
SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

Number 85

October, 1998

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SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS

FOUNDED 1986

Editor-in-Chief
VICTOR H. MAIR

Associate Editors
PAULA ROBERTS MARK SWOFFORD

ISSN
2157-9679 (print) 2157-9687 (online)

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Tokharian Buddhism in Kucha:

Buddhism of Indo-European Centum Speakers in Chinese Turkestan before the 10th Century C.E.

Mariko Namba Walter

Kucha, in the present-day Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region of northwestern China, was one of the major Buddhist kingdoms of Central Asia before Islamization began to take place in this area at the end of the tenth century C.E. The other Buddhist oasis kingdoms in the region were Shan-shan,¹ which was buried under sand by the sixth century C.E., and the kingdom of Khotan, which had been a flourishing center of Mahāyāna Buddhism for centuries until around the eleventh century C.E. The language of these Central Asian kingdoms varied, as many different kinds of people settled in and around the Tarim Basin for many centuries. The Khotanese spoke a Middle Iranian language and the people in the Kucha and Agni region a language commonly called Tokharian. Tokharian is classified as an archaic Indo-European language, belonging to the so-called Centum branch of Indo-European languages.² It has two dialects, Tokharian A, used in

¹ Shan-shan 善 善 was an ancient Buddhist kingdom near Lake Lop Nor on the southeastern rim of the Tarim Basin. The local name was Kroraina, the transcription of which in Chinese was Lou-lan 楼 兰. This Chinese designation was used until 77 B.C.E. The vernacular language of Shan-shan is unknown but the official language was a kind of Prakrit, or Gāndhārī.

² Tokharian, which is particularly close to Germanic, belongs to the *Centum* or "Western" group of Indo-European languages. In contrast, the *Satem* group includes the "Eastern" family of Indo-European languages such as Baltic, Slavic, and Iranian languages. Pulleyblank notes that "the supposedly western features of the Tokharian languages are better explained as survivals in peripheral areas of features that were once found in common Indo-European." Edward G. Pulleyblank, "Chinese and Indo-Europeans," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (1966): 13. Also see Emil D. Sieg and Wilhelm Siegling, "'Tocharisch,' die Sprache der Indoskythen," *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1908): 915; Douglas Q. Adams,

the Agni region only for Buddhist texts, and Tokharian B found in Kucha for both vernacular and religious textual use. It should be noted that Tokharian is not the name of the language used in Tokharistan in Bactria,³ which was East-Iranian (Bactrian).⁴ Despite such complications, the name Tokharian has stuck and continues to be used by both philologists and historians alike up to now. The Tokharian language continued to be used at least up to the end of the eighth century C.E., and Henning⁵ suggests that the language faded away eventually, although this was not caused by drastic changes such as war. We do know, however, that the Tokharians disappeared from the stage of history at

"The Position of Tocharian among the other Indo-European Languages," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 104 (1984): 395-402.

³ Tókharoi in Greek, Tochari for Latin historians, Tukhāra of Sanskrit, and Tu-huo-lo 都貨邏 in Chinese texts all seem to point to "Tokharistan" in ancient Bactria, the area between the Oxus River and the Hindu Kush. In the seventh century C.E., however, Hsüan-tsang called twelve countries, some of them to the east of Khotan, as the ancient homelands of Tu-huo-lo (Tokhāra). The exact meaning of the ancient homeland is not clear but it probably indicates a large scale migration and spread of ancient Tokharian people in and around the Taklamakan Desert.

⁴ Ludwig Bachhofer, "On Greeks and Śakas in India," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 61, No. 4 (1941): 250. This rather confusing identification rests largely on the study of the colophons of the Buddhist text, *Maitrisimit*, in Old Turkish. Müller identified *Toxri* in the colophons as Tokharian, the language of Tokharistan in ancient Bactria. This was refuted by Bailey, who rectified the correct reading of *Toxri* as *Twyri=toyari*, but not the Tokharian of Bactria, and proposed that Tokharian A could be more appropriately called *Agnean* and Tokharian B *Kuchean*. See Harold W. Bailey, "Taugara," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)* 8 (1937): 883-922; Walter B. Henning, "Agni and the 'Tokharians'" *BSOAS* 9 (1938): 545-570; F. W. K. Müller, "Beitrag zur genaueren Bestimmung der unbekanntenen Sprachen Mittelasiens," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (SPAW)*, Berlin (1907): 959-960; F. W. K. Müller and Emil Sieg, "Maitrisimit und 'Tocharisch'," *SPAW* (1916): 414-416.

⁵ Walter B. Henning, "The First Indo-Europeans in History" in G. L. Ulmen (ed.) *Society and History: Essays in honor of Karl August Wittfogel* (The Hague, Paris and New York: Mouton & Co., 1978), 215-230.

the same time the Turkic-speaking Uighurs came to dominate the parts of the Tarim Basin where they were located, so there may well be a causal relationship between the two events.

How did such west Indo-European speakers come to exist in the midst of speakers of Chinese, Turco-Mongol, and East Iranian languages? As Tokharian languages have an archaic form showing relatively early separation from the other Indo-European languages, Henning suggested that the proto-Tokharians, originating from South Russia, were the first Indo-Europeans in history, appearing as "Guti" in Akkadian and Babylonian records of Mesopotamia.⁶ According to him, these ancestors of the Tokharians moved to Persia and eventually appeared in Chinese Turkestan as the Yüeh-chih 月氏 in the Kan-su region.⁷ The question of the origin of the Indo-European speakers in Chinese Turkestan has to be considered along with the movements of peoples over an extremely broad area in Eurasia over several millennia up to ca. 1000 C.E.⁸

⁶ Henning 217-219. Also see William F. Albright, "A Babylonian Geographical Treatise on Sargon of Akkad's Empire," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 45 (1925): 193-245; Cyril J. Gadd, "The Dynasty of Agade and Gutian Invasion," Chapter XIX in Iorwerth E. Edwards, Cyril J. Gadd, and Nicholas G. L. Hammond, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 1, pt. 2, 3rd ed. Early History of the Middle East (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 417-463, 595-643.

⁷ Henning 220-221. Similarly, from the linguistic proximity of Tokharian to the pre-Germanic dialects of late proto-Indo-European and other languages such as Greek, Baltic, and Latin, Adams also traces the "wandering" of Tokharians. According to him, Tokharians separated themselves very early from the pre-Germanic speakers and moved south or east and came into contact with the Greeks, perhaps in the first half of the third millennium B.C.E., somewhere in the Moldavia region, before the Greeks entered the Balkans proper. The Tokharians continued to move eastward across the north Pontic steppes and then the Central Asian steppes, where they briefly associated with some groups of pre-Indic speakers, before they appeared in history 2000 years later in Chinese Turkistan. See Adams 401.

⁸ For recent archaeological and linguistic studies regarding the Indo-European speakers in the region, see Victor H. Mair, "Prehistoric Caucasoid Corpses of the Tarim Basin" and other articles in *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 1995): 281-437.

Wherever they are originated, Caucasian-featured residents of Kucha were first noted by the Chinese in the *Han-shu* 漢書 in the first century B.C.E. as one of the barbarian kingdoms in their western region which had been involved in many wars with the Chinese, along with the *Hsiung-nu* 匈奴 (Mongolian nomads), Turks, and Tibetans. Exactly when Buddhism was introduced to Kucha from India is unknown since there are no historical records describing such a transmission. Nevertheless it is likely to have been around the beginning of the Common Era, since there were already some Kuchean missionary Buddhist monks in China from the third century C.E., a topic which will be discussed later in this paper.

