

**The Underlying Language  
of the Chinese Translation  
of the *Madhyama-āgama***

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## Abstract

The Indic original of the *Madhyama-āgama* presently included in the Chinese Buddhist canon (中阿含經, T 26) was recited in an Indic language by a monk from Kashmir, and then translated into Chinese by another Kashmirian monk in AD 397–398. An analysis of the transliterations found in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* points to the conclusion that the Indic original might have been much Sanskritised, though containing elements of Gandhari and other Prakrits.

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## I. The Indic Original

Oskar von Hinüber (1982 and 1983) and Enomoto Fumio 榎本文雄 (1984 and 1986) assume that the Indic original of the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* (中阿含經, T 26) may have been transmitted in Gandhari, a conclusion based on a few translated words<sup>1</sup> and on two transliterations.<sup>2</sup> However, as Jin-il Chung (in Chung and Fukita 2011: 31–32) rightly points out, it is still not clear whether and to what degree those examples actually reflect the original language.

According to the colophon to the *Madhyama-āgama*, its Indic original was recited by Saṅgharakṣa, a monk from Kashmir, and then translated into Chinese by another Kashmirian monk by the name of Gautama Saṅghadeva (fl. 383–398) in AD 397–398.<sup>3</sup> By the fourth century, the role of Gandhari and its script, namely Kharoṣṭhī, seems to have been gradually replaced by that of (Buddhist) Sanskrit and its script, namely Brāhmī.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore quite probable that the Indic original of the *Madhyama-āgama* was already Sanskritised to a certain degree. Around the same period, in AD 413, the *Dīrgha-āgama* of the Dharmaguptakas was translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, based on the recitation by a Kashmirian monk, Buddhayaśas.

By analysing the transliterations—around five hundred in all—found within this *Dīrgha-āgama* (長阿含經, T 1), I have demonstrated that its original text was a mixture of elements of Sanskritisation, Prakrit, and local dialects as well as Gandhari.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, we

<sup>1</sup> E.g., T 26 at T I 632b6: 斷穢 *prahīṇa* < *pabhiṇṇa* < Pa. *pabhinna*.

<sup>2</sup> T 26 at T I 685a4: 彌薩羅 \**Misalā* < *Mithilā*; T 26 at T I 472a1: 阿攝貝 \**Aśpa'i* < BHS *Aśvajit*.

<sup>3</sup> T 26 at T I 809b (esp. 809b21–26).

<sup>4</sup> See Karashima 2015: 113.

<sup>5</sup> Karashima 1994.

need to investigate the transliterations that occur in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama-āgama*, before reaching any conclusion about the language of its Indic original.

## II. Preliminary Survey of Transliterations

### II.1 Prakritisms

According to my preliminary research, there are quite a few instances which show that the original text of the *Madhyama-āgama* contained Prakritisms:

-gh- > -h-

彌鹽 (491a14; \**Mehi*) / Pa. *Meghiyā*; Skt. *Meghikā* (*Abhidharmadīpa*, Jaini 1977: 296,2)

-j- > -y-

那利耆伽 (801b5; \**Nāli(y)an̄ga*) / Pa. *Nālījan̄gha*; Skt. *Nāḍḍījan̄gha* (MW, s.v.), *Nālījan̄gha* (MW, s.v.), *Nālījan̄gha* (MW, s.v.)

-j- > -y- (?)

阿夷羅婆提 (428b17; *Ayiravatī* or *Ajira-*), 阿夷羅耆(v.l. 和)帝 (600c3; *Ayiravatī* or *Ajira-*) / Skt. *Ajiravatī* (cf. *ajira* ‘quick’); Pa. *Aciravatī*  
婆夷利 (801c20; \**Vayirī* or *Vajirī*) / Pa. *Vajirī* (Skt. \**Vajrī*)

-ñc- > -ñj-

般闍羅 (772b15; \**Pañjāla*) / Skt. = Pa. *Pañcāla*

-t- > -l<sup>6</sup>

阿邏鞞伽邏 (482c9; \**Ālavikāla* ?) / BHS *Āṭavikā*, Pa. *Ālavī*

波羅利 (802a14; \**Pālali*) (子) / Skt. = Pa. *Pātali*-(*putra*)

波羅牢 (445a25; \**Pālalau* ?) / Pa. *Pātali*; cf. *Pāṭalaka* (SWTF 17: 111, s.v.)

