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A SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPT ON BIRCH-BARK FROM Bairam-ALI. II. AVADĀNA AND JĀTAKA (PART 8)

As we have seen earlier, the text of the Bairam-Ali manuscript contains a large number of Prakrit grammatical forms. For instance, in place of Skt. satvaiḥ, Instr. Pl., we find the form satvehi, which goes back to satvebhīḥ. We find -*ehi* in place of -*ebhīḥ* and -*aih*; which is one of the most widespread Prakrit grammatical forms, repeated almost invariably throughout the text. Especially frequent are violations of the *sandhi*, rule, for example, *kin* *tavā* and *kintena* instead of Skt. *kins* *tavā* and *kins* *tena*. Also, many verb forms — aorist forms, for example — are given incorrectly.

A textual comparison with avadānas with the same plotline shows that the text in the manuscript is abbreviated and simplified. One is tempted to conclude that the stories outlined in note form in the manuscript hark back to an earlier folkloric layer that was further developed in alter avadānas. The language would have been intentionally “Sanskritized” to grant it legitimacy by making it similar to the language of classical Sanskrit literature.

In two recently published articles, Prof. Seishi Karashima (Tokyo) analyzes the grammatical features of a number of Sanskrit texts recorded in the fifth — ninth centuries. He notes departures from standard Sanskrit in orthography, phonology, syntax, and morphology and identifies several forms reflected neither in *BHS* nor in *BHSg*, but which came to be standard for the Buddhist Sanskrit of the period under discussion. Seishi Karashima concludes that the language of many Buddhist texts (e.g., the earliest extant version of the “Lotus Sūtra” that we find in the Lūshun fragments of the *sūtra*) was originally not Sanskrit, but Prakrit (the Indian vernacular of the medieval period), only later “Sanskritized” when they were recorded in written form. It seems that the Bairam-Ali manuscript may confirm Karashima’s conclusion. But, of course, its language needs additional and thorough intensive study [1].

FOL. 26a

TRANSLITERATION

1. catur mahārājā[nā]jñānāṃ vina[yā] vistareṇa kim karma śvāsaḥ ca mahāśvāsaḥ ca babhūva.
2. aṭiśvaras ca citiśvaras ca gurudā babhūvaḥ te kāśyape saṃmyaksambuddhe sakaśā ² śikṣāpadā-
3. ni grīhī Oṭāhi || vivāha iti dharmadinnāyāṃ bhikṣunyāṃ vistareṇa pravrajyā vaktavyā tasya
4. karma kāśyape saṃmyaksambuddhe[e] pravrajitā tatra karma tayā mātāpitārā ³ varṣakaṃ kāritam
5. vedapatyam kṛtam brahmaçaryam cīrṇam || chedanaṃ yathā mahāsamanadre satvasya pañcachā ⁴ yakṣa

TRANSLATION

1. [Tell] in detail the *vinaya* of the four mahārājās. What was [their] *karma*? The [nāgas] Śvāsa [²] and Mahāśvāsa [³] were
2. [flying in the air]. Aṭiśvara [⁴] and Cūtiśvāra [⁵], [later became] Guruḍa. At the time when the entirely enlightened Kāśyapa was alive, they followed
3. moral norms of conduct. [Story] of entering marriage [⁶]. In detail about the bhikṣunī Dharmadinnā. Tell how [she received] pravrajyā. Her
4. *karma* [was thus]: in the time of the entirely enlightened Kāśyapa [she] underwent the ritual of induction. Here the *karma* [was the following]: her parents commanded that a house be built for her to varṣa time; [by her] the Vedas were
5. comprehended [⁷]. She led a pious way of life. [Tale] entitled “Division”. How in the ocean between five-hundred yakṣas

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1 Braces { } designate superfluous *akṣara*.
2 Instead of *sakāse*.
3 Instead of Skt. *mātāpitara*.
4 Instead of Skt. *pañcābahīḥ*.

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