A TALE OF ASOKA

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Asoka has been interpreted in the speculations of historians for his public acts authenticated by his own inscriptions, to those inscriptions long known new inscriptions have been added from Afghanistan. But another side is displayed in the legendary record. Here he is the great patron of Buddhism. The cycle of his acts fills an avadana, a narrative, of his religious career. Two of the episodes of this religious epic of Asoka were translated into the language of Grostana-desa, that is, modern Khotan, and have survived in two copies, both incomplete, now in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. They have been published in transcription in my *Khotanese Buddhist Texts* (1951—KBT), pp. 40-44. Here I offer a first attempt to render the text in English. Asoka is also the subject of a legend in Tibetan. In the Tenjur, in the Lhi li kyi brig-bstan, the origin of the Khotan Saka kingship is traced to a son of Asoka who is here called Dharma 'Asoka.' Allusion to this genealogy in a Saka text from Ch'ien-fe-tung is made in my book *Khotanese Texts* 2.33. Here we read in a paragaic that Vis' Dharma king of Gostana-desa derives from the ancient family 'vaha 'gutora rmi mehavamme srams la sva esta fia nareta' issued from the family of royal Mahasenmites the king of sure family. This is followed by reference in a list to Vaimamana the deva Asum (=Asoka) and Ca-yam the king, who is called in Tibetan Ca-yam and Cha-yam.4

A Sogdian reference to Asoka occurs in a Manichaean text in a list of evil-doers: *swk MLK* by prw 'kmon paw' my 'yopa my 'xtra drt the king Asoka who slandered the Buddha Sakyamuni. Is the tenth century *vocubular* in Sanskrit and Tibetan the name Bud. Skt *dummasapaka* is given as rgyal po Dama 'Angs in Tibetan. This is near to the Pali

2. Translated in F. W. THORAS, *Tibetan Literary Texts and documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan*, 1988 et.; a new translation has been made by R. E. Emmet, and will shortly be printed with a transalted text.
3. A translation of this text is in preparation in the Text Volume to be joined to my four portfolios of facsimiles of *Saka Documents*, See earlier *BSOAS* 10, 91-9-5.
form which has given in Khotan Saka Aṣu (indicating the sound Aṣu) and Aṣu, here the -a- has been replaced by -u- as usual in Saka dialects. From this same Prakrit came the older Chinese 造 for an older Aṣu, now pronounced in Japanese A-iku, showing the older -i-. The Bud. Skt Aṣoka is written in Saka Asokas as the name of four Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpika-sūtra, in KT 3,116. 104 occurs naming Aṣokas naming tathagatau the revered Asoka, by name, the tathagatas.

The other names occurring in the Saka text are Purwama Bud. Skt Padmavati. Titāṇvācyya, older E 20-45 (KT 3, 256v3) Titāṇavāca, Bud. Skt Titāṇavakita Varmanandam, Bud. Skt Dharmavardhana, Kusala, Upagupta. Vissu. Śrīvaka the acarya, not found in Bud. Skt; and the place names Gomdharamjum, Bud. Skt Gomdharamjuna, and Turikasa-tila Bud. Skt Vakastila.

The whole avadana of Aṣoka is preserved in a Chinese translation from Sanskrit, from which J. Przylucki made his rendering into French with an introductory essay. The Buddhist story is told in Sanskrit in the Divyavadana (pp. 382-434) and has recently been studied again by Sujitkumar Mukhopadhyaya in his book The Aśokavadana, 1963, The Kunala episode of the avadana is published with a facsimile of a Buddhist Sanskrit manuscript by G. M. Bongard and O. F. Volkova in their Legenda o Kunalie Moscow 1963, reviewed by J. de Jongh, in the Indo-Iranian Journal 6,233-240. The tale of the man’s head is told in the Sutramāṇaka (French translation by Ed. Huber, p. 90 ff.). The Tibetan version is in the Kunalavadana (Tanjur Mdo, facsimile Pekin 127, 294-302).

The Saka avadana reads in English translation as follows:

TRANSATION

Cudham. So I have heard. When this revered dasabalaacakravartin Śakyamuni, deva of devas, the Buddha had completed the work of bodhi, there also the present vāneyas were taught and delivered, the time (of death) arrived for him. Then he drew near to the bank of the Nairanjana river under the yamaka-sała tree he entered upon the same dhana called Mahaparīvana when over him the first watch of the night had passed.


7. La légende de Pemereu Aṣoka.
Then here in Jambudvipa in Pataliputra a king named Asu sat in sovereignty. He brought under his own control the whole continent of Jambudvipa as far as the verge of ocean; all who were kings in Jambudvipa acclaimed him and did his commands. In Jambudvipa he made 18000 caityas, in all of them he placed satires (relics) of the Buddha. This king had two queens, and 8000 in his acasthupa—Of the first queen the name was Padmavati and the name of the second Tisyalakasita.

