In the 1990’s an ancient pot was discovered in “an underground chamber” in eastern Afghanistan, near the town Haḍḍa. Inside the pot were twenty-five scrolls made of birch bark, all written in the same handwriting in the Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī language, a northwestern kind of Prakrit related to Sanskrit. Aside from the scrolls, we also have the pot that they were stored in for nearly two thousand years, a lucky find that gives us a clue about what brought these texts to lie hidden for so long. Two inscriptions, one on the pot itself and another on the lid, provide much-needed data.

Richard Salomon’s translation of that on the pot reads, “In the year [twelve], in the month of Avadunaka after (*five) days; at this time [this] was established in honor of [his] father and mother, in honor of all beings; [donation] of Rohana, son of Māṣumatra.” The lid of the pot likewise bears a similar inscription with a key addition: “Year 12, month Avadu[naka], after 5 days, (*established?) by Rohana, son of Maṣumatra, in the stūpa, in honor of all beings.”

We learn several things of note from these. Firstly there is the date, “Year 12, month Avaduṇaka” which scholars have dated to roughly 140 C.E. This makes the collection contemporary with another assortment of Gāndhārī scrolls held in the British Library. Secondly it tells us that the collection was a donation carried out by a figure named Rohana to give merit to his parents and all beings. Lastly is the partially obscured but securely read locative form of stūpa [Gāndhārī thubami] on the lid of the pot, which tells us that the texts and pot served as contents of a burial mound. This I hold to be vital in piecing together the common threads within the scrolls. Approaching the texts with their place in a stūpa in mind can tell a new story about the

---

1 Mark Allon, The Senior Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts, in “From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research” (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 2014), 21.
2 The meaning of the symbols found in the reconstructions are as follows: [ ] refers to an unclear aksara whose reading is unsure, (*) to a lost/unreadable aksara restored based on context, parallel texts or other evidence, to a missing portion of a partly readable aksara, and ? to a visible but unreadable aksara.
Transcribed and translated in Salomon, “The Senior

---

Translations from Pāli and Sanskrit are my own. Where possible I have translated Gandhāran material myself unless otherwise noted.

5 Ibid., 77.
collection’s nature and the connections between the texts.

My hypothesis is this—that the texts of the Senior collection reflect their status as contents of a stūpa. Seventeen of the identified sūtras either discuss stūpas and who is deserving of them, reference figures important to local stūpa cults in Gandhāra, deal with death and the afterlife, the composition of the body in various organs and fluids, the makeup of a being through the five aggregates [Sanskrit *skandha*] or even the disgust that one should feel toward one’s form [Sanskrit *rūpa*], all appropriate topics for texts preserved in what is essentially a burial mound. In other words there is an agreement between form and function, between the compilation of texts and the purpose they are meant to serve. And that function was a vital one for the stūpa itself. The texts were sacred objects likened to bodily relics and it is also possible that they went even further and transformed the very stūpa they occupied into the body of the Buddha in the eyes of practitioners through their repeated mentioning of the skandhas and body parts.

For my assessment I rely heavily on the textual identifications by Mark Allon, Andrew Glass and Richard Salomon. Given the fragmentary condition of the scrolls I have deemed it necessary to rely also on the Pāli parallels rather than solely the Gāndhārī originals. In this way we can have a clearer picture of their content, with the likelihood of minor variations between the two, but sharing the overall lessons and plot points. After summarizing the unique qualities and contents of the Senior collection, namely the inclusion of an “Index Scroll” and its being the work of a single scribe, I claim that the collection is the result of a great deal of planning. An overview of Allon’s and Salomon’s attempts at finding a coherent scheme behind this planning will show that an important facet of the collection has gone underappreciated: the many instances of stūpas, bodily imagery and the attention the collection pays to the five skandhas. After reviewing these texts, we will see that when taken as a whole they comprise a stūpa canon, a collection of texts centered around 1) the miracles and events that gave rise to key stūpas sites both in the Buddhist heartland and in the local areas around Gandhāra; 2) the efficacy of giving offerings to and worshipping stūpas; and 3) the five skandhas that comprise a being and that ultimately break down upon death.

