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Saccaka's Challenge – A Study of the *Samyukta-āgama* Parallel to the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* in Relation to the Notion of Merit Transfer

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Abstract

The present article provides an annotated translation of the *Samyukta-āgama* parallel to the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. This is followed by a brief study of the significance of this discourse in relation to the theme of the transference of merit.

Keywords:

Early Buddhism, Comparative Studies, *Samyukta-āgama*, Debate, Transference of Merit.

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薩遮迦的質疑—由《雜阿含經》與《中部尼柯耶·薩遮迦小經》的平行研究談福德轉化的意義

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摘要

此篇文章針對相當於《中部尼柯耶·薩遮迦小經》的《雜阿含經·110經》提供譯注，此是有關福德轉化之教法的重要性初探。

關鍵字：早期佛教、比較研究、《雜阿含經》、辯論、福德之轉化

Introduction

With the present article I continue exploring the theme of debate in early Buddhist discourse, broached in the last issue of the *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* with a study of the *Ekottarika-āgama* counterpart to the *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta*. Whereas in the case of the *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta* and its parallels the debate situation involved a challenge to the Buddha's disciples, in the case at present under examination the Buddha himself is challenged by the debater Saccaka, whom the texts introduce as a follower of the Jain tradition.

The versions that report this challenge are as follows:

- (1) the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*;¹
- (2) the “Discourse on Saccaka” in the *Samyukta-āgama*;²
- (3) a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama*;³
- (4) and a few words preserved in a Sanskrit fragment.⁴

1 MN 35 at MN I 227-237.

2 SĀ 110 at T 99, 35a-37b. The title can be deduced from the *uddāna* at T 99, 37b27: 薩遮.

3 EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715a-717b.

4 Fragment I A in Bongard-Levin (1989, 509) and SHT III 997A in Waldschmidt (1971, 258), identified by Hartmann in Bechert (1995, 273). SHT III 997 is listed in Wille (2008, 418) as corresponding to MN 35 and as pertaining to the *Kāyabhāvana-sūtra*, which parallels the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, MN 36, wherefore Chung (2008, 68) does not include these fragments in his survey of parallels to SĀ 110. Yet, the recurrent reference to *āsādyā puruṣasya svastir bhāvo* in both fragments parallels a section in MN 35 at MN I 236, 3, SĀ 110 at T 99, 37a9 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716c7 where Saccaka illustrates his inability to vanquish the Buddha with various similes. In fact MN 35 at MN I 236, 3-10 repeatedly uses the corresponding wording *āsajja purisassa sotthibhāvo*, whereas MN 36 does not have a comparable formulation. Thus these two fragments are also parallels to MN 35, SĀ 110 and EĀ 37.10. They at the same time pertain to the *Kāyabhāvana-sūtra* preserved in Sanskrit fragments stemming from a (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* collection, since this discourse, though otherwise a parallel to MN 36, in its concluding section also reports how Saccaka (referred to as Sātyaki) illustrates his failure to overcome the Buddha with a set of similes, cf. fragment 339v3-6 in Liu (2009, 62) where the same phrase *āsādyā puruṣasya svastir bhāvo* occurs repeatedly. The same fragment indicates that this is the second time Sātyaki has approached the Buddha for debate, cf. 339v7 in Liu (2009, 62) and his comments p. 7, clearly showing awareness of the existence of a version of their first encounter, recorded in MN 35, SĀ 110 and EĀ 37.10. The occurrence of the set of similes in the *Kāyabhāvana-sūtra* could easily be the result of a transfer of this piece during oral transmission, facilitated by the circumstance that the two discourses to Sātyaki share the same protagonist and his being defeated in a debate by the Buddha.

The second of these, the “Discourse on Saccaka”, stems from a *Samyukta-āgama* translated during the period 435-436 of the present era by Bǎoyún (寶雲), based on what appears to have been a Sanskrit original of (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda provenance, read out to him by Guṇabhadra.⁵

Translation of SĀ 110

1. Thus have I heard.⁶ At one time the Buddha was staying at the Monkey Pond by Vesālī.⁷
2. In the country of Vesālī there was a son of Nigaṇṭhas who was intelligent and clever,⁸ skilled at understanding any doctrine. He was proud of his intelligence and of his refined knowledge of vast collections of doctrines and their subtle details. When giving teachings to assemblies, he surpassed all [other] debaters and he kept on thinking:

‘Among recluses and Brahmins I am invincible, able to debate even with a Tathāgata. On [merely] hearing my name, any kind of debater will have sweat pouring forth from his forehead, armpits and the pores of his hair. [When] debating a matter, I

5 Bucknell (2006, 685); Choong (2000, 6, note 18); Enomoto (1986, 23); Glass (2010); Harrison (2002, 1); Hiraoka (2000); Lü (1963, 242); Mayeda (1985, 99); Schmithausen (1987, 306) and Waldschmidt (1980, 136), on the translation procedure cf. T 2145, 13a5.

6 For ease of comparison I adopt the paragraph numbering used in the English translation of the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* in Ñāṇamoli (2005, 322-331). For the same reason, I employ Pāli terminology (except for anglicized terms like ‘Dharma’ or ‘Nirvana’), without thereby intending to take a position on the original language of the *Samyukta-āgama*, which in fact according to de Jong (1981, 108) would have been in Sanskrit.

7 T 99, 35a17: 獼猴池. As noted by Skilling (1997, 295), the Monkey Pond by Vesālī seems to be unknown in the Pāli discourses, cf. also *ibid.* (1997, 406f), Bingenheimer (2008b, 159 note 31) and Lamotte (1958, 171). References to the Monkey Pond can be found in the *Avadānaśataka*, Speyer (1970, 8); in the *Bhaiṣayavastu of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*, Dutt (1984, 224); in the *Buddhacarita*, T 192, 43c12, cf. also Johnston (1995, 75, verse 23.63); in the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell (1886, 136); in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart (1882, 300); in a *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* fragment, S 360 folio 173 V5-6 in Waldschmidt (1950, 19); and in a Sanskrit fragment parallel to the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* (MN 12), SHT IV 32 folio 41 R5 in Sander (1980, 137). Besides occurring frequently in the *Samyukta-āgama*, the same location is also mentioned in the *Dīrgha-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama*, cf. T 1, 66a23 and T 125, 739b10. Xuánzàng (玄奘) also refers to this location, T 2087, 908b17, trsl. Beal (2001, 68).

8 T 99, 35a18: 尼捷子, a “son of the Nigaṇṭhas”; an expression found similarly in EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715b1, with its counterpart in *nigaṇṭhaputta* in MN 35 at MN I 227, 17. According to the Pāli commentary (Ps II 268, 7), his parents had been Nigaṇṭhas. The Sanskrit fragments of the *Kāyabhāvana-sūtra* repeatedly employ the expression *nigranthīputra*, cf. e.g. 329r5 in Liu (2009, 48); an expression also used in the *Viyāhapaṇṇatti* 5.8.1 in Lalwani (1974, 210) as the name of a particular Jain monk.

am [like a strong] wind that is able to flatten grass and trees, break up metal and stone, and subdue serpents and elephants – what to say of any kind of debater among humans being able to equal me?”⁹

3. Then a monk by the name of Assaji, having put on the [outer] robe and taken his bowl in the morning, entered the town to beg food with awe-inspiring and decorous behaviour, walking calmly and with eyes lowered. At that time, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, who owing to some small matter had to go to the villages, was coming out of the town gate and saw from afar the monk Assaji.¹⁰ He right-away approached him and asked:
4. “What teachings does the recluse Gotama deliver to his disciples, what are the teachings with which he instructs his disciples for their practice?” [35b]

