The Role of Jibin Monks in the Transmission of Scriptures and Medical Knowledge to China[1*]

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Abstract

This study examines the historical transmission of medical knowledge between China and ancient Pakistan (Gandhara/Jibin region) via Buddhist monk intermediaries from the 4th to 9th centuries CE. Drawing on Chinese Buddhist texts, travelogues, and translated medical treatises, it identifies Jibin and Gandhara as a critical hub for cross-cultural exchange. Key findings include: (1) Over 15 documented Jibin monks (e.g., Saṅghabhadra, Buddhayaśas) translated Buddhist scriptures containing medical knowledge into Chinese during the Jin, North-South Dynasties, and Tang periods; (2) Medical centers like Taxila (Pakistan) trained physicians such as Jīvaka, with records indicating Chinese patients sought treatment there; (3) Ayurvedic texts like the Caraka Saṃhitā *and* Astāṅga Hṛdaya Saṃhitā *(attributed to ancient Pakistani scholars Charaka and Vāgbhaṭa) entered China through Xinjiang and Tibet, evidenced by manuscripts like the Bower Manuscript (Kucha, Xinjiang) and Tibetan medical thangkas. The paper argues that pre-modern Sino-Pakistani medical*

[1*] Notes of the English translation of originally Chinese-drafted paper: (1) Citations of Chinese-translated Buddhist Scriptures. This study references Chinese-translated Buddhist texts from the CBETA Electronic Buddhist Texts Archive (2016 edition) or its online version. (2) Transliteration of Sanskrit titles and authors of Chinese-translated Buddhist works. The Sanskrit titles and authors of Chinese-translated Buddhist scriptures follow the 'Twenty-Two Editions of the Buddhist Canon: A Comprehensive Survey' by Tong Wei (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1997). (3) Tibetan Buddhist Canon References. Citations of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon are based on: facsimile editions of the Qing Dynasty Beijing version; PDF reproductions from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC). (4) Transliteration of Tibetan Documentary Titles and Authors. Tibetan documentary titles and authors are transliterated according to the Wylie system, with exceptions for terms that have established English equivalents (e.g., Dalai Lama instead of Dalai Bla-ma). (5) English Titles of Chinese References: if the original publication/book has an official English title, it is cited directly; if no English title exists, a literal translation is provided (e.g., A Record of Buddhist Monks Sent from Great Tang for《大唐西域求法高僧传》). Notes on Style and Conventions: CBETA: Acronym retained for Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association. Wylie System: Standard transliteration method for Tibetan terms unless otherwise noted. Historical Dates: Follow the Gregorian calendar for clarity (e.g., "1906–1908" instead of "the 32nd year of Guangxu"). Proper Nouns: Names of institutions, places, and individuals adhere to standardized transliterations (e.g., TBRC for Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center).

exchange was facilitated by Buddhist networks, revealing a trans-Eurasian continuum of knowledge transfer often overlooked in historiography.

Keywords: Jibin, China, Buddhist monks, Gandhara.

1. Gandhara: The confluence of Chinese, Hellenistic and Buddhist Cultures

Chinese sources are an invaluable source of information on Gandharian toponymy, ancient Buddhist practices, the distribution of ancient Buddhist complexes, and the political, economic and cultural conditions of the region in late antiquity. While several contributions have been devoted to the aforementioned topics, this article aims to explore a little-known topic, which is the historical exchange of traditional medicine between China and Jibin (Gandhara region, northwest Pakistan/Afghanistan region).

Ancient Chinese documents recorded several regions located in nowadays Pakistan, such as Gandhara, Uddiyāna, Shendu and Jibin. The names and extents of these regions varied across different periods. On the one hand, Chinese Buddhist monks, including the famous Xuanzang (7th century CE), visited these areas. On the other hand, most of the eminent Buddhist translators of Buddhist text in China were closely related to Jibin (Kuwayama 1987: 707). Jibin is often translated as Kashmir, Kapiśa, or Kabul (Kuwayama 1999: 60) but it was probably used to refer more generally to the area of northern Pakistan corresponding with the region of Gandhara (Neelis 2011: 251; see also Hulsewé and Loewe 1979: 105-106).

Song Yun in his 6th century trip to Peshawar reported: "Continuing westward for one day, they reached the site where the Tathāgata (如来) plucked out his eyes to give to others. Here stood a pagoda and temple, with footprints of Kaśyapa Buddha (迦葉佛跡) engraved on a stone within the temple. Journeying another day westward, they crossed a deep river by boat—a passage spanning over three hundred paces. Then proceeding sixty *li* southwest, they arrived at the city of Gandhara (乾陀羅城). Seven *li* southeast of the city lay the Cakuri Stupa" (Yang X. 2008).

Xuanzang, when arrived in Gandhara in the early 7th century reported, "The Kingdom of Gandhara extends over a thousand *li* from east to west and eight hundred li from north to south, bordered by the

Sindhu River (Indus River) to the east. Its grand capital, Puruṣapura (present-day Peshawar), spans over forty *li* in circumference [...] Since ancient times, this land within India has birthed master philosophers: Nārāyaṇa Deva, Bodhisattva Asaṅga, Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, Dharmatrāta, Manorhita, and the Elder Parśva. Over ten monastic complexes (*saṃghārāma*s) stand ruined and overgrown; numerous stupas crumble in decay. A hundred temples of deva-worship persist, where diverse sects dwell intermixed" (Xuanzang and Bianji, 646).

In the early 8th century, Huichao in his *Account of Travels to the Five Regions of India*, wrote "From Lampaka again, heading into the mountains for an eight-day journey, one reaches Jibin. This country is also under the rule of the king of Gandhara. This king spends the summer in Jibin to escape the heat and moves to Gandhara in winter to seek warmth. Gandhara has no snow and is warm without cold, while Jibin accumulates snow in winter, making it cold." (Huichao 2000).