In this paper I would like to present a survey of Tokharian Buddhism in Kucha from the following three perspectives: first the fragmentary information derived from the Chinese Buddhist literature including traveling monks' records, second from the Tokharian Buddhist texts, and third from the art-historical evidence gleaned from the Buddhist paintings in the Kizil caves near Kucha. The issues we are concerned with here are the school affiliation of Kuchean Buddhism in its relation to Indian and Chinese Buddhism, and the relationship between the Kuchean kings and the Buddhist saṃgha. Unlike in China, Mahāyāna Buddhism seems not to have taken a firm hold in Kucha, where monastic-based Nikāya Buddhism flourished for over a millennium until the end of the tenth century C.E. Despite this general tradition of *Sthavira* Buddhism,⁹ Kucha produced a major Mahāyāna translator called Kumārajīva, to whom China owes a great deal for the transmission of major Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Lotus Sūtra*. Through the literature concerning Kumārajīva and other monks of Kuchean origin, and through the study of Tokharian Buddhist texts, I hope to delineate the features of Buddhism in Kucha.

⁹ This refers to the Buddhism based on the Community of "Elders," mainly the Sarvāstivādins in the case of Kucha.

Buddhism in Kucha in the early period

The early stage of Buddhism in Kucha, during the third century, is known from the activities of Kuchean monks in China, according to the various records of monks and from the kind of sūtras which were translated into Chinese by the Kuchean monks.¹⁰ The name of Kucha, however, was already known in India before this time since the name appears in the *Aśokāvadāna* 阿育王息壤目因緣經 as one of the countries which King Aśoka intended to give to his son, Dharmavarddhana. The text is translated by Chih-lou-chia-ch'en 支婁迦讖 of the Yüeh-chih in the mid-second century C.E., thus this is the earliest appearance of the name Kucha in a Buddhist text. In the third century C.E., Buddhism in Kucha was spread first among the aristocrats. This can be surmised from the fact that most of the Kuchean monks who came to China had the surname of *Pai* 白 or *Po* 帛, as a possible dynastic name of Kucha. For example Pai-yen 白延, came to Lo-yang, the capital of the Wei-dynasty in 258 C.E. and translated the *Sukhāvati-vyūha* 無量清淨平等覺經,¹¹ a Mahāyāna text, and a Hinayāna text. Po-yüan-hsin 帛元信, a Kuchean monk, edited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* 正法華經, when Dharmarakṣa (Fa-hu 法護) had finished translating it in 286 C.E.¹² Both monks have *Pai* or *Po* surnames and are considered to have been of royal or aristocratic origin. There was also a vice-envoy of Kucha who brought a Sanskrit text of the *Avaiivartya-sūtra* 阿維越致遮經 to

¹⁰ Most of the references for Buddhism in Kucha are derived from the *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi* 出三藏記集 [Collected Records on the Making of the Tripiṭaka] compiled ca. 510 C.E. by Seng-yu (445-518 C.E.), *Kao-seng-chuan* 高僧傳 [Biographies of Eminent Monks] by Hui-chiao 惠皎 (497-554 C.E.), etc.

¹¹ The other name of the sūtra is *Amitāyusa-vyūha* or *Sukhāvati-vyūha*. Nanjio Bunyiu, *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), 21/22.

¹² The *Collected Records*, vol. 8, "Cheng fa-hua ching hou-chi" 正法華經後記 (*Taishō*, vol. 55, 56c).

China in 284 C.E.¹³ From these records, summarized in the following chart, we find that Kuchean Buddhism was established and flourishing to an extent sufficient to send missionary monks to transmit both Mahāyāna (including early Tantric¹⁴) and Hīnayāna texts to China in the third century C.E.

Texts Translated by Kuchean monks in the third century C.E.

<u>Year (C.E.)</u>	<u>Name of monk</u>	<u>sūtra</u>
258	Pai-yen: 白延	<i>Wu-liang-ch'ing-ching p'ing-teng-ch-eh ching</i> 無量清淨平等覺經 [<i>Sukhāvati-vyūha</i>]; <i>Ch'u-tsai-huan ching</i> 除災患經 [<i>Sṛīkantha-sūtra</i> ¹⁵] (Hīnayāna class).
284	Ch'iang-tzu-hou: 羌子候	<i>A-wei-y-eh-chih-che ching</i> 阿維越致遮經 (<i>Pu-t'ui-chuan-fa-lun chig</i>) 不退轉法輪經; <i>Avaivartya-sūtra</i> or <i>Aparivartikacakra-sūtra</i> .
286	Po-yuan-hsin (ed.): 帛元信	<i>Cheng-fa-hua ching</i> 正法華經 [<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra</i>]
ca. 291-306	(Po 白) 法炬	Fa-chü : <i>Ta-fang-teng ju-lai tsang-ching</i> 大方等如來藏經 and several other Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna texts including Āgama.
ca. 291-306	Pai-yüan ¹⁶ : 白遠	<i>P'u-sa-shih ching</i> 菩薩逝經; <i>Ta-ch'eng ju-lai-tsang ching</i> 大乘如來藏經 etc. Mahāyāna vaipulya, Tantric, and Āgama texts

¹³ The other name of the sūtra is *Aparivartikacakra-sūtra* or *Pu-t'ui-chuan fa-lun ching* 不退轉法輪經. See the *Collected Records*, vol. 7, "A-wei-yüeh-chih-che ching" 阿維越致遮經 (*Taishō*, vol. 55, 50b).

¹⁴ Early Tantric texts such as *Ta-kuan-ting ching* 大灌頂經 and *Mahāmayūri-rājñi-samyuktārdhidhāraṇī sūtra* were translated by Śrīmitra from Kucha in the early fourth century C.E., thus it is not impossible to believe that Tantric Buddhism was practiced to some extent in Kucha in the third century C.E.

¹⁵ The sūtra on removing fear, misfortune and anxiety. See Nanjio 97.

¹⁶ He was not a Kuchean, but his master was probably Kuchean because of his name.

307-312 Po-shih-li-mi-tou-lo (Śrīmitra): *Ta-kuan-ting ching* 大灌頂經;
 帛戶梨密多羅 *Ta-k'ung-ch'üeh-wang shen-chou ching* 孔雀王雜神呪經
 [Mahāmayūri-rājñī-saṃyuktārdhidhārāṇi-sūtra]

(Source: *K'ai-yüan lu* 開元錄,¹⁷ *The Collected Records, Liang Kao-seng chuan* 梁高僧傳.)

Various forms of Buddhism, both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna, flowed into Kucha from the west and south by the trade routes from such places as Parthia, Bactria, Kushana (Gandhāra), and Kashmir in the early phase of Kucheana Buddhism. Both Kucha and China were probably introduced to Buddhism about the same time, during the first half of the first century C.E. However, Buddhism in Kucha settled and flourished much faster than in China, due to geographical and cultural factors in addition to the obvious fact that Kucha is a small oasis state. Kucheans received direct impetus from traveling Central Asian and Indian monks, who had fewer linguistic obstacles to overcome in Kucha in propagating the Dharma than in China, and the Kucheans did not have a strongly rooted religion to counteract Buddhism such as Confucianism or Taoism in China. As the Kucheans established the early roots of Buddhism among themselves, they set out to introduce Buddhism to China in the third century C.E.