-t- > -l-

阿私羅 (665c1; \**Asila*) / BHS = Pa. *Asita*

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ji 1948.

弗迦邏娑利 (690a21; \**Puklasāli*) / Pa. *Pukkusāti, Pukkasāti*; cf. Skt. *pulkasa, pukkaśa, paulkasa*

-th- > -h-

于娑賀 (496b11; \**vosaha* or \*(v)*osaha*) / Pa. *uposatha*; BHS *upoṣa-dha, upoṣatha*; AMg. *posaha*

-p- > -v-

賴吒想羅 (623a8; \**Raṭṭhavāla*) / BHS *Rāṣṭrapāla*; Pa. *Raṭṭhapāla*

阿闍想(v.l. 和)羅 (633b29; \**Ajavāla*) / BHS = Pa. *Ajapāla*

瞿婆 (634b9; \**Gova*) / BHS = Pa. *Gopaka*

遮想(v.l. 和)邏 (648b25; \**Cāvāla*) / BHS = Pa. *Cāpāla*

阿想那 (740c15; \**Āvaṇa*) / Pa. *Āpaṇa*

尸攝想(v.l. 和) (525a12, 749c11; \**Śiśavā*) / Skt. *Śiṃśapā*; Pa. *Siṃsapā*

波和 (752c10; \**Pāvā*) / Pa. *Pāvā*; BHS *Pāpā*

-p- > -v- > -m-

瞿默 (653c18ult; \**Gomak(a)*) / Skt. = Pa. *Gopaka*

-m- / -v-

般那蔓闍 (536a18; \**Pānamamza*) / Skt. *Prācīnavamśa* (MW, s.v.) / Pa. *Pācīnavamśa*

搖尤那 (428b17 \**Yavunā* or \**Yaunā*; cf. Pkt. *Jauṇā*) / Skt. = Pa. *Yamunā*

婆想(v.l. 和)菟 (656c21; \**Vāvanu*) / Pa. *Vāmanikā*

-lm- > -mm-

劍磨瑟曇 (431c14, 542b5; \**Kammāṣadam[m]a*) / BHS *Kalmāṣadamya*; Pa. *Kammāṣadamma*

## II.2 Gandharisms

In addition to the forms 彌薩羅 (\**Misalā* < *Mithilā*) and 阿攝貝 (\**Aśpa* 'i < BHS *Aśvajit*), which were among the first to be noted as possible instances of Gandhari influence,<sup>7</sup> there are also several other examples betraying phonetic developments typical of Gandhari:

<sup>7</sup> Cf. note 2 above.

*upa-* > *va-*

婆難 (655b15; \**Vanann(a)*); Skt. = Pa. *Upananda*

*upo-* > *vo-*

于娑賀 (496b11; \**vosaha* or \*(*v*)*osaha*); Pa. *uposatha*; BHS *upoṣa-dha*, *upoṣatha*; AMg. *posaha*)<sup>8</sup>

*-ñj-* > *-ññ-*

陀然 (456a22; \**Dhanaññ-*) / BHS *Dhanañjaya* / Pa. *Dhānañjani*

鞞蘭若 (475c18; \**Veraññā*) / Pa. *Verañjā* (> \**Veraññā* >) / BHS *Vairañyā*

娑若鞞羅遲 (782a6; \**Sañña Velaṭī*) / BHS *Samjayin Vairaṭī-(putra)*; Pa. *Samjaya Belaṭṭhi-(putta)*

薩云然 (784a4; \**sarvaññam*) / Skt. *sarvajña*; Pa. *sabbaññū*

Cf. 想 (620c12; \**saññī-* ‘perception’) / *Sañjīva*; 想 (793b27; \**saññaya* ‘perception’) / *Sañjaya*

*-nd-* > *-nn-*

周那 (752c8; \**Cunna*) / *Cunda*

*-śv-* > *-śp-*

阿濕貝 (749c1; \**Aśpa’i*) / *Aśvajit* / Pa. *Assaji*

The developments *-ñj-* > *-ññ-* and *-nd-* > *-nn-* are found in the Gandhari *Dharmapada* from Khotan and the Niya documents.