Tang monk Falin (572-640) states in *The Doubt-Dispelling Treatise,* "The land of Shendu [Indus Valley region] was inhabited by the Xuanyuan Clan [Yellow Emperor]. It is thus known that the roots of the Three Sovereigns lie there. Buddhist pilgrims, therefore, accept this without doubt. The Three Sovereigns: Suiren-Fuxi-Shennong sequence reflects socioeconomic evolution: fire control → social organization → agriculture (medicine)". This attribution of East Asian cultural progenitors to Shendu [Indus Valley] is exceptional in Chinese historiography, likely influenced by Jin-Tang-era Buddhist syncretism (c. 5th-9th centuries), which facilitated Gandharan-Chinese cultural exchanges. While contested due to lack of archaeological corroboration, the claim underscores pre-modern trans-Eurasian mobility to ancient Pakistan via Jibin and Gandhara, reflecting a Sino-Pakistani cultural continuum.

2. Jibin Monks as Transmitters of Buddhist Scriptures and Medical Knowledge (4th-8th centuries CE)

Jibin (罽宾) served as a critical hub for Buddhist knowledge exchange between China and South Asia. From the 4th to 8th centuries CE, over 15 documented Jibin monks—including Saṃghabhadra (僧伽跋澄), Gautama Saṃghadeva (瞿昙僧伽提婆), and Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍)—journeyed to China, translating core Buddhist texts and facilitating cross-cultural medical transmission. Some of them (such as

Buddhayaśas, Dharmayaśas, Dharmamitra, Vimalāksa, and Punyatara) traveled to China via the Tarim Basin, other eminent figures including Buddhabhadra, Gunavarman and Buddhajīva used maritime itineraries.

Wei-Jin and North-South Dynasties Period* (3rd–6th *centuries CE)

During the 4th-6th centuries at least nine monks from Jibin are mentioned in Chinese texts as translators of Buddhist texts.

In 300 CE, during the West Jin Dynasty, "In the first year of Yongkang era, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the Bodhisattva Dharmarakṣa（竺法护）of Yuezhi origin obtained the *Bhadrakalpika-samādhi Sūtra* (贤劫三昧) from a Jibin monk. He orally transmitted it while holding the manuscript. At that time, Dharmamitra（竺法友）sent it from Luoyang, and the scribe was Zhao Wenlong (赵文龙)" (Taishō Tripiṭaka, Vol. 14, No. 425).

In the Later Qin Dynasty, according to Sengrui's *Preface to the Chuyao Jing* (《出曜经》序), "The Jibin monk Sanghabhadra journeyed across the Congling Mountains (Pamirs) and traversed the Taklamakan Desert, traveling thousands of miles to reach Chang'an in the 19th year of the Former Qin's Jianyuan era (383 CE) [...] In the autumn of the 5th year of the Later Qin's Huangchu era (398 CE), he was requested to translate [the text]. The translation commenced that autumn and concluded in the spring of the 6th year (399 CE). Saṅghabhadra held the Sanskrit manuscript, Buddhayaśas (佛念) orally translated it, Daoyi (道嶷) transcribed the Chinese text, while the masters He (和) and Bi (碧) collated and corrected it against the Dharma." Also in the Later Qin Dynasty of the late 4th century, the *Saṃghaṭa-saṃgīti-sūtra* (《僧伽罗刹所集经》), translated by Tripiṭaka Master Sanghabhadra of Jibin et al. reported, "In the 20th year of the Jianyuan era (384 CE), the Jibin monk Sanghabhadra brought this scripture to Chang'an. Zhao Wenye (赵文业), Governor of Wuwei, requested its translation. Buddhayaśas served as oral translator, and Hui Song (慧嵩) transcribed the text". Saṅghabhadra additionally translated the *Vibhāṣā-śāstra* (《鞞婆沙论》) and *Ārya-Vasumitra-paripṛcchā* (《尊婆须蜜菩萨所集论，Sanghabhadra et al.).

In the late 4th century of the East Jin Dynasty, the Postface of the Later translation of the *Madhyama Āgama* (《后出<中阿含经>记》) reports, "The monk Shi Fahe (释法和) of Jizhou and the Jibin monk Saṃghadeva (僧伽提和) gathered their disciples and traveled together to Luoyang. Over four to five years, they delved deeply into scriptural

studies and gradually mastered Chinese. It was then that they realized the errors in prior translations. Fahe (法和), regretting these earlier inaccuracies, collaborated with Saṃghadeva to retranslate the *Abhidharma* (*Āpidámó*) and its extensive commentaries (*Guǎngshuō*). From then on, these sutras and vinayas were progressively corrected and standardized. Subsequently, on the tenth day of the eleventh month of the first year of the Long'an era (397 CE), during the Dingyou year, at a monastery in Jiankang County, Danyang Commandery, Yangzhou, the *Madhyama Āgama* (*Zhōng Āhán Jīng*) was retranslated. The Jibin monk Saṃgharakṣa (僧伽罗叉) was invited to recite the Sanskrit manuscript (*Húběn*). Saṃghadeva translated the Sanskrit into Chinese, the Yuzhou monk Daoci (道慈) transcribed the text (*bǐshòu*), and Li Bao (李宝) and Kang Hua (康化) of Wu jointly handled the calligraphy. By the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of the following year (398 CE), the draft was completed" (Anonymous. c. 5th century).