Kumārajīva and Mahāyāna Literature in Kucha

Among these monks from Kucha, Kumārajīva was the most well-known, and he established the first phase of the translation of major Mahāyāna canons in China in the beginning of the fifth century C.E. His extensive works are, in quality and its scale, only comparable to those of Hsüan-tsang 300 years later in the seventh century. Kumārajīva was the first and the most prominent authority on the translation of Buddhist texts in

¹⁷ *K'ai-yüan lu* is the record of 1,076 works compiled in 730 C.E. by Chih-sheng 智昇. It is the Buddhist Catalogue of the K'ai-yüan Era (*Taishō*, vol. 55, No. 2154, 477a-723a)

China, mainly Mahāyāna sūtras, which triggered the later development of various schools in Chinese Buddhism. Kumārajīva was born in 344 C.E. as the son of a Kuchean princess and an Indian father, Jīva, and entered the monkhood when he was seven years old. With his mother he went to Kashmir and studied Hīnayāna texts such as the *Samyukta-piṭaka*, *Mādhyamāgama*, *Dirghāgama* under Vandhudatta until he was twelve years old. On his way back to Kucha he stopped at Kashgar and studied Mahāyāna texts such as the *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, *Śata-śāstra*, and *Dvādaśanikāya śāstra* from the Mahāyāna teacher Sūryāsoma there. In Kucha, having been inspired by Mahāyāna Buddhism, Kumārajīva preached the Mahāyāna in the Wang-hsin temple 王新寺 under the most influential master of Āgama texts and the administrator of various major temples in Kucha. In fact Kumārajīva was not only tolerated by his Hīnayāna teacher but also gained favor and support from the king Pai-ch'un 白純, and even managed to convert some Hīnayāna scholars to Mahāyāna.¹⁸ From this account relating to Kumārajīva, we can deduce that the Sarvāstivādins and other Nikāya saṃghas were dominant in Kucha in the fourth century C.E., although Mahāyāna had existed in Kucha from an early time. In such a climate of Hīnayāna dominance, Kumārajīva's enthusiastic support of Mahāyāna was probably considered non-conformist, however, he does not seem to have suffered in any way, as he had already achieved fame and respect from the kings and noble monks in Kucha.

What was the condition of the saṃghas in Kucha during Kumārajīva's time in the fourth century? Several names of the saṃghas can be obtained from the preface to the vinaya text (prātimokṣa text) for the bhikṣuṇīs.¹⁹ The largest was the Ta-mu-lan 達慕藍

¹⁸ Dharmabhadra (Fa-hsien 法賢) was one of the converts, who was persuaded probably by Kumārajīva's teacher Sūryāsoma (or Sūryabhadra) according to *Fa-hua-ching chuan-chi* 法華經傳記, vol.6 (cited by Hatani 373-374).

¹⁹ *Pi-ch'iu-ni chieh-pen so-ch'u pen-mo hsü* 比丘尼戒本所出本末序 in the *Collected Records*, vol. 11 (*Taishō*, vol. 55, 79c-80a).

saṃghārāma with 170 monks, the Chih-li-lan-chien 致隸藍劍 with 60 monks, the Chien-mu-wang hsin-lan 劍慕王新藍 with 50 monks, and the Wen-su-wang-lan 温宿王藍 (King of Ush) with 70 monks. The teacher of Kumārajīva, Fo-t'u-she-mi 佛圖舌弥, probably the head of the Sarvāstivādins in Kucha, ordained the monks and nuns under his administration in these four temples and three nunneries. Many princesses and daughters of aristocratic families east of the Pamir mountains came to Kucha to be ordained since Kucha was the only place where a nun could be ordained, being the center of the neighboring Buddhist kingdoms.

Kumārajīva arrived in Lo-yang in 402 C.E. and translated over 300 texts for about fifteen years until his death in 412 or 415 C.E. Can all of these texts he translated be considered to have been from Kucha? It is plausible to suppose that most of the texts he translated were from Kucha as he spent much of his mature age over twenty years in Kucha despite his early education in Kashmir and Kashgar. If these sūtras are from Kucha, we can detect to some extent the nature of Buddhism in Kucha at that time through analysis of the kind of texts he translated, even though his texts were mostly Mahāyāna. Regarding the Prajñāpāramitā class, he translated both the small and large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*,²⁰ *Vajra-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* 金剛般若經, *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra on a Benevolent King* 仁王般若經, *Ta-chih-tu-lun* 大智度論 or *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa*, etc., some of which originated from Kucha since we know at least that Kumārajīva obtained the *Fang-kuang po-jo ching* 放光般若經 [*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra of Emitting Light*] in Kucha when he arrived back there from Kashmir. The most popular sūtras in Kucha seem to have been the Mahāyāna Mahāvaipulya class, such as the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Mahāvaipulya Mahāsaṃnipāta sūtra*, and the *Sukhāvati-vyūha (Amitābha-vyūha)*,

²⁰ *Hsiao-p'in po-jo ching* 小品般若經 [Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in 8,000 Lines] and *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

judging by the relative amounts of Kumārajīva's translation. Perhaps some variety of Pure Land worship existed in Kucha, as some of the texts are related to Maitreya and Amitābha. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*The Lotus Sutra*) was widely read among the Kucheans even before the fourth century, as we discussed previously, and Kumārajīva re-translated it in twenty-eight chapters, probably using the *Lotus-sūtra* in Tokharian for a reference.²¹ Tantric texts also existed in Kucha, as Kumārajīva translated several tantric texts including some dhāraṇīs. Tantric Buddhism continued to exist in Kucha from the third century to the eighth century C.E. as is known from the fact that two tantric texts were transmitted to China from Kucha during the T'ang period.²² Moreover Kumārajīva translated three *dhyāna* or Ch'an (Zen) texts including the *Tso-ch'an-san-mei ching* 坐禪三昧經, which is said to have later become an important text for Ch'an Buddhism in China.²³ There are also some hints in the *Ming-seng chuan* 名僧傳, vol. 25 that *dhyāna* was practiced in Kucha in the fifth century C.E. Least represented in Kumārajīva's translation corpus are the Avatamsaka (Hua-yen 華嚴) and Parinirvāṇa classes, only one each of which was translated by Kumārajīva, who was likely to have obtained them somewhere other than Kucha. Lastly, regarding the vinaya texts, Kumārajīva translated five Mahāyāna vinaya texts and the *Daśa-bhāṇa-vāra-vinaya*,²⁴ the vinaya texts of the Sarvāstivādins, which he obtained in Kashmir. Moreover, he

²¹ See Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku Bukkyō-shi* [History of Buddhism in China], vol. 2 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983), 278-9.

²² *Shih-li ching* 十力經 *Daśabala sūtra* and *Fo-ting tsun-sheng t'o-lo-ni pieh-fa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼別法 (a version of *Uṣṇīṣavijyaya dhāraṇī*). Hatani 362.

²³ Hatani 365.

²⁴ *Shih-sung lü* 十誦律 [*Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*] (*Taishō*, vol. 23, No. 1435, 1a-470b).

translated a vinaya text for nuns, the *Shih-sung-pi-ch'iu-ni chieh-pen* 十誦比丘戒本, the first text of this kind introduced to China.

During the fourth century Kumārajīva dominated the saṃghas in Kucha with his Mahāyāna perspectives until he was taken by the Chinese general Lü-kuang 呂光 to the Ho-hsi 河西 region and eventually to China. It was a period of flourishing Buddhist culture in Kucha, as several distinguished Buddhist scholars including Kumārajīva and his teachers received full royal support from the kings of Kucha. For example, the king of Kucha, Pai-ch'un 白純 traveled to the Ush kingdom in order to welcome back Kumārajīva, having heard of his achievements in Kashmir, Kashgar, and Ush.²⁵ Having escorted Kumārajīva back to Kucha, the king made him sit and preach the dharma on a golden seat in the shape of lion, covered with silk materials from Ta-ch'in 大秦 in the west. Royal support of Buddhism is also clear from the names of various saṃghārāmas, some of which were quoted before. Wang-hsin-ssu 王新寺, where Kumārajīva stayed, means literally "king's new temple," which probably implies that a king commissioned the building of this temple. Similarly Chien-mu-wang hsin-lan 苾芻王新藍 also probably means a new saṃghārāma built by the king Chien-mu and Wen-su-wang-lan 溫宿王藍, a saṃghārāma of the king of Ush, was probably donated by the king for his country's fellow monks to study in Kucha.

