# Buddhism of Bāmiyān[1]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

IT APPEARS THAT THE NOMADIC people of the arid world did not attach much importance to documentary records. Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism have an abundance of textual materials, but not a single text belonging to Afghanistan Buddhism has been found. A few Buddhist texts have been unearthed from archeological sites, but they are all items transmitted from India.

Various sorts of inscriptions have also been exhumed, but all are exclusively based on non-native characters such as Aram and Greek, as well as Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī characters of India. Having no written language of their own, any will on their part to inscribe something in writing is practically undetectable. Here, the characteristic of Afghanistan Buddhists—weak in conceptual ideality, yet active and pragmatic—is clearly evident.

Although Bāmiyān Buddhists handed down no records at all of their own activities or ideas, they left behind an enormous amount of material objects associated with their ideas and faith. That very few matters were recorded while a great many objects were produced reveals one aspect of the characteristic of Afghanistan, or Western Turkistan Buddhism. The existence of objects left behind in great quantities certainly informs us that Buddhism took root and prevailed in this area. However, they merely continue to exist in silence and do not clearly tell us about the contents of that form of Buddhism.

## II. THE ACCOUNTS OF HSÜAN-TSANG

The only materials which contain mention of Bāmiyān Buddhism are the accounts of Hsüan-tsang and Hui-ch'ao, and even they are not very detailed. This is a summary of the accounts referring to Buddhism in the records of Hsüan-tsang's travels, *The Record of the West in the Great T'ang Period*:

1. The religious minds of people in Bāmiyān are deeper than of those in Tokharistan (northern Afghanistan); they revere everything from the Three Treasures to the one hundred deities. The heavenly deities reveal good omens to the traders who go to and from this land.
2. There are scores of monasteries, and thousands of monks who study the Lokottara-vāda.
3. To the northeast of the king's palace is a stone image of a standing Buddha; it is 140–150 feet in height and its color is a brilliant gold.
4. To the east of the eastern temple built by the previous king is a statue of a standing Śākyamuni Buddha made of brass, over 100 feet in height.
5. In a temple located about half a mile from the palace is a statue of a reclining Buddha about to enter nirvana; it is over 1,000 feet in length.
6. The king has established a "great assembly of indiscriminate giving" and is fervent in the practice of making donations.
7. There is a monastery over 60 miles to the southeast;[2] there they preserve the "Buddha tooth," "pratyeka-buddha tooth," "golden-wheel king tooth," and robe and bowl of Arhat Sanakavasa.

The accounts set out in the biography of Hsüan-tsang contain no great discrepancies from the ones noted above. It just mentions, in one description not conveyed in the *Record of the West*, that two scholar-monks with profound understanding of the teaching of Mahāsaṃghika, that is, Āryadaśa and Āyrasena, guided Hsüan-tsang.

Hui-ch'ao did nothing more than report about the state of Buddhism that, "Everyone from the king to the chief governors and the common people greatly revere the Three Treasures. There are many temples and monks. They practice the teachings of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna." In contrast to Hsüan-tsang, who states that they study the Lokottara-vāda, and the biography of Hsüan-tsang, which states there are scholar-monks of the Mahāsaṃghika, Hui-ch'ao reports that they are studying both the Mahāyāna and Hīnāyāna.

## III. SECTS AND TEMPLES

Although it contains barren and arid regions in its interior, India is basically a warm and moist agricultural region of abundant harvests.

Religions bred here were quite rich in speculative thinking, which was characteristic of a farming culture, conjoined with a conceptuality that was essentially Aryan. They exhibited remarkable advances in doctrinal rather than in intuitive respects.

On the other hand, the arid regions of Asia that stretched out to the west to its border at Gandhāra did not represent a soil accepting of a high degree metaphysical discussion or complex doctrine.[3] Much less so would the Buddhists of Afghanistan have been able to understand the intricate sectarian debates developed in India, which was so different in language, ethnicity, climate, and culture. We are only able to get a sense of doctrine from Bāmiyān through Hsüan-tsang's accounts that the Lokottara-vāda were engaged in studies and the several copied manuscripts that have been unearthed. As we will explain later, these copies did not exist as doctrinal tracts, but were regarded as the objects of worship. The kind of Buddhism that is seen here was filled with visual objects of worship extraordinarily exaggerated both in quality and quantity.