In second century C.E. Gandhāra, stūpas were burial mounds that held relics of the Buddha and were often the foremost buildings in monastic grounds. Sizes varied, with the grandest structures built in several levels and embellished with rails and detailed carvings of key events in Buddhist history. With a piece of the Buddha resting inside the structure, pilgrims worshiped it as they would the living Buddha and received similar karmic benefits. The inscription on the Senior lid, along with the details regarding the recovery of the collection, shows us that the purpose of the Senior collection was to serve as the contents of such a stūpa.6

What of the texts themselves? To begin with, all twenty-five scrolls bear the same handwriting and so are the products of a single scribe. Sūtras of the Śrāvakayāna or Mainstream Buddhist tradition make up the majority of the collection, with four of the texts having parallels in the Vinaya of the Pāli canon. Scholastic treatises and texts concerning monastic rules do not appear. Several of the scrolls are either unidentified or so unreadable as to make identification impossible. Of those

---

texts which have been securely identified, sixteen have parallels in the Pāli Samyuttanikāya. More striking is that nine of those texts, nearly a third of the entire collection, have parallels in the Pāli Khanda-samyutta, a division of the Samyuttanikāya in which all the texts are teachings on the skandhas that combine to form a constantly changing being.

There is also the unique inclusion in the pot of two scrolls (Senior 7 and 8, collectively known as the “Index Scroll”) on which the scribe wrote references to certain texts within the collection. Such a scroll is elsewhere unattested in Gandhāran findings. The references are not uniform—at times only a keyword in a sūtra or an important figure in a text. Senior 15, for example, contains the collection’s version of the Songs of Lake Anavatapta [Gāndhārī anodātī/anodātā, Sanskrit Anavataptagāthā], in which the Buddha and his close disciples share stories of their former births. The scribe refers to this story in Senior 8 not as a single text, but as separate units, writing out the speaker of each story in the genitive followed by anodātī:

(2) śastarasa anodātī (*ṣa)r[i]pu[t…] …ṣa a[ṇuḍ. tie] [m.g.l.] + anod. .i? ///
(3) ānapurudhasa anodatī śrōṇasa anodatī koḍiṇasa anodatāśa

The Anavatapta recitation of the teacher; the Anavatapta recitation of Śāriputra, etc.\(^7\)

The relation of entries in the Index scroll to the surviving texts is a matter of debate. One-to-one correspondences are rare: certain texts that have survived, such as those on Senior 24, have not been identified with entries in the Index scroll, while many entries do not seem to match up with surviving scrolls. Therefore the present work places no great reliance on the Index scroll and relies entirely on the texts that have survived and been reconstructed. At the end of the entries we find the following notation: “In all fifty-five, 55, sūtras.”\(^8\)

The Index scroll, the concentration of texts from the Khanda-samyutta and the fact that the collection was written by a single scribe lead us to conclude that a great deal of forethought went into the collection’s making and placement. This is not a random assortment. Whatever factors led these specific texts to end up in the pot and stūpa, the texts themselves may tell us.

Past attempts at surveying the connections among the Senior texts have been inconclusive. Mark Allon noted in 2003 that certain texts in the collection glorify the Buddha and the Saṅgha, such as the Dhammacetiya-sutta and the Sāmaññaphala-sutta. From this he argued that perhaps the three jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha, played a part. According to Allon we can group the texts in two ways:

The first is to group them into (a) texts concerning the Buddha… (b) texts concerning monks, and (c) texts


\(\text{Journal of the American Oriental Society 123, No. 1 (January – March 2003), 82. Salomon posits that anodatī is parallel to a hypothetical Sanskrit anavataptikā.}\)
concerning laypeople… Alternatively we can divide the texts into those concerning (a) the Buddha, (b) the Dharma, and (c) the Sangha. In other words, the texts in these collections may be a celebration of the three jewels (Sanskrit Triratna).\(^\text{10}\)

Allon favored the latter but was quick to remark that the theme was purely speculative. Nor was he particularly satisfied with the idea and in later works he retracted it, saying “it is probably the case that any random selection of canonical sūtras and vinaya narrative passages would lead to the same conclusion.”\(^\text{11}\) Although the Three Jewels theme cannot be absolutely ruled out, it is precisely its commonness that makes it unsatisfying.

