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# **New Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra in the Stein/Hoernle Collection**

## **A Preliminary Report**

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I

The Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra, vitally important for its propagation of the concepts that the Buddha is eternal and that all beings possess the potential for Buddhahood, has, along with the Saddharmapundarīka, exerted a tremendous influence on Far Eastern Buddhism through its Chinese translations. Only a few fragments of its Sanskrit original are known to exist, however, and compared to the Saddharmapundarīka with its numerous Sanskrit recensions, research on this sutra is virtually nonexistent. Until recently, only two folios of the Sanskrit Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra were known to exist: one in the Hoernle Collection at the India Office Library and Records,

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\* This is a report on research recently conducted on the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Stein/Hoernle Collection deposited in the India Office Library and Records, London. We wish to thank Mr. B. C. Bloomfield, Stephen Green, and Michael O'Keefe of the Library administrative staff, and Mr. Michael Maher, Ms. Margaret Willson, and Ms. Matsuoka Kumiko who assisted us with our work. Without their kind cooperation our research would not have been possible. This research was funded by a Japanese Ministry of Education grant for scientific research. I also wish to thank Mr. W. S. Yokoyama for his assistance in the preparation of this report.

London,<sup>1</sup> and the other in Japan at the Hōjū-in temple on Koyasan.<sup>2</sup> In 1985, this number was brought up to eight when the Soviet scholar Dr. G. M. Bongard-Levin of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, Moscow, published his study on six folios contained in the Petrovsky Collection in the Leningrad branch of the Academy.<sup>3</sup> This handful of folios is extremely valuable for the glimpse it affords us of the original manuscript. Said Dr. Watanabe Kaigyoku, who assisted F. W. Thomas in identifying the one precious folio contained in the Hoernle Collection: "It is as if a single scale of that mythical golden dragon had fallen to the earth before it disappeared forever beyond the clouds."<sup>4</sup>

No one knew, however, if this was all that remained of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. Had past researchers made an exhaustive search of the collections for further fragments?

Two years ago, when I obtained a set of 424 photographs of the Stein/Hoernle Collection taken from a microfilm kept in the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library), Tokyo, I made a routine examination of them before putting them on the shelf.

Last spring things started to happen. I had an opportunity to exchange views about the Sanskrit version of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra with Dr. Bongard-Levin, then visiting in Kyoto. At that time he presented me with a copy of his above-mentioned work on the six folios in the Petrovsky Collection. Looking through it, I was sure there was something related in the Toyo Bunko photographs I had received, and so I re-examined them as soon as I returned home. That night I discovered the missing right half of the second of six folios among the Toyo Bunko photographs: One folio of the manuscript had been broken in two, the left half ending up in Leningrad, the right in

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Thomas, "Miscellaneous Fragments," in A. F. R. Hoernle, ed., *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature found in Eastern Turkestan*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1916), pp. 93-97.

<sup>2</sup> Yuyama Akira, *Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra: I. Koyasan Manuscript* (Tokyo, 1981), 44 pp.

<sup>3</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin and M. I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, *Pamyatniki iniiskoi pismennosti iz Tsentralnoi Azii*, I, in the Bibliotheca Buddhica series, Vol. XXXIII (Moscow, 1985), pp. 37-64.

<sup>4</sup> Watanabe Kaigyoku, "Daijō Nehangyō Bonbun-danpen" (The Mahāyāna Nirvāna Sutra Sanskrit Fragment) in *Kogetsu-zenshu*, Vol. I (Tokyo, 1933), p. 572.

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London. I immediately made a report of this to Dr. Bongard-Levin. He wrote to me that he had made the same discovery on a recent visit to the Toyo Bunko. He later reported his finding in a supplement to the English version of his study on the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra published by the International Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tokyo.<sup>5</sup> Intrigued by my own discovery, I made an even more detailed study of the photographs only to uncover another, almost complete folio.

As a result of these findings my interest in the Stein/Hoernle Collection grew. I wondered if this was the extent of the Nirvāna Sūtra fragments and if the Toyo Bunko photographs were complete. I was determined to find an answer to these questions.

