

Named Sanctuaries and another Fire-hall in Gandhāra

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Apart from the standard monasteries with their impressive statue chamber there are also small shrines, uninhabited, sometimes called *vihāra*, which housed a statue of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Often, as at the Dharmarājika stūpa at Taxila, such shrines are located close to a centre of devotion. Others may have stood alone and will today hardly furnish enough remnants to indicate their former nature. Adherents of these local shrines may have furnished them with necessary implements like lamps and earthenware. In some lucky cases these items were inscribed and have survived the centuries to be studied today. I present here five such items, two of them not yet published. Their inscriptions suggest that the donations were made either to a very special Bodhisattva or to a monk looking after the shrine.

1. An image lamp stand

Oil lamps usually are cups with a pointed tip to keep the wick from sliding into the oil. Some oil lamps are part of a small statue of a male person holding the lamp proper in his hands. The statue can be given the features of the donor. An impressive example is depicted in Kurita 2003: 205, fig. 594, where we read *dhamadevasa*, 'of Dharmadeva', on the sockle below a kneeling shaven monk. Another case is the statue of a kneeling layman, uninscribed, shown in Tanabe 2007: 142. In some other cases the person is standing, about 40 to 50 cm high, holding the lamp in front of his belly. Only the feet remain of the donor in the following case (Fig. 1), where, however, an inscription on three sides (Figs. 2-4) of the pedestal provides important information. The base was found in the Thana valley in the lower Swat area, and is kept today in a private collection. It reads:

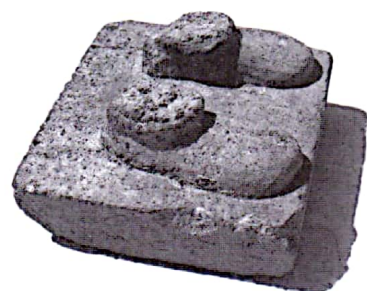


Fig. 1: Pedestal of a lamp holder

lovami kalyāṇaṇe / trami puṣadeṇasa / daṇamukhe

'This is the religious donation of Puṣyadinna at Lova, at (the site of) Him, with the friendly eye.'



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

The three inscribed sides of the pedestal

Lova must be the specific site in the Thana valley, with no possible successor to its name found on any map of the area. Kalyāṇanetra, although not found in Buddhist literature, most likely is the name of a Bodhisattva, 'with propitious eyes'. Puṣadena I take to be the personal name Puṣyadinna, well-attested, with a common change from *ṣy* to *ś*. The *-e* could be an incomplete *-i*-stroke.

Apart from a new site name in ancient Thana we get the name of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, defining the precise location.

2. A water vessel

It only seems that this kind of designation of small-scale shrines is a novelty. There are, in fact, two similar cases. In 1969 G. Fussman published an inscribed water vessel from the Kabul Museum, probably coming from Haḍḍa. Its inscription is very basic, dedicating the pot to the teachers of the Sarvāstivādins. The only unusual terms in addition are *samaṇṭapaśe* and *mahapriyasaṃñe* in the locative case. Fussman saw that these terms stood where a place-name was expected and that they do not actually look like place-names, but rather like personal names. Cautiously, he proposed to see here the name of the monk who deposited the vessel. Fussman well saw that *samaṇṭapaśa* would equal Skt. *saṃantaśāśya*, 'who sees everything', and he points at Pāli *saṃantacakkhu*, without evaluating the fact that this is an often used epithet of the Buddha. The same applies to Skt. *saṃantadarśin*, found copiously in the *Lalitavistara*. *Mahapriyasaṃñā* looks like a similar case, but has to be read as *mahapriyasaṃñe* (Salomon 1999: 243; Strauch 2008:80), 'in the Mahāpriya-ārāma', providing the name of the locality.

Seen by the side of the lamp-holder mentioned above we can again assume the presence of a statue of a very local Bodhisattva who was given a name not occurring in literature.

3. Dhamitra's panel

A beautiful panel was first published by Brough in 1982. It shows the Buddha sitting on a lotus displaying the *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*. To his left a Bodhisattva in a 'pensive mood' is seen on a wicker chair, pointing the forefinger of his right hand to his forehead; holding a flask in his left hand, which rests on his left thigh. The whole piece is so asymmetrical that it looks as if removed from a larger composition. The pedestal is inscribed in clear letters reading and translating according to Salomon and Schopen (2002: 13) as:

dhamitrāsa oloīśpare danamukhe budhamitrāsa amridae



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

The oversized lamp seen from above and from one side

'Gift of Dhamitra [sic] at Oloīśpara [?], for the immortality [i.e.] nirvāna of Buddhamitra.'

