

# Extant Sanskrit Manuscripts of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*

Shin'ichirō Hori

## 1. A fragmentary Sanskrit manuscript of the entire text of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*

Complete Sanskrit manuscripts of the entire text of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* corresponding to Buddhābhaddra's (Taishō 278) and Śikṣānanda's (Taishō 279) Chinese translations and the Tibetan version (Peking 761; Tōyō Bunko 32) have not been found so far. However, the present author has identified numerous Sanskrit fragments that most likely belong to a single manuscript originally containing the entire *Buddhāvataṃsaka*.<sup>1</sup> These fragments came from the ruins of Khadaliq located about 115 km east of Khotan on the Southern route of the Silk Road and are currently scattered across three collections: (1) the Petrovsky Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, (2) the Hoernle Collection in the British Library, London, and (3) the Stein Collection in the British Library. A fragment from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Hoernle Collection Or 15010/155, has a special significance, because it bears the folio number "382." If this fragment belonged to an independent manuscript of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the total number of folios would not exceed 140. The number "382" thus suggests that it did not numerate the folios of the independent *Gaṇḍavyūha*. In addition to many fragments from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, fragments from chapters 2, 3, and 4, and the *Lokottaraparivātra* have been identified. The writing support of the fragments is paper and the script is Early Turkestan Brāhmī, type b. According to Lore Sander, the manuscripts written in this script may be dated to the fifth to sixth century CE.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Sanskrit manuscripts of several chapters from the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* as independent texts

Sanskrit texts of several chapters from the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* are transmitted as independent sutras, such as the *Daśabhūmika* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

### 2.1. *Daśabhūmika*

---

<sup>1</sup> Hori Shin'ichirō, "Sanskrit Fragments of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* from Central Asia," in: Robert Gimello, Frédéric Girard and Imre Hamar, eds., *Avataṃsaka Buddhism in East Asia: Origins and Adaptation of a Visual Culture* (Asiatische Forschungen: Monographienreihe zur Geschichte, Kultur und Sprache der Völker Ost- und Zentralasiens 155), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012, 15–35; Hori Shin'ichirō 堀 伸一郎, 「華嚴經原典への歴史—サンスクリット写本断片研究の意義」 『智慧／世界／ことば 大乘仏典 I』 (シリーズ大乘仏教 第4巻), Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2013, 183–211.

<sup>2</sup> Lore Sander, "Brāhmī Scripts on the Eastern Silk Roads," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 11/12 (1986): 159–192, esp. 167, plates 15–17; Lore Sander, *Paläographisches zu den Sanskrithandschriften der Berliner Turfansammlung* (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband 8), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968, 181–182, Tafel 29–40 (Alphabet s).

Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Daśabhūmika*<sup>3</sup> are found in Nepal, Northwestern India, and Central Asia.

### 2.1.1. Nepalese manuscripts

The independent text of the *Daśabhūmika* is revered as one of the nine *dharmas* (*navadharmas*) in Newar Buddhism. Therefore, there are several palm-leaf and a great many paper Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Daśabhūmika* from Nepal. Kazunobu Matsuda reproduces the oldest incomplete palm-leaf manuscript in Gupta script together with another incomplete palm-leaf manuscript in Bhujimol script (see footnote 13 below), both preserved in the National Archives, Kathmandu.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.2. So-called Gilgit manuscript

A folio from the *Daśabhūmika* belongs to the so-called Gilgit manuscripts actually found in Naupur near Gilgit and is now preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra reproduce the folio in facsimile.<sup>5</sup> The writing support of the folio is birch-bark and the script is Gilgit/Bāmiyān Type II (= Protośāradā).<sup>6</sup> Klaus Wille identifies the folio as belonging to the *Daśabhūmika*. Judging by the folio number 62 and the amount of text contained in the folio, it can be considered a folio from the independent sutra of the *Daśabhūmika*.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1.3. Central Asian fragments

The German Turfan Collection preserved in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin includes three

---

<sup>3</sup> The text corresponds to chapter 22, 十地品, in Buddhahadra's translation, chapter 26, 十地品, in Śikṣānanda's translation, and chapter 31, *sa bcu*, in the Tibetan translation.

<sup>4</sup> Kazunobu Matsuda, ed., *Two Sanskrit Manuscripts of the Daśabhūmikasūtra Preserved at the National Archives, Kathmandu* (Bibliotheca Codicum Asiaticorum 10), Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for Unesco, Toyo Bunko, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Raghu Vira & Lokesh Chandra, eds., *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts (Facsimile Edition)*, Part 10 (Śāta-Piṭaka Series, Indo-Asian Literatures 10), New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1974, 3338–3339.