Post-Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang's report on Kucha

From the fifth century, we also have some fragmentary information regarding the kings' favor to Buddhism. The Kashmiri monk Dharmamitra stayed in Kucha for several years from 424 C.E. under the protection of the Kuchean king, and had dreamed about his

²⁵ *The Biographies of Eminent Monks*, vol. 2, Chapter on Kumārajīva (*Taishō*, vol. 50, No. 2059, 330c).

visit to Kucha beforehand.²⁶ Another monk, named Fa-lang 法郎, originating from Turfan, who escaped from the destruction of Buddhism by the Emperor Wu-ti of the Northern Wei in China in 446 C.E., was also helped by the Kuchean king and stayed in Kucha for a while.²⁷ Moreover, Dharmagupta, a monk from South India, who preached Mahāyāna Buddhism in Kucha for two years from 585 C.E., had to escape from Kucha secretly since the Kuchean king did not let him go, even though he explained that his initial aim was to teach the Dharma in China.²⁸ These episodes illustrate how the Kuchean kings assisted Buddhist monks as the protectors of the dharma. Similarly, in the seventh century C.E. Hsüan-tsang, on his way to India, was also received by the king of Kucha with the highest respect. At the eastern gate of the palace in Kucha, the king awaited Hsüan-tsang with his ministers, the noble Śramaṇa Mokṣagupta, and thousands of monks to welcome him. The next day, Hsüan-tsang performed a prayer/rite at the royal palace in the honor of the king. On his departure, the king ordered all his subjects to bid farewell to Hsüan-tsang on both sides of the streets to the gate in Kucha.

Thus the Kuchean kings still had an interest in Mahāyāna Buddhism during the sixth century even after the death of Kumārajīva, although Mahāyāna was almost non-existent in Kucha by the time of Hsüan-tsang's visit in the seventh century. In fact, Hsüan-tsang reported that the Kuchean monks did not show any respect to the Mahāyāna texts.

Mokṣagupta, a Kuchean noble monk who studied Buddhism over twenty years in India, told Hsüan-tsang that it was not necessary to go to India since they had all the important

²⁶ The *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, vol. 3, Chapter on Dharmamitra. (*Taishō*, vol. 50, No. 2059, 342c-343c)

²⁷ The *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, vol. 10, Chapter on Fa-lang (*Taishō*, vol. 50, No. 2059, 392c-393a)

²⁸ The *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, vol. 2, Chapter on Dharmagupta. (*Taishō*, vol. 50, No. 2060, 435b)

Buddhist texts.²⁹ When Hsüan-tsang asked him if he could get the *Yogācārā śāstras* in Kucha, the noble monk replied that they were slanderous texts, which no real Buddhist disciples should study. Hsüan-tsang could not even accept the food with meat, which the king specially offered to him, since Chinese Mahāyāna monks were vegetarians and did not eat meat at all.³⁰

According to Hsüan-tsang's report,³¹ in the seventh century C.E. there were just over a hundred saṃghārāmas in Kucha with over five thousand monks, most of whom belonged to the Sarvāstivādins. Their doctrine and the rules of discipline were like those of India and they learned to read original Indian texts, which implies that Kuchean monks read and studied Sanskrit texts. Both kings and commoners devoted themselves to Buddhism deeply and ceremonies and rites were performed gracefully and lavishly. There were many noble and influential monks such as Mokṣagupta in Kucha, who attracted many monks from the neighboring countries such as Turfan, Agni, and Pa-lu-chia 跋祿迦 (Ku-mo 姑墨 = Aksu), where the Sarvāstivādins had strong roots. The names of the saṃghārāmas in the seventh century are also known from Hsüan-tsang's report, for example, Acārya (A-she-li-erh 阿奢理貳)³² saṃghārāma, and the twin temples east and west of the river flowing from the mountains north of Kucha under the name Chao-hu-li

²⁹ Such as the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra* and *Mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*.

³⁰ Under the non-Mahāyāna traditions, monks could eat meat if they did not see or hear that the animal was killed for their consumption and if they were sure about it. This was called *San-ching-jou* 三淨肉 [three kinds of pure meat]. See Samuel Beal (tr.), *Life of Hsüan-tsang by the Shaman Hwui Li* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1911) Book 2, 38.

³¹ Samuel Beal (tr.), *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World, Translated from the Chinese of Hsüan Tsiang (A.D. 620)* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1880) 19-24.

³² Aścharya is also described in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, (vol. 2, Chapter on Kumārajīva) as Ch'üeh-li ta-ssu 雀梨大寺, also in Tao-an's *Hsi-yü chi* 西域記 as Ch'üeh-li ta ch'ing-ching ssu 雀離大清淨寺. The *Wei-shu* indicates that such a name

昭怙薩. The former was the saṃghārāma where Mokṣagupta resided and was used as the headquarters of the annual procession of Buddha statues.

As in Khotan and other Central Asian countries, Hsüan-tsang reported annual and quinquennial Buddhist assemblies in Kucha, in which the king took a major part in promoting Buddhism and social cohesion.

Every year at the autumnal equinox, during ten several days, the priests assemble from all the country in this place. The king and all his people, from the highest to the lowest, on this occasion abstain from public business, and observe a religious fast; they listen to the sacred teachings of the law and pass the days without weariness.³³

On the occasion, thousands of the people flocked to see the procession of Buddha images, decorated with silk clothes and shining with jewelry. Hsüan-tsang also briefly reported on the ceremony of *pañca-varṣikā-pariṣad*, which was held every five years for the king to give offerings to the Buddhas and to almost every class of people including monks, scholars, hermits, and poor people. In India,³⁴ the king made offerings to the people until his personal belongings were given away and his state-treasury became empty, which was then filled and compensated by the donations of other neighboring kings and aristocrats to the king. The ceremony in Kucha was very likely to have been performed in the same

also existed in Gandhāra for a saṃghārāma supposedly built by King Kaṇiṣka. See *Wei-shu*, Hsi-yü chuan 西域傳 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), 2259-2261. Pelliot explains that the name originated from *cākri* or *čägrii*, a Tokharian word for a religious building or stūpa. In Yagnobi, Parachi, and Ormuni, dialects of the Pamir and Hindu Kush regions of the present day, a temple is called *cakka*, *cuki*, *sakek*, *čūkī*, or *šakikata*. See Paul Pelliot, "Tokharian et Koutchéen," *Journal Asiatique* (1934), 87. George Morgenstierne, *Indo-Iranian Frontier Languages*, II (Oslo: H. Aschhoug, 1929), 245 and 290.

³³ Beal (tr.), *Si-yu-ki* 21-22.

³⁴ For an example of the scale of the *pañca-varṣikā-pariṣad*, see Hsüan-tsang's *Buddhist Record of the Western World* Vol. 5, chapter 3, Prayāga kingdom 針羅耶伽国 near Varunasi. Beal 233.

manner and spirit as that of India. Moreover, the kings of Kucha also visited sacred places of the Buddha to pay homage as Hsüan-tsang's quotation of the legend³⁵ suggests.

According to Hsüan-tsang, high-ranking monks took part in the king's issue of decrees. He reported that the king and ministers discussed state affairs on the fifteenth of the month and at the end of the year, and that he visited the monks to consult about the issuance of decrees. It is notable that it was the king who visited the monks to consult, rather than for the king to order the monks to come to the royal palace. To some extent, Kucha seems to have maintained an archaic relationship between kingship and saṃgha as it was described in the early Buddhist teachings. The kings of Kucha seem to have respected the relative superiority of spiritual authority over their mundane authority of kingship.

