the documents contain components of Indo-Buddhist origin. Judging from the documents, Buddhist monasteries (*viḥaras*, *saṃgharamas*) were built in Kroraina, and some Buddhist monastic ranks were mentioned in the texts: senior monks — *sthaira* (Skt. *sthavira*) and *ṛdha bhichu* (Skt. *ṛddha bhikṣu*); novice monks — *ṣamner* (Skt. *śrāmaṇera*); head of monastery — *viḥāravala* (Skt. *viḥārapala*) (Litvinskiy (ed.), 1992: 107).

18. Sander, 2005: 135.

19. The scripts of Sanskrit manuscripts, which circulated in Serindia prior to the 4th—5th centuries AD, were essentially those same used in North India. The process of emerging of the new types of script through the adaptation of Brāhmī to the written fixation of the Central Asian languages started around the 3rd to 4th centuries, when the earliest texts in the local languages of Serindia were written (*ibid.*: 135).

20. As noted by A. Stein, for everything that is of Indian origin in its culture Khotan was directly indebted to Northwest India (Stein, 1907: 362). This applies in particular to the writing material, since previous to the introduction of paper as the chief material for manuscripts Khotan received importations of Indian birch bark. The Bhurja tree (*Betula utilis*), which supplied India with a bark for writing was not to be found to the north of the Himalaya, on the slopes of the Kun-Lun (*ibid.*: 362).

21. In the second half of the first millennium AD the oasis centres of the northern part of the Tarim Basin, namely, Kucha, Turfan, Karashar, were the region of distribution of manuscripts in Sanskrit and local Tocharian languages written in the North Turkestan Brāhmī subtypes.

22. This is true for the manuscripts copied in the south of Serindia. However, the standards of pagination differ depending on the region. The manuscripts from the oases of the Northern Silk Route were numbered on the verso side of the pothi-folio.

23. Unlike those copied in Khotan, manuscripts of the Northern Route have clearly marked square space for the string-hole.

24. *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* (“Chapter [on Instructions] to Kashyapa”) recounts the Buddha’s discourse with his disciple Kashyapa about the moral code of the bodhisattva and the basic tenets of the Madhyamaka. It is noteworthy, that such a name of the sutra was not preserved in the Sanskrit text itself and was borrowed from the Tibetan translation of the 9th century, but in another Sanskrit manuscript of this sutra from the Serindia Collection (SI 1905) two following names are mentioned: *Mahāratnakūṭa-dharmaparyāya* (“Sutra of the Heap of Great Jewels”) and its short variant *Ratnakūṭa-dharmaparyāya* (Bongard-Levin, Vorobiova-Desiatovskaia & Tiomkin, 2004: 92—95).

25. *Madhyamaka* (“middleness”, “middle vision”) or *sūnyavāda* (“the doctrine of emptiness”) is the Mahayana school founded by Nagarjuna (2nd—3rd centuries). This philosophical school asserted the position of the “middle view”, which consisted in behavioural middleness (rejection of the extremes of asceticism and hedonism) and in the “middle vision” of the nature of the primary elements of being (*dharmas*). Regarding the definition of the nature of *dharmas*, *Madhyamaka* refutes

extreme theoretical positions (nihilism and eternalism) and relies on the postulate of *sūnyatā* (“emptiness”) of all *dharmas*. The development of *Madhyamaka* was directly inspired by the influence of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, i. e., a class of sutras that includes texts revealing the doctrine of “perfection of wisdom” (*prajñāpāramitā*), one of the most important concepts of the Mahayana teaching, closely related to the doctrine of the bodhisattva path and the understanding of *sūnyatā* as the true nature of all phenomena.

26. In the Serindia Collection, among the written monuments copied in Early Turkestan Brāhmī, several manuscript fragments (SI 3646, SI 6377/10) containing Buddhist texts (currently undetermined) in the Khotanese-Saka language were found. Thus, according to palaeographic data, the beginning of translation work in the southern oases and the appearance of the first texts in the local language can be attributed as early as the 5th—6th centuries. It should be noted, that the beginning of translation of Indo-Buddhist texts into the local language is considered to be an important indicator of the successful reception of Buddhism in the new ethno-cultural environment (i. e., Khotan), which, in particular, is emphasized by E. A. Ostrovskaia (Ostrovskaia, 2002: 15—17).