Richard Salomon has taken a different approach. Despite his misgivings about the collection’s incompleteness, he noted that we have enough evidence to label it as conceived “as an integral anthology of fifty-five sūtras.”\(^\text{12}\) This of course derives from the ending note on the Index scroll where the scribe wrote “In all fifty-five, 55 sūtras.” In particular there are striking similarities in composition between the Senior texts and the eighteen “Great Sūtras” from the Sarvāstivāda-vinaya. Both the Great Sūtras and the Senior collection favor texts from the Samyuktāgama and Dīrghāgama at the expense of the Aṅguttaranikāya. This hints perhaps at “some common background to their formulation.”\(^\text{13}\) A few thoughts have been that it represents a selection of the favorite texts of a particular teacher or ruler, as in the list of seven texts or “dharma expositions” [Prakrit dharmapaliyāṇi] from Asoka’s Calcutta-Bairāṭ edict, or the greatest hits of a specific body of texts such as the “Six Sūtra Collection” [Sanskrit Śatsūtrakā-ṇipāta] drawn from the Dīrghāgama of the Sarvāstivāda canon in India and Central Asia.\(^\text{14}\) Alternatively they may be broadly drawn to represent the Buddha’s teaching as a whole.

It is certainly true that the collection presents many of the central teachings of the Buddha. The attention given to the five skandhas seems exceptionally high, however. Perhaps the collection is not a gathering of the greatest hits of the Buddha’s teachings at all, but instead was chosen for the texts’ suitability as funerary deposits: that is, my contention is that the Senior collection is a carefully constructed deposit that was destined from the outset to remain in a stūpa. The texts were never meant to be read, only to exist as relics.

Mark Allon has similarly argued that the Senior collection makes up a “dharma relic” [Sanskrit dharmā-saśrīra], and while they “may not have had the same power that is generally associated with the physical remains of the Buddha, they nonetheless would have made present the Buddha and transformed the stūpa which housed them into an object of veneration.”\(^\text{15}\) To bolster his claim Allon has argued on literary grounds that whoever beheld


\(^{11}\) Mark Allon, “The Senior Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts,” in From Birchbark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research (Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften), 2014, 28.


\(^{13}\) Salomon, 2011, 193.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 184-190.

\(^{15}\) Mark Allon, 2014, 24.
such texts beheld the Buddha, as in the famous passage in which the Buddha consoles a dying Vakkali by saying “Whoever sees the dhamma sees me.”\textsuperscript{16} Given that this is a clear instance of Buddhist scrolls placed within a stūpa, seven of which concern the Buddha establishing a relic cult or the various parts of the body and the skandhas, it is likely that these themes and texts were vital for this particular stūpa. For a concise summary of the texts that occupy the first of these themes see Figure 1 below. Preserved in four frames, two of which are highly fragmentary and not easily readable, Senior 4 records a series of tales relevant to the beginning of the stūpa cult and have direct parallels in the Pāli Mahāparinibbāna-sutta. Passages that have survived include the Buddha at Kuśinagarī on his death bed as sāla trees cast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scroll</th>
<th>Textual Parallel</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mahāparinibbāna-sutta DN II 109–110; AN 307–308\textsuperscript{17}</td>
<td>The Buddha teaches others the way to end suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mahāparinibbāna-sutta MPS-Pāli 5.1, 5.13—DN II 137, 143–4; MPS Sanskrit. 32.4–19</td>
<td>The Buddha near death, making arrangements for the Buddha’s remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mahāparinibbāna-sutta MPS-Pāli 5.14–6; DN II 144–146; MPS-Sanskrit. 32.22–42</td>
<td>The Buddha exhorts Ānanda not to grieve for the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vinaya Cullavagga II 286</td>
<td>First Buddhist council after the Buddha’s passing, associated with MPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Anavatapta-gāthā – numerous parallels from Turfan and Gilgit; Taisho 4 no. 199 p. 190a–b22); 24 no. 1448 p. 78a24–b27\textsuperscript{18}</td>
<td>Tales of former births, worshipping and cleaning stūpas leads to better rebirths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā III 230 – 236; Mvu III 382.8–389.11</td>
<td>Birth as a human is rare, Erakapatta/Elāppattra’s questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Vinaya Mahāvagga I 3 – 4; Mahāvastu III 302–311</td>
<td>Trupuṣa and Balika and the Buddha’s bowl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Scrolls referring to Stūpas and Local Figures


\textsuperscript{17}Further details regarding parallels can be found in Allon 2007, 7-18.