## IV. EXCAVATED MANUSCRIPTS

From Afghanistan, including Gandhāra, to western Turkistan, present Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tadjikistan, surprisingly few manuscripts have been excavated in comparison to the large number of excavated Buddha relics. In particular, when one compares them to the large number of manuscripts exhumed from Khotan, Turfan, and Lu-lan in the Takla-makan area of Xingjiang Province in China, one might say that they are almost non-existent. An example of this scarcity can be found in Bāmiyān. The only reports of manuscripts beside those involve the ones thought to be second to fourth century Nikāya texts excavated from the Kara-tepe Temple located in the outskirts of Termez on the northern shore of the Oxas River, the manuscripts with unidentified contents from the Gyaur-kara excavation in the vicinity of Merv in Parthia, and the Kharoṣṭhī fragments obtained in the Tapa Sardar excavation.

A rare example of manuscripts in the west of Pamir is a group discovered in Bāmiyān by M. Hackin in 1930 within a stone cave on the eastern side of a great Buddha image, which was some 38 meters (at the time it was believed to be 35 meters) in height. Its birch bark fragments had rotted away to the state where they could not be saved. Among the several palm leaves that were barely salvaged, nine pieces were reported on by Sylvain Lévi.[4] Other than the two written in slanting Gupta-style characters, they are clearly from discontinuous, separate texts and are not related with each other. It is reported that the place of their discovery was beneath a collapsed ceiling and that they were located between carvings on the face of the wall.

The circumstances of the excavation of the manuscripts and the composition of the copies' contents themselves clearly tell us that they were not texts used for the purpose of reciting the sutras or for study. This group of manuscripts is a compilation of single pages from expositions likely from the Sarvāstivāda traditions, as well as Mahāsaṃghika *vinaya* tracts respectively. Their various contents are completely disjointed.

A small number of palm leaf manuscripts have been recovered in Afghanistan from the ruins of the citadel of Shahr-i-Zohak located on a precipice some 10 miles to the east of Bāmiyān.[5] A complete one-page document is a medical text unrelated to Buddhism. There are also three slightly larger sheets, which originally formed a single leaf that was torn into three parts. Together they belong to the later Gupta Brāhmī characters of the sixth or seventh centuries. The former consists of four lines while the latter includes six lines, and they are clearly from different texts. In addition, a small fragment of a manuscript written in Kharoṣṭhī characters was exhumed along with them. In any event, none of them are thought to be texts used for the purpose of study.

What significance can be drawn then from the manner in which these manuscripts have survived? To the monks and lay followers in Afghanistan the manuscripts of texts written in Sanskrit, which had come in from India, were considered more as relics of the Buddha that were to be enshrined within the *stūpa*-s than as books conveying doctrine or theory. Their existence was thought to be sanctified since they represented the sacred Buddha. Thus, rather than objects of study they were looked upon as objects of worship.

As a result of conflict and hostilities that took place continuously since 1979, there were no discoveries for over ten years of new historical materials related to Afghanistan's ancient history. However, within a few years some surprising, newly discovered historical materials were reported. They are:

1. The Robatak Inscription of Kaniṣka in the Bactorian language was found in 1993 at the Robatak Pass, 30 kilometers north of Surkh-kotal, where an inscribed Kaniṣka image had been found.
2. Twenty-nine birch bark scrolls that had been stored in five pots, which were thought to have been unearthed in Hadda, Afghanistan. These Kharoṣṭhī scrolls, which were acquired by the British Library in 1996 or 1997, are thought to be from the first or second century CE, and are perhaps the oldest Buddhist manuscripts known.
3. Over ten thousand Buddhist fragmental manuscripts on palm leaves, birch bark, leather, and other materials, which were added to the collection of Martin Schøyen of Norway.

