He remains as he was before his death.

The old countrymen, the village women, spare him not a look;
  Sometimes a field rat comes to bite his moustache[58].
The sight of him makes distraught men flee[59]:
  So who will question the wordless master for me[60]?

The Sung poet's attitude is remarkably close to that of the first Chinese literati who, six or seven centuries earlier, had known and adopted Vimalakīrti. The latter remains for Su Shih a type of sage in Taoist style, incomprehensible to the common worldling: the 'field rats' have nothing to do with this aristocrat of holiness. In fact, his popularisation was never to go very far. In contrast to other *pien-wen* which are at the origin of the vulgate literature of modern times, the large development rediscovered in Tun-huang was to have hardly any posterity in the Chinese novel or theatre[61]. We have to wait until our own times for Mei Lan-fang, the greatest actor in contemporary China (1893-1961), to stage the episode of the goddess of the flowers[62] which, however, like the rest of the sūtra, lends itself so well to dramatical elaboration that one might wonder if there did not exist in India or Serindia theatrical versions of the 'philosophical drama' of Vimalakīrti.

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[57] An allusion to Vimalakīrti's silence, as it was interpreted by the Dhyāna school: supreme knowledge is of the spirit, not of the letter; each person must realise this for him/herself.

[58] An allusion to Hsieh Lung-yün's beard ('moustache' because of the rhyme).

[59] Cf. *Chuang-tzu*, Ch.VII, ed. Wieger, p.266, where it is a matter of a fortune-teller who claimed to predict people's death but who, confused by the master of Lieh-tzŭ, ended up by 'fleeing distraught'.

[60] A play on words on the term *chieh*, 'to question, search', which is also the last syllable of Vimalakīrti's name in Chinese.

[61] This is what is remarked by Tch'en Yin-k'iue in his article cited above (n.2).

[62] *T'ien-nü san hua*, of which there exists a Pathé-China recording. According to Tcheng Mien, *Répertoire du théâtre chinois moderne*, Paris 1929, p.148, this play was created in Peking in 1921. However, I saw Mei Lan-fang act in it in 1920, and a summary can be found (pp.79-80) as well as a fragment of it (pp.137-8) in the small work on Mei Lan-fang published in 1918 by the Chung-hua shu-chü in Shanghai, in which it is expressly confirmed that this play was an original creation by the distinguished actor.

ONCE UPON A PRESENT TIME:
AN AVADĀNIST FROM GANDHĀRA[†]

TIM LENZ

When Captain James Cook set sail from Plymouth on 12 July 1776, he was charged with the secret mission of circumnavigating the globe at the highest possible latitude in the southern hemisphere to search for Terra Australis Incognita, establish British dominion over newly discovered islands or continents, look for new sources of plants, animals, and minerals suitable to quench the British thirst for lucrative items of trade, and make friends with the indigenous inhabitants of the new world[1]. Cook left port armed with astronomers, naturalists, artists, a landscape painter, as well as four chronometers, and ultimately he left the world a detailed account of the land, the people, the plants, and the animals encountered during the course of his journey. Unlike Cook, when the earliest followers of the Buddha set out from the eastern Indian heartland of Buddhism armed with the religious para-phernalia – texts, Buddhist legends, and relics – that would serve to

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[1] W. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery,* New York 1987, p.44.

propagate the Buddha's teachings in distant lands, they apparently traveled without an entourage. The early Indian Buddhist monks left no maps, no journals, and no pictures portraying what they did or what they encountered on their travels. There is, therefore, practically nothing with which a scholar of early Buddhism can draw upon to bring to life the lives of the countless monks and nuns who helped to make Buddhism one of the world's great religious traditions. But with clues gleaned from sources such as early manuscripts, archaeological excavations, and artistic remains, a researcher sometimes can painstakingly reconstruct some aspect of the life of a member of the early Buddhist community.