\textsuperscript{18}See Allon 2007, 12 for a fuller account of the Anavatapta-gāthā’s parallels.
their blossoms on him, and the Buddha consoling a distraught Ānanda with a lesson in impermanence. These events come just before the Buddha’s passing in parinirvāṇa and feature prominently in Gandhāran art, notably on stūpa decorations. Having reached the outskirts of Kusinagarī, the Buddha assumes his final posture on a bed between sāla trees as they burst with blossoms and divine sandalwood powder falls from the sky to cover the Buddha’s body.19 This scene just before his death and others that take place soon after, such as those depicting the cremation of the Buddha and the division of his relics, were popular ones in Gandhāra and we find many panel reliefs on stūpas depicting them. One such relief from Gandhāra (Figure 2) kept in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, depicts the Buddha’s final hours surrounded by such figures as Anuruddha worshipping his feet, the Malla princes and Ānanda hanging their heads in grief, a yakṣa looking on and the Buddha’s final convert Subhadra in the foreground facing away from us.20

It is noteworthy that this collection was written down in the mid-second century C.E., just at the beginning of a flourishing sculpture tradition depicting this scene in the region.21 We cannot say for sure whether the beginnings of both a written literary culture and an iconic sculpture tradition depicting the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa and its aftermath arose from a common source. Further work comparing the contents of Gândhāri texts and local friezes may be especially enlightening in this regard. Immediately after this scene follows an account of the grieving devas who have come to see the Blessed One. Further on we find the Buddha discussing stūpas directly in his wishes to have one erected after his passing and explaining that there are certain people for whom such mounds are appropriate, among which are righteous kings and monastics.22

After the Buddha explains what is to be done with his remains, we find him consoling Ānanda, who is beside himself with grief. His lesson is that all compounded things are subject to decay and are impermanent. The Pāli parallel reads:

Have I not spoken before, Ānanda, of change, loss and separation from

---


21 Ibid., 33-42.

22 DN II, 144.
everything that is dear and pleasant? How is it possible now, Ānanda, that whatever conditioned thing that arises, being subject to decay, would surely not fall apart? Such a state is unknown.\(^{23}\)

Such a teaching regarding death and the impermanence of all things would be appropriate for a stūpa deposit that memorialized one who had passed.

Senior 24 is likewise in poor condition. Within it we find the tale of the merchants Tripuṣa and Balika, who stumble upon the Buddha just after his awakening and offer him almsfood. Seeing that the Buddha lacked a bowl to receive their offerings, four divine lokapālas approach him and each offers him a bowl. The Buddha desires to please each of the gods and so magically combines their divine gifts into a single bowl. The manuscript ends just as the four lokapālas approach the Buddha with their bowls: “And [the lokapālas took] the four [bowls] and approached the lord at the base of the tree.”\(^{24}\) Mark Allon suggests this text merited inclusion because “it establishes the origins of the Buddha’s bowl, which was an object of veneration and pilgrimage in Gandhāra.”\(^{25}\) A number of reliefs depicting the bowl have been recovered and it reportedly possessed its own stūpa.

---

\(^{23}\) Na nu etām ānanda mayā paṭigacc’ eva akkhātam, sabbe’ eva piyehi manūpehi nānā-bhāvo vinā-bhāvo aṇṇathā-bhāvo? Tam kut’ ettha ānanda labbhā? yan tam jātaṃ bhūtaṃ saṅkhataṃ paloka-dhammaṃ, tam vata mā palujjīti n’ etām thānam vijjati. Ibid.