These items are well known among scholars, having been introduced by Nicholas Sims-Williams of the University of London, Richard Solomon of the University of Washington, Jens Braarvig of the University of Oslo, and others. These materials are all important for research into Afghanistan's ancient history and Buddhist history as well.

The fragments referred to in item three above were reported to have been scattered about in a natural cave some 30, 50, or 90 kilometers north of the Bāmiyān Valley. It was said that they were brought out of the country to Peshawar by an Afghan refugee. After passing through many hands, they came into the possession of a dealer in London. Mr. Schøyen from Norway bought up ten fragments, and a Japanese individual purchased around one hundred fragments. Very possibly, some more fragments belonging to the same group will come out to the market.

From the form of the characters of these manuscripts, it is known that the oldest manuscript belongs to the second century CE, and the latest ones to the eighth century. According to a report by a research group at the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Oslo, they include such Mahāyāna scriptures as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda-nirdeśa* (Jpn. *Shōmangyō*), as well as the *Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, and so on.

I find it quite shocking that these were discovered in the northern areas of Bāmiyān. As I have previously mentioned, the Buddhism that had gained popularity in Afghanistan did not focus on monks who held doctrine in high regard. Rather, I believe that it was a Buddhism centered on lay followers who worshipped religious relics, made offerings, and engaged in supplicatory prayer. Such Buddhism was supported in particular by merchants and commercial traders. However, these many texts from the periphery of Bāmiyān are not objects of worship. They were discovered in the form of texts written for educational purposes.

Prof. Kazunobu Matsuda of Bukkyō University in Kyoto is a member of the Oslo research group, and continues to do research on the Schøyen Collection. He conducted an extremely interesting lecture in Kyoto, upon his return from Norway. In it, he confirmed that a fragment from the Schøyen Collection was one of the manuscripts from Bāmiyān about which Sylvain Lévi had written a paper in the *Journal Asiatique* in 1932. He made this report as he showed slides of the manuscript. The manuscript about which Sylvain Lévi had written was later stored in the Kabul Museum. In 1997, I found the Kabul Museum was ruined, and the items in its collection completely missing.

Now there is no longer any need to believe the story about how an Afghan refugee accidentally discovered the manuscripts in a cave near Bāmiyān and brought them to Peshawar. Those manuscripts were very possibly part of the collection formerly stored in the Kabul Museum. Moreover, the existence of that cave near Bāmiyān is also doubtful.

However, this is no reason to decrease the value of these manuscripts. I would like to devote more time and thought to this issue. I simply mention it to you now because there is value in reporting to you these facts, which have only recently come to light.

## V. THE STRATIFIED STRUCTURE OF THE BUDDHIST ORDER

The Buddhist order possessed a two-layered structure from the earliest times. There were the groups of monks or renunciants who sought emancipation through the rigorous practice of the three types of learning (*tisraḥ śiksāh*)—*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*. The second group was that of laypersons or householders who aspired for prosperity (*hita*) and happiness (*sukha*) in the world to come through the accumulation of roots of merit (*kuśala-mūla*) derived from the practices of giving (*dāna*), veneration (*pūjana*) and worship (*vandana*). The former can be said to correspond to a "Buddhism of emancipation," that is, where one seeks to attain the Other Shore of enlightenment through one's own efforts in studying the doctrine, upholding the precepts, and engaging in *dhyāna* practices, principally meditation and contemplation. The latter might be referred to as "Buddhism of salvation," that is, one in which a person prays for salvation through the power of the transcendent Buddha as a recompense for one's accumulated merit.

The Pali *Mahāparinibbana-suttanta*[6] contains an account in which Ānanda asks Śākyamuni Buddha about how to treat Śākyamuni's body after his death. In response, Śākyamuni states,

> O Ānanda. You should not be worried about venerating the remains of the Tathāgata. O Ānanda. You should strive to realize the highest good. You should practice the highest good. You should dwell in the highest good, with diligence and devotion and without self-indulgence. O Ānanda. There are scholars of Kśatriya class, scholars of the Brahman class, and scholars among the householders who harbor faith in the Tathāgata. These people will venerate the remains of the Tathāgata.