Toward the end of the seventh to the eighth century, two reports regarding Kucha simply state that the Kucheans study Hīnayāna texts only and are ignorant about the Mahāyāna. According to Hui-ying 惠英,³⁶ the Khotanese monk Shih-yu-nan-t'o 実又難陀 reported that an Indian monk brought the *Avataṃsaka sūtra* to Kucha, which nobody took interest in, and the monk returned to India in vain with the sūtra. Hui-ch'ao, in the beginning of the eighth century, also stated that the people in Kucha practiced the dharma of Hīnayāna and ate meat and onions. At that time, Mahāyāna including tantric Buddhism seems to have been practiced only by foreign monks in Kucha, Chinese and some others, in addition to a few Kucheans. Mahāyāna Buddhism, however, did not die out completely in Kucha. Even in the eighth century, a Kuchean monk, Li-yen 利言, and an Indian monk Dharmacandra (Fa-yüeh 法月) came to China and translated Mahāyāna

³⁵ Beal 22. The legend goes, "A former king of this country worshipped the 'three precious' ones. Wishing to pay homage to the sacred relics of the outer world, he intrusted the affairs of the empire to...."

³⁶ In his *Hua-yen-ching kan-ying chuan* 華嚴經感應伝 (cited by Hatani 386).

texts such as the *Ta-ch'eng y-eh-teng-san-mo-ti ching* 大乘月燈三摩地經 and *Yü-chia chen-tsung* 瑜伽真宗 in 726 C.E.³⁷

Hstlan-tsang's report provides vital information on the subject of kingship and Buddhism in Kucha. In comparison with Khotan and Shan-shan, both Buddhist kingdoms, the saṃgha in Kucha enjoyed relative independence from the kingship. This was probably due to the fact that during the early phases of Buddhism in Central Asia, the saṃgha-based Nikāya schools, such as the Sarvāstivādins, had a highly structured church organization, unlike Māhayāna Buddhism. The king had to seek consultation and legitimization of his and his minister's decisions from the head of the saṃgha and, as dharmarāja, had to carry out elaborate ritual functions in service of the saṃgha. As Kucha was not a Mahāyāna country, scriptures for the protection of the state such as the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* were not spread there, however the idea of the *cakravartin* as the protector of Buddhism existed and was practiced by the kings of Kucha.

Tokharian Buddhist Texts

To some extent it is possible to delineate the nature of the Buddhism of Kucha from indigenous sources, since many Buddhist texts in Tokharian were found in both Kucha and the ancient Agni (Qarašahr) region. Tokharian A texts, which were found in Šorčuq near Qarašahr, east of Kucha, are all Buddhist in their content and are kept in the Berlin Collection. A total of around 470 texts, including many fragmented parts of possibly the same texts, have been published in the form of transcription and/or facsimile by German scholars since the 1920's, including over 60 texts translated either into German or into English. Tokharian B texts, written in at least three different dialects due to a much wider distribution than those of Tokharian A, were found mainly in the Thousand Buddhas Caves of Kizil and in Šorčuq. Over 780 texts/fragments in Tokharian B are known to

³⁷ *Chen-yüan lu* 貞元錄 (Buddhist Catalogue compiled 800 C.E. by Yüan-chao *et al.*), vol. 14. See Hatani 386.

exist in Germany, and a much lesser number in England, France, Russia, and Japan. The scripts used for Tokharian are Indian scripts, called slanting Gupta or Northern Central Asian Brahmi, which date from roughly around the sixth to the eighth century C.E.³⁸

The content of Tokharian texts in both A and B is difficult to identify clearly due to the fragmentary condition of the manuscripts and the lack of direct correspondence to the Chinese texts. Unlike Khotanese or Old Turkic Buddhist texts, Tokharians did not translate Chinese texts and there is little evidence that the Chinese translated Tokharian texts, although there are some hints of exceptions in bibliographic Chinese sources and elsewhere.³⁹ It is rather intriguing to see that the Tokharian speakers had their own center of culture and Buddhism, almost completely independent from the Chinese, who were close to them geographically. For instance, Turfan, only about 350 km east of Šorčuq,⁴⁰ was under the Chinese warlord of Kao-ch'ang, Chü-shih 麹氏, or under T'ang China during the sixth to eighth centuries, the time from which most of the Tokharian texts can be roughly dated.

The texts of Tokharian A and B include many jātakas and avadānas, Āgama-related texts, abhidharma texts, vinaya, stotras, and other Hinayāna texts. Mahāyāna texts are found only in Tokharian B, as possible fragments of the *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka sūtra* and

³⁸ See L. Sander, "Buddhist Literature in Central Asia," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, 4.1 (Colombo 1981), 52-75.

³⁹ For example, see *Collected Records*, vol. 1, chapter 4: *Hu-han-i yin-i t'ung-i chi* 胡漢譯音義同異記 (*Taishō*, 55, 4bc-5a) etc. See also Ono Genmyō, "Kucha shurufuto kutsuin no kabegaki to sono geijyutsu shisō" [Murals and art, the Cave temples of Kucha], *Shigaku zasshi* 39:9 (1929), 917; Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku bukkyō-shi* [History of Chinese Buddhism], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1983), 278-9.

⁴⁰ According to Winter, Šorčuq was the center of the Tokharian culture and Buddhism since the most authentic or archaic form of both Tokharian A and B were found in Šorčuq. See Werner Winter, "Linguistic Classification of Tocharian B texts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 224.

other tantric texts, as noted by Lévi⁴¹ and others. Most of the texts were translated from Sanskrit or Prakrit. There is a colophon which states this clearly and many Sanskrit loan words in Tokharian suggest the same. Tokharian monks probably studied and read Sanskrit texts directly, hence Tokharian B texts were translated from Indian languages in order to teach the lay-people of Kucha in their vernacular language.⁴² This explains why very few abhidharma-related texts in Tokharian were found. Abhidharma, one of the most prominent teachings of the Sarvāstivādins, was studied by the monks in Sanskrit, hence some Abhidharma manuscripts in Sanskrit, but not in Tokharian, were discovered in Kucha, Qarashahr, Tun-huang, and the Turfan region.⁴³ In terms of subject matter, Tokharian texts correspond partially with the Chinese texts which were translated by the Kuchean monks, since both contain Vinaya, tantric, yoga, and Maitreya-related texts.

Some examples of Tokharian Buddhist texts are:⁴⁴

Jātaka and Avadāna

Araṇemi-jātaka, Ṣaḍḍanta-jātaka, Mūgapakha-jātaka, Sūryodgamaprātihārya-jātaka, Koṭikaraṇāvadāna, Unmādayanti-jātaka, Viśvantara-jātaka, Puṇyavanta-jātaka.

Āgama class

Udānavarga, Udānalaṅkāra, Dīrghāgama, Nidāna-samyukta

Abhidharma class

Abhidharmāvatāra-prakarāṇa, possible fragments of the *Abhidharma kośa*

⁴¹ Sylvain Lévi, "On a Tantrik fragment from Kucha (Central Asia)," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 12 (1936).

⁴² Unlike Tokharian B, Tokharian A texts are all Buddhist texts and nothing else. This suggests that the vernacular language of the Qarashahr region was different from the church-language (Tokharian A) at that time.

⁴³ For the examples of the abhidharma texts from the region, see Lore Sander and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil IV (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1980) 247-263; Junkichi Imanishi, *Das Pañcavastukam und die pañcavastukavibhāṣā* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969).

