

---

Christiane Reck

## Short Survey on Sogdian Manuscriptology

---

*Abstract:* The catalogue of the Middle Iranian fragments in Sogdian script in the Berlin Turfan collection in three volumes was completed in 2018. These fragments belong to the literature of the Manichaean, Buddhist and Christian communities in Turfan. Some specimens and peculiarities of these fragments referring to codicology, illustrations, headlines and numbering of folios will be presented.

*Key words:* Middle Iranian studies, Manuscriptology, Turfan fragments

Cataloguing any manuscript collection involves delving into codicology and its related fields, and hence the cataloguing<sup>1</sup> of the Sogdian texts in Sogdian script in the Berlin Turfan collection has required addressing various aspects of their codicology. Separate overviews of Manichaean, Christian, and Buddhist texts in Sogdian script have been published as a result of this cataloguing work.<sup>2</sup> This article intends to give a brief overview of some specimen of the texts in Sogdian script.

Among the Sogdian manuscript fragments from Turfan preserved today, there is an observable relationship between book formats and religious affiliation: in particular, Manichaean literature is mainly preserved in codices and scrolls, Buddhist literature in scrolls and pustaka books, and Christian literature in codices only. There are, of course, some exceptions, which means, that some few Manichaean and Christian pustaka books and leaves, in both Manichaean and Sogdian scripts, are to be found.<sup>3</sup> The distinctive feature of pustaka leaves besides the binding hole and circle

---

© Reck, Christiane, Persian Manuscripts, Goettingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Marburg (reck@bbaw.de)

<sup>1</sup> Carried out as part of the Union Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts in German Collections project, the results of which are now completely published: see RECK 2006, 2016 and 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular RECK 2008, 2010, 2014a, 2014b and 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this last group, see RECK 2014b, and especially Table 2 in RECK 2014a, 543.

---

around it is the fact that in the case of so-called long lined leaves the script stands on the top after turning the leave in horizontal direction. That's why these leaves could not have been bound into a codex and should have been part of a *pustaka* leave.

However, because of the texts' fragmentary state, several types of evidence — including decoration, headlines, incipit or explicit formulae, or script — must be considered in order to determine not only religious affiliation, but also often the type of manuscript they represent.

Most of the typical Manichaean codex book fragments in Sogdian script show no specific decorative elements other than headlines written in red or blue color and adorned with flowers at the top corners of the page (**pl. 1**).<sup>4</sup> Sections or separate texts within a manuscript are often distinguished by means of incipit and explicit formulae (**pl. 2**), though these are not always preserved.<sup>5</sup> The highest quality Manichaean manuscripts, those in Sogdian included, were sometimes adorned with both illuminations and/or line drawings, often unrelated to the content of the text.<sup>6</sup> A typical example of such are the fragments So 18700+M 501e+III 6261 (**pl. 3**), a text which contains a passage known from the preface to Burzōy's *Kalila wa Dimna*.<sup>7</sup> The small drawing of a musician playing on a flute on the margin has no relation to the text describing the tribulations of the human existence.

Many of the Manichaean texts are written on scrolls, in particular on the versos of re-used Chinese Buddhist scrolls. The best preserved example of such is the so-called *Āzandnāmē* 'Parable-Book' (**pl. 4**),<sup>8</sup> in this and similar examples, there is also Sogdian writing on the Chinese side, typically short notices or scribbles. Manichaean texts are also sometimes written in columns containing lists also on the blank versos of Chinese scrolls. These columns are not a form of increasing the beauty and importance of a manuscript but executed in a negligent way with hand-ruled lines. Some of the scrolls were halved in height — this format was presumably popular because its smaller size made it more portable (**pl. 5**).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> For the Manuscriptology of the Middle Iranian Manichaean fragments from Turfan see COLDITZ 2013. For details of the colours see Durkin-Meisterernst et al. 2016, 11–12.

<sup>5</sup> See BENKATO 2017b for a recent study of these formulae.