This account, as well as the famous legend of the division of the Buddha's relics into eight parts,[7] gives clear expression to the notion that participation in veneration of the Buddha's remains, that is, *stūpa* worship, was mainly undertaken by lay householders and not by renunciants.

The unique feature of Buddhist relics in the regions to the west of northwestern India (not only Bāmiyān) is the existence of an overwhelmingly large number of sacred places such as *stūpa* or *caitya* in comparison with the number of *vihāra,* or monasteries where monks reside. In the areas

surrounding them a great many miniature votive *stūpa*-s and other votive articles have been unearthed, but few Buddhist texts, the existence of which would suggest the flourishing of doctrinal developments, have been recovered. Further, we must take note of the narrative elements, as well as elements of folk belief which can be richly seen in the relics of antiquarian art. Their unique feature lies in their having a character which coincided with a form of faith possessed by lay believers, but which was, within the actual undercurrent of Indian Buddhist history, seldom outwardly manifested as such in Buddhist literature.

## VI. MIXTURE WITH LOCAL FOLK BELIEFS

It is unthinkable that the development of Buddhism in India could have been shouldered solely by practicing monks or by scholar-monks in the upper stratum of the saṃgha. Common lay believers rarely make appearances in Buddhist literature. Yet, any attempt to undertake a reconstruction of Indian Buddhist history while ignoring the existence of an overwhelmingly large number of householders who supported the foundations of the Buddhist order would limit one's understanding to dogmatic or doctrinal aspects. If one were to discuss Central Asian Buddhism only from the side of dogmatic or doctrinal history, one would not be able to see very much there.

Viewing Buddhism from the standpoint of its transmission through three countries—India, China, and Japan—would disclose the development of a theoretical Buddhism that was filled with metaphysical debate. It would not reveal the overall character of Buddhism, which brought together the faith and beliefs of many ignorant and illiterate common people during nearly a thousand years in the non-agricultural regions of Central Asia. As we have stated above, the character that one can strongly sense in the Buddhism of Central Asia is that of a Buddhism of the *caitya*, that is, a Buddhism of worship and salvation, which was completely different in nature from a Buddhism of doctrine and emancipation centered on the *vihāra*, or, monastery.

It is clear that the phrase "one hundred deities" that appears within Hsüan-tsang's writings regarding Ghazni refers to non-Buddhist deities, while the phrase "heavenly deity" is a reference to a Hindu deity, possibly Sūrya, the Sun-deity. However, it is not known whether "heavenly deities" also refers to deities of other paths in general, or whether it is limited to Hindu deities. Most likely it is the former. In any case, this state in which a "myriad monks and followers" in this land who "revere the Three Treasures" of Buddhism while they also "pray to the one hundred deities" are "learning the Mahāyāna teaching" creates the strong sense of a fairly chaotic hodgepodge of magical beliefs. Further, the character of the "heav-

enly deities" who, even among the one hundred deities, attracted particular reverence was to "bring to fulfillment the aspirations of those who seek and believe, and bring calamity upon those who slight them." This bears a close resemblance to the attitude of faith of lay believers who prayed for benefit and reverently brought offerings to the *stūpa* in search of prosperity.

## VII. TEMPLES AS SACRED PLACES

The central portion of Tapa Sardar, Ghazni, is filled with excessively adorned objects of worship. On the right-hand wall of the shrine in chapel twenty-three on the southern side of the central *stūpa* there remains part of a mud image of Durga, a female deity (*mahīśāsura-mardini*) slaying a demon with the head of a water buffalo. Nothing remains of the principal Buddha on the front facade, but on the left-hand wall a Buddha image survives. The mixture with Hindu images can be clearly seen, corresponding with Hsüan-tsang's accounts. It is also thought that a *vihāra* might have existed at the foot of the hill. Despite that, however, we can only think that the entire rise must have been a mammoth sacred place. Aside from that, in the surrounding areas there are many complicated and strange objects the use of which is difficult to explain. The area, however, has had the misfortune of being embroiled in recent hostilities, and as the result, the excavation was suspended and reports about it are only being partially made.