Assaji replied: “Aggivessana, the Blessed One instructs his disciples with these teachings for them to train accordingly, saying: ‘Monks, form should be contemplated as without a self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness should be contemplated as without a self, make an effort to contemplate the five aggregates of clinging as a disease, as a carbuncle, as a thorn, as deadly, as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as empty, as not-self’.”¹¹

On hearing these words, the mind of Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, was not pleased and he said:¹² “Assaji, you certainly heard wrongly, the recluse Gotama would not speak like this at all.¹³ If the recluse Gotama does speak like this, then this is a wrong view and I

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- 9 MN 35 at MN I 227, 18 introduces a similar set of presumptions as public claims made by Saccaka. The introductory narration of EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715a29 does not provide a description of Saccaka, hence it has these presumptions neither as reflections nor as public claims made by Saccaka.
 - 10 MN 35 and EĀ 37.10 neither describe the inspiring and calm manner in which Assaji went begging, nor do they indicate that Saccaka had some matter to attend to.
 - 11 Assaji's reply in MN 35 at MN I 228, 10 does not bring in the characteristic of *dukkha*, only mentioning impermanence and not-self. In EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715b4, however, his reply covers all three characteristics, indicating that each aggregate is impermanent, what is impermanent is unsatisfactory, and what is unsatisfactory is not-self.
 - 12 According to EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715b10, Saccaka was so displeased that he covered his ears with his hands and told Assaji: “Stop, stop!”.
 - 13 MN 35 and EĀ 37.10 do not report that Saccaka assumed Assaji may have misheard what the Buddha teaches. The counterpart passage in MN 35 at MN I 228, 16 reads: *dussutaṃ vata, bho Assaji, assumha*. If a similarly worded passage should have been found in the Indic original used for translating the *Samyukta-āgama*, a mistake could have arisen by assuming *dussuta* to intend that Assaji had “misheard”, instead of being an expression of Saccaka's displeasure at having “heard [something] improper” (cf. the gloss in Ps II 271, 18 on *dussutaṃ* as *sotuṃ ayuttaṃ*). The term as such can have both meanings: In MN 97 at MN II 185, 21 *dussuta* refers

shall approach him, argue with him and closely interrogate him, so as to stop him [from speaking like this].”

5. At that time, Saccaka, the son of Niganthas, approached the villages. He told the Licchavis, who had gathered in the assembly hall: “Today I met a foremost disciple of the recluse Gotama by the name of Assaji and we had a small debate on a matter. According to what he has told me, I shall approach that recluse Gotama and on debating the matter with him, I will certainly make him advance, retreat and turn around according to my wish.

Just as a man mowing grass might pull out the grass at its roots and, grabbing the stalks with his hand, shake it in the air to get rid of any dirt, in the same way I shall debate that matter with the recluse Gotama, argue with him and closely interrogate him, taking hold of what is essential and making him advance, retreat and turn around according to my wish, getting rid of that mistaken assertion.

[Or] just as, in a liquor shop, someone might take a liquor filter and press it to get pure wine and to get rid of the residual grains, in the same way I shall approach the recluse Gotama, debate and argue with him, closely interrogate him, taking hold of the pure essence and making him advance, retreat and turn around, getting rid of any mistaken assertions.

[Or] like a master in weaving mats who, wanting to sell a dirty mat in the market, will wash it with water to get rid of any smell or dirt, in the same way I shall approach the recluse Gotama and debate that matter with him, taking hold of what is essential, making him advance, retreat and turn around, getting rid of any dirty assertions.

[Or] just as if a master elephant trainer in a king’s household were to lead a large and drunken elephant into deep water to wash its body, the four limbs, ears, trunk, washing it all round to get rid of any dust or dirt, in the same way I shall approach the recluse Gotama, debate and argue that matter with him, closely interrogate him, make him advance, retreat and turn around according to my free will, taking hold of the main points and getting rid of any dirty assertions. Licchavis, you may come with me to see how he will be defeated.”¹⁴

6. Among the Licchavis there were some who said: “That Saccaka, the son of Niganthas, should be able to [hold his ground] in debating that matter with the recluse Gotama, that

to hearing something that is improper or disagreeable, thus being similar to MN 35, whereas in MN 76 at MN I 520, 6 *dussuta* stands for what has been misheard, contrasted to what has been heard correctly, *sussuta*.

- 14 MN 35 at MN I 228, 29 also has four similes, which describe dragging a sheep by its hair, dragging a brewer’s sieve around, shaking a brewer’s strainer, and an elephant who plays in water. The images of dragging a sheep by its hair and of an elephant that plays in water recur in EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715b20, which besides these two has one more simile of two strong men that take hold of a weak third man and roast him over a fire.

is not possible.” Others said: “Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, is intelligent and of sharp faculties, he will be able to [hold his ground] in debating that matter.” [35c]

Then Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, together with five-hundred Licchavis, approached the Buddha for the purpose of debating that matter.

7. At that time the Blessed One was seated beneath a tree in the Great Wood for the day's abiding,¹⁵ while many monks were outside of the [monastic] dwelling, practising walking meditation in the forest. They saw from afar that Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, was coming. He gradually approached the monks and asked them: “Where is the recluse

15 T 99, 35c3: 天住, an expression which, *pace* Bingenheimer (2008a, 14 note 32), I consider to correspond to the “day's abiding”, *divāvihāra*, mentioned in MN 35 at MN I 229, 23, instead of intending a “heavenly abiding”. Both meanings would be possible interpretations, cf. Hirakawa (1997, 333), who lists *diva* alongside *deva* and *divya* as possible meanings for 天. In the Pāli discourses, a “heavenly abiding”, *dibba vihāra*, does not occur on its own as part of a circumstantial description, comparable to the present context. Instead, it forms part of a set of three types of *vihāras*, the “heavenly”, *dibba*, the “divine”, *brahmā*, and the “noble”, *ariya*, cf. the *Saṅgīti-sutta*, DN 33 at DN III 220, 18. A counterpart to this set of three can be found in the reconstructed *Saṅgīti-sūtra* in Stache-Rosen (1968a, 88), whose reconstruction is based on the *Saṅgītiparyāya* (T 1536, 389a7): 三住者：一天住，二梵住，三聖住, and on an unpublished manuscript Hs M 658 line 3 reading [*divyo*] *vihāro brahmo vihāra āryavihāraḥ*, cited in Stache-Rosen (1968b, 57 note 173). The same set of three recurs in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* parallel DĀ 9 at T 1, 50b14: 三堂：賢聖堂，天堂，梵堂. An explanation of the implication of such *dibba vihāra* can be found in AN 3.63 at AN I 182, 27, according to which the mental condition to be experienced after attainment of the four absorptions can be reckoned as “heavenly”, cf. also the *Saṅgītiparyāya* (T 1536, 389a7): 天住云何？答謂四靜慮. The expression *divāvihāra*, in contrast, simply stands for any type of meditation practice, this forming the “day's abiding” regularly practiced, in whatever form, by the Buddha and his monastic disciples. Such “day's abiding” certainly does not exclude deep concentration, as can be seen in a passage in the *Madhyama-āgama* (T 26, 670b25), where the Buddha's “day's abiding”, 晝行, (the counterpart MN 75 at MN I 501, ult. similarly refers to his *divāvihāra*) involves the exercise of the divine eye, clearly indicating that in this case his “day's abiding” would at the same time also have fulfilled the conditions required for a “heavenly abiding”, namely attainment of the four absorptions. In the case of another occurrence of 晝行 in the same collection, T 26, 706c18, however, a monk listens to and well remembers a conversation that is going on not too far from the place where he is seated in his “day's abiding”, an instance where the expression does not stand for “abiding” in deep concentration. Yet another occurrence of 晝行 in the same collection (T 26, 795c9), has as its counterpart *nyin mo gnas*, “day's abiding”, in the Tibetan (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, D (6) 'dul ba tha 82b6 or Q (1035) 'dul ba de 79b4, thereby confirming this sense for a text from the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition as well, though the Chinese translation of the same Vinaya (T 1451, 237a26) instead speaks of 靜慮.