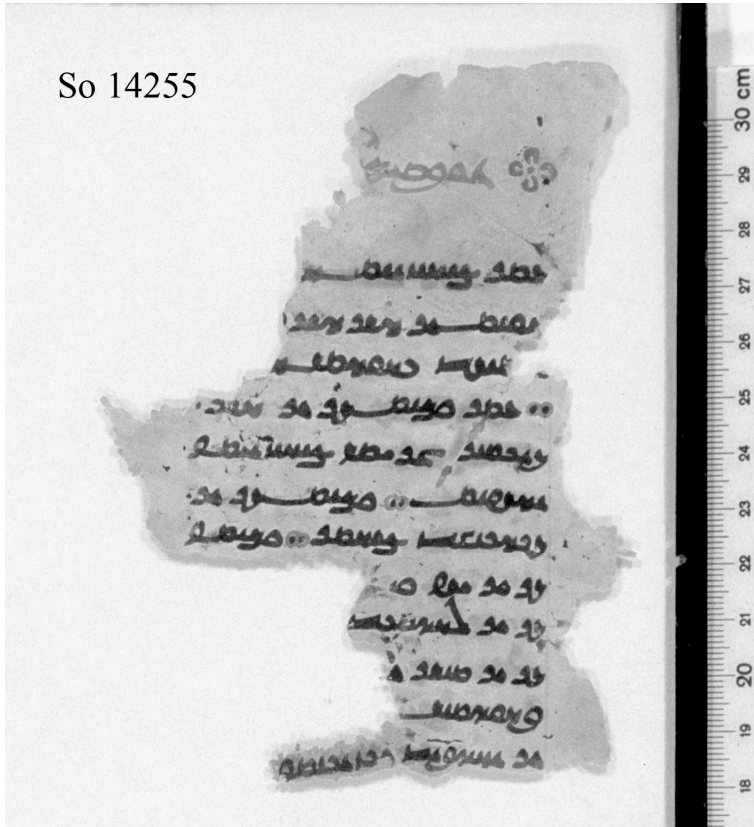
<sup>6</sup> GULÁCSI 2005, 195–219.

<sup>7</sup> GULÁCSI 2001, # 9 and # 41; GULÁCSI 2005, 158. Edition by RECK 2005, 338–341 with facsimiles on 434–435, joining see RECK 2006, 215–217 # 293.

<sup>8</sup> See SUNDERMANN 1985 and BENKATO 2017a for a new edition and textual commentary on the *Āzandnāmē*.

<sup>9</sup> HENNING 1940, 5 (Fragments III = So 14700(13), and IV = So 14700(12)), facs.: WEBER 2000, pl. 169 and 170; YOSHIDA 2000, 71–74, facs.: 78; RECK 2009, 219–221, Taf. IX.

---

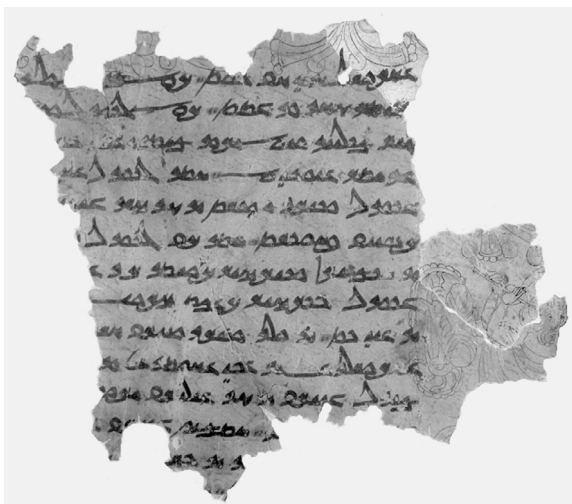


Pl. 1.