At the temple ruins of Fondokistan as well it appears that a single hill was made into a shrine.[8] The treeless peak in the shape of an inverted mixing bowl towers in height approximately 100 meters over the village at its base. In the middle courtyard at the summit are the ruins of a *stūpa*. The wall around its perimeter contains only worship halls filled with niches for Buddha images and there is no room there to construct a *vihāra*.

In Tapa Shotor near Hadda as well there are few elements that would make up a monastic temple. It is believed to be a sacred place for pilgrimages, which were made primarily to *stūpa*-s. The periphery of the main monument in the *stūpa* temple is fully encircled with the small votive *stūpa*-s. The outer balcony is lined with niches for the placement of images and, beginning with a fish-porch of odd construction which is thought to represent a scene from a fable centering around Apalala, the Dragon King, there are certainly many elements which appeal to one's visual sense.

The neighboring *caitya* to the north is famous for its image of Hercules holding a *vajra*. Besides that, other curious items include the ten great disciples found on the surface of a wall of a long and narrow hall, which is halfway underground, and the wall painting with a skeleton at its center. This hall, with its long and narrow shape, its mural suggestive of meaning and, its half-way underground structure having its air of mystery could not

have been an assembly hall. Instead, one has to believe that it was the site of some kind of ritual or a place to undergo the practice of contemplation on the impurity of the body.

The same kind of curiously constructed cave temple and *stūpa*-s can be found in Haibak, which is to the north over the Hindu-kush mountains.[9] At the summit of 40 meter-high limestone hill, there is a *stūpa* some 8 meters in diameter carved out by digging down into the corridor portion at the circumference (a circle path). A square structure, which appears to be a place for the enshrinement of relics, has been carved out on the top of the *stūpa*. This room for enshrining of relics can be seen only if one views it from close to the top of the hill. From below, it is impossible to see that a large *stūpa* has been chiseled out to look as if it were buried in the ground.

In the southern foot of the northern mountain there are five stone caves, which line up facing the hill of the *stūpa*. The first and third caves are shrine caves that come together in an antechamber, and along the surface of their walls there are niches. The second cave, which lies between them, can only be considered to be a place in which special rituals were performed. The construction of the fourth and fifth caves is even more curious, and we are completely unable to understand what they might have been used for. The only way to make sense of the construction of this group of caves is to surmise that they were involved in fairly unique rituals. The structures that remain make us wonder whether they might have been esoteric in nature, or whether they might have involved a mixture of folk beliefs.

Among the unique features of the Buddhist relics in Afghanistan are:

1. The great number of shrines and *stūpa* and objects of worship such as Buddha and bodhisattva images is disproportionate to the number of *vihāra*.
2. There are a large number of narrative elements.
3. A confusing mixture with other religions can be seen. This includes not only the religions of India, Greece, and Persia, but also local folk beliefs.
4. There is an overabundance of decorative adornments.

In the background of these features we can easily read between the lines to perceive a flourishing of activities that involved giving and making reverential offerings, as well as worship and pilgrimage, and a manner of faith that tended strongly toward prayer rather than religious practice.

Further, there is a tendency to give visible expression to the transcendent and universal nature of the Buddha and bodhisattvas through massive and abundant Buddha and bodhisattva images. The strength of this tendency reveals an emotional religious sense weak in conceptual ideality and speculation. Moreover, the state of unearthed scriptural texts indicates

that the scriptures as well were regarded purely as objects of worship and were thought to possess a kind of mystical power.

Two inferences can be drawn from the large number of these objects of worship: first, pilgrimages took on a form in which activities of worship were able to develop; second, the practice of indiscriminate giving (*dāna*) flourished. This makes us think that both represent a conspicuous trend toward the development of a lay Buddhism.

