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Preface

The Sudhanāvādāna is a major work of the avadāna genre which enjoyed immense popularity in large parts of Asia. The earliest Indian versions are preserved in the Mahāvastu of the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda school, in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school and in a Sanskrit *kāvya* work by the poet Haribhaṭṭa which is dated to the fifth century CE. In Chinese it is attested in the third century when Kāng Sēnghuì composed a free adaptation of the tale. The Khotanese Sudhanāvādāna is of special importance for the study of Central Asian Buddhism. It is clearly related to the Sanskrit versions of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya and the Sudhana poems of Haribhaṭṭa and the 11th century poet Kṣemendra, but seems not to be directly dependent on either versions. For this very reason it has attracted the attention of many scholars of Buddhist literature to many of whom the inadequacies of H. W. Bailey's much-quoted pioneer edition and translation of 1966 were sadly obvious.

It was in the early 1980s that the late R.E. Emmerick suggested to me to prepare a new edition of the Khotanese Sudhanāvādāna. The necessity of a revised edition was also stressed by Mauro Maggi (1996) who contributed with several articles to details of this text. For various reasons, however, a complete new edition was never undertaken until 2007 when the Sudhanāvādāna became the object of a research project carried out at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The new edition of the Khotanese Sudhanāvādāna by Matteo De Chiara profits from the author's careful analysis of the Khotanese text which was made in close comparison with the relevant Indian parallels. For the benefit of the reader interested in literary and Buddhist studies the Sanskrit parallels from the Divyāvādāna (almost entirely corresponding to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya) and from Kṣemendra's Sudhana-Kinnary-avadāna are quoted along with the translations by M. Straube (2006) and J. Tatelman (2005). Late Khotanese is a language parts of whose vocabulary are not fully understood, so the interpretation of a text in Late Khotanese is bound to be controversial. Therefore it will be appreciated that a successive detailed commentary will ensure a high degree of transparency with regard to the editor's and translator's decisions. M. De Chiara's edition is not only a major contribution to Khotanese philology but will also provide a reliable text for scholars interested in narrative literature, Buddhism, and Asian cultures.

Almuth Degener

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First of all I need to thank many institutions and people who directly or indirectly rendered possible my work on the Khotanese Sudhanāvadāna: I would like to name the Institut für Indologie of the “Johannes Gutenberg Universität” of Mainz and the Iran Heritage Foundation of London, Nicholas Sims-Williams and Giuliana Martini.

However without Almuth Degener and Mauro Maggi this work would never have been published or even have existed at all. They both have encouraged, advised and helped me in every possible way, putting at my disposal their material, energy and time.