So 14255/recto

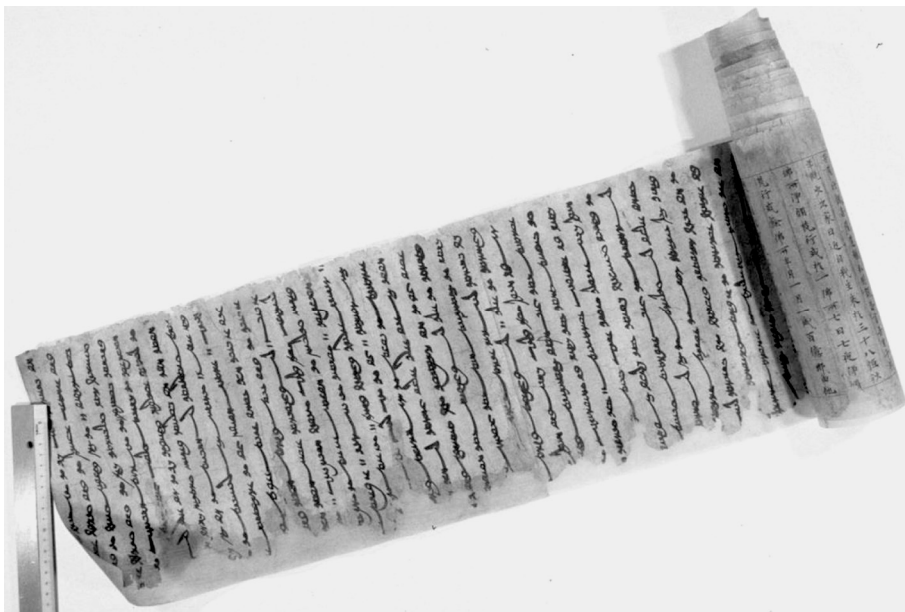
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin





Pl. 3.

So 18700+M 501e+III 6261  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 4.

Ch/So 20182  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 5.  
Ch/So 14760/verso and Ch/So 14761/verso  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

There are some fifty Christian fragments in Sogdian script in the collection. The most well-known are the two types of the Book of Psalms: the first is characterized by Syriac rubrics at the beginning of each psalm (pl. 6), while the other has a Greek line on the upper margin which marks the beginning of the psalm in Sogdian (pl. 7).<sup>10</sup> Another group of fragments, possibly containing a Sogdian version of the *Dormitio Virginis*, uses a unique brown ink (pl. 8).<sup>11</sup> The brown ink was analysed within a research project on pigments in the Turfan materials. It was interpreted in the result as faded colour exceptional among the other inks, because it “was composed with an organic dye not been identified yet”.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, neither Manichaean nor Christian codices in Sogdian script have page numbers; no Manichaean codices in Manichaean script have page numbers either, while Christian Sogdian codices in Syriac script often bear quire numbers. Some of the Christian manuscripts in Sogdian script do bear a cross on the upper outer corner of the verso side.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned above, many Buddhist Sogdian texts are written on scrolls. In contrast to the Manichaean scrolls, these are typically new scrolls produced especially for the writing of Buddhist texts. Later, the blank versos of these were often re-used for the writing of Buddhist texts in Old Turkic. A typical example is a fragment of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (pl. 9).<sup>14</sup> Sogdian Buddhist texts are often also written in the *pustaka*, or *poṭhi*, format. Two types can be distinguished: “long-lined” (pl. 10) and “short-lined” (pl. 11) *pustaka* leaves as called by YOSHIDA.<sup>15</sup> Both types often have foliation headlines, above the main text in the former and at the beginning of the text in the latter. The foliation headlines contain usually a shortened title, the number of the book or chapter (given as an ordinal number) and the number of the leaf (given as a numeral) with the classifier *ptr* ‘leaf’. These headlines are usually written in a smaller script. Sometimes only a number is written. In one case this foliation number is written in Chinese.<sup>16</sup> These foliation

<sup>10</sup> For the first of these, see SCHWARTZ and SIMS-WILLIAMS 2014, pl. II, and for the second see SIMS-WILLIAMS 2004; SIMS-WILLIAMS 2011.

<sup>11</sup> RECK 2008, 193–194, and 200–202, pl. 2–5 and RECK 2018, 59–60.

<sup>12</sup> DURKIN-MEISTERERNST et. al. 2016, 11.

<sup>13</sup> RECK 2008, 194, see also BARBATI 2016, 38. For the Manuscriptology of the Christian Sogdian fragments in East Syriac script see BARBATI 2017.

<sup>14</sup> MÜLLER and LENTZ 1934, 38–43 [539–544], text 7 (T II Y[ār χōtō] 50a = So 14850), for the Old Turkic text, see ZIEME 2007, 115–121.

<sup>15</sup> YOSHIDA 2015, 837.

<sup>16</sup> BENVENISTE 1940a, 154–158 (P3).

headlines or numbers are situated more often on the recto, though they can also be written on the verso as is typical for Old Turkic texts.<sup>17</sup> As already assumed by Henning<sup>18</sup> in both scrolls and pustaka books the script runs vertically.