## II.3 Sanskritisms

Besides the just listed examples of Gandhari influence, there are also numerous instances which show Sanskritisation:

*-t-* is retained

兜率哆 (429b17; *Tuṣita*) / BHS *Tuṣita*, Pa. *Tusita*

優波鞞舍 (431b25; \**Upatisśa*) / BHS *Upatiṣya*; Pa. *Upatisa*

娑雞帝 (544b21; *Sākete*) / Skt. = Pa. *Sākete* (loc.); BHS *Sāketā*

阿夷羅毘 (v.l. 和) 帝 (600c3; *Ayiravatī* or *Ajira-*) / Skt. *Ajiravatī*, Pa. *Aciravatī*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Chung and Fukita 2011: 32 note 107.

阿夷哆雞舍劍婆利 (782a7; \**Ayita* or *Ajita Keśakambalī*); BHS *Ajita Keśakambalin*; Pa. *Ajita Kesakambalī*

橋儼鉢帝 (*Gavāṃpati*; 532a25) / BHS *Gavāṃpati*; Pa. *Gavaṃpati*

-*p*- is retained

優簸遮羅 (560b26; *Upacāla*) / Pa. *Upacāla*

-*śv*- is retained

阿攝猊(v.l. 和)邏延多那 (663c5; \**Āśvalāyantana*) / Skt. *Āśvalāyana*, Pa. *Assalāyana-sutta*

-*sk*- is retained

摩息迦利瞿舍利 (782a5; *Maskari Gośalī*) / BHS *Maskarin Gośālī-putra*) / Pa. *Makkhali Gosāla*

As in Sanskrit (and Gandhari), the clusters -*kr*-, -*dr*-, -*pr*-, -*kṣ*- and -*st*- are retained:

-*kr*-

覺礫拘苟 (620c8; *Krakusanda*); BHS *Krakuchanda*, *Krakucchanda*, *Krakutsanda*, Pa. *Kakusandha*

-*dr*-

優陀羅 (603a3; \**Udra*) / BHS *Udraka*, Pa. *Uddaka*

鬱陀羅羅摩(子) (776c6; \**Udra Rāma*)(*putra*) / BHS *Udraka Rāma-putra*) / Pa. *Uddaka Rāma(putta)*

-*pr*-

摩訶簸邏闍鉢提 (721c24; *Mahāprajāpatī* [= BHS]) / Pa. *Mahāpajāpatī*

-*kṣ*-

加羅差摩 (738a7; *Kālakṣema* [= *Sanghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1977: I 78,10]) / Pa. *Kālakhema*

-*st*-

波遮悉多羅那 (617c5; \**paccāstarāṇa*), 波遮悉哆羅(v.l.邏)那(541b3, 646a27; \**paccāstarāṇa*) / BHS *pratyāstarāṇa*, *paccattharāṇa*



## Conclusion

The foregoing survey of reconstructed Indic forms that appear to underlie the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* suggests the preliminary conclusion that the Indic original of this *Āgama*, recited by Saṅgharakṣa at the end of the fourth century, might have been much Sanskritised, though containing elements of Gandhari and other Prakrit(s). However, a comprehensive investigation of transliterations as well as translated words in this *Āgama* remains a desideratum to make the features of its original language clear.

## Abbreviations

AMg	Ardhamāgadhī
BHS	a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit word (listed in BHSD)
BHSD	<i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary</i> (Edgerton 1953)
loc.	locative
MW	Monier-Williams 1899
Pa.	Pali
Pkt.	Prakrit
Skt	Sanskrit
SWTF	<i>Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden</i> (Bechert et al. 1973–)
T	Taishō edition

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