Buddhism was introduced to Afghanistan in the third century BCE by Aśoka, but there is absolutely no evidence that Buddhism took root at that time. The only Buddhist remains that can be traced back prior to the common era are several items from within the *stūpa* at Jaralabad. It is believed that Buddhism emanated extensively around the beginning of the common era, in particular, after the formation of the Kushan empire in the first century CE. Coupled with the rise of the Roman Empire during this period, contacts between the East and West developed rapidly. Buddhism spread to Afghanistan through the medium of caravans engaged in trade, but such Buddhism was under the influence of the Buddhism of Gandhāra, the great commercial city that connected India with the outside world.

Gandhāra was an international city in which there existed a mixture of Indian and western things. From such epoch-making events as the existence of a Buddhist *stūpa* at Sirkap in Taxila[10] and the appearance of Buddha images that flourished in Gandhāra in the latter half of the first century CE, we can infer without difficulty that Buddhism surely took root there at around the beginning of the common era. This area was a typical terminus zone in which there existed a confusing mixture of different cultures. Buddhism here ushered in people from many different races and, rather than requiring them to learn complicated doctrine and perform difficult practices, it taught them a simplistic practice which gave lucid promise of a desirable and fortunate outcome. That is to say, it was a lay-oriented Buddhism, in which one could hope to receive the salvation of the Buddha as the reward for performing such simple practices as giving, making offerings in reverence, and worship, which was most easily accepted by people of different races.

Of course, inscriptions and Buddhist transmissions attest to the existence of the Sarvāstivādin order, and the *Milinda-pañhā*[11] tells of the intense philosophical interest in Buddhist doctrine by the Greek King Menandros. However, it cannot be believed that the traders of Central Asia, who were engaged in everyday commerce, understood such metaphysical discussions.

It is possible to say that the Buddhism that found acceptance in Afghanistan placed primary value in objects of art such as objects of worship like *stūpa*-s and newly added Buddha images. They later came to include the images of bodhisattvas, which the people were probably brought to feel close to as a result of the newly emerging Mahāyāna

ideology. Although they were not of course produced as works of art, these were in fact visual objects of art, which by themselves could appeal directly to the religious sense of the people.

## VIII. PRAYERS AND SALVATION

The sixth chapter of the accounts of Hsüan-tsang's *Record* relates that the Bāmiyān king frequently arranged an event called the "great assembly of indiscriminate giving" at a Buddhist monastery. The temple, which enshrined an image of the Buddha's *parinirvāna*, was located half a mile from the castle city. He would give away everything—from his wife and children to the country's treasures. When the national treasury became exhausted, he would even endeavor to give himself away. It would then be the duty of his retainers and court officials to buy back from the *saṃgha* the king, his family, and the objects that he had donated to the monastery.

In the central Bāmiyān cliff alone there are over seven hundred stone caves just among those exposed at the surface, including the ones containing the two great Buddha images. We do not know how many more would be uncovered were there to be an excavation of the lower portion of the cliff wall. Further, if we should look at the group of temple caves at the Kakrak and Foladi valleys, or take a survey of all of the caves which extend across areas covering a much wider range, we could not help but surmise that there must have been a flourishing practice of indiscriminate giving that was beyond our imagination.

It is hard to believe that the donations supporting the great number of cave temples were made by the inhabitants of the valley, including members of the royal family, alone. Looking at Bāmiyān as a whole, the only rich oases were those surrounding the main cliffs by the castle town. Aside from those, there were no oases to be seen. Here, the accounts set forth in Hsüan-tsang's *Record* are brought to mind. The wealthy merchants and traders who traveled back and forth in thriving commerce might not have distinguished between the Three Treasures and the one hundred gods, but they probably would have made large contributions out of their wish for happiness and prosperity.