The possibilities of making such a reconstruction have been increased in recent years with the discovery of hitherto unknown collections of early Buddhist manuscript fragments. Such collections afford researchers the opportunity to search for clues with which to reconstruct early Buddhist history by means of analytic methods that would otherwise yield little new information. With early Buddhist manuscripts in hand, we can analyze the physical condition of the documents and ponder the significance of their origin in order to discover clues with which to uncover some of Buddhism's lost past. Specifically, we can study the handwriting of their scribes, catalogue the kinds of writing errors made in their texts (e.g., crossed out letters), discover the genres represented among their texts, assess how their texts are arranged, consider the relevance of their geographic association, and of course, examine the content of their texts. From such analyses, as will become clear, we can deduce information that is unattainable from the usual sources consulted by scholars of early Buddhist history and culture, such as published editions of Buddhist texts, reports of archaeological excavations, and analyses of artistic remains.

The kind of information that can be gleaned from manuscript fragments can be demonstrated by an examination of some of the texts from a collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts recently acquired

by the British Library. These documents were acquired by the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collections in September 1994. The collection consists of twenty-nine fragments of birch bark scrolls written on both the recto and verso in the Kharoṣṭhī script and the Gāndhārī language. The scrolls contain texts from a variety of Buddhist genres, including didatic poetry, scholastic commentary, doctrinal analysis (*abhidharma*), and previous-birth stories (*jātaka/avadāna*)[2]. They are written in a language that is generally similar to that of the famous 'Gāndhārī Dharmapada', critically edited by John Brough, which was until recently the only Gāndhārī manuscript available for scholarly study. The recent discovery of these scrolls confirms the existence of a Gāndhārī Buddhist canon, which was postulated more than a century ago though only proved with the recent manuscript find[3]. The new manuscript fragments can probably be dated to the first half of the first century CE[4], making them the earliest Buddhist

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[2] Jātakas are commonly distinguished from avadānas as follows: Jātakas concern the past lives of the Buddha whereas avadānas may be about past lives of the Buddha or other figures, including kings, ministers, brahmans, monks, disciples, and commoners. Such a distinction generally holds true in well-known texts such as the Pali *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* and the Sanskrit *Divyāvadāna*, but the complexities of the historical development of this type of literature probably are belied by this rather simple distinction. See T. Lenz, *A New Version of the Gāndhārī Dharmapada and a Collection of Previous-Birth Stories: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 16 + 25,* Seattle 2003, pp.92 and 108 for an edition of Fragments 16 + 25 and for comments relating to this matter.

[3] See R. Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls From Gandhāra: The British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments,* Seattle/London 1999, pp.156-7 for comments concerning the Gāndhārī canon.

[4] R.Salomon, *A Gāndhārī Version of The Rhinoceros Sūtra: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragment 5B,* Seattle 2000, pp.xi-ii.

manuscripts discovered to date[5]. The British Library collection is particularly important for our purposes, for it contains a sizable collection of texts written by a single author. When analyzed, these texts provide unique clues with which we can deduce something of the otherwise undocumented life of their author.

From the circumstances of the British Library collection's discovery, we can determine the location of the home of the monk with whom we are concerned. According to hearsay reports, the British Library manuscripts were found in Haḍḍa, a small village near present day Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan. This village is located in the heart of Gandhāra, the region between the Suleiman Mountains in Afghanistan and the Indus River in Pakistan (see fig. 1)[6], where the Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī language flourished from approximately the third century BCE through the third century CE[7]. Although the origin of the manuscripts is unknown with any degree of certainty, the large number of Gāndhārī manuscripts that have been found at Haḍḍa and other sites in the Jalalabad Plain, lends some credibility to the hearsay reports[8]. Thus, we can tentatively assume that our author was a Gandhāran Buddhist monk who lived in Haḍḍa.

This Gandhāran monk from Haḍḍa is known only through portions of six texts that are preserved on British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 1, 2, 3, 4, 12 + 14 and 16 + 25[9]. To date, only the text

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[5] See Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls* for a comprehensive introduction to the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments.

[6] The map in figure 1 is reprinted from *ibid.*, p.2 with permission from the University of Washington Press.