Gotama staying?” The monks answered: “He is seated beneath a tree in the Great Wood for the day’s abiding”.

8. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, approached the Buddha, paid respect and, after exchanging friendly greetings, sat down to one side. The Licchavis also approached the Buddha, some of them paid respect, others held their hands with palms together [in homage], exchanged friendly greetings and, having exchanged friendly greetings, stood to one side.¹⁶
9. Then Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas said to the Buddha: “I have heard that Gotama delivers such teachings and gives such instructions to his disciples, instructing his disciples to contemplate form as without self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... to contemplate consciousness as without a self, making an effort to contemplate the five aggregates of clinging as a disease, as a carbuncle, as a thorn, as deadly, as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as empty, as not-self”.¹⁷ Is this said as it was said or is it not said as it was said? Is this said according to the Dharma, is it said in accordance with the Dharma, so that there is no ground for another person¹⁸ to arrive at the condition of falling into error on being argued with and closely interrogated?”¹⁹

The Buddha told Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas: “What you have heard is said as it was said, it is said according to the Dharma, is it said in accordance with the Dharma, it is not a misrepresentation and there is no ground for falling into error on being argued with and closely interrogated. Why is that? [Because] I indeed deliver such teachings to my disciples, I indeed continuously instruct my disciples, so that in conformity with my teaching and instruction they contemplate form as without a self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness as without a self, and contemplate the five aggregates of clinging as a disease, as a carbuncle, as a thorn, as deadly, as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as empty, as not-self”.

16 While EĀ 37.10 does not record the behaviour of the Licchavis at all, MN 35 at MN I 229, 27 describes an even broader variety of behaviour, with some of the Licchavis announcing their name and others just remaining silent, though all of them sit down.

17 Instead of reporting what he had heard from Assaji, in MN 35 at MN I 230, 1 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715c10, Saccaka asks the Buddha the question he had earlier asked Assaji (with some minor differences in wording in EĀ 37.10).

18 My translation follows the 元 and 明 variant 人 instead of 忍.

19 Though this passage does not have a counterpart in MN 35 (or EĀ 37.19), cf. also above note 17, a similar mode of inquiry occurs in other discourses in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, e.g. MN 55 at MN I 368, 28, MN 71 at MN I 482, 12, MN 90 at MN II 127, 4, MN 103 at MN II 243, 11, and MN 126 at MN III 139, 31; on the formulation of this inquiry cf. Alsdorf (1959).

10. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, said to the Buddha: “Gotama, I shall now give a simile.” The Buddha told Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas: “Do what you think it is time to do.” [Saccaka said]: “Just as whatever is done in the world entirely depends on the earth,²⁰ so too form is a person's self, from which good and evil arise ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is a person's self, from which good and evil arise.²¹ Again, just as in the realm of humans, [or] in the realm of [earthen] spirits, herbs, grass, trees and woods all

20 That the earth is the basis for the growth of beings and their activities, MN 35 at MN I 230, 14: *paṭhaviyaṃ paṭiṭṭhāya* (B: *pathaviyaṃ*), appears to have been a general tenet in ancient India. Several discourses report the Buddha taking similar positions, cf. e.g. SN 45.149 at SN V 45, 26, SN 45.150 at SN V 46, 14, SN 46.11 at SN V 78, 1, SN 49.23 at SN V 246, 1, SĀ 880 at T 99, 221c10, SĀ 882 at T 99, 221c24, SĀ 901 at T 99, 225c15, SĀ 903 at T 99, 225c26, SĀ 904 at T 99, 226a3 and SĀ 1239 at T 99, 339b25. The same position was apparently upheld by the Jains, as in the *Viyāhapaṇṇatti* 1.224 (Lalwani 1973, 97), Mahāvīra proclaims that: *puḍhaviṃpaiṭṭhiyā tasā thāvarā pāṇā*, trsl. *ibid.*: “the earth is the base for ... moving and non-moving beings”.

21 To fully appreciate the position taken by Saccaka, it would be helpful to consider it in the light of the standard early Buddhist analysis of what underlies an assertion of selfhood, which distinguishes between twenty distinct forms that may be implicit in identifying the five aggregates as self. These are arrived at by relating each of the five aggregates to the following four modes: (a) identifying an aggregate as the self, (b) postulating that the self is what possesses an aggregate, (c) assuming the self to contain an aggregate within, (d) locating the self within an aggregate (for full references cf. below note 31). Now in MN 35 at MN I 230, 20, Saccaka indicates that the *purisapuggala* according to his self-conception *rūpe paṭiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati*, “with form as the basis he engenders merit and demerit”, a formula then applied to the other four aggregates as well. This suggests Saccaka's view to be that the five aggregates are adjuncts of the self, corresponding to mode b of the four modes mentioned above. In fact, the use of the expression *paṭiṭṭhāya* clearly harks back to the simile of the earth, found also in SĀ 110, so that the aggregates are to the self what the earth is to beings. MN 35 at MN I 230, 26 then continues with the Buddha ascertaining that this proposition can be reckoned as one of the modes of identifying the aggregates as self: *nanu tvaṃ ... evaṃ vadesi: rūpaṃ me attā* etc., i.e. “are you not [thereby] asserting that ‘form (etc.) is my self?’” Thus Saccaka's view described in MN 36 and SĀ 110 need not be confined to the above mode a and does reflect self notions held among contemporary Jains or Brahmins, *pace* Kuan (2009, 163ff and 170). EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 715c18 differs from the other two versions in so far as here the issue at stake is whether form etc. is permanent or impermanent, with Saccaka continuing to affirm that the aggregate of form is permanent. The progression of this part in EĀ 37.10 is so different that it makes a detailed comparison impossible, hence in some footnotes I only mention variations between SĀ 110 and MN 35.

depend on the earth for their arising and growth, so too form is a person's self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is a person's self."

11. The Buddha said [36a]: "Aggivessana, do you say that form is a person's self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is a person's self?"

He replied: "Indeed, Gotama, form is a person's self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is a person's self – and this whole assembly says the same."

The Buddha said: "Aggivessana, just maintain your own doctrine. [What] is the use of bringing in the people in the assembly?" Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, said to the Buddha: "Form is truly a person's self."

12. The Buddha said: "Aggivessana, I shall now question you, answer me in accordance with what you think. Just as the king of a country, in his own country can put to death a man who has committed a crime, or bind him, or expel him, or whip him and cut off his hands and feet; and if someone has done a meritorious deed, [the king can] grant him the gift of an elephant, a horse, a vehicle, a town, or wealth – could he not do all that?"²²

He answered: "He could do it, Gotama." The Buddha said: "Aggivessana, whoever is the owner, would he not be totally free to do anything he likes?"²³ He answered: "Yes, indeed, Gotama."

13. The Buddha said: "Aggivessana, you say that form is a person's self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is a person's self, [but] are you able, in accordance with your wish, freely as you like, to have them be like this, and not like that?"

Then Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, remained silent. The Buddha said: "Aggivessana, come on, speak, come on, speak. Why do you remain silent?" Like this [it went] three times, but Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, remained silent as before.

14. Then a powerful thunderbolt spirit, holding a thunderbolt, fierce and blazing with fire, staying in the empty space close above the head of Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, said: "The Blessed One has asked you three times. Why do you not reply? With this thunderbolt,

22 MN 35 at MN I 231, 4 illustrates the king's power by bringing in the examples of King Pasenadi and King Ajātasattu, differing from SĀ 110 also in that it does not take up the positive case of rewarding those who have done something positive.