Again in the East Jin of late 4th century, the *Madhyamāgama* and *Ekottarika-āgama,* (《中阿含经》and《增一阿含经》) were translated by the eminent Jibin monk Gautama Saṃghadeva (瞿昙僧伽提婆). As recorded in the *Madhyamāgama,* "During the Eastern Jin Xiaowu and An'di reigns, in the 1st year of Long'an (397 CE), from November to June of the following year, the Tripitaka Master Gautama Saṃghadeva translated [the *Madhyamāgama*] at Dongting Monastery, with Daozu (道祖) transcribing." Saṃghadeva also translated the *Three Dharmas Treatise* (《三法度论》) and *Abhidharma Aṣṭaskandha Śāstra* (《阿毘昙八犍度论》).

In the later Qin Dynasty of early 5th century, the preface by Sengzhao (僧肇) to the *Dirghāgama Sutra* (长阿含经) reports: "In the 12th year of the Hongshi era (410 CE), during the *gēngxū* year (上章阉茂), the Tripiṭaka Master Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍) of Jibin was invited to translate a section of the Vinaya Piṭaka in 45 fascicles. This task was completed in the 14th year (412 CE). In the 15th year (413 CE), the *guǐchǒu* year (昭阳赤奋若), this *Dīrghāgama* (《长阿含经》) was fully translated. The Liangzhou monk Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍) served as the Sanskrit reciter, Dharmakṣema (竺佛念) orally rendered the text into Chinese, and Daohan (道含) from Qin scribbed it." (Sengzhao, c. 414). In Later Qin Dynasty, Buddhayaśas, the Tripitaka Master from Jibin translated the *Four-Part Monastic Precepts* (《四分僧戒本》) and the *Akashagarbha Bodhisattva Sutra* (《虚空藏菩萨经》). Buddhayaśas,

together with Zhu Fonian and others, translated the *Four-Part Vinaya* (《四分律》).

Dharmayaśas (Later Qin Dynasty), the Tripitaka Master from Jibin, translated the *Sutra on the Adornments of the Joyful Garland* (《乐瓔珞庄严方便品经》), also known as the *Sutra on the Dialogue of the Female-to-Male Transformation Bodhisattva* (《转女身菩萨问答经》). Dharmayaśas collaborated with Dharmagupta (昙摩崛多) translating the *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (《舍利弗阿毗昙论》).

Vimalāksa (卑摩罗叉, Eastern Jin Dynasty), the Tripitaka Master from Jibin, continued the translation of the *Ten Recitations Vinaya, Volume 60* (《十诵律卷第六十》), specifically the *Good Recitation of Vinaya Preface, Part 1* (善诵毘尼序卷上).

Dharmamitra **(**昙摩蜜多, Song Dynasty), the Tripitaka Master from Jibin, translated several sutras, including: *Akashagarbha Bodhisattva Dharani Sutra* (《虚空藏菩萨神咒经》), *Sutra on Contemplating Akashagarbha Bodhisattva* (《观虚空藏菩萨经》), *Sutra on the Transformation of the Female Body* (《佛说转女身经》), *Essential Methods for the Five Gates of Meditation* (《五门禅经要用法》), *Sutra on the Elephant's Hidden Treasure* (《佛说象腋经》) *Sutra on the Courageous King of All Dharmas* (《佛说诸法勇王经》).

Buddhajiva (佛陀什, Song Dynasty), the Tripitaka Master from Jibin, collaborated with Zhu Daosheng and others to translate *Mahisasaka Vinaya in Five Parts* (《弥沙塞部和酰五分律》), *Five-Part Precepts of the Mahisasaka School* (《弥沙塞五分戒本》).

Gunavarman (求那跋摩, Song Dynasty), the Tripitaka Master from Jibin, translated *Four-Part Bhikkhuni Karma Methods* (《四分比丘尼羯磨法》), *Disciplinary Rules for Novices* (《沙弥威仪》), *Five Precepts and Disciplinary Rules for Laymen* (《优婆塞五戒威仪经》), *Sutra on the Good Precepts of Bodhisattvas* (《菩萨善戒经》).

Tang Dynasty Period (7th-9th centuries CE)

During the Tang dynasty other master from Jibin are mentioned as translator of texts. Tripitaka Master Prajñā (般若) from Jibin translated several texts: *Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Mind-Ground* (《大乘本生心地观经》), *Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sutra* (《般若波罗蜜多心经》), *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Prajñāpāramitā* (《大乘理趣般若波罗蜜多经》), *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (《大方广佛华严经》), *Sūtra on the Elder's Inquiry About Nārāyaṇa's Power* (《大花严长者问佛那罗延力》), *Sūtra on the True Realm of All Buddhas* (《诸佛境界摄真实经》), *Sūtra*

on the Merit of Building Stupas for Longevity (《佛说造塔延命功德经》).

Tripitaka Master Buddhatrāta (佛陀多罗) from Jibin (罽宾国) translated the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment* (《大方广圆觉修多罗了义经》).

Monk Buddhapālita (佛陀波利) from Jibin (罽宾国) translated *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* (《佛顶尊胜陀罗尼经》).

Beyond those monks from Jibin who came to China for missionary work and sutra translation, some also studied under eminent Chinese masters. In the *Āryāvalokiteśvara Hṛdaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* (《观世音菩萨随心咒经》, also known as *Dhāraṇī of Tārā's Heart*), translated by Zhi Tong (智通), it is recorded: "Tong, personally received [this teaching] from the Tripitaka Master Xuanzang (玄奘法师). Knowing the deficiency in *mudrā* (印) transmission, the Tripitaka thus imparted it to Master Zhi Tong. The elder Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa (跋咤那罗延) of Central India (中天竺国), together with the Jibin monk Haraṇasaṃgha (喝啰那僧伽), jointly received and upheld this method in the maṇḍala assembly (三曼荼罗会)" (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* No. 1103a).