### II

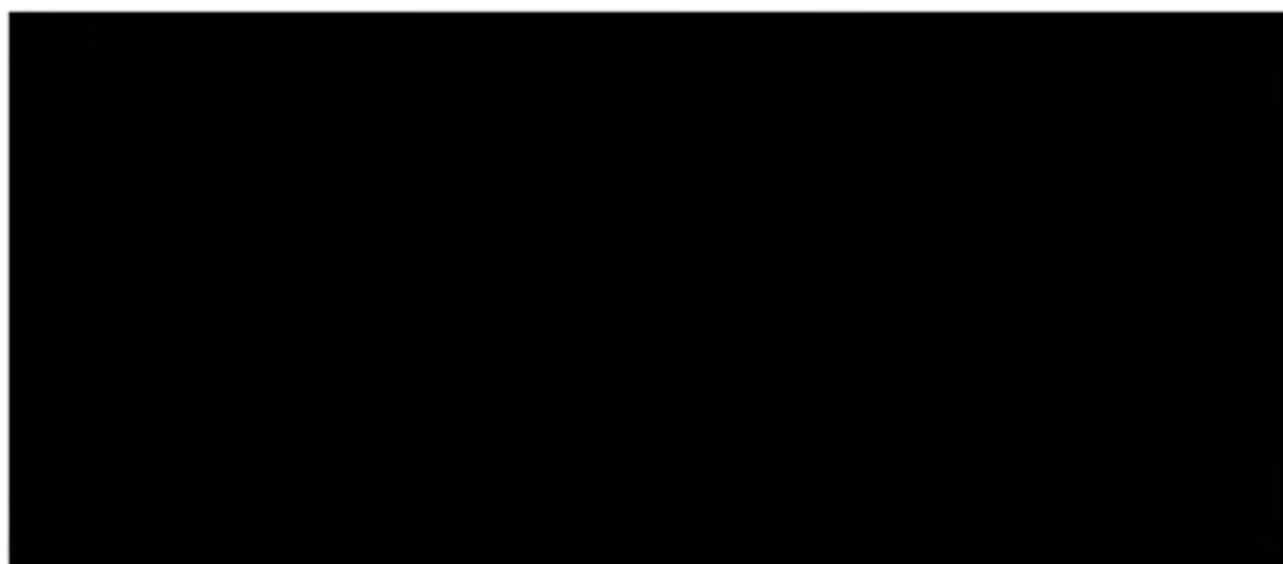
An opportunity arrived sooner than expected. In the fall of last year, I was sent to London as a member of a research team under the auspices of the Toyo Bunko to investigate the Sanskrit materials collected by M. A. Stein and A. F. R. Hoernle in Central Asia earlier in this century. The vast literary find uncovered by the three Stein expeditions and those obtained independently by Hoernle resulted in the collaboration of researchers from several countries in the publication of Hoernle's *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature found in Eastern Turkestan* (1916). While many studies of the manuscripts have been done, a number of problem areas remain. The Sanskrit have not been subjected to detailed study as the collections assembled by Pelliot and the German expedition, and are all but forgotten about nowadays. The findings of the Stein Collection resulted in the publication of a catalogue of manuscripts,<sup>6</sup> but there is no catalogue for the Hoernle Collection, for which the studies and publications to date account for less than one tenth of the total manuscripts. Our recent investigation revealed that the Toyo Bunko microfilm of the Stein/Hoernle Collection did not account for the entire collection. The Hoernle Collection, in particular, contained a number of important texts that had somehow

<sup>5</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, *New Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra: Central Asian Manuscript Collection at Leningrad* (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 10-12.

<sup>6</sup> The three expeditions are described in M. A. Stein, *Ancient Khotan* (Oxford, 1907); *Serindia* (Oxford, 1921); and *Innermost Asia* (Oxford, 1928).



*Manuscript A, Stein Collection*  
*No. Kha-0014.1 Recto, size 9.0 × 18.0 cm.*



*Manuscript B, Stein Collection*  
*No. Kha 1-129 Verso (left), size 11.0 × 38.0 cm*



*Manuscript C, Hoernle Collection*  
*No. 143 S. B 72 Recto, size 9.3 × 21.0 cm*

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escaped the attention of the academic world. During the month our research was conducted, I was able to take up all the manuscripts by hand and to inspect them one by one. The work conducted by our research team should offer a better picture of the entire collection once our order for a new microfilm is processed and the task of compiling a catalogue is completed. I would like here to make a preliminary report on the newly identified Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra contained in the collection.

### III

Before discussing the collection in the India Office Library, I would first like to consider on the Sanskrit fragments from the Stein Collection deposited in the British Library's Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books (hereafter as OMPB). The different kinds of texts brought back from Tun-huang by the Stein expeditions were divided between the British Museum Library which received the Chinese, Uighur and Sogdian documents (these works presently being under jurisdiction of the OMPB), and the India Office Library which received the Tibetan, Sanskrit, Khotanese and Kuchan documents. The laborious work of division was carried out, understandably, in a rather makeshift way, with the result that a number of Sanskrit fragments came to be deposited in the OMPB. The famous Kashgar manuscript of the Saddharmapūṇḍarīka in the Stein Sanskrit collection has been assigned its own OMPB registration number (Or. 9613), but with that exception the great majority of manuscripts are grouped under the number Or. 8212. Like Or. 8210, under which all Tun-huang Chinese documents are grouped, Or. 8212 functions as a catchall for works written in the various Central Asian languages, under which number each language is further subdivided. Among them are also many bilingual texts written in Chinese and Tibetan or Chinese and Uighur. In addition to the microfilm of the Indian Office Library collection, the Toyo Bunko also has a copy of the OMPB microfilm of Or. 8212. This contains Nos. 1 (Or. 8212/1) to 195 (Or. 8212/195), of which Nos. 1 to 73, 103, 164, 165 and 174 are Sanskrit texts. Single numbers do not indicate separate fragments, but rather groups of fragments. Thus, while the Toyo Bunko microfilm goes up to No. 195, this is not all of Or. 8212, and at the OMPB I was shown up to No. 1927. Of these Nos. 1361

