The dating of an ancient birch bark Buddhist scroll recently acquired by the Library of Congress

Chief Investigator: Dr Mark Allon
Department of Subcontinental Indian Studies, Brennan A18, The University of Sydney

Other Investigators:
- Students
- ANSTO Investigators: Geraldine Jacobsen
- Specialist Committee: A

**SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVES**

To date the birch bark Buddhist manuscript recently acquired by the Library of Congress, USA. Apart from dating this manuscript, this will contribute towards our paleographical and language studies of Gandhari texts in general.

**PROGRESS REPORT and RESEARCH OUTCOMES**

The result produced for this sample (2-sigma 206 B.C. to A.D. 59) is a little surprising and unexpected, particularly the B.C dates. The palaeography and language of the scroll are not strikingly different from those of the Senior manuscripts, which were dated by ANSTO in 2004 to A.D. 130 to 250 (2-sigma). Even a date towards the end of the A.D. range, e.g. A.D. 59, would require a revision of our current understanding of Kharosthi palaeography and the development of the Gandhari language. That such a revision is needed is supported by recent C-14 tests of similar manuscripts undertaken German institutions that have also produced early dates.

These results were presented and discussed for the first time in public by Prof. Richard Salomon at the recent conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Atlanta (June 2008), in a paper entitled “Results of radiocarbon testing of the Gāndhārī *Bahubuddha-sūtra scroll.*”

The implications of the results from the tests undertaken by ANSTO, which are indeed very interesting and may prove to be extremely important, are still being evaluated and discussed with other colleagues. But it is hoped that these will be published in the near future.

**DATA**

The results for this test of sample OZK184 was 2070 +/- 60. The 2 sigma date produced was 206 BC to AD 59.

No publications have resulted to date.
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