---

Figure 3: the base of a standing bodhisattva Maitreya from Gandhāra showing figures worshipping the Buddha’s bowl, ca. 3rd century CE.\(^{26}\)

That the merchants Balika and Tripuṣa are associated with Baktria, a country just west of Gandhāra, adds weight to the story’s local importance. The Chinese and Dharmaguptaka-vinaya parallels add further that the Buddha gives the merchants nail filings and hair for them to take and worship within their own stūpa. But we cannot place too much stock in this, as Allon himself noted “because of damage to the scroll, we cannot verify that this episode was included in the manuscript.”\(^{27}\) In the event that it was included, it may have been “because it establishes the practice of relic and stūpa worship, of which this commission of manuscripts is a later manifestation.”\(^{28}\) It would also further highlight the text’s relevance to the region where it was produced.

This likely explains another text on Senior 24 concerning the nāga king Elāpattra posing a series of riddles to the Buddha. Allon relates that this nāga king is associated with greater Gandhāra in certain Chinese sources, particularly that “Xuanzang 玄奘…gives an account of Elāpattra’s residence 70 lis northeast of Takṣaśilā and of a stūpa erected to him by

---

\(^{26}\) Behrendt, 2007, 54, 59

\(^{27}\) Allon, 25.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.
King Aśoka.” 29 That both texts of local importance appear on the same scroll supports this view.

Lastly regarding stūpas Senior 14 bears some importance. Only the right half survives, the scroll having been rolled then folded in half before being deposited. 30 The text is a Gāndhāri parallel of The Songs of Lake Anavatapta, in which the Buddha and his close disciples fly to Lake Anavatapta in the Himalayas and tell stories of their past actions and their karmic fruits. The readable fragments recount the beginning of the story and the opening verses of Mahākaśyapa. It is likely that the scribe never intended to write more. Seeing this, Salomon noted that “…it should not be assumed that the text of this chapter was completed on another scroll, as the extant scroll may have been considered a symbolic representation of the entirety.” 31 If so, then there are eight disciples in The Songs of Lake Anavatapta who achieve karmic benefits from giving offerings to, or caring for, stūpas. Chief among these is the account of Sumana, as it has luckily been preserved in another Gāndhāri version of The Songs of Lake Anavatapta in the British Library collection. That the same text has been found in two separate collections shows perhaps its prevalence in Gāndhāra. The story goes that Sumana watched others give offerings to a stūpa of the Buddha Vipaśyin and after offering a flower of his own, reaped the benefits: “Seeing them [and] watching them one after another, I took the jasmine flower from [my]

ear [and] placed [it] on the stūpa myself.” 32 And further on: “Having donated [just] one flower, for a thousand crores of years I enjoyed pleasures among the gods, [and] in the end [now comes] my calming [i.e., nirvāṇa].” 33 Sumana is far from the only case of stūpa worship found in The Songs of Lake Anavatapta. In the Sanskrit parallel found in the Turfan manuscripts, just prior to Sumana’s story is that of Śobhita, who piously cared for stūpas:

After realizing it is purified, which I have felt myself, you should sweep the stūpa of the Sugata and ready your mind, so that the many good qualities of the fully-awakened Buddha [may] be realized. Honoring stūpas properly [bears great reward. This merit of mine] is agreeable, desirable and charming. 34 Therefore one should perform wonderful honors to the stūpas of the Victorious One. This, Venerable Ones, is the highest, unrivalled field of merit. 35

32 teṣu aho dhriṣpaṇa añamaṇaṇa paśia kaṇade ghriha suṇaṇa thuve āroae śpe; reconstructed from the Gāndhāri and translated by Richard Salomon; Ibid., 317.
31 (*eko) puṣṇa caitya sahasu barsaṣudina devehi pāvariitya avasēṣe mi nibud; Ibid., 322.
34 Based on Dutt’s reconstruction of the Sanskrit as kāryah stūpeṣu saktāḥ bhavisiya mahāphalaḥ etanme kuśalam tasya…; Nalinaksha Dutt, Gilgit Manuscripts, Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications), 1984, 179.
35 161. etām viśodhitām jñātvā yā mayā vedīta svayam 162. sammārjya sugataṣṭūpaṃ prasādayata mānasam 163. tasmāt praṇānatām samyakṣaṃbhuvhayya guṇān bahūḥ 164. kāryah stūpeṣu saktāḥ… 165. …tasya kāntam iva manoramam 166. tasmād jīnasya stūpeṣu puṣṭam kuruṣṭa śobhanām 167. etad bhadantāḥ paramām puṇyaṣṭetam anuttamatam; Sanskrit transcription of the Turfan manuscripts by Marcel Hofinger, Le congrès du lac Anavatapta (vies de Saints