Monks of the Tang era like Prajñā (般若) rendered the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (《大方广佛华严经》), while *Damonan Tuo* (达磨难陀) validated Sanskrit texts for Yijing's (义净) translations (710 CE). In the 4th year of the Jinglong era of the Tang Dynasty (710 CE), the master translator Yijing (义净) completed his principal translations of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Nidāna and Avadāna(《根本说一切有部尼陀那目迦》, Extracted Verses from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Nidāna and Avadāna, in One Fascicle (《根本说一切有部毘奈耶·陀那目得迦摄颂一卷》), Extracted Verses from the Abridged *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Kṣudraka Vastu*, in One Fascicle (《根本说一切有部略毘奈耶事摄颂一卷》), Ratnajāta Treatise on *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (《成唯识宝生论》). The Jibin monk Dharmānanda (达磨难陀) participated in the translation project, responsible for verifying Sanskrit texts (证梵文).

In summary, the monks from Jibin (罽宾国) who came to China to translate Buddhist scriptures include Saṃgharakṣa (僧伽罗叉), Saṃghadeva (僧伽提和), Saṃghavarman (僧伽跋澄), Harṣavarman (喝啰那僧伽), Gautama Saṃghadeva (瞿昙僧伽提婆), Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍), Dharmayaśas (昙摩耶舍), Vimalākṣa (卑摩罗叉), Dharmamitra (昙摩蜜多), Buddhajīva (佛陀什), Guṇavarman (求那跋摩), Prajñā (般若), Buddhatrāta (佛陀多罗), Buddhapālita (佛陀波利), Dharmānanda (达磨难陀). Their activities spanned from the 4th to the 8th century CE.

3. Medical Knowledge Transmission by Jibin translators

Buddhist Vinaya texts contain medical knowledge transmitted to China via translators from Gandhara. It can be said that Jibin monks served as key intermediaries in introducing South Asian medicine—including ancient Gandharan medical practices to China. According to *Record of the Three Treasures Through the Ages* (《历代三宝纪》) Vol. 8, "During the reign of Emperor An of Jin, Punyatara (弗若多罗 'Merit Blossom'), a Tripiṭaka Vinaya master from Jibin renowned for his ascetic discipline, arrived in Chang'an. Yao Xing, ruler of Later Qin, summoned six hundred eminent monks to the Central Monastery, where Punyatara recited the Sanskrit text of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya" (《十诵律》). Kumārajīva (鸠摩罗什) translated it into Chinese. When two-thirds was completed, Punyatara passed away abruptly. Later, Kumārajīva collaborated with Dharmaruci (昙摩流支 , 'Dharma Hope') to finalize the translation."（Fei, C. F.: 597)

Jibin monks in China consisted of scholars proficient in traditional medicine. According to *Record of the Three Treasures Through the Ages* Vol.8 (《历代三宝纪》卷第八), "Buddhayaśas, a monk from Jibin, mastered the *Five Vidyas* (五明, including medical science 医方明). During his stay in China, he memorized Chinese medical formulas. He remains the only documented scholar versed in both Chinese medicine and ancient Gandharan therapeutics, arguably the earliest Gandharan scholar to study traditional Chinese medicine. After returning to Jibin, he likely introduced Chinese medical knowledge to Gandhara. Buddhayaśas, though born a Brahmin, studied the Five Vidyas under his uncle. Kumārajīva revered him as 'Great Vibhāṣā'. When asked to recite the Dharmagupta Vinaya (《四分律》), doubts arose about his accuracy. He was tested by reciting Qiang ethnic registers and medical formulas totaling 50,000 characters. After two days of verification, not a single error was found. In the 12th year of Hongshi (410 CE), he translated the Dharmagupta Vinaya. Later, he returned westward, his fate unknown."

Collected Records on the Emanated Tripiṭaka (《出三藏记集》) writes, "The *Dharmagupta Vinaya* was transmitted by Buddhayaśas. Initially arriving in Chang'an without Sanskrit manuscripts, Yao Xing demanded proof of his memorization. At Kumārajīva's urging, Buddhayaśas flawlessly recited a medical formulary and population register (40 pages) within three days—down to precise weights (zhu and liang) and demographic data—silencing skeptics". (Sengyou, *515).*

After leaving Chang'an (c. 413 CE), Buddhayaśas returned to Jibin (Gandhara region), where he obtained the Sanskrit manuscript of the Ākāśagarbha Sūtra. He translated it locally and entrusted merchants to deliver it to monastic communities in China. *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* writes, *"*The *Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva Sūtra* (in one fascicle; sometimes titled without 'Bodhisattva'), translated by the Tripiṭaka Master Buddhayaśas of Jibin during the Yao Qin dynasty. [He] returned to Jibin to translate it and sent it to the Qin state—the first translation [of this text]" (Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu, 開元釋教錄).

The Transmission and Translation of Incantation Techniques in China

Incantation techniques are one of the ancient traditional medical therapies closely related to shamanism and religion. With the introduction of Buddhism to China, the incantation techniques associated with Buddhism were also transmitted to China.

In the Tang Dynasty, Zhitong (智通) translated the "Sutra of the Mantra of the Thousand-Eyed and Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva" (《千眼千臂观世音菩萨陀罗尼神呪经》). In the first volume, it is recorded: "In ancient times, there was a plague in the Kingdom of Jibin (罽宾), and those who contracted the disease died within one or two days. A Brahmin named Zhendì (真谛) aroused great compassion and bestowed this Dharma method to save the entire nation. The plague was immediately eradicated. At that time, the king of the plague demons also left the country. This demonstrates its effectiveness" (Zhitong, n.d.).