Until about the middle of the sixth century the road going north from Gandhāra across the Karakorum mountains was the principal route taken by Buddhist pilgrims and commercial traders. For that reason Gandhāra was the hub of Buddhism; filled with a large number of sacred grounds and monasteries, it also prospered as a commercial and economic stronghold. However, as the result of the occupation of Gandhāra by Hephtal until the first half of the sixth century, Buddhism in this region was devastated, with monks and followers scattering into the interiors of India or to China. With the weakening of Hephtal due to pressure from the forces of Turkic and

Sasanian rulers, Gandhāra also lost its position as a commercial and economic base. After that the new trade route passed through Gandhāra without stopping and stretched to the north of Hindu-kush by way of Kapisi and Bāmiyān. In this way, Kapisi and Bāmiyān took the place of Gandhāra as the hubs of trade and Buddhism.

From the very earliest times, Chinese Buddhist scriptures included texts that gave instruction on the contemplation on the Buddha. The *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (Jpn. *Hanju zammai kyō*), *Śūraṃgama-samādhi Sūtra* (Jpn. *Shuryōgon kyō*), *Sūtra on the Samādhi of Sitting Meditation* (Jpn. *Zazen zammai kyō*), and *Sūtra on the Ocean of the Samādhi of Contemplation on the Buddha* (Jpn. *Kanbutsu zammai kai kyō*) are representative of the many scriptures which are compiled in volume fifteen of the *Taishō Daizōkyō*.

The "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha" (*kanbutsu zanmai*) which is taught in these scriptures often places "contemplation on the Buddha image" at the very first stage of practice. This attests to the fact that the existence of a Buddha image is indispensable to the "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha." In *the Sūtra on the Ocean of the Samādhi of Contemplation on the Buddha*,[12] which is thought to be an apocryphal sutra arising from China, there are expressions that cannot be understood without presupposing the existence of a Gandhāran Buddha image in particular. It makes one mindful of the prevalence of the "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha" in Gandhāra. We can see that the existence of massive and abundant Buddha images from Gandhāra to the worlds outside of India suggests an inclination toward the practice of "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha" among the renunciant monks.

There is a theory that seeks to attach a relationship between the large Buddha images of Bāmiyān and descriptions of the massiveness of the body of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life in the *Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*.[13] Yet, they do not necessarily have a direct relationship with that sutra alone. Still, the "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha," which has as its initial stage the contemplation on the Buddha image, and the existence of large Buddha images raise a plausible issue to which attention should be given. In any case, it causes us to consider that, more so than abstract doctrinal debates, the tendency to pray for salvation through the supernatural power of the Buddha took root deeply among renunciant monks as well.

The *Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, which was translated in the early part of the fifth century CE, takes on a form similar to other Buddha-contemplation sutras translated during about the same period of time. Yet, in terms of its content, it must be considered to be one of the Pure Land sutras in that it urges the practicer to aspire for birth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss by saying the Name of Amida Buddha. The so-called "six contemplation sutras," in which this sutra is

often included, are all apocryphal scriptures; that is, they are all thought to be sutras that came into existence in China. However, the elements making up their contents include many that were transmitted from India and Central Asia. A great many things could be discussed in regard to these sutras,[14] but we will omit them here. By raising only those points which are related to the main thesis of this paper, we are able to get a detailed look at the process through which the practice of the "*samādhi* of contemplation on the Buddha" underwent an extreme simplification, becoming the act of saying the Buddha's Name.

From the earliest days, Buddhist texts flowing into China from Central Asia reached the extremes of miscellany. Even the distinction between Mahāyāna and Nikāya remained unclear, and so the Chinese people had no choice but to accept all of the texts as sacred Buddhist scriptures. For that reason, Chinese Buddhists were forced to struggle hard with an abundance of scriptures, each of which taught that its own ideas and methods of practice—each mutually distinct from the others—were peerless and superlative. Soon, however, the Chinese people became aware of the distinction between Mahāyāna and Nikāya, and the differences between the Theravāda and Mahāsaṃghika traditions. As a result, they classified the scriptures into categories and made judgments as to their relative value. They began to make efforts to discover a sutra, from among the extensive groups of scriptures, which would teach that it was the fundamental reason why the Buddha appeared in the world. These studies in pursuit of a critical classification of the Buddhist teachings (Jpn. *kyōsō hanjaku*) led to the systematization of Chinese Buddhism and the establishment of order within it. As a consequence, Chinese Buddhists became unavoidably sensitive to the distinctions between Mahāyāna and Nikāya, and to the differences between lineages of transmission.