to 1927 were fragments in plastic holders awaiting classification, and included many Sanskrit fragments. Most of them were pieces so tiny that Stein had not assigned them a number, but some were larger and their original forms were still discernible. The fragments in the plastic holders had yet to be microfilmed by the OMPB.

There is a catalogue of the fragments contained in the Stein Sanskrit collection, but if a fragment is listed and cannot be found in the India Office Library collection, it may well be in the OMPB's Or. 8212. Scholars studying these Sanskrit manuscripts seem to be unaware of this fact. For instance, the recently published first volume of *Sanskrit Manuscripts of Saddharmapundarika* notes that, of the fragments recovered by Stein, the whereabouts of Kha.i.66, Kha.i.74b, Kha.i.213, Kha.i.303b, and F.xii.9 are unknown;<sup>7</sup> these fragments, however, can be found scattered throughout the Toyo Bunko's OMPB microfilm in frames Nos. 1-73. Lack of time precluded a detailed examination of the OMPB collection, but I would suggest any scholar seeking the whereabouts of other fragments should start with the unclassified documents in Or. 8212. The OMPB has a mimeographed listing of the works up to No. 195, and it is clear at a glance what works these include. When it comes to the other unclassified pieces, however, there is no way of verifying their identity other than examining the actual fragments. At any rate, as far as I could tell, there were no Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvānasūtra in the Stein Collection in the OMPB.

The Sanskrit collection in the India Office Library includes the Stein manuscripts outside those in the OMPB, as well as the entire Hoernle collection. The works are stored in 45 wooden boxes, two cardboard boxes, and a number of paper folders. The wooden boxes each contain a few up to several tens of plates, each plate containing one to ten folios of manuscript fragments. The cardboard boxes contain stacks of plastic cases, each containing a hundred or more folios; these are all Hoernle manuscripts. The paper folders contain works too large to fit in the plates.

Of the 45 wooden boxes, Boxes 1-13, 15-22, and 35-40 are Khotanese

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<sup>7</sup> K. Tsukamoto, R. Taga, R. Mitomo, and M. Yamazaki, *Sanskrit Manuscripts of Saddharmapundarika: Collected from Nepal, Kashmir, and Central Asia*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 17-20.

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manuscripts, and the remaining 18 boxes are Stein/Hoernle Sanskrit manuscripts. Of these, the Stein manuscripts are contained in Boxes 30-32, 41-43, and 45, as well as a few paper folders; the remainder are the Hoernle manuscripts. The Toyo Bunko microfilm which I had did not contain photographs of the plates in Boxes 14, 23-27, 33, 34, and 44 of the Hoernle manuscripts; nor did it contain those in Boxes 30-32, or plates Nos. 88 to 112 in Box 45 of the Stein manuscripts. The unphotographed portions of the Stein manuscripts may be explained by the fact that these are new plates of recent vintage, and did not exist when the microfilming was done in 1950. However, this does not explain why the Hoernle manuscripts went unphotographed since the plates appear to be rather old. The photographed portions of the Hoernle manuscripts comprise the contents of two cardboard boxes, several paper folders, and two wooden cases that Hoernle had already published. The unphotographed portions, except for a small part, have never been brought to the attention of the academic world, although they contain a number of important fragments. For example, the 11 folios of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra I discovered were almost all derived from the unphotographed portions. I was also able to pick out several fragments of the Saddharmapūṇḍarīka, among them the colophon of the closing chapter. No reports, of course, have ever been made on these fragments.

The Toyo Bunko microfilm consists of 424 photographs, i.e., the recto and verso sides of 212 frames, of which Nos. 1 to 85 and 208 to 212 are Stein manuscripts, and the remainder are Hoernle. Among the Hoernle manuscripts, however, are a large number of Khotanese fragments. When these manuscripts were filmed in 1950, they had not been mounted onto plates, but were placed on a white background and photographed directly; in some frames as many as ten fragments appear. The plates of the Stein manuscripts kept in the India Office Library retain the approximate order of the frames. The Khotanese texts included in the Hoernle manuscripts were put in separate wooden boxes; the already published Sanskrit fragments were mounted onto plates and put in Boxes 28 and 29; and the remainder was put in cardboard boxes. The India Office Library has since disposed of the original microfilm, and no one seems to have any knowledge of the circumstances under which the filming was done.