<sup>6</sup> Sander 1968: 137–161, Tafel 21–26 (Alphabet m); Lore Sander, “Einige neue Aspekte zur Entwicklung der Brāhmī in Gilgit und Bamiyan (ca. 2.–7. Jh. n.Chr.),” in: Klaus Röhrborn & Wolfgang Veenker, eds., *Sprachen des Buddhismus in Zentralasien: Vorträge des Hamburger Symposiums vom 2. Juli bis 5. Juli 1981* (Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica 16), Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983, 113–123.

<sup>7</sup> Oskar von Hinüber, “The Gilgit Manuscripts: An Ancient Buddhist Library in Modern Research,” in: Paul Harrison & Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds., *From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research. Papers Presented at the Conference, Indic Buddhist Manuscripts: The State of the Field, Stanford, June 15–19 2009* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 460. Band; Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Nr. 80), Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014, 79–135, esp. 109.

folios of the *Daśabhūmika* discovered by the Third German Turfan Expedition in the ruins of Šorčuq, near Qarašahr, on the Northern route of the Silk Road.<sup>8</sup> The writing support of the folios is paper and the script is Northern Turkestan Brāhmī, type a.<sup>9</sup> Klaus Wille transcribes the three folios.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. *Gaṇḍavyūha*

Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the last chapter of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*,<sup>11</sup> are found in Nepal, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

### 2.2.1. Nepalese manuscripts

The independent text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is revered by Newar Buddhists as one of the nine *dharma*s (*navadharmā*), like the *Daśabhūmika*. There is only one complete palm-leaf Sanskrit manuscript of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Brian Houghton Hodgson acquired the manuscript in the Kathmandu Valley and offered it to the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London.<sup>12</sup> The date in the Newar Era recorded in its colophon can be converted to Sunday, February 13, 1166 CE. The script used in the manuscript is called *Bhujimol* in Nepal.<sup>13</sup>

An illustrated palm-leaf manuscript of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is very important for the study of art history, but is unfortunately incomplete.<sup>14</sup> Svetoslav Roerich purchased the manuscript in India in the 1950s. The manuscript is now dispersed in many museums in the USA and the State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow.<sup>15</sup> The text is written in

---

<sup>8</sup> SHT I 414. See Ernst Waldschmidt, Walter Clawiter & Lore Holzmann, eds., *Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil 1 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Band X, 1), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965, 187.

<sup>9</sup> Sander 1986: 160–167, plates 7–8; Sander 1968: 182, Tafel 29–40 (Alphabet t).

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Wille, *Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil 11: Die Katalognummern 4363–5799 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Band X, 11), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012, 407–410.

<sup>11</sup> The text corresponds to chapter 34, 入法界品, in Buddhābhadrā's translation, chapter 39, 入法界品, in Śikṣānanda's translation, and chapter 45, *sdoñ pos brgyan pa*, in the Tibetan translation.

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson Collection No. 2. See E. B. Cowell & J. Eggeling, "Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Possession of the Royal Asiatic Society (Hodgson Collection)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, New Series 8 (1876): 1–52, esp. 3–4.

<sup>13</sup> Śaṅkarmān Rājvaṃśī, *Prācīna lipi varṇamālā* (Purātattva prakāśana mālā 3), Nepal: Śrī 5 ko sarkār, purātattva ra saṃskṛti vibhāg, nepāl, 1960, 15–19.

<sup>14</sup> Alexey Vigasin, "A Unique *Gaṇḍavyūha* Manuscript in Moscow: A Preliminary Report," *Bulletin d'études indiennes* 31(2013): 253–265.

<sup>15</sup> Sonya Rhie Mace, "Clearing the Course: Folio 348 of the Nepalese *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* in the Cleveland Museum of Art," *Religions* 11(4), 183 (2020): 1n1; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11040183>; accessed April 1, 2023. 144 folios and two wooden covers that are now in the State Museum of Oriental Art (Государственный музей Востока), Moscow, were formerly preserved in the International Centre of the Roerichs, Moscow.

Nepālākṣara.<sup>16</sup>

While only one complete and several incomplete or fragmentary palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* from Nepal are available, there are more than twenty Nepalese paper manuscripts of the sutra.

### 2.2.2. A fragment probably from Bamiyan

The former Kabul Museum Collection contained a fragment of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* probably from Bamiyan.<sup>17</sup> Gudrun Melzer identifies the fragment as belonging to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The writing support is palm-leaf and the script is Northwestern Gupta Brāhmī.

### 2.2.3. Central Asian fragments

The German Turfan Collection contains one folio<sup>18</sup> and three fragments of a folio<sup>19</sup> from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The present author re-edits these fragments which are now preserved in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.<sup>20</sup> The former was discovered by the Third German Turfan Expedition in the ruins of Šorčuq, near Qarašahr, on the Northern route of the Silk Road. Its writing support is paper and the script is Southern Turkestan Brāhmī.<sup>21</sup> Judging by the folio number 275 and the amount of text contained in the folio, it can be considered a folio from the independent sutra of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The latter was also discovered by the Third German Turfan Expedition in the ruins of Šorčuq. Its writing support is paper and the script is Northern Turkestan Brāhmī, type a.<sup>22</sup> Since the two folios are written in different scripts, they must belong to two different manuscripts.