29 Ibid., 24.
31 Ibid., 330.
There are similar passages in the verses of Vāgīśa, Śaivala, Kāśyapa, Nanda, Bhadrika and Prabhākara, who goes into great detail about the karmic benefits of cleaning a stūpa.

Perhaps the greatest oddity within the Senior collection is the high number of texts devoted to teachings on the skandhas. Merely three scrolls, Senior 5, 17 and 22 have nine out the ten relevant sūtras. And though the scrolls also have sūtras that do not share the topic they nevertheless are mostly parallel to texts from the Khanda-saṃyutta. This surprising number of texts cannot be chalked up to coincidence. It is fitting that texts about the skandhas, which in their ever-changing flow and interactions shape a discernible being and which disband upon that being’s death, came to rest in a mound that honors one who had passed. It suggests that the teaching of the skandhas played directly into the role of the manuscripts as dharma-saṃrīras, embodying the Buddha in literary form.

In the remnants of Senior 17 there have survived a few passages, one of which Salomon has identified as the Tissa-sutta from the Khanda-saṃyutta. Dissatisfied with the monkish life, Tissa speaks with the Buddha who asks a series of questions about the aggregates and whether lust for them leads to suffering. Naturally the conclusion is that attachment to the five aggregates does lead to suffering. Images of the parinirvāṇa showing kings and devas weeping over the death of the Buddha make this plain. What better message is there for a stūpa that commemorates his passing?

There are similar teachings further on in Senior 17, one of which corresponds to the Nadi-sutta, where attachment to the aggregates is likened to a man being carried along a swift river torrent who tries to grasp onto the fragile grasses along either bank. Lastly on the scroll is a parallel to the Gadula-sutta, where beings who regard the aggregates as a self are likened to a dog leashed to a post who runs around and around without being freed from bondage. Those who do not regard the aggregates as a self, meanwhile, find freedom from suffering.

The further texts I will only briefly cover, as they all share similar messages about the importance of the skandhas. Senior 22 preserves six sūtras, one being the Puppha-sutta, in which the Buddha likens himself to a lotus flower that springs from muck to bloom unstained and teaches that permanent skandhas do not exist. The fourth text on the scroll has strong parallels in both the Uppada-sutta and the Khanda-sutta, which state that the arising, continuation and birth of each skandha entails the arising of suffering, old age, sickness and

---

36 Ibid., 211-212.
37 Ibid., 225.
38 Ibid., 232-233.
39 Ibid., 262-263.
40 Ibid., 273.
41 Ibid., 289-291.
43 SN III, 137-138.
44 SN III, 150.
The last of the texts dealing with the aggregates has a parallel in the Anattalakkhaṇṇa-sutta, in which the Buddha teaches his disciples to look upon the aggregates with dispassion.46