Then at another time the queen Padmavati became pregnant and after the passing of ten months she bore a king’s son like a deviputra. The queen took him up in a swaddling and gave him to the king. The king received him in his arms. To the queen he spoke delightfully, saying, To the measure of a hundred years forward may you live with this prince as in the clear akasa the graha (planets), the nakṣatra (constellations), and the moon and sun shine out. At the time of Jatinaha (birthday feast) they named a name for him and they gave the name prince Varnavardhana.

Then at another time the king Asu designed to look at the eyes of the prince Varnavardhana. And he ordered his amatyas, saying, You should look at the prince’s eyes, whether anything on earth resembles such eyes which are his. The amatyas spoke with respect, saying, Deva, in a rumour we have heard on Mount Gandhamadana there is a bird by name kunala and his eye is so fine that if he should not resemble it, on earth no being exists who resembles it. Deva, the prince’s eyes are such eyes as if one put two chaledony jewels upon a blue lotus leaf, if he looks straight at us suddenly, it seems that amata flies into our throat, or that in it are brilliant jewels lying there. Then the king ordered, saying, Bring, here a kunala bird from Gandhamadana. When they had brought it for comparison, saying, The eyes are like one another, then they gave to prince Varnavardhana the name Kunala.

Then the prince Kunala quickly grew up and became adult as in cool water the celestial utpala lotuses grow.

Then at another time the king Asu conducted the prince Kunala to a samghaasana. Kunala was a delight to the sthavira Upaputta. When the sthavira had finished the dharma dwana, then the king returned again. There at another samgharama he sat with the acarya Senavalka and with his forehead he went with homage to his feet. In his following was an amatyas. He was exceedingly devoid of faith. He reproved
the king, he spoke so, saying, Deva not to make the sovereignty contemptible. To every red-clad person that you may see, you go with homage. A king is necessarily fierce and bold with exalted punyas (merits). It is not fitting, Deva, for the sovereignty that he (the king) should roll on the earth. Then the king returned to the palace. Thereupon he issued an order, saying, All amatyas, you shall assemble. Thereupon 7000 amatyas gathered, The king ordered this, saying. Every amatya is to bring a head, Yasa for his part will bring a man's head, but do not in any way cause pratapita (death to breathing beings). Early next morning they all brought before the king a head. The king ordered this saying, Take them to the market, and sell them at a price. When they brought them to the market they sold all of them at a price. When they saw that the amatya Yasa on his part carried a man's head, horror was felt, in all ways they fled. With abuse they spoke to him, saying, Do not a second time design to offer that, such a disgusting thing, stuffed with worms as is this head. If indeed he orders, saying, Take it into your hand, indeed, he will suffer great trouble, who buys that at a price. Then the amatyas returned to the palace and they made a report, saying All other heads we could sell at a price, but the man's head the amatya Yasa has been unable to sell at a price. Then the king ordered him, saying, What fault do you see in it which you deigned to search out? Yasa the amatya spoke, saying, In every one are the same faults. Deva, it is in no one because of peculiar qualities; disgusting it is, stinking, inauspicious, the same. The king ordered him, Is only that one disgusting, or are all disgusting? Yasa the amatya spoke to him, saying, All in fact have the same marks, Deva. The king ordered him, saying, This my head which possesses exalted punyas, how is it to be thought of? Speak truly. Yasa the amatya spoke, saying, This too is precisely like the other heads, Deva. Then the king ordered him, saying. It is such a disgusting thing as this man's head is, for which not even a place can be found where you may put it. Then, amatya, does it not please you when with it I receive the deva Buddha's pupil who actually appears with the asaya (mind) of the foremost gotra (family) of the ascas? These good qualities of all kinds, approved, have, they not become subjects recognisable by you? One can know the number of the drops of water in the ocean, then they will know the good qualities possessed by the pravrajitas (wanderers). Then Yasa the amatya begged pardon of the king Asu', and he spoke, saying, I have not done well, I did not understand that the many good qualities are possessed by the pravrajitas. And then at another time the inhabitants of Taicasila rebelled
against the king Isu, his command they did not obey, and they withheld his taxes. Then Isu the king in Patliputra mounted and led an army to Takassila. He brought the people of Gandhara back to his command. Long time he remained there. There he in Patliputra the queen Tisya-
sakita deigned to call prince Kunala. When the prince came before her, he greeted her with his forehead, humbly he sat, and the queen spoke to him so saying: When your father went away, he placed the country and the land in your hand, but a month passes for you, you do not come to the palace. The prince spoke to her, saying, As much as is my love to my own mother, so much is it to the devi queen. Because here in the palace there is gossip and talk, I dared not enter. These are those whom you draw to come to the palace, and still more that the king is now not present. Then the queen Tisyasakita tried the for-
titude of the prince Kunala by way of love sports. But the prince refused to agree, and he went out from them. Then the queen felt fierce displea-
sure, she thereupon sough, revenge against him. Then Isu the king returned from Takassila. When he came to Patliputra there Padmavati, and Tisyasakita the queen, the prince Kunala asked after his health and the fatigue of the road. They spoke (each) to him, saying, My heart is greatly pleased here, that you have come to your throne. We see the Deva in good state, calm, in health and fortune.