The title of a text is also sometimes mentioned in the colophon, though a colophon is preserved only in a handful of cases.<sup>19</sup> The colophons often are separated from the main text by more elaborate punctuation, and the script is often in a different size (**pl. 12**). The scribes or other persons mentioned in the colophons bear Old Turkic names, and sometimes the colophon is even written in Old Turkic.<sup>20</sup> To aid in locating a scroll in an ancient library, a title was often written on the outside of the rolled-up scroll — such titles are preserved in only two cases, however, in the *Sūtra of Causes and Effects* (P4, Pelliot Chinois 3516) and So 16110(1)+So 16123.<sup>21</sup> Some of the Buddhist manuscripts are illustrated as well. The most prominent example is the luxury pustaka volume of the Araṇemi-Jātaka, where in the opened volume on one side the story is told and on the other side the matching illustration is situated.<sup>22</sup> There are also a few other fragments with illustrations, which one has not been able to identify as yet (**pl. 13**).<sup>23</sup>

There are several kinds of script the use of which also aligns, to some extent, with book format and religious affiliation. Buddhist texts are typically written in the ‘formal’ variant of the Sogdian script, though it is not limited to texts that are Buddhist in content, but also appears in pharmacological fragments, for example. Such a text shall be edited by A. Benkato and Ch. Reck in this volume as well in connection with a short survey on the Sogdian medical fragments. Most of the Manichaean texts are written in various calligraphic forms of the regular Sogdian script, as are the Christian texts, and even some of the Buddhist texts. Script variety is hence not distinctive enough on its own to identify a fragment.

---

<sup>17</sup> SUNDERMANN 2010, 77.

<sup>18</sup> HENNING 1958, 56.

<sup>19</sup> For more on these see RECK 2017, 388–389, and about colophons in Manichaean books, see YOSHIDA 2000, 83–85 and YOSHIDA 2008, 342–343.

<sup>20</sup> MÜLLER and LENTZ 1934, 43–47 (text 8, TM 391 = So 18242 = MIK III 32), YOSHIDA 2008, 342–343.

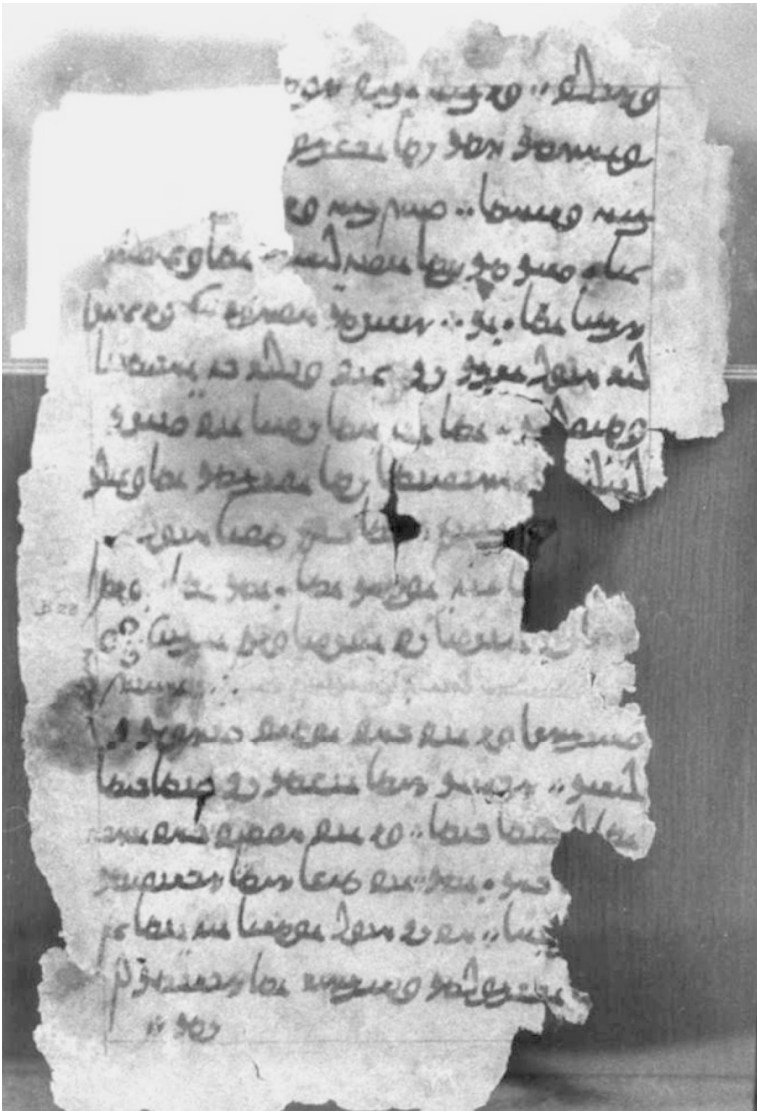
<sup>21</sup> See MACKENZIE 1970, 2–3 and RECK 2013, respectively, for discussion of each of these texts and the titles on the verso.