[7] R. Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages,* New York 1998, pp.46-7.

[8] Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls,* p.68.

[9] See *ibid.,* § 2.3 for general descriptions of these fragments.

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on Fragments 16 + 25[10], lines 174-84 of Frag. 1[11], lines 1-7 (recto) of Fragment 2[12], lines 1-11 (verso) of Frag. 3[13], and the first five lines of the text on Frag. 12 + 14[14] have been critically edited. In addition, preliminary transcriptions of all of the texts written by this monk, as well as translations and lexicons for the texts on Fragments 2, 3, and 12 + 14 have been produced[15].

Like many other Buddhist manuscript texts, the aforementioned ones bear no name or biography of their authors. But unlike other manuscript texts, which are largely scribal copies of well-established texts, our Gāndhārī texts are apparently written in their author's own hand. In other words, our Gāndhārī works are Buddhist texts that were learned and memorized by our scribe and subsequently set down by him in written form. All the texts in question, save one, are written in a single hand consisting of large, flowing letters, which are the source of the very non-monastic nickname we have conferred upon their author, 'Big Hand'[16]. The sole text of Big Hand that was not written completely in his own hand (Frag. 4) is one that was begun by a monk with a distinctive thin, slanting, vertically elongated hand[17] and apparently completed by Big Hand.

That Big Hand is both author (though not necessarily the

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[10] Lenz, *op. cit.,* Part II.

[11] *Ibid.,* appendix 3; see also Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls,* pp.145-9 for comments on another portion of this text.

[12] Salomon, *ibid.,* pp.141-5.

[13] Lenz, *op. cit.,* appendix 2.

[14] M. Allon, *Three Gāndhārī Ekottarikāgama-Type Sūtras: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 12 and 14,* Seattle 2001, appendix 2

[15] All translations and transcriptions used in preparation of this article are my own.

[16] See Lenz, *op. cit.,* Ch. 8 for an examination of Big Hand's handwriting.

[17] Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls,* pp. 45 and 54).

original composer) and scribe of these texts is evident from the copious number of textual corrections that stand in his texts, errors that probably would have been expunged by a professional copyist who was merely reproducing a previously written text. For example, in his text on British Library Fragments 12 + 14[18], a portion of a line of writing (l. 82) has been crossed out (see fig. 2). In another line (l. 98), Big Hand apparently had difficulty writing the verb *hokṣadi* (ŒÉđ, 'will be', √*bhū*, 3rd pers. sing. fut.), for he apparently wrote *hokṣavidi* (ŒÃÉđ) and then, for some unknown reason, crossed out *vi* and *di*, the final two letters of the word (see fig. 3). Furthermore, in the text on Fragments 16 + 25, Big Hand wrote a large punctuation mark, apparently consisting of six circles arranged in two columns of three circles each, to indicate the end of a section of text. Such punctuation marks are not unusual in Big Hand's writings, but this one is written over the top of a previously written letter (see fig. 4)[19]. The syllable *ga* (Å) or perhaps *ge* (ŷ) is obscured but visible beneath the well-preserved left column of circles[20].

Besides indicating that he is an author as well as a scribe, the corrections in Big Hand's texts suggest that he does not have complete mastery over the material that he is writing. The crossed out letters (Frags. 12 + 14) and punctuation marks written over the top of other letters (Frags. 16 + 25) are reminiscent of student life before the advent of the word processor, when early drafts of handwritten papers were filled with crossed out words, sentences, and sections. In this light, we might regard Big Hand as a student, perhaps a very young monk struggling to become fluent with one

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[18] Jason Neelis (University of Florida) is currently preparing a critical edition of Fragments 12 + 14.

[19] Figure 4 is reprinted from Lenz, *op. cit.,* p.124, with permission from the University of Washington Press.

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 102; for further discussion, see § 7.8.

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genre of Buddhist literature. Such a characterisation is hypothetical, but there is some internal evidence suggesting that Big Hand was a student.