It is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the contents of the

manuscript groups contained in the Stein/Hoernle Collection. Briefly, though, the Stein manuscripts seem to consist mainly of Mahāyāna sūtras collected along the southern Silk Road in the Khotan area, while the Hoernle manuscripts consist of Mahāyāna sūtras from the same area as well as Āgama and Vinaya texts collected along the southern T'ien-shan route in the Turfan area. There are hundreds of Turfan fragments among the Hoernle manuscripts in the cardboard boxes, only a small fraction of which have ever been examined. The India Office Library has neither a catalogue nor a card file for the Stein/Hoernle Collection, making it rather difficult for the general visitor to determine which case, which plate a particular manuscript can be found in; in fact, the only choice would be to leaf through the manuscripts one by one.<sup>4</sup>

## IV

During the course of examining numerous manuscripts I was able to discover 33 fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. These were the fragments of 15 folios of which only a few were complete, since about half of the fragments were rather small. All of them were written on paper in Gupta Brāhmī Script, and judging by the size, handwriting, and format, I was able to determine that they originally derived from three manuscripts, which I have tentatively labelled Manuscripts A, B, and C. At that time I was able to identify the contents of two thirds of the folios, and was reasonably certain that the remaining ones were somehow related to the Nirvāṇa Sūtra. Judging from the folios I had already identified, the contents corresponded well to the Tibetan translation (Peking ed. No. 788) and six-volume Chinese translation (Taisho No. 376; the first halves of Nos. 374 and 375), which were rendered from the original Sanskrit. I had only the Tibetan

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<sup>4</sup> Until 15 years ago, the India Office Library was the library annex of the India branch of the British Embassy. When the British Library was made independent of the British Museum, the India Office Library was made part of it, and, with its staff of over one hundred employees, it now forms one section of the vast British Library network having 31 departments in ten different locations. Once the new library facility north of the British Museum is completed, the India Office Library and the OMPB will be transferred there. This means that the entire Stein Collection will be housed in the same place for viewing.

and Chinese translations of the Nirvāna Sūtra with me, in London, and was unable to identify three folios belonging to Manuscript A. Upon returning to Japan, I was able to determine that two of the folios were of the Sarvavaitulyasamgrahasūtra (Chinese tr. Taisho No. 275, Tib. Peking ed. No. 893), and the other folio was of the Aṣṭabud-dhakasūtra (Taisho No. 431, Tib. Peking ed. No. 937). It seems that Manuscript A continues with these other sūtras after the Nirvāna Sūtra ends.

Five of the six folios in the Petrovsky Collection and the one published by F. W. Thomas in Hoernle's *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature found in Eastern Turkestan*, Vol. I, belong to Manuscript A.<sup>9</sup> This latter folio is, of course available for viewing at the India Office Library. The Stein/Hoernle Collection also yielded the missing portions of the third and sixth folios in the Petrovsky Collection. The fifth folio in the Petrovsky Collection belongs to Manuscript B. Manuscript C represents a newly discovered text, and is formed of six large fragments. The fragments of these three manuscript groups are scattered among the Stein/Hoernle Collection. It is well known that the Stein manuscripts all belong to works excavated from the ruins of Khādalik near the Domoko oasis, 110 kilometers east of Khotan along the southern Silk Road. This would seem to indicate that Hoernle, who did not divulge the site of his excavations, must also have obtained his manuscripts from Khādalik. (The same would apply also to the Leningrad manuscripts.)

With the help of the Library's restoration department I was able to create three new plates of the Nirvāna Sūtra from fragments found in other plates of the Stein Collection. The manuscripts in the Hoernle Collection are affixed to the mounting plates making them impossible to remove.

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The India Office Library has kindly granted me permission to

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<sup>9</sup> Hoernle died just before the second volume was to be published, and the paper he had intended to publish has been registered as Mss.Eur.D.723. It is a Khotanese translation of the medical treatise by Ravigupta entitled *Siddhasāra*. A study of this treatise has since been published by someone else, and Hoernle's paper is probably of little more than historical value.

## MATSUDA

photograph the folios related to my findings on the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra and publish them as part of a study (in Japanese) scheduled for publication in spring 1988 from Toyo Bunko. Along with photographs of these newly identified fragments, the study will include a romanized text and the corresponding Tibetan and Chinese translations of these portions. The chance to examine the Sanskrit fragments in that room on the top floor of the Library was indeed a thrilling experience, and with memories of the kindness shown by everyone during our stay I hasten to prepare the materials for publication.