<sup>22</sup> EBERT 2001 and SUNDERMANN 2001. The direction of reading is under discussion, see RECK 2016, 57.

<sup>23</sup> RECK 2016, 449.

---

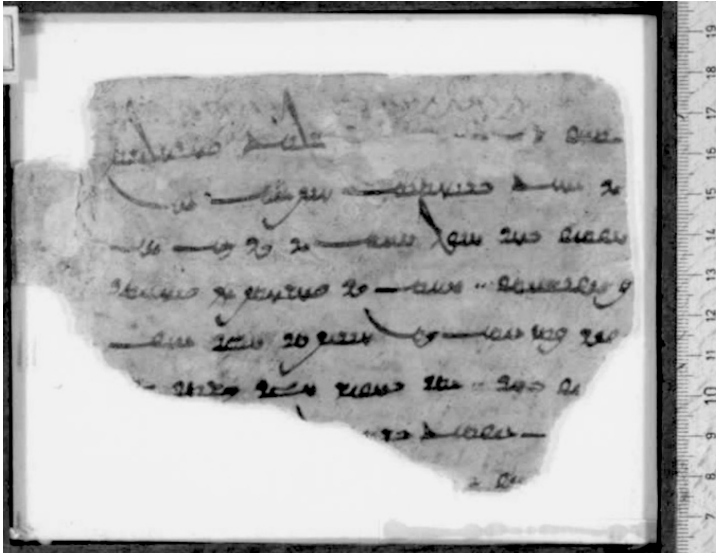




Pl. 6.

So 12601=III 59/recto

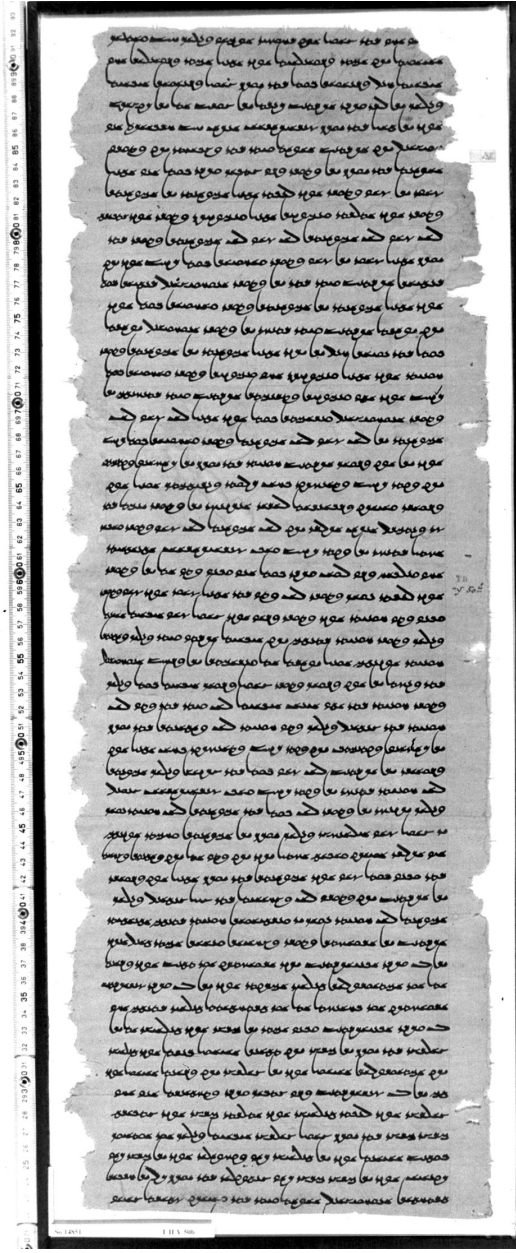
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 7.  
So 12950(2)/recto  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 8.  
So 12600 I/recto und II/verso  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 9.