A comparison of Fragments 12 + 14 with Fragments 16 + 25 shows fairly clearly that much like an 'ideal student' today, Big Hand has the ability to learn from his mistakes. In addition to the obvious difficulties of writing suggested by the crossed out letters, his text on Fragments 12 + 14 shows stylistic inconsistencies that are absent in the one on Fragments 16 + 25. The texts on both of these scroll fragments are avadāna-type texts, consisting of a numbered series of brief story summaries, or skeleton texts, that presumably were known to their author in much more fully developed forms. Typically the summaries include a one- or two-sentence introduction, a description of a few important scenes, a concluding abbreviation formula telling the reader that he should be able to expand the story for himself with reference to the supplied summary[21], and a story number. For example, one of Big Hand's stories (Frags. 16 + 25, ll. 18-23) concerns a previous life of the Buddha as a shipwrecked merchant who sacrifices his life to save his shipmates from drowning:

[18] A previous birth of the Buddha. Thus it was heard. [19] The Buddha was a merchant, a merchant of the great ocean. Supplies were [20] collected by him. He set out on the great ocean. The ship was destroyed. [21] The merchant met his death on the surface (*of the ocean). It was a favour… . The merchant himself [22] was set down here on the shore. He killed himself. Thus the previous birth (*(*pūrva)yoga*). Expansion should be according to the model. [23] It should be told. (*Story number) 1[22].

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[21] For further discussion, see *ibid.,* § 7.2.

[22] 18. … *bosisatvaprovayoge cv[o]*

For purposes of this discussion, the above story's abbreviation formula and its story number are of particular interest. The sentence 'Expansion should be according to the model' (*vistare ya̓yupamano siyadi*) apparently became a standard abbreviation formula in this genre. It occurs in most of the avadāna-type texts in the British Library Kharoṣṭhī collection, probably occurring four times in Fragments 16 + 25 alone[23]. The stories included in the avadāna-type texts are also numbered with a story number that is almost always placed at the end of a story following one or more circular punctuation marks (see fig. 5)[24].

In Big Hand's text on fragments 12 + 14, however, the afore-mentioned abbreviation formula and numbering pattern show unusual variations. For example, at the end of story number 7 (l. 107), Big Hand concludes with a truncated form of the standard formula 'Expansion should be according to the model' (*vistare ya̓yupamano siyadi*): 'Expansion according to the model' (*vistare ya̓yupama*). Although the words making up the shortened formula are familiar components of the longer one, the second term lacks its final syllable: *ya̓yupama* rather than *ya̓yupamano*

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19. *ṣuyadi ∘ boi[sa]tvo ∘ vaniage [ho-] /// (*vadi maha-) /// [sa]mudr[ava]nige t(*a)no pañ[o]*

20. *samudanido mahasamudro adirno [ya-] /// (*napatra) /// bhirno vaniaga tala vi-*

21. *layam=avarnage [p](*ra)cagaran(*o) ∘ hova[di] /// + + + /// [sa]rya [va]niaga śpagam=iśa*

22. *tirami ∘ liśavido ∘ apano hado ∘ evo /// (*prova-) /// [yo]go vistare ya ∘ ṣayupamano si-*

23. *yadi vatava ○ 1* (*ibid.*, p.150; see also § 11.2.2 for notes and interpretation and pp. 212-6 for Sanskrit and Chinese parallels).

[23] Two cases are partially reconstructed; see *ibid.*, § 11.1.

[24] Figure 5 is reprinted from *ibid.*, p.103, with permission from the University of Washington Press.

(see fig. 6)[25]. In other words, it is spelled incorrectly and rather than writing 'according to the model', Big Hand wrote something like 'according to the mod'. This misspelling is rather surprising for such a common word, and for one that is apparently rendered correctly everywhere else in Big Hand's texts (though other examples may be found after all his texts are critically edited).

