

PREFACE

This volume, which represents the specific contribution on the part of the University of Rome La Sapienza to the activities of the international project “Multilingualism and the History of Knowledge”, contains nine papers that cover a diversity of themes relating to the presence and practice of Buddhism among the Iranian peoples of Central Asia, that is chiefly among the Khotanese and the Sogdians. Six of the papers were presented at the panel “Buddhism among Iranian peoples” convened by Mauro MAGGI at the XVIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, held at Dharma Drum Buddhist College, New Taipei City (Taiwan), from 20 to 25 June 2011. Three other articles that widen the scope of the volume and enhance its usefulness have been contributed by scholars who could not be accommodated into the panel due to time constraints or could not participate in the congress.

The panel at the origin of this volume was envisioned as an attempt to integrate the resources of Indo-Iranian philology with those of Buddhist philology. It is hoped that the volume will help to bridge the gap between these fields of study which have so far only partially fulfilled their potential for cross-fertilisation towards a better understanding of the transmission of Indian Buddhism through Central Asia to China and thereby to Tibet and the rest of East Asia.

The articles in the first two parts focus on linguistically Iranian Buddhist texts (Khotanese and Sogdian), while the third part comprises contributions dealing with non-Iranian sources (Tocharian and Chinese) that are relevant to the history of Buddhism in Khotan and among the Sogdians and the Tumshuqese.

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