Then at another time the queen Tisyasakita remembered the grief against prince Kunala, Yasa the amatya she deigned to call, to him she deigned to disclose that earlier hostility against him. Yasa the amatya spoke, saying, The prince formerly put me to shame before men. My hat fell off and he struck me six strokes upon the head. This hatred therefore is not yet forgotten. Together they formed a plot against him. And they worked upon the king Isu so that they induced him to send prince Kunala to Takassila to rule in his own native land, (The rest is missing).

COMMENTARY

These Saka text are still full of difficulties. A short commentary is therefore necessary.

Line 7, simahāṃ sasmaveṣa he entered into samadhīna; the same time is mentioned in KT v. 137, 12 panditaṃ kasa-saṃaye, but with the madhāyame yame the middle watch

19, hadikanā, loc., sg. only here, is from the context the cloth in which the child is carried; in form it is hada with suffix ṭa- connected
with hada-cladding, see Transactions of the Philological Society 1954, 195, and the Barr Festschrift; Georgian loan-word ardeg mantle, and Armenian Arts are likely to be the same word.

22. jem, B text 139 jye 2 sg. conjunctive, may you live, to jete he lives.

24. such-to name, call from a base suko-familiar in Baltic Lithuanian suaku, suakti, Lettish suakt to name, see Indo Iranian Journal 2,186-7.

36. karakiyin, raman B text 163 karakiyina, chaceony stone, Siddharsa 137vi kirikyan for Bud. Skt ambu-mani- elsewhere Skt karketana- Zoroastrian Pahlavi karketan, Arab, karkulan, see Asiatica, Festschrift Wolfer, 14-5.

37. viatam vi, B text 37 viina vi in the throat, here only. from the base vi-to turn, elder *viisa-to vari-to turn, see Asa Avag, new series 11,114.

42. parbuta he became adult, as Bud. Skt Divyavasana 3,17 mehan sameyatya-.

48. isada infidal, from Prakrit Gandhari asadha-. Bud. Skt asraddha-.

53. bith- to turn, twist, from older *bha-yu-, attested in Siddhawara 121vi bihana-. Bud. Skt udvartti-Tibetan dril-ba be twisted, with proverb Sid 18v2 hambith, Bud. Skt grahi-, Tib. siz-bar byed-.

83. kusada-palace, Bud. Skt rajakula-pajusada-cantait, Bud. Skt raja-dhuni, from older *kusuda-as in Avestan kozdor-, and with suffix -da- in Middle Persian kosi.

95. pitarivya- renders Bud, Skt jungesia in Divy 382,25.

93. kusa. infinitive to kuya-, Bud. Skt a ximarguna seeking.

70. suta has been taken as Bud Skt sama- equal, same.

85. pujama, B text 203 pujama, is derived from pujama-to know, hence pujasa-yu-recognition.

104. spasti is elsewhere ripasti, from Prakrit; Bud, Skt vivasta-with suffix-ya-, occurring also Jataka-stava.

107. caiyem play, sport, gan, plural for elder tarka-, which renders Bud. Skt rati-.

104. ha ni anavartya orshortcut he did not approve of agreeing, he refused to consent.

105. tama vasta then for him, with tama-adjctive from ta-belonging
to that time or place, in loc. sg. same with pronoun ye.

115. gchanam grief trouble, Siddhasara 125r2 gchanam jad, Tib. ghungs misery.

117. jioicu richaste the hat fell down, in the Chinese version k'i kuam jun si his hat fell to the ground.

117. raggi blinds. Chinese t'ou head, found also in KT (=Khotonevs Text) 2, 1,11 steqgyu boda tsempa rendering Chinese t'ou fa hair on the head.

117. k'i patai kuaxe he struck six light strokes, in Chinese p'ao he struck lightly.

118. semjapo dassado they bound an agreement. Here samhoja is from Prakrt to Bud. Skt sem-ad-japa-planning together, not the more usual Saka samhoj to be successful, prosper from sem-podable.

120. raute rule, sovereignty, acc. sg. to elder manta acc. sg. mistr: abstract to manta-king.