Another unusual story ending occurs in story number 6. Here, the story includes the final circular punctuation mark and story number, but lacks the usual concluding abbreviation formula. This is striking. All the other avadānas written by Big Hand for which the end of the story is clearly preserved do have such a final abbreviation formula. However, in a few cases where the text is only partially preserved (particularly in Frag. 4) it is not always obvious whether or not such a formula was included[26]. In any case, the lack of an abbreviation formula at the end of an avadāna is outside of the normal pattern of Big Hand's work.

In contrast to the text on Fragments 12 + 14, the one on Fragments 16 + 25 is generally free of the kinds of unusual features discussed above. There are no crossed out passages, the story numbering patterns are regular (only numerals are used), and the final abbreviation formula is more often than not the standard one: 'The expansion should be according to the model'.

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[25] The reproduction here is very difficult to read. The reading is clearer on the original colour digital image supplied by the British Library.

[26] Thanks go to Jason Neelis for sharing his notes on the abbreviation formulae used in Fragment 4. It should be noted that at least two of the stories in Big Hand's text on this fragment end with something other than formulae commonly seen in Big Hand's texts. Since the text is badly damaged, I am unable to determine whether this is because the stories lack final abbreviation formula or whether they include formulae that are somewhat different from the ones used elsewhere in Big Hand's writings. This may or may not be clarified after Fragment 4 is critically edited.

The consistency of the text on Fragments 16 + 25 seems to indicate that Big Hand has a greater command of writing avadāna-type stories than he had when he wrote the text on Fragments 12 + 14. In other words, he seems to have learned from past mistakes and has, therefore, written a cleaner text.

Since it appears that Big Hand improves his writing with practice, we can hypothesize that he is a student of his craft rather than a master. Given the kind of errors and inconsistencies that occur in some of his texts (crossed out letters and passages, unusual numbering patterns and abbreviation formulas), it is tempting to describe him as a young novice, perhaps the equivalent of a modern-day high school student. But such a characterisation would be premature without access to biographical accounts or diary entries, which Big Hand unfortunately did not see fit to produce.

In any case, another feature of Big Hand's work that appears to mark him as a student is that in nearly all of his texts there are one or more interlinear notations stating that the text has been 'written' (*likhidago*). Seven such notations are written on five different scrolls (for one example, see fig. 7), apparently added after Big Hand had completed his texts:

1. It is written (*(*li)kh(*i)dago,* Frag. 1, l. 130a)
2. Now, all is written, (*likhidago aco sa[rvo],* Frag. 1, l. 172a)
3. Now, all these avadānas are written (*sarva ime avadana [aca] (*likhidaga),* Frag. 2, r, between ll. 8 and 9; see fig. 8; see also Salomon 1999: pl. 15)
4. All is written (*likhidaga sarve,* Frag. 3, above l. 1 (verso); see Lenz 2003: Fig. 18)
5. Written (*likhidago,* Frags. 12 + 14, between ll. 75 and 76; Allon 2001: pls. 4 & 7)
6. All is written (*likhidago sarvo,* (Frags. 12 + 14, l. 77;

Allon 2001: pls. 4 & 7)[27]
7. Now the avadānas are written (*likhidage aca avadane,* Frags. 16 + 25, l. 18)[28]

These notations are subject to various interpretations, but the fact that they are found exclusively in avadāna-type texts and that two of the notations, numbers 3 (see fig. 8) and 7, specifically refer to avadānas strongly suggest that all the notations refer to the avadāna texts rather than generally to their respective manuscripts. If this is the case and if Big Hand was a student rather than a master, the notations might best be interpreted as proofing marks of a teacher or inspector, indicating that the stories were satisfactorily written by one of his students[29]. Accordingly, Big Hand's text can be viewed as a student's writing assignments and the inspector's notation as something akin to the grading mark that modern-day professors place at the top of completed student papers.

