

The Bodhisattva and Kassapa Buddha – A Study Based on the *Madhyama-āgama* Parallel to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta*

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Introduction

The present article offers a comparative study of a canonical *jātaka*, found in the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. This *jātaka* presents the tale of two friends, a young Brahmin and a potter, who live at the time of the previous Buddha Kassapa. My study of this tale, which takes place at a time when the Buddha was still a 'bodhisattva', comes as the third in a trilogy of articles studying aspects of the early Buddhist conceptions of the Buddha, of an arahant and of the bodhisattva.¹

I begin with a partial annotated translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* counterpart to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta*, and then examine the question whether the present tale has always been a record of a past life of the Buddha.

The Chinese parallel to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* employed as a basis for the present study stems from a *Madhyama-āgama* collection translated into Chinese towards the end of the fourth century of the present era by Gautama Saṅghadeva. His translation appears to have been based on a Prākṛit original transmitted by a Sarvāstivāda tradition.² In addition to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* counterpart, versions of the same tale can be found in the *Mahāvastu* of the Lokottaravāda Mahāsāṅghika

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¹ In the previous two articles I examined the attribution of omniscience to the Buddha, Anālayo (2006), and the description of the arahant monk Bakkula, Anālayo (2007).

² On the language of the *Madhyama-āgama* manuscript cf. Bapat (1969: 5); Enomoto (1986: 20) and von Hinüber (1982: 250); on its school affiliation cf. Enomoto (1984); Enomoto (1986: 21); Lü (1963: 242); Mayeda (1985: 98); Minh Chau (1991: 27); Waldschmidt (1980: 136); and Yinshun (1962: 703).

tradition, in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition, and in a Chinese *Avadāna* collection.³

Translation⁴

The Discourse at Vebhaḷiṅga⁵

1. Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was living in the country of Kosala. At that time, the Blessed One was travelling on a road together with a large company of monks.

2. On the way, he smiled with delight. Venerable Ānanda, on seeing the Blessed One smile, held his folded hands [in reverence] towards the Buddha and respectfully said: "Blessed One, what is the reason for this smile? Buddhas and Tathāgatas, free from attachment and fully awakened, do not smile arbitrarily and without reason. I would like to hear about the meaning [of this smile]".⁶

³ The parallel versions are as follows: *Ghaṭikāra-sutta*, MN 81 MN II 45-54; 鞞婆陵耆經, MĀ 63 at T I 499a-503a; *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 409-428) or Senart (1882: 317-329); *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 22-30), with its Tibetan counterpart at D 'dul ba ga 4a-10a or Q 'dul ba nge 3b-9a; and the tenth tale in an *Avadāna* collection preserved in Chinese, 佛說興起行經, T 197 at T IV 172c-174b, whose translation the Taishō edition attributes to Kang Mengxiang, 康孟詳, though Nattier (2008: 177) does not include T 197 among the translations that can safely be attributed to him.

⁴ In order to facilitate comparing my partial translation of MĀ 63 (which covers T I 499a11-500c12 and again T I 503a3-19) with the English translation of the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* in Ñāṇamoli (1995: 669-676), I adopt the same paragraph numbering. For the same reason of easy comparison, I employ Pāli terminology in the translation, without thereby intending to take a position on the language of the original *Madhyama-āgama* manuscript.

⁵ MĀ 63 at T I 499a9: 鞞婆陵耆, which according to Pulleyblank (1983) would correspond to the Early Middle Chinese pronunciation *pɛjŋ' ba liŋ gi*, where the last syllable would be closer to the Vaibhidiṅgī given as the location in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 22,1); D 'dul ba ga 4a1 or Q nge 3b3 reads *be'i bhi ŋing gi*. The *Mahāvastu* speaks of Māra karaṇḍa, formerly called Veruḍiṅga, Basak (1963: 412,10) or Senart (1882: 319,8). T 197 at T IV 172c9 has 多獸邑, with a phonetically similar 宋, 元 and 明 variant reading 多符邑, which seems to reflect a different name.

⁶ In MN 81 at MN II 45,3 and in the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 409,10) or Senart (1882: 317,8), a smile by the Buddha similarly forms the occasion

3. Then the Blessed One said: "Ānanda, in this place the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, sat and taught [his] disciples the Dharma.⁷

4. Then venerable Ānanda quickly prepared a seat in that place and, holding his folded hands [in reverence] towards the Buddha, respectfully said: "Blessed One, may the Blessed One also sit in this place and teach his disciples the Dharma. In this way, this place will have been made use of by two Tathāgatas, free from attachment and fully awakened."

At that time, the Blessed One sat on the seat that venerable Ānanda had prepared in that place. Having sat down, he said: "Ānanda, in this place there was an assembly hall of the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened. Seated in it, the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, taught his disciples the Dharma.

5. Ānanda, in former times in this place there was a town called Vebhaliṅga, greatly prosperous and opulent, with many inhabitants. Ānanda, in the town of Vebhaliṅga there was an eminent Brahmin householder by the name of Non-anger,⁸ very wealthy and opulent, with immeasurable wealth and with livestock and property beyond calculation, [holding a royal] fief endowed with a variety of families, provisions and cities.⁹

Ānanda, the eminent Brahmin householder Non-anger had a son by the name of Uttara,¹⁰ a young Brahmin (*māṇava*). He was of pure

for the delivery of the tale. The *Saṅghabhedavastu* and T 197 do not report such a smile.

⁷ The *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 411,8) or Senart (1882: 318,12), at this point brings in three former Buddhas.

⁸ MĀ 63 at T I 499a26: 無恚. The *Saṅghebhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 22,3), gives the name of the Brahmin as Nyagrodha. Could the rendering employed in MĀ 63 be a mistaking of *nyagrodha* for *nis + krodha*?

⁹ MĀ 63 at T I 499a27: 封戶食邑種種具足, where the intended sense would be similar to a description, found in Pāli discourses, of an eminent Brahmin as holding "a royal fief full of living beings, with grass, wood, water, and with grain", *sattussadaṃ satīṇakaṭṭhodakam sadhaññam rājabhoggaṃ* (e.g. MN 95 at MN II 164,6).

¹⁰ MN 81 at MN 46,4 gives the name of the young Brahmin as Jotipāla. The *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 412,13) or Senart (1882: 319,11) similarly speaks of Jyotipāla; whereas the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,1), agrees with MĀ 63 on the name *Uttara*, with its Tibetan counterpart in D 'dul ba

descent on both the father's and mother's sides for up to seven generations with uninterrupted continuity of births without blemish. He had learned much and kept it in mind, [being able] to recite it.¹¹ He was a master of the four Vedas, being thoroughly proficient in their causes and conditions, with correct phonology and histories as fifth, [being also proficient in] philology and grammar.¹²

Ānanda, the young Brahmin Uttara had a close friend by the name of Nandipāla,¹³ a potter, who always had thoughts of affection

ga 4a6 or *Q nge* 3b8: *bla ma*. The Chinese *Avadāna* tale, T 197 at T IV 172c13, reads: 火鬘, which according to Akanuma (1930: 251) stands for Jotipāla. A past life of the bodhisattva as a Brahmin youth by the name of Uttara who goes forth as a Buddhist monk is also recorded in Bv 12.11 at Bv 53,21 and Jā I 37,31, though with the difference that this past life took place at the time of the former Buddha Sumedha.