The same text, in the section titled "Bodhisattva's Divine Transformation and the Seal of Freedom" (《菩萨神变自在印》), Section 24, describes the following practice:

"First, use the thumb of the left hand to hold down the little fingernail. Then do the same with the right hand. The remaining three fingers should be extended vertically. Place the wrists together and hold them above the head. Recite the body mantra twenty-one times. This will enable one to move about freely (In the past, there was a monk named Jia Ti (阇提) from the Kingdom of Jibin who obtained this Sanskrit text in Northern India. He had not translated it but had practiced it himself, finding its power to be vast and profound. He dared not spread it widely. Zhitong obtained this text from his fellow monk, Bhagavat (婆伽), and practiced it according to the method, achieving significant results. However, he did

not popularize it in the world. This text is extremely rare. Those who later obtain it are wished to share the same merit)" (Zhitong, n.d.).

4. Taxila as center for medical learning

When discussing the ancient medicine of Gandhara, Taxila (Skt.: Takṣaśilā;) must be mentioned. Taxila (Takṣaśilā) is located 50 kilometers northwest of Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. The renowned center of learning at Taxila was also a famous center for medical education at that time. According to Buddhist Vinaya texts, the famous physician Jīvaka (耆婆) studied medicine at Taxila for seven years, mastering medical techniques such as cranial surgery.

Taxila in Chinese sources

The "Record of Buddhist Kingdoms" by Faxian records: "Traveling east from the Kingdom of Gandhara for seven days, there is a country named Zhuchashiluo (竺刹尸罗). In Chinese, this means 'cutting off the head.' When the Buddha was a bodhisattva, he gave his head to someone here, hence the name." According to this account, the country's name was 'cutting off the head' (Takṣaśira), which is different from the commonly referred to 'Takṣaśila' (cutting stone). Moreover, Takṣaśira should be transliterated as 'Dachashiluo' instead of 'Zhuchashiluo'. The Sui Dynasty's Indian Tripitaka Master Jñānagupta (阇那崛多) translated the Collection of "Buddha's Past Deeds" (《佛本行集经》), where the terms Dachashiluo and Tachashiluo used.[2] Xuanzang's "Great Tang Records on the Western Regions" mentions "crossing the river (Indus River) to reach the Kingdom of Tachashiluo" (呾叉始罗国), which is Taxila. The Ming Dynasty compilation "Exposition of the Names and Meanings of the Four Part Vinaya (《四分律名义标释》)" summarized the different transliterations of Taxila and cited relevant records: "Dechashiluo, also written as Zhuchashiluo, and Dachashiluo, are all variations of the Sanskrit pronunciation. According to the "Record of Faxian", Zhuchashiluo means 'cutting off the head' in Chinese. When the Buddha was a bodhisattva, he gave his head to someone here, hence the name. It is also said to be the name of a city in the Gandhara region of Northern India. The Records of the Western Regions states, "Dachashiluo is in the

[2] [Sui translation: "Xiaoshi" (消石)] refer to Takṣaśilā. Additionally, in the translation of the Great Vajra Dhara Tantra Sutra, the term "Chiqiasailuo" [Sui translation: "Xiaoshi"]

northern part of India, with a circumference of over 2,000 li. The capital city has a circumference of more than 10 li. The land is fertile, with abundant crops and numerous springs and fruits. The climate is pleasant, and the people are brave and light-hearted."

Taxila as academic center

The "Jataka Sutra" (《本生经》) records: "During the reign of King Brahmadatta (梵与) of Vāranāsi (波罗奈), the bodhisattva was conceived by the first queen. After the pregnancy blessing ceremony, he was born safely. On the naming day, he was named Prince Brahmadatta. At the age of 16, he went to Taxila to study the profound secrets of all arts and sciences".

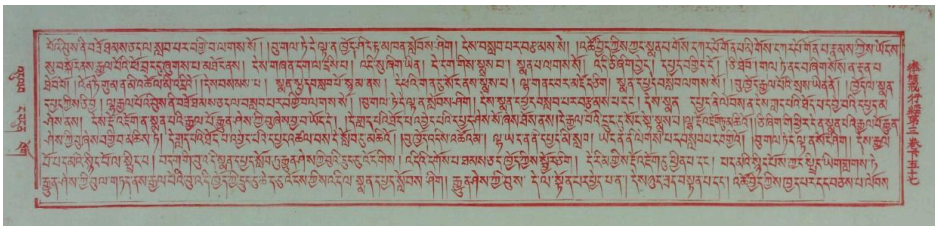

Fig. 1 – A leaf from the Tibetan translation of the "Vinaya Matters" (清代北京版) (Beijing Edition,Qing Dynasty): Jivaka (耆婆) learning cranial surgery from Atreya (恒知子) in Taxila.

The Tibetan translation of the Vinaya (戒律事[根本说一切有部毘奈耶出家事]) (The Palace Museum, n.d.) records that Jivaka (Tib.:འཚོ་བྱེད་ 'tsho byed) went to Taxila and studied cranial surgery (གླ་པའི་ཐོད་པ་འབྱེད་པའི་གདབ་ glad pa'i thod pa 'byed pavi dpyad) under the renowned physician Atreya (Tib.: རྒྱུན་ཤེས་ཀྱི་བུ་, rgyun shes kyi bu; Figs 2-4).[3]

According to Indian sources, during the Han Dynasty, a Chinese prince traveled to Pakistan for medical treatment. The "Mahāvyutpatti Sūtra" (《大庄严经论》) written by Asvaghosha (马鸣菩萨), who lived around the time of the Han Dynasty in China, records a legend of a Chinese (汉地) king sending his prince to Taxila for eye treatment, "I once heard that a prince from the land of Han (China) had a cataract covering his eyes,