If we accept the ideas that Big Hand was a student and that his texts are completed writing assignments, we can determine the focus of his studies by assessing the range of literary genres represented in his texts. Since Big Hand's extant works are exclusively avadāna-type texts, we can surmise that he probably was studying to become a specialist in this type of literature. Such avadāna specialists are mentioned elsewhere in Buddhist literature. In two verses in the *Kalpadrumāvadānamālā,* an anthology of avadāna-type stories, they are called 'avadānists', *avadānika* or *avadānārthakovida* in Sanskrit:

[27] Salomon (*Ancient Buddhist Scrolls,* p.76) and Allon (*op. cit.,* p.303) transcribe *likhidago sa[rvo],* but *sarvo* is clearly visible on Allon's plates 4 and 7.

[28] This list was compiled by Salomon (*loc. cit.*). No. 7 corrected from *likhitage.*

[29] Lenz, *op. cit.,* §§ 7.8 and 7.10; for an alternative analysis, see Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls,* § 4.2.

From dharmic actions, beings obtain bliss.
From evil action, they are allotted suffering.
From mixed action, they come to enjoy mixed fruits.
Thus speak the avadānists[30].

By the measure of qualities and dharma,
There are no standards of caste at all.
Thus proclaim the Buddhist avadāna-experts[31].

If our interpretation of Big Hand's work is correct, his texts would represent a unique collection of avadāna-type stories written by a student who is studying to become an avadāna specialist, that is to say, an avadānist like the ones mentioned in the *Kalpadrumā-vadānamālā*.

Even though Big Hand's avadāna texts are unique and exciting finds for a modern-day Buddhist studies scholar, the texts that we have probably were little prized by members of the Buddhist community other than by the avadānists themselves. Although there is no direct evidence in this regard, physical evidence suggests that our avadāna-type texts were considered as secondary to other types of Buddhist literature, which is not too surprising for works that may have been student writing assignments. All of the

avadāna-type texts appear as the second text on scrolls made up of two texts, suggesting that they were not primary. The first text on a scroll that contains two texts is always a formal Buddhist text, such as a didactic or popular poetry text (e.g., Dharmapada)[32] or a canonical sūtra text (e.g., Ekottarikāgama-type sūtra)[33]. Typically, the avadāna texts commence immediately after the first text on a scroll, fill up any remaining space on the recto, and then continue onto and presumably fill the verso, though this remains hypothetical because only the beginning portions of our texts have been preserved. One possible explanation for this state of affairs is that avadānists were 'scavengers' who had to search for and appropriate unused space on scrolls containing previously written texts[34]. In any case, because the avadāna collections are invariably the second text on scrolls containing two texts, they do not appear to have been held in as high esteem as the more formal texts that preceded them. This also might indicate something of the status of Big Hand and his fellow avadānists in the Buddhist community, but there is no indication in the manuscripts that such a hypothesis is warranted.

But even though our Gāndhārī specialist's written work may not have been accorded high status in the Gandhāran literary hierarchy and his personal status might not have been extremely high in the monastic hierarchy, we can, nevertheless, deduce that his work did fill an important niche in the monastic community. A still widely held view concerning avadāna-type literature is that it is not serious Buddhist literature and was not really studied by monks: it was a literature for laymen and for the winning of

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[30] Translated by John Strong ('The Buddhist Avādanists and the Elder Upagupta,' in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein*, Brussels 1981, p.867); punctuation added.
dharmataḥ sukhino bhūtāḥ pāpato duḥkhabhāginaḥ.
miśrato miśrabhuktāra ity uktam avadānikaiḥ. (Vaidya, *Avadāna-śataka*, Darbhanga, 1959: *Kalpadrumāvadānamālāyām* v. 106, p.272)
[31] *Loc. cit.* I have changed Strong's translation of *guṇadharmapramāṇena* from 'By measure of dharmic qualities' to 'By the measure of qualities and dharma.'
guṇadharmapramāṇena jāter naiva pramāṇatā.
tathā ca procyate bauddhair avadānārthakovidaiḥ. (v. 162, p.275)

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[32] See Lenz, *op. cit.* for an edition of the Dharmapada.
[33] See Allon, *op. cit.* for an edition of the Ekottarikāgama Sūtra.
[34] Credit for the outlines of this interpretation (also mentioned in Allon, *ibid.*, p.3 and Lenz, *op. cit.*, p.108) goes to Richard Salomon (see *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls*, p.35).

converts. No doubt, this is true up to a point. Some of our Gāndhārī stories seem to be especially aimed at laymen. The most obvious example of this comes from Fragments 12 + 14:

> Thus it was heard. The Kardamaga King's father was named Kardamaga. He was born in the womb of a pig. An exceedingly stingy mind. All should be according to the model[35].