So 14851/recto

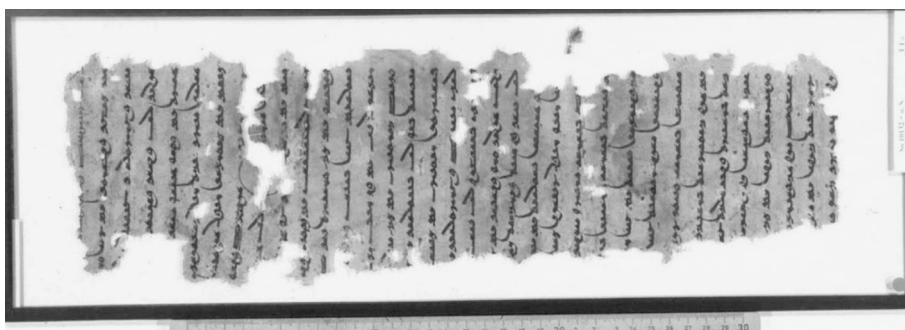
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 10.

So 14736/verso

Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



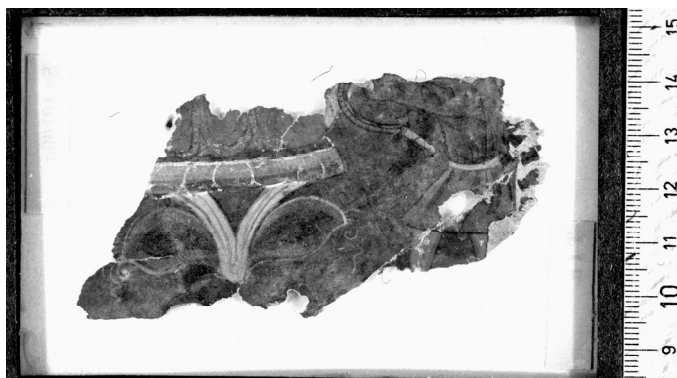
Pl. 11.

T I α+So 10132/recto

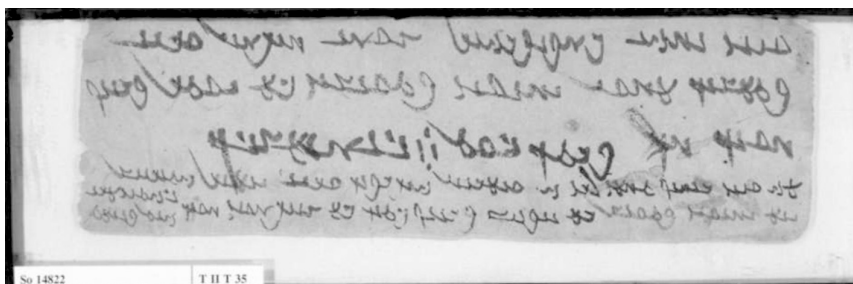
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 12.  
So 18274-So 18276, colophon on So 18276  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 13.  
So 10100q/2<sup>nd</sup> page  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin



Pl. 14.  
So 14822/recto  
Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

Finally, the format of fragments containing letters, economic documents, pharmacological texts, or texts of uncertain religious affiliation is often difficult to discern. These can be parts of scrolls, pustaka leaves, or simply single sheets. Even worse, it is sometimes not possible to determine the recto or verso of smaller fragments. It also bears mentioning that many such previously medical fragments are written with a thin brush rather than a calligraphic pen or reed (Pl. 14).<sup>24</sup>