## 2.3. *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvananāmamahāyānasūtra*

A complete manuscript of the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvananāmamahāyānasūtra*<sup>23</sup> is included in the bound manuscript of twenty Buddhist sutras preserved in the Potala

---

<sup>16</sup> Siegfried Lienhard & Thakur Lal Manandhar, *Nepalese Manuscripts, Part 1: Nevārī and Sanskrit, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin* (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Band XXXIII, 1), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1988, xviii–xxv.

<sup>17</sup> Lore Sander, “Dating and Localizing Undated Manuscripts,” in: Harrison & Hartmann 2014: 171–186, esp. 177n43.

<sup>18</sup> SHT I 531. See Waldschmidt, Clawiter & Holzmann 1965: 234–236.

<sup>19</sup> SHT III 960. See Ernst Waldschmidt, Walter Clawiter & Lore Sander-Holzmann, eds., *Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Teil 3 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Band X, 3), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971, 221–222.

<sup>20</sup> Shin’ichirō Hori, “Gaṇḍavyūha-Fragmente der Turfan-Sammlung,” *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies* 『国際仏教学大学院大学研究紀要』5 (2002): 113–132 (118–99).

<sup>21</sup> Sander 1986: 167–168, plates 12–13; Sander 1968:183, Tafel 29–40 (Alphabet v).

<sup>22</sup> Sander 1986: 160–167, plates 7–8; Sander 1968:182, Tafel 29–40 (Alphabet t).

<sup>23</sup> The text corresponds to chapter 26, 壽命品, in Buddhābhadrā’s translation, Chapter 31, 壽量品, in Śikṣānanda’s translation, and chapter 37, *tshe’i tshad*, in the Tibetan translation.

Palace, Lhasa. The manuscript is published and translated by Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā.<sup>24</sup> The manuscript is written in Old Bengali script.<sup>25</sup>

#### 2.4. *Samantabhadracaryānirdeśaparivarta*

A folio from the last portion of the *Samantabhadracaryānirdeśaparivarta*<sup>26</sup> is included in a set of Sanskrit manuscripts presented to Russia by the Dalai Lama XIII through Dorzhiev and is now preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.<sup>27</sup> The folio is published by Kazunobu Matsuda.<sup>28</sup> The writing support of this set of manuscripts is paper and the script used is Nepālākṣara.

---

<sup>24</sup> Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā (Vinita Tseng, 自運), ed. & tr., *A Unique Collection of Twenty Sūtras in a Sanskrit Manuscript from the Potala*, Vol. I,2 (Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region 7/2), Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House; Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2010, 557–593.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā (Vinita Tseng, 自運), ed. & tr., *A Unique Collection of Twenty Sūtras in a Sanskrit Manuscript from the Potala*, Vol. I,1 (Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region 7/1), Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House; Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2010, xvii, xxxviii. For the term “Old Bengali script,” see Dragomir Dragomir, “Tables of the Old Bengali Script (on the Basis of a Nepalese Manuscript of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa*),” in: Dragomir Dimitrov, Ulrike Roesler, and Roland Steiner, eds., *Śikṣisamuccayaḥ: Indian and Tibetan Studies* (Collectanea Marpurgensia Indologica et Tibetologica) (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 53), Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2002, 27–78, esp. 29.

<sup>26</sup> The text corresponds to chapter 31, 普賢菩薩行品, in Buddhābhadrā’s translation, chapter 36, 普賢行品, in Śikṣānanda’s translation, and chapter 42, *kun tu bzañ po ’i spyod pa bstan pa*, in the Tibetan translation.

<sup>27</sup> Call number: Ms. Ind. VII. 23. See Н. Д. Миронов (N. D. Mironov), *Каталогъ индійскихъ рукописей*, Выпускъ I (Каталоги Азіатскаго Музея Императорской Академіи Наукъ, I), *Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum Indicorum qui in Academiae Imperialis Scientiarum Petropolitanae Museo Asiatico asservantur*, Fasc. I (Catalogi Musei Asiatici, I), Петроградъ: Типографія Императорской Академіи Наукъ, 1914, 332 (no. 422); Т.К. Посова & К.Л. Чижилова, *Краткий каталог индійскихъ рукописей Института востоковедения РАН*, Москва: Издательская фирма «Восточная литература» РАН, 1999, 79 (no. 348).

<sup>28</sup> Kazunobu Matsuda 松田 和信, 「華嚴經「普賢菩薩行品」第 78-121 偈の梵文テキスト」『インド論理学研究』8 (2015): 255–268.