[3] The term "rdo 'jog" has multiple meanings, including placing, erecting, preserving, and splitting. The latter meaning is similar to "Takṣa," hence "rdo 'jog" means "cutting stone." This differs from the explanation in the Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

causing complete blindness. Various treatments were ineffective. At that time, some merchants from Taxila came to Han. The Han king asked the merchants, 'My son suffers from eye disease. Can you treat him?' The merchants replied, 'There is a monk named Jivaka in our country who can cure him.' Upon hearing this, the king sent his son to Taxila with great provisions. Upon arrival, the prince went to the venerable Jivaka and said, 'I have come from afar to treat my eyes. Please have mercy and cure my blindness.' The venerable Jivaka then agreed to treat his eyes" (Aśvaghoṣa, 150 CE). This record indicates that about two thousand years ago, Chinese patients traveled to Pakistan for medical treatment.

In short, the initial understanding of Gandharan medicine by ancient Chinese people came in the context of translation of Buddhist scriptures, which were associated with Taxila.

Fig. 2 - The group portrait of famous physicians, including Atreya, in a 17th century Tibetan medical thangka (after Chilie and Wang 2004: 15).

Fig. 3 - Portraits of the famous Taxila physicians Atreya (left) and Roruka (right) in a 17th century Tibetan medical thangka (after Chilie and Wang 2004).

Fig. 4 - Portrait of the Buddhist medical master Jivaka in a 17th century Tibetan medical thangka (after Chilie and Wang 2004: 39).

5. Ayurvedic texts

Charaka, Dridhabala, and the Caraka Saṁhit

The "Caraka Saṁhitā" (《遮罗迦集》) is one of the three major medical texts of Ayurveda (寿命吠陀) and the oldest complete text of Ayurveda. Originally titled the "Agniveśa Tantra" (《入火氏续》), it consisted of 120 chapters. After being reorganized and revised by Charaka (遮罗迦), the text was passed down and later became known as the "Caraka Saṁhitā". Charaka is a legendary figure, with no historical records of his life found in Indian history. However, some clues can be found in Chinese translated Buddhist scriptures.

The "Mahāyāna Bhadrakalpikā Sūtra" (《大乘悲分陀利经》) mentions various scholars such as Nigantha, Charaka, Beli, and Parajjaka. In a past life, the Buddha studied medicine: "He then thought, 'I should gather Śakra, Brahma, and the protectors of the world, as well as other devas, nāgas, yakshas, and human sages, to create remedies for the benefit of sentient beings'. He then used his supernatural powers to inform Śakra, Brahma, and the protectors of the world, as well as devas, nāgas, yakshas, and human sages. There was a mountain named Aikapīlāvatī, where they gathered on its peak, the place of the great physician Charaka. There, he expounded remedies for treating major diseases such as wind, water, and fire, thereby eliminating the diseases of countless sentient beings. He made a vow: 'Now, with this wisdom, I will illuminate countless sentient beings, place them on the three vehicles, close the doors to the evil paths, and place them in the heavenly realms to eliminate diseases. Thus, for the benefit of countless sentient beings, I

will create wisdom and place them in a state of peace and happiness. With this meritorious karma, I vow to fulfill my intention' (大乘悲分陀利经, Mahāyāna Bhadrakalpikā Sūtra, n.d.).

The "Avadāna Śataka" (《杂宝藏经》) records: "At that time, in the Kingdom of the Yuezhi (月氏国), there was a king named Candanajñiṭha (栴檀阙尼咤). He had three wise men as his close friends: the first was the Bodhisattva Āryadeva (马鸣菩萨), the second was a minister named Mocara (摩咤罗), and the third was a skilled physician named Charaka (遮罗迦). These three were well-treated by the king and were always by his side. The third wise physician said to the king: 'If Your Majesty follows my advice, you will never die an untimely death, and you will enjoy a hundred flavors without illness'. The king followed his advice and never suffered from any illness" (《月氏国王与三智臣作善亲友缘》, n.d.).

The "Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra" (《大宝积经卷》) records that the Buddha explained knowledge of human embryonic development to the heretics Charaka, Parigha, and Parivrajaka (《菩萨见实会遮罗迦波利婆罗阇迦外道品》(The Bodhisattva's Meeting with the heretics Charaka, Parigha, and Parivrajaka, n.d.).

According to Chinese-translated Buddhist scriptures about the court physician Charaka of the Yuezhi Kingdom, Western scholar S. Lévi believed that Charaka, the compiler of the "Caraka Saṁhitā", was a minister of king Kaniśka (*The Caraka Saṁhitā*, 2008). However, by the 3rd or 4th century CE, about one-third of the "Caraka Saṁhitā" was lost, including 17 out of 30 chapters on therapeutics, and 12 chapters each on pharmacology and success. Dridhabala(德黎特波罗) revised and supplemented the missing sections, resulting in the "Caraka Saṁhitā" that exists today. This text was translated into Arabic and spread westward with the expansion of Islam, influencing regions as far as the eastern Atlantic coast (Filliozat 2023).

Tibetan scholars were familiar with Charaka and his work, the "Caraka Saṁhitā". Quotations from the "Caraka Saṁhitā" can be found in the Tibetan translation of the Ayurvedic text "Padārthacandrikā" (《词义月光》). The Tibetan scholar Yuthok (宇妥) also mentioned Charaka in his compilation of the "Four Tantras" (《四部医典》) (Aba Tibetan Hospital, Sichuan Province, 2005). Śuka Luozhui Jiebu (2006) (宿喀·洛追杰布) and Desi Sangye Gyatso (2004) (第司·桑结嘉措) mentioned Charaka in their histories of Tibetan medicine. The first two volumes of

the Tibetan translation of the "Caraka Saṁhitā" were published in India in 2006 and 2017 (Lobsang and Losang 2006, 2017).