For that reason it is likely that whenever Hsüan-tsang visited a monastic temple, he tried to report, as far as possible, the school to which it belonged. However, Buddhists in the Afghanistan region did not have the background of a speculative culture like that of China. Both monks and lay followers were more deeply concerned about the Buddha than the Dharma, more concerned about worship and making offerings, as well as contemplating and praising the Buddha than about dogma or doctrine. They were unconcerned with the distinctions between Mahāyāna and Nikāya or about differences between the various Buddhist schools. Since in many cases the standards for making such judgments did not exist, on many occasions Hsüan-tsang was probably unable to make any sectarian references. If we look at the entirety of Hsüan-tang's *Record*, there are indeed few references to the schools to which the Buddhists belonged.

## NOTES

1. This article is based on the author's article published originally in Japanese as "Bāmiyān no Bukkyō," in Higuchi Takayasu, ed., *Bāmiyān: Afuganisutan ni okeru Bukkyō sekkutsu jiin no bujutsu kōkogakuteki chōsa 1970-1978 nen*, vol 3, Honbun-hen (Kyoto: Dōbōsha, 1984), pp. 218–239 [chapter 4 of the part 2, kenkyū-hen], and subsequent writings by the author.

2. The distance of one *li* in Hsüan-tsang's text appears to correspond to approximately 400–440 meters. For reference see Mizutani Shinjō, "*Saiiki ki* no ichiri no nagasa," in Genjō, *Daitō Saiichi ki*, Mizutani Shinjō, trans., *Chūgoku koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 22 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971), p. 416, supplemental note 2.

3. This is discussed in more detail in my article, "Indasu kara Pamīru e," in *Shiruku rōdo no shūkyō: Maboroshi no jiin o tazune te*, Nakamura Hajime, Kasahara Kazuo, and Kanaoka Shūyū, eds., *Ajia Bukkyōshi: Chūgokuhen*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Kōseisha Shuppansha, 1975), pp. 26, et seq.

4. Sylvain Lévi, "Note sur des manuscripts sanscrits provenant de Bamiyan (Afghanistan), et de Gilgit (Cachemire)," *Journal Asiatique* 220 (1932): pp. 1ff.

5. Bernard Pauly, "Fragments sanskrits d'Afghanistan (fouilles de la D.A.F.A.)," *Journal Asiatique* 255 (1967): pp. 3–4, pp. 273ff.

6. *Dīgha Nikāya*, 16, Pāli Text Society II, p. 141.

7. *Dīgha Nikāya*, 16, Pāli Text Society II, p. 164.

8. Joseph Hackin, "Le monastère bouddhique de Fondukistan," *Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Franńaise en Afghanistan* 8 (1959).

9. Mizuno Seiichi, ed., *Haibaku to Kashumīrusumasuto*: Afuganisutan to Pakisutan ni okeru sekkutsu jiin no chōsa 1960, Kyoto *Daigaku Iran Afuganisutan Pakisutan gakujutsu chōsa hōkoku* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku, 1962).

10. John Hubert Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila* (Cambridge: For the Department of Archaeology in Pakistan at the University Press, 1960).

11. Both the two fascicle (*Taishō*, vol. 26, p. 694ff.) and three fascicle (*Taishō*, vol. 26, p. 703ff.). Chinese translations of the text preserve its ancient style. The Pāli version of the *Milinda-pañhā* (London: Pali Text Society, 1880) contains many sections that were appended later.

12. *Taishō*, vol. 15, pp. 645ff, 402–412.

13. *Taishō*, vol. 12, pp. 340ff.

14. This issue is discussed in more detail in my article, "Kangyō kō: Muryōjubutsu to Amidabutsu," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 408 (1976): pp. 76–95.