The message of this story seems obvious, even though the literary style is extremely terse: 'Be stingy with regard to the Buddhist monastic community at your peril.' Presumably, such a story would have been 'expanded' in front of a non-monastic audience in order to obtain monetary support or other political favor.

On the other hand, Big Hand wrote one story that apparently is intended for much loftier purposes. The story in question is about a magic contest between a white (*indra mayagara*) and black (*śabari mayagara*) magician, wherein the black magician brings about darkness and the white magician overcomes the darkness with light. Such a story could conceivably be used for any number of purposes, but after its conclusion in the written text, there is a notation telling exactly what the story is to be used for: 'Understanding of impermanence. With regard to the characteristic of impermanence, all should be told.[36]' Though the significance of this notation is debatable, it seems to me that it implies a 'serious Buddhist' discussion that most likely would have taken place within the monastic community. Thus, from the aforementioned two stories we can deduce that Gāndhārī avadānists oratorical skills

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[35] 86. ... *evo śruyadi kadamagasa rayasa ka(*dama-)* ////
87. *go namo pido hovadi so suarayonige u(*va)* ////
88. *gado adivamaca[rimadi] sarvo ya·iyu[p]* //// *(*amano)*
[36] 172. *anicada parigarmo sarvo matr[ida]vo ?* ////
172.5. *likhidago aco sarvo ? ? ?* ////
173. *anicadalakṣanami sarvo ∘ [matri]* //// *(*davo)*

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were probably put to use instructing both monks and laymen (in Big Hand's case, training to instruct monks and laymen). Avadānists must have been instructors who always had a story at the ready to ram home an abstruse doctrinal point or to coax an Indo-Scythian king into donating a bag of drachmas to the Buddhist cause.

Thus, even in the absence of paintings, sketches, scientific treatises, and diaries, such as those produced by Captain Cook and his entourage, we are able to reconstruct something of the life of one Gandhāran storyteller, the avadānist Big Hand. The reconstruction is admittedly incomplete, but we still have three other avadāna-type texts in the British Library collection that wait critical editing and other manuscripts from places such as Merv, Afghanistan (e.g. the so-called Bairam-Ali manuscript) which should provide useful comparative material and further information with which to fill out our initial attempts at drawing a character sketch of one ancient Gandhāran monk. With further examinations of Buddhist manuscripts – comparing manuscripts, cataloguing story themes, assessing the percentages of local and "traditional" stories contained in our collection, identifying the historical data (e.g., royal names) preserved in our stories, and accounting for the physical circumstances and condition of our manuscripts – solutions to many unsolved riddles surrounding the monastic life and career of Big Hand and his fellow avadānists may yet be discovered: To what end does Big Hand specialise in avadāna-type literature? What kind of audience would be interested in listening to Big Hand's stories? Which Buddhist doctrines are illustrated by Big Hand's stories? What is Big Hand's status within his monastic community? How was Big Hand chosen to be an avadānist, a specialist in avadāna-type literature? Our manuscripts hold the key to answering such questions, though, of course, information gleaned from these sources must necessarily be supported by archaeology, art history, epigraphy, literary criticism, and numismatics. In any case, further creative explorations into

uncharted Buddhist-manuscript territory will undoubtedly bring to light solutions to many intriguing mysteries associated with the study of early Indian Buddhism that previously the mists of antiquity have caused to remain unsolved.