¹¹ In MN 81 at MN 46,1, neither the father nor the young Brahmin's learning are mentioned, in fact the potter is introduced first, and then only his friend is brought in. The same is the case for the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 412,11) or Senart (1882: 319,9). The *Saṅghebhedaṅgastu*, Gnoli (1978: 22,3), begins similarly to MĀ 63 by mentioning first the father and describing the young Brahmin's learning, before turning to the potter. Notably, the Tibetan version of the *Saṅghebhedaṅgastu*, D 'dul ba ga 4a2 or *Q nge* 3b4, begins instead with a detailed description of the potter and only after that turns to the Brahmin youth, without mentioning his father. The Chinese *Avadāna* tale, T 197 at T IV 172c9, proceeds similarly to MĀ 63, as it first takes up the father and then the young Brahmin, before mentioning the potter. In its description of the Brahmin youth, T 197 at T IV 172c11 notes that he had thirty of the thirty-two marks (of a great being), 有三十相. Lüders 1913: 883 notes a pictorial representation of the meeting between Buddha Kassapa and the young Brahmin, in which the latter is depicted as a monk endowed with *uṣṇīṣa* and *ūrṇā*, two prominent marks (*lakṣaṇa*) out of the set of thirty-two; for another representation of this meeting in Gandhāran sculpture cf. Vogel (1954: 810).

¹² MĀ 63 at T I 499b1: 誦過四典經, 深達因緣, 正文, 戲五, 句, 說 (punctuation added). My translation assumes that: 過 renders an equivalent to *pāragū*; 文 corresponds to *sākkhara*[*ppabhedā*]; 戲五 translates an equivalent to [*iti*]hāsapañcama (Winternitz (1908: 260) notes that *Itihāsapurāṇa* is reckoned a fifth Veda in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.1.2); 句 corresponds to *padaka*; and 說 to *veyyākaraṇa*. Notably, this description refers to four Vedas instead of the three Vedas mentioned in the standard description of a learned Brahmin in Pāli discourses (cf. e.g. MN 91 at MN II 133,13).

¹³ MN 81 at MN 46,2 gives the name of the potter as Ghaṭikāra, as does the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 412,11) or Senart (1882: 319,9). The *Saṅghebhedaṅgastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,1) reads: *Nandipāla ghaṭikāra*, with its

towards the young Brahmin Uttara. [They] untiringly delighted in seeing each other, without getting weary of it.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter had taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the community of monks, he was free from doubts in regard to these three [objects of] veneration and had no perplexity in regard to *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation and the path [leading to its cessation]. He had attained faith, was keeping the precepts, had heard much, was generous and was accomplished in wisdom.¹⁴

[Ānanda, Nandipāla] was aloof from killing and had given up killing, having discarded sword and club he had a sense of shame and fear of blame, with a mind [full of] loving kindness and compassion for the welfare of all [beings], even insects. He had purified his mind with regard to killing living beings.¹⁵

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from taking what is not given and had given up taking what is not given, taking [only] what is given, delighting in taking what is given, always being fond of giving in generosity, rejoicing in [generosity] without stinginess, not expecting a reward. He had purified his mind with regard to taking what is not given.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from sexual activity and had given up sexual activity, diligently cultivating the practice of celibacy, energetically [practising this] immaculate conduct with unsoiled purity, free from sensual desires, giving up sexual desires. He had purified his mind with regard to sexual activity.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from false speech and had given up false speech, he spoke the truth, delighting in truth, unshakeably established in speaking truth, being completely trustworthy, not deceiving [anyone in] the world. He had purified his mind with regard to false speech.

Tibetan counterpart in D 'dul ba ga 4a2 or Q nge 3b4: *rdza mkhan dga' skyong*, a name also reflected in T 197 at T IV 172c13: 難提婆羅瓦師子.

¹⁴ MN 81 at MN II 46,5 does not describe the potter's accomplishment or his virtuous conduct at this point, a description it has instead at MN II 51,11 as part of the explanation given by Kassapa Buddha to the king of Vārāṇasī. In the corresponding section in MĀ 63 at T I 501b11, Kassapa Buddha repeats word for word the account of the potter's accomplishment and virtues given in the present section.

¹⁵ For some comparative remarks on the standard description of virtuous conduct in *Madhyama-āgama* discourses in the light of parallel *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses cf. Anālayo (2008).

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from divisive speech and had given up divisive speech, he engaged in speech that is not divisive, that does not harm others. He did not tell those what he had heard here, out of a wish to harm these; nor did he tell these what he had heard there, out of a wish to harm those. He had the wish to unite those that were divided, delighting in union. He did not create factions, did not delight in or praise the [forming of] factions. He had purified his mind with regard to divisive speech.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from harsh speech and had given up harsh speech. Whatever speech there is that is rough and rude in tone, that sounds offensive and grates on the ear, that beings neither enjoy nor desire, that causes others suffering and vexation and that does not lead to calmness, he had given up such speech. Whatever speech there is that is clear, peaceful, gentle and beneficial, that is pleasant to the ear and touching to the heart, that is enjoyable and desirable, that gives others happiness, words endowed with meaning, [words] that do not make others afraid and that lead to calmness (*samādhi*) in others, such speech he spoke. He had purified his mind with regard to harsh speech.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from frivolous speech and had given up frivolous speech. He spoke at the [proper] time, speaking what is true, what is Dharma, what is meaningful, what [leads to] appeasement, delighting in speaking what [leads to the] appeasement of [any] matter, and in accordance with the [proper] time and in a proper way he would teach well and admonish well. He had purified his mind with regard to frivolous speech.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from earning profits and had given up earning profits, he had discarded weights and measures and did not accept goods [on commission], he did not bind people [with debts], he did not try to cheat with measures, nor did he deceive others for the sake of some small profit. He had purified his mind with regard to earning profits.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter was aloof from accepting widows or girls ...¹⁶ from accepting male or female slaves ... aloof from accepting elephants, horses, cows or sheep ... aloof from accepting chickens or swine ... aloof from accepting farmlands or

¹⁶ In what follows, the abbreviations are mine. MĀ 63 treats each case in full.

marketplaces¹⁷ ... aloof from accepting uncooked rice, wheat, or legumes ... aloof from alcoholic beverages ... aloof from [reclining on] high and broad beds ... aloof from [making use of] flower garlands, necklaces, perfumes and cosmetics ... aloof from singing, dancing or acting, and from going to see or hear [singing, dancing or acting] ... aloof from accepting gold or silver ... aloof from eating after noon and had given up eating after noon. He always took a single meal [per day], not eating at night, training in eating at the [proper] time. He had purified his mind with regard to eating after noon.

Ānanda, Nandipāla the potter for his whole life was aloof from taking a spade or a shovel in his hand, he did not dig the earth himself [for clay], nor tell another to do so. If water had washed out a bank so that it collapsed, or if a rat had broken up some earth, he would take that and use it to make pots. These he would put on one side and tell customers: 'If you have peas, legumes, rice, wheat, big or small hempseed, castor beans, or mustard seed, pour them out [as payment] and take whichever [pot] your wish'.

Ānanda, for his whole life Nandipāla the potter had been looking after his father and mother, who were blind. They were entirely dependent on other people. This was the reason why he was looking after them.

Ānanda, when the night was over, at dawn, Nandipāla the potter approached the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, and, having reached him, paid his respects and sat down to one side.

The Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, taught him the Dharma, exhorting, inspiring and perfectly delighting him. Having taught him the Dharma with innumerable skilful means, having exhorted, inspired and perfectly delighted him, [the Tathāgata Kassapa] remained silent.

Ānanda, then, having been taught the Dharma, having been exhorted, inspired and perfectly delighted by the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, Nandipāla the potter rose from his seat, paid his respects at the feet of the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, circumambulated him three times and left.

¹⁷ MĀ 63 at T I 499c12: 店肆, which according to Hirakawa (1997: 427) can render *antarāpana* or *āpaṇika*.

At that time, when the night was over, at dawn, the young Brahmin Uttara, who was riding in a chariot [drawn by] white horses, had left the town of Vebhaḷiṅga. In the company of five hundred young Brahmins he was approaching a forest spot with the intention of teaching his disciples, who had come from several different locations in order to recite Brahmin hymns.¹⁸

Then the young Brahmin Uttara saw from afar that Nandipāla the potter was coming. Having seen him, he asked: "Nandipāla, where are you coming from?"