Vāgbhaṭa's Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā *and its Dissemination in China and Tibet*

Vāgbhaṭa's (瓦婆哲) life is not recorded in historical texts. The *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā* (《八支心要本集》) does not mention the author's name. The mainstream traditional view holds that Vāgbhaṭa authored both the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā* and the *Aṣṭāṅga Saṃgraha* (《八支集》). At the end of the *Aṣṭāṅga Saṃgraha*, the author briefly introduces his name "Vāgbhaṭa" and lineage in a verse (AS.Utt.50.101):

bhiṣagvaro vāgbhaṭa ityabhūnme pitāmaho nāmadharo'smi yasya | sutobhavattasya ca siṁhaguptastasyāpyahaṁ sindhuṣu labdhajanmā ||101|[4]|

(The great physician Vāgbhaṭa was my grandfather; I bear his name. I am the son of his son Siṁhagupta, born in the land of Sindhu.)

The commentary by Indu in the *Aṣṭāṅga Saṃgraha-ṭīkā Candraprabhā* (《八支集注·月印》) states:[5]

bhiṣagvara iti | me tantrakarttur vāgbhaṭanāmā pitāmaho bhiṣajāṁ jyeṣṭho'bhūt |... sindhudeśe labdhajanmā ||101||

(The term "bhiṣagvara" [great physician] refers to my grandfather named Vāgbhaṭa, the foremost among physicians. I inherited his name [...] I was born in the region of Sindhu).[6]

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[4] 此偈颂的韵律为upajāti (11:5+6).

[5] Dr. Shivaprasad Sharma, Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgrahaḥ of Vāhaṭa or Vṛddha Vāgbhaṭa with the śaśilekhā Sanskrit Commentary by Indu, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 2006, 164.

[6] Scholars debate the location of "Sindhu": K.R. Srikantha Murthy (2005: 545) translates it as "country of Sindhu (Indus River basin); S.K. Ramachandra Rao (1985: 101) interprets it as "Sindh province, modern Pakistan; Vaidya Bhagawan Dash (2013: 19) concurs, locating it in present-day Sindh, Pakistan. The term *sindhuṣu* (locative plural) in the verse likely denotes the Indus River valley. Historical records describe ancient Sindh as encompassing parts of Baluchistan (see N.N.Bhattacharyya, The Geographical Dictionary, Ancient and Early Medieval India, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1999, 275).

Due to the scarcity of historical records, no direct documentary evidence has been found to pinpoint the exact birthplace of Vāgbhaṭa. However, scholars have made indirect inferences based on commentaries on the *Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha* (《八支集》). In Prakrit, *Vāgbhaṭa* was pronounced as *Vāhaṭa* (瓦诃哲). Since North Indians do not distinguish between *b* and *v*, *Vāhaṭa* was also written as *Bāhaṭa* (巴诃哲). Thus, *Vāgbhaṭa* appears as *Bāhaṭa* in some texts. Jejjaṭa—a renowned commentator on Ayurvedic classics (阿育吠陀医典注释家)—identified himself as a disciple of Vāgbhaṭa. He referred to Vāgbhaṭa as *Mahājahnupati Śrī Bāhaṭa*, meaning: *"The Auspicious Bāhaṭa, Lord of Mahājahnu (*大扎合努国*)"*. Based on this, Niścalakara (尼施卡拉卡拉) called Vāgbhaṭa a *Rājarṣi* (王仙, sage-king), likening him to 'a king among sages'. Bhaṭṭācharya (巴塔查亚) equated *Mahājahnu* with Majhand, located near present-day Karachi, Pakistan (巴基斯坦卡拉奇).[7]

Desi Sangye Gyatso, a Tibetan scholar in his *Desi's History of Tibetan Medicine* dedicates a special chapter to the biography of Phakhol (ཕ་ཁོ་ལ་, i.e., Vāgbhaṭa /瓦婆哲), author of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā* (《八支心要集》). Sangye Gyatso identifies the author of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā* as the Buddhist master Aśvaghoṣa (马鸣). According to Per *Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho's History of Tibetan Medicine* (《第司藏医史》), the text entered Tibet circa the 8th century CE (Fig. 5). It became one of the "Three Great Medical Traditions" studied by Tibetan physicians. For over a millennium, it influenced Tibetan and Mongolian medicine across western/northern China. The Tibetan scholar Desi Sangye Gyatso's *Desi's History of Tibetan Medicine* dedicates a special chapter to the biography of Phakhol (i.e., Vāgbhaṭa), author of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā (Eight Branches Essence Compendium)*. Sangye Gyatso identified the author of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā* as the Buddhist master Aśvaghoṣa (马鸣). Regarding Vāgbhaṭa's birthplace, Sangye Gyatso specified that he was born into a Brahmin family proficient in the *Aṣṭāṅga Āyurveda* (寿命吠陀八支医学) near the palace of King Kaniṣka (迦腻色伽). His father was the great physician Siṃhagupta (辛诃笈多), rendered in Tibetan as ཟེང་ཆེ་སྦས་པ། (*seng ge sbas pa*, "Lion-Secret") or དགེ་འདུན་གསང་བ། (*dge 'dun*

[7] K.R. Srikantha Murthy, Biographical History of Indian Medicine, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 2005, 75-76.

gsang ba, "Monastic-Secret") (Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, 1703).