⁴⁴ Tokharian texts which were published in transcription only or with translation.

Stotras

Śatapañcāśatkastotra, Udāna stotras, Buddha stotras.

Vinaya

Vinaya and prātimokṣa fragments

Mahāyāna class

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra, Yogaśataka, Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka-sūtra, a tantric fragment.

Others

Karmavibhaṅga, Catusparīṣat-sūtra, Daśottara-sūtra, Karmavācanā, Praṇidhi

The Tokharian A version of the *Koṭīkarṇāvadāna*⁴⁵ was studied by Inokuchi⁴⁶ who found that it was closer in content to the version included in the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* or *Shih-sung lü* 十誦律 in Chinese than to the Sanskrit or Pali versions in the *Divyāvadāna* or the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayavastu*. This does not mean that the Tokharian version was translated from Chinese or vice versa since the former was written in rhymed verses and the latter in prose. Nevertheless they probably originated from the same recension of the story in its early form of the development of the avadāna in Central Asia. The Chinese version was translated into Chinese in 404 C.E. by Puṇyatara and Kumārajīva, the Kuchean translator, a fact which may partially explain the similarity between them. Since there are no vinayas of the schools which spell out the details of the the story related to Koṭīkarṇa, except that of the Sarvāstivādins, this Tokharian fragment shows its definite affiliation to the school in the Qarashahr and Kucha region.

⁴⁵ The transcription of the avadāna (fragments) is available in Emil Sieg and Wilhelm Siegling, *Tocharische Sprachreste* (Berlin: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1921), 186-188.

⁴⁶ Inokuchi Taijun, *Chūo-Ajia go kodai-go bunken* [Texts in Ancient Languages of the Western Region], *Seiki Bunka kenkyū*, Vol. 4, Supplement (Kyoto: Hozōkan, 1961), 322-332. There are exactly five different scenes in which Koṭīkarṇa meets with different *pretas*, in both the Tokharian and Chinese versions. The Sanskrit versions have additional scenes included and the Pāli version is far removed from the Tokharian version.

Was the Kuchean saṃgha related to any specific group of the Sarvāstivādins? The study of the *Udānālaṃkāra*, the commentary of the *Udānavarga*, shows it relates to a certain specific school of the Sarvāstivādins in Kashmir, since the text contains many abhidharma concepts defined by the school.⁴⁷ Through the study of different kinds of abhidharma texts available, we know that the Sarvāstivādins were already split into two factions before or around the second century B.C.E. and further sub-divided into many factions even within the Kashmiri Sarvāstivādins. According to Inoue, there are mainly two abhidharma texts in Chinese, which roughly correspond to the Tokharian *Udānālaṃkāra*, i.e., the *Abhidharma vibhāṣā-śāstra* 婆沙論⁴⁸ and the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* 大毘婆沙論,⁴⁹ each of which was compiled by different schools within the Sarvāstivādins.⁵⁰ As the study shows that the Tokharian text is closest to the latter Chinese text, Dharmasoma, the commentator of the *Udānālaṃkāra*, probably belonged to the particular subdivision of the Sarvāstivādin which was related to the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*. Thus the Sarvāstivādins in Kucha might have been related to the particular faction of the same school in Kashmir.

In general, Tokharian Buddhist texts have so far been studied primarily by linguists and there has not been enough work done by Buddhologists to determine the religio-

⁴⁷ Inoue Yasuyoshi, "Tokara-go batten Udānālaṃkāra ni okeru abidaruma-teki chūkai" [Abhidharma Commentary in the Tokharian Udānālaṃkāra], *Bukkyō-gaku kenkyū* 29 (1972): 60.

⁴⁸ *A-p'i-t'an p'o-sha lun* 阿毗曇婆沙論. This commentary is attributed to Kātyāyanīputra and translated by Buddhavarman, together with Tao-t'ai 道泰 in 437-439 C.E. Nanjio 278.

⁴⁹ *A-p'i-ta-mo ta-p'i-p'o-sha lun* 阿毗達磨大毘婆沙論 was compiled by five hundred Arahats, headed by venerable Vasumitra, 400 years after the Buddha's entering Nirvāna. It was translated by Hsüan-tsang (656-659 C.E.). Nanjio 278.

⁵⁰ As the abhidharma texts include critical comments regarding the ideas of non-Buddhist, other Nikāya schools, and/or even of other factions within the same school, this similarity to a particular text reveals affiliation to the specific school to which the text is

historical background of the texts or to systematically compare the contents of Tokharian texts with different versions in other languages. As Tokharian Buddhism seems very different from Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism or even from the Theravāda of the Southeast Asian countries in its soteriological framework and in its historical setting, further studies of Tokharian texts will facilitate the knowledge of some aspects of Tokharian Buddhism unknown from the Chinese sources.

Kizil Caves of Kucha

The Kizil caves, situated 65 km west of Kucha, constitute the largest Buddhist cave complex in the Kucha region. Over 236 cave temples in Kizil, with various paintings along the walls and ceilings inside, were carved on the cliffs stretching from east to west for a length of 2 km. As in Tokharian literature, the main subjects of the murals are jātakas, avadānas, and legends of the Buddha, some of which are depicted inside the repetitive patterns of diamond-shaped mountains in many layers on top of one another to show the narrative sequences of the scenes. According to Grünwedel,⁵¹ these murals on the walls of the caves are dated from the third to the eighth century C.E. The earlier paintings reflect more Greco-Roman or Gandhāran influences while the later ones are a blending of Indian and indigenous style and coloring. Later caves seem to have fewer legends and/or jātakas, being replaced by the repetitive designs of the small thousand Buddha motifs, or sitting Buddhas with nimbuses. One common characteristic throughout the caves is a lack of Chinese influence on stylistic features.

related.

⁵¹ Albert Grünwedel, *Alt buddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von George Reimer, 1912). For more recent art-historical accounts on Kizil, see M. Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 17-98.

Waldschmidt⁵² classified the art of the region into three distinct periods:

- 1) Indo-Hellenistic (Gandharan) -- until c. 600 C.E.
- 2) Tokharian period centered around Kucha -- until c. 800 C.E.
- 3) Turkic-Chinese period centered around Turfan -- from c. 800 C.E. onwards.

Along the lines of Waldschmidt, Gabain⁵³ noted several characteristics of the Tokharian period. First, foreigners (non-Tokharians such as Indians) on the wall paintings were portrayed with distinguishing facial and ethnic features, which can be compared to more stylized facial features of themselves. Secondly, the ancient Indian warriors were depicted with Iranian costumes and styles. According to Gabain, these Tokharian artistic styles were passed onto the Uighur art in the later Turkic period.

Indian stylistic influences are seen in two different levels; earlier Gandhāran elements such as the winged angels, Garuḍa with serpents in its beak, or the sun god on a chariot, and later Indian motifs such as the depiction of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī with a stylistic emphasis on the physical body.⁵⁴ Unlike textual study, art historical studies reveal the local culture of the population in the Kucha region, namely the Iranian culture, which is distinct in many aspects of the Kizil caves, such as in the structure of the caves, the style of paintings, and the ornamental and/or decorative details. For example, the square cave with round ceiling (Cave No. 92) reflects Persian architecture, in common with the Pandrentham in Gandhāra and the caves of Bāmiyān in Afghanistan. The diadem decorated with beads and disks worn by Maitreya and Boddhisattvas, with white ribbons

⁵² A von Le Coq and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*, Bd. VII (Berlin: Verlag Dietrich Reimer Ernstvohsen, 1933), 29

⁵³ Annemarie Gabain, *Das Uigurische Königreich von Chotscho* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961), 26-36.