Tim Lenz (University of Washington, Seattle)

Transcription Key

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[ ]	An unclear or partially preserved akṣara (graphic syllable) whose reading is uncertain.
(*)	A lost or illegible akṣara that has been conjecturally restored on the basis of context, parallel citation or other means.
.	A missing portion (consonantal or diacritic vowel sign) of a partially legible akṣara. For example, .*e* is represents an akṣara in which the vowel diacritic *e* is visible, but the consonant to which it was attached is lost or illegible; *g.* signifies the consonant *g* is legible, but incomplete so that it cannot be determined whether or not a vowel diacritic was attached to the syllable.
?	An illegible, but visible or partially visible akṣara.
+	A missing akṣara that would have appeared on a lost or obscured portion of the scroll. A series of these symbols indicates the approximate number of lost syllables, one + sign being equivalent to one aksara.
///	Beginning or end of an incomplete line.
°	A small dot or circle used in the original text to indicate word, sentence, verse, half verse or other minor unit divisions.
○	A large circle, a design of circles or other large circular or square design used in the original text to mark sectional divisions.
=	A word break within an akṣara: used in phrases such as *karyam=ido,* in which the final consonant of the preceding word and the initial vowel of the following are written as a single syllable (*mi*).

Figures
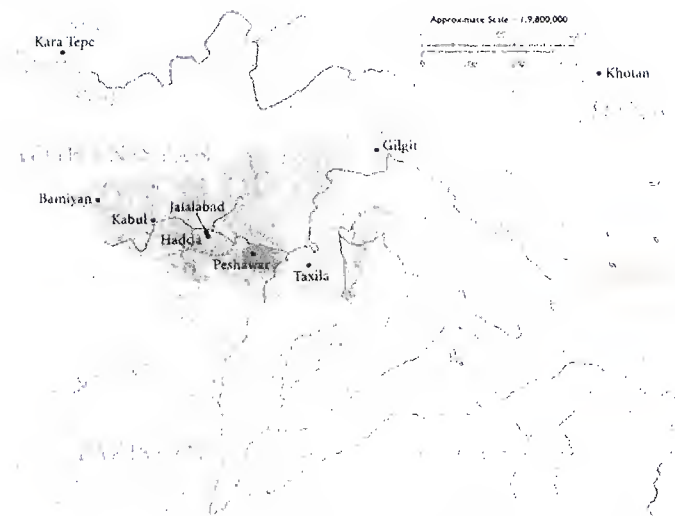
Fig. 1. Map of Gandhāra proper (dark gray), Greater Gandhāra (light gray), and surrounding territory.

Fig. 2. Crossed out text from Fragments 12 + 14, line 82: *dravado // evo ko kurigo [viva] spa ? ?.*
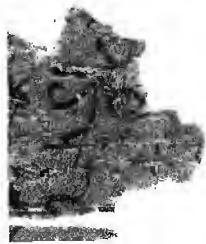
Fig. 3. Frags. 12 + 14, line 97: *hokṣavidi*.

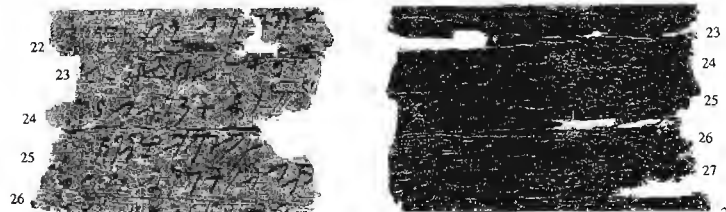
Fig. 4. Six-circled punctuation mark from Fragments 16 + 25.

Fig. 5. Story numbering in Fragments 16 + 25: number 1 (*/*) in l. 23 and number 2 (*//*) in l. 27.

Fig. 6. Truncated abbreviation formula: *vistare yaṣayupa[ma]* 7 O.

Fig. 7. Story numbering and abbreviation formula, avadāna 3, Fragments 12 + 14.

Fig. 8. *Likhidago* notation written in small letters between lines of text (Frag. 2): *sarva ime avadana [aca] (*likhidaga).*