In the Tang Dynasty, the monk Yijing (义净) mentioned "eight medical arts" in his *Account of Buddhism Sent from the South Seas* (《南海寄归内法传》), "These eight arts were originally divided into eight sections. Recently, someone condensed them into one volume, followed throughout the Five Regions of India" (义净, 2020). A.F. Rudolf Hoernle speculated this 'condensed volume' referred to Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, though Yijing did not name the text or author (Hoernle 2011). No complete Chinese translation exists to date.

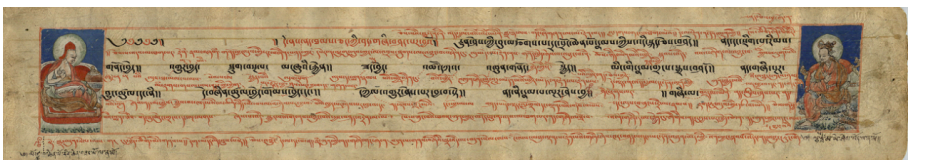

Fig. 5 - Handwritten and illustrated manuscript of the Tibetan translation of the "Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Saṁhitā" in the Potala Palace (Nimaciren 2014).

The Japanese Otani expedition collected fragments of the Sanskrit palm leaf manuscripts of the "Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Saṁhitā" (《八支心要集》梵文贝叶写本) in Xinjiang, China. This evidence shows that the medical works of ancient Gandharan physicians were transmitted to the western part of China (Wang Xingyi and Duan Yishan 2016: 450-451) (王兴伊、段毅山, 2016). In February 1889, treasure seekers unearthed a cache of Sanskrit pothi manuscripts inscribed in the Brahmi script at a *stupa* site near Kucha, Xinjiang. Within days, Ghulam Qadir Khan—an Afghan merchant residing in Kucha for over three decades—acquired portions of these manuscripts from Temur Yusuf (a local Islamic *qazi*, or magistrate). Khan subsequently sold one birch-bark pothi to British Lieutenant Hamilton Bower, who was then in Xinjiang pursuing fugitives (Fig. 6). This collection, now known as the Bower Manuscripts, is housed in Oxford University's Bodleian Library. The collection comprises seven distinct texts, including three medical prescriptions rooted in ancient Ayurvedic tradition. The German-British Indologist August Friedrich Rudolf Hoernle (1841–1918) transcribed, translated, and published these manuscripts. His seminal studies appeared in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* between 1893–1901, with the definitive edition posthumously published in 1912. German paleography expert Lore Sander established the manuscripts' origin and dating. They were copied

in Jibin circa 500-550 CE **(**Sander 2016). This chronology is widely accepted by international scholars, confirming these medical texts as the earliest documented evidence of ancient Gandharan medical knowledge transmitted to China. This conclusion has been widely accepted by the international academic community.

Therefore, these three medical texts serve as reliable documentary evidence of Gandharan medical books being transmitted to China. Professor Chen Ming from Peking University first translated these prescriptions into Chinese, which were included in the book "Shu Fang Yi Yao" (《殊方异药》, *Exotic Medicines from Distant Lands by*陈明, 2005). After nearly 1,500 years of dormancy, these ancient prescriptions finally became accessible to a broader Chinese-speaking audience. This translation represents a significant achievement in the translation of ancient medical texts, following the Tibetan, Khotanese, Uighur, and Mongolian translations of Āyurvedic classics.

Fig. 6 - Birch bark manuscript of the Bower Manuscript containing medical texts, at University of Oxford, UK. [The image used here was provided by Professor Wang Xingyi from Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine].

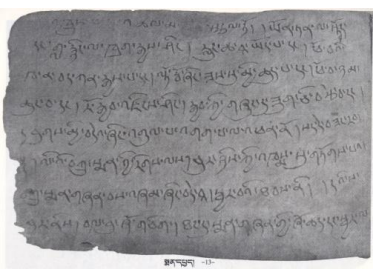

Fig. 7 - The Bambaqi medical book includes a medical prescription from Khotan (Basang and Lobsang 2007: 224).

A medical book from the later Tubo period was unearthed in the Bambaqi Tower in Shannan, Tibet, which includes a medical prescription from Khotan (present-day Hotan) called "Dalisasa Powder" (Liu et al. 2016; Fig. 7) Research has shown that this prescription originates from the "Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Saṁhitā" and can be traced back to the *Caraka Saṁhitā*. This indicates that in addition to being directly transmitted to Tibet from Gandhara, Āyurvedic medicine was also indirectly introduced to Tibet through Xinjiang.

6. Conclusion

This study establishes that Jibin/Gandhara served as a pivotal conduit for Sino-South Asian medical exchange from the 4th-9th centuries CE, primarily mediated by Jibin Buddhist monks. These monks translated sutras containing medical knowledge (e.g., surgical techniques, pharmacology) into Chinese, while institutions like Taxila emerged as renowned centers for medical training—attracting even Chinese patients, as documented in texts by Aśvaghoṣa. Key Ayurvedic treatises, including the Caraka Saṃhitā (linked to Charaka, a physician in the Yuezhi Kingdom) and Vāgbhata's Astāṅga Hṛdaya Saṃhitā (composed in Sindh, Pakistan), were transmitted to China via overland routes through Xinjiang and Tibet. Archaeological evidence, such as the Bower Manuscript (Xinjiang) and Tibetan medical texts referencing Gandharan masters, corroborates this diffusion. Despite gaps in archaeological corroboration for some claims (e.g., Falin's attribution of Chinese cultural origins to Shendu), the consistent documentation in Chinese sources underscores a robust pre-modern medical dialogue. This exchange highlights Pakistan's historical role in Eurasian knowledge networks and calls for further interdisciplinary research into material evidence of Gandharan medicinal practices along Silk Road sites.

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