⁵⁴ Ueno Teruo, "Kiziru Sen-but-su-do no Bukkyō bijyutsu ni okeru Indo-teki kei-shiki" [Indian Stylistic elements on the Buddhist art of the Thousand Buddha Caves of Kizil], *Buddhaica* 50 (1962), 19-21.

hanging from both sides, originated from the crown of the Sasanian king, the symbol of divine kingship. The decorative motifs, birds or other animals in the pearl medallion on the clothes of donors (Cave 8) are also typical patterns used in Persian silk textiles and silver work of the Sasanian period.⁵⁵

Many of the jātakas depicted in the caves can be identified in the *Mahājātakamālā*, *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalata*, and *Mañicuda-avadāna* among Hīnayāna texts.⁵⁶ Jātakas do not necessarily demonstrate affiliation to particular schools since both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna schools used jātakas as a significant part of their religious teachings. Hence Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, *Mahāsamnipāta-sūtra*, and *Hsien-yü ching* 賢愚經 (*Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*) also contain these jātakas of the caves. Moreover, the most frequent subject of the jātakas of the Kizil caves, the bodily sacrifice or giving up part or the whole of body for the sake of others or for the Dharma, can be interpreted in either a Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna way. In the Hīnayāna environment of Kucha, bodily sacrifice was considered to be an important practice on the path of enlightenment for monks and laymen in spirit even if it was not taken literally. Such practice was expanded in Mahāyāna as one of the Six Pāramitās⁵⁷ which a Bodhisattva has to practice. In Kizil's case, the jātakas and avadānas belong to the tradition of the Sarvāstivādins, as Hatani noted that there is at least one mural which depicts the Buddha's miracle of walking on the water of Ganges River, which was described exclusively in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavastu*, the vinaya text of the school.

⁵⁵ Ueno 25.

⁵⁶ Hadani Ryōtei, "Kaku-shyoku kutsu-in ni okeru bukkyō gei-jyutsu ni kansuru mon-dai" [Problems on the Buddhist art of the Kizil Caves], *Gendai Bukkyō* 9 (1921): 21.

⁵⁷ The six pāramitās are *dāna* (almsgiving), *sīla* (precepts), *kṣānti* (forbearance), *vīrya* (assiduousness), *dhyāna* (meditation), *prajñā* (wisdom).

The popularity of bodily sacrifice was also reported by Fa-hsien 法顯 (394-416 C.E.) who notes that in Gandhāra, the stūpas named "sacrifice with flesh," "giving one's eyes," or "giving one's head" were more popular than those named "enlightenment" or "preaching the law."⁵⁸ He reported such practice as Mahāyāna, although Gandhāran Buddhism, like Kuchean, was centered around the Sarvāstivādins. Kucha must have imported such popular Buddhist culture from Gandhāra.

Most of the paintings of legends of the Buddha's life can be also traced to Hīnayāna texts such as the *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavastu*, *Fo pen-hsing chi ching* 仏本行集經, *P'u-yao ching* 普曜經, the *Sūtrālaṅkāra śāstra*, *T'ai-tzu jui-ying pen chi ching* 太子瑞應本記經, and *Kuo-ch'ü hsien-tsai yin-kuo ching* 過去現在因果經 and others. Especially the early murals of the legends show the Hīnayāna tendency toward "worship of the Buddha alone"⁵⁹ by putting the Buddha himself as the center of focus rather than the thousand Buddhas, for example. Another Hīnayāna feature in Kizil can be detected in the frequency of appearance of the Nirvāṇa scenes among the early caves, wherein enlightenment is represented as the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa or his death itself as the state of the total cessation of desire and ignorance as the freest eternal state of life according to Hīnayāna teaching.⁶⁰ Moreover, the depiction of the *Pañca gatayaḥ* in cave No.175 also

⁵⁸ James Legge (tr), *Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1886), 32.

⁵⁹ *The Collected Records*, vol. 5, *Hsiao-ch'eng mi-hsüeh chu-fa-tu-tsao i-i chi* 小乘迷学竺法度造異儀記 (*Taishō*, vol. 55, No. 2145, 40c-41b).

⁶⁰ Ma Shih-ch'ang and Ting Ming-yi, "Kiziru sekkutsu no Butsuden-hekiga" [The Murals of the Legends of Buddha in Kizil Caves], in *Kiziru sekkutsu* (3), 218.

complies with the five paths⁶¹ of the Sarvāstivādins, but not the other Nikāya schools⁶² which describe six paths. Thus there seems to be enough evidence to show that the art of Kizil was an artistic representation of the Sarvāstivādins.

Nirvāṇa scenes of the Buddha in a coffin are usually depicted on the wall behind the niche of the Buddha of various caves. The Parinirvāṇa scenes, originating from Gandhāra, are composed of mourners, lamenting gods, and disciples around the lying Buddha in the coffin. Ma and Ting have noted that the depiction of the nirvāṇa scene complies with some details described in the *Abhidharma vibhāṣā-śāstra*, vol. 32, the abhidharma text of the Sarvāstivādins, but not with the Mahāyāna texts.⁶³ The scene does not owe much to the art of India proper, but rather developed in divergent ways in Central Asia and China. The expression of the mourners, pulling their hair and cutting their faces with a knife is not from Indian Buddhist tradition but from Central Asian funeral customs as described by Al-Biruni and Mahmud al Kashgari.⁶⁴ They reported that east Iranians, including Sogdians, had such customs at funeral rites as violent mourning with bleeding, which was believed to bring about the resurrection of the dead person. Although they reported the custom around the tenth century or later, such funeral rites were believed to have been widely practiced by Eurasian nomads and the sedentary populations of Central Asia from pre-Buddhist times.

⁶¹ The five paths are five basic states of life which include hell, hunger, animality, human, and heaven.

⁶² For example, the texts of Vātsīputrīya and other schools describe six paths, including anger (asura).

⁶³ *Yu-yü-i nieh-p'an i* 有余依涅槃義 cited by Ma and Ting 212.

⁶⁴ Miyaji Akira, "Chū-ō ajia ni okeru nehan-zu no zuzō ni tsuite" [Regarding the artistic representation of Parinirvāṇa scenes in Central Asia], *Oriente* 24 (March 1982): 32.

Who were the commissioners of these vast and elaborate cave temples of Kizil? There are two hints regarding this question. One of them is the depiction of donors in Cave No. 8⁶⁵ and the Tibetan inscriptions regarding the commissioner and painters of the Kizil Caves. In the Indian Buddhist art of Ajanta and Gandhāra, donors are not usually depicted clearly, if at all. In Kizil, local aristocratic donors are represented in their long mantles with wide flaring lapels. The male figures with short and long swords at their waists are depicted in a rather formal and monumental manner. Unlike the Indian style, bodily elements are minimized and the clothes are emphasized in a two dimensional, decorative manner. Why are there such distinctively mundane donor figures in the Kizil caves which were built for Buddhist prayer and meditation? It can be interpreted that the secular authority did not hesitate to express its power in the religious domain as both the secular and religious authority was often intermingled for mutual dependency in Kucha. The domination of political authority, which permeated the religious arena is symbolically demonstrated here in Kizil. The power of politico-military authority was a prime necessity for the survival of the Central Asian kingdoms where so many different races and peoples were constantly striving for existence and domination.

Regarding the patronage of the caves, a text explaining the map of the Kucha area in Tibetan found in Kucha by Grünwedel describes the paintings in the older caves⁶⁶ as being commissioned by a Tokharian (Thogar) king called "Mendre" with the advice of Anandavarman, a high-ranking monk.⁶⁷ The king ordered an Indian artist, Naravāhanadatta, and a Syrian artist, Priyaratna, with their disciples to paint the caves.

⁶⁵ The celebrated Cave of Sixteen Sword-Bearers dated around sixth/seventh century.