### Abbreviations

Pl. = Plate

### References

- BARBATI, Chiara 2016: *The Christian Sogdian Gospel Lectionary E5 in Context*. Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik, 81. Wien.
- BARBATI, Chiara 2017: “Mitteliranisch-christliche Manuskriptologie”. In *Handbuch Iranistik*, 2. Ed. by Ludwig Paul. Wiesbaden, 403–411.
- BENKATO, Adam 2017a: *Āzandnāmē: An edition and literary-critical study of the Manichaean-Sogdian Parable-Book*. Wiesbaden.
- BENKATO, Adam 2017b: “Sogdian Letter Fragments in the IOM, RAS”. *Written Monuments of the Orient*, 5, 26–38.
- BENVENISTE, Émile 1940: *Codices Sogdiani: Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale (Mission Pelliot)*. repr. en fac-similé avec une introduction par E. Benveniste. Copenhagen.
- COLDITZ, Iris 2013: “Die Manuskriptologie der iranisch-manichäischen Turfantexte”. In *Handbuch der Iranistik*, 1. Ed. by Ludwig Paul. Wiesbaden, 352–360.
- DURKIN-MEISTERERENST, Desmond et al. 2016: “Scientific methods for philological scholarship: Pigment and paper analysis in the field of manuscriptology”. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 17, 7–13.
- EBERT, Jorinde 2001: “Sogdische Bildfragmente der Araṇemi-Legende aus Qočo in Turfan”. *De Dunhuang à Istanbul: Hommage à James Russell Hamilton*. Ed. by Louis Bazin and Peter Zieme. Turnhout, 25–41.
- GULÁCSI, Zsuzsanna 2001: *Manichaean art in Berlin collections: A Comprehensive catalogue of Manichaean artifacts belonging to the Berlin State Museums of the Prussian Cultural Foundation, Museum of Indian Art, and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, deposited in the Berlin State Library of the Prussian Cultural Foundation*. (Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum: Series Archaeologica et Iconographica; 1). Turnhout.
- GULÁCSI, Zsuzsanna 2005: *Mediaeval Manichaean Book Art: A Codicological Study of Iranian and Turkic Illuminated Book Fragments from 8th–11th Century East Central Asia (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies; 57)*. Leiden–Boston.
- HENNING, Walter B. 1940: *Sogdica*. London.

---

<sup>24</sup> RECK 2016, 447 and RECK 2018, 172.

---

- HENNING, Walter B. 1958: “Mitteliranisch”. *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, 1. Abt., 4. Bd., Iranistik, 1. Abschn. Linguistik. Leiden–Köln, 20–130.
- MACKENZIE, David N. 1970: *The ‘Sūtra of the causes and the effects of actions’ in Sogdian*. London.
- MÜLLER, Friedrich W.K. and LENTZ Wolfgang 1934: “Soghdische Texte II”. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Kl. 21. Berlin.
- RECK, Christiane 2005: “The tribulations of human existence: A Sogdian fragment corresponding to a passage of Burzōy’s preface to Kalilah wa Dimnah?”. In *Il Manichaeismo. Nuove prospettive della ricerca* [sic.]. Ed. by Alois van Tongerloo in coll. Luigi Cirillo. Turnhout, 434–435.
- RECK, Christiane 2006: *Mitteliranische Handschriften, Teil 1: Berliner Turfanfragmente manichäischen Inhalts in soghdischer Schrift*. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 18,1. Stuttgart.
- RECK, Christiane 2008: “A Survey of the Christian Sogdian fragments in Sogdian script in the Berlin Turfan collection”. In *Controverses des chrétiens dans l’Iran sassanide*. Ed. by Christelle Jullien. Paris, 191–205.
- RECK, Christiane 2009: “Soghdische manichäische Parabeln in soghdischer Schrift mit zwei Beispielen: Parabeln mit Hasen”. In *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit: Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Werner Sundermann*. Ed. by Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst and Christiane Reck and Dieter Weber. Wiesbaden, 211–224.
- RECK, Christiane 2010: “Some remarks on the Manichaean fragments in Sogdian script in the Berlin Turfan Collection”. In *‘The way of the Buddha’ 2003: The 110th Anniversary of the Otani Mission and the 50th of the Research Society for Central Asian Cultures*. Ed. by Takashi Irisawa. Kyoto, 69–74.
- RECK, Christiane 2013: “A Specimen of the Buddhist Sogdian Texts of the Berlin Turfan Collection: the Beginning of a Scroll”. In *Commentationes Iranicae: Sbornik statej k 90. Letiju Vladimira Aronoviča Livšica*. Ed. by S.R. Tochtasev and Pavel B. Lurje. St. Petersburg, 394–397.
- RECK, Christiane 2014a: “The Middle Iranian manuscripts from the Berlin Turfan collection: Diversity, origin and reuse”. In *Lecteurs et copistes dans les traditions manuscrites iraniennes, indiennes et centrasiatiques*. Ed. by Nalini Balbir and Maria Szuppe. Halle, 541–553.
- RECK, Christiane 2014b: “Nichtbuddhistische mitteliranische Pustakablätter”. In *Vom Aramäischen zum Alttürkischen: Fragen zur Übersetzung von manichäischen Texten*. Ed. by Jens P. Laut and Klaus Röhrborn. Berlin, 167–178.
- RECK, Christiane 2016: *Mitteliranische Handschriften, Teil 2: Berliner Turfanfragmente buddhistischen Inhalts in soghdischer Schrift*. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 18,2. Stuttgart.
- RECK, Christiane 2017: “Buddhistisch-sogdische Manuskriptologie”. In *Handbuch der Iranistik*, 2. Ed. by Ludwig Paul. Wiesbaden, 385–393.
- RECK, Christiane 2018: *Mitteliranische Handschriften, Teil 3: Berliner Turfanfragmente christlichen Inhalts und Varia in soghdischer Schrift*. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 18,3. Stuttgart.
- RECK, Christiane and WILKENS, Jens 2015: “Eine soghdische Version von Vāgbhañas *Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya-saṃhitā*”. In *Kutadgu Nom Bitig. Festschrift für Jens Peter Laut zum 60. Geburtstag*. Ed. by Elisabetta Ragagnin and Jens Wilkens. Wiesbaden, 431–452.