23 This additional inquiry, driving home the implication of the simile on the king, is without a counterpart in MN 35.

I shall break your head into seven pieces!”²⁴ Owing to the Buddha's supernatural power,²⁵ only Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, could see the thunderbolt spirit; the rest of the assembly could not see it.

15. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, became greatly afraid and said to the Buddha:²⁶ “Indeed no, Gotama.”

16-19. The Buddha said: “Aggivessana, pay close attention and reply after having understood. Earlier in this assembly you proclaimed that form is the self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is the self, yet now you say it is not so. The earlier and the later contradict each other.²⁷ You earlier kept on saying: ‘form is the self ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is the self’.²⁸

20. Aggivessana, now I will ask you: Is form permanent or is it impermanent?” He answered: “Impermanent, Gotama.”²⁹ [The Buddha] asked again: “What is impermanent, is it unsatisfactory?” He answered: “It is unsatisfactory, Gotama.”

[The Buddha] asked again: “What is impermanent, unsatisfactory and of a nature to change, should the well-taught noble disciple herein regard it as a self, as distinct from the self [in

24 The intervention of this spirit is similarly reported in MN 35 at MN I 231, 30 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716a7, a minor difference being that in the Pāli version he appears before the Buddha repeats his question a third time, while in the two Chinese versions he takes action once the third repetition of the question has not met with a reply. Ps II 277, ult. explains that this spirit (named Vajirapāṇi/金剛力士 in MN 35 and EĀ 37.10), was a manifestation of Sakka, cf. also Godage (1945, 51-52). On the threat that an opponent's head will split to pieces in ancient Indian literature cf. Hopkins (1932, 316); Insler (1989); Witzel (1987).

25 MN 35 at MN I 231, 35 agrees with SĀ 110 that only Saccaka and the Buddha could see the spirit, without, however, indicating that this was due to the Buddha's supernatural power. In EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716a10, Saccaka apparently at first does not notice the spirit and only realizes what is happening when the Buddha tells him to look up into the sky.

26 When describing Saccaka's fear, MN 35 at MN I 232, 1 indicates that he was seeking from the Buddha protection, *tāṇa*, shelter, *leṇa*, and refuge, *saraṇa*; cf. also EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716a13.

27 This remark, with its counterparts in MN 35 at MN I 232, 8 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716a18, is noteworthy in so far as it shows that in early Buddhist thought “consistency is regarded as a criterion of truth” (Jayatilleke 1980, 334).

28 Instead of reminding him of the position he earlier took, in MN 35 at MN I 232, 4 the Buddha takes up each aggregate individually and inquires about the possibility to control it, in each case concluding that the reply Saccaka gives does not square with what he upheld before.

29 MN 35 at MN I 232, ult. proceeds similarly, differing from SĀ 110 in that it does not refer to the well-taught noble disciple. In EĀ 37.10, however, at this point the Buddha points out that even a wheel-turning king will grow old. A counterpart to the teachings given at present in SĀ 110 and MN 35 on the true nature of the five aggregates occurs only later in EĀ 37.10 at T 125,

the sense of being owned by it),³⁰ or as either existing [within the self] or [the self] existing [within it]?”³¹ He answered: “No, Gotama.”

(Feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are also to be taught like this).

The Buddha said: “Aggivessana, you [should] attend well and [only] then speak.” [36b]

21. [The Buddha] asked again: “Aggivessana, if one is not free from lust in regard to form, not free from desire for it, not free from calling it to mind, not free from craving for it, not free from thirst in regard to it, if that form changes, if it becomes otherwise, will sadness, sorrow, vexation and suffering arise?”³²

He answered: “So it is indeed, Gotama.”

(Feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are also to be taught like this).

[The Buddha] asked again: “Aggivessana, if one is free from lust in regard to form, free from desire for it, free from calling it to mind, free from craving for it, free from thirst

716b25.

- 30 T 99, 36a28: 異我, the supplementation of “[in the sense of being owned by it]” suggests itself from SĀ 109 at T 99, 34b20, where the question “how is form regarded as ‘distinct from self?’”, 云何見色異我, receives the reply “[by] regarding form as ‘this is mine’”, 見色是我所, cf. also the note below.
- 31 T 99, 36a28: 相在, literally “mutually existing”. As Choong (2000, 59) explains, the cryptic formulation 是我, 異我, 相在 functions in the *Samyukta-āgama* as the counterpart to the three-partite Pāli set phrase *etaṃ mama, eso ‘ham asmi, eso ma attā*, “this is mine, this I am, this is my self”, found in the present case in MN 35 at MN I 232, ult. Choong notes that the same formulation also parallels a four-partite Pāli set phrase where the self is regarded as identical with an aggregate, as what possesses an aggregate, as containing an aggregate within, or as itself being within the aggregate (e.g. for the first aggregate of form in MN 44 at MN I 300, 7: *rūpaṃ attato ... rūpavantam vā attānaṃ, attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmim vā attānaṃ*, with a similarly worded Tibetan counterpart in D (4094) *mngon pa ju 7a2* or Q (5595) *tu 7b7: gzugs bdag yin no ... gzugs bdag dang ldan, bdag la gzugs yod, gzugs la bdag gnas*, and a straightforward rendering in the Chinese parallel MĀ 210 at T 26, 788a28 as: 見色是神, 見神有色, 見神中有色, 見色中有神也. In the case of *Samyukta-āgama* passages paralleling this four-partite formula, 相在 covers the last two alternatives, as can be seen e.g. in SĀ 45 at T 99, 11b5: 色是我, 色異我, 我在色, 色在我, which is then summarized two lines later as 色是我, 異我, 相在. This suggests that 相在 is probably best rendered as the aggregate “either existing [within the self] or else [the self] existing [within it]”.
- 32 This argument is not found in MN 35, though it occurs in other Pāli discourses, cf. e.g. SN 22.84 at SN III 107, 5.

in regard to it, if that form then changes, if it becomes otherwise, won't sadness, sorrow, vexation and suffering arise?"

He answered: "So it is indeed, Gotama; this is true and not otherwise."

(Feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are also to be taught like this).

[The Buddha said]: "Aggivessana, it is just like a person whose body is afflicted by various types of suffering, being constantly accompanied by suffering, suffering that does not cease, does not go away. Will [this person] be able to get delight from that?"³³ He answered: "No, Gotama."

[The Buddha said]: "So it is indeed, Aggivessana. A [person whose] body is afflicted by various types of suffering, being constantly accompanied by suffering, suffering that does not cease, does not go away, will not be able to get delight from that.

22. Aggivessana, it is just as if a person in search of solid heartwood were to enter a mountain area, carrying an axe. On seeing a very large and perfectly straight plantain tree, he were to right away cut it at the root and remove the leaves, taking off the skin until nothing is left. [He would find that it is] totally without a solid essence.³⁴ [Your arguments are like the plantain tree].

Yet, among this assembly you dared to make the declaration: 'I do not see, among recluses or Brahmins who possess knowledge and vision, [even] a Tathāgata who, being properly and rightly awakened and possessing knowledge and vision, would be able to take part in debating a matter without being shattered and defeated [by me]'.

You also said of yourself:³⁵ '[When] debating a matter, I am [like a strong] wind that flattens grass and trees, breaks up metal and stones, and subdues serpents or elephants, I am certainly able to cause others to have their sweat pour forth from their forehead, armpits and the pores of their hair'. Now you have not established your own doctrine and your own matter, [though] at first you boasted of being able to subdue the modes of [thought adopted

33 In MN 35 at MN I 233, 9 the Buddha instead points out that someone who regards as self what in reality is dukkha will not be able to transcend dukkha.