⁶⁶ Mischen-höle and Staten-höle in the German naming system.

⁶⁷ Albert Grünwedel, *Alt-Kutscha* (Berlin: O. Elsner Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.h, 1920), S. I., 10 (1): I, II, 1, 12(4); Hatani Ryōtei, *Gendai Bukkyō*, 24.

Khotanese (Zin-li) kings Vijayavardhana and Murlimin also assisted with the painting of the life of Buddha Śakyamuni in the Cave 60⁶⁸ by sending artists called Amoghabindu, Lipidatta, and Agathadīmā. Thus the Tokharian King Mendre and likely other Kucheans at different times played a major part in creating the Buddhist complex at Kizil, with the help of other neighboring kings in gathering a rather international group of artists at that time. Thus art-historical studies show that the Kucheans, as Buddhist kings, protected and promoted mostly the Nīkāya Buddhism dominated by the Sarvāstivādins in Kucha.

Summary and Conclusion: Kingship and Saṃgha in Kucha

In the early phase, Buddhism spread in Kucha probably from the king's court and aristocrats, as there were many early monks who had the royal surname of *Pai* or *Po*. By the third century, Buddhism was well established in Kucha as some missionary monks from there started to arrive in China to transmit various Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna texts. In the fourth century, Kumārajīva, under the patronage of the king Pai-ch'un, preached Mahāyāna texts and established a Mahāyāna basis in Kucha at least temporarily. His Mahāyāna mission was most appreciated in China, where he translated over 300 Mahāyāna texts, while Buddhism in Kucha simply continued to be dominated by the Sarvāstivādins until the seventh century C.E. Kucha was not an exclusively Hīnayāna Buddhist country, however, since the Sarvāstivādins dominated Kucha for half a millennium.

Studies of Tokharian Buddhist texts also confirm the co-existence of various schools despite the predominance of the Sarvāstivādins. No Tokharian texts dated before the sixth century have been found up to the present and most of the extant texts are dated around the sixth to eighth century C.E. These include many jātakas, avadāna, Āgamas, abhidharma

⁶⁸ The Grösste-höle in German classification.

texts, vinaya and even Mahāyāna texts. These texts do not include information concerning from which schools they were generated, but study shows that the Tokharian *Koṭikarṇāvadāna* is closest to the version in the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*. Another textual study of the *Udānālamkāra* further postulated that the school in Kucha was one of the sub-divided groups of the Kashmiri Sarvāstivādins.

The Kizil caves near Kucha, unlike those of Indian or Chinese construction, represent a rather unique Buddhist art of the Sarvāstivādins, which dominated the saṃghas of Kucha for over half a millennium until the end of the tenth century C.E., this despite there being some Mahāyāna motifs of the thousand Buddhas among later caves in Kizil. The most popular theme depicted in the jātakas, bodily sacrifice and the nirvāṇa scenes, both point to the direction of Gandhāra as the source of artistic and religious inspiration in the two levels of popular and scholastic Buddhism. Studies of the Kizil cave paintings reveal the influence of Iranian culture on the Kucheans, although they were not Iranian speakers. Furthermore the decorative and monumental depiction of the aristocratic donors in the Kizil caves suggests that the mundane authority headed by the king influenced the religious domain to some extent in Kucha, as the donors are almost never distinctively depicted in religious paintings in India, where Buddhism tried to be independent from the secular authority in its early period. The Tibetan inscription also described a Tokharian king, who with the help of the Khotanese kings, gathered artists to decorate the Kizil cave as a commissioner. Both Tokharian textual and art historical studies of Buddhism in Kucha point out the predominance of the school of the Sarvāstivādins originating from Kashmir. The increase of Mahāyāna elements in the later Kizil paintings, however, is not attested in textual studies or the Chinese monks' reports, which describe the Hīnayāna dominance in Kucha during the seventh century C.E. and onwards.

Some Kucheans occasionally favored certain monks of the Mahāyāna school, which did not seem to upset the noble monks of the Nikāya school particularly. The

dominant Sarvāstivādins and other Nikāya schools sometimes co-existed with the Mahāyāna and, at other times, they were more intolerant of it. Nevertheless both the saṃghas and the kings of Kucha treated foreign monks respectfully, whether they were Indian, Chinese, or Central Asian, regardless of their difference in school, despite the fact that there were major differences in their respected vinayas and texts, depending on the particular schools.

Like other Central Asian oasis states, Buddhism in Kucha had to draw the interest and dedication of the aristocrats and kings in order to establish a firm basis as the state religion in the kingdom. Most missionary monks from Kucha in China had royal or aristocratic background as is known from their surnames in the early phase of Kuchean Buddhism in the third and fourth century C.E. Kumārajīva was one such monk with a royal background, who was at times treated by the Kuchean king as higher than the king himself. The king traveled a long distance to the next kingdom in order to welcome Kumārujīva and offered him an elaborately decorated chair, which was placed higher than the king's chair, on which to sit and preach when they arrived back at Kucha. In the seventh century, Hsüan-tsang was also treated with respect by the Kuchean king in a similar manner. Does this mean that the religious authority dominated over the kingship in Kucha? That seems to be the case only in a symbolic sense, as it was part of the religious prescriptions which led Buddhist kings to subscribe to a certain pattern of behavior in order to show respect to noble Buddhist monks. Such prescriptions are most vividly depicted in the roles of the kings in Buddhist ceremonies such as *Pañca-varṣikā-pariṣad*, the procession of Buddha images, and the commissioning of the Kizil caves.

The kings were the central figures of these ceremonies and rituals, showing a good example of "giving away," or generous spirit in the act of donation to the saṃgha and poor people, an act frequently depicted in the paintings of the Jātakas in the Kizil caves. The buildings of saṃghārāma were donated by the kings and named after them. These kingly

duties and services as Buddhist monarchs were compensated for by getting support from the saṃghas when a king had to consult concerning the issue of decrees with the head of the saṃghas, who officially represented the whole religious community in Kucha. The royal palace of Kucha was almost indistinguishable from a Buddhist temple as both were full of Buddha statues and other Buddhist objects. The palace symbolism celebrated the integrated relationship between church and state in Kucha, which was common among Central Asian Buddhist kingdoms in general.

What was the influence of kingship on the religious domain? Unlike other Buddhist kingdoms in Central Asia, such as Khotan or Kroraina, there is no evidence that kingship interfered in the domain of the saṃgha in Kucha. This might have been due to the strength of the Sarvāstivādin saṃgha, with its relatively structured religious order independent of the secular powers, such as kingship, other than for financial or material support. This was closer to the ideal of early Indian Buddhism in its immunity to political authority. Such, however, may be an idealization from the point of view of the Buddhist saṃgha, as we do not have enough evidence to firmly support the above assumption. Nevertheless it implies that Mahāyāna Buddhism seems to have been more open to the penetration of secular powers, such as kingship, as seen in the kingdoms of Khotan and Kroraina than the saṃgha-oriented Nikāya school of Kucha. As far as we know, unlike Khotan, the king's personal favor for some Mahāyāna monks did not change the fate of the Sarvāstivādins nor the rest of the history of Buddhism in Kucha. The only example of the intrusion of kingship in the religious sphere is the donor figures in the Kizil caves, which can be interpreted as an invasion of mundane power into the religious domain. This may, however, probably be taken more as an indication of the integration of Buddhism and secular power than an intrusion of Central Asian kingship on Buddhism in Kucha.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Long after I had finished this paper, I became aware of Xu Wenkan's excellent article on the same subject, though from a different angle. See "The Tokharians and Buddhism," *Studies of Central and East Asian Religions*, 9 (1996): 1-17.

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