Nandipāla replied: "I am coming from having paid respects to the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened. Uttara, you could come with me to approach the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, to pay respects to him!"¹⁹

Then the young Brahmin Uttara replied: "Nandipāla, I do not want to see [that] bald-headed recluse,²⁰ [these] bald-headed recluses will not be able to attain the path, since the path is to be attained [through what is] difficult."²¹

¹⁸ MĀ 63 at T I 500a15: 令讀梵志書, literally "in order to read aloud Brahmin books", where the counterpart in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,13) reads: *brāhmaṇakān mantrān vācayitukāmaḥ*, clarifying that oral recitation of hymns and mantras is meant. For other instances where a reference to 'books' should be similarly interpreted cf. Gombrich (1990: 27).

¹⁹ MN 81 does not report a visit paid by the potter to Kassapa Buddha, nor does it describe how the young Brahmin left town to teach his disciples. Instead, it sets in at MN II 46,5 right away with the potter asking his friend to come along to visit Kassapa Buddha. The same is the case for the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 413,5) or Senart (1882: 319,17) and the Chinese *Avadāna* tale, T 197 at T IV 172c22; whereas the *Saṅghebhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,2) and D 'dul ba ga 4b4 or Q nge 4a5, reports that the potter was coming back from having paid a visit to Kassapa Buddha.

²⁰ MĀ 63 at T I 500a21: 我不欲見禿頭沙門. The parallel versions report similar derogatory expressions used by the young Brahmin at this point, MN 81 at MN II 46,11: *kiṃ pana tena muṇḍakena samaṇakena dīṭṭhena?*; Basak (1963: 413,12) or Senart (1882: 320,3): *kiṃ me ... tehi muṇḍikehi śramaṇehi darśanāye?*; Gnoli (1978: 23,19): *kutas tasmin muṇḍake śramaṇake bodhih?*, D 'dul ba ga 5a4 or Q nge 4b5: *dge sbyong mgo reg de la byang chub ga la yod?*; T 197 at T IV 172c23: 用見此禿頭道人為?

²¹ MĀ 63 at T I T I 500a22: 道難得故, where judging from the counterpart in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,20): *bodhir hi paramaduṣkarā* and D 'dul ba ga 5a4 or Q nge 4b5: *byang chub ni mchog tu dka' ba yin no*, the

9. Then Nandipāla the potter took hold of the topknot of the young Brahmin Uttara, forcing him to descend from the chariot.²² Then the young Brahmin Uttara had the following thought: "This potter Nandipāla never makes jokes and he is neither mad nor foolish; there must certainly be a reason why he now takes hold of my topknot."²³ Having thought this, he said: "Nandipāla, I will follow you, I will follow you!" Nandipāla was delighted and added: "To go [with me to visit the Tathāgata Kassapa] is very good."

10. Then Nandipāla the potter and Uttara the young Brahmin approached the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, and having reached him paid their respects, stepped back and sat down to one side. Nandipāla the potter said respectfully to the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened:

"Blessed One, this is my friend the young Brahmin Uttara, who always looks on me with affection and untiringly delights in seeing

idea could be that awakening should be gained through asceticism. In MN 81 at MN II 46,12 the potter repeats his invitation two times, and once the young Brahmin has refused these as well, they go to bathe. After bathing the potter again invites the young Brahmin three times, and the latter refuses up to the third time. The *Mahāvastu* and the Chinese *Avadāna* tale proceed similarly, though they only report a single invitation after the two have taken a bath, Basak (1963: 414,15) or Senart (1882: 320,19) and T 197 at T IV 172c27. The *Saṅghebhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,23) and D 'dul ba ga 5a7 or Q nge 4b8, only report the first instance with three invitations, without following this with the bathing interlude.

²² MN 81 at MN II 47,12 depicts a gradual build-up of the potter's attempts to convince his friend, whom he at first takes hold of by the belt, only seizing the freshly washed hair of the young Brahmin when the latter undoes his belt. The *Mahāvastu* proceeds similarly, with the difference that the first attempt does not involve the belt but rather the neck of the young Brahmin, Basak (1963: 415,3) or Senart (1882: 321,2). In the Chinese *Avadāna* tale, T 197 at T IV 173a1, the potter first takes hold of the clothes of his friend, then of the belt, and then of the hair. The *Saṅghebhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,32) and D 'dul ba ga 5a7 or Q nge 4b8, proceeds similarly to MĀ 63, though without reporting that the potter's action forced his friend to descend from the chariot.

²³ According to MN 81 at MN II 47,28, the young Brahmin was surprised that the potter, though of inferior birth, should go so far as to seize a Brahmin's freshly washed hair. The *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 415,12) or Senart (1882: 321,11), also reports the young Brahmin reflecting on the lower birth of the potter, a point not made in the *Saṅghebhedavastu* or the Chinese *Avadāna* tale.

me. He has no faith and no respect [in his] mind for the Blessed One.²⁴ May the Blessed One teach him the Dharma, arousing his delight so that he develops faith and respect [in his] mind."

Then the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, taught the Dharma to Nandipāla the potter and to the young Brahmin Uttara, exhorting, inspiring and perfectly delighting them. Having taught the Dharma with innumerable skilful means, having exhorted, inspired and perfectly delighted them, [the Tathāgata Kassapa] remained silent.

Then, [after] the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, had taught them the Dharma, had exhorted, inspired and perfectly delighted them, the potter Nandipāla and the young Brahmin Uttara rose from their seats, paid their respects at the feet of the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, circumambulated him three times and left.

11. Then, when they had not yet gone far [on their] return [journey],²⁵ the young Brahmin Uttara asked: "Nandipāla, having heard this sublime Dharma from the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, why are you intent on remaining at home, unable to leave [home] and train in the noble path?"

Then Nandipāla the potter replied: "Uttara, you know yourself that for my whole life I have been looking after my father and mother, who are blind and entirely dependent on other people. It is because I am supporting and looking after my father and mother [that I cannot leave home]."

Then the young Brahmin Uttara asked Nandipāla: "Can I obtain the going forth to train in the path under the Tathāgata Kassapa, free

²⁴ Whereas MN 81 and the *Mahāvastu* do not explicitly mention that the young Brahmin had neither faith nor respect for the Buddha, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* and the Chinese *Avadāna* tale highlight that he had no faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Saṅgha*, cf. Gnoli (1978: 24,14) and D 'dul ba ga 5b7 or Q nge 5a8, as well as T 197 at T IV 173a15.

²⁵ The *Saṅghabhedavastu* does not report that the two had left the presence of Kassapa Buddha. In the *Mahāvastu*, however, not only had the two left the presence of the Buddha, but after their discussion the young Brahmin does not decide right away to become a monk and only takes this decision a little later, after he has become dissatisfied with the household life; cf. Basak (1963: 417,14) or Senart (1882: 322,19).

from attachment and fully awakened, can I receive the full ordination, become a monk and practise the holy life?"

12. Then the potter Nandipāla and the young Brahmin Uttara promptly turned back from there and again approached the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened. Having reached him and paid their respects, they sat down to one side.

Nandipāla the potter said to the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened: "Blessed One, when we had not yet gone far [on our] return [journey], this young Brahmin Uttara asked me: 'Nandipāla, having heard this sublime Dharma from the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, why are you intent on remaining at home, unable to leave [home] and train in the noble path?' Blessed One, I replied: 'Uttara, you know yourself that for my whole life I have been looking after my father and mother, who are blind and entirely dependent on other people. It is because I am supporting and looking after my father and mother [that I cannot leave home]'. [Then] Uttara asked me again: 'Can I obtain the going forth to train in the path under the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, can I receive the full ordination, become a monk and practise the holy life?'

May the Blessed One let him go forth and train in the path by giving him the full ordination [so that he] becomes a monk and practises the holy life."

The Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, accepted Nandipāla's [request] by remaining silent. Then Nandipāla the potter, knowing that the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, had accepted by remaining silent, rose from his seat, paid his respects with his head at the feet [of the Tathāgata Kassapa], circumambulated him three times and left.

Then, soon after Nandipāla had left, the Tathāgata Kassapa, free from attachment and fully awakened, let Uttara go forth and train in the path by giving him the full ordination.

13. [After] having [let him] go forth to train in the path and having given him the full ordination, [the Tathāgata Kassapa continued] to stay for a number of days at his discretion in the town of Vebhāṅga. [Then] he took his robes and bowl and with a large company of monks went wandering with the intention of approaching Vārāṇasī, a town in the Kāśī country. Travelling in

stages they reached Vārāṇasī, a town in the Kāśī country. In Vārāṇasī he dwelt in the Deer Park, the Place of Seers.

14.-22. ...²⁶

23. The Buddha said to Ānanda: "What do you think? Do you consider the young Brahmin Uttara at that time as someone else? Do not think like that. You should know that I was him."²⁷

Ānanda, at that time I was benefiting myself and benefiting others, benefiting many people, [full of] compassion for the world, seeking the advantage and benefit of gods and men, seeking their peace and happiness. At that time [in] the Dharma that was taught [I] did not reach the ultimate, nor the ultimate purity, nor the ultimate holy life, nor the ultimate completion of the holy life.²⁸ At

²⁶ The section of MĀ 63 that, for lack of space, I have not translated, ranges from T I 500c12 to T I 503a3, covering approximately half of the entire discourse. Summarized in brief, MĀ 63 continues by describing how, on arrival at Vārāṇasī, Kassapa Buddha is visited by the local king, to whom he delivers a teaching. At the end of the discourse, the king invites Kassapa and his monks for a meal the next day. The meal is prepared and served, followed by another teaching delivered by Kassapa, after which the king invites Kassapa to stay with him for the rains retreat period, promising abundant support. Kassapa does not accept the invitation. Asked by the saddened king if there is another supporter that equals him, Kassapa mentions the potter Nandipāla, explaining that the potter has full insight into the four noble truths and describing his virtuous conduct in the same way as done in the above translated section of MĀ 63. Kassapa then relates how on two former occasions he helped himself to food in the potter's house, having been invited to do so by the blind parents of Nandipāla, who was away; and how on another occasion Kassapa told his monks to remove the roofing from the potter's workshop to repair his own hut. In all these instances, Nandipāla reacted with joy and delight on finding out what had happened. Having heard this good report of Nandipāla, the king of Vārāṇasī decides to send him abundant food supplies, which the potter, however, politely declines to accept.

²⁷ The identification of the young Brahmin as a former life of the Buddha is similarly made in MN 81 at MN II 54,18; in the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 436,2) or Senart (1882: 335,5); and in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 30,14) and D 'dul ba ga 10a4 or Q nge 9a7. The same is also implicit in the tale given in T 197. After providing this identification, MN 81 at MN II 54,20 concludes with Ānanda's delight in the Buddha's words, so that the remainder of MĀ 63 is without a counterpart in MN 81. The same is also the case for the other versions, which do not have a statement comparable to what comes next in MĀ 63.

²⁸ The original actually reads as if the Dharma itself were not conducive to reaching liberation. Thus my supplementation of "[in]" and "[I]" is made in

that time [I] was not able to abandon birth, old age, disease and death, sorrow and grief, sadness and lamentation, [I] was not able to completely overcome *dukkha*.

Ānanda, now I have appeared in the world [as] a Tathāgata, free from attachment, fully awakened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well gone, knower of the worlds, an unsurpassable person, charioteer of the path of Dharma,²⁹ a teacher of gods and men, called a Buddha, an Assembly of Blessings.³⁰ Now I am

an attempt to make sense out of this passage, which forms a standard pericope in the *Madhyama-āgama* for past lives of the Buddha spent in a way that was not conducive to awakening. Yet, this pericope does not fit the present case, as the Dharma taught by a former Buddha would have been conducive to reaching liberation.

²⁹ MĀ 63 at T I 503a12: 道法御. Nattier (2003: 227) explains that "having taken *anuttarapurusa* as a separate title ... translators were left to explain the epithet *damyasārathi* on its own. In ... Prakrit languages ... *damyā* would have been written *damma* ... Ignoring the unaspirated character of the initial *d-*, this word was apparently read as *dhamma*, and the resulting **dhammasārathi* interpreted as 'charioteer of the Dharma'; cf. also Min Chau (1991: 326).

³⁰ MĀ 63 at T I 503a12: 眾祐. Counterparts to this listing of epithets in Pāli discourses have *bhagavant* at this juncture, cf. e.g. DN 2 at DN I 49,19. Nattier (2003: 231) explains that, in its usage by early translators, "眾祐, 'mass of blessings', [is] a rendition which conveys quite well the etymology of the term [*bhagavat*], which consists of *bhaga* 'blessing, good fortune' plus the suffix *-vat* 'possessing' ". In *Madhyama-āgama* discourses, the standard counterpart for *bhagavant* is 世尊. A perusal of the *Madhyama-āgama* gives the distinct impression as if Gautama Saṅghadeva aimed at consistency in his translation terminology (which is not necessarily the case with other *Āgama* translators). Hence one would not expect him to use 眾祐 if the source text had the same term that he elsewhere rendered as 世尊. According to Hirakawa (1997: 1042), 眾祐 can render *bhagavat* or else *lokanātha*. In the four Pāli *Nikāyas*, the term *lokanātha* seems not to occur, being found only in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, Th 921, Thī 229 and Thī 307-8; where according to von Hinüber (1996: 53) "both collections have been growing over a long period". Another occurrence can be found in the *Vatthugāthā* of the *Pārāyanavagga*, Sn 995, a section of the *Sutta-nipāta* that appears to be a later addition to this chapter, cf. Jayawickrama (1948: 243-249) and Norman (1983: 69). Thus *lokanātha* does not seem to be part of the earliest layer of Pāli canonical texts. It remains open to conjecture if the Indic original of the *Madhyama-āgama* had *lokanātha* at this point and thus differed in this respect from the usage in the four Pāli *Nikāyas*.

benefiting myself and benefiting others, benefiting many people, [full of] compassion for the world, seeking the advantage and benefit of gods and men, seeking their peace and happiness. Now I teach a Dharma that reaches the ultimate, the ultimate purity, the ultimate holy life, the ultimate completion of the holy life. Now I have abandoned birth, old age, disease and death, sorrow and grief, sadness and lamentation, I have already completely overcome *dukkha*."

The Buddha spoke like this. Venerable Ānanda and the monks heard what the Buddha said, were delighted and put it into practice.

Comparison

In agreement with the above translated *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, the other parallel versions identify the young Brahmin as a former life of Gotama Buddha.³¹ A discordant note in this otherwise unanimous identification comes from a passage in the *Ekottarika-āgama* preserved in Chinese, which identifies the young Brahmin Uttara from the time of the Buddha Kassapa with a monk by the same name who lived at the time of the Buddha Gotama.³² This would obviously make it impossible for the young Brahmin Uttara to be a former existence of the Buddha Gotama.

³¹ See above note 27. The *Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 863c22, similarly refers to a former life of the bodhisattva during which he was a monk disciple of the Buddha Kassapa.