34 This simile has a counterpart in MN 35 at MN I 233, 15, though it is absent from EĀ 37.10. The Buddha's subsequent reminding Saccaka of his earlier boasting, however, is reported in all three versions.

35 Here Saccaka's claims are presented as something he said, T 99, 36b18: 說, whereas earlier they were introduced as his reflections, T 99, 35a20: 念, cf. also above note 9.

by] others. Now you have reached your own [wits'] end and you have not been able to stir a single hair of the Tathāgata.”

At that time the Blessed One, in that great assembly, took off his upper robe and bared his chest, [saying]: “Try to see if you can stir a single hair of the Tathāgata!”³⁶

At that time, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, lowered his head in silence, pale and ashamed.

23. At that time, in the assembly there was a Licchavi named Dummukha, who got up from his seat, arranged his clothes and holding his hands with palms together [in respect] towards the Buddha said: “Blessed One, please listen as I speak a simile.”

The Buddha said: “Dummukha, do what you think it is time to do.” Dummukha said to the Buddha: “Blessed One, it is as if a person were to take just a peck-sized or ten-peck-sized [container] in order to gather twenty or thirty pecks from a great heap of grains. Now this Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, is just like that. [36c]

Blessed One, it is as if a householder of great wealth and much treasure were to commit a transgression out of neglect, due to which all his wealth [is confiscated] and taken to the king's household. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, is just like that, his ability at arguing has been completely taken away by the Tathāgata.³⁷

It is as if there was a big pond alongside a town or village. Men and women, young and old, were all playing in the water and, having caught a crab in the water, were to cut off its legs and then put it on the dry ground. Having no legs, it would be unable to go back into the big pond. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, is just like that. All his ability at arguing has been completely cut off by the Tathāgata, for his [whole] life he will never again dare to approach the Tathāgata and challenge him to debate a matter.”

24. At that time, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, was angry and upset. He upbraided the Licchavi Dummukha,³⁸ saying: “You are rude and impolite! Not having investigated the

36 In MN 35 at MN I 233, 35 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716b5, the Buddha uncovers his upper body in order to show that he is not sweating, unlike Saccaka. In a record of this episode in the *大智度論*, T 1509, 251c16, trsl. in Lamotte (1970, 1666), the point of the Buddha's baring his chest is also to show the absence of sweat.

37 This and the previous simile are not found in MN 35 or EĀ 37.10, which only have counterparts to the next simile of the crab.

38 My translation follows the 宋, 元 and 明 variant 呵 instead of 唾.

truth, why are you yapping? I am discussing with the recluse Gotama myself. You mind your own business!”

Having upbraided Dummukha, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, in turn said to the Buddha: “Let be that ordinary low-level kind of talk. Now I have another question.”³⁹ The Buddha told Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas: “Feel free to ask, I will answer in accordance with your question.”

[Saccaka said]: “Gotama, how do you teach your disciples so that they become free from doubt?” The Buddha said: “Aggivessana, I teach my disciples: ‘whatever form there is, be it past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, beautiful or ugly, far or near, it should all be contemplated as it really is as not the self, not distinct from the self [in the sense of being owned by it], and neither existing [within the self] nor [the self] existing [within it].⁴⁰ [Whatever] feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness ... it should also [be contemplated] like this.’ Training [like this] they will certainly come to see the path and not abandon it or let it come to ruin, being able to achieve dispassion, knowledge and vision, [thereby] taking hold of the door to the deathless.⁴¹ Even though they do not all attain the supreme, yet they [all] move towards Nirvana.⁴² A disciple who is taught the Dharma by me in this way reaches freedom from doubt.”

25. [Saccaka] asked again: “Gotama, how do you further teach your disciples so that in the Buddha’s teaching they attain the destruction of the influxes, [become] free from the influxes, [reach] liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom, here and now knowing and realizing by themselves: ‘For me birth has been extinguished, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done’, knowing by themselves that they will not experience any further existence?”

The Buddha said: “Aggivessana, by properly employing this [same] teaching: ‘Whatever form there is, be it past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, beautiful or ugly, far or near, it should all be contemplated as it really is as not the self, not distinct from the self [in the sense of being owned by it], and neither existing [within the self] nor [the

39 The section beginning with the present question, up to Saccaka’s admission of defeat (27), is without counterpart in EĀ 37.10, which instead reports how the Buddha teaches Saccaka the true nature of the five aggregates, cf. above note 29.

40 T 99, 36c18: 非我，非異我，不相在, cf. above notes 30 and 31.

41 T 99, 36c20: 守甘露門, where in my translation I follow the indication in Hirakawa (1997, 371) that 守, besides its main meaning of “guarding” and “preserving”, can also render *ādāya*, a sense that seems to fit the present context best. A reference to the door of the deathless is not found in the counterpart passage in MN 35.

42 This sentence is without counterpart in MN 35.

self] existing [within it]; [whatever] feelings ... perceptions ... formations ... consciousness ... it should also [be contemplated] like this.’

26. At the time of [contemplating like this] they accomplish three unsurpassable qualities [37a]: unsurpassable knowledge, unsurpassable path, and unsurpassable liberation.⁴³ Having accomplished these three unsurpassable qualities, they honour the great teacher, esteem and worship him as a Buddha: ‘The Blessed One has realized all teachings, and with these teachings he tames his disciples so that they attain peace, so that they attain fearlessness, are tamed, at peace and [attain] the ultimate, Nirvana. For the sake of Nirvana the Blessed One delivers teachings to his disciples.’⁴⁴ Aggivessana, [being fully established] in this teaching my disciples attain the destruction of the influxes, attain liberation of the mind, attain liberation by wisdom, they here and now know and realize by themselves: ‘For me birth has been extinguished, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done’, and they know by themselves that they will not experience any further existence.’
27. Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha said to the Buddha: “Gotama, one might escape from a strong man recklessly wielding a sharp sword, [but] from the debating skills of Gotama it is difficult

43 My translation follows the 宋, 元 and 明 variant readings 道無上 and 解脫無上 for the second and third item, the Taishō edition instead reads: “unsurpassable liberation” and “unsurpassable knowledge and vision of liberation”, T 99, 37a1: 解脫無上, 解脫知見無上. MN 35 at MN I 235, 28 speaks of “unsurpassable vision”, *dassanānuttariya*, “unsurpassable path of practice”, *paṭipadānuttariya*, and “unsurpassable liberation”, *vimuttānuttariya*. A listing of the same set of three in DN 33 at DN III 219, 17 agrees with MN 35. A Sanskrit fragment parallel from the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* has preserved (*jñānā*)[*nutta*]*ryam prati*(*padānuttaryam*), cf. K 484 (37) V8 in Stache-Rosen (1968a, 23). The relevant section in the *Saṅgītiparyāya* (T 1536, 390c29) speaks of “unsurpassable practice”, 行無上, “unsurpassable knowledge”, 智無上, “unsurpassable liberation”, 解脫無上. The above instances would support adopting the variant readings in the case of SĀ 110.