- SCHWARTZ, Martin and SIMS-WILLIAMS, Nicholas 2014: "A Sogdian Psalter". In *Biblical and other Christian Sogdian Texts from the Turfan Collection*. Ed. by Nicholas Sims-Williams. Berliner Turfantexte, 32. Turnhout, 7–53.
- SIMS-WILLIAMS, Nicholas 2004. "A Greek-Sogdian Bilingual from Bulayıq". In *La Persia e Bisanzio*. Roma, 623–631.
- SIMS-WILLIAMS, Nicholas 2011. "A New Fragment of the Book of Psalms in Sogdian". In *Bibel, Byzanz und christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*. Leuven, 461–465.
- SUNDERMANN, Werner 1985: *Ein manichäisch-soghdisches Parabelbuch*. Berliner Turfantext, 15. Berlin.
- SUNDERMANN, Werner 2001: "Eine soghdische Version der Arañemi-Legende". In *De Dunhuang à Istanbul: Hommage à James Russell Hamilton*. Ed. by Louis Bazin and Peter Zieme. Turnhout, 339–348.
- SUNDERMANN, Werner 2010: "A Sogdian *Mahāyānamahāparinirvāṇasūtra* manuscript". In *'The way of the Buddha' 2003: The 110th Anniversary of the Otani Mission and the 50th of the Research Society for Central Asian Cultures*. Ed. by Takashi Irisawa. Kyoto, 75–83.
- WEBER, Dieter 2000: *Iranian Manichaean Turfan texts in publications since 1934: Photo Edition*. London.
- YOSHIDA Yutaka 2000: "First Fruits of Ryūkoku-Berlin Joint Project on the Turfan Iranian Manuscripts". *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture*, 78. 71–85.
- YOSHIDA Yutaka 2008: "Die buddhistischen sogdischen Texte in der Berliner Turfansammlung und die Herkunft des buddhistischen sogdischen Wortes für Bodhisattva. Zum Gedenken an Prof. Kōgi Kudaras Arbeiten an den sogdischen Texten. (translated from Japanese by Y. Kasai with Ch. Reck)". *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae*, 61/3, 325–358.
- YOSHIDA Yutaka 2015: "Local Literatures: Sogdian". *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol. 1. Leiden, 837–843.
- ZIEME, Peter 2007: "Uighur night watch songs". *Zhuanxing qide Dunhuang sue [= Dunhuang Studies in the Transitional Stage]*. ed. Liu Jinbao e.a. Shanghai, 109–127.
-