³² EĀ 1.1 at T II 551b18: "in this auspicious aeon there was also a Buddha, called the Tathāgata Kassapa, who had appeared in the world having reached the truth and being fully awakened. At that time, the monk Uttara was called Brahmin Uttara ... Now the Tathāgata Sakyamuni has appeared in the world, having reached the truth and being fully awakened. Now this monk is called Uttara, 此賢劫中次復有佛, 名迦葉如來, 至真, 等正覺, 出現於世, 爾時, 優多羅比丘名梵優多羅 ... 今釋迦文如來, 至真, 等正覺, 出現於世, 今此比丘名優多羅. EĀ 1.1 thus uses the same name for the young Brahmin as MĀ 63 at T I 499a28: 優多羅, and the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 23,1) and D 'dul ba ga 4a6 or Q nge 3b8. The name Uttara for the former life of Gotama at the time of the Buddha Kassapa recurs also in the *Avadānaśataka*, e.g. Speyer (1906: 239,7) and (1909: 23,5; 51,8; and 88,1) or Vaidya (1958a: 105,20; 184,21; 196,23; and 212,30). In MN 81 at MN II 46,4 and in the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1963: 412,13) or Senart (1882: 319,11), however, the young Brahmin is called Jotipāla/Jyotipāla.

Though the indication provided in the *Ekottarika-āgama* is not decisive, it does provide a hint sufficiently strong to warrant further investigation, in that it suggests that the present tale may not always have been considered a *jātaka*, an account of a former life of the Buddha. To explore this possibility, in what follows I will examine the proposed identification of the young Brahmin as a former life of the Buddha Gotama from its two possible perspectives, namely from the perspective of the Buddha Gotama and from the perspective of the young Brahmin.

When considered from the perspective of the life of the Buddha Gotama, a problem related to this identification is raised in the *Kathāvatthu*. This problem is how far the Buddha Gotama could claim to have been without a teacher, if not too far back in the past he had been a disciple of the Buddha Kassapa.³³

According to the account of the Buddha's awakening given in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* and its parallels, the Buddha's attainment of liberation was preceded by developing the ability to recollect past lives.³⁴ The standard descriptions of such recollection indicate that through exercising this supernormal knowledge one will remember such information as one's name and social standing in a former life, the food eaten and the pleasurable and painful experiences one had at that time.³⁵

³³ Kv 286,16 (§ 4.8), where the issue at stake is whether at that time the bodhisattva had reached the path of assurance, *okkantaniyāmo*, cf. also the discussion in McDermott 1989.

³⁴ Records of this event agree that recollection of past lives preceded the Buddha's awakening, though they disagree on whether it was the first or the second of the three higher knowledges he attained. Recollection of past lives forms the first of these three in MN 36 at MN I 248,1 and its parallel EĀ 31.8 at T II 672a1; in the *Dharmaguptaka* Vinaya, T 1428 at T XXII 781b7; in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1977:117,27), with its Chinese counterpart in T 1450 at T XXIV 124a9 and its Tibetan counterpart in D 'dul ba nga 32a6 or Q ce 31a2; and in the *Buddhacarita*, verse 14.2 in Johnston (1995: 157). The opposite sequence, with the divine eye in first place, followed by recollection of past lives, can be found in an individual translation that parallels part of MN 36, T 757 at T XVII 599b20; in the *Lalitavistara*, Lefmann (1902: 344,9) or Vaidya (1958b: 250,12); and in the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1965: 184,12 and 389,13) or Senart (1890: 132,6 and 283,15).

³⁵ MN 36 at MN I 248,7: *amutr' āsiṃ evaṃ nāmo evaṃ gotto evaṃ vaṇṇo evaṃ āhāro evaṃ sukhadukkhapaṭisaṃvedī evaṃ āyupariyanto*. Although the parallel EĀ 31.8 does not have such a description, a similar listing can be found in EĀ 31.1 at T II 666b27: 我曾生彼, 字某, 名某, 食如是之食,

Given that in the case of the bodhisattva Gotama this recollection of past lives was part of an attempt to reach awakening, one would expect his recollection to soon focus on his recent former life as a monk under the Buddha Kassapa. The period of training as a monk under Kassapa would have been the nearest instance in the past where the bodhisattva had been in contact with a teaching capable of leading to liberation. According to the commentary to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta*, the young Brahmin had in fact learned all of the Buddha Kassapa's teachings and had practised insight meditation right up to the brink of stream-entry.³⁶ Thus, by recollecting the teachings of the Buddha Kassapa and his former practice of insight meditation, the bodhisattva Gotama would have had a firsthand experience of the liberating teachings of a Buddha, showing him how to proceed in order to reach awakening himself. From this perspective, it would follow that his own awakening did not really take place independently of a teacher.

Such a conclusion would to some degree conflict with the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* and a range of other sources, which agree in reporting that, right after his awakening, the Buddha claimed to have no teacher.³⁷ Though one might take this to refer to the

受如是苦樂, paralleling a description of recollection of former lives in MN 4 at MN 22,17. Similar descriptions can be found in the other main *Āgamas*, cf. e.g. DĀ 8 at T I 48c17: 我曾生彼種姓, 如是名字, 如是飲食, 如是壽命, 如是所受苦樂; MĀ 104 at T I 594c3: 我曾生彼, 如是姓, 如是字, 如是生, 如是飲食, 如是受苦樂, 如是長壽; SĀ 684 at T II 187a12: 我爾時於彼生, 如是族, 如是姓, 如是名, 如是食, 如是苦樂覺, 如是長壽.

³⁶ Ps III 282,18 presents this as a general pattern for any bodhisattva, *tepiṭakaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ uggāṇhitvā ... vipassanaṃ vadḍhetvā yāva anulomaṃ nāṇaṃ āhacca tiṭṭhanti*.

³⁷ MN 26 at MN I 171,7: *na me ācariyo atthi* (= Vin I 8,21); MĀ 204 at T I 777b17: 自覺誰稱師; EĀ 24.5 at T II 618c8: 我亦無師保. The same is also found in several biographies of the Buddha, T 189 at T III 643c22: 無師無等侶; T 191 at T III 953b21: 我今無所師; T 196 at T IV 148a8: 我行無師保; and in the *Lalitavistara*, Lefmann (1902: 405,20) or Vaidya (1958: 296,22): *ācāryo na hi me kaścit*. Other occurrences of this statement occur in the different versions of the *Udānavarga*, Bernhard (1965: 279), (21.4): *ācāryo me na vai kaś cit*, Nakatani (1987: 60), (273): *[ācār]jyā ko asti*, (cf. also Chakravarti (1930: 263)); with the Chinese versions, T 212 at T IV 717b22 and T 213 as at T IV 787c1: 我既無師保; and the Tibetan versions, Beckh (1911: 69) or Zongtse (1990: 209), (21.4): *nga la slob dpon su yang med*. In addition, several *Vinayas* have preserved this statement, such as the

absence of a living teacher, another difficult passage would be his claim to having realized what was "unheard before", made according to the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* and a range of parallels when, soon after having reached awakening, he began to teach his five earlier companions.³⁸ If in reality he had heard similar teachings during his earlier lifetime under the Buddha Kassapa, one would expect the statement to be worded differently, speaking perhaps of having realized what is "unheard at present" etc., but not of something that was "unheard before".

Here it also needs to be kept in mind that, in view of the esteem accorded in ancient India to being the successor of a lineage of teachers, it would have been rather convenient for the Buddha to be able to point to a past Buddha as his teacher.³⁹ This would have enhanced his claim to having reached full awakening rather than detracting from it. Thus, if on the night of his breakthrough to awakening he had indeed recalled the instructions received from the previous Buddha Kassapa, it would have been

Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 787c3: 我亦無有師; the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1968: 194,31) or Senart (1897: 326,11): *na me ācārya asti*; the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 104a26: 我行不由師; the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1977: 132,5): *na me sti kaścīd ācāryaḥ*, with its Chinese parallel, T 1450 at T XXIV 127a20: 我今不從師受業, and its Tibetan counterpart in Waldschmidt (1957: 129): *nga la slob dpon 'ga' med do*.

