

The Kaniṣka Cluster

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Outline

South Asia's First Authors?

Abhidharma Textuality

The Kaniṣka Cluster

Saṅgharakṣa

Conclusions

What is an author?

- ▶ a **historical** person, i.e., someone whom we can locate with some degree of confidence in historical time;
- ▶ who **wrote** or **had written** a text, i.e., someone who produced a document that can be consulted at an arbitrary spatiotemporal distance (“latency”) from the original composition/performance.

From legends into history

- ▶ the Vēdāṅgas (esp. Śikṣā/Vyākaraṇa/Nirukta → Pāṇini, Yāska, Patañjali, etc.)
- ▶ Jain works (Indrabhūti → Śayyambhava, Āryarakṣita, Bhadrabāhu, etc.)
- ▶ the Buddhist tradition (*ēvaṃ mē sutaṃ*)

Abhidharma: from legends into history

- ▶ early texts: ascribed to the Buddha's disciplines
- ▶ later texts: ascribed to historical authors
 - ▶ Dēvaśarman: *Vijñānakāya*
 - ▶ Pūrṇa(yaśas?): *Dhātukāya*
 - ▶ Vasumitra: *Prakaraṇapāda*
 - ▶ Kātyāyanīputra: *Jñānaprasthāna*

Sarvāstivādīkaraṇa

- ▶ The Sarvāstivādas exerted a big influence on the development of Abhidharma literature, as it was their “trademark.”
- ▶ Their activity culminates in (a series of texts called?) *Vibhāṣā*, probably in the 3rd c.
- ▶ There are legends in Chinese and Tibetan sources about how this *Vibhāṣā* was the product of a “council” that occurred under the reign of Kaniṣka
 - ▶ see Frauwallner (1952), esp. the version found in Xuánzàng’s *Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*

Kaniṣka and the Sarvāstivādas



The so-called Kaniṣka casket (image from Wikipedia)

Literature and Philosophy

- ▶ Sander (1991) noted that the earliest fragmentary Sanskrit manuscripts from Central Asia, dating to the Kuṣāṇa period (2nd–4th c.), generally represent Abhidharma literature and *kāvya*, two “trademarks” of the Sarvāstivāda *nikāya*
- ▶ Aśvaghoṣa, known to us as a poet, was also probably a Sarvāstivāda monk (Eltschinger/Yamabe), and is referred to in the *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra*
- ▶ Why are these two kinds of texts connected with each other in this way?
 - ▶ The open embrace of manuscript literacy?

Author clusters

- ▶ Groups of authors who appear at more or less the same time, maybe even the same place
- ▶ “Ready-made” clusters in the form of anthologies
 - ▶ *Sattasaī* (Prakrit: Hāla, Pālitta, Poṭṭisa, Kumārila, etc.)
 - ▶ *Eṭṭuttokai* (Tamil: Kapilar, Avvaiyār, etc.)

A Kuṣāṇa anthology?

- ▶ Not quite, but the *Tridaṇḍamālā* comes close (see ongoing work by **Hartmann and Matsuda**)
 - ▶ collection discovered and photographed in Tibet in the 1930s
 - ▶ used in Buddhist liturgies (?)
 - ▶ attributed to Aśvaghoṣa, who is also very often quoted (*Buddhacarita*, *Saundarananda*, *Śāriputraprakaraṇa*, *Sūtrālaṅkāra*?)
 - ▶ contains verses from Mātṛcēṭa and Gōpadatta too, as well as the *Udānavarga*, *Mūlasarvastivādinaya*, etc.

The Kaniṣka Cluster

Authors who are at least remembered as having been contemporaries of Kaniṣka (r. 127–150):

- ▶ Vasumitra (possibly 1st or 2nd c. CE)
- ▶ Mātrcēṭa (possibly late 1st to early 2nd c. CE)
- ▶ Pārśva (possibly early 2nd c. CE)
- ▶ Saṅgharakṣa (possibly early 2nd c. CE)
- ▶ Aśvaghoṣa (mid-2nd c. CE)

The “Sarasvatī Movement”

(The term is from Jain 1964: 100–119)



Inscribed figure of Sarasvatī from Mathurā

Saṅgharakṣa

僧伽羅剎 (sēngjiāluóchà = *song gja la ts^{rh}æt)

- ▶ **Yōgācārabhūmi* tr. 道地經 T. 607 by Ān Shìgāo (安世高) in 2nd c. CE (Demiéville 1951)
- ▶ **Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya* (?) tr. 僧伽羅剎所集經 T. 194 by Fóniàn 佛念 in 384 CE

Saṅgharakṣa

According to the preface to the 僧伽羅剎所集經 by Dào Ān (312–385 CE):

- ▶ born seven hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa
- ▶ native of Surāṣṭa (須賴 xūlài)
- ▶ after becoming a monk, arrived in Gandhavatī (犍陀越 Qiántuóyuè), i.e., Gandhāra, then ruled by Candakaniṣka (甄陀闍膩 Zhēntuó Jìni)

A story is related about how Saṅgharakṣa died underneath a tree, and nobody could move his body, not even when Kaniṣka tried moving it by tying it to an elephant. → died before Kaniṣka in 150 CE?

Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya

- ▶ Pretty much unknown to Indologists
- ▶ Sometimes mentioned as a possible precursor to the *Buddhacarita*
- ▶ Doesn't follow the events of the Buddha's life **chronologically**, but is organized around his exemplary practice of various virtues, perfections, etc.
- ▶ **"Didascalie"** according to Lettere (2023)
- ▶ Includes, as examples, many narratives from both the earlier births and final birth of the Buddha
- ▶ Like the *Buddhacarita*, ends with a description of Aśoka and the redistribution of relics/building of stūpas

Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya

Table of contents

Style of the *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*

Each section begins with prose that is unmistakably more elaborate than that of the *sūtras*, and stylistically has more in common with the *Lalitavistara* or even Mahāyāna *sūtras*. For example (very loose translation!):

At that time the venerable Mahākāśyapa, who was exhausted after exerting himself in asceticism, was relaxing in that garden retreat [i.e. Vēḷuvana]. Without letting up his fire practice (? 事火), covered by his filthy robe, his hair and nails all grown long, all his faculties perfected, having vanquished desire internally, he was walking around back and forth. He was fully aware of everything that he directed his attention to; in his superior spiritual qualities he had no equal; the gods venerated him as a field of merit, paid homage to him, revered him, and worshipped him; he delivered everyone that fell into disaster; he ferried them over the cycle of life and death; he made manifest the signs of the *dharma*, and made manifest joy, exactly as a father would protect his children. He jumped with joy when, in the course of his careful observation, he saw the Tathāgata, who was also looking for a place of quiet retreat, and he went toward the Bhagavan, overcome with joy, bowed before his feet, and sat to one side.

Style of the *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*

是時尊者大迦葉，勤修苦行身體疲厭，於彼園觀處而自娛樂，事火無懈怠，已眾圍繞僧迦梨壞髮爪皆長，諸根淳熟內降伏姪，經行往來所觀察皆悉知之，樂閑處名稱遠聞，故得大慈悲。無與彼尊德等者，天人所供養，是大福田，加敬恭拜，諸遭困厄者皆度脫之，度彼生死布現法相，布現歡樂，擁護如事父無異，所供養業如山不可動，歡喜踊躍欲觀察如來，欲獨一閑靜處，往至世尊所歡樂異法故，頭面禮世尊足在一面坐。

Style of the *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*

At the end of nearly every chapter, verse very often reiterates in terse fashion the main subject matter of that chapter.

He (2012: 50–51), about the *Lalitavistara*

於是便說此偈 yú shì biàn shuō cǐ jì =
atraivōcyata ēṣā gāthā,

“on this very topic there is said the following verse”

Are these verses Saṅgharakṣa’s own compositions?

Style of the *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*

What independence does this one attain,
the disciple who cultivates austerity!
Pure, free of all vexation,
like the clarity of the moon.
Just so today, without any doubt,
those who have this great virtue
must securely grasp the Saddharma,
cleanse themselves of and dispel all impurities.

「彼得何自在， 弟子修苦行，
清淨無眾惱， 如月星中明，
如今無狐疑， 彼有是大德，
當牢持正法， 淨除一切穢。」

Sources (?) of the *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*

廣說如契經 guǎngshuō rú qìjīng “expand as in the sūtras”

- ▶ Also found in Zhū Fóniàn’s other translations
- ▶ But sometimes this occurs when no corresponding sūtra text can be found!

In the Mahākāśyapa story, there are (predictably) closer parallels with the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama* texts than with the Pali *Saṃyuttanikāya*, and these allow us to expand Mahākāśyapa’s discussion with the Buddha from the single topic of solitude (閑居) to the three topics of (1) living alone in the forest, (2) wearing *pāṃśukūlika* robes, and (3) subsisting on alms.

Das Alter der indischen Kunstpoesie

- ▶ Is this *kāvya*?
- ▶ Does it change our story about the origins of *kāvya*?
(Not that we have a story.)
- ▶ Does it change our story about the growth of manuscript culture and other forms of textuality?
(Probably.)

From clusters to cultures

- ▶ Mutual influences?
- ▶ Shared ideas/stories/doctrines?
 - ▶ Yamabe (2003): possibly connections between Aśvaghōṣa's *yōgācāra* (in *Saundarananda* 16) and the *yōgācāra* of Saṅgharakṣa
- ▶ Is Saṅgharakṣa ever cited by or besides other poets of this cluster (e.g. in the *Tridaṇḍamālā*)?
- ▶ Metrical practice? (Is this even possible?)
- ▶ Similarities in literary form: *Saṅgharakṣasamuccaya*, *Lalitavistara*, *Sūtrālaṅkāra* (?), *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, *Drṣṭāntapaṅkti*



Thank you!

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The story of Aśōka

The end narrates a version of the story of Aśōka (阿儻). He was told in a dream to “distribute the relics” of the Buddha.

聞彼城裏有金券書，已見金券有其形像，前世以土惠施見彼相， [...]

He had heard that there was a gold-plate inscription in that city [Rājagṛha], and that they were known to contain a reference to him making a gift of earth in a previous life.

The story of Aśōka

Sure enough, he finds the gold-plate inscription in a “copper box” (銅函), possibly in the *stūpa* previously built by king Ajātaśatru (a contemporary of the Buddha).

The inscription is a “document from Ajātaśatru” (阿闍世王記) — evidently an anachronism — which testifies to the Buddha foretelling the birth of Aśōka.

The story of Aśōka

In that document, the Buddha reports that he was greeted by a child named Vijayamitra (毘闍耶蜜多羅), who is playing in the dirt and offers a handful of dirt to him (in other versions: in the Buddha's begging bowl).

Aśōka then breaks open the seven earlier *stūpas* and redistributes the relics of the Buddha, building eighty-four thousand *stūpas* that are all completed on the same day.

Evidently this is meant to be a lesson to Kaniṣka.