44 In the parallel passage in MN 35 at MN I 235, 30, several qualities of the Buddha’s own realization are shown to be at the same time the goal of his teaching, thus e.g. the Buddha is “awakened”, *buddha*, and teaches the Dharma for the sake of “awakening”, *bodhi* (on the preferability of rendering derivatives of \sqrt{buj} as “awaken” instead of “enlighten” cf. Collins (1998, 213), Gimello (2004, 50), Norman (1990, 26), and MN 54 at MN I 365, 31, where *paṭibuddho* describes someone who wakes up from sleep). MN 35 then applies the same pattern to being “tamed”, *danta*, “at peace”, *santa*, having “transcended”, *tiṇṇa*, and being “appeased”, *parinibbuta*. Carter (1978, 94) comments on the present passage that apperceiving this consistency between what the Buddha has reached himself and what he teaches others is what inspires reverence and worship. On the significance of this passage in relation to the development of the *bodhisattva* ideal cf. Nattier (2003, 148-151).

to escape. One might avoid a poisonous snake, or avoid a vast swamp or a fierce fire,⁴⁵ or one might escape from a fierce drunken elephant, or from a mad and hungry lion; from all these one might escape, [but] from the debating skills of Gotama it is difficult to find an escape.⁴⁶ It is not for me, a commoner, impetuous and a lowly man, not endowed with debating skill, to come and call on Gotama for the sake of debating a matter.

Recluse Gotama, the country of Vesālī is pleasant and prosperous. There are the Cāpāla shrine, the Sattambaka shrine, the Bahuputta shrine, the Gotama-nigrodha shrine, the Sāradhāra shrine, Dhurānikkhepana shrine, and the Balaratana shrine.⁴⁷

May the Blessed One feel at ease in the country of Vesālī, may the Blessed One always receive respect, worship and offerings from all devas, Māra, Brahmās, recluses, Brahmins and anyone else in the world, so that these devas, Māra, Brahmās, recluses and Brahmins for a long time may be at ease. May he stay here, and with the great congregation [of monks] may he accept my humble food offering tomorrow morning.⁴⁸ At that time, the Blessed One accepted by [remaining] silent.

28. Then Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, knowing that the Buddha, the Blessed One, had accepted the invitation by [remaining] silent, was delighted and happy, rose from his seat and left.

At that time, while Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, was on his way [back], he said to the Licchavis: “I have invited the recluse Gotama and a great congregation [of monks].

- 45 The images of getting away from being burnt by a fire or bitten by a poisonous snake recur in one of the *Mūlasūtras* of the Jain canon, the *Dasaveyāliya* 9.7 in Leumann (1932, 57): *siyā hu se pāvaya no ḍahejjā, āsīviso vā kuviao na bhakkhe*, trsl. by Schubring in *ibid.* p. 110: “perhaps the fire does not burn [him], the angry snake will not strike [at him]”. Bronkhorst (2000, 16f) notes that in MN 36 Saccaka also represents Jain positions.
- 46 MN 35 at MN I 236, 3 has three similes, which describe reaching safety after attacking an elephant, a fire, or a snake. EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716c7 only describes a fierce lion, who is not afraid on seeing a man coming.
- 47 My attempt to reconstruct the names of the shrines is merely conjectural. T 99, 37a16 reads: 遮波梨支提, 漆菴羅樹支提, 多子支提, 瞿曇在拘樓陀支提, 娑羅受持支提 (adopting the 宋, 元 and 明 variant 娑 instead of 婆), 捨重擔支提, 力士寶冠支提. DN 16 at DN II 102, 15 lists the following shrines in the area of Vesālī: Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sārandada, Cāpāla. Its Sanskrit counterpart fragment 173R2-3 and 6 in Waldschmidt (1950, 19) lists the following: Cāpāla, Saptāmraka, Bahuputraka, [G](autama-nya)grodha, Sālavrata, Dhurānikṣepaṇa, Makuṭabandhana.
- 48 The listing of shrines and Saccaka's wish for the Buddha to be at ease and respected are not reported in the parallel versions. While MN 35 at MN I 236, 12 instead directly proceeds to the invitation for a meal; according to EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716c12 Saccaka at this point takes refuge. Some degree of conversion appears to be also implicit in SĀ 110, since in the present

[Let us] supply the meal together. Each of you prepare one dish of food and send it to my place.”⁴⁹

29. The Licchavis each returned to their homes, made preparations during the night and in the morning sent [the food] to the place of Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas. In the morning, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas swept [his place], sprinkled water [on the floor], set out seats and prepared clean water [for washing]. He sent a messenger to the Buddha to announce that the time [for the meal] had arrived. [37b]
30. At that time, the Blessed One, along with the great congregation [of monks], put on his robes, took his alms bowl and approached the place of Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas. He took his seat in front of the great congregation [of monks]. [Then] Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, with his own hand respectfully served pure beverages and food, sufficient for the great congregation [of monks]. [When they] had eaten and completed washing their bowls, Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, knowing that the Buddha had finished eating and had completed washing his bowl, took a low seat and sat down before the Buddha.

At that time, the Blessed One spoke the following verses as a thanksgiving to Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas:⁵⁰

“The [performance of the] fire sacrifice
Is foremost among all great gatherings.
The Sāvithī is foremost

passage Saccaka no longer addresses the Buddha as “recluse Gotama”, 沙門瞿曇, a mode of address used in the early discourses by outsiders and expressive of a certain indifference, cf. Wagle (1966, 56). Instead, in the present passage in SĀ 110 at T 99, 37a18 Saccaka employs the honorific address 世尊, corresponding to *bhagavant* and indicative of the respectful attitude a disciple has towards the Buddha.

- 49 MN 35 at MN I 236, 16 and EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716c18 proceed similarly, though without Saccaka giving specific indications as to how much each Licchavi should prepare.
- 50 Instead of listening to a set of verses by the Buddha, in MN 35 at MN I 236, 33 Saccaka wishes to share the merit of his offering with the Licchavis and is then told by the Buddha that the Licchavis will receive the merit to be gained by giving to one not free from defilements, like Saccaka, whereas Saccaka himself will receive the merit to be gained by giving to one free from defilements, like the Buddha, after which MN 35 ends. In EĀ 37.10 at T 125, 716c29, the Buddha gives a gradual teaching at the end of which Saccaka attains stream-entry, at which point the Buddha delivers a set of verses similar to those found in SĀ 110. EĀ 37.10 then continues by reporting that later on Saccaka’s disciples, having found out that their teacher has been converted by the Buddha, intercept him when he is returning from a visit to the Buddha and kill him. On being asked about Saccaka’s destiny, the Buddha explains that he has been reborn in the heaven of the Thirty-three and will reach total liberation at the time of Maitreya Buddha.

Among treatises and higher scriptures.⁵¹
 The king is foremost among men,
 The ocean is foremost of all rivers.
 The moon is foremost of all stars,
 The sun is foremost in brilliance.
 A fully and rightly awakened one is foremost
 Among gods and men in the ten directions.”

At that time, the Blessed One taught the Dharma in various ways to Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas. Having instructed and taught him, given clarifications and inspired him, he returned to his former dwelling place.

Then, on the road [back] the congregation of monks were discussing this matter: ‘Five-hundred Licchavis each prepared food and drinks for Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas. What merit have the Licchavis obtained, what merit has Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, obtained?’

At that time, [when] the monks had returned to their own residence, put away their robes and bowls and washed their feet, they approached the Blessed One, paid respect with their heads at his feet and, sitting to one side, said to the Buddha: “Blessed One, [while] on our way back we discussed the following matter: ‘Five-hundred Licchavis prepared the food and drinks for Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, which he offered to the Blessed One and the great congregation [of monks]. What merit have the Licchavis obtained, what merit has Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, obtained?’”

The Buddha told the monks: “The Licchavis prepared beverages and drinks for Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, so they obtained merit in dependence on Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, obtained merit [in dependence] on the virtues of the Buddha. The Licchavis obtained the fruits in dependence on giving to one who has desire, anger and delusion. Saccaka, the son of Nigaṇṭhas, obtained the fruits in dependence on giving to one who is free from desire, anger and delusion.”