³⁸ SN 56.11 at SN V 422,3: *pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu* (= Vin I 11,1); *Catuṣparīṣat-sūtra* fragment 484e R2 in Waldschmidt (1952: 52): *pūrvam-ananuśruteṣu dharmeṣu*; SĀ 379 at T II 103c15: 本所未曾聞法; EĀ 24.5 at T II 619a21: 本未聞法; T 109 at T II 503b19: 本未聞道 (adopting the 元 and 明 variant 未 instead of 末); T 212 at T IV 685c27: 本所未聞; D *mdo sde sa* 275a7 or Q *shu* 283b2: *sngon ma thos pa'i chos*; the *Lalitavistara*, Lefman (1902: 417,15) or Vaidya (1958b: 303,17): *pūrvamaśruteṣu dharmeṣu*. The same recurs in several *Vinayas*, such as the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 788a30: 本未聞法; the *Mahāvastu*, Basak (1968: 198,19) or Senart (1897: 332,13): *pūrve ananuśrutehi dharmeḥi*; the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 104c7: 是法我先未聞; the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1977: 135,2): *pūrvam ananuśruteṣu dharmeṣu*, with its Chinese parallel, 1450 at T XXIV 127c8: 我未曾聞; and the Tibetan counterpart in Waldschmidt (1957: 149,1): *sngon ma thos pa'i chos*; and in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* T 1435 at T XXIII 448b19: 我先不從他聞法; cf. also Chung (2006).

³⁹ Gombrich (1980: 64) speaks of the Buddha's "failure to authenticate his position by reference to a long line of teachers" when compared to other contemporary religious teachers.

natural as well as convenient for him to indicate this when proclaiming his realization.

In fact, according to a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and its parallels the Buddha considered his awakening to be a rediscovery of an ancient path, trodden by awakened ones of the past.⁴⁰ This puts his assertion of having realized what was "unheard before" in perspective: He did not claim to have discovered something entirely new; instead, he reckoned his own realization to be a rediscovery. In view of this, his claim to have realized what was "unheard before" must be intending to highlight that he accomplished awakening independent of any instructions from a teacher (which in the ancient Indian context would necessarily have been oral instructions "heard" by the disciple). It is precisely this entirely self-reliant manner of discovering the path to realization that makes him a Buddha.⁴¹

Though these considerations are in themselves not conclusive, the above discussed passages do not give the impression that the Buddha's awakening was simply a matter of having remembered teachings received from the previous Buddha Kassapa. These passages would read more naturally if one were to assume that at the time when they came into being the idea that the Buddha had been a monk disciple of the previous Buddha had not yet arisen. Thus, on considering the life of Gotama from the

⁴⁰ SN 12.65 at SN II 106,15: *addasaṃ purāṇaṃ maggaṃ*; with similar expressions found in the Chinese parallels SĀ 287 at T II 80c27: 得古仙人道, EĀ 38.4 at T II 718c6: 見古昔諸佛所遊行處; T 713 at T XVI 827b7: 得故道所; T 714 at T XVI 828b21: 我今證得舊道; T 715 at T XVI 830a24: 我亦如是, 履於諸佛舊所行道; and in the Sanskrit fragment version, Bongard-Levin (1996: 80), (I.32): *adhigato me purāṇo mārgaḥ*, cf. also Lévi (1910: 440) and Tripāṭhī (1962: 103).

⁴¹ SN 22.58 at SN III 66,15; SĀ 75 at T II 19c3 and SĀ 684 at T II 186c6 highlight the discovery of the path as the decisive difference between a Tathāgata and an arahant. Cf. also MN 100 at MN II 211,16, according to which the Buddha claimed to have reached realization after having directly known for 'himself' the Dharma among things not heard before, *pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya*, with a similarly worded counterpart in Sanskrit fragment 348r1-2 in Zhang 2004:12: *pūrvam ananuśruteṣu dharmeṣu [svayaṃ dha]rmmā[n abhiññāya]*, cf. also SHT IV 165 folio 26Vc in Sander 1980: 200. The emphasis in this formulation is on having reached realization on his own, without relying on instructions by others.

perspective of his supposed identity with the young Brahmin who went forth under the Buddha Kassapa, it seems possible that this identification may have come into being only at a later time.

Turning to the other aspect of this identification, when evaluated from the perspective of the young Brahmin, a problem arises owing to his manifest lack of interest in meeting the Buddha Kassapa. In the career of a bodhisattva, to be able to meet a Buddha would be the most significant event imaginable, providing the occasion for the initial resolve to follow this path and for subsequent reaffirmations of this aspiration.⁴²

The *Buddhavaṃsa* reports that at a time in the faraway past, when the bodhisattva was the Brahmin Sumedha, on merely hearing about the former Buddha Dīpaṅkara he was filled with such inspiration and faith that he lay down in the mud as a plank so that the Buddha and his disciples could walk over him,⁴³ aspiring to become a Buddha in the future. The *Mahāvastu* records how, at an even earlier time, in an extravagant act of pious devotion the bodhisattva scattered flower-powder worth a hundred-thousand pieces as an offering over the Buddha Sarvābhīhū and his disciples,⁴⁴ at the same time aspiring to become a Buddha himself. What these tales have in common is the deep respect that the

⁴² As becomes readily apparent from the study by Skilling (1996), different Buddhist schools and textual traditions agree that the bodhisattva served and worshiped exceedingly high numbers of Buddhas during the aeons of his gradual progress to Buddhahood, making it inconceivable that he should conduct himself otherwise on meeting the last Buddha he was ever going to encounter.

⁴³ Verse 2:51 in Bv 12,14. Rahula (1978: 121) notes that in some traditions emphasis is instead on an offering of flowers as the main act undertaken by the bodhisattva. A precedent for the motif of lying down in the mud can be found in MN 65 at MN I 439,26 and its parallel MĀ 194 at T I 747a28. These two discourses report that the Buddha, on an occasion when he was admonishing a recalcitrant monk, remarked that other monks would even be willing to lie down in the mud if he asked them to do so (the Pāli version specifies that the purpose of this act would be to become a plank for the Buddha).

⁴⁴ Basak (1963: 44,12) or Senart (1882: 38,9) indicate that he scattered *keśara* over the Buddha and his disciples. Jones (1949: 32 note 3) explains *keśara* to be "a perfume prepared from the flower of that name", while Franke (1929: 118) takes it as standing for the pollen. The same *Mahāvastu* associates the bodhisattva's original aspiration with a gift given to the former Buddha Śākyamuni, the bodhisattva being a merchant at that time, Basak (1963: 55,4) or Senart (1882: 47,16).

bodhisattva had towards Buddhas in the distant past, something not easy to reconcile with the description of the young Brahmin's reluctance to even go to see the Buddha Kassapa, the last Buddha to arise before the advent of the Buddha Gotama.

Regarding the young Brahmin's reluctance, while according to the *Madhyama-āgama* version of the present tale the young Brahmin refuses the potter's invitation to visit the Buddha Kassapa only once, in the other versions he refuses repeatedly.⁴⁵ In the *Madhyama-āgama* account his disinclination is also more easily understandable, as he is about to give teachings to a group of five hundred disciples, who apparently have come from different locations in order to study under him. If he were to go and visit the Buddha Kassapa, as suggested by the potter, all these disciples would not be getting the instructions they are expecting of him.

The same pattern continues when according to the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse he is willing to visit the Buddha Kassapa after his friend has taken hold of him once, whereas in the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* and the *Mahāvastu*, as well as in the Chinese *Avadāna* tale, he only acquiesces after being taken hold of several times.⁴⁶ The different versions agree, however, that the potter eventually took hold of the young Brahmin's hair.

In his detailed study of the implications of seizing someone's hair in an ancient India, Hara (1986: 71-72) explains that in a fighting situation "the seizure of the hair in single combat means complete control over one's adversary", as "once he succeeds in holding his adversary's hair, he is in a position to behead him". Hence "being held by the hair is an unbearable humiliation".