27. In the Sanskrit part of the Serindia Collection manuscripts written in Early Turkestan Brāhmī, type 2 (5th—6th centuries) and South Turkestan Brāhmī (8th—9th centuries) present numerically the richest segments, counting roughly over 150 storage units each.

28. Laid paper — homogeneous paper of good quality made using a laid mould and thus containing laid lines pattern (visible when held up to the light). Laid lines are vertical (or horizontal) lines formed by horse hair threads running parallel to the short (or long) side of a rectangular pothi folio. Such type of paper was identified for Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts since the middle of the first millennium AD.

29. A whole cycle under the name *Mahāratnakūṭa* was formed in Serindia including about 50 sutras, which, most likely, were not in active circulation in India. In the 8th century this series was compiled by Bodhiruci, the scholar and translator of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, who selected Mahayana sutras in Sanskrit, translated some of the texts and added previously made Chinese translations to a single collection named after the sutra, which later became known as *Kāśyapaparivarta*. Almost all the sutras in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection were among the early Mahayana texts that appeared in the first centuries AD, circulated in Sanskrit manuscripts in Khotan and were repeatedly translated into Chinese.

30. *Ratnarāśi-sūtra* (“Collection of Jewels”), similarly to *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra* in contents, presents conversation between Buddha and Kashyapa. *Ratnarāśi-sūtra* exists in translations into Chinese and Tibetan and its Sanskrit text, apart from the fragment SI 2013, is represented by only one folio from the Hoernle Collection in the British Library.

31. Viśa — the royal family name of Khotanese kings. Although various names of the rulers of the Viśa house are preserved in the Khotanese-Saka, Tibetan and Chinese sources of the first millennium AD, it has not yet been possible to clearly establish the chronology of the reign of all representatives of this dynasty, the years of their reign, and even the total number of rulers.

32. Litvinskiy (ed.), 1992: 173.

33. The name “Kashgar manuscript” is conditional, since

it is associated with Kashgar, as a place where this manuscript was acquired by Nikolai F. Petrovskii from a local treasure-hunter, aqsaqal Badruddin Khan, who had discovered it near Khotan (more precisely, in the ancient Buddhist site at Khādalik, where excavations were carried out at the beginning of the 20th century, and where many other manuscripts of the Serindia Collection were found) (Meshezhnikov, 2022: 39).

34. The Serindia Collection includes over 40 Sanskrit manuscript folios and fragments from Khotan, containing various kinds of invocations. Among them the most extensively represented texts are those containing *dhāraṇīs* addressed to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, praising their names — *Buddhanāma-sūtra* and *Sumukhanāma-dhāraṇī*.

35. Stein, 1907: 180.

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Illustrations

- Fig. 1.** *Abhidharma-piṭaka*. Palm leaf, 3.9×20.7 cm, 1 folio. Kucha, 2nd—3rd centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Berezovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 1424r. Courtesy of the Institute.
- Fig. 2.** *Vinaya-piṭaka*. Birch bark, 7.6×16.9 cm, 1 fragment. Kucha, 4th—5th centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Petrovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 1943v. Courtesy of the Institute.
- Fig. 3.** *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Paper, 16.7×17.2 cm, 1 fragment. Khotan, 5th—6th centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Petrovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 2019r. Courtesy of the Institute.
- Fig. 4.** *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Paper, 17.4×55.0 cm, 1 folio. Khotan, 5th—6th centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Petrovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 3687v. Courtesy of the Institute.
- Fig. 5.** *Kāśyapaparivarta-sūtra*. Paper, 6.5×40.8 cm, 1 folio. Khotan, 7th—8th centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Petrovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 1905r. Courtesy of the Institute.
- Fig. 6.** *Lotus Sutra*. Paper, 17.9×56.8 cm, 1 folio. Khotan, 8th—9th centuries AD. Serindia Collection, Petrovskii Subcollection. The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, call No. SI 1925r. Courtesy of the Institute.