Saccaka's Meal Offering and its Merit

Out of the various differences that a comparative study of the Discourse to Saccaka in the light of its *Majjhima-nikāya* and *Ekottarika-āgama* parallels can yield, in what follows I will focus only on the final episode of the discourse, where the defeated Saccaka offers a meal to the Buddha and his monks. In my study of this last section of the discourse, I will examine in particular on the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Samyukta-āgama* versions, as the final section of the *Ekottarika-āgama* version differs to such an extent from the other two versions as to leave little ground for comparison. Though this is difficult to ascertain, perhaps the *Ekottarika-āgama*

51 My translation follows the 宋, 元 and 明 variant 闡, instead of 闡. On this set of verses cf. the study by Skilling (2003).

version incorporated material from an originally different context, in line with a recurrent feature in the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection of combining different textual pieces in a particular discourse.⁵²

Be that as it may, a significant difference between the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Majjhima-nikāya* versions occurs in relation to the question of the merit accrued from the food offering to the Buddha.⁵³ In both versions, the Buddha explains that the Licchavis will only receive the merit of giving to Saccaka, who is not free from defilements, whereas Saccaka will receive the superior merit of giving to the Buddha, who is free from defilements.

Whereas in the *Samyukta-āgama* account the Buddha gives this information to the monks after they all have returned to their dwelling, in the *Majjhima-nikāya* version the Buddha makes this statement in front of Saccaka, who has just dedicated the merit of the meal to those who had supplied the food.⁵⁴ For Saccaka to be publicly told in front of his supporters that his defiled condition makes him an inferior recipient of offerings would be insulting and humiliating. That the Buddha should be portrayed as acting like this is surprising.

According to all versions Saccaka had publicly admitted his foolishness of trying to challenge the Buddha and, in what appears to be a gesture of reconciliation, he had invited the Buddha and his following for a meal. Thus his role vis-à-vis the Buddha was no longer that of a debater challenging the Buddha, but of a donor of food to the Buddhist monastic community. In view of this changed setting, etiquette would demand a conciliatory attitude on the side of the recipients of such an offering. This would all the more be the case when the donor is just making a pious aspiration to share the merit of this offering.

The *Samyukta-āgama* report avoids presenting the Buddha in the almost resentful attitude he displays in the *Majjhima-nikāya* account. Once the Buddha gives this explanation to his disciples in private, no direct insult or humiliation of Saccaka would be involved.

The present instance is thus to some degree similar to the difference between the three versions of the *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta* discussed in my previous paper.⁵⁵ Just as in the present instance, the *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta* and its parallels depict a debate situation. Of the three

52 In Anālayo (2008, 9f), I mentioned three such cases, out of which a particularly evident example is EA 49.7, whose first part parallels the tale of the monk Bhaddali in MN 65 and MĀ 194, but then continues with the tale of Udāyin found in MN 66 and MĀ 192, after which it again returns to the monk Bhaddali. That this is indeed a case of conflation of two originally separate events becomes evident in EA 49.7 at T 125, 801c5, where a sentence begins with an exhortation to Bhaddali, but concludes by telling Udāyin to train himself in this way. For another case study of this pattern in the *Ekottarika-āgama* cf. Lamotte (1967).

53 I had already drawn attention to this difference in Anālayo (2005, 10).

54 MN 35 at MN I 236, 33: *yam idaṃ ... dāne puññañ ca puññamahī ca taṃ dāyakānaṃ sukhāya hotu* (S^c: *sukhāyeva*, C^c: *puññaṃ* not followed by *ca*), “what merit and ground for merit there is in this offering, may it be for the happiness of the givers”.

55 Anālayo (2009, 16).

versions, the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse breathes a considerably less competitive spirit, as here the Buddha does not teach his disciples to proclaim a lion's roar that involves belittling others. Such a version of the lion's roar appears to be more in harmony with the implications and functions of the lion's roar in the early discourses in general and with the teachings given in other discourses on avoiding competitiveness and disparaging remarks. These stand in contrast to the somewhat strident tone adopted in the *Cūlasīhanāda-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, which might reflect the situation of the Buddhist community after the decease of their teacher, when the struggle for survival among rival religious groups in ancient India may have been felt to require more forceful and competitive ways of expression.

The same tendency could also stand behind the present instance in the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta*, whose portrayal of the Buddha is not easy to reconcile with the recurrent emphasis in other canonical passages on forgiveness and patience. According to the *Abhayarājakumāra-sutta*, for example, the Buddha would speak what is hurtful to others only if this is beneficial.⁵⁶ Applied to the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta*, it is not easy to understand how the Buddha's remark benefitted Saccaka.⁵⁷ In contrast, for the Buddha to be addressing a defeated opponent, who has just made the reconciliatory gesture of offering food, by delivering the set of verses recorded in the two Chinese versions would be more easily understandable.

Another noteworthy aspect of the present episode is related to the merit accrued by this food offering. The *Samyukta-āgama* version agrees with the *Majjhima-nikaya* account that the Licchavis will not receive the merit of preparing a meal for the Buddha. This is remarkable, since the Licchavis knew that the food they were giving to Saccaka was going to be offered to the Buddha and his monks. Yet, the circumstance that they prepared the food at the instigation of Saccaka and then gave it to him prevents them from receiving the merit obtainable through making an offering to the Buddha.

The position taken in the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Majjhima-nikāya* versions in this way reflects the early Buddhist conception of the relationship between karma and its fruit, which emphasizes strict individual responsibility and sees intention as the key factor. In the present case, the intention of the Licchavis was to give to Saccaka, hence they receive the merit that corresponds to this intention. Their offering was done at the instigation of Saccaka, whose intention was to make an offering to the Buddha. Hence his gain of merit will be accordingly, even though his giving was based on assistance received from others.

The *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse stands alone in reporting that Saccaka even tried to dedicate the merit of the food offering to the Licchavis. Since the Buddha in his reply indicates that the

56 MN 58 at MN I 395, 13.

57 Ps II 283, 27 explains the benefit of the Buddha's remark to be that it will leave an impression on Saccaka's mind for the future, a *vāsanā*. That the commentary comes up with such an explanation shows that the difficulties inherent in this episode did not go unnoticed.

Licchavis will not be able to receive the merit Saccaka wishes to dedicate to them, the present episode in the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* constitutes a clear denial of the transfer of merit.⁵⁸

This explicit denial, found only in the Pāli version, is remarkable. Other passages among the early discourses are in fact less unequivocal in regard to the theme of merit transfer, an expression that stands for a “deliberate and voluntary passing on to another person of (religious) merit gained by a person for himself”.⁵⁹

An instance that shows some similarities to the event depicted in the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* occurs in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. The discourse in question reports that one of the Four Heavenly Kings by the name of Vessavaṇa, who is on route to attend to some matter at hand, overhears the lay disciple Nandamātā reciting a set of verses. When she has finished, he praises her recitation. Once she comes to know about the identity of her august visitor, Nandamātā dedicates the verses as her ‘gift’ to him.⁶⁰ Vessavaṇa reciprocates by informing her that Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna are about to arrive without having had a meal, asking her to prepare food for them and, when giving it to them, declare that the offering was done on his behalf.⁶¹ By in this way informing her of this opportunity and motivating her to prepare food in time, Vessavaṇa has responded to her ‘gift’ of verses by making a ‘gift’ to her in turn. Since Vessavaṇa is the one responsible for the offering and since it is his intention to benefit the travelling monks, he naturally will derive merit from the deed.⁶² When she carries out his instruction to inform the monks of the one who has instructed her to make this timely offering, she employs a formulation that reads as if she is making a transfer of merit.⁶³ Even though this

58 This has already been pointed out by Witanachchi (1987, 155) and Egge (2002, 58).

59 This definition has been provided by Wezler (1997, 578).

60 AN 7.50 at AN IV 63, 23: *ayaṃ dhammapariyāyo bhaṇito, idan te hotu ātittheyyaṃ* (B^c and S^c: *idaṃ*).

61 AN 7.50 at AN IV 64, 3: *mamaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ ādiseyyāsi, etañ ca me bhavissati ātittheyyaṃ* (B^c, C^c and S^c: *mama*; B^c: *etañ ce va*; C^c and S^c: *evañ ca*). The original point of his instruction could simply be that she is to “point out”, *ādisati*, to the monks who is responsible for the fact that the meal is already prepared for them. On the term cf. Cone (2001, 299), who s.v. *ādisati* lists the following range of meanings: “aims at; points out, indicates; relates, declares, foretells; dedicates; assigns (*one’s own puñña to someone else*)”; cf. also Gehman (1923, 411).