The *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* in fact makes a point of noting the unusual nature of this deed, reporting that the young Brahmin was rather surprised at the audacious act undertaken by someone of a low social standing. According to the Chinese *Avadāna* account, grabbing someone's hair like this was considered to be so outrageous in this part of ancient India that it was punishable by death.⁴⁷ The same is also reflected in the *Mahāvastu*, according to which, on arriving in the presence of the Buddha Kassapa, the

⁴⁵ For references see above note 21.

⁴⁶ For references see above note 22.

⁴⁷ T 197 at T IV 173a6.

young Brahmin declared that he was not ready to take the precepts because he still had to kill the potter for having seized his hair.⁴⁸

Thus it would be quite surprising for the potter to act in the way depicted in the *Madhyama-āgama* version, where after a single refusal he immediately gets onto the chariot and grabs the young Brahmin's hair and pulls him down from the chariot, right in front of a company of five-hundred disciples of the young Brahmin. When viewed from an ancient Indian perspective, this account seems highly unlikely.

According to the *Mahāvastu*, the potter had gone so far as to seize the young Brahmin's hair because the latter kept on refusing to visit the Buddha Kassapa and finally had pushed the potter away and was about to leave.⁴⁹ This offers a more credible account, in that here it is sheer exasperation that causes the potter to undertake an action that involves a serious breach of etiquette.

The *Madhyama-āgama* discourse's presentation of the young Brahmin as being more easily convinced to approach the Buddha Kassapa could be reflecting the difficulty underlying this episode, according to which the potter had to be quite insistent in order to overcome the young Brahmin's reluctance.

Another aspect of the same problem would be the way the young Brahmin formulates his objection, where he indicates his unwillingness to visit one of those "bald-headed recluses". This quite derogatory phrase is found similarly in all versions.⁵⁰

Thus according to this episode the bodhisattva, in a life close to the time of becoming a Buddha himself,⁵¹ was disinclined to visit another Buddha and even went so far as to disparage him.⁵²

⁴⁸ Basak (1963: 416,6) or Senart (1882: 321,19), where it remains open to interpretation how far this remark is intended in a humorous sense.

⁴⁹ Basak (1963: 415,6) or Senart (1882: 321,5).

⁵⁰ See above note 20.

⁵¹ MĀ 32 at T I 469c27 presents this life of the bodhisattva under Buddha Kassapa as the last existence before his life in Tusita heaven from where he descended to become a Buddha; so does the *Saṅghabhedavastu* in Gnoli (1977: 21,1). According to Jā I 47,16 and Ps IV 169,7, however, the life that preceded his stay in Tusita heaven was as Vessantara, described in detail in *Jātaka* tale no. 547 at Jā VI 479-596.

⁵² Peris (2004: 48) notes that when a narration originally not related to the bodhisattva has become a *jātaka*, it easily happens that "carried away by the

According to the *Madhyama-āgama* account, the potter in fact quite explicitly told the Buddha Kassapa that the young Brahmin had no faith or respect for the Buddha.⁵³

The original point of this whole episode may have been to depict the lengths to which a faithful lay disciple like the potter is willing to go in order to convert others, in that he would even dare to seize a Brahmin's freshly washed hair. Once the young Brahmin is identified as a former life of the Buddha Gotama, however, the episode becomes problematic.

The difficulty caused by the young Brahmin's disrespectful attitude towards a Buddha is also reflected in several works that present the six years of asceticism spent before the Buddha's awakening as the karmic result of the disparaging remark he had made about the Buddha Kassapa in his former life as a young Brahmin.⁵⁴ The importance of this explanation is reflected in the title of the Chinese *Avadāna* version, which is the "Discourse spoken by the Buddha on the causes in former existences [for his undertaking of] ascetic practices".⁵⁵ Similarly, according to the *Saṅghabhedavastu* the Buddha delivered the tale of the potter and his young Brahmin friend in reply to an inquiry by the monks about the former deeds responsible for his having to spend six years in ascetic practices.⁵⁶ That is, in these versions the main

intrinsic drama of the plot, the Bodhisatta is made to say and do things unbecoming of a Bodhisatta, a being on the path of Buddhahood".

⁵³ MĀ 63 at T I 500b3: 彼於世尊無信敬心, see also above note 24.

⁵⁴ This is reported in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1978: 21,31) and its Tibetan counterpart in D 'dul ba ga 3b7 or Q nge 3b1; cf. also the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* in Dutt (1984a: 217,15). The same karmic relationship is also reflected in the Chinese *Avadāna* collection, T 197 at T IV 173c24 and T IV 174a3-5 (in verse); and the Pāli *Apadāna* verses 387:29-30 at Ap I 301,7; for a corresponding Sanskrit fragment and its Tibetan counterpart cf. Bechert (1961: 238-239); cf. also the *Bodhisattvāvadāna-kalpalatā* résumé in Mitra (1882: 58); and the discussion in Cutler (1997: 73); Guang Xing (2002: 21); Hara (1997: 250-253) and Walters (1990: 77 and 81). A further step is then taken in the *Upāya-kauśalya-sūtra*, which reasons that the bodhisattva's reluctance was only a skilful means in order to convince some former friends to visit the Buddha Kassapa as well, T 310 at T XI 602b3.

⁵⁵ T 197 at T IV 172c5: 佛說苦行宿緣經.

⁵⁶ Gnoli 1978: 21,30: *kim bhadanta bhagavatā karma kṛtam yasya karmaṇo vipākena śaḍvarṣāni duṣkaraṃ caritam*; D 'dul ba ga 3b6 or Q nge 3b1: *btsun pa bcom ldan 'das kyis phrin las ci zhig mdzad na phrin las de'i rnam par smin pas lo drug tu dka' ba spyad par gyur lags*.

purpose of the present story is to explain why the Buddha undertook asceticism before reaching awakening. Evidently, the for a bodhisattva rather surprising conduct of the young Brahmin did not go unnoticed.

In sum, on considering the proposed identification of the young Brahmin as a former life of the Buddha Gotama from both possible perspectives – that of the Buddha and that of the young Brahmin – the hypothesis that this identification may be a later addition would explain several difficulties.

In the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel this young Brahmin in fact plays a secondary role, as the main emphasis of the tale is on the potter and his relationship with the former Buddha Kassapa.⁵⁷ The central purpose of the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* appears to be to depict the ideal layman, who fulfils his filial duty by supporting his blind parents and at the same time lives a life of such high ethical standard that it corresponds as closely as possible to the life of a monastic. Besides being endowed with the insight of a disciple in higher training, the potter undertakes his livelihood in a way that – by avoiding the harm caused to creatures through digging the ground and by abstaining from selling his products – conforms to the conduct usually only incumbent on and compatible with the life of a monastic.

Another point that deserves attention is the conclusion of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, which has a passage that in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection regularly occurs at the end of tales that record a former life of the Buddha.⁵⁸ This standard passage contrasts the type of practice adopted by the bodhisattva at that time in the past, which was not able to issue in awakening, to the type of practice the Buddha is teaching at present, which is capable of leading to awakening.⁵⁹ In the present case, however, this passage is a misfit, since the practice the young Brahmin had adopted by becoming a monk under Kassapa Buddha was capable of leading him to awakening. Thus this passage looks as if it could have been added to the discourse as part of a general process of this

⁵⁷ Oldenberg (1912: 189): "auch ist die Erzählung vielmehr der Verherrlichung des Ghaṭikāra und seiner frommen Intimität mit dem Buddha jenes Weltalters gewidmet, als der Jotipālas".

⁵⁸ See above note 28.

⁵⁹ MĀ 8 at TI 429c16; MĀ 60 at TI 496a3; MĀ 67 at TI 515a14; MĀ 68 at TI 518b11; MĀ 155 at TI 678a11; MĀ 160 at TI 684b13.

tale becoming a *jātaka*, an addition made without noticing that its contents do not suit an account of a life lived as a disciple of a Buddha.