Senior five contains three further sūtras on the skandhas: 1) the Natuspahu-sutta, in which the Buddha teaches his monks to let go of what does not belong to them, namely, the skandhas;47 2) the Vāsiḷaṭ-sutta stressing the importance of consistent gradual development of one’s practice, which includes noting the origin and passing away of the skandhas;48 and 3) the Nibbidābahula-sutta that extols the hearer to view the skandhas with disgust [Pāli nibbidā Gāndhārī ṇivīḍa/ṇivṛīḍa]. From the Nibbidābahula-sutta we hear that, “One should dwell full of disgust for form… feeling… volitional formations… consciousness.”49 Following this is the familiar teaching that one who fully understands the skandhas is freed from birth, death and suffering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scroll</th>
<th>Textual Parallel</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Šaṅa-sūtra</td>
<td>Concerns the four perceptions of foulness and the parts of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Natuspahu-sutta SN III 33–34</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nibbidābahula-sūtra SN III 179</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vāsiḷaṭ-sutta SN III 152–153</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Nādi-sutta SN III 137–8</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Gaddula-sutta SN II 150</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tissa-sutta SN III 106–9</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mahāpariḷāha-sutta SN V 450–452</td>
<td>One ignorant of volitional forces will suffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Simile of the Gatekeeper SN V 160; AN V 194–195; DN II 83</td>
<td>Having confidence in the Buddha’s teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Anattalakkhaṇṇa-sutta SN III 66–68</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Dutiyaṣciggaḷayuga-sutta SN V 456–457</td>
<td>The appearance of a Buddha is rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Uppāda-sutta/Khanda-sutta SN III 31–32/ SN III 231</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Puppha-sutta SN III 138–140</td>
<td>Teaching on the skandhas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Dhanugga-sutta SN II 265–6</td>
<td>Vital formations perish quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Akitti-jāṭaka Ja IV 240.1–2</td>
<td>The importance of generosity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Scrolls Referring to the Skandhas and Parts of the Body

---

45 SN III, 231-232
46 SN III, 66-68.
47 SN III, 33 – 34.
We must acknowledge at this point that not every text in the Senior collection falls neatly under the rubric of stūpa canon that I have put forward. Some do not place any importance on stūpas, the body, relics or the skandhas and are more concerned with glorifying the Buddha and nirvāṇa. The remaining texts in the deposit remain defiant against any attempt at categorizing them. For some, with good reason: six of the texts (Seniors 6, 9, 15, 18, 21 and 25) are blank, unidentified, or so illegible as to make drawing parallels unlikely, while Senior 7 and 8 are in a class of their own as the Index Scroll. For the rest the reader is referred to Figures 5 and 6.

Given all this, it is likely that one of the organizing principals behind the Senior collection was the notion of a stūpa canon, concerned chiefly with collecting well-known tales of the formation of major stūpa sites, the care that one should give to them and finally teachings on the impermanence of the skandhas and one’s body. The prevalence of texts devoted to the five skandhas shows that their inclusion was more than coincidental. Nor should we consider the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta, Anavataptagāthā and scenes involving the locally important Tripuṣa, Balika and Elāpattra as being unimportant. All show the beginnings of the very stūpa practices that the collection continues centuries later, as well as importance to the same region where the collection came to rest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scroll</th>
<th>Textual Parallel</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Dhammacetiya-sutta MN 89 II118-25; AN 10.30 V65–9</td>
<td>The Buddha and his disciples should be honored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sāmaññaphala-sutta DN 2 I 47–86</td>
<td>The Buddha is more knowledgeable than other teachers; should be honored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cūḷagosīṅga-sutta MN I 155–157</td>
<td>Communities benefit from having monks and should support and honor them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + 23</td>
<td>Vinaya Cullavagga II 185-7</td>
<td>The Buddha is the most skillful teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + 23</td>
<td>Vinaya Cullavagga II 180-183</td>
<td>Ordination of famous Śākyan monks (Devadatta, Anaruddha, Ānanda)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: Scrolls referring to the Buddha and his disciples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scroll</th>
<th>Textual Parallel</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Saṅkhārupapatti-sutta? MN III 99–103; cf. AN IV 239–241; DN III 258–260</td>
<td>Nirvāṇa is the greatest aspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Vana-saññyutta SN I 197–205</td>
<td>Monks and devatās swap verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Veṭudala-sutta SN V 352–356</td>
<td>Nirvāṇa is superior to rebirth among the gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dārukkhanda-sutta SN IV 179–81</td>
<td>Nirvāṇa is superior to rebirth among the gods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Scrolls concerning rebirth in heavenly realms and the superiority of Nirvāṇa**
Bibliography


Deeg, Max, Freiberger, Oliver and Kleine, Christoph, eds. Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte. Österreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften. 2011.


Harrison, Paul and Hartmann, Jens-Uwe, Editors. “From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research.” Vienna: Österreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften. 2014.