62 McDermott (2003, 41) comments that “it is to be noted that the proposed gift of hospitality is not merely to be declared the gift of the deva. It is also his gift in that the idea for it originated with him. He planned the gift, and good intention bears good fruit.”

63 After reporting to Sāriputta what has happened, in AN 7.50 at AN IV 65, 10 she employs the formula “venerable sir, may the merit and benefit of this offering be for the happiness of the Great King Vessavaṇa”, *yad idaṃ, bhante, dāne puññaṃ hitaṃ Vessavaṇassa mahārājassa sukhāya hotu* (B^c: *puññañca puññamahī ca taṃ*, S^c: *puññaṃ puññamahitaṃ*). Egge (2002, 57) comments that “we have good reason to believe, however, that this dedicatory formula has been interpolated into the text”, since “Sāriputta does not acknowledge this dedication with an *anumodana* ... as one would expect, but continues to speak with Nandamātā about her meeting

may not constitute an actual case of merit transfer – given that Vessavaṇa had taken such an active role as to become a recipient of merit anyway – it is easy to see how from such instances the practice of transferring merit could have evolved.

The theme of transfer of merit comes up also in a passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*. According to the Pāli and Sanskrit versions of this passage, at the end of a food offering received from a Brahmin, the Buddha speaks a set of verses in which he recommends dedicating (*ādisati*) the gift to the local *devas*.⁶⁴ Such a recommendation by the Buddha does not occur in three Chinese parallel discourses.⁶⁵ In view of the composite nature of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, noted by a range of scholars,⁶⁶ it is possible that the Chinese versions reflect the original condition of this episode, with the verses in the Pāli and Sanskrit versions being only a later addition. Nevertheless, their occurrence does point to the acceptance of the practice of dedicating gifts to the gods in the respective traditions.

Another discourse sometimes quoted in relation to merit transfer occurs in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and the *Samyukta-āgama*. The two versions report how a Brahmin approaches the Buddha and inquires whether the departed will partake of offerings (*dāna*).⁶⁷ The Buddha replies that this is the case if one's relatives have been reborn as ghosts, not if they have been reborn as hell beings, animals, humans or devas, as in these cases they instead subsist on the food available in those realms. Thus the theme of this discourse is not transfer of merit,⁶⁸ but

with Vessavaṇa" as if nothing had happened.

- 64 DN 16 at DN II 88, 30 (= Ud 89, 22 and Vin I 229, 37): *dakkhiṇam ādisē*; fragment 163R3 in Waldschmidt (1950, 13): *dakṣiṇām-ādiṣet*, where this verse is spoken in reply to a corresponding dedication made by the Brahmin. Harvey (2005, 66) explains that according to the Theravāda commentaries, if a food offering to monks is "dedicated to an ancestor or god, so that the donation was done on his or her behalf", "provided they assent to this donation by rejoicing at it (*Vv. A.* 188), they will themselves generate karmic fruitfulness, both from the donation-by-proxy and from the mental act of rejoicing".
- 65 DĀ 2 at T 1, 12c14, T 5, 162c27, and T 6, 178a10 (in the last case there is a dedication, though this is initiated by the Brahmin himself). The counterpart to Ud 8.6 at Ud 89, 22 is rather short and does not report the meal offering at all, cf. T 212, 707c4.
- 66 Cf. e.g. (listed according to date of publ.) Rhys Davids (1910, 71-73), Przyluski (1918-1920), Waldschmidt (1939), Pachow (1945-1946), Waldschmidt (1948, 335-54), Dutt (1957, 47), Pande (1957, 98-106), Winternitz (1968, 29-32). Williams (1970), Snellgrove (1973), Bareau (1979), Norman (1983, 37-38), and An (2001).
- 67 AN 10.177 at AN V 269, 8, with a counterpart in SĀ 1041 at T II 272b11.
- 68 Gombrich (1971, 210) comments that "in this text, no reference is made to the merit of the act; the gift is said to benefit (*upakappati*) the relatives and they to enjoy (*paribhuṅgati*) it, so presumably the object passes to them direct. That all this is addressed to a brahmin points up the fact that the Buddhists were consciously adapting Hindu custom".

the ancient Indian practice of offering gifts to one's departed ancestors, also reflected in other passages.⁶⁹

In sum, while the denial of the transfer of merit in the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* conveys a clear-cut position, other discourses give the impression that, even though the transfer of merit may not have been part of the original doctrine, it nevertheless must have made its appearance at a relatively early stage in the history of Buddhism. Whatever may be the final word on the transfer of merit in early Buddhism, the agreement between the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* and its *Samyukta-āgama* parallel highlights that central factors for the generation of merit are one's own intention and actions undertaken accordingly.

In this way, a comparison of the *Cūlasaccaka-sutta* with its *Samyukta-āgama* counterpart brings to light agreement in central matters together with interesting variations. This aptly reflects the general potential of comparative studies of the early discourses, where often concordance on essentials can be found embedded in a framework of smaller but sometimes noteworthy differences.

69 Thus e.g. AN 5.39 at AN III 43, 18 indicates that the duty of a son consists in: *petānaṃ kālakatānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ anuppadaṣṣati* (B^c: *kālaṅkatānaṃ*), a formulation that recurs in a similar context also in DN 31 at DN III 189, 8. Schmithausen (1986, 211) points out that this may simply intend “the son's presenting or passing on *gifts of food*, etc., to his deceased parents as a recompense for what they have done for him when they were still alive”. It is easy to see how from the continuity of this ancient Indian practice of offering gifts to one's departed ancestors the practice of transferring merit to them would have developed. On transfer of merit in early Buddhist texts and inscriptions cf. also e.g. (listed according to date of publ.) Woodward (1914, 46f and 50), Weeraratne (1965, 748), Malalasekera (1967, 87), Amore (1971, 148-150), McDermott (1974), Ruegg (1974, 210 note 37), Schalk (1976, 88f), Agasse (1978, 313f and 329), Holt (1981, 10-19), Oguibénine (1982, 404), Keyes (1983, 281), Bechert (1992, 105f), Herrman-Pfandt (1996, 82-92), Schopen (1997, 34-43), and Marasinghe (2005, 469). For an appreciation of the ancient Indian conception of merit cf. esp. Filliozat (1980), Hara (1994) and Wezler (1997), for further publications on transfer of merit in general cf. the bibliographical survey in Wezler (1997, 585-589).

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| AN | <i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i> |
| B ^e | Burmese edition |
| C ^e | Ceylonese edition |
| D | Derge edition |
| DĀ | <i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1) |
| DN | <i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i> |
| EĀ | <i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125) |
| MĀ | <i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26) |
| MN | <i>Majjhima-nikāya</i> |
| Ps | <i>Papañcasūdanī</i> |
| Q | Peking edition |
| SĀ | <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99) |
| S ^e | Siamese edition |
| SN | <i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> |
| T | Taishō |
| Ud | <i>Udāna</i> |
| Vin | <i>Vinaya</i> |

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