The doubts as to *dhamitra* can be laid to rest in light of the 'pensive Bodhisattva' in the Hirayama collection (Tanabe 2007: 104-106), inscribed *sariotami aya vakhaliaṇa x x [da]ṇamukhe* on the cone, followed by a few letters just below on the petals: *dhamitrāsa ṇavakarmull*.¹ Whatever its etymology, *dhamitra* on the panel most likely is neither a mistake nor is it short for *budhamitra* but should rather be taken in its own right.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

The inscription on the lamp

Salomon and Schopen have correctly read *amridae*, Skt. *amṛtāya*, thus getting rid of an older *amidaha*, allegedly referring to Amitābha. There remains *oloīspare*, which was taken by Brough to be Skt. *Avalokiteśvara*, a Bodhisattva presumably represented on the panel as well. Salomon and Schopen (2002: 26-27) do not rule out the possibility that linguistically *oloīspare* represents Skt. *avalokiteśvaraḥ*, but rather interpret it as a toponym in the locative, given that other references to the Bodhisattva are always accompanied by a descriptive or honorific title. Fussman (2002-03: 858) objects as he cannot imagine that a term ending in *-īśvara* could be a toponym.

The solution from the scanty material presented above regarding shrines as places of donation could apply here as well, allowing us to recur to the simplest linguistic explanation for *oloīspare* and at the same time taking **avalokiteśvare* to be a toponym in the locative, presuming that the place was not a larger locality, but just a shrine known by the name of its most prominent deity.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

The inscription on the lamp

4. Another large oil-lamp

In 2006 I presented an inscribed oil-lamp of considerable size. Such seemingly oversized lamps are characteristic for Gandhara, being unattested elsewhere in early Buddhist South Asia. I am thankful to Jolin Siudmak who brought one more such lamp to my notice. It measures *ca.* 30 cm in length and height (Figs. 5-6). It shows an inscription on both sides (Figs. 7-11). Since part of the rim has broken away the text is not fully legible. It reads on the right and left side:

thulaatreyami dharmaraiaami - lla a [gh?] [?] [m] e damukhe

On the second side the name of the donor can be expected. If we take the final *-e* as part of the required genitive, then we have to do with a female donor. *Damulhe* is faulty or abbreviated for

daṇamukhe. The letter *khe* is very elegantly written in one run of the brush, reminiscent of the letters on the Māmāneḍheri relief, commonly dated to the third century.

The term which concerns us most is *thulaatreyami*, locative of *thulaatreya*. The dictionaries show a range of personal names ending in *ātreya*, e.g., Kaniṣṭhātreya, Kṛṣṇātreya, Vṛddhātreya, Śvetātreya, and Svastyātreya. In most cases these terms will be nicknames or epitheta. Our *thulaatreya* represents Skt. **sthūlātreya*, denoting a person of *ātreya* descent with a decidedly fat or bulky body. A figure with this designation will hardly be an object of veneration. *Ātreya* is a term typical of the brahmin descent system and Bodhisattvas usually do stand clear of that. For the time being it seems safer to assume that the term describes a monk by his lineage and appearance, rather than referring to Bodhisattva. This one monk receives a large lamp, obviously because he is in charge of a locality where such a lamp is needed. The locality can be in the vicinity of Taxila or Butkara, *dharmarājika*, if the locative *dharmaraiami* refers to the site itself. It could also be a secondary formation, Skt. *dhārmarājika*, denoting a monk hailing from *dharmarājika*. This latter case was found on the said large lamp in a phrase *dharmaraiṇa malaśpaṇa*, where obviously a whole group of monks is referred to in the genitive plural. If also here *dharmaraiami* is to be taken as an adjective, qualifying *thulaatreyami*, then the place of the donation can be anywhere, but not in Taxila. I favour this latter solution since it would provide us with two large lamps referring to the same group of monks hailing originally from Taxila but having founded branches away from there, – with a common predilection for oversized lamps.

Therefore I translate:

“(This lamp) is the pious donation of (lady) A.... at (the shrine of) ‘the fat Ātreya’ who hails from Dharmarājika.”