It is also worthy of note that the young Brahmin's encounter with the former Buddha Kassapa has not made its way into the Pāli *Jātaka* collection, unlike other canonical discourses. In the case of the *Mahāsudassana-sutta* or the *Makhādeva-sutta*, for example, besides the discourse proper a version of these former lives of the Buddha can also be found in the *Jātaka* collection.⁶⁰ Thus from the perspective of both discourse collections – the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Madhyama-āgama* – the *jātaka* status of the present discourse is not entirely unproblematic.

When considered from the perspective of early Buddhist literature in general, the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* would not be the only instance where what originally may have been simply a didactic tale was subsequently identified as a former life of the Buddha. In his study of the Pāli *Jātaka* collection, von Hinüber (1998: 188) highlights a case where a tale, which in the *Vinaya* appears to be simply a parable, is a story of a former life of the Buddha in the *Jātaka* collection.⁶¹ This parable describes how a partridge, a monkey and an elephant lived together in harmony by giving foremost respect to the eldest among them, which turned out to be the partridge. According to the *Vinaya* account, the Buddha had addressed this parable to a group of notoriously misbehaving monks who had occupied all dwellings without leaving room for elder monks. The *Tittirajātaka* in the Pāli *Jātaka* collection concludes the same parable with the Buddha identifying the elephant and the monkey as former existences of Mahāmoggallāna and Sāriputta, while the partridge was a former life of himself.⁶²

Versions of the same tale in the Mahāsāṅghika, (Mūla-) Sarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda *Vinayas* agree with the Pāli *Jātaka*

⁶⁰ DN 17 at DN II 169-199 and MN 83 at MN II 74-83, who have their counterparts in *Jātaka* tales 95 and 9 at Jā I 391-393 and Jā I 137-139. This discrepancy has already been noted by Oldenberg (1912: 189).

⁶¹ Vin II 161,18 and tale 37 at Jā I 218,18.

⁶² Jā I 220,12: *tadā hatthināgo Moggallāno ahosi, makkaṭṭo Sāriputto, tittirapaṇḍito pana aham eva.*

collection on presenting this tale as a *jātaka*.⁶³ The Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka *Vinayas*, however, as well as a version of this tale in the Chinese *Udāna(-varga)*, do not identify any of these animals as a former life of the Buddha, so that here this tale does not take the form of a *jātaka*.⁶⁴ Such variations give the impression as if the protagonist of what originally appears to be just a parable may have eventually been identified as a former life of the Buddha.⁶⁵

In the case of the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta*, however, such a conclusion is less straightforward, since all extant versions agree on identifying the young Brahmin who goes forth under the Buddha Kassapa as a former life of the Buddha Gotama. Hence it is only the indication given in the *Ekottarika-āgama* and the difficulties that result from this identification that would support the assumption that the young Brahmin may not always have been identified with the bodhisattva.

Whatever may be the last word on this hypothesis, a shift of emphasis from the potter to the young Brahmin can definitely be observed with the different versions, thereby expressing the increasing interest in the latter protagonist as a stage in the bodhisattva career of the Buddha.

Thus whereas in the Pāli discourse the actual tale begins with the potter, the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse instead turns first to the young Brahmin, offering a rather detailed description that mentions his father and depicts the learning of the young Brahmin.⁶⁶ While the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* only notes that the young Brahmin is a friend of the potter, the *Madhyama-āgama* account introduces him as the son of an immensely wealthy Brahmin, of pure descent, accomplished in all those qualities that make a

⁶³ T 1425 at T XXII 446a28; Dutt (1984c: 125,16), with the Tibetan version D 'dul ba ga 189a6 or Q nge 181a5, translated in Schiefner (1876: 106-112); T 1435 at T XXIII 242b16;.

⁶⁴ T 1428 at T XXII 940a8; T 1421 at T XXII 121a11; and T 212 at T IV 686a6.

⁶⁵ In order to avoid digressing too much from the main theme of the present article, I have to abstain from presenting several other examples, which I intend to survey in another paper dedicated to the gradual development of some *jātaka* tales found among the discourses or the *Vinayas* out of what appear to have originally been parables and allegorical tales.

⁶⁶ See above note 11.

Brahmin worthy of respect (such as mastery of the Vedas etc.) and the teacher of a sizeable group of students.

This shift of emphasis also finds its expression in the title of the discourse. While the Pāli version is named after the potter, the *Madhyama-āgama* account takes the village where the potter and the young Brahmin lived as its title, while in the *Mahāvastu* the tale is named after the young Brahmin.⁶⁷

The *Mahāvastu* in fact develops the theme of the young Brahmin as a former life of the Buddha further, reporting how he formed the aspiration to become a Buddha himself.⁶⁸ Through his telepathic powers the Buddha Kassapa became aware of this aspiration and predicted that the young Brahmin was destined to become a Buddha in the future and to set rolling the wheel of the Dharma at the Deer Park at Vārāṇasī.

Pursuing the same theme in a different mode, the Chinese *Avadāna* tale reports how, on meeting the Buddha Kassapa, the young Brahmin recognized that the Buddha Kassapa had thirty of the marks of a superior being, and thereon requested to be shown the other two.⁶⁹ On ascertaining that the Buddha Kassapa had all thirty-two marks, the young Brahmin was filled with faith, whereon the Buddha Kassapa delivered a description of the conduct of a bodhisattva. On hearing this description, the young Brahmin confessed that he had not kept up this conduct. With these episodes, the shift of emphasis from the tale of the potter to the young Brahmin as a step in the bodhisattva career of the future Buddha Gotama becomes ever more evident.

The same tendency can even be found in the Pāli canon, where the *Kathāvatthu* attributes a statement to the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* that is not found in the discourse itself. According to this statement, the Buddha told Ānanda that he lived the monk's life under the Buddha Kassapa for the sake of his future awakening.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Basak (1963: 436,5) or Senart (1882: 335,8): *Jyotipāla-sūtra*.

⁶⁸ Basak (1963: 428,10) or Senart (1882: 330,1).

⁶⁹ T 197 at T IV 173a19, an account in several respects similar to standard descriptions in the Pāli discourses of how Brahmins would ascertain the nature of the Buddha, cf. e.g. MN 91 at MN II 143,1 and its parallel MĀ 161 at T I 688b17.

⁷⁰ Kv 288,34: *Kassape ahaṃ, Ānanda, bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ acarim āyatiṃ sambodhāya*. A remark similar to the quotation in Kv, though made by Mahāmoggallāna, can be found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* in Gnoli (1977:

In spite of the young Brahmin being identified as a former life of the Buddha, in the discourse versions his deeds and activities are not yet presented as something undertaken on purpose to promote his progress to Buddhahood.⁷¹

In sum, even though the different versions of the present tale agree in identifying the young Brahmin who went forth under the Buddha Kassapa as a former life of the Buddha Gotama, it seems quite possible that this idea was not part of the earliest version of this tale. Though this remains hypothetical, a comparison of the different versions does show a shift of emphasis from the potter to the young Brahmin. The present case study thus testifies to the influence of the evolving bodhisattva conception, whereby the didactic function of the potter as an exemplary lay disciple is increasingly overshadowed by emphasis given to his companion as a former life of the bodhisattva.

Abbreviations:

Ap	<i>Apadāna</i>
Bv	<i>Buddhavaṃsa</i>
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
Jā	<i>Jātaka</i>
Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>

20,17), according to which the *bodhisatta* lived the holy life under Buddha Kassapa with the aspiration to reach awakening in the future, *Kāśyapo nāma ... buddho bhagavān, yasya antike bodhisattvo bhagavān āyatyāṃ bodhāya prañidhāya brahmacaryaṃ caritvā*.

⁷¹ In relation to other canonical *jātakas*, Gokuldas (1951: 10) notes that a "significant feature in the early Nikāyas ... lies in the recognition of these births as great kings or sages without ... the implication that these births formed some links in the chain of Bodhisatta evolution".

Q	Peking edition
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
T	Taishō
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>

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