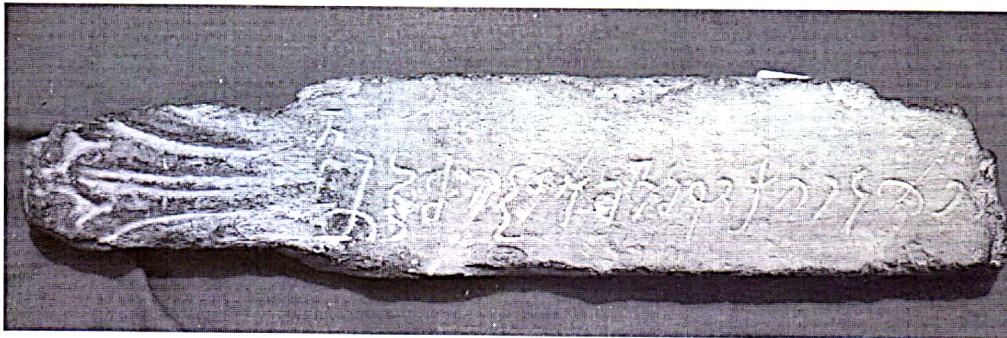


Fig. 12: The inscribed stone-board

5. A Stone Board misread

I take this opportunity to add a fourth item, a small stone board, broken to the right, ending in decorative fringes (Fig. 12). It has nothing to do with small shrines, but provides an interesting parallel to the donation mentioned on the Shah-ji-ki-Dheri perfume box, earlier misnamed ‘Kanishka casket’ (Errington and Falk 2002). The board was published by Nasim Khan in 2007 who reads:

+aśiravakami+budharakṣidasa kalusarva[bha]++

‘In ...aśiravaka, of Budharakṣita, (to) all the perfect (Buddhas).’

Apart from the personal name, everything is misread and consequently mistranslated. I saw the board in 2004 in the house of the collector. There is one letter partly preserved at the beginning, possibly a *kh(e)* from *daṇamukhe*. The rest reads:

ayi ṇavakarmigha-budharakṣidaṣa ṣalu sarva[ṇa] bha

In *ṇavakarmigha*, Skt. *navakarmika*, the *rmi* with its *r*-bend attached to the vowel-stroke is well-attested. *gha*, not recognized as a letter by Nasim Khan because of its mirror-inverted form, is unique so far in an *-ika*-formation, but can be seen as the last outcome of a development *ka*→*ga*→*gha*, with *ka*→*ga* and *ga*→*gha* having a series of parallels.

At first *ṣalu* looks enigmatic. If we take *ayi* as a feminine demonstrative pronoun, with *ae* (Konow 1929: 179, *ae pukariṇi*) as a variant spelling, then *ṣalu* should be a feminine nominative. With regard to content, Skt. *śālā*, ‘hall’, offers itself, posing, however, two problems. One concerns the initial sibilant, the second concerns the ending in *-u*. Fortunately, there are parallels for both changes. A seal in the Aman-ur Rahman collection (GKm 775) belonged to one Gośāla and reads *gośalakasa* in Kharoṣṭhī.

One feminine nominative in *-u* is already known from the Senavarman gold-plate (von Hinüber 2003, sentence 12b) where Skt. *atyantaniṣṭhā* is rendered as *acataiṭhu*.

The final *bha* after *sarvāṇām* can hardly be anything else but the initial of *bhavatu*.

I therefore translate:

‘(As a donation?) this is the hall of the architect Buddharakṣita. May it be (for the welfare etc.) for all.’

When architect Buddharakṣita presents a ‘hall’, we are instantly reminded of the Shah-ji-ki-Dheri text where we read: *mahaseṇasa saṅgharakṣidasa agiśalaṇavakarmiaṇa deyadharme sarvasatvaṇa hitasuhartha bhavatu*, ‘this is the pious donation of Mahāseṇa and Saṅgharakṣita, the architects of the fire-hall. May it be for the welfare and happiness of all beings.’

At Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, the two architects cashed in on their work, but on completion donated a skillfully made metal perfume box. Our board, however, testifies to the donation of the whole hall. And the parallelism proposes to regard the *ṣalu* not as any hall, but as a fire-hall.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. The anonymous editio princeps in Tanabe 2007: 295 differs